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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Background.....	1
1.1	Organizational Background	1
1.2	Overview	2
1.3	NED Funding to CIVITAS	10
2	Methodology & Evaluation Approach:.....	11
3	Findings And Conclusions.....	12
3.1	Conclusion of the Cumulative Assessment	12
3.2	Objectives & Outcomes	14
3.2.1	Grant #: 2014 - 266:	14
3.2.2	Grant #: 2015 – 275:	15
3.2.3	Grant #: 2016 – 659:	17
3.3	Objectives' Achievement	18
3.4	Challenges	24
3.5	Results & Long-Term Changes	29
3.6	Organizational Assessment	40
4	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	43
4.1	Recommendations on Current Structure	43
4.2	Recommendations on Methodology	43
4.3	Recommendations on thematic interventions with YCs, and CBO's structures based on demands stated by beneficiaries and stakeholders:	44
5	ANNEXES.....	45
5.1	Annex A - Quantitative survey with decision makers	45
5.2	Annex B – Questionnaire with YCs	45
5.3	Annex C - Quantitative survey with YCs	45
5.4	Annex D - Quantitative survey with CROLD	45
5.5	Annex C - Success Stories & Anecdotes via desk review	45

ACRONYMS

CIVITAS:	CIVITAS Institute
NED:	National Endowment for Democracy
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PA:	Palestinian Authority
PLC:	Palestinian Legislative Council
Hamas:	Islamic Resistance Movement
Fateh:	Palestinian National Liberation Movement
INGO's:	International NGOs
CRS:	Catholic Relief Services/U.S. based organization
Mercy Corps:	U.S. based organization
CROLD:	Consortium for Rule of Law and Democracy; founded by CIVITAS in G/WB comprises NGO's, CBO's, and Networks aiming at coalescing to carry the monitoring and oversight for the Gaza Reconstruction process.
CP:	Citizens' Participation
CPP:	Civic Participation Project/Program
D&G:	Democracy & Good Governance
DRR:	Disaster Risk Reduction
LC:	Local Councils
LCM:	Local Councils Mayors
CVN:	CIVITAS Volunteers' Network
CBO's	Community Based organizations
CSO's	Civil Society Organizations
DBs:	Duty Bearers
RHs:	Right Holders
GYG	Getting to Yes Group (a group of young researchers affiliated with CIVITAS)
POs:	Partner Organizations
VM:	Volunteer Moderators
MoHPW:	Ministry of Housing & Public Work
NPA:	Norwegian People Aid
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IRPAL:	Islamic Relief Palestine
GIZ:	German International Cooperation (Deutsch Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)

GRM:	Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (Robert Seri mechanism adopted by the UN)
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons (acronym adopted by the UN)
IDPsL	IDPs League
ITA	Integrity, Transparency, Accountability
PD:	Panel Discussion
PET:	Public Expenditure Track
PM:	Public Meeting
OCHA:	Office for Coordinating Humanitarian Assistance to Palestinians (UN special mission)
UNCaC:	UN Convention against Corruption
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UNRWA:	United Nations Relief and Working Agency for the Palestinians.
WB:	West Bank
YCs	Youth Councils

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1 Background

1.1 Organizational Background

CIVITAS is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan and independent organization based in Gaza and was established in Dec., 2001 as an initiative of democrats, young community leaders, journalists, activists, human rights and civil society advocates.

CIVITAS aims for achieving sustainable community development through many strategies that aim to empower civil society bases by working in many aspects such as: increasing awareness, implementing advocacy programs, leadership & institutional development, seeking independent media, supporting local and voluntary initiatives, and organizing communities by capacity building, networking, and experiences exchange.

CIVITAS seeks for compliance its goals through empowering civil society principles and grouping all efforts of those who believe and are involved in the community democratization process.

CIVITAS sees that reform and development as a corner stone element and factor that can carry out the change and shaping a better future to Palestinian society through education, training, empowerment, and a government watch dog.

CIVITAS is dedicated to the success of democracy in Palestine and the prospect that each person in every corner of the country is entitled to have a free and informed say in how he or she is governed.

CIVITAS recognizes that democratic governance is an evolving and dynamic process, created by and meeting the needs of the people it serves.

CIVITAS provides professional advice and technical assistance in promoting democracy and serves as an information-clearing house on democratic development.

CIVITAS Goals:

- Expanding and deepening democratic practices, principles, and behaviors among Palestinians.
- Contributing to social change through leadership development among new generations.
- Building capacities of Palestinian institutions and strengthening the relations between different sectors of the Palestinian society.
- Achieving consensus among Palestinians through providing civic forums and platforms for community leaders and their grassroots.
- Enhancing transparency and valued ethics among Palestinian communities and institutions.

CIVITAS has a General Assembly consists of 52 members who meet annually to review the organization's policies and performance; they elect seven Board Members periodically every three years.

1.2 Overview

This cumulative assessment report is a multi-year assessment of NED funding to CIVITAS over the period from February 2014 to March 2016; this requirement enables both the NED and CIVITAS to determine where they are, their standing, what was achieved, and what improvements should be brought to the program based on the learned lessons.

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is a Washington-based private, nonprofit foundation dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world. Each year, with funding from the U.S. Congress, NED supports more than 1,000 projects of non-governmental groups abroad who are working for democratic goals in more than 90 countries.

CIVITAS is one of the NED guarantees since 2005, where CIVITAS receives funding annually on a project-basis submission, each year.

The NED funding to CIVITAS is expected to contribute to improving the whole democratic environment in Palestine as a part of the Middle East Region to support democracy and reform efforts, despite government restrictions and political violence.

The NED funding to CIVITAS started approximately twelve years ago, since the beginning of the increasingly violent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians following to the second Intifada on sep., 2000, and two years earlier before the political division and split that had taken place among Palestinians as a result of militant clashes between Fatah and Hamas, the main political factions among Palestinian regime. Concurrently, the peace process between Palestine and Israel has been stopped despite of several efforts carried by the International Community, the Quartet Committee, and the Arab League to identify a just and comprehensive peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and to put an end to the Israeli Occupation to the OPT since 1967.

Long before, in the twenty-four years, since the Oslo Agreement was signed in 1993 by Israel and the PLO, which resulted in establishing the Palestinian Authority (PA), the Palestinian society has undergone a significant political transformation, including the establishment of legislative, executive, and judicial institutions, and the strengthening of civil society initiatives.

However, while new systems and structures have been formed, their performance and impact have been mixed. Although the 1996 elections were initially seen as a positive development, the consolidation of executive power at the expense of legislative authority and judicial independence has been pervasive and troubling. The proliferation of Palestinian security services and haphazard application of the rule of law, have generated further concerns. Beginning with the second intifada in September 2000, ongoing fighting between the Palestinians and Israelis—in addition to creating widespread economic destruction, grave humanitarian concerns, political polarization, and fatigue and trauma within the Palestinian population—has further exacerbated internal frustration and disappointment.

Long before the second intifada, that started in Sep., 2000, Palestinian civic groups and organizations were pushing for greater participation, accountability, transparency, and reform in their elected and appointed institutions. These voices were poised to intensify following the November 2004 death of Yasser Arafat. A high level of political and civic awareness has long existed within the Palestinian population, and it is being increasingly cultivated by NGOs; at that point, the Palestinian society and the political system were standing at a breaking point for both reform within the Palestinian Authority and continuation of a peace process with Israel. These paths are mutually reinforcing, as positive movement on the peace process will be dependent in part on positive political reform, where many believe that pursuing these two fronts can still create conditions for sustained economic improvement and growth, as well as for serious internal reform.

To this end, within the transitional political climate, a number of Palestinian NGOs were still optimistic that the presidential, municipal, and legislative, elections would hold the potential for real change, making the Palestinian national and local governments more accountable to their citizens and showing greater responsiveness to their constituencies.

However, the situation was neither developed healthy, nor smoothly, as being expected, nor the required facilitative and supportive conditions were existed so far; considering that the

Israeli withdraw from Gaza through one-side evacuation step, in 2005, without coordination, has created further troubles to Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, where the PA was not able to set bases for the new emerging reality, or to establish a mechanism for ensuring the required peaceful transfer of power to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Gaza.

However, the presidential elections and later the municipal elections, and the legislative in early 2006, had created a fatigue within the political regime that assumed to be shared between Fatah and Hamas, which was not the case due to their different programs, pressure and influence of foreign agendas on both sides, along with the soft experience of Palestinians to practice the peaceful change of power within a consolidated democracy.

This situation had led to an international siege and blockade against the PA new government, led by Hamas, where Palestinians suffered numerous from severe circumstances including checkpoints, closures, food and water shortages, home demolitions, missile strikes and the Israeli's troops to several areas of the oPt, which had rendered daily life miserable and onerous for all Palestinians, and Gazans in particular, who have received 3 wars by Israel who attacked Gaza three times during 2008, 2012, and 2014 respectively.

After Hamas dominated a government in Gaza, which actually, divided oPt, into two states, one in West Bank ruled by Fatah and one in Gaza ruled by Hamas; the situation became worse, as Israel had announced Gaza under Hamas's ruling as an enemy entity, which led to 3 wars in less than six years and set a blockade that turned Gaza into an open air prison, added to that Hamas was unable to manage the government, or to pay the salaries, nor to get recognition from the International Community or the donors agencies.

The unjust blockade on the Gaza Strip, has negatively impacted all aspects of life in Gaza, as movements in and out of Gaza has been restricted for both individuals and goods, also, either for importing much-needed supplies, or for exporting Gaza products; thus, not only the humanitarian situation has been deteriorated as a result of the siege and the closure of the borders' crossings, but also, the repeated wars on Gaza that has seriously exacerbated the crisis, where Israel has attacked Gaza on late 2008 and 2012, respectively, before launching a massive and destructive war again on Gaza in July 2014.

On the ground, the siege has resulted in many serious troubles, including the electricity crisis that was caused by a shortage of fuel which is another aspect of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza; it resulted that all Gaza residents have been suffering from power cuts and a paralysis of their daily lives. For example, homes suffer from a lack of means water, students are unable to study or do their homework during the lengthy blackouts, that forced population to use power generators, that usually caused tragedies, where several has been killed when these generators were exploded, or the used candles had generated home's burn up, and killing particularly, the children and infants. From other side, the power shortage has had a negative impact on public health in the Gaza Strip as public services such as sewage treatment plants are shut down; hundreds of patients are suffering and their lives are endangered by the constant electricity blackouts which affect the work of sensitive medical equipment in hospitals and clinics. Also, due to the lack of fuel, the municipalities are still unable to provide their usual public by services such as garbage collection and sewage treatment. Moreover, residents of high buildings and towers are suffering from the electricity crisis as well, as elevators usually stopped, where people are forced to climb long flights of stairs, which are especially difficult for children, elderly, and people with disabilities. Eventually, the educational institutions are severely hampered also, in particular laboratories that depend on electricity. Most of Gaza's schools are operating without electricity and as a result, the schools have been unable to use much of their educational equipments or facilities.

Back to the last brutal war in 2014, that was not only a shock for Palestinians, but also a disgusting realization that the Arabs regimes supported and concord Israel in its war against Gaza, through their silence, and direct blaming Hamas by further accusations of embarking on an adventure that endangers the civilian population of Gaza, even during the war itself, with a complete ignorance of the war's implications on the populations, particularly of creating around

65,000 Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs), who have been living in sever conditions, either in schools or hospitals that were turned into shelters, or within the community hosting shelters.

The Egyptian hostility toward Hamas is not entirely new, they participated now and before actively in maintaining the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip especially in war times, where Palestinians realized now more than before that the conflict game, siege, and war, are not just a conflict that needed to be solved, rather than a nation's political game, where Arabs and PNA represented and dominant by Fatah are involved within it (informally); despite no one wins, nothing has been doing to resolve it, but it will be always remain an enduring focus of regional and worldwide concern, while the Palestinians will always be promised that someday, they will eventually, have their rights to life, liberty and security.

As Gaza continued to remain isolated on many levels, it was critically important to support civil society organizations and strengthen their role as effective institutions, by the International donors, so that they can better fulfill responsibilities in empowerment and development of the individuals and groups among Palestinians to advocate as constituents, liaise as local leadership and being encouraged to invest the environment of assumed participatory democracy that still exists despite the overall crisis in the region. Moreover, the civil society actors are requested to voice concern about the tenuous nature of the government and the sustainability of the civic institutions and community leaderships that have evolved, particularly in terms of the credibility of these institutions at a local level, and their capabilities to organizing communities and encouraging them to advocate and lobby about their rights and concerns, considering the emerging realities in the oPt, where at last, a unified government has been formed that would be seen as a positive opportunity for putting Palestinians' ambitions and expectations into act, particularly for the IDPs communities, who turned to be the major challenge that faces all actors in the Gaza reconstruction process, given that they have variety of needs, concerns, and high level of expectations that need to be met, meanwhile the national unified government along with civil society- through the support and funding - have to fulfill their obligations towards the IDPs aiming at ensuring that the NAKBA of 1948, would not be repeated again.

While, the PA's popular credibility in Ramallah and Gaza is lacking, and the besieged Hamas in Gaza, faced also the same problem, despite of being in the last years relatively gain high levels of credibility among the Palestinian people, and lacking support among key international actors, the equation has been revised now, and both Fatah and Hamas faced the same mistrust from their constituents.

The reconciliation, which is considered the most achievable breakthrough, and a key solution for the lack of creditability for both Hamas and Fatah, has been launched on the track, without real or concrete results that might be felt by citizens despite of the wide enthusiasm among Palestinians; the process has been failed to face the first test, when both governments had failed to handle paying the salaries of the employees of former governments in Gaza, where the clashes between Hamas police in Gaza and the rows of employees of the PA's Gaza-based staff who intended to receive their salaries, from Gaza banks, but the Hamas counterparts did not, where the PA has refused to pay Hamas civil employees, their due salaries. As a result, Hamas disbanded the reconciliation deal with PA until the new government has pledged to solve the problem by several measures including re-assessment of the structures of the public sector within the next 4 months as obliged by the two parties within the reconciliation agreement, where Qatar and Switzerland have promised to help particularly with paying the salaries of employees, and to sustain the reconciliation deal.

Earlier, the president, Mahmoud Abbas, has been charged of finalizing negotiations on forming a Palestinian national unity government, in which it does not accomplished as planned, due to Hamas declaration following to its announcement; however, the government that was formed to include only 4 ministers from Gaza is still lacking the access to act or to deliver services on the ground, where Hamas is actually ruling the ministries in Gaza even without intervention from the government; meanwhile the security and militant forces in Gaza and West Bank are still acting based on the prior role, without obedience to the Interior Ministry, where they have to obey directly the orders come from president himself.

However, the Israeli policies against Gaza is not the only primary cause of instability, but also the non-exertion of significant external pressure on Israel, requesting stopping boycotting

Gaza and respond to the prisoners' demands and their liberties, that always will warm up the situation and would not create a facilitative environment neither for the internal reconciliation, nor for any potential settlement for the conflict with Israel.

Palestinian Index:

INTRODUCTION

According to analysts (Economic Intelligence Unit, EIU), the level of democracy in Palestine has decreased between 2006 and 2012. Palestine changed from a "flawed democracy" in 2006 to a "hybrid regime" in 2012.¹ The EIU classifies countries of the world in four groups: full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes. Palestine is ranked 24 out of 37 hybrid regimes. Palestine total rank is 103 out of 148 countries. In general Palestine follows the mainstream of declining democracy across the world that has been caused by the global financial crisis that started in 2008 and highlighted some existing negative trends in political development, according to the Economist Intelligence Units. The weakened democracy in Palestine is also a result of the ongoing Israeli occupation, the 10-year siege of Gaza and also the internal political split between Hamas and Fatah.

The Transparency International has identified three main challenges related to corruption in Palestine. Government and politics or lack of parliamentary control over executive power is identified as the first one.² Without free elections people's power to hold public officials to account and transparency has been deteriorating. Therefore, it is important to restore the institution of elections and opportunity to people to participate in influencing and shaping the society and controlling the political power.

The second challenge is access to information. The absence of a law on the right to information is a main obstacle for transparency in the public sector there conflicts of interest occur more often than the state controlled media report on. The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedom (MADA) works on the draft of information law in cooperation with the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission and respective ministries.³

The third challenge and the most widespread form of corruption in the governmental, civic and private sector is nepotism or "Wasta". The existing corruption diminishes the way in which the marginalized groups could benefit from the public sector and claim/practice their human rights especial social-economic rights. Otherwise, there is no corruption perception index for Palestine 2012. Should these three challenges be handled by political decision makers, the corruption index for Palestine would decrease.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT:

Due to political a split between Hamas and Fateh, the Palestinian Legislative Council has been in a state of political paralyses since 2007. This in addition to failure to maintain national and presidential elections since 2006, is one of the main reasons for decreasing of Palestine's democracy index from overall score of 6.01 in 2006 to 4.80 in 2012. On a 1 to 10 scale Palestine has the lowest scores in category of Functioning of government (2.86) and Civil liberties 3.82 while the Electoral process and pluralism got 5.17, Political culture 4.30 and Political participation (7.78).

To increase the ranking there is a need for increased popular participation or citizens' right to decide who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national level. Elections for President and Parliament have been postponed several times which has deprived Palestinian voters this basic right. The Palestinian Authority have conducted local elections in the West Bank in 2012 and 2016 respectively, but the Hamas government in Gaza has refused to participate in elections or recognize the results.⁴

1 http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy_Index_2010_web.pdf

2 <http://www.transparency.org/country#PSE>

3 <http://www.madacenter.org/news.php?lang=1&id=10>

4 <http://www.elections.ps/tabid/979/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

According to a Gallup survey from April 2013 just 18% of the population feels confidence in honesty of elections.⁵

The political landscape is directly influenced by the conflict with Israel. When it comes to the main problems confronting Palestinians today, 46% believe that the first most vital Palestinian goal should be to end Israeli occupation in the areas occupied in 1967 and build a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital. By contrast, 30% believe the first most vital goal should be to obtain the right of return of refugees to their 1948 towns and villages, 15% believe that it should be to build a pious or moral individual and a religious society, one that applies all Islamic teachings, and 9% believe that the first and most vital goal should be to establish a democratic political system that respects freedoms and rights of Palestinians.⁶ These topics are also reflected on the agenda of the political parties in Palestine. The struggle for power in Palestinian politics takes place today between the two movements, Fateh and Hamas. The secular, nationalist Fatah movement is the largest party within the PLO. Fateh, however, found it difficult to transform itself from a guerrilla organization into a political party.⁷ After years of rivalries between the two political fractions a reconciliation agreement was signed and a joint technocratic government established in June 2014 with support from the majority of the population.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Palestinian Human Development Index for 2012 is 0.670 or in the medium human development category and placing the country at 111 out of 187 countries. This index is above- average of 0.652 from countries in the Arab region but masks economic and other inequality across the population at the national level and even in the same household, according to UNDP Human Development Report 2013⁸. The Gross National Income per capita was 3,359 US dollars 2012 while in Arab states in average were 8,317 US dollars. According to the same resource 1.4 percent of the population in Palestine lived in multidimensional poverty while additional 8.8 percent were vulnerable to multiply deprivation or deprivation in education, health and standard of living. Intensity of deprivation or average percentage of deprivation experienced by people in multidimensional poverty was 37.3.⁹ The increasing poverty and more visible gap between rich and poor is potentially a social bomb that could explode at any time especially if the PA continues to face every social demonstration with oppression.

Unemployment in Palestine is high in general and among youth and women in particular. According to The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistic (PCBS) the number of unemployed people in March 2013 was 326 900 out of 1 189 200 or 27%. Unemployment is still higher in Gaza Strip 34.5 compared with and 23.9 in the West Bank.¹⁰ Approximately 41% of young people are without jobs and incomes, and over half of them hold university degrees.¹¹

Palestinian youth at age 15 - 29 constitute about one-third of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the East Jerusalem. They are a huge potential of the society but living under the occupation and suffering from poor economic performance, with a high rate of unemployment, paternalism and unequal distribution of familial and political power they are marginalized. Therefore, they are like the other marginalized groups unable or limited to participate in influencing society.

The reports on the State of Palestinian Youth, these reports stress that frustration, despair, a sense of futility and the reduction of human dignity which result from poverty and unemployment, lead to social and political problems. The young people tend to emigrate in search of better living

5 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/world.aspx?ref=b>

6 <http://www.pcbsr.org/survey/polls/2014/p52epressrelease.html>

7 <http://www.landguiden.se/Lander/Asien/PalestinskaSjlvstyret/Politiska%20grupper>

8 <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/PSE.html> (PSE .pdf).

9 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/mp/> The 2012 HDR introduced the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which identifies multiple deprivation in the same households in education, health and standard of living.

10 www.pcbs.gov.ps/.../_pcbs/.../Press_En_LFSQ120.

11 <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=790&mid=3172&wversion=Staging>

conditions. There is also much evidence pointing to the correlation between poverty and unemployment with high rates of community violence, crime and drug abuse.¹²

The second marginalized group on the labour market with high unemployment rate is women. For example, the gap in the participation rate between men and women in labour forces still is very big and reached 69.0 percent for men compared with 17.1% in the beginning of 2013.¹³ At the same time the highest unemployment or 46, 7% is among women with 13 years of schooling or more.

The women's organizations that are quite well-organized in Palestine expected that women rights would be improved with Palestinian Authority's ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 2009. Actually, this is only one out of ten key international agreements that the Palestinian Authority has ratified. The Palestinian women did not benefit in any way from this ratification until now.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Palestinian authorities have failed to replace the outdated and backward penal code and personal status law in Gaza and the West Bank, which date back to mandatory times in Egypt and Jordan and deprived women from their basic rights. The failure to change is not merely a technical-political problem, but a difficulty to reconcile several of socio-cultural and religious approaches and norms. These approaches and norms are based on the patriarchal system that, amongst other things, serve to restrict women's ability to enforce their basic rights, including their reproductive, education and right to work, as well as to play a full part in decision-making both within family and in the public space.

Replacing the outdated law and empowerment women in their rights and promote women's active participation in public life by equipping them with the skills, knowledge, resources and mechanisms to (re-)engage in leadership, decision-making and advocacy at the local and national levels is only one part of the solution. The second one is participation of men in similar activities or in joint activities in order to have a holistic approach to women's issues in the society. A lot of improvement could be done by political parties especially secular parties through bringing a higher number of women in decision making process within own party and in the elected bodies. The election law of 2005 states that political parties must have at least one woman among the first three on the list, at least one woman among the next four, and one woman among every five for the rest of the list. This solution guarantees about 20 percent women among the candidates.¹⁴ In the election for the Palestinian Legislative Council 2006 totally 13% out of 132 elected lawmakers were women.¹⁵

The majority of women in particular and the Palestinian population in general are not very familiar with their rights stated by the Palestinian Basic Law.¹⁶ The rights of people with disabilities and rights of LGBT population are not even mentioned in the Basic Law. The first group is marginalized but relatively visible in the society since the second group is outlawed and because of that invisible.

There are huge needs of intervention in the field of human rights but due to the detention of the Palestinian legislators by the Israeli occupation forces and the ongoing Palestinian political division it has been unable to propose, adopt, or approve any legislation that would support the Palestinians' rights and consolidate the Palestinian legal system. Additionally, it was unable to investigate claims of human rights violations. Independent human rights organizations register and pay attention to human rights violated both by the occupation power and bodies within the Palestinian Authority. Apart from that the Palestinians are collectively deprived of their rights to self-determination in other cases of human rights abuse is question about torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and death in detention facilities, disrespect or delay of courts' decisions, the right to peaceful assembly and association as well as the right to freedom of opinion and

12 <http://www.sharek.ps/new/report%202013e.pdf>

13 <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=790&mid=3172&wversion=Staging>

14 http://www.elections.ps/Portals/0/pdf/Elections_Law_No_9_of_2005_EN.pdf.

15 <http://www.elections.ps/tabid/817/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

16 <http://www.ichr.ps/en/2/6/1041/ICHR-18th-Annual-Report.htm>

expression. Furthermore, the occupation power violated in huge scale the right to movement and travel and the right to private property. Under the ongoing occupation and the split between Hamas and Fatah especially vulnerable groups are journalists and social media activists.

CIVIL SOCIETY

A long experience in promotion and rights protection of own members have trade union movements, despite that any ILO conventions have not been ratified.¹⁷ Moreover, Palestine is not a member of the ILO. In the West Bank pluralism in trade union work has been accepted by the Labour Ministry. There is also quite a good cooperation in policy setting. The Hamas parliamentary group adopted a new union law in the beginning of 2013. The law does not respect international labour standards.¹⁸ In reality both in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank the trade unions affiliated to some political parties tend to control their members in the name of protection of their rights. The right to work is also affected by the split between the main political actors.

In order to increase human rights implementation, it is necessary that parties, media and especial civil society organizations work tirelessly to form a strong Palestinian public opinion concerning human rights issues. The focus should be on the right to take part in the government of her/his state, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

It is about 2082 NGO/CSOs in the West Bank and approximately 1500 in the Gaza Strip registered with the respective Interior Ministry (IM) in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank. NGO/CSOs in East Jerusalem are under Israeli authority but a number of them have an office in the West Bank also. The Interior Ministry as a registered address is constantly questioned by NGO/CSOs and interpreted as a mechanism of control rather than a mechanism of equal cooperation. Three legislative frameworks jeopardize the Palestinian civil society and decrees its ability to act as a national movement in democracy building, state institution building, and protection of human rights, advocacy and lobbying for policy setting as well as in representing of specific groups such as the disabled, youth, women and member of trade union movements.¹⁹

Since 2000 the NGO/CSOs have been governed by the Law on Charitable Associations and Civil Society Organizations (the NGO law), and the Palestinian NGOs Code of Conduct of the year 2008. The NGO Law was for many years the most liberal and least restrictive NGO law in the Middle East. The effects of the occupation combined with the degradation of Palestinian state institutions since 1994, have resulted in arbitrary application of the Palestinian NGO law. The split between Fatah and Hamas has worsened NGO/CSO circumstances by applying arbitrary punitive acts. The worst consequences are the forced dissolution of NGO/CSOs affiliated to Hamas or to Al Fatah or the replacement of NGO/SCOs boards with ideologically loyal members.

Being a member of a political party is not as common as it was during the 1970s and 1980s. At that time 37% of NGO employees have been members of some political party. Currently 24 percent are members of some political party and 16% are active members. At the same time 37% of NGO employee's still feel loyalty to a party they have left.²⁰

A new body called the CSO Affairs Commission has been established by the Presidential Decree at the end of 2012 and triggered off protest of human rights and other CSOs. The main task of the new Commission is planning, decision making and the selection of partners, between all Palestinian and foreign CSOs.²¹ This kind of guardian and coordinator role has been taken in Gaza by Interior Ministry in Hamas government. In both cases Palestinians' constitutional right to freedom of assembly guaranteed by the Palestinian Basic Law has been infringed. Israel also applies arbitrary measures against the Palestinian NGOs/SCOs in East Jerusalem.

The Palestinian NGO Development Center in a wide coordination with CSOs both from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank has identified four main challenges for CSO connected to the

17 <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:1:0::NO::>

18 http://www.solidar.org/IMG/pdf/60_mena_foa.pdf

19 <http://www.enpi-info.eu/library/content/civil-society-organisation-mapping-study-palestinian-territories>

20 http://www.palestine.rosalux.org/fileadmin/ab_palestine/pdf/RLF_newsletters_EN/RLF_PAL_Gerster_PNGOs.pdf

21 <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/palestinian-violations/673-unconstitutional-presidential-decrees-seek-to-control-civil-society-organisations>

socioeconomic and political environment in the coming five years.²² The first one is the Israeli occupation that is reflected as movement restrictions, fragmentation of the national territory, land confiscation, new settlements/colonies, the Separation Wall, house demolishing, displacement and imprisonment of people, settler violence, etc. The second challenge is a continuous economic uncertainty caused by unsustainable economic growth and the irregularity of donor assistance to the Palestinians. A conditional funds could be added as a part of the second challenge also.²³ The conditional funds violate NGO law.

Poverty and employment are the third challenge. The last but not less crucial one for the whole society is the internal political division reflected in two governments who claiming legitimacy in the Gaza Strip respectively in the West Bank. At the moment the consequences of the division are reprisals of both parties on CSOs associated with the rival political party as well as increasing pressure on CSOs to fill the gap in basic service in Gaza. Actually, in the last decade, a process of concentration of CSOs on service delivery activities became apparent, while their engagement in the policy making was often marked by difficulties. A positive example is organizations committed to social-economic rights and youth and women's issues. Otherwise the civil society actors as a channel for people living in poverty to participate in the decision making process and development of democracy also tend to avoid demanding accountability from government or from other power holders keeping "neutrality", according to the Mapping Study of the Civil Society Organizations.

The study mentioned existing of some exception that corresponds with wide experience. Improving knowledge and practice of good governance is a way how to reach municipalities and involve CSO representatives in local councils. The International Development Cooperation is also well known in its partners cooperation with some ministries or other PA bodies that often consult "specialized" CSOs,²⁴ Relatively new social movements dedicated to a popular struggle against the occupation and advocacy for boycott, divestment and sanction against Israel have been established both nationally and internationally.^{25&26} .These movements above all attract young people affiliated to various political factions and parties as well as civil society organizations and local groups.²⁷

22 <http://www.ndc.ps/node/1021#sthash.pJYs8PBM.dpuf>

23 <http://www.maan-ctr.org/pdfs/FSReport/PositionPaper.pdf>

24 The Democracy & Workers' Rights Center is a consult to the Labour Ministry; The Palestinian Youth Union is a member to the Youth Council; Pyalara is also a consult to different bodies working with youth and media.

25 <http://www.stopthewall.org/>

26 <http://www.bdsmovement.net>

27 <http://www.stopthewall.org/youth>

1.3 NED Funding to CIVITAS

The NED funding to CIVITAS was granted and renewed on a regular project proposal on an annual basis since January 2005.

Each year, CIVITAS has received funding for a separate grant within its CIVIC PARTICIPATION Program; however, the current cumulative assessment report is assigned to assess the impact of the recent three NED grants to Civitas since 2014, as shown below:

Table 1: NED Grants to CIVITAS

Grant no.	Project Title	Funding
2014 – 266.0	Youth Civic Participation	\$35,000
2015 – 275.0	Civic Engagement in Accountable Reconstruction in Gaza	\$41,000
2016 – 659.0	Civic Engagement in Accountable Reconstruction in Gaza	\$41,000
	Totals:	\$117,000

2 Methodology & Evaluation Approach:

The evaluation team has employed a multi-dimensional, participatory approach to carry out the Cumulative Assessment, utilizing a diverse set of tools that included: Documents & Reports' review, semi-structure interviews with key informants, focus group discussions, and a quantitative survey of beneficiaries and stakeholders.

However, the evaluation assessment was based on holding 2 focus groups with YCs members, where 12 & 13 participants have attended these focus group; totally 25 participants. The YCs were selected among those who received advocacy training, HEARINGS management, budget analysis, research skills, ITA, and recent training on social audit mechanism.

Moreover, the assessment was enriched by additional interviews that were held with the seven field coordinators of the YCs, where 2 field coordinators of the YCs were females), who were interviewed through semi-structure interviews where they answered an open-ended questionnaire to provide a qualitative evaluation about CIVITAS work and to provide feedback about improvements in the YCs attitudes, knowledge, and skills as a result of their engagement within CIVITAS work in the assessed projects, in addition to answer the question of the projects sustainability. Also, 6 interviews were held with selected members of CROLD including 2 members of the executive secretary of CROLD along with 3 members of three sectors represent women, child protection, people with disabilities, and the agricultural sector.

Moreover, the evaluation examined the program based on a series meetings and interviews with project staff and stakeholders, as well as the projects' documents review and analysis; also, the assessment included interviews with 7 decision makers among Local Government Councilors, as well as representatives and professionals of relative entities who had participated in the projects activities during the projects course.

The evaluation added to that analysis by review of prior evaluation results depending on the distributed questionnaires to YCs members. The questionnaire comprised a mix of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks, and open-ended questions to capture various dimensions of YCs' experiences and opinions concerning CIVITAS work.

3 Findings And Conclusions

3.1 Conclusion of the Cumulative Assessment

As part of the Cumulative Assessment, the assessment team concluded the following:

- CIVITAS program in “CITIZEN PARTICIPATION” created a vehicle for CITIZENS, particularly youth and newly graduates students, to become more engaged with politics (at both local and national levels) and to practice democratic forms of civic engagement and to reflect leadership. The projects activities for the most part addressed issues of interest to participants and have stimulated the development of new leadership, communication skills, new expertise on the local governance and municipal work, advocacy, and watchdog on the performance of the public institutions, particularly on topics and themes pertained to enhance the accountability among society.
- The primary challenge facing the project is the question of sustainability within a changing context. It's clear that there is significant uncertainty on the part of all stakeholders as to what extent are the YCs and CROLD would be existed? and what they should do, when CIVITAS is less hands? Also, the question of continuity of both advocacy networks volunteers, young researchers, as well as the volunteer moderators among the YCs with their organizations? We believe that this issue needs to be addressed systematically, so that various scenarios can be compared and objectives identified, so that ultimately adequate plans can be put in place to guide the future projects in a way that will support ongoing activities; moreover, changing the approaches and strategies in a responsive and satisfactory way, that consider the target groups' periodic needs and ambitions, would ensure their engagement, sustained participation in the mainstreaming of civil society, and self development towards future promotion and development for them as well as for the future of the civic participation and engagement in Palestine, whilst incorporating preventive and building strategies that should fit and provide most proper solutions for the country constraints.
- A related issue is the level of political engagement on the part of the CBO's within CROLD. The assessment team has noted that in some cases, where the engaged CBO's have organized their own initiatives or their planned activities within the projects, they started to be locally in nature, rather than national agenda as a focus area, where they were threatened to be engaged in activities with a political nature. That raises the question of **whether political engagement, particularly national-level political engagement, is really the primary interest of participants currently**, or whether they are more interested in acting as a civil or charitable associations more focused on the community level, given the current crisis in the Gaza Strip, following the recent war on Gaza; thus, CIVITAS, would examine periodically this trend among the CBO's and CSO's towards ensuring that civil society would be engaged in the efforts that would ensure their meaningful and fruitful role of policy dialogue with duty bearers rather than engagement in service provision, despite being engaged in actions that was forced on these CSO's as a result of the emergencies in the society due to war, conflicts, and blockade.
- The assessment team recommended that project management should initiate a participatory strategic planning process at the Gaza level initially, in order to

articulate a vision for the future of CITIZEN PARTICIPATION in the good governance and policy dialogue themes. Among the crucial issues to be addressed are:

- Political focus: Is political engagement to be the central purpose of CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, or one among a number of points of emphasis?
- Structure: Is the Target Structures identity within the projects to be national or local? If yes, what should be the relationship between local and national committees/structures? What options are exist? in terms of, partnership and networking possibilities with other grassroots organizations, or local initiatives, and CSO's working at the national level, or businesses, considering the geographic separation between Gaza and WB?
- Institutional Identity: Should the YCs, and CROLD including the IDPsLeague, take the form of a political body or a registered community entity as self-help groups? What are the implications for organizational development, fundraising, and legal status?
- Leadership: What will be the role of CIVITAS in future among its network? Should CIVITAS be a leading party? Or should CIVITAS be in the shadow as a resource or focal point that supports, motivate, and orient the work? What will be the implications and consequences of CIVITAS leading the scene? What will be the price of potential confrontation between CIVITAS with the authorities?
- Loyalty: What will be the relation between CIVITAS and other partners in future among CSO's? Are they will be loyal to CIVITAS addressed issues? Or loyal to their own interest that stand behind their participation in the coalitions/networking on good governance and advocacy issues? Will the common cause stand against the encountered challenges, including the political affiliation/polarization, self-interest against common interest, or national interest? Given the emerging realities where the grassroots ambitions have become either traveling abroad or meeting their kids basic need for food, security and safety, and poverty alleviation?

3.2 Objectives & Outcomes

- ✓ Looking at the previous grants (2014-266, 2015-275, and 2016-659) and restating the objectives of these grants to be able to assess to which extent these grants' objectives had been achieved.

3.2.1 Grant #: 2014 - 266:

Grant Objective:

- To engage youth in civic action, oversight to, and interaction with local representatives.

Grant Activities & Outputs:

YEAR	#.	ACTIVITY	NO.	PARTICIPANTS	Topic
Grant#: 2014 - 266	1.	(2) Training courses	Two 36-hours course; 2 courses of a total of 72 hours were conducted during 12 days.	70 trainees among members of (7) Youth Councils (YC); the trainees were selected from the staff of CBO's from Gaza's five districts.	Research skills, reporting and documentation, and HEARINGS management and follow-up, aiming at enabling YCs members to conduct effective civic action activities and tactics, including identifying citizen priorities.
	2.	HEARNGs	14 HEARINGS; each of two-hour to be held in 7 localities; two HEARINGS in each location.	464 participants in Deir alBalah, Bureij, Bany Suhaila, Beit Lahia, Jabalia, Khan Younis, and Rafah; mostly YCs members, NCs members, and key persons.	Intimate discussion on the local council's budget and plans with a minimum of 25 council members.
	3.	Public Meetings	9 public meetings; each of three-hour public meeting	768 grassroots; gathered with normally the mayors in the seven localities among the five-districts of Gaza Strip.	Engage the community on pressing community issues; enhance local council accountability through direct engagement with citizens.
	4.	Civic education sessions to grassroots	70 awareness sessions led by YCs; each session of two-hours.	1,953 participants; (1,093) women and (860) men among grassroots, as well as marginalized illiterate men and women.	Role of citizens, duties and responsibilities, public money, municipalities' roles and services, and the relationship between citizens and their local representatives.
	5.	Booklet handout on Citizen and Municipality is delivered.	2,000 copies	Participants in awareness sessions.	Citizen and Municipality; a handout booklet contains topics like: legal and administrative framework of local governance within the Palestinian Authority.

3.2.2 Grant #: 2015 – 275:

Grant Objective:


- To engage youth in civic action, oversight to, and interaction with national representatives.

Grant Activities & Outputs:

YEAR	#.	ACTIVITY	NO.	PARTICIPANTS	Topic/Aim
Grant#: 2015 - 275	1.	Formation of civil society coalition among Palestinian CSO's.	(96) CSO's who formed a CS coalition (CROLD).	CSO's administrators among CBO's, NGO's, and a platform.	Monitor reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip; while the Gazan-based groups will lead spearhead the hands-on observation and documentation efforts, the West Bank-based organizations will ensure national-level coverage and consultation with Ramallah-based political decision-makers.
	2.	Training course	Six three-day training courses. Totally 18 days.	(96) members of Civitas' established youth councils (YCs) & members of CROLD ²⁸	How to address violations related to human rights, accountability and transparency, and policy and budget analysis of the Gaza reconstruction plan and budget, to strengthen youth awareness about governance in the Gaza Strip and enhance their ability to engage in oversight of the authorities' reconstruction efforts.
	3.	Needs assessment on the internally displaced persons (IDPs).	(96) trainees among YCs and CROLD members; 45 Males and 51 Females.	96 youth, who trained priorly on research skills in addition to current courses on policy and budget analysis, ITA ²⁹ and HR violation & documentation & Reporting	Carrying assessment, to identify IDPs' priorities in the reconstruction process, as well as create a database of their needs. Chief among these are housing conditions, and types of assistance the individuals currently receive; Civitas and the coalition's subsequent work on monitoring and documentation will use these findings as a baseline survey. The working teams had produced (22) factsheets, reports, and studies.
	4.	Campaigning	(8) panel discussions and HEARINGS; actually Civitas had held (11) panels instead of (8) as planned.	(492) participants; was planned to reach to 240; however, the participants are grassroots and elites among the IDPs, stakeholders of the reconstruction process, who had discussed the reconstruction progress, the performance of duty bearers, and set of priorities and problems that facing the grassroots, local communities, particularly, the IDPs.	Highlight the CROLD's findings from the field research, as well as its attempts to seek redress for oversights, in addition to launching a policy dialogue that would lead to the disclosure of the correct procedures to be adopted by the authorities, contributing to ensure the integrity, transparency, and accountability within the process of Gaza reconstruction. However, a set of recommendations and actions were agreed including formulation of coordination committees between IDPs League and each ministry, to follow up issues of IDPs with each ministry following to these events.
	5.		(5) public meetings	(595) participants; 454 males and 141 females; the meetings were held in Shjeja'ya, Rafah, Bany Suhaila, and Bureij.	The meetings aimed to address challenges and problems facing the reconstruction process and qualities of services provided to the beneficiaries, particularly the IDPs, and to examine the extent of facilitation

²⁸ CROLD: a civil society coalition for rule of law and democracy, was established by Civitas to lead a monitoring and observation process for the Gaza reconstruction following the war on Gaza in 2014.

²⁹ ITA: Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability.

				and support that the relative ministries had been providing to the affected people by the war on Gaza.
6.		1,000 posters	1,000 CSO's had received the posters that was published at variety of localities of the Gaza Strip.	The poster aimed to deliver and publish to public the necessity for accelerating the reconstruction process as well as pushing for community recruitment and support to IDPs reclaiming their rights.
7.		(3) radio shows; 1 st radio show: http://c.top4top.net/m_48h36v1.mp3	1. Yousri Darwish; the Chairman of GUCC & Spokesperson of CROLD; 2. Baker Turkmani; lawyer of AMAN Coalition for Transparency & Integrity (member of CROLD Secretariat).	The radio talk-show aimed to publish the CROLD initiative, its aims and purpose, components, working methodology, and role in monitoring the Gaza Reconstruction process.
8.		2 nd radio show: http://b.top4top.net/m_48cokq1.mp3	1) Mrs. Haniya Za3anin; director of Woman Studies Development Society; member of CROLD Executive Secretariat; 2) Mrs. Haneen Sammak, coordinator of AID Watch Initiative in Gaza; member of CROLD); 3) Mrs. Reem Kuhail; HR specialist at Civitas; and 4) Ahmed Natil; Field coordinator of Civitas.	CROLD role in advocacy for the rights of IDPs, vulnerable including elderlies, peoples with disabilities, and women among IDPs.
9.		3 rd radio show: http://c.top4top.net/m_48c3kn1.mp3	1) Mrs. Amal Seyam; director general of Woman Activities Center; member of CROLD Executive Secretariat; 2) Mr. Maher Issa; director general of Civitas.	CROLD role in monitoring HR violations within GRM (Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism). 
10.		(5) Wall Drawings in Gaza Strip Cities & Towns	1 st wall drawing	Unification is the way for Gaza Reconstruction: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1659730480972688&set=gm.1513041442339493&type=3
			2 nd wall drawing	Features of Gaza from damage to reconstruction: https://www.facebook.com/1581441145412443/photos/a.1581495482073676.1073741828.1581441145412443/1710753855814504/?type=3
			3 rd wall drawing	Hope & Frustration; two features of awaiting child for reconstruction versus a frustrated child. http://video.alwatanvoice.com/view/2015/11/29/822179.html
			4 th wall drawing	Stairs and snake (Progress faced by obstacles) https://m.facebook.com/nmpsite/posts/832683530184679?_mref=message_bubble
			5 th wall drawing	Turtle leads the Gaza reconstruction. https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=961269187267797&set=gm.1514969295480041&type=3

3.2.3 Grant #: 2016 – 659:

Grant Objective:

- To engage youth in civic action, oversight to, and interaction with national representatives.

Grant Activities & Outputs:

YEAR	#.	ACTIVITY	NO.	PARTICIPANTS	Topic/aim
Grant#: 2016 - 659	1.	Civitas will lead a civil society coalition, the Consortium for Rule of Law and Democracy (CROLD),	A minimum of (85) coalition members among CSO's from G/WB.	CSO's from Gaza/WB, represented by key board members.	Monitoring the reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip, following extensive destruction of infrastructure and human displacement as a result of the Summer 2014 war on Gaza. While the Gazan-based groups will lead spearhead the hands-on observation and documentation efforts; the West Bank-based organizations will ensure national-level coverage and consultation with Ramallah-based political decision-makers.
	2.	Printing practical manual/handout to public on social audit.	1,000 copies	Trainees in capacity building courses (CROLD & YCs); in addition to CSO's that hosted the awareness sessions.	70-page practical guide on social audit; Civitas based the guide on A Practical Guide to Social Audit as a Participatory Tool to Strengthen Democratic Governance, Transparency, and Accountability, which was produced by UNDP; Civitas team had adapted the guide to the Palestinian context, specifically to monitoring reconstruction efforts.
	3.	Capacity building training course.	Four four-day training workshops for a total of 100 members and representatives of CROLD. Totally 16 days; i.e. (96) training hours.	101 members and representatives of CROLD & YCs had participated in the training courses; (41) males and (61) females.	To strengthen youth awareness about governance in the Gaza Strip and enhance their ability to engage in oversight of the authorities' reconstruction efforts. The training course included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Best practices for CSO engagement with national and local governments; ➤ Concepts of policy dialogue and social audit; ➤ Skills on identifying constraints on reform; ➤ Tools for assessing authorities' performance on transparency, accountability, integrity, corruption, efficiency, and social responsibility; and ➤ Establishment of roles for CSO intervention in the reconstruction process.
	4.	Producing social audit reports via desk review, policy analysis, and field research.	(100) trainees are guided by policy advisors to produce (15) social audit reports.	Participants from (CROLD & YCs).	Producing (15) social audits on performance of the duty bearers while practicing Gaza reconstruction process and providing services to right holders; each report had concentrated on a specific sector, including infrastructure, water and sanitation, and housing.
	5.	Study circles and seminars.	Conduct of 15 district level study circles on (15) produced reports; each event last for 3 hours.	(509) participants; (284) males and (225) females among YCs, IDPs, youth social movements, CSO's, CROLD. And media in 10 locations of Gaza Strip. Moreover, 30 policy and decision makers had attended these events.	Trainees are guided by Civitas' five district coordinators in the conduct of 15 district level study circles discussion forums that discussed each report content, diagnosed problems and issue that raised by YCs.
	6.	Awareness sessions.	Conduct of (50) district-level discussions; each event last for 2 hours.	1,587 participants; women (1,016), and men (568), among youth, women, in marginalized illiterate men and women in Gaza Strip.	At each two-hour discussion, Civitas and the district team had led a presentation of a social audit report for a minimum of 30 men and women, to raise awareness about the social audit mechanism, and social audit reports' findings, aiming at deepening citizen understanding of these reports and their accountability role.

3.3 Objectives' Achievement

In response to the CITIZEN PARTICIPATION & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT in Gaza, the three annual grants of NED to CIVITAS were a cornerstone for CIVITAS's working in the good governance in the Gaza Strip, that contributed significantly to promote the "citizen participation and engagement in the local governance" in the recent few years, despite of all deficits in the overall political and socio-economic emerging environment in Palestine in general, and in the Gaza Strip in particular.

The projects have contributed to strengthening and motivating both YOUTH and CSO's engaged in these projects, particularly the Community Based Organizations (CBO's), and self-help groups, including youth social movements and initiatives, and women groups, to be engaged towards promoting their civic participation and interaction with their elected representatives and with key actors among the duty bearers, who are in charge, at the local level and national levels, considering that the PLC is completely muted during the period from 2008 until now, following the political split between Gaza and WB that had taken place on June 2007.

Moreover, the projects have contributed to raising the awareness of engaged actors among citizens on their rights and providing required facilitation and support via providing the required space for their participation, and fruitful utilization of the provided information for their participation in the interaction and monitoring of the performance of their representatives and other duty bearers among the municipal councils, International Entities and organizations, as well as the national team, in charge of Gaza reconstruction; thus, their participation had been based on a full awareness and knowledge on these targets, whom they would supervise and interact with, at the local and national levels.

However, these projects have become an adopted strategy for the CSO's and CBO's affiliated with CIVITAS, to approach the duty bearers and local representatives, where they have been able to address their own interests and grassroots' concerns and priorities on the agenda of their representatives among the duty bearers, as well as being able to advocate and liaise on behalf of the grassroots citizens, particularly the IDPs, to claim their rights; moreover, the projects have fostered the recognition of political plurality, and contributed to spreading the respect and mutual understanding among the decision makers and grassroots' representatives, who are represented by the YCs, CSO's and CBO's members of CROLD, in addition to the IDPsLeague, who carried the major activities within the implemented projects.

To this end, the CITIZEN PARTICIPATION has become an essential component of the permanent program of "Good Governance" that CIVITAS carries in Palestine, where it has been one of the opened pillars within the current context, that can foster the citizens' engagement in the process of influencing the making decisions, particularly related to their daily life, ambitions and expectations, and priorities of their concerns, where they were able to act, interact, and express themselves through addressing their needs and looking for proper solutions to their problems, jointly with their representatives and other key actors among the duty bearers.

Moreover, these projects have contributed to set one of the pre-conditions for forming a democratic community aiming at ensuring a democratic regime characterized by a good governance behavior in Palestine, based on civic engagement of the constituents in the making decisions process, where their concerns and priorities would be transformed into made policies and decisions.

From other side, the projects have succeeded to bridge gaps between the citizen's and their representatives where the local councilors usually, contact the YCs members to intervene and to share hands towards solving the encountered challenges with the grassroots among citizens, in addition to debate about the councilors' intentions and plans. Moreover, the YCs have become accustomed to advocate on behalf of the grassroots constituents that reflects a participatory democracy, where the YCs became real representatives at each locality. Remarkable indicators were recorded in this benchmark, as the projects have motivated the YCs, to carry activities that had succeeded to achieve concrete results that resulted in improving the extent of the citizens' life proportionally despite the emerging situation, along with raising the accountability of other entities engaged in Gaza reconstruction, as a result of the interactions throughout the carried actions including HEARNGs, periodic meetings with the YCs, as well as the interviews that have been conducted throughout producing the social audit reports on the performance and operational processes of these entities.

One more change is the permanent existence of the YCs in the municipal work and context, where their role became well recognized and acknowledged by several duty bearers, particularly the Ministry of Housing and the local municipal councils; these structures have become a title and an umbrella, where most of the interventions related to the municipal work, have to rely on their work, to approach them, to request their support, and to ask for their help and sharing hands, when carrying activities jointly with the municipalities in the Gaza Strip. Recently, the local council of Bureij has invited 4 members of Bureij YC to join the municipal staff to be part of the working team who would develop the strategic plan for the municipality, particularly to be responsible for ensuring the civic participation, social responsibility and good governance in the plan as representatives of the citizens of Bureij; meanwhile the local municipal of Deir alBalah has invited and selected

the YC coordinator of Deir alBalah to participate in the strategic plan development for the years 2018-2021 to ensure the DRR, safety, and security in the plan. These achievements reflect the extent of acknowledgement and recognition of the municipal councils to the added values of the YCs to their work, as well as a result of the interaction between the YCs and the municipal councils. However, Civitas sees interest in the process through the capability of the YCs to shape the agenda of the municipal councils, their policies, and plans to meet the expectations and needs of the citizens, as the YCs in each locality demonstrate and represent the grassroots who would be satisfied when their interests and concerns are based and considered when planning.

Moreover, the CSO's particularly the CBO's who are involved in the projects' activities, have become more and more independent, where they can act somehow independently with the local councils; in terms of approaching the local municipal councils, or the YCs themselves, who are the CBO's representatives, to plan, organize, and to conduct their own activities directly with their representatives among the councilors, with less hands from CIVITAS.

Also, there are changes on the behavior of the involved decision makers towards the projects' activities, where they responded positively towards participation including also the decision makers outside the local government area, like UNRWA officials and the UNDP, as well as the Ministry of Housing and Public Work, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of National Economy, who are the main relevant ministries, engaged in the Gaza reconstruction process.

The created structures by the projects, particularly, the YCs and the CROLD were able to interact with the officials at both local and national levels, including both the municipal councils as well as the national team engaged in the Gaza reconstruction, in addition to UN agencies (UNRWA and UNDP), along with INGO's, particularly the CRS and Mercy Corps, and the Islamic Relief UK; these actors were able gradually to accept and accommodate with the CROLD and the YCs, and to respond to their requests and demands, which demonstrates originally the grassroots demands and concerns, particularly the IDPs; for example, these entities have already treated these structures without restrictions including publishing their plans, developmental plans, records and data base on the IDPs and the reconstruction units that was utilized to hold compromise with the collected data from the field by CIVITAS field researchers throughout the social audit processes that reflect their cooperation and accountability, when dealing with the YCs and CROLD members, which reflect the extent of harmony and interaction between the two parties. The harmony status could be felt deeply, when analyzing the context of the YCs, CROLD, and local municipal councils' work, UNDP, and UNRWA, as the YCs members are mostly affiliated with Fateh, whilst CROLD members are mostly affiliated with PLO factions, meanwhile the majority of the ministries' staff and the municipals' staffs are mostly affiliated with Hamas; thus, the projects have succeeded to bring diversities among Palestinians to work with each other and to face their own challenges commonly and to search for common grounds about the common concerns and challenges. Thus, we can conclude that these projects are a real opportunity that has demonstrated a platform for CSO's, CBO's, and YCs to practice a participatory democracy within a diversified and challenging context.

However, the following responses, attendees, and requests for participation in the project activities and events reflect the citizens' interest in the interaction with their representatives and the oversight of the government's performance:

- ☞ The closed group of CROLD became 612 members, meanwhile it was around 500 members in December 2016; this reflects interest of people to join the group and be part of the CROLD initiative to monitor and oversee the Gaza reconstruction process;
- ☞ There are many requests from the grassroots CBO's to follow up the social audit reports' findings; they have asked to take further initiatives including full engagement in the social audit reports preparation and production, meanwhile have called for CIVITAS support for the process;
- ☞ Magazines and newspapers have contacted the YCs coordinators to have more details and figures on the social audit to be based on their articles and media coverage; usually, the articles and press statements are posted at these locations typically as sent by CIVITAS without change or editing that reflect the extent of trust and recognition of CIVITAS work.
- ☞ In many cases, there was attendance from the senior administrators, board members, and chairmen of the CBO's in the educational sessions carried for community sensitizing on the findings of the social audits that reflect their concern and interest in these events;
- ☞ Periodic follow up were made by the YCs and CROLD members, including the IDPs League, following the events, where they were in contact with the authorities' representatives, exchanging information, receiving data, addressing problems and challenges, and looking for solutions commonly; an important success was remarked when the UNDP has participated in a wide HEARING with CROLD and

IDPsLeague event, where they assigned a focal point for daily contact with CIVITAS and the IDPsLeague to follow up the raised problems and challenges.

☞ CIVITAS has continued to be part of the Network for Social Protection, as the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) has called CROLD and CIVITAS to join its efforts while designing and debating the framework of their operational plans for 2015 and 2016;

From other side, CIVITAS has been documenting and analyzing the level of engagement between CROLD and YC members from one side with the duty bearers based on engagement surrounding the events that youth lead. Moreover, CIVITAS has been carrying assessments for the feedback from the decision makers on the quality of analysis provided by youth on the performance and delivered services by those duty bearers. To this end, this level was assessed throughout each project cycle, via documenting the engagement cases of the YCs and CROLD members with the local councils, relevant ministries, and other key actors involved in providing services and duty fulfillment to the citizens in Gaza, as well as following the performance successful indicators throughout each project course. The following are some collected success stories that reflect the YCs and CROLD members' level of engagement and their performance' effectiveness and efficiency:

☞ **Follow-up the problem of garbage and solid wastes landfill in Beit Lahia:**

The YC of Beit Lahia, had followed the raised problems from the field educational sessions; one of the most emerging problem was the landfill of Garbage and solid wastes, eastern of Beit Lahia, which was the source for the spread of mosquitoes and insects and pollution. The municipality who couldn't access the formal landfill eastern of Gaza Strip due to its proximity to the Israeli borders, that resulted in having a jammed waste landfill; thus, the municipality decide to burn the huge amounts of the garbage, causing a suffocation and huge smoke that turned the sphere so back, particularly during nights. The YC had followed-up the problem with Beit Lahia municipality, who has deported a large amount of wastes, and removal of other large amounts that piled up in the landfill, in coordination with the authorities, that put an end to the problem of burning up these wastes. However, the YC of Beit Lahia continued follow up the unloading landfill operation in the field, and they still have open eyes on its situation.



Policy Dialogue with Duty Bearers and key actors:

The YCs and CROLD members, including the IDPsLeague, have been following the events, via daily contact with the authorities' representatives, exchanging information, receiving data, addressing problems and challenges, and looking for solutions commonly; they have created a focal person in each directorate of the relative engaged Ministries or at the level of local authorities and Municipalities to accelerate the problem solving process, where usually there is a proper solution to the raised problems within limited time; recently, the IDPsLeague, member of CROLD secretariat had stopped the UNRWA plans to replace the due renting allowances assigned for renting temporary homes, instead of the shelters that were evacuated, by proposing a Cash for Work Program that was directed to the IDPs, where CROLD and the IDPs League have carried a demonstration against UNRWA at its HQ in Gaza and submitted to them a tough press statement that was received by UNRWA spokesman who confirmed later that the Program was temporary suspended; thus, the follow up with UNRWA has resulted in a formal declaration during the November 2015-Conference that UNRWA officially had suspended the program as UNRWA pointed that the proposal was considered as an optional choice not a mandatory, and then they stopped it.

However, the extent of interaction and harmony between the YCs and the authorities have been reflected on the types of the carried actions within the projects, where there was no need for using tough tactics (high profile actions) with the authorities; most of the actions and tactics have focused on survey process, meetings with representatives of the authorities, meeting with INGO's, and other key actors, where actions like periodic press statements were not carried as there was no need to be carried given the smooth responses from the relative authorities, where the high-scale advocacy tactics aimed to show power, had been suspended as were not needed during the projects courses. Actually, only two tough actions were carried by the IDPsLeague jointly with CROLD on March 8th, 2015 against UNRWA and against the Palestinian Cabinet in Gaza, and recently on Sep., 15th, 2015 against the CASH for Work Program instead of the paying allowances for rent that was published by UNRWA, which was encountered by organizing a wide demonstration from all demolished locations in Gaza Strip who had marched to HQ of UNRWA in Gaza on Tuesday 15th of Sep. that resulted in suspending the [UNRWA Cash for Rent Program](#).

Recognition from MoSA:

One more achievement is the call from the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) for CROLD and CIVITAS to join the Network of Social Protection aiming for finding ways of reaching to mutual ground on common goods as a result of approaching the Ministry earlier on April 2015 following to the first HEARING that the Minister Deputy had attended and responded to the concerns of CROLD.

Recognition from Local Municipal Councils:

Recently, the local municipal councils have selected and invited members of the YCs to share hands and be part of the working teams, responsible of developing the strategic plans of these local councils.



The Bureij local council has invited the YC coordinator along with other three YCs members; they have been selected to be part of the committee for enhancing the good governance and the committee for community participation and development; meanwhile the local municipal council of Deir alBalah, has selected the YC coordinator to join the working team for the good governance and management committee. These are

illustrative examples of the YCs recognition by the duty bearers as a result of the YCs efforts and interactions with these local councils throughout the recent project, as well as acknowledgement and recognition of the YCs expertise and experience in the selected themes and topics to be incorporated within the municipal plans for better planning to meet the grassroots' needs in addition to ensure participatory and efficient planning.

☞ **Recognition from Independence Commission for Human Rights:**

One of the most important evidence on formal recognition of CIVITAS efforts, was the invitation for Maher Issa to provide a formal speech and to present a working paper on "Role of popular monitoring in strengthening the right to housing" on behalf of CROLD, within the conference "[Right to Housing within Gaza reconstruction](#)" organized on November 17th, 2016 by the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights; the conference was attended by wide attendance including representatives of Aid agencies, formal PA officials, ministerial level, political parties and factions and IDPs representatives. Maher Issa focused on: Concept of right to housing due to international law, the international conventions, and the basic law; the reality of right to housing, particularly in Gaza since the PA establishment; the efforts of CS to lead the popular monitoring on the right to housing (IDPsLeague and CROLD models); then, focusing on: obstacles that faces the civil monitoring efforts (frustration and pessimism of public, implications of the political split); lack of cooperation of the duty bearers (un-obedience to disclosure of information, insufficient of information, and no periodic publishing if any); lack of resources required for actions (minimized zones and size of Gaza); and had concluded by provided recommendations including: necessity for community organizing and disciplined networking, approving a legislation on the disclosure of information, showing responsibility by both duty bearers and citizens, as well as reactivating the role and function of Urban Planning Authority.

☞ **YCs improved expertise:**

The efforts of the desk review, research, and budget analysis of the Reconstruction were reflected on the YCs, as they had been addressing issues and points throughout their interventions with the authorities and other key actors through requesting adherence to the budgets items as well as reducing the deviations through warning that the expenditures of the long phase of relief and early recovery were much exceed the planned on the expense of the next phases of recovery and the re-cope until reaching resilience.

Moreover, the YCs are still committed to the ordinary line of work that belongs to their districts problems and challenges even if it's not within the scope of work of the new projects that reflect their commitment and accountability to their local communities' concerns and problems; for example, the YC of Rafah has followed up the cleaning and removal of the garbage on the sea shore widely distributed and disturb the inhabitants' life; also, they have addressed the danger beyond the launching of a sea water canal surrounding the southern borders of Gaza at Rafah borders by the Egyptian Authorities that caused real troubles for the water wells and water reservation at the inner water reservation of the South of Gaza Strip; they documented the canal establishment process along with sharing hands in the press conference was held by the Municipality of Rafah along with the Water Authority at the borders.

Additional success stories on the YCs achievements:

☞ Additional success stories and project anecdotes might be found on the Facebook homepage of the project, which is managed by the YCs members themselves; however, some additional achievements that show the interaction between the YCs and their representatives are mentioned here below in each of the following links:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=857916124231879&set=pcb.857923234231168&type=1&theater>

<https://www.facebook.com/Boreij2014/photos/pcb.858808847475849/858805740809493/?type=1&theater>

<https://www.facebook.com/khanyounis.mun/photos/a.753016698120212.1073742363.442317982523420/753017058120176/?type=1&theater>

<https://www.facebook.com/Boreij2014/photos/pcb.847656025257798/847655741924493/?type=1&theater>

<https://www.facebook.com/khanyounis.mun/photos/a.718544284900787.1073742282.442317982523420/718544844900731/?type=1&theater>

Further achievements for projects objectives & outcomes in 2015 &2016:

It's worthy to say that all of the above achievements were belonged to NED Project #: 2014-266 that actually belongs to the prior program of CPP that focused on the NCs and the YCs engagement in governance at the

local governance level; however, the following achievements of projects objectives of NED Grants in 2015 & 2016 were as follows:

☞ **YCs produce fact sheets and reports on IDPs rights:**

The YCs working teams in assistance of two HR specialists were able to collect data via desk review, field surveys, followed by analysis of the collected data, where they produced periodically their assignments and obligations to produce the following reports as a result of monitoring and observation for the Gaza reconstruction process:

- 1) Status of Right to Suitable Housing for IDPs in Gaza Reconstruction brochure delivered to CROLD.
- 2) Factsheet on the general policies of key actors in Gaza Reconstruction Process;
- 3) Factsheet on challenges of social protection in Gaza reconstruction;
- 4) Special Focus Report on Damage of focus locations of Gaza Strip;
- 5) Factsheet on the “fishing sector losses” in the war on Gaza in 2014 in the light of International Humanitarian Law.
- 6) Special Focus Report on IDPs rights to suitable housing.
- 7) Factsheet on the complete demolished homes in the Gaza Strip;
- 8) Report on the reality of the fisheries sector after the war on Gaza in July 2014;
- 9) A detailed report on the "State of the infrastructure of “AlNada Towers” in Beit Hnoun and its impact on citizens;
- 10) Fact Sheet on “Monitor fraud and corruption of distributors of cement” approved by the Ministry of Economy;
- 11) Factsheet analysis policies about nepotism and patronage in the reconstruction process;
- 12) Status of Right to Suitable Housing for IDPs in Gaza Reconstruction (the report is under production currently, after holding interviews with all of selected the sample who have benefited from the first phase of the reconstruction that represent 50% of the total beneficiaries).
- 13) A worksheet of CROLD Coalition on Gaza Reconstruction process that was proposed in the conference held on Nov. 3rd, 2015.

However, the produced factsheets, reports, and studies along with relative reports issued by the International Organizations had been uploaded on the launched Facebook homepage of CROLD for the public debates. Moreover, these reports were accessed by members of CROLD that reached so far to 481 members, where additional linkages are sharing these reports that have broadened their publicity to society at wide: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1400931080217197/>

3.4 Challenges

CIVITAS has encountered several challenges over the projects' course; some of these challenges were external, meanwhile others were internal. The external challenges had impacted the project greater than the internal challenges due to its nature, as well as its seriousness, given the emerging reality in Palestine, and the uncertainty of the environment that the projects were carried within.

- ✓ **External Challenges:** These challenges were of the main focus of the projects staff during the projects period, since the basic assumptions were changed in a manner that affected negatively the projects' planning and caused re-planning for the projects' activities several times, in a periodic manner.
 - **The war on Gaza:** the major challenge that has ever faced Gazans since decades, as Gaza has not faced a brutal war before the war in 2014, where a massive destruction has been hitting many areas, resulting with over 30,000 homeless and estimated 2,500 people have been killed. The United Nations estimates that more than 70% were civilians, many homes, schools and other buildings in Gaza were destroyed or damaged, before a ceasefire was reached to end over 52 days of unprecedented violence and destruction resulting up to now that 65,000 Gazans living in shelters since late September 2014. Whilst recovery and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip is essential at this time, families in Gaza are still eagerly await updates regarding critical underlying issues such as a lifting or easing of more than decade of Israeli-imposed blockade. To this end, the consequences of the war have turned the daily life to miserable situation, where the loss in human capital, as well as property and assets had resulted in dramatic deterioration that affected every aspect of the Gazans life.
 - **Blockade and its impact:** The second challenge is the continuous siege and blockade against Gaza that has been also a major challenge for CIVITAS line of work through NED funding; it minimized so much the possibility of following up a lot of problems until their ends that might result in getting concrete results to the addressed problems, since the lack of raw materials still remain the main problem; in fact, the blockade against Gaza caused a real deficit in the development process for Palestinians, where the borders of Gaza are linked officially with the Israelis due to the Inter Agreement signed between PLO and Israel in 1993. Long before, the Israelis, usually, used to provide Palestinians with the required equipments through special coordination either by President Office or UNRWA, UNDP, or U.S. AID; following to the blockade, enforced against Gaza on July 2007, all of these conditions were muted and nothing done at all, except for a while, where the tunnels with Egypt have solved the problem partially; following the 3rd of July coupe in Egypt, the situation has been worsened again, even worse than Mubarak era, where a complete shutdown and closure is enforced again against Gaza. This situation was reflected as a shortcoming in the municipal councils' role, where most municipalities have fiscal issues with having to respond to public's pressure on meeting their requirements and demands, to improve delivered services, including, the water and sewage treatment facilities, improving landfill design, enhancing waste diversion, and improving infrastructure for public transportation systems within their communities. Moreover, the municipalities were unable to respond to environmental and other responsibilities including the increase of infrastructure needs, cause of the lack of instruments and reconstructions materials, that the siege was part of this lack. However, the situation continued to be even more worst following the war on Gaza, as it contributed significantly to delay of the reconstruction process of Gaza, by adopting the GRM, which provided a legitimacy for the continuous blockade since more than a decade.
 - **Suspension of the legislative work:** the suspension of the legislature work has resulted in muting completely its voice that means became paralyzed and unable to fulfill its duties of legislations or monitoring the executive branch that has grown up completely far away from touch. As a result, Palestinians have two governments, one in Gaza and another in WB that was not influenced due to the disabled PLC, meanwhile Gaza government was not influenced also neither by citizens nor by the PLC who has been assembled in Gaza by holding its meetings for the Hamas representatives in Gaza. However, this situation has been additional obstacle on the shoulders of civil society who was enforced to play the monitoring role assigned for the PLC with much less immunity from the ascendancy of the security forces in both Gaza/WB. Thus, it became so difficult for majority of CSO's to keep doing its assumed role within a risky situation without looking for rescuing themselves or their organizations that have resulted in deciding to adopt safeguard activities and actions that would not rescue themselves or their organizations. The dire situation of absence of rule of law has turned the role of CSO's from playing assumed role of civic work including advocacy, information dissemination, policy dialogue, or

advocacy towards service provision within a shrinking space for civil society that has characterized the recent era either in Gaza or West Bank. This situation was somehow an obstacle for CIVITAS that relied on its record and objectiveness to keep doing its assumed role and mission fulfillment at the low profile level to avoid potential risks; in concrete words, CIVITAS has employed its capabilities to work on the local governance level for a while with an opened eye on utilizing the proper opportunities to stand up again and work on the policies at the higher and national levels. CIVITAS has utilized the moment following the war, where the radical and authoritarian voices were partially lower than before to carry its initiative of CROLD as well as upgrading the YCs work to be incorporated and invested at the higher level during NED grants in 2015 and 2016.

- **Procedural and operational obstacles:** the absence of disclosure law in addition to the GRM have added additional obstacles that resulted in a slow process of Gaza Reconstruction due to the UN adopted mechanism (GRM) that led to a slow process of monitoring the reconstruction process; moreover, the absence of “disclosure law” that might enforce the formal authorities to prevail the truth, providing facts and full information to public has really created a foggy environment that made it difficult to CROLD and the YCs to monitor the reconstruction process based on concrete information, which has forced the working teams to employ variety of methods and tactics to collect data on the reconstruction process via local, national, and international relationships that were also not adequate due to the nature of these information as well as differences of its resources, objectiveness, and lack of supportive documents from most of the key informants. However, the collected data has been tested numerously and periodically to ensure that CIVITAS is in the safe side when addressing its claims and points of view on the reconstruction process. However, within this context, the exact information on funding was only from the donors’ resources themselves in case that they publish their figures occasionally; from other side, the CROLD monitoring was based on the funding data provided by AMAN Coalition, member of CROLD, based on its mutual understanding with authorities; the publicity of these figures has resulted in accusing “AMAN” by the Prime Minister, where he had formally published that the authorities in WB would close down around 1,082 CSO’s among the 2,082 CSO’s that were under the authorities’ focus. His speech was encountered by wide denial and condemnation among CSO’s, where the situation approximately reached to a collision point just few days before the start of the 3rd wave of Al-Aqsa Intifada. From other side, CIVITAS has been utilizing its linkages with the Swedish Partner (STS) to get required information, and reports on the provided funding to PNA through the position of Sweden as a periodic presidency of AIDA to Palestinians, where the [AIDA Report](#) was provided to CIVITAS to be published publically along with the reconstruction plan and agenda, in addition to quotations that were translated into Arabic to facilitate and support engagement of grassroots and the public in the public debate on the budget of the reconstruction, the expenditures aspect, and the priorities. Also, reports published to donors on the progress of the reconstruction by the relative Ministries were approached and published to public as well.
- **Disconnection between G/WB:** The disconnection between Gaza/WB & East Jerusalem has not provided facilitative environment for communication, contacts, and follow up towards CROLD spreading and evolving, as planned, where CROLD and its mission still needs more promotions, many gaps to be filled in the visibility and media areas compared to the efforts done on the ground. However, the learned lessons will be incorporated in the future work of CROLD towards filling these gaps and ensuring best practices towards effective and efficient monitoring process via assigning the media coverage for the respected members who are specialized in the media area.
- **Contextual Obstacles:** a newly raised obstacle was the developments towards unification and reconciliation; as known, most of the targeted DBs are officials belong to Hamas Government in Gaza as they are the real and factual implementers on the ground, where their performance was actually assessed, meanwhile somehow other topics were a compromise and composition between both Ramallah and Gaza governments; hence, it was so difficult to bring back the Gaza officials to be investigated via the seminars and to hold a policy dialogue, as they would claim that they are not in charge anymore, meanwhile, the newly hired or in charge officials from Ramallah would say that they are not responsible on the prior performance in Gaza, considering that their policies actually affected the overall results and findings of the decisions and procedures on the ground. However, this situation was encountered via deciding to accomplish producing the social audit report to utilize the time, meanwhile the findings of the social audit reports would be debated after a while, once the foggy situation becomes clearer, after the unified government would be settled and accessible in Gaza; the same problem would periodically emerge whenever there is a talk on the reconciliation and unification that requires readiness and response based on the analysis of the context at that moment.
- **Technical limitations:** The blockade also, caused a lot of technical limitations on CIVITAS; there were daily challenges that reflected negatively on the productivity and efficiency of the work. Such limitations were the shortage of electric power to the office continuously, for a long time, that sometimes continued for more than 60% of the total working hours at the office,

which reflected negatively on the fluency of the work further meeting the tight deadlines of a lot of tasks and missions. Moreover, there was a shortage of several materials and tools that were necessary for the work accomplishments or quality; materials such as inks for the printers, computers' maintenance tools and accessories. Also, the shortage of the raw materials was reflected on the training workshops since for a long time, the service providers were not able to provide the customers in Gaza. Thus, CIVITAS was able to overcome the electricity shortage by diversifying the power resources, where it established a UPS system that costs CIVITAS around \$5,000, and annual maintenance and upgrade by additional \$2,000, via Swedish funding throughout 3 years of the Swedish budget, and later via HEKS/Switzerland budget, along with a generator to be used in emergencies, in addition to the ordinary power supply that Gaza planting station provides to Gazans for a period varied between 3-5 hours daily, mostly at night times. Regardless to the efficiency of these alternatives that solved the problem of electricity shortage, and guaranteed the processing and operational capacity of CIVITAS, the costs of the maintenance and upgrading of these facilities are still high annually, where it cost additional funding more than expected, including, fuel with its high prices in Gaza to be brought via Israel, compared to the fuel was provided from Egypt through Tunnels (1/3 is cheaper from Egypt); also, the upgrade and maintenance of the batteries of the UPS system cost around \$2,000 annually, as well as crashes of the life safety in the electricity system and electricity network.

- **Usual shelling on Gaza:** One more challenge was the unexpected troops by the Israelis to several locations of Gaza in particular the borders where most of CIVITAS work targets these locations where the marginalized villages and councils are located; these troops might not be overcome easily since it wouldn't be expected from one side, as well as, difficulty in assessing its results or impact that forced CIVITAS staff to reschedule the planned activities until better time.
- **Political Split:** This challenge was even the worst, where Hamas ruling to Gaza, had resulted in complete mute of the PA power and its representatives in Gaza; given the fact that the PLC role and voice has been muted completely as well, which was affected CIVITAS work, where relative meetings and campaigns that required the PLC representatives' pressure or involvement became no more productive or significant, since the PLC became a disabled institution; their assumed role was helpful in the past, in pushing things to be done usually after their intervention. This situation has limited the projects' capability to affect the decision makers at different levels and had minimized the available options and opportunities to find proper solutions to the encountered challenges, at both local and national levels.
- ✓ **Internal Challenges:** The main challenge was raised due to changes in the projects' structures; the following are the two cases:
 - **Changes within CIVITAS structure:** There is only one internal challenge that faced CIVITAS during the projects course; the changes within the project staff and CIVITAS structures including the project coordinator and field coordinators; however, the adopted policy for recruitment and employment within CIVITAS, has contributed positively on overcoming this challenge, where CIVITAS policies itself ensure that staffs must be selected among the volunteer network that consider one of the most effective mechanisms that guarantee the smooth replacement, continuous promotion for the volunteers and staffs, and keeping the organization's culture maintained, where there is no strange actor who has not own the common understanding or common ground that might not ease the teambuilding and harmony among the working staffs. Thus, CIVITAS approach that depends on investment in the volunteer committees and its network, has been effective when selecting the proper candidates to fill the vacancies, where the new joined staff members among the YCs showed the desired added values to the projects.
 - **Volunteers' Retention & Recovery:** Considering the dire situation in Gaza during the projects' courses that have affected Gaza in recent three years at all levels, in addition to the blockade on Gaza that has been fruitless up to this point, which also has been reflected on the capacities of the CSO's themselves, where the YCs who were working with CIVITAS as representative volunteers of those CBO's/CSO's, who faced shortages including the

volunteers' salaries and honoraria, which reflected negatively on their mental health and the voluntary work in general; as a result, most of them became frustrated, losing their enthusiasm in change and recovery. One additional aspect is the unplanned opening of Rafah borders by the Egyptians for Gazans results usually by travels for some of the actors engaged in the projects, who could not be back again in the due time, as sometimes they continue to be stuck outside Gaza for 5-6 months that demonstrate also a big loss for the project due to their absence abroad. Responding to these conditions, CIVITAS took this situation into consideration, and started earlier, to meet this challenge through paying more attention, where CIVITAS utilized its relations and networking with other CSO's and entities to consider those CBO's and the YCs members; actually, CIVITAS has involved the YCs within several re-employment projects within their CBO's in addition to employing most of them in other CIVITAS paid work to ensure that this gap, has been filled. Moreover, CIVITAS has broadened the membership of each YC to have wider options in case of absence of some of the YCs outside the country due to the blockade conditions.

- ✓ **Learned lessons:** CIVITAS has learned several lessons during the projects' course; these lessons were simultaneously applied at the field, and reflected as corrective actions that were taken on time; all of these lessons were learnt and have added new experience and expertise to CIVITAS, where they were technical aspects, related to approaches that had to be adopted to respond to the constraints emerged, due to the overall destructive environment in the region, which was reflected on the work; as a result, CIVITAS has been looking for diversifying its approaches towards overcoming these challenges based on the learnt lessons; such lessons were:
 - **Exploring Options & Diversifying Opportunities:** CIVITAS learned to explore options throughout the work to have wider opportunities; precisely, to have several components that serve in achieving the main objective within a project rather having one type of actions that might not be fulfilled if there is any external challenge. An illustrative example was utilizing the efforts of the GYG members in the research field in the local governance area, municipal budgets analysis, and policy analysis, that enriched the thematic interventions in the NED line of work, whilst the YCs, were engaged in the training courses assigned for CSO's on conflict transformation and campaigning for the nonviolence and dialogue policy and dialogue culture, that have brought better knowledge and expertise to the YCs, which was reflected on their performance in the field of the municipalities' work; gradually, this approach has resulted later in the classification of the YCs to work thematically on variety of issues within the mission of CROLD; thus, diversifying the experience and expertise of the YCs along with CROLD members would pave the way for the variety of strategies in case that there is a need for certain topic or tactic, where the related team would be ready to fulfill the new assignment.
 - **Investing in People:** the other lesson is to invest in human resources, where the well-equipped volunteers solved the challenge of field coordinator periodic leave, when those volunteers were promoted to occupy the vacancies. Also, widening the options of recruitment among CIVITAS network that reached to approximately 86 CBO's and 15 CSO's that resulted in recruitment of additional staffs, who participated in other CIVITAS assignments; these actions have resulted to produce a more sustainable structure that enabled CIVITAS to function with its current 9 staff-members, alike as it has multiplier members, compared to similar organizations in the same position. One more thing is, having the change from downstairs towards upstairs, through focusing more on investing in grassroots to improve their attitudes and be more responsible and accountable towards their communities, and to feel as owners of the reform and democratization in Palestine. This issue has contributed to improve the cooperation and mutual understanding between the duty bearers and their constituents among the right holders regarding good governance and accountability issues issue aiming at achieving better situation for society.
 - **Follow up with YCs & CROLD:** CIVITAS has its set plans to follow up with the engaged beneficiaries, where it builds on the achievements; CIVITAS always follows up with both the trained YCs and CROLD members to ensure that they are doing their responsibilities when CIVITAS is less hands in the field; moreover, CIVITAS has built a wide YCs-focus program, where the YCs are the main target group and beneficiaries; CIVITAS has decided to invest in

the YCs who have the required potentials and pre-conditions for future development as a spearhead leadership in future. From other side, CROLD needs a detailed strategic planning that would result in ensuring that it would play the role of a platform for democratic change and human rights respect. However, CIVITAS has to work with CROLD on three levels: 1) with the Executive Secretariat of CROLD, working on the national level with DBs; 2) and at the International Organizations levels via dialogue and role-play to fill the gaps based on contextual analysis following to unification within CS and CROLD itself to have a common voice; 3) meanwhile working with other members of CROLD along with the YCs at the center and the local levels; this methodology has been enabling CIVITAS to approach variety of levels among the key actors engaged in the development process and reform in Palestine due to the needs of the problem solvent, either at the national level or local or center levels.

- **Adoption of Prevention & Intervention Strategy to Conflict:** CIVITAS acknowledged the necessity for adopting a conflict resolution and transformation strategy through including the relative conceptual themes of this topic within the training courses matrix and curricula carried for both CROLD and the YCs, to ensure that the target beneficiaries can work and live together in coexistence, and to learn how to broaden the common ground, as well as feeling that “unity in diversity”. The acquired knowledge, so far, by the YCs was reflected on their performance while practicing their work at the field, either while dealing with the municipal councils, or during carrying their educational sessions for a diverse audience. This success needs to be broadened and applied while working with CROLD as well.
- **Shortcomings in media coverage:** CIVITAS has learned that there should be additional efforts to be paid in the area of publicity and media coverage to community at wide; moreover, the documentation and feedback from the field still need to be improved through investing in the capabilities of both CROLD and YCs to provide better feedback to the project staff; particularly, the capabilities of the YCs to research and investigate local needs based on accurate data collection, and to improve their reporting skills, and the effectiveness of the follow up of the conducted events’ results and recommendations. These areas have been improved, meanwhile they still have to be developed to ensure multiplier improvements and outcomes of the projects that will guarantee better efficiency. The YCs, were motivated in exploring their capabilities, where they have been fulfilling well within the launched exchange forums and group for the project named "CIVIC PARTICIPATION" that is one of the most familiar forums amongst Gazans on the Facebook that demonstrates the civic participation line of work.

3.5 Results & Long-Term Changes

The NED funding to CIVITAS has been an urgent response to the emerging reality in Palestine after the dramatic change following to the PA strategy to adopt the reform as a strategy for achieving development and sustainability for Palestinians after the elections of 2005, for the presidency and later for the local councils. Later on, the projects line of work, even became more crucial after the political split and fatigue had taken place since July 2007, after Hamas has captured and ruled Gaza since then; thus, there was a necessity for not only keeping the existed civil society initiatives, but also, to broaden and deepening the civic work aiming at keeping and ensuring the line of work that are consistent with democratic participation, civic engagement, and watchdog and advocacy, to ensure that the de-facto government in Gaza is not going to grow up far away from touch or be influenced. From other hand, the projects became one of the rare pillars for Gazans to practice a participatory democracy through participating in the decision making - even though at the local level - where other levels and pillars of participation, either at the national level or the legislations were completely muted, due to the disability of the legislature or the governance process at the national level. However, CIVITAS has been trying to incorporate its work to achieve short-term results within a long-term results and changes via working in two directions: 1) carrying short term strategies that would result in improving the citizens' situation and the daily life, as well as: 2) adopting strategies that might achieve long-term results and changes towards wider impact. Hence, CIVITAS short-term and long-term strategies were complementary to each other in terms of meeting the urgent needs and challenges for citizens' daily life and country constrains as well as keeping an eye on the necessity to be adhered to the long-term goals and aims for democratic transformation, participatory democracy and the achievement of the State of Democracy that requires comprehensive and integrated efforts and strategies including real and structural changes that would be the basis for future and sustainable change.

However, the following are some of the results and long-term changes that would contribute to achieve the desired changes that the mentioned projects have contributed to achieve:

(A) Structural Change:

I. YCs Foundation:

The strategy of foundation of the Youth Councils (YCs) structures who represent variety of CSO's in Gaza has been demonstrating establishment for an effective infrastructure for democratic transformation process and participatory democracy as their engagement in the governance within Gaza context demonstrates a real opportunity for increased civic participation, increased citizen responsibility, and enhanced accountability among Palestinians despite of the emergencies and disasters that Palestinians have been encountering, particularly in Gaza. To this end, the YCs efficiency and effectiveness are a cornerstone for measuring and assessing the projects long-term results and changes; the YCs efficiency and effectiveness might be assessed induced via the following successes and achievements that demonstrate the strengths of the project long-term strategies:

- i. The YCs members became more reliable and self-motivated, where they have been working in sub-groups at each locality, where they meet together, assess and analyze their situation, identify the needs and areas for their interventions, come up with proper solutions, and set their priorities; then, they identify their action plan, based on their meetings' findings, where they adopt the most proper and effective actions to be carried. Thus, all of the YCs carried activities were identified by the YCs themselves including the titles, attendances, targeted decisions makers, and other logistical requirements. CIVITAS was more less-hand recently than before, as a result of its assessment to the YCs capacities towards independency, where they became more reliable and self-confident to carry their obligations and duties in the required qualities;
- ii. The YCs became more responsive to the community needs than before, as they had their own initiatives to respond to the majority of the local and emerging needs that included several aspects including: the local councils' preparedness and responsiveness to Winter each year, including anticipated consequences and implications on the population, considering their focus on the DRR approach; as well as the qualitative response by the local councils to the grave needs of the population during and after the war on Gaza, including the special needs and required assistance and facilitation for the IDPs, as a result of the war.

However, in many locations, the YCs were able to show and reflect their engagement with the local councils following the carried events; all of these follow up stories are addressed on the project Facebook exchange forum that would provide full details on the project activities, successes, and interactions: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/450953121622909/>, and: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=868452673178224&set=pcb.868454073178084&type=1&theater>, where field follow up and site visits were conducted and documented



by the YCs throughout these follow up visits.

II. CROLD Foundation:

Another structural change that CIVITAS has achieved for the long-term changes might be gauged also by CIVITAS ability to lead CROLD as a broad civil society monitoring effort based on the sustained commitment of coalition members; CIVITAS had called for founding a broad coalition among CSO's in Gaza and WB at early February 2015, aiming at finding a popular monitoring body that represent the grassroots in front of the formal authorities and International actors engaged and in charge in the Gaza reconstruction process; however, CIVITAS has succeeded to form and maintain a broad Coalition among CSO's (CROLD) with a mission to monitor the Gaza Reconstruction, where CROLD has been initiated by a call from CIVITAS among 14 CSO's, reaching to a wider meeting of 32 CSO's, then 75 CSO's, who called for an open election that was culminated by the attendance of 85 CSO's to elect a first 13-member executive secretary, which has been followed by a second election for a [New Executive Secretary](#) on March 1st, 2016 to be valid for the years 2017 & 2018 that reflect the capability of CIVITAS to lead and manage a wide coalition and to show best practices of democracy within the coalition; moreover, the expansion of CROLD that reached to 111 members recently showed also the success of CROLD to attract more members who have the interest and benefit of join the coalition. From other hand, CIVITAS not only has succeeded to maintain the coalition, but also, employing much efforts in internal organizing of CROLD, identifying roles, setting lines of authorities, responsibilities, and its vision, mission, and goals. To this end, Civitas has been active in leading CROLD towards institutionalization and functioning as well via motivating, coaching, and mobilizing its efforts to show and reflect responsibility of observing, monitoring, and watchdog of the performance of the key actors involved in the Gaza Reconstruction process.

Hence, CROLD formation demonstrates a widest platform that was formed on a common cause in Palestine; it's the widest non-formal Coalition (not formally registered to be formal due to the classification of CSO's in Palestine); however, the effectiveness and efficiency of CROLD might be gauged by the following indicators:

- i. CROLD has acquired the required support among civil society in Gaza, and gradually it began to have the needed support in Gaza & WB; one of the best modalities in this field, is the shared training and efforts that were carried jointly by AMAN Coalition for Integrity and CIVITAS to carry the capacity building training for the YCs and CROLD members on (ITA), policy analysis, and monitoring Human Rights violations and documentation within Gaza reconstruction process; the events of training the three target groups of YCs and CROLD was published also on AMAN's website a well: <https://www.aman-palestine.org/ar/activities/2444.html>; moreover AMAN itself has expanded its scope of work to train further groups of youth among university students to be involved in the monitoring the process: <https://www.aman-palestine.org/ar/activities/2373.html>, in addition to engaging the journalists and mass media groups as well in the process in cooperation with the Journalists Syndicate: <https://www.maannews.net/Content.aspx?id=779922>; however, the wide recognition that CROLD had acquired has resulted in full cooperation from the relative bodies of UNRWA, local authorities, and the relative ministries; particularly, they have provided the representatives of CROLD, CIVITAS coordinators, and the IDPs League with the required information, lists, data, and available information about their work necessary for carrying the scanning, the sampling, the field work, and follow up for the development of the reconstruction process;
- ii. The dynamics and institutionalized behaviors among CROLD members have reflected the maturation of the member CSO's, as well as the overall Coalition as a body in general, where variety of human resources, efforts, experiences, and expertise were provided by the members that were utilized in a best and productive way while carrying the assigned activities within CROLD plans to monitor the reconstruction process; moreover, many experiences and expertise were explored throughout working together among CROLD;
- iii. The CROLD Facebook homepage and the closed group together demonstrate a resource portal for the CROLD members and public at wide; currently there are 615 members in the closed group for CS and social activists members: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1400931080217197/members/>. All reports, findings, efforts, and surveys are published to public debate at the page; however, the public page was launched for the public debate, based on CROLD executive secretary decision on [CROLD efforts to monitor the Reconstruction of Gaza](#);
- iv. The "AID Watch Palestine: www.aidwatch.ps; and <https://www.facebook.com/AidWatchPalestine>, which is a consortium from WB that aims at making aid accountable, had contacted CIVITAS earlier to join CROLD, where they were elected within the [New Executive Secretariat](#) on March 1st, of CROLD. Their contribution to CROLD is a significant added value;
- v. The commitment of CROLD towards the monitoring process of Gaza Reconstruction and the rights of the IDPs within the process was reflected in the second election for the executive secretary, where the IDPsLeague has been elected again as a general secretary for CROLD;
- vi. Adherence of CROLD members that has been reflected through the following behaviors:

- ☞ Nominating candidate trainees to participate in the capacity building training programs, where the trainees were so committed during the training courses, and post training through carrying and fulfilling the assignments of producing the social audit reports, including the field survey and the researches that were accompanied with compiling the collected data, sharing a role in producing the social reports, that all were followed by conducting the seminars that debated the reports. Moreover, they have the major role in grassroots' sensitizing through holding the field educational sessions, in addition to their ability to document, report and carry a media coverage for their activities at their Facebook pages, where CIVITAS had been sharing their posts and media coverage at its formal pages and locations.
- ☞ Sharing hands in coordination and cooperation in holding the project activities, including holding the seminar debates; attending these seminars, and having comments and providing suggestions and recommendations for the duty bearers to adopt for future performance;
- ☞ Attending the CROLD periodic meetings of the executive secretariat on a half-month basis; moreover, debating the CROLD status, role and mission, and functions that resulted in a draft concept paper focuses on the new role of CROLD towards playing a role of representation for advocacy and policy dialogue with duty bearers on strategic issues that CROLD should take role including, democracy and rule of law, monitoring Gaza reconstruction including the IDPs rights, Reconciliation and unification, and building national agenda. Thus, CROLD is going gradually to fill the gap in the areas, where civil society should act towards ensuring participatory democracy despite overall challenges and risks that encounter Palestinians and the whole region.

(B) Responsive Program:

CIVITAS has been committed to democratic change among Palestinians throughout its work since has been launched in late December 2001; fulfilling this mission requires be adapted, responsive, and well distinguished that requires the matching between the needs and concerns of the organizational audience including target groups, groups of beneficiaries, and target-end beneficiaries, in addition to being responsive to the country constraints, along with fulfilling these duties by internal and operational capacity that requires experience, knowledge and expertise, and records. To this end, CIVITAS has been looking for adequate responsive strategies, methodologies, and approaches that would achieve its stated vision and mission for democratization and social justice and social cohesion that all would be achieved via open and free society that is characterized by good governance.

Hence, the responsiveness of NED funding to CIVITAS program might be gauged by assessing the following aspects:

I. Relevance:

The needs in Palestine is multifold. Under the umbrella of this program, the respective projects have been responsive to the needs of Palestinians to benefit of participatory democracy, the grassroots groups and citizens' needs to capacity building, as well as raising awareness, towards civic engagement in governance and keeping the space available for civil society initiatives and interactions aiming at influencing the agenda of politicians and other key actors who might have the duties for their constituents. However, the NED funding initially was devoted to projects were designed initially based on the grassroots' needs to participate and to vote in electoral processes, followed by funding assigned for meeting the local needs to carry post-election activities aiming at ensuring best practices among the local councils, as well as ensuring citizen participation in the local governance. The prior designs of the projects were based on CIVITAS staffs prior experience in the area of democracy that was developed based on the feedback from the field and the analysis of the context. Gradually, the projects' design became an investigation issue, where further evaluations and assessments in particular, have served to further enhancement of the identification of needs for future interventions and projects designs and development that have to respond to the accurate needs of target groups and groups of beneficiaries, as well as responding to the country's constraints. To this end, the results and findings of the midterm evaluations of the projects following to each project cycle showed that the projects activities addressed and responded to both communities' immediate needs as well as to the development needs, where the majority of projects' target groups and beneficiaries had always concluded that services provided have responded very well and have described the interventions as very good to their needs. Similarly, high percentage of participants expressed great satisfaction with provided assistance that aimed to promote and develop their capacities, as well as high percentage of participants who described services as responding well to the needs of their community. Moreover, the selection of the themes and topics that CIVITAS has been addressing throughout the respective projects were so respondent to the needs of both target groups and community along with the country constraints; hence, the promotion gradually from utilizing the prior experience and expertise of representative-constituent relationship to citizen and civic participation, to engagement in governance, policy analysis and human right monitoring, to utilization of the "social audit mechanism", towards increased accountability, and later the utilization of the UNCaC tool, all illustrate CIVITAS ability to diversify and employ variety of tools and mechanisms towards ensuring the relevance of its

interventions, relevance of methodologies and approaches as well, within a well reading and analysis of the overall context of the Palestinian case.

II. Satisfaction:

Quantitative data has shown that grassroots participants found the provided service and carried activities greatly satisfactory. The majority of participants have found that educational and awareness sessions, capacity building training courses to YCs and CROLD members on advocacy, HEARINGS, policy analysis, budget analysis, research skills, HR monitoring, documentation, and reporting, social audit mechanism, and UNCaC, as well as the carried activities including public forums, panels, face2face meetings with officials, study circles, as well as carried HEARINGS, greatly satisfactory. Similarly, the majority of YCs and CROLD members described their experience and knowledge as excellent. Moreover, they have pointed that they have felt that they are not only a target group but also a direct beneficiaries of the projects, where they have the required potential, motivation, and skills to work on meeting their community's needs efficiently; they were engaged with other actors in the process of increasing accountability at local level, central, and national levels, including their target beneficiaries among the grassroots; moreover, the YCs reflected understanding to the concepts and objectives that the projects have addressed, where they were able to use the acquired skills and knowledge and utilizing them very successfully, while performing their assumed role including the monitoring of the Gaza reconstruction, researching, social audit reports production, advocacy and campaigning, HEARINGS and public meetings and panels, as tools for policy dialogue towards holding their duty bearers more accountable towards the citizenry.

III. Effectiveness:

The projects were able to reach as many as 10,693 beneficiaries; amongst were 275 beneficiaries directly as target groups, meanwhile 10,368 were indirect beneficiaries throughout the Gaza Strip, in addition to indefinite numbers of beneficiaries as a result of the project outreach and evolving. The projects offered a variety of services to beneficiaries ranging from research skills, policy analysis, budget analysis, HR monitoring and reporting on documentation of the violations, social audit and UNCaC mechanisms, advocacy training, educational and awareness sessions, and ITA. Moreover, the projects have benefited indefinite number of indirect beneficiaries who benefited from the project impact and evolving throughout the last 3 years in Gaza.

Hence, the projects activities were effective in meeting the needs of variety of beneficiaries; moreover, an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data depicts that the majority of all anticipated output and results have been achieved, particularly those directly aimed at building capacities of the YCs and CROLD members, as well as activities aimed at enhancing the accountability among Palestinian society that would contribute to facing effectively the encountered challenges to both citizens as right holders and the duty bearers as well.

However, some of the indicators and progress markers on these successes were recorded throughout the projects courses including the following:

☞ CROLD conduct for a first hand conference on Gaza Reconstruction:

The CROLD had decided to culminate all efforts had been carried since early Feb., 2015 by holding a formal and actual manifesto about CROLD launching and existence to public, authorities, international players, and key actors among INGO's; the conference was planned and prepared by CROLD itself, where the working groups among CROLD had been finalizing the administrative preparation, the data collection from the field survey and its analysis, the fact sheets, the review of available documents and data about the reconstruction by other initiatives and actors, and the content of the conference. The conference was shared by the efforts of the CROLD members and led by CIVITAS, where it has held on Nov. 3rd, 2015 and attended by more than 200 participants from variety of background including IDPs representatives, CSO's, local authorities' representatives, UNRWA, MoHPW, and the Chamber of Commerce that represented the private sector and businesses in the Gaza Strip. However, the CROLD conference in Gaza demonstrated a Tsunami compared to the results that it had achieved, where the Norwegian Consulate has sent a representative to meet with AMAN Coalition as their core-funders along with the partners in CROLD, where an hour of debate has been held beside the conference hall, at the end of the conference; the Palestinian formal Satellite Channel has held several meetings and interviews as well as a live broadcasting from Gaza with the CROLD and the IDPsL representatives as well. Moreover, a formal meeting has been conducted with the UN Office for Coordinating Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) who asked for a cooperation and exchange of the survey findings and the efforts of the CROLD towards accumulation and integration. Thus, the conference was a successful event for CROLD, since it gathered wide participants along with required diversities, where it was a real and sharp voice

that was clearly heard by the duty bearers, who started, following to the conference, to respond smoothly to CROLD and YCs demands and requests to avoid the criticism and pressure of the grassroots who were felt deeply as a result of the active and functioning civil society who advocate on behalf of the grassroots' interests and concerns, particularly the IDPs in Gaza.

IV. Efficiency:

A number of efficiency-related challenges have arisen throughout the projects course. Most of these challenges have certainly arisen as a consequence of the complex and difficult environment in Gaza. The projects teams have to improve project efficiency during next plans with regard to the following aspects:

- **Project Design:** The timeframe of the projects had to be altered several times, as Gaza has experienced a grave war by Israel, resulted in grave consequences throughout the projects' course. This question should be considered seriously in future, where invasions and militant actions, had affect the projects seriously, not only the timeframes, but also, the priorities of the local communities that had to be analyzed, adopted, and respond to. One other thing is the YCs and trainees among CROLD members, selection and development have all the same challenge due to the changing reality in Gaza, where dramatic changes usually take place in Gaza, particularly when the borders of Rafah were opened, as some of the target groups had to travel outside Gaza, and were not able to be back before three-four months after the next borders' opening due to the Egyptians' decisions. Thus, CIVITAS, had to be dynamic and to have a continuous strategy of volunteers' recruitment, replacement, and retention. However, this requires CIVITAS to increase the knowledge and skills of the new recruited members for YCs and CROLD members and their involvement in following up the conducted activities, either the educational sessions or following the conduct of the advocacy tactics such as the HEARINGS and Public Meetings, social audit reports' production, that followed by the seminars publicity; the lessons learned showed that the mobility of YCs and CROLD to follow up these issues on the ground, whilst providing their running costs like communication and transportation have resulted in achieving real results and anecdotes, along with finding solutions to the raised problems efficiently; moreover, this approach would result in providing the required support and legitimacy for the YCs and CROLD to act among the grassroots, when they achieve the desired results and solutions to their problems. One more efficient approach, is to rely more on the field research, where the grassroots will feel widely that someone is taking care about them, rather than relying only on the participation of the active grassroots who attend the projects' activities. Thus, this approach had increased the project outreach as well as its efficiency, where the YCs and CROLD researchers have come up with more accurate details about the communities' needs and priorities. Moreover, this approach, even was a necessity, when targeting the IDPs, who have been approached strictly to ensure that they are not going to be marginalized or ignored.
- **Project Partners:** To ensure quality of service delivery, the projects have involved external services providers, with specific expertise and extensive experience in Gaza in a relative area; this was built on the assumptions that despite CIVITAS is specialized in the projects area, there are certainly, other partners who have significant and added values who would share hands and would contribute to project objectives' achievements; such significant contribution were provided by other CROLD partners including AMAN Coalition for Integrity who share hands of the training and costs of the course on ITA, meanwhile other members of CROLD have contributed significantly in the conferences, seminars, and the educational sessions with the required quality. However, the nature of the carried projects had forced this fact, as partnerships, networking, and collaboration have provided the required expertise, and had maximized the project outreach and effectiveness compared to CIVITAS self-efforts.
- **Project Structure:** The structure of the projects have been developed significantly throughout the projects duration, as the project became a permanent program of CIVITAS, considering that several staff members along with YCs coordinators and volunteers have duties and responsibilities within it; hence the project structure and line of authorities are summarized below:
 - **Project Supervision:** has been clear due to clear line of communication and reporting among the project staff. Even, following to the changeable structure of CIVITAS, the projects were more supervised, as each level of the organizational structure has played a meaningful role in the supervision of the project.
 - **The selection of target beneficiaries:** has been based on a regular assessment conducted by CIVITAS based on a participatory approach that involved the beneficiaries and partners in the process (CBO's of the YCs and CROLD). In case that there is a local partner among CBO's or

CROLD that their commitment and obligations did not fully meet the criteria identified initially, then a correction decision was made to ensure project efficiency. Moreover, the partner CBO itself takes a major role in replacing their leaving representative in the YCs.

- **Distinction of Services:** CIVITAS ensures the separation of services provided under the NED funding to be clearly distinguished from activities conducted under other projects of CIVITAS, or jointly with CIVITAS, moreover, CIVITAS has been paying additional efforts of identifying complementary aspects with other projects carried by other agencies; furthermore, CIVITAS considers its role as a technical assistant that works in the area of D&G to promote the "citizen participation" via advocacy, policy dialogue, watchdog, or mightily Think-tank, rather than an agency/organization that provides services directly to people to meet their direct and basic needs. However, this approach might not be valid within all interventions that current situation requires, due to the grave needs of Palestinians currently, as the nature of the responses in future might identify, whether they need multifold efforts from variety of actors or not, depending on the required inputs that should meet those needs, as well as the employment of several actors and staffing to be allocated on these future actions. However, CIVITAS should not in any case be shifted towards being engaged in service provision far away from its assumed role as a spearheading organization that works for D&G to ensure that the required services are provided by the duty bearers to the right holders in an efficient and effective manner.
- **Follow up beneficiaries plans:** Beneficiaries have expressed great satisfaction with the provided assistance to them, either the capacity building training or engagement in policy dialogue and advocacy activities, as well as community sensitizing and mobilization. However, several respondents in the quantitative research stated and assured on the necessity to have more follow up for the carried activities. From other hand, the qualitative research brought about different conclusions. Main areas of concerns have included that they have been satisfied of the improvements of holding regular YCs meetings at the district level – in addition to the meetings that were conducted centrally at CIVITAS office or at other gatherings locations for wider participation; the follow up efforts of CIVITAS staff, were delegated to the YCs coordinators at the field, who were elected by the YCs themselves earlier, by their own say, was also an efficient strategy that contributed to the YCs independency and self-reliance. Moreover, CIVITAS has been carrying additional tactics through conducting regular and adhoc follow up and site visits to the partner associations and CBOs for coaching and mentoring and re-planning their strategies to ensure that they are working as planned and to provide additional recognition for the YCs among their CBO's, while developing their plans, producing the social audits, and conducting the field research and data collection. However, CIVITAS has been devoting particular attention to the follow-on capacities of the YCs and CROLD members that were trained, as an indication of the YCs and CROLD representatives' staying power. This was evaluated through an (Evaluation Point Sheet System) that assessed the performance of the members of the YCs; the analysis of the evaluation results showed the figures and facts about the YCs performance and progress while practicing their work within CIVITAS Network as YCs; however, the project staff assessed the capacities of the YCs based on assessing their self-motivation and the performance of the YCs throughout the last three-year for the YCs members who have at least two years within the YCs network, particularly, who have been carrying field research, social audit report production, and carrying field educational sessions and were fully engaged in variety of activities within CIVITAS's work. Anyway, the performance appraisal evaluation about the YCs, is carried continuously and periodically, by CIVITAS and the YCs coordinators, to identify their standing as well as their capabilities, capacities, and further needs towards ensuring their full capacity to act as qualified YCs members who would achieve their mission and the stated objectives of the project that they are engaged in.

V. Sustainability:

As a developmental response projects, sustainability of activities and provided assistance are a primary objective. While the fact of inclusion local partners, increases sustainability efforts of the projects, the political split and fatigue within the Palestinian Society has actually resulted in problems of coordination and cooperation at times. Despite of this, the diversification of project actors was so efficient and contributed to its sustainability, given that the projects target the local and national levels; moreover, this approach has ensured that the skills and knowledge might not be thrown out, but actually were utilized towards further developments, since the projects succeeded to institutionalize the YCs and CROLD work within the civil society at the level of

Gaza Strip, as well as the YCs within the partner CBO's through further and additional capacity development efforts. To this end, CIVITAS has to focus more on YCs independency and self-reliance, meanwhile CIVITAS might continue to play the role of resource organization for their new structures that might be developed to be a democratic structural platform that would take the responsibility of advocacy and democracy issues at the districts level, aiming at future culmination of a unified democracy umbrella or platform at the Gaza Strip level; thus, more efforts in supporting this networking process towards establishing linkages and relationships with other locally-based coalitions in other areas where applicable, with similar initiatives that might take place, where CIVITAS has to be respondent to all of changing reality and needs within the Palestinian context as a leading organization in the area of democracy and good governance. A successful example on the projects' sustainability is the new trends of several organizations to form YCs in certain localities within Gaza Strip, including initiative carried by the GIZ and Save Youth Future Association, who requested CIVITAS experience in developing and training their leading leadership committee who had trained other youth within their new established network, where they have started working on local issues and needs of youth communities and initiatives via youth engagement in encountering their challenges.

VI. Precedents:

The projects have already highlighted the role of CROLD as representative of grassroots constituents, and the YCs as representatives of youth communities, where they were asked in several occasions to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations or to provide space for others to replace them; the YCs members in several discussions claimed for holding periodic election for the YCs coordinators positions that reflects their recognition to the importance to democratic change, in addition to the fact that they have the will for change through holding the exercise for democracy and accountability, meanwhile the YCs coordinators have been motivating other members, and holds the low potential members to be more accountable to their obligations. This is an important progress marker for CIVITAS that reflect their adoption to the peaceful change of power that would be reflected on their future developments and promotions.

From other hand, many of the citizens have acknowledged the importance of the carried activities, particularly the HEARINGS and panel discussions, as tools that have succeeded to reach to common understanding on the debated issues between the citizens and the duty bearers. This fact would ensure future actions in the same area by the same manner, where both YCs and CROLD, would act to hold accountability to their representatives and leadership, meanwhile the elected representatives will be requested numerously and periodically to show adherence to grassroots' challenges and concerns. This is another precedent among the Palestinian context.

(C) Long-term Changes:

The conducted projects were so helpful and productive in achieving long-term changes and impact on the target groups as well as the community at wide; the following long-term changes were recorded:

I. YCs & CROLD self-development and engagement:

The qualitative assessment with the YCs & CROLD showed that the level of engagement of both with local councils and the targeted ministries has been improved at four levels; 1) the capacity of the YCs and CROLD members to collect data from the field through the citizen cards, citizens opinion towards performance of duty bearers, and the interviews with the key informants including the duty bearers; 2) degree of debate and discussion within the conducted activities and events; 3) extent of engagement between the two sides in the development and preparation for the action/activity including the prepared agenda for the meeting/event; and 4) the level of interaction they have following the forums/events, when CIVITAS provides less hands-on assistance. The feedback showed that these volunteers, particularly the YCs, were able to carry initiatives based on the local needs and constraints; for example, the follow up of the YCs with the councilors, has resulted in periodic publishing of the municipalities' audits on their websites, improving of the complaining systems that were activated in several municipal councils and ministries, delivering brochures and publications to public on the planning and priorities, as well as allowing for the YCs and the IDPsLeague (member of CROLD) to attend the local councils' meetings, as well as holding periodic meetings and follow up debates with them on the developments of the Gaza reconstruction, including the most engaged key actors, mainly the UNRWA and the UNDP.

Moreover, the local councils have asked the YCs to join new youth initiatives in several locations, where the mayors consider that the YCs as permanent and main initiative to be recognized; thus, they assure on the fact that the YCs became a long-term body that is recognized and it will be a guidance for the youth work within the municipal work. To this end, CIVITAS became a school for democracy that graduates new generations to Palestinian democracy, which certainly would contribute to democratic transformation. Precisely, it's amazing that the YCs members became able to provide context analysis for the municipal councils, in addition to the IDPsLeague and other CROLD members who have been submitting recommendations and suggestions for

the relative ministries on their priorities and accurate needs that were seriously incorporated and reflected on these ministries agenda; examples are the suspension of the cash for work program adopted earlier by UNRWA, the rejection of the UNRWA and UNDP to conditions of some donors to reconstruct buildings sized by only 80 m², meanwhile most of the destructed buildings were sized more than 150 m². Also, the compensation amounts for the IDPs were promoted to include the prices of the damage furniture, property, and assets.

II. Impact:

The evaluation of the projects has concluded that the projects' impact on beneficiaries, namely YCs and CBO's including their grassroots, in addition to CROLD members was impressive. The interventions are most likely to have short term impact by responding to immediate needs, particularly the adhoc monitoring to Gaza Reconstruction. However, capacity building, training followed by coaching, advocacy, and awareness raising all have contributed to having a longer term impact on target-end beneficiaries, expertise and experience of project staffs, engaged volunteers, and at community at wide. More details would be addressed here below:

(D) Impact-oriented strategies:

CIVITAS has been assessing the impact of its research, monitoring efforts, and policy dialogues with the authorities at both local and national levels, based on evidence of media coverage and civil society's use of the findings in its own campaigns and initiatives. Here are the results of the impact assessment for the respective projects in several aspects:

I. Impact on community:

The impact of the field research and monitoring was reflected on CROLD efforts, where the published reports and findings of surveys at the mass media were recognized by variety of key actors who comment, interact, or appreciate the efforts including foreigners (outside of Palestinians) who are members of the CROLD Group at the social media opened forums for CROLD and the IDPsLeague. One of the raised issues by the YCs is the removal of the rubble and demolishing of the destroyed homes that was not considered fully by the authorities and turned into top priorities, where pledges to accomplish the process have been released in several occasions throughout the campaign activities and face to face meetings with the authorities; however, the YCs as surveyors have been reporting on these situations that were addressed by CROLD and the IDPsL in the meetings with the relative authorities and duty bearers, where real improvements have been recorded.

Moreover, the loud voice of CROLD on issues pertained to corruption and manipulation within the Reconstruction process has resulted in supporting the position of the Minister of Housing & Public Work, Dr. Mofeed alHasayna to respond on all accusations by [accusing the biggest five businessmen in Gaza](#) who violated the importing system of cements to Gaza through manipulation and selling the cements in the black market with higher prices that resulted in stopping the system by the Israelis that resulted in a significant slow in the Gaza Reconstruction process.

Moreover, the survey on the [suffering of the IDPs in the Caravans](#) was recorded by several mass media through a special focus that resulted in denying their situation by the authorities and recognition for their mistakes, including the Palestinian Authorities and the Catholic Relief Services (CRC), who reported about the Caravans shortcomings and had provided pledges to improve the Caravans conditions to match the conditions of both winter and summer; however , several mass media had published the YouTube video titled: "[The morgue Caravans in Gaza "Painless Video"](#)"; where an urgent assistance from the government in Ramallah was directed to the [Caravans in Gaza to accommodate](#) with the situation during winter.

Moreover, the paper of CROLD that was presented in the Conference of Nov. 3rd, 2015 was published widely that focused on [call for necessity to adopt a comprehensive approach to reconstruction in Gaza](#); a paper presented by Taysir Mohaisen (the chairperson of CROLD at that phase).

From other hand, CIVITAS has recorded multiple requests and demands by wide people particularly the lawyers, university students, and young females who joined and follow up the CROLD and YCs groups' work and the formal Facebook home page launched by CROLD; however, the participants numbers in the carried activities reflects that there is a significant increase varies between 75%-100%, where the coordinators used to invite 20-25 participants, meanwhile 36 as a minimum participants had attended these activities that sometimes was attended by 75 participants. The annual conference was attended by 200 participants meanwhile only 120 participants were invited. In Bureij public meeting, 202 participants had attended the meeting, which is higher than the capability of a political party to gather people on one issue at those days in Gaza due to the wide frustration politically; this reflects the importance and great interest that grassroots pay towards the project activities and the issues that CROLD and YCs address.

Moreover, the staff in cooperation with the YCs and CROLD members had held additional HEARINGS and educational sessions beyond the scheduled activities, further to the project contract originally that reflect both the YCs commitment to the local needs as well as the interest of the grassroots and community of these activities that certainly meet their needs and expectations.

However, several calls from initiatives who have interest in monitoring the Gaza Reconstruction have been approaching CROLD seeking its approval and signing-off for their statements on the reconstruction.

Lastly, it's worthy to say that the impact of CROLD efforts is still at an earlier phase to be assessed fully, but the published reports and findings of surveys at the mass media have been recognized by variety of key actors who comment, interact, or appreciate these efforts.

II. Impact on Direct Beneficiaries:

Many of the beneficiaries surveyed found that the carried activities have a great impact on them. The YCs members showed changes/improvement in their knowledge and skills such as communication, dealing with their representatives, capabilities to identify their communities' needs and priorities, and addressing them on their representatives' agendas. Moreover, the projects contributed to ensure evolving democratic behavior among beneficiaries through changes in their attitudes and trends towards dealing with their representatives, utilizing the created relationships, and adoption of advocacy activities on behalf of their constituents and followers. In several cases, there are improvements of relationships between the duty bearers and CROLD and the YCs that reflected on the planning process for the scheduled events as well as engagement in the carried projects, particularly the municipal councils. Furthermore, the respected projects have highlighted and provided several tools and mechanisms for increased accountability, particularly the HEARINGS, social audit mechanism, and the UNCaC that were not familiar tools among Gazans before.

III. Impact on YCs as Volunteers:

Similarly, the volunteers among the YCs became so professional in this line of "citizen participation" work, where they provided CIVITAS by the required results, better qualitatively, throughout the projects courses, in terms of accurate identification for the needs of the grassroots, community concerns and needs, and the problems to be solved on the ground. Thus, this improvement was reflected positively also, on the volunteers themselves, as they were promoted and selected to join CIVITAS, as CIVITAS work has been built on the availability and qualifications of the staffs and structures, including the volunteers, who would fulfill the requirements, where those volunteers has become able to join the work and to promote themselves, not only within CIVITAS, but also in several positions at other CSO's. A lot of success stories usually reported to NED, but still the most important success is the ability of these volunteers to approach their duty bearers and to receive regularly the deliverables and findings including municipals' auditors' reports, financial positions and statements, strategic plans, and developmental plans of the projects that were analyzed by the projects volunteers and actors to come up with themes and cases to be based throughout holding the project advocacy activities and tactics. Also, the interaction with the duty bearers on the Gaza reconstruction process have resulted in recognition of the YCs, CROLD, and IDPsLeague as titles for their complaints that were addressed to respective duty bearers towards debates and agreement on proper solutions. These major successes are considered a long-term impact and change that has been achieved and could be a base to build in future, where the whole Palestinian context would benefit from these precedents that will ensure future collaboration between community and their representatives, and would lay the bases for the processes of accountability, integrity, and social responsibility. One more improvement as an impact on the volunteer is their capability to develop an online mechanism for documenting and reporting on their work to CIVITAS that reduced the administrative efforts of the projects documentation and reporting.

IV. Impact on Decision Makers:

Qualitative assessment has concluded that the projects have had good impact on the trends and attitudes of the duty bearers, particularly the councilors and mayors, as well as on the municipalities' staffs, in addition to some staffs of the ministries towards their constituents' needs and concerns that was reflected positively by better attention to these concerns as well as direct response to both NCs & CROLD requests and claims. This was obviously shown through collaboration in conducting joined activities together beyond the project scheduled activities, or when CIVITAS is less hand with them. Also, the decision makers who attended the activities have benefited from the projects, where they improved their responses towards communities' needs; this was reflected as increased interaction between the local councils and the community structures and initiatives, particularly with youth. Currently, the duty bearers can easily contact CROLD, IDPsLeague, or the YCs members to ask their intervention towards solving certain problems, and to debate about their intentions and plans, particularly when there is not a consensus on a certain issue between Ramallah and Gaza staffs in the same ministry. Thus, their smoothness and cooperation was reflected positively on their relationships with their constituents.

V. Impact on Community at Wide:

The qualitative research and documents review have concluded that the projects have had great impact on the knowledge of the community about the local governance work, as well as the accountability process; the conducted awareness sessions' results showed obviously that citizens among the beneficiaries were able to differentiate between the challenges encountering the duty bearers due to the blockade and the GRM, and the

low performance of some local councils, and the respective ministries, due to probable corruption or misconduct.

From other side, the community at wide has benefited from several anecdotes, achievements, and solutions to problems that have been solved, based on the projects activities, forums and events. Moreover, the projects activities have highlighted a lot of challenges and communities' needs to other donors' agencies in the Gaza Strip that resulted in adoption of these needs within those donors' plans that met these needs. Several donors' agencies in Gaza benefited from the projects findings where their donations became so effective through linking them with the real needs in community through their attendance to the debate forums like OXFAM-U.K., the Water Authority, Action against Hunger, the Islamic Relief, UNRWA, NRC, ANERA, and the UNDP. Recently, the Action Aid and Christian Aid have adopted joined initiatives to increase the municipal response to disasters via adopting long-term program of partnership on DRR; moreover, the NRC has jointly with the Ministry of Education have developed and accommodate 75 schools to be proper shelters for the IDPs in case of emergencies.

VI. Changes on target population and regions:

The wider community in general benefited from these projects; directly, 70 YCs members, in addition to 31 members of CROLD rather than the VBO's who are represented by the YCs, were equipped well through several topics of capacity building; thousands of grassroots were educated and became aware either through the civic education or through being engaged in the YCs and CROLD carried activities. Totally the projects reached to 10,693 participants, where around 45% of the beneficiaries were females, meanwhile 55% were males, mostly have received qualitative services, where they participated in the training courses, study circles, and panels, HEARINGS, public meetings, data providing that totally reached to around 11,000 individuals, who were able to interact and to debate with 123 decision makers, including local councilors, directors and assistants of ministers, International Organizations, and UN agencies, among the duty bearers.

Hence, considering the fact that most of the duty bearers had attended the projects activities several times, as well as the projects' spreading nature, which reflects that the projects have a great impact on the Palestinian Democracy where this fact would be utilized in future as a precedent, where Palestinians would build on it, and ensure that the duty bearers should respond to their constituents and keep adhered to their concerns and ambitions. Despite the uncertainty in Gaza, the projects are still able to collect the divided people on common interests and concerns and have been succeeded to bring them together to face the common challenges, to behave, and to respond objectively to encountered challenges despite of the political environment.

However, here are additional results that show the impact on the target population and different localities in the Gaza Strip:

- ☞ The Bureij Municipal Council has expressed their willingness to be part of the DRR plans that might serve the IDPs, while CIVITAS thinks to carry a model of creating such a DRR plan jointly between one of the local authorities and civil society that might be mainstreamed in future based on the learned lessons; this contact has been created after carrying a seminar on the social audit report titled: "**Facilitations provided by local municipals for IDPs during displacement**" that was conducted on Feb. 22nd, 2017;
- ☞ The seminar on "**Performance of Complaints Unit of MoHPW after 2 years of the war**", held On Feb., 22nd, 2017 in Bany Suhaila has resulted in activating the Complaints' Unit in the Ministry (MoHPW), where the IDPsLeague had accessed the Ministry to follow up the complaints of the IDPs and to receive answers about their problems with the Ministry; the follow up process has been productive and resulted in solving a lot of the encountered problems that face the IDPs.
- ☞ Following the seminar on "**Monitoring health services providers in the northern Gaza Strip**", held on March, 22nd, 2017, the IDPsLeague and CIVITAS had a deduction of 30% for the patients among the IDPs for the health treatment, particularly the surgeries, in case the IDPs have a supportive certificate that approve his/her identity as an IDP; the deduction was made by the Union of Health Work Committees who has wide health centers, clinic, and hospitals' network across the Gaza Strip;
- ☞ The factsheet on the "Health Sector" had created a wide debate among the citizens of Eastern Region of Khan Younis (consists of 7 localities) who started addressing the need for establishing a wide hospital for these regions separately from Khan Younis main hospital (that far away and located at the west shore of Khan Younis).
- ☞ The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) has re-assessed the requests of harmed people (who have fully damage) who benefit from the temporary program of cash-basis assistance for the IDPs, where the review had assessed if they have to be transferred into the national permanent program in case of finding that they live in a severe conditions; this decision was made following their attendance the seminar on the report "**Monitoring the performance of cash transfers assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs program after two years of the war**" that was held on March, 7th, 2017;
- ☞ However, the Ministry of Education has pledged to consider the recommendations of the report on "**Suitability of new established shelters in Governmental Schools to suit people with disabilities**

when displacement” held on Feb., 25th, 2017 in Gaza City; they had pledged to include these recommendations into the upcoming 5-yr plan of the Ministry. Recently, they have already accommodated 75 schools to be proper shelters in case of emergencies through funding from the NRC.

☞ [Bureij Local Council has launched a new water well](#) to increase the portion of water supplies for 3 neighborhoods following to addressing this issue and was a recommendation of the seminar was held earlier on 26 of Feb., 2017.

VII. Impact on Gender Perspective:

The projects have highlighted the gender as a human right and a point of focus, where several members of the projects staffs as well as its volunteers were females, particularly among the YCs, where they were dealt equally in this regard; Moreover, the females’ participation was encouraged and promoted throughout the projects course, through providing equal opportunities in development as well as providing the required space to participation. A great attention was paid to females to have major role at the activities that used to be seen as a specialization of males particular, when addressing the leadership for CROLD or the YCs. However, two among the project three-staff are females, meanwhile two among the five-YCs coordinators are females as well. Moreover, 60 members among the 98-members of the YCs are females, meanwhile 38 are male members. Furthermore 4 females are members among the 13-member of CROLD’s executive secretary, where females occupy significant positions in the CROLD board.

However, the existence and involvement of women in the civic work is not only a symbolic representation rather than a guarantee for including the gender perspectives, concerns, and needs that would make the carried work more respondent to gender sensitivity.

3.6 Organizational Assessment

- ✓ **Changes & Development:** CIVITAS has several changes during the projects course either structural development or staff promotions; these changes were indicators of successful development record for CIVITAS throughout the projects courses as well as CIVITAS capability to accommodate and to make control despite the encountered challenges.
- **Staff Promotions:** There was a development and promotion for some staff members who have been allocated at other projects to be fully coordinators that required the promotion of the YCs coordinators to replace this vacuum. These coordinators were recognized positively by CIVITAS who relied on their capacities and have promoted them to replace the field coordinators. The five-YCs coordinators promotion and self-development reflected positively through improvements in coordination, effective contacts with stakeholders, successful management to their YCs members and best practices and management, efficient community recruitment, and meeting tight deadlines; these qualifications resulted in picking them among CIVITAS network, either among the volunteers or from the CSO's partners. Usually, the leaving coordinators are asked to develop other proper candidates to replace them, where they are engaged in the selection process of the most qualified volunteers who would replace them and their positions. This approach enables CIVITAS to ensure smooth replacement as well as ensuring that there is no gap in the performances; moreover, it represents transparency among the volunteers when they are part of the process and there is a promotion for the qualified volunteers. Further development was recorded in the project main staff, as newly staff has joined the project, Mr. Ahmed Abu Irteima, who replaced the lawyer Abdallah Sharshara, who had replaced earlier Mr. Mahmoud Abdel Hadi, where both are currently became permanent employees with AMAN Coalition for Integrity. However, the permanent senior staff stayed the same where Maher Issa, Mrs. Fariza Bsaiso, and Maya Ahmed are still the senior staff who manage and supervise the projects. These changes enabled CIVITAS to accommodate and to make a control over the natural changes that any CSO's may encounter, particularly within Gaza context. However, the changes were adopted to ensure smooth development within CIVITAS structure as well as guarantee the flexibility of the structure that has to achieve and fulfill the projects obligations and objectives, as well as fitting within the overall organizational aim and mission, considering the overall framework of CIVITAS that considers strictly and highlights the organization's culture and common ethics and values that enforces CIVITAS to select its employees and staff members among its network due to the bylaws and general policies. One additional change is the promotion of Mr. Ahmed Natil to become the Field Activities Officer, who is fully responsible of the field and outreach work including the overall management and supervision of the filed work within the NED projects.

From other hand, new leadership for **CIVITAS board** was elected on March 6th, 2016 for the next three years until March 5th, 2019.

However, the new leadership is a composition of academic professors in politics, research, and electoral system experts. Moreover other members are specialized in labor work, NGO management, and youth activism that is considered a real leadership in the programmatic aspect for CIVITAS work.

- **Performance Development:** Given the significant development of the projects staff; this was obviously shown and reflected on the institutional sustainability, where the programs manager and assistant have carried the required training for other staff members, as well as the target beneficiaries without the help of CIVITAS Director or external trainers as before at the beginning start of CIVITAS; moreover, the field coordinators among the YCs were able to decide about the actions and events in the field based on the community needs with less advice and assistance from the main office that reflects improvement in decision making. Also, they became able to moderate the discussions with decision makers and community alone and had the capability to documentation, reporting, initiating press brief, and media coverage, particularly the exchanges forum of the projects, that is considered one of the most famous forum for civic engagement in the country. From other hand, M&E unit became working systematically, where Mrs. Bsaiso, has developed the staff to carry the monitoring and evaluation systematically, where each activity is evaluated, analyzed, where the findings are incorporated within the overall work, with the learned lessons. From other side, Mrs. Bsaiso, along with CIVITAS Chairman, Prof. Riadh ElAila, helped significantly in improving the content of the deliverables, including the annual booklet that became a resource for civil society organizations on accountability, particularly the social audit manual, and the UNCaC tools. Lastly, there is improvements in reporting and analysis of the context



as Mrs. Fariza Bsaiso is a real talent in research, reading, and analysis along with high potential and energy that has brought the required analysis of the context that became incorporated fruitfully in the outcomes of the documentation and reporting. Furthermore, the delivered capacity building training and civic participation projects released the creativity, reflection, social discourse, and organizational skills of the new staffs and the YCs coordinators and members as well; they were accessing cultural experiences, improved in their capacity to play an active role in decision-making processes, to overcome barriers and obstacles, better self-expression, and to engage with and contribute to wider community through creative practice, for leadership and cooperation within community groups, and to use organizational skills to engage with variety of sectors and other organizations' line of work as a result of carrying social audits in variety of sectors and themes. All these capacities were improved among the staff members and volunteers as well.

- **CIVITAS is a Recognized Institution:** CIVITAS became an address for the work in the areas of "local governance and citizen participation", the accountability through social audits, and policy analysis, in addition to civic engagement in monitoring and policy dialogue with authorities and public institutions, where several mayors, decision makers, researchers, CROLD, and YCs members usually perform visits to CIVITAS office to receive advices, technical assistance, and required information about their challenges. From other side, the IDPsLeague has its principle headquarter in a separate office beside CIVITAS main office.
- Also, the NRC has approached CIVITAS to request assistance on how to reach the IDPs at the field in variety of localities that consists of 28 localities across the Gaza Strip; CIVITAS staff, the YCs, and the IDPsLeague have assisted the NRC lawyers and legal specialists to approach their target beneficiaries to provide the required legal assistance and consultancy as well as improving their skills and knowledge to improve their access to justice.
- Also, CIVITAS is still the resource organization for both the local municipal councils and the NCs, themselves, who are in a direct contact with CIVITAS, where they request intervention to re-organize the NCs, holding periodic elections for the NCs, or to intervene to solve a certain problem that might be raised either between the municipal councils and the NCs or among the NCs themselves.

✓ **Strategy & Approaches Development:**

- **Diversifying Approaches:** There was periodic development of the approach and strategy of CIVITAS towards achieving the projects' objectives and overall goals; the development is based on the participatory approach of all project multi-stakeholders that CIVITAS adopts when designing its projects; hence there was each year-activities that are adopted based on the feedback and the needs of the projects' target groups and beneficiaries that might achieve the stated objectives. This approach has enabled CIVITAS to hold balance between the needs for qualitative or quantitative results; in terms of spreading the work in all cities and villages of Gaza Strip, particularly the remote areas and locations, aiming at expanding the projects outreach quantitatively, from one hand, in addition to incorporating the work of the YCs who were created to be complemented and integrated with the prior NCs efforts, at local level work, towards more qualitative results, from other hand. Thus, the YCs were able to provide the required community support among the grassroots, as well as the ability to educate those grassroots, as well as thematically and technically be able to carry the assignments which are beyond the capabilities of the NCs, such as the budget analysis, policy analysis, research, media coverage, ITA, and social audit mechanism's usage and utilization.

Thus, CIVITAS has been developing and diversifying its approaches, strategies, and tools to qualify the required assignments within each project, where CIVITAS has moved each year from one strategy to another, developing tools that match each year requirements, and accommodate with the context of each project internally and externally within the overall context of Gaza towards being responsive to the grave needs of target populations and audience expectations, country constraints, and the proper strategy to interact with the new project duty bearers either at local, national, or international levels.

- **Further Engagement:** CIVITAS has also, adopted further approach to build the capacity of selected partners among the CBO's and NGOs, whom the YCs are working with, to facilitate and support the process of their internal capacity strengthening in order to be reflected more effectively and efficiently on their work, particularly regarding their engagement with local power structures, and to be more engaged in people-centered advocacy from a rights-based perspective regarding specific broad issues of their choice that require change; CIVITAS has engaged them in the dialogue awareness sessions, radio episodes, and campaigns, funded by SIDA, or via adopting strategic plans based on HRBA and DRR approaches to be more responsive to the needs and rights of the IDPs as well as other vulnerable groups and communities, funded by HEKS, aiming at promoting their engagement in required fields and encountering country constraints including engagement in the reconciliation process and spreading the dialogue culture among Palestinians, the networking for EPP (Emergency Preparedness Plan), and preparing shadow reports vis a vis the state reports submitted to the

UNCHR; through that way, CIVITAS aims to guarantee the strengthening of civil society position in the implementation and development of strategies that are complementarily with the Palestinian Authority's strategy and actions, through building the capacities of CSO's to qualify them to hold the PNA more accountable and to make the government more responsible towards its citizens and constituents' rights. CIVITAS concern was paid to this point in order to motivate the YCs, CROLD, and other engaged groups among the local partners, to acquire the vision of acting in a complementary approach that should fit within the overall national development plan of the PNA, and other engaged partners and international agencies who are working on this issue.

- ✓ **Responsiveness:** CIVITAS is keen to be a responsive organization; in terms of being able to act and to approach its target groups within the changeable context in the region; thus, CIVITAS's approaches and strategies have been tested periodically to explore its effectiveness and efficiency periodically. As a result, several components and new tactics were adopted within the projects courses. For example, CIVITAS diversified its actions taken to respond to needs within campaigning processes, where Panel Discussions were adopted sometimes instead of Public Meetings to focus on certain issue due to the nature of the debated or raised issue; also, study circles were included, where the YCs members used to carry these activities along with the technical departments of the municipalities about certain issues. Moreover, CIVITAS relied on the field research instead of the public opinion polls, to bring the priorities of the grassroots that were raised on the agenda of the councilors; additional tools were developed including social audit mechanism and UNCaC to ensure accountability via promotion of the civil society engagement based on full knowledge and skilled members of these CSO's.
- ✓ **Organizational Lesson:** Civitas staff learned an important lesson over the course of NED projects, which is the project rescheduling based on the changing context and situation, considering the local circumstances, basic assumptions; this was reflected as dynamicity of CIVITAS work, where the staff reads the context, analyze the collected data, linking things together, then act based on the validity of the adopted or planned action. This gained experience has enabled the staffs to work systematically in a smooth way that characterized the work on NED Grants.
- ✓ **YCs thematic organizing:** CIVITAS has responded to the increased numbers of volunteers among its network, through more delegation, less hand interventions, and being more supportive resource aiming at increasing their independency and motivating them to be self-helping groups. Thus, CIVITAS has held elections among the seven-YCs, periodically, in the seven targeted locations in the Gaza Strip. Each YC has its leader and a deputy, where the gender balance was adopted; however, a steering committee of 14 YCs, currently are managing the deployed YCs members in the field, considering that these YCs, are handling the field activities with less hands from CIVITAS, that reflect their capability to act and respond on the needs of their communities in a prompt way. Moreover, CIVITAS has promoted its relationship with the YCs towards more and better utilization and investment in people via classifying these YCs members into thematic team-works, where each member of the YCs is currently a member of one of the created thematic team-works, including: social audit teams (all YCs are engaged in this process); the poverty alleviation team, strategic planning team, gender audit team, resilience building team for the IDPs, research team, GYG team, budget analysis team (PET), policy analysis team, conflict transformation and reconciliation team, ITA team, YouTube team, and Think-tank team.

Thus, this methodology would achieve two goals: 1) specialization of the YCs members due to their capacities and the needs at the field; and 2) promoting the YCs members' special skills and expertise that would contribute to their development and promotion within CIVITAS work as well as preparing them to qualify the civil society work that would demonstrate income generating resources for these volunteers who would not be volunteers forever given the severe conditions that face Gazans currently. CIVITAS thinks that this new methodology has increased the new trends of voluntarism among CIVITAS work, where CIVITAS receive multiplier requests and demands to join the networks that reached to 18 groups, 5 public pages, and 2 platforms assigned for CROLD and IDPsLeague.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Recommendations on Current Structure

- Consider that part of the recommendations from the previous cumulative assessments, were fulfilled during the current period, there are still recommendations to be fulfilled, including:
 - Encourage regular meetings between partner CBO's in the same district, to share monthly findings;
 - Have a steering committee present semi-year findings in meetings to all project stakeholder to ensure projects publicity as well as YCs communication at the Strip Gaza level; this action has been fulfilled and needs to be maintained in future.
 - Consider formation of an umbrella structures of the YCs, and CBO's who work in the field of Good Governance & Democracy; this recommendation has been fulfilled via CROLD foundation that needs to be maintained, strengthened, and promoted to play the role of a platform for democracy and rule of law.

4.2 Recommendations on Methodology

- Update the needs assessment undertaken throughout the work for all targeted areas through employing more volunteers, who might be developed in this area, towards establishing a data base unit on volunteers within youth sector for civil society work, including ages, basic education, specialization of graduation, baseline experience and knowledge, needs, and proper intervention strategies for their development;
- Engaging the YCs in CIVITAS high ranking tasks including project design and development as well as meeting with key decision makers, in the planning process for future actions through further conduct of additional workshops that the YCs would be engaged in;
- Engaging the key actors among the decision makers into civic work to exchange experience and expertise that would increase the common grounds, mutual recognition and respect, and improved agenda making towards ensuring the mutual capacities aiming at providing qualitative outcomes to citizens;
- More facilitation for the engagement with the structures in power, such as municipalities staffs and decisions makers on particular issues such as fundraising, internships and study tours aiming at gaining knowledge from other successful models to reach to the desired outcomes. CIVITAS has already planned to fulfill this within its educational and capacity building pillars within Civitas Academy abroad, where these target groups among CSO's and nonstates actors will be in the main focus of the further development. Pending the current situation, CIVITAS has planned to nominate and facilitate the participation of target key actors to participate in relevant events that might be funded by SIDA (CIVITAS has already funding for such events), as well as similar courses that might be potentially suitable like the mentioned beside, which is funded also by the Endowment.
- It's worthy to pay more attention to the media coverage of CROLD and YCs activities that is proportional to the efforts carried on the ground; one of the proper strategies is to assign the media coverage assignments for the specialized CSO's in media area to fill this gap.



4.3 Recommendations on thematic interventions with YCs, and CBO's structures based on demands stated by beneficiaries and stakeholders:

- Necessity to increase their capacity through well designed capacity building courses to further topics, relative to their assumed roles and obligations; such training topics are:
 - Needs assessment periodically to new joined beneficiaries;
 - Moderation and facilitation skills for the newly recruited YCs who replace the dropout volunteers;
 - Initiatives design and management for youth engagement in governance and accountability;
 - Fundraising, proposal writing, and strategic planning to CBO's; and
 - Training the YCs on M&E, Theory of Change (ToC), and monitoring matrix design aiming at increasing their capacities to perform efficient monitoring and follow up processes to the duty bearers while performing their duties.

5 ANNEXES

- 5.1 Annex A - Quantitative survey with decision makers
- 5.2 Annex B – Questionnaire with YCs
- 5.3 Annex C - Quantitative survey with YCs
- 5.4 Annex D - Quantitative survey with CROLD
- 5.5 Annex C - Success Stories & Anecdotes via desk review