

Planning of Health Non-Governmental Organizations in Palestine under the Conditions of Instability

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Abstract

Often, planners are forced to operate under unpredictable conditions or use imprecise information. This paper examines the strategies adopted by Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the period of instability between 1986 and 2000 and how they coped with the situation. The effectiveness of the NGOs is also investigated, and the relationships between planning strategies and organisational effectiveness ratings were examined. The research sample was 20 Palestinian health NGOs in West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. A multi-method approach combining a self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interview was adopted in order to collect both a large volume of comparable data and a rich picture of respondents' opinions and behaviours. Indices were constructed as proxies for the use of five planning strategies - Risk Analysis, Gambling, Organisational Learning, Contingency Planning and Instrumentalism - as well as for measuring organisational effectiveness. NGOs reported that planners used all five strategies to varying degrees. Instrumentalism was the most used, and greater use of this strategy was associated with higher ratings of organisational effectiveness. Organisational Learning was associated with effectiveness only for the more stable period. All other strategies were negatively correlated with effectiveness. More effective organisations selected and combined strategies flexibly.

Key words: Strategies, planning, NGOs, Palestine.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Statement of the Problem

Planning is a future- and action-oriented process that links knowledge to action to bring about positive and meaningful changes (Dror, 1986; Goldberg, 1986; Friedmann, 1987b; Procter, 1998). The great difficulty underlying this task is usually that planners and decision-makers are forced to operate under unpredictable conditions or using imprecise information (Pearman, 1985; Russel and Michael, 1995). Thus, the central issue in most decision theory is how to cope with uncertainty. Conceptually, uncertainty can be explained using two main concepts: vagueness and ambiguity. Vagueness is defined as the "lack of precise or sharp distinctions or boundaries", and ambiguity is defined as the "situation in which several alternatives are left unspecified" (Klir, 1989:349). It is not a new concept, however. It affected the past, continues to influence our present and is likely to shape the future (McConkey, 1987). There are a number of strategies to cope with uncertainty in planning: for example, risk analysis, gambling, organisational learning, contingency planning, and Instrumentalism. Risk analysis refers to the strategy in which several options are identified for achieving one's goal, and each one of these options has a corresponding probability distribution used for making decisions (Sager, 1996). In comparison, gambling refers to the decision-making process in which one cannot rely on exact probabilities as proposed by a risk analysis strategy because of the 'wicked' nature of the problems that face planners in which the "game rules are unknown" (Dror, 1986:30).

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Organisational learning in turn refers to the process of learning from experience (Friedmann, 1976; Levitt and March, 1988, Sager, 1996), on the assumption that enough similarities exist between previous and current situations for planners. Of comparison Contingency planning is based on the planners' ability to anticipate future events and to pre-plan for them accordingly (McConkey, 1987). In order to make contingency plan useful, it is essential that each and every component of the plan is implemented in the proper order and time.

Instrumentalism is a process-oriented methodology which relies on continual learning and modifying of current strategy based on new information (Lindblom, 1973; Swaney, 1996). Because of this reliance on continual modification, some experts have criticised incrementalism for several reasons, including not having a known or easily determined direction that planners can rely upon for achieving their objectives (Swaney, 1996) Such issues are worthy of investigation, particularly at a time when many organisations in various parts of the world are operating in highly volatile environments. How are organisations affected by situations of high instability? How do planners cope with the uncertainties with which they are faced? How feasible and effective are the strategies proposed by theorists for planning under uncertainty, in conditions of high instability? These issues are explored in this research, with particular reference to the case of health NGOs in Palestine, in the hope of obtaining insights that will benefit not only the studied organisations themselves, but also planners further afield, in their efforts to respond to the uncertainties of a turbulent environment.

1.2 Rationale

The Palestinian environment in general can best be characterised as one of transition, influx, and instability (Diwan and Shaban, 1999). For several reasons, therefore, Palestine is an interesting and politically illuminating setting in which to examine empirically the appropriate strategies for coping with instability. There are several reasons for this. The first and most important factor is that the very existence or the future of Palestinian Statehood is anything but stable. That is, although negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have been taking place since 1991, when the Madrid Peace Conference was inaugurated, nobody can tell if, when, and how a permanent agreement might be reached and what outcomes it might bring about.

Traditionally, very few planners working in Palestine have a formal planning, policy, or public administration background. Instead, most of them have backgrounds in sociology, political science, economics, or even engineering. In addition, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have never been planners or decision-makers. Instead, their roles were, at best, limited to administrative support and implementation of these plans (Bird and Lister, 1997). It has been widely recognised that because of the political sensitivity that most NGOs have faced and their dependence on external source of finance, NGOs in Palestine have faced a variety of instabilities due to political, financial, professional, and legal causes. For example, the absence of a uniform legal structure to govern operations and clarify rights and responsibilities of NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been a major source of instability that continues to threaten the very existence of these NGOs. With the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority PNA in 1994, a new but not less-challenging chapter in NGOs' histories started to unfold.

Furthermore, for better or worse, with numerous donors assisting the Palestinians in the public, private, and NGO sectors, the planning process itself is not as homogenous or unified as it is in most other countries. Needless to say, this heterogeneity of approaches used and objectives sought, together with the lack of adequate competition among the donors themselves, have created additional complexities and unpredictability in donors' support.

1.3 Aim and Questions of the Study

The aim of the research was to compare the effectiveness of Palestinian health NGO's before, during and after the First Intifada (uprising): i.e. before 1987; from 1987 to 1993 when the (PNA) was established by the signing of the Oslo Accord between the PLO and Israel, and after 2000. The main focus was to examine the challenges the NGOs faced in the period of stability and instability along with the strategies they adopted to cope with the situations; further to explore the relative usefulness of the various strategies employed.

The researchers refocused on two interrelated themes:

1. Organisational Response

- How were these unstable situations addressed?

2. Are there differences between planners of different education and experience?

3. Organisational Effectiveness

- How effective have these NGOs been, as perceived by the planners themselves?
- Are there differences among planners of different education and experience in their perceptions of organisational effectiveness?
- Is there a relationship between the use of certain planning strategies and the planners' perception of the effectiveness of the NGOs they represent?

In order to answer these questions, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, involving multiple information sources, was employed in order to triangulate the information obtained and increase the validity of the findings. Based on preliminary exploration of the field, the researcher designed, and conducted a semi-structured survey of twenty health NGOs in Palestine, regarding the types of instabilities they faced, the methods used to deal with the types of instabilities they faced, and the overall effectiveness of these NGOs.

1.4 Significance of the Study

A country like Palestine, with an unstable environment, offers valuable opportunities to examine the appropriate strategies for coping with instability, among many challenges facing health NGOs during the past twenty years, especially during the Intifada between 1987-1994. This study will empirically examine how twenty planners in health NGOs dealt with both internal and external causes of instability. The results of this research will be of importance to different constituent groups. First, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the country will, it is hoped, find the conclusions and recommendations helpful in evaluating themselves, assessing their shortcomings and strengths and redoubling their efforts in coping with instability. The next constituent group for whom the results of this study will be beneficial is the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Hopefully, the results of this study will be useful in helping the PNA increase its attention to the positive role of the NGOs the development process.

Although this research is focused on planning in instability within health NGOs in Palestine, the researchers believe that it will be of value to all planners in public, private, and NGO sectors alike. This research may be viewed as a modest contribution towards advancing our theoretical understanding of planning in instability and making it more responsive to practitioners. This is a much needed effort, given the fact that currently, "...there is very little in planning theory to guide planners in crisis, nor is there much documentation of how planners have responded to crisis in practice" (Alterman, 1995:157).

4. Theoretical Framework

Writers on organisational theory have long been aware that conditions of turbulence and instability in the environment give rise to uncertainty. In other words, as to goals, and availability of resources - that create difficulty for managers tasked with planning for the organisation (see, for example, Schon, 1971; Friedmann, 1976; Bryson, 1981; Sager, 1996). Such has been the situation facing Palestinian health NGOs. This section provides a theoretical basis for the empirical work. It contains an exploration of two key themes: the nature and sources of uncertainty that organisations face, particularly in conditions of uncertainty, and a variety of planning approaches and techniques which organisations may adopt in an attempt to cope with an unstable environment and the uncertainties such instability generates.

The first part of the section is concerned with uncertainty. Various typologies of uncertainty are presented, which show that uncertainty can come from various sources, both within and outside an organisation, and may vary in degree: both are a function of the perspective of the observer. The remainder of the section examines approaches for dealing with instability and uncertainty when carrying out strategic planning.

2.1 Uncertainty

Mack (1971) suggested that it is not sufficient to view uncertainty as merely a 'function of futurity'. Instead, she proposed a more elaborate understanding of uncertainty that is based on the fundamental causes of such uncertainty. Accordingly, Mack divided uncertainty into four different general forms based on their possible causes. The first form of uncertainty is related to the 'intrinsic functional relationships' between the various elements of the situation under consideration.

The second type of uncertainty is related to 'external influences' that are exogenous to the system under consideration. They are produced and controlled outside the domain of the system at issue. The third type of uncertainty identified by Mack is related to the 'human element and strategies'. The fourth and final type of uncertainty is related to chance, which is a non-systematic, randomly generated type of uncertainty (Mack, 1971). From this perspective, it can be suggested that in the conditions of instability prevailing in Palestine, health NGOs faced at least two of these types of uncertainty. They were subject to external forces beyond their control, not only in the general climate of violence and destruction, but also in a hostile legal environment under oppressive licensing regulations, and political demands from the PNA and donors.

2.2 Types of Strategies

2.2.1 Risk Analysis

Three main approaches have been used for dealing with decisions under risk. The first and perhaps most widely used approach is based on the notion of expected utility (Pearman, 1985; Hansson and Johnnesson, 1995). Numerically, the expected utility for any given state of affairs may be computed by multiplying the probability of a risk by its expected severity. The second approach used for conducting risk analysis is based on the maximal criterion, where an assessor considers only the best outcome associated with each option and selects an option with the best potential outcome

Risk Analysis has many inherent weaknesses that must be recognised and addressed when using such a strategy. Furthermore, even if risk analysis is used for dealing with one or more types of uncertainty, there still may be serious problems in its application, resulting in catastrophic unforeseen consequences of decision-making due to the lack of accuracy. Given these considerations, it is unlikely that risk analysis alone can adequately solve the various problems of planning in conditions of instability. This is particularly true because there is a difference between decision-making under risk and under uncertainty (Pearman, 1985). In the former, the probability distribution of all outcomes is, very unrealistically, assumed to be known. With these thoughts in mind, this paper examines later whether planners in Palestinian health NGOs have used risk analysis in dealing with the various types and levels of uncertainty caused by the instabilities surrounding them. If so, what were the reasons for such a decision? And, do the planners think that such a method is effective for coping with the instabilities they encounter?

2.2.2 Gambling

Statistical theories, regression analysis, cost-benefit analysis, long range estimation and future projections have become a necessity for portraying the 'soundness' of the decision making processes. This mode of thinking and problem-solving became known as the 'rational approach' (Friedman, 1987a). This approach was called rational despite its many weaknesses, over-simplifications and irrationality in certain cases, especially when facing the 'wicked' types of problems that characterize most types of actual planning problems (Rittel and Webber, 1973). Consequently, one may ask how much 'certainty' and 'confidence' we can have in predicting the future. Do planners have the type and quality of information they need to perform complex and interconnected tasks? It is doubtful whether increasing the level of methodological sophistication and rigor can adequately address the subjective nature of the probability distributions that characterizes most complex planning problems (Lindblom, 1973). Hence, one can question the very assumptions behind and the utility of spending much needed resources, human and capital, in search of better and more accurate solutions. Furthermore, it has also been recognised that any planning and policy environment must cope with much quantitative and qualitative uncertainty, much of which is 'hard' and built into the dynamics of the relevant phenomena. Accordingly, quantitative uncertainty exists when the probabilities of future scenarios cannot be identified and computed.

Thus, planning without estimating probabilities or with contradictory information will be considered as two sub-indicators of the use of gambling. But as discussed above, the very assumption of calculable probability distribution is debatable, not to mention the reliability of its estimation. In fact, every decision under conditions of instability and, hence, uncertainty is a gamble, according to Dror (1986). If we accept this claim, we are opening the door for a potentially radical change in the way planners and policy-makers operate.

2.2.3 Organisational Learning

Organisations learn from experience (Hage, 1966; Friedmann, 1976; Korten, 1987b; Levitt and March, 1988; Carley and Harrald, 1997). Ideally, learning would be used for furthering the goals of the organisation, although that is not guaranteed. Theory and practice can be inconsistent, however. As discussed earlier, practice is typically more complicated than theory, as it reflects multiple perceptions and approaches to cope with problems, for example, in theory, organisational learning improves performance, but in practice, “when actual organisations have been examined, the case is not always clear as to whether organisational learning has occurred and whether such learning actually improved performance” (Carley and Harrald, 1997:311). The following sections provide an operational definition of organisational learning and its potential contribution to coping with uncertainties in planning. Organisational Learning can be defined as “dialectic and dialogic process, a process of reflexive action that takes place in environments from which we learn in the very process of transforming them” (Friedmann, 1987b:169). To explain organisational learning in its ecological setting, Levitt and March (1988) used an organisation behavioural framework with an emphasis on three main observations. The first one indicated that behaviour in an organisation is based on routines. In this context, the word “routines” is a generic term that encompasses form, rules, procedures, conventions, strategies and technologies around which organisations are constructed and through which they operate. It also includes the structure of informal beliefs, frameworks, paradigms, codes, cultures, and knowledge that support, elaborate, or in some cases undermine the formal routines (Levitt and March, 1988).

The second observation is that organisational actions are history-dependent. That is, routines are based on interpretations of the past more than prediction of the future. Organisations adapt to experience in gradual stages in response to feedback about outcome. Accordingly, Levitt and March (1988) suggested two main mechanisms for fostering organisational learning. The first one is based on trial-and-error experimentation. Here, an organisation experiments with as many possible alternative routines as possible and develops new ones in its attempt to find the one that best meets its needs and adequately addresses its problems. The second mechanism for developing an organisation’s learning capacity is based on an organisational search for appropriate mechanisms, as suggested earlier. In this case, “an organisation draws from a pool of alternative routines, adopting better ones when they are discovered” (Levitt and March, 1988:321). Several forms of organisational learning have been identified. They include the following: the development of routines, standard operating procedures, accounting procedures, cumulative production skills, development of consensus, determination of the optimal decision rule and the emergence of effective communication structures and improved accuracy in problem solving (Hage, 1966; Levitt and March, 1988; Carley and Harrald, 1997).

From a planning perspective, the strengths of organisational learning are based on the fact that learning maximises the benefits of experience and thus, typically, is associated with increased returns to scale (Levitt and March, 1988). However, as indicated at the start of this section, despite the potential benefits from organisational learning, there exist two alternative views on organisational learning: one asserts and the other questions the potential benefits of organisational learning. An implicit assumption in this view is that the past experience can be easily analysed, and lessons can be drawn from past experience and incorporated into current policy-making processes. This view also assumes that lessons will be reflected in the future planning of these organisations. Otherwise, organisational experiences are not of much use.

2.2.4 Contingency

The major potential strength of contingency planning lies in the ability of the planners to anticipate the potential future scenarios and to prepare adequately agreed-upon action to be taken when and anticipated event occurs. An essential prerequisite for a successful contingency plan is that agreements and demonstrated commitments must be reached on who is doing what, where, when and how, if an anticipated event actually occurs. The conclusion of such agreements with other NGOs or other health providers, together with the development of future scenarios, will be used as two sub-indicators of contingency planning in this research study. Equally important to the success of contingency planning is the ability of the main actors to mobilise and involve potentially affected parties. Several assumptions characterise contingency planning, the first of which is role identification and motivation (Meyer and Belobaba, 1982). In this assumption, appropriate roles and responsibilities of each member of the organisation are clearly identified and agreed upon. It also implies that communication channels are agreed-upon and easily accessible at appropriate times.

The second assumption is that plans are thoroughly and completely implemented, without deviation. Notably, this view is an extension of the synoptic planning approach, which unrealistically assumes the existence of a 'rational' actor whose capabilities are far beyond a human's intrinsic and extrinsic capabilities (Simon, 1955; Bryson and Delbecq, 1979; Sager, 1996). The third assumption is that the environment surrounding contingencies is political by nature (Bryson and Delbecq, 1979). This may be due in part to the surprise elements that are associated with the expected changes and the potential responses to such changes. The third assumption that characterises contingency planning is related to the type of analysis used. Since, by definition, planners will have little or no time to make important decisions under conditions of stress, more time and resources should be spent in anticipation of what may happen and designing appropriate responses to dealing with such scenarios in a timely and efficient manner. The final assumption is related to the crisis situation aftermath.

Despite the fact that contingency planning has its own unique elements, it is in many respects closely related to the other planning strategies identified earlier, particularly risk analysis and organisational learning. Similarly, even if one identifies all possible futures, there is no guarantee that the organisation can deal with and plan for each and every contingency adequately. After all, "it is impossible to plan for any and all contingencies" (McConkey, 1987:41). To this end, the following sub-section examines and analyses incrementalism in the planning context.

2.2.5 Instrumentalism

Incrementalist planning, also referred to as "successive limited comparisons" (Lindblom, 1973) or "muddling through" (Etzioni, 1973), refers to the method by which one is "continually building out from the current situation, step-by-step and by small degree" (Lindblom, 1973:154). It was developed as a result of the apparent failure suffered by the synoptic, means-ends method which unrealistically assumed the existence of subjective, agreed-upon social values and goals (Lindblom, 1973; Rosenhead, 1980; Etzioni, 1973). In essence, the incremental is methodology recognises fallibility and focuses on the process of planning rather than its product.

Prominent planners, such as Simon (1955), have supported the incrementalist approach because it recognises that the types of problems facing planners are too complex to expect that an 'economic man' can solve them. As an alternative, Simon suggested continual cross-reference between the state and process descriptions of the same complex reality with a view to discovering a sequence of processes that will produce the goal state [i.e. the solution] from an initial state [i.e. the problem] (Cartwright, 1991). In incrementalism, problems are not subjected to a once-and-for-all solution but are attacked repeatedly. Policy is developed gradually through a long chain of such small steps. Accordingly, the use of intuition will be considered a sub-indicator of the use of incrementalism.

Like all other planning strategies, incrementalism has strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps, the greatest weakness of incrementalism is the absence of a built-in safeguard for ensuring that planners and policy-makers consider all relevant potential options. That is, because of the way incrementalism is applied, it encourages continual re-thinking and re-positioning after every step in the planning process, without a guarantee that all potential strategies are considered. This failure may lead to incoherence and lack of direction (Rosenhead, 1980). Accordingly, it has been suggested that "Incremental decision-making amounts to drifting or action without direction" (Sager, 1996:4). The criticism is, however, based on a distortion of the claims of incrementalism. The Incrementalist approach does not assume that the summation of the marginal benefit will add up to a well-defined desired total benefit. On the contrary, the Incrementalist process states that, at each increment, the general objective of the organisation is reconsidered and revised in light of the new findings (Rosenhead, 1980).

In addition, because incrementalism is a process-oriented approach, it does not require that the sums of the marginal benefits add up to 'an overall improvement' unless such improvement is a part of the process and not an end by itself. A third potential weakness in incrementalism is related to the fact that an Incrementalist typically proceeds by searching for agreement to initiate the process of planning instead of the other way around (Sager, 1996). Incrementalism does not, however, necessitate that an organisation has a specific agreement that cannot be revisited and agreed upon-again. Perhaps an initial agreement on what needs to be done is required, but by definition, such agreement is tentative and can be easily modified after new information is obtained. The challenge, therefore, lies in how a planner can craft an initial agreement that is small and flexible enough, especially if planning for a pluralist society with multiple and often-conflicting interests and social values.

In spite of these potential weaknesses, it has been widely recognised that structural strengths in incrementalism make it particularly suitable for planning under condition of stress, turbulence, and uncertainty (Lindblom, 1973; Sager, 1996). In the remainder of this section, the main strengths of the incrementalist approach will be examined, with emphasis on its ability to deal effectively with instability in particular. Flexibility is, by far, the most positive aspect of incrementalism. It allows planners to redress the rigidity, complexity, and abruptness problems. Consequently, the plan needs to be flexible (Sager, 1996). The Incrementalist approach offers an alternative for dealing with flexibility in the planning system because it avoids “the need for decisions to be ‘right’, by subjecting them to continuous adjustment” (Rosenhead, 1980:211). As discussed earlier, the incrementalist approach, with an emphasis on taking small steps that differ only slightly from current strategies, and on continual feedback and adjustment of procedures used and the ‘objective’ sought, offers a much-needed flexibility critical for coping with instability.

The ability to simplify complex problems is another important indicator of the Incrementalist approach. Therefore, it is critical that planners find ways to simplify these complex problems. In the Incrementalist approach, simplification is achieved in two main ways. The first one, which follows directly from the definition of incrementalism, is achieved by limiting policy comparisons to those policies that are, relatively, not very different from policies currently in effect (Kellinger and Lee, 2000). That is, by considering marginal variations of existing and or known strategic options, an incrementalist is inevitably simplifying the problem under consideration and making it easier to analyse, understand and implement. In this context, the use of pilot studies is considered a useful approach for testing a particular strategy before implementing it full scale.

The second type of simplification is achieved through “ignoring important possible consequences of possible policies, as well as values attached to neglected consequences” (Lindblom, 1973:162). This is critical because complex problems, especially in social contexts, tend to have repercussions in all directions. This modified version which “seeks to adapt decision-making strategies to the limited cognitive capacities of decision-makers and reduce the scope and cost of information collection and computation” is known as disjointed incrementalism (Etzioni, 1973:19). Continual learning is another characteristic of the Incrementalist planning approach. As indicated earlier, in incrementalism, planning and policy-making are considered to be “a process of successive approximation to some desired objectives in which what is desired itself continues to change under reconsideration” (Lindblom, 1973:164-165). Feedback loops are therefore invaluable instruments commonly utilised in the Incrementalist approach to ensure that planners are kept abreast of changing circumstances by continually updating them with new and relevant information as they become available.

3. Analysis of Planning Strategies

This section presents the empirical results of the planning strategies used by NGOs in coping with instability and the resulting uncertainty. A detailed comparative and contextual analysis of specific strategies used will be presented and a set of potential actions that appear to help health NGOs will also be outlined. An examination is further made of the extent to which each of the five planning strategies have been used, and the relationship between the use of these strategies and the NGOs’ overall effectiveness is assessed, based on the available empirical evidence.

3.1 Accounting for Instability and Conducting Contextual Analysis

It has been maintained that instability is neither predictable nor measurable (De Rodes, 1994). For this reason, the author has aimed to develop a method to measure instability based on empirical methods, rather than the conventional theoretical methods. Based on an extensive literature review, the author identified three elements, which could be used as sub- indicators to develop a composite index of instability. This index could then be used to stratify the three geographic regions: the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, according to the level of instability. These elements were the financial, political and legal instability faced by an NGO from 1986 until now. Information about these matters was obtained from extensive interviews with planning practitioners and academics. On the basis of respondents’ replies, it was evident that instability was highest in Palestine during the period of Intifada (from 1987 to 1993). In these years, the West Bank had the highest degree of instability, whereas Jerusalem had the lowest. The situation stabilised somewhat with the signing of the Oslo agreement in 1993, which brought some stability to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, though the status of Jerusalem was left for final negotiations between the PNA and Israel.

Of these two regions, Gaza Strip continued to face tighter control. Thus, the degree of instability in all three regions was not uniform. After 2000, the Gaza Strip had become the region of greatest instability, while the West Bank had become more stable.

3.2 Measuring Perceived Effectiveness

In order to evaluate the planning strategies used, it is important first to develop an indicator for measuring how effective the NGOs were in achieving their objectives. A common measure of the overall effectiveness of these NGOs makes it possible to compare the different strategies in use and their effectiveness. Based on the information, elicited, the researcher computed an overall effectiveness index (EFFI) for each organisation. The scale for this index ranged from zero (=not effective) to two (= most effective). The results are presented in Table 1. In this table, and in the others, the numerical figures are the numbers derived from the categorical variables.

Table 1: Reported Organisational Effectiveness by Sub-Component 1986- After 2000 (n=20)

Effectiveness Component	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	EFFI 1986	EFFI 1993	EFFI After 2000
Cost	1.34	1.19	1.09
Time needed to deliver services	1.17	1.15	1.19
Number of beneficiaries	1.48	1.59	1.54
Quality	1.34	1.41	1.53
Overall Effectiveness	1.25	1.37	1.33

Table 1 presents mixed results in terms of changes in sub-indicators between 1986 and after 2000. Thus it can be seen that cost-effectiveness declined between 1986 and after 2000, but the number of beneficiaries increased and quality of services improved. In addition, the time required to provide these services fluctuated during this period. These trends can be explained if we take into account the under-developed nature of the health sector during this period. Especially during the period of Intifada, demand was always higher than supply, since the governmental and private sectors could not completely fulfil all health-care needs. At the same time, providing good quality health care services was important for NGOs in order to attract funding. The differences in time of service delivery can be accounted for by the fact that this was a time of severe restrictions and closures imposed by the Israeli government. Following the signing of the Oslo Peace Agreements, the borders remained closed for Palestinians.

Problems between the PNA and the Israeli government were reflected in organisations working in health. As shown above, the PNA was unable to carry out its obligations to this health NGO because of its dependence on Israeli materials and due to border restrictions. Therefore, it was not always possible for the NGOs to stick to their time schedule. This is why the time effectiveness component was the lowest rated among the effectiveness factors, for the Intifada period. Different regions also reported different levels of effectiveness. This is shown in Table 2. Between 1986 and 1994, the planners in the Gaza Strip reported the highest rates of effectiveness, followed by Jerusalem and the West Bank. It is notable that between 1994 and after 2000 there was a decrease in reported effectiveness for Gaza-based planners, and an increase in the reported figures for the West Bank, while Jerusalem remained almost unchanged.

Table 2: Reported Total Effectiveness in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. (n=20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	EFFI 1986	EFFI 1994	EFFI After 2000
West Bank	1.00	1.01	1.48
Gaza Strip	1.47	1.51	1.26
Jerusalem	1.45	1.41	1.30
Overall Effectiveness	1.35	1.36	1.32

This trend is consistent with the findings in regard to instability. Instability elements were the highest in the West Bank between 1986 and 1994 and lowest in Jerusalem, with the Gaza Strip in between. This trend reversed in 2000, with the lowest levels of instability now in the West Bank and the highest in the Gaza Strip. The level of instability in Jerusalem was higher in 1994 but became the second highest in 2000. Accordingly, there is an inverse, but not linear, relationship between the reported level of overall effectiveness and the level of instability facing health NGOs.

3.3 Use of Specific Strategies

This section focuses on an empirical analysis of the five planning strategies, the extent to which they were used for coping with instability and their relationship with perceived organisational effectiveness.

3.3.1 Risk Analysis

It was indicated earlier that if the level of instability is high, it is more difficult to use risk analysis, and vice versa. This section will be used to test if this expectation holds across various regions and time periods.

Table 3 shows the use of risk analysis (RISK) as reported by twenty planners, each in health NGO investigated for this study. It can be seen that there was a gradual increase in overall usage of risk analysis between 1986 and 1993 with a sudden drop after 2000. Looking at values for the time period between 1986 and 1993, at the regional level, the values for RISK were lowest in the West Bank, average in the Gaza Strip and highest in Jerusalem. This pattern coincides with the level of instability in this area since use of risk analysis varied inversely with stability.

Table 3: Reported Use of Risk Analysis in West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem (n =20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	RISK 1986	RISK 1993	RISK After 2000
West Bank	0.59	0.81	0.71
Gaza Strip	0.66	0.90	0.53
Jerusalem	0.73	0.98	0.89
RISK	0.66	0.90	0.69

A closer look at the components of RISK helps in understanding these trends. In 1986, nine planners used risk analysis whereas twelve did in 1991, even though all the information that they needed was not available to them. This can be explained by the fact that in 1986, many of the NGOs were new and could not afford to take risks. Information available during the Israeli occupation could not always be relied upon as accurate or complete. Also, most of the planners who founded these organisations were medical doctors who did not have much knowledge of administrative issues, including the use of risk analysis.

When the three regions are compared, it can be seen that the NGOs in Jerusalem reported a higher level of RISK than those in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This may be linked to the unique status of Jerusalem, which was driven by Palestinian efforts to protect its Arab identity from Israel's threats. One important implication of these efforts was that the planners in Jerusalem were more willing to take risks than those in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This planner also added: Risk analysis should be used whenever a situation permits, but always in combination with other strategies. The use of risk analysis decreased after 1994, irrespective of the number of years of planning related experience. The first reason for this was probably the financial instability of the NGOs after 1993. This instability forced NGOs to be more conservative in planning approaches and less willing to take risks in any given level of instability. Also, as planners experimented with risk analysis, they realised that it was not as effective as anticipated and they turned to other strategies like organisational learning, contingency planning and others, as explained below. The relationship between overall perceived effectiveness (EFFI) and risk analysis (RISK) for the period between 1986 and 2000 is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients for the Use of Risk Analysis and the Reported Level of Overall Effectiveness 1986- After 2000

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	RISK 1986	RISK 1993	RISK After 2000
Overall Effectiveness	-0.04		
Overall Effectiveness		-0.36	
Overall Effectiveness			
Overall Effectiveness			-0.04

This table shows a negative correlation between the use of risk analysis and the NGOs’ perceived overall effectiveness. The correlation coefficient between risk analysis and overall effectiveness was small and negative (-0.04) in 1986, and then decreased substantially in 1993 (-0.36), and reverted to its initial small and negative value (-0.04) after 2000.

3.3.2 Gambling

The theoretical analysis suggested a strong positive correlation between the level of instability and the use of a gambling strategy (GAMI) to cope with instability. Table 6 explores the use of gambling strategy in the three regions of Palestine from 1986 to after 2000.

Table 5: Reported Gambling Strategy Use in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	GAMI 1986	GAMI 1993	GAMI After 2000
West Bank	0.81	1.13	1.11
Gaza Strip	0.43	0.77	0.41
Jerusalem	0.38	0.79	0.83
GAMI	0.51	0.86	0.73

As shown in Table 5, the lowest values for GAMI were 0.38 for Jerusalem in 1986, after which they increased in all regions and peaked at 1.13 in 1993 and 1.11 after 2000. For the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the overall value of GAMI was highest in 1993 at 0.86 and 0.77 and declined thereafter. It was in 1993 that Intifada peaked, leading to rising levels of instability and, hence, uncertainty, compared to previous years. In such conditions, the use of probability became unfeasible and it was more realistic to use gambling. As shown in Table 6, GAMI values between 1986 and 2000 were highest in the West Bank, with inconsistent trends for the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. The differences in the value of GAMI can be due planners’ educational background, and planning-related experience, there was a positive relationship between educational status and use of a gambling strategy. Thus, planners who were more educated were more likely to use a gambling strategy, because they were more aware of the limitations of probability estimations. They were more likely to take decisions based on incomplete information. As one of the planners said:

We believed that any decision, whatever the outcome, was better than no decision at all. The number of years of planning experience was considered in relation to the use of a gambling strategy. However, the results did not reveal any clear relationship between the two. No further conclusions can be made in this regard.

Table 6: Correlation Coefficients between Gambling and Use of the NGO's Overall Effectiveness 1986- After 2000 (n =20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	GAMI 1986	GAMI 1993	GAMI After 2000
Overall Effectiveness	-0.21		
Overall Effectiveness		-0.28	
Overall Effectiveness			
Overall Effectiveness			-0.05

Table 6 compares the use of gambling to the overall effectiveness of the NGOs. There was a negative correlation between the use of gambling strategy and overall effectiveness between 1986 and after 2000. The negative correlation was strong until 1993, when it started to decrease to reach its lowest negative value (-0.05) after 2000. Such a correlation is expected because, as discussed, use of a gambling strategy increased when instability increased, which is also the time when overall effectiveness decreased. The size and direction of the correlation coefficients between using gambling strategy and overall effectiveness are very similar to those for using risk strategy and overall effectiveness, confirming the close relationship between the two.

3.3.3 Organisational Learning

Organisational learning as defined earlier could be expected to be a highly-used strategy during the period under consideration (1986-2000), since this was the period of great political and economic change in Palestine, especially with the Intifada and the establishment of the PNA. To validate this expectation, Table 8 compares the use of organisational learning (LEARI) in health NGOs, both overall and for each time period.

Table 7: Reported Use of Organisational Learning in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem 1986- after 2000 (n =20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	LEARI 1986	LEARI 1993	LEARI after 2000
West Bank	0.89	1.22	1.31
Gaza Strip	0.63	1.28	1.29
Jerusalem	0.75	0.96	1.13
LEARI	0.73	1.04	1.22

This table shows that there was a substantial rise in the LEARI values from 1986 to 2000. The values for LEARI are lowest in 1986. There was a very rapid increase in LEARI between 1986 and 2000, which was the period of greatest political turmoil and instability. Therefore, the health NGOs had considerable and invaluable experience to learn from; there was almost a 60% leap in LEARI value of 1993 (1.22) compared to 1986 (0.73). There was a positive relationship between the planners' educational status and the use of LEARI, with the exception of a single planner. Thus planners with a higher educational level were more likely to use LEARI than less-educated ones. However, no relationship could be found between LEARI and years of experience; this merits further study.

Table 7 below compares the values of LEARI and EFFI from 1986 to after 2000. The correlation coefficients between LEARI and EFFI were negative in the period before and during Intifada, but then become positive. The negative correlation can be related to the early period in which the NGOs were just being set up and there was very little experience on which to draw.

Table 8: Correlation Coefficients between Organisational Learning Use and the NGOs' Overall Effectiveness 1986-2000

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	LEARI 1986	LEARI 1993	LEARI After 2000
Overall Effectiveness	-0.04		
Overall Effectiveness		-0.10	
Overall Effectiveness			
Overall Effectiveness			-0.19

Once the NGOs started establishing themselves, they had much more experience to learn from, especially during the period of the Intifada. In addition, they also started to incorporate other strategies (Al-Barghouthi, 1997). Therefore, the impact of using organisational learning strategy grew steadily over the years, followed by a corresponding increase in overall effectiveness.

3.3.4 Contingency Planning

Contingency planning as defined (CONTI) depends heavily on pre-planning; therefore, it is expected to increase at a small rate with the rise in instability, in contrast to GAMI, which is expected to rise steadily with an increase in instability. The largest increase is in the period between 1986 and 1991, when the Palestinian Intifada reached its peak. The restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities made it necessary for the NGOs to take a proactive role in the development and use of contingency plans. Also, as instability continued to increase after 1993, CONTI also increased, though at a much lower rate.

Table 9: Reported Usage of Contingency Planning in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem 1986-2000 (n =20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	CONTI 1986	CONTI 1993	CONTI After 2000
West Bank	0.93	1.14	1.49
Gaza Strip	0.73	1.11	1.41
Jerusalem	0.53	0.68	1.33
CONTI	0.76	0.96	1.29

The individual sub-indicators of contingency planning are outlined in Table 10. These sub-indicators were only used moderately in 1986, but their use grew steadily but slowly from 1993 until 2000. The use of contingency planning was limited in the early 1980s, because there were fewer emergency situations in these years. Conditions started to change in the late 1980s with the outbreak of the Intifada. Consequently, there was a 50-100% increase in the use of four sub-components from 1986 to 2000. The use of CONTI was also examined in light of the educational background of the planners and the years of experience.

However, neither of these two variables proved to be useful for explaining variations. That is, analysis did not show any significant relationship between planners' education or planning-related experience on one hand and the use of contingency planning on the other.

Table 10: Reported Use of the four Sub-Indicators for Contingency Planning 1986-2000 (n=20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	CONTI 1986	CONTI 1993	CONTI After 2000
Sub-Contracting	0.89	1.08	1.14
Scenarios	0.41	0.88	1.24
Detailed Process	0.70	1.10	1.25
Emergency	0.88	1.13	1.23

The relationship between the use of contingency planning and the NGOs' overall level of effectiveness is examined in Table 9.

Table 11: Correlation Coefficients between Contingency Planning Use and the Overall Effectiveness of NGOs 1986-2000 (n=20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	CONTI 1986	CONTI 1991	CONTI After 2000
Overall Effectiveness	-0.19		
Overall Effectiveness		-0.29	
Overall Effectiveness			
Overall Effectiveness			-0.04

Table 11 shows a small negative correlation between using contingency planning strategy and overall effectiveness. Thus, planners who used a contingency planning strategy perceived their organisations as less effective and vice versa. The size of correlation gradually decreased from a highest negative (-0.29) in 1993 to a lowest negative of (-0.04) after 2000, which coincides with a decrease in the level of instability. Therefore, overall effectiveness values for an NGO decrease, with an increased use of contingency planning strategy, during the period of higher instability.

3.3.5 Instrumentalism

Based on the definition and discussion of instrumentalism (INCREMI), together with the results of the in-depth study, it was expected that the use of INCREMI would increase as the level of instability and, hence, uncertainty, increased. Thus, there would be a positive relationship between the two. To test this expectation, the use of INCREMI by the health NGOs is shown below in Table 13. The table shows that the value of INCREMI was usually higher than those for other strategies for the same time period. Due to the outbreak of the Intifada in 1987, the value of INCREMI was lower in 1986, with the highest increases from 1986 to 1991. Then, there was a marginal increase for the West Bank and Jerusalem between 1993 and after 2000.

Table 12: Reported Use of INCREMI by the Planners in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem 1986-2000 (n=20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	INCREMI 1986	INCREMI 1993	INCREMI After 2000
West Bank	0.89	1.18	1.39
Gaza Strip	1.23	1.46	1.28
Jerusalem	0.71	1.19	1.26
INCREMI	1.10	1.30	1.29

When the sub-elements were compared, a similar trend of increase between 1986 and 1993, followed by a decrease was observed except in "intuition". This is shown in Table 12. All the values of INCREMI increased between 1986 and 1998. The sub-component of flexible planning showed the highest value every year. This corresponds to what was found in the researcher's in in-depth interviews. The second sub-component in the order of rating was "continuous learning", which also forms a part of the organisational learning strategy. Similarly, "pilot testing" was both a part of the INCREMI and could be conceptually related to organisational learning strategy as a tool to learn from, modify and redirect strategies.

Table 13: Reported Sub-Indicators for the Extent to Which INCREMI was Used 1986-2000 (n=20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	INCREMI1986	INCREMI1993	INCREMI After 2000
Pilot Testing	0.95	1.42	1.33
Simplification	0.94	1.40	1.49
Flexibility	1.25	1.54	1.51
Continuous Learning	1.12	1.48	1.41
Intuition	0.85	0.92	0.82

INCREMI was examined in relation the years of planning experience and the educational background of the planners. Both these factors were expected to have a positive association with INCREMI. However, the results showed no relationship for either factor. The relationship between the use of INCREMI and EFFI is shown in Table 13 below.

Table 14: Correlation Coefficients for the Use of Instrumentalism and Reported Overall Effectiveness of NGOs 1986- After 2000 (n=20)

	Before Intifada	During Intifada	After Intifada
	INCREMI1986	INCREMI1993	INCREMI After 2000
Overall Effectiveness	0.13		
Overall Effectiveness		0.36	
Overall Effectiveness			
Overall Effectiveness			0.51

There is a positive correlation coefficient between use of an INCREMI strategy and overall effectiveness, which increases gradually from 1986 (0.13) to 2000 (0.51). Of all the five strategies, INCREMI was the only one which had a positive correlation with overall effectiveness. Based on these correlations and the earlier discussion, it is possible to conclude that the more planners used an INCREMI strategy, the higher the NGOs’ overall effectiveness.

4. Discussion

Coping with instability and the uncertainty that results is, to some extent, a challenge that all organisations have to face in today’s dynamic environment. For Palestinian NGOs, however, the challenges are particularly acute, possibly unique, in view of the volatile political context in which they operate and the many practical constraints that impede their activities

4.1 Organisational Response to Instability

This section considers how Palestinian health NGOs have responded to the turbulent and uncertain environment facing them, in terms of the approaches they have adopted in planning their activities. Five common planning strategies were investigated. The aim was to see how they had been used across time periods and regions, whether theoretical assumptions about the feasibility and value of using the strategies under conditions of instability were supported by practice in the surveyed NGOs, and whether planning preferences were influenced by the personal characteristics (education and experience) of the planners. Risk analysis, in which planners attempt to assess the likelihood of unwelcome outcomes or adverse effects (Swaney, 1996) was one of the least used strategies overall - only gambling was less used. The relatively low use of risk analysis, in particular by more experienced planners, is consistent with the problems attributed to the use of this approach in the literature. Even in conditions of relative stability, there may be difficulties arising from inability of planners to assess probabilities (Mack, 1971) and lack of accuracy in such assessments (Hansson, 1996b).It was notable in this study that NGOs’ reported use of risk analysis as an element in their strategic planning varied inversely with instability, when viewed from a regional perspective.

For example, from 1986 to 1993, the use of risk analysis was lowest in the West Bank, which had the highest level of instability arising from the impact of the Intifada; and most used in Jerusalem, which had the lowest instability. This finding, too, is consistent with theory, since, as noted by De Rodes (1994) uncertainty is not predictable or measurable; it therefore does not meet the assumption of known probabilities, on which risk analysis is based. It is interesting to note, however, that the inverse relationship between instability and use of risk analysis does not completely hold when examined across time periods. For example, risk analysis was least used, in all regions, in the pre-1986 (pre-Intifada) period, when the environment was more stable. The low use of risk analysis before 1986 may be related to the recent establishment of the organisations and lack of familiarity with such techniques.

A strategy used even less than risk analysis, however, was gambling, which was, overall, the least used of all five strategies. Gambling could, perhaps, be seen as a strategy of last resort, when the conditions for more rational strategies do not hold. It was noticeable from the interview responses analysed that the gambling strategy was reportedly most used in conditions of greater instability. From a temporal perspective, for example, the highest scores for use of gambling strategy were in 1993, reflecting the peak of the Intifada and, hence, a highly turbulent period. From a regional perspective, from 1986 to 1993 it was most used in the West Bank, which was the region with greatest instability.

In such a situation where predicting the future is difficult, one solution is to look to the past, with the aim of drawing on one's own or others' experience for information which may assist in dealing with the present. This is the essence of the organisational learning approach, which was one of the more widely reported planning strategies among the sample NGOs, for all the time periods investigated. It is notable, also, that use of the organisational learning approach was also low throughout the Intifada period, increasing significantly from 1993 onwards, suggesting some link with the level of stability.

Surprisingly, however, this planning approach received the second highest scores among the planners, overall and for three out of the four time periods (the exception being 1993, when it came third after organisational learning). Contrary to expectation, the greatest increase in use of contingency planning coincided with conditions of greatest instability, namely, the 1986-1991 period. This contingency planning is based on an assumption of agreed roles and responsibilities, and an understanding that when the planned for event occurs, the plan will be implemented without deviation. In the case of the Palestinian NGOs, however, it could be questioned whether the necessary level of agreement and continuity could be achieved. One reason for this is the reported uncertainty as to objectives and strategies in a context of changing affiliations and agendas, the difficulty of obtaining consensus in a highly politically-charged environment. Whereas the pattern of use of contingency planning was contrary to expectation, interviewees' indications of the use of an incremental planning strategy in their NGOs were in line with what had been predicted. This was the most used strategy overall, and the mean scores indicated that the use of this strategy peaked in 1993, at the height of the Intifada. These findings are consistent with the claim of Sager (1996) that an incremental approach to planning is useful in conditions of stress, turbulence and instability.

4.2 Effectiveness of NGOs

The second research theme was concerned with respondents' perceptions as to how effective their NGOs have been. This issue was explored in terms of a number of separate indicators, which were combined to produce an overall effectiveness index. In this section, the perceptions of effectiveness are discussed in relation to the characteristics of the respondents (experience and education), and the planning strategies used in the organisations. First, however, it may be useful to recall the findings in relation to organisational effectiveness. It was shown in the previous chapter that all sub-components of effectiveness, except for cost effectiveness, were perceived to have improved over the period from 1986 to after 2000. In the case of quality, this was a steady, linear improvement. Time needed to deliver services and number of beneficiaries had, however, shown a less straightforward pattern. Both had peaked during or immediately following the Intifada, and had declined somewhat between 1993 and 2000: in the case of service delivery time, falling back almost to the 1986 (pre-Intifada) level.

The component that had shown an overall decline, cost-effectiveness, had reached its lowest in 1994 and had since recovered somewhat, the index increasing from 1.19 to 1.09 between 1993 and 2000, but this value is still a long way behind the 1986 value.

The low rating of the time component was attributed to the restrictions on NGOs' activities and the curtailment of programmes imposed by the Israeli government, which in some areas continued to be applicable in 2000. The level of reported effectiveness varied, not only over time, but also across regions, reflecting, to some extent, regional differences in stability. In the West Bank, which before 1986 had been rated lowest in effectiveness, there was a substantial increase from 1.00 to 1.48, most of this taking place since 1994. Conversely, the Gaza Strip, which started with the highest effectiveness rating, after a small but steady increase during the Intifada, experienced a sharp drop in effectiveness after 1994. Jerusalem, meanwhile, showed two district trends: on the one hand, high effectiveness before 1986, which changed little during the Intifada; on the other hand, significantly lower effectiveness from 1993 onwards, with virtually no change between 1994 and 2000. For all regions, in 1986 and 2000, the effectiveness values show a clear relationship with stability, i.e. effectiveness was higher where regions were more stable.

Perceptions of NGOs' effectiveness varied to some extent with managers' education and experience. In general, planners with higher levels of education had lower perceptions of their NGOs' effectiveness. Since what was being explored was perceptions, rather than any objective measure of effectiveness, this does not necessarily mean that the organisations whose planners had more education were necessarily less effective. In contrast, the planners who had more years of planning experience reported higher levels of effectiveness in their NGOs. To some extent this was related to the finding on level of education, since the managers with the highest number of years of planning experience had the lowest educational levels. However, the relationship between age and experience was not a straightforward inverse one, as planners with postgraduate qualifications had a wider spread of experience than other categories. This may suggest that practical experience of planning to some extent tempered the idealistic expectations inspired by education and training, inducing managers to evaluate their organisations more favourably.

Of particular interest in this study is the relationship between organisational effectiveness, as perceived by the respondents, and the planning strategies chosen to cope with a turbulent environment. The previous sections revealed that each of the planning strategies investigated was employed by the NGOs to varying degrees, at different times and in different regions; the relationship between the choice of strategies and instability over time and across the regions has already been discussed in relation to the second research themes. Of the five planning approaches considered, three (risk analysis, gambling and contingency planning) were consistently negatively correlated with effectiveness ratings; in other words, greater use of these strategies was associated with lower perceived effectiveness in the organisations. A correlation, of course, does not necessarily imply a cause-effect relationship. Nevertheless, the findings are interesting, and are consistent with the theory discussed in previous section. For example, in view of the doubts that have been expressed about the rationality of actors and their ability to assess probabilities and the problems of lack of accuracy (Hansson, 1996b) in risk analysis, it would not be expected that this would be an effective strategy, particularly when the difficulties are compounded by instability. In an organisation that relied heavily on this strategy in unstable conditions, effectiveness might be compromised. In the case of gambling and contingency planning, the inverse relationship with effectiveness rating may be explained by the fact that these strategies were both used most in times of greater instability. This association may influence organisational effectiveness in two ways. Firstly, it may be that effectiveness was influenced directly by the degree of instability. Secondly, effectiveness may be compromised by the adoption of a planning strategy which, while not necessarily problematic per se, is inappropriate to the level of instability experienced, and cannot be implemented properly. It has previously been indicated, for example, that in conditions of high instability, the assumptions of contingency planning do not hold.

5. Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

This study has explored the nature and degree of instability facing Palestinian health NGOs between 1986 and after 2000, the effects experienced by the organisations, the planning strategies used to deal with uncertainty, and the previous effectiveness of the organisations. This section presents a summary of the main findings and the key lessons concluded from the study. The limitations of the study are reviewed. Recommendations are made for future practice in organisational planning and the management of the relationship between NGOs, the Authority and the donors.

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Main Empirical Findings

This research reached several key empirical findings which have been previously discussed in detail. This section summarises some of these findings due to their particular contribution to the study's main objectives. To start with, this was an exploratory study which aimed at developing a sound way to assess empirically how the planners' perceptions of their effectiveness related to the use of each five strategies under various levels of uncertainty. The first major finding is that all five planning strategies were used simultaneously, albeit at various rates, for coping with the changing levels of instability that faced health NGOs in Palestine for the period between 1986 and after 2000. This is in line with what Pearman (1985) suggested, that there would never be a single 'correct' approach to incorporating uncertainty in planning or coping with it most effectively. That is, no single strategy can be given the credit for making the difference in NGOs' overall effectiveness.

The second major finding is that, there is a strong and positive relationship between the perceived effectiveness of these NGOs and the use of incrementalism and organisational learning and a weak relationship with the use of contingency planning, risk analysis and gambling. The third significant finding here is that the extent to which all five planning strategies were used increased between 1986 and after 2000, albeit not uniformly. The strategies in the order of increasing use are: gambling, risk analysis, contingency planning, organisational learning and incrementalism. That is, gambling increased the least between 1986 and 2000 and incrementalism increased the most. This ordering is very interesting, because it confirms the previous finding that the most effective NGOs used different levels of these strategies, with more incrementalism and organisational learning and less of the rest (contingency planning, risk analysis and gambling) compared to the least effective ones, which did not vary the extent to which they used the various strategies, despite environmental change.

5.2 Implications for Planning Theory and Practice

The above conclusions can be generalised to a broader population and linked more closely to the planning theory. The main purpose of this section is to bridge the gap by developing linkages between planning theory and practice under uncertainty. Although the twenty health NGOs used in this survey had to satisfy a list of criteria that distinguished them from the other NGOs in Palestine, all NGOs in this region faced similar types and levels of instability and consequent uncertainty. For example, the financial, political, legal, professional and human resources related types of challenges and instability affected all NGOs, regardless of their sector-based interests. Discussions with heads of NGOs and experts on NGOs confirmed that, with slight modifications to fit the exact type and level of uncertainty that faced other NGOs, the potential approaches for coping with instability and uncertainty were similar. Thus, one can use the indicative findings of this limited number of health NGOs to make an analytical generalisation covering all health NGOs in Palestine and beyond.

In addition, the types of challenges and instabilities that the NGO sector in Palestine faced are not fundamentally or conceptually different from those faced by other NGOs in most developing or even some developed countries. Despite the fact that they have their own differences, most NGOs worldwide face various levels of financial, political, administrative, professional or legal challenges. Furthermore, NGOs are only one form of organisational structure as distinguished from other structures such as the private, public, and multilateral organisations. Because of the fact that the organisation was used as the unit of analysis in this research study, highlighting the similarities and linkages among the NGO sector and the other sectors will be reasonable and helpful. Based on the findings of this research, there are three interrelated lessons with implications for planning theory and practice: (1) Planning under uncertainty is related to effectiveness; (2) Effective planning must be contextual; and (3) Planning practice is complex.

5.2.1 Planning Under Uncertainty Is Related To Effectiveness

Based on the results of this research, one can conclude that planning under uncertainty is related to NGOs' overall effectiveness. These findings clearly show that there is a relationship between the use of the various planning strategies and the NGOs' overall effectiveness. This is a critical finding because it challenges some of the existing assumptions regarding planning under uncertainty especially when such uncertainty is extreme or chaotic (Christensen, 1985).

5.2.2 Effective Planning Must Be Contextual

This results of this research confirmed that there is no standard formula for combining planning strategies to ensure better results and satisfactory outcomes for all forms of organisations at all times or in all places. On the contrary, the results show that the more effective organisations used different combinations of the five strategies depending on the types and levels of instability and uncertainty they had to cope with. For example, the more effective NGOs made a high use of gambling in 1993 when instability was very high, but then reduced their use of gambling after that while continuing to make a high use of instrumentalism and organisational learning as a way for coping with the changing level of instability and, hence, uncertainty. In comparison, the least effective NGOs showed less variation in terms of the level at which they used the various strategies. That is, the least effective NGOs did not make the necessary changes in the combination of strategies they used to reflect the changing level of instability and uncertainty that they faced. Thus, the organisation must be flexible and innovative enough to accommodate the abrupt changes and instabilities that could affect their development. Therefore, the ability and willingness of the organisations to be flexible and make the necessary changes on a timely basis are definitely key factors that would enable NGOs to be as effective as they can.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Every study has its limitations. While attempts are made when conducting empirical research to adopt the optimal approach, there are inevitably drawbacks and limitations. The following limitations apply to this study:

- The researcher does not include the opinions of the second level of management.
- Some of the planners did not talk frankly about the relations of the organisation with the PNA as they found it a sensitive issue.
- No views were obtained from the beneficiaries.

5.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings discussed in this study, the researchers have made some recommendations and directions for action.

5.4.1 Recommendations Related to the NGOs

More cooperation and collaboration is needed among Palestinian Health NGOs. Such cooperation could be achieved by establishing a committee amongst them for planning during emergency situations, because the situation of Palestine is unique as an emergency situation is almost permanent. This committee should include planners who have good experience and a strong managerial background. The main goal of this committee would be to formulate plans to cope with instability in general and to take the situation of each NGO individually. More effective training for planning students is strongly recommended. Courses should be taught by seasoned planning practitioners who can draw extensively from their own experience on the importance of these skills, with specific emphasis on case studies in a seminar style format rather than the traditional lectures.

5.4.2 Recommendations Related to the Palestinian Authority

-It is further recommended that the PA should formulate a coherent policy supportive of NGOs. This policy could include contracting out to NGOs because some of them were ready to take on this role.

5.4.3 Recommendation Related to the Israeli Restrictions

Israeli restrictions should be lifted to allow more freedom and power for Palestinians to proceed with their development campaigns.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher would also like to propose recommendations for further research. This research explored whether planning under instability is related to the overall effectiveness of the Palestinian health NGOs, for example, the current approach could be extended to education NGOs. Prior to the establishment of the PNA in 1994, NGOs ran all pre-schools and secondary education in Palestine. These NGOs faced very similar threats, challenges and instabilities to those faced the health NGOs.

Examining the instabilities that faced these NGOs and how they coped with them, together with the perceived effectiveness of these NGOs, would be helpful for comparative case study analysis of the strategies used and their perceived effectiveness in dealing with instability in Palestine. The researchers believe that further research is needed to keep pace with the rapid change in the situation of Palestine.

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