Strategic and Operational Planning As Approach for Crises Management Field Study on UNRWA

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to study the role of strategic and operational planning as approach for crises management in UNRWA - Gaza Strip field- Palestine. Several descriptive analytical methods were used for this purpose and a survey as a tool for data collection. Community size was (881), and the study sample was stratified random (268).

The overall findings of the current study show that strategic and operational planning is performed in UNRWA. The results of static analysis show that there are a relation between strategic and operational planning and crises management. In spite this relation existence, it need more improvement and expanding.

Also there are shortcomings in the way that organization manages the crises before and after they occur. A crisis management is only practicing during the crisis.

The study suggests that UNRWA must invest in more resources to enhance strategic and operational palming and improve other methods to face potential crises in the future.

Keywords: *Strategic and operational planning, crises management, UNRWA*

1. INTRODUCTION

Now days, organizations live in a complex, in light of complex political and social, economic, technological and cultural changes.

Opportunities and threats are changing by an ongoing basis not just the external environment of the organization, but also their interior environment. This change put the organization in a tough mission that require a fast adoption and cope with the external and internal environment to ensure survival and achieve their goals, otherwise it will be doomed to finish and disappearing.

Under these rapid changes in the organization environment, the need for a strategic and operational planning process increased. The analyzing process for the internal and external environment in light of the vision, mission and clear objectives of the organization is essential. Strategic and operational plans for the organization are important to success and survival.

Crisis has also become a key feature also of contemporary organizations under this dynamic environment, and these crises threaten the continuity of the organization, survival and the ability to continue providing their services. Also crisis put organizations reputation and image in the community at stake, if those organizations not able to deal with crises through the effective management of the different stages of the crisis either before, during or after the fact.

NGOs are no different from the rest of the business organizations according to that, the objective of this study is to examine the impact of UNRWA top management support for strategic planning on crisis management.

The study raises the question of:

Q1. To what extent the strategic and operational planning process is practicing in UNRWA?

Q2. How far crisis management practicing in the UNRWA (before, during, after)?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Palestinian environment is unstable and unsecure with all means. Also suffer from the ongoing blockade and a lot of crisis. Despite the fact that the international relief agency "UNRWA" in Gaza practiced strategic planning, there are shortcomings in dealing with crises.

For example, microfinance program for SMEs has been reduced by 15% in 2012, teaching level is collapsing in dramatic way cause of extra student's number with shortage in facilities. Unemployed percent were 60% for youth in 2014 which represent the highest in the world.

Crisis management in such environment is so difficult and without good strategic plan it will be wasting of sources not any more.

2.1 Strategic and operational planning:

In accordance with the idea of strategic management being a process, the process can also be referred to as strategic planning. It can be divided into four context related areas: general planning, strategic planning, operational planning, and steering and controlling the operational planning [19, 31].

Strategic planning is not the wholeness of strategic management; it is a main process involved in the running of strategic management, and is central to helping managers satisfy their strategic management roles [14, 28].

During general planning, managers or owners determine the future conditions for which they strive, in other words the objectives of strategic management. In this context, business leaders have been turning away from profit maximization as the sole corporate objective since the middle of the twentieth century. These days it is recognized that companies have a range of equally important objectives, with the result that firms now work with a "multi-attributive system of objectives" [12, 16, 19].

2.2 Strategic planning

Goldman& Casey (2010) defined strategic planning: "Oriented systematic based on the router untapped opportunities, which lead to discover new organizational strategies".

The important of strategic planning comes from its ability to lead the organization in the future and decreases the failure opportunity [3, 4, 9, 26]. The concept of strategic planning might differ between organizations according to future concept and means to deal with the future [11].

The main frame of strategic planning is strategic management. Wheelen & Hunger (2012) & David (2011) pointed that strategic management are a series of administrative decisions and actions that determine the long-term performance of the organization, which includes the following four stages: environmental scanning, strategy formulation, application and implementation of the strategy, evaluation, monitoring and control.

According to them, strategic planning is the main function for strategic management.

Sharbiny (2009) mentioned the difference between strategic planning and strategic management as the following:

1. Strategic planning is an analytical process, while the strategic management is also concern about performance.
2. Strategic planning end when pick the things that will be made, while the strategic management skip the process of identifying options for the orientation of the organization to search for appropriate choices by people who can implement the decisions .
3. The strategic planning outcomes lead to better strategic decisions, while strategic management outcomes represented in strategically results.

2.3 Operational planning

Just as strategic management is absolutely concerned with operational management, so strategic planning is linked with operations; but as with strategic management, the focus of strategic planning is on strategy more than operations.

Strategic planning means the formulation of concisely stated operational aims in a way that main strategies turn into the organizing framework to guide the remainder of the planning process - from the strategic plan to the yearly operational plan to the specific level of action and accountability. Strategy formulation encompasses the steps including framing mission and objectives, SWOT analysis, gap analysis, framing alternative strategies, choice of strategy [22, 25, 28, 31].

The operational level of planning is primarily realized for specific procedures and processes, and controlled by the lowest ranked cause the fact that they understand best not only current problems, but also daily tasks and activities to be undertaken [14, 19 21, 31].

This level of planning defines individual tasks to be performed in due time using the available resources. Operational planning comprises a one-year period, it is derived from tactical planning, it contributes to realization of the planned strategy, it is more detailed and more concrete, and is performed continuously (minimally) at the level of business units, including the production process as well. The level of detail

rises accordingly and the planning interval decreases [14,16, 17,25].

Steering and controlling the operational planning draws the strategic planning approach to a close and concludes the organized understanding of strategy. The process involves regularly comparing actual values against predetermined, quantified targets. This enables countermeasures to be initiated if need be. [14, 19, 31].

2.4 Crisis management

Crisis management involves quick decision-making in critical conditions, with the obligation of issuing a public report to the media. Crises therefore lead decision-makers into an urgent decision-making situation, with the obligation to minimize the potential consequences for a wide range of high-stake elements There are many definitions for crisis management [6, 13, 24, 34] define it as "Systematic attempt to define and identify potential crises, take action and measures to prevent and contain the impact and get rid of the effects".

Crisis management in the organization process passed through several stages represents each stage of them to deal with the crisis basis, although each of these phases is characterized by a kind of autonomy in dealing with them depending on the nature of each of its stages. The main goal remains to find a solution to the crisis and come out from it with minimal losses.

Sense of crisis and ignoring it is the first phase of the crisis because it is fast-moving, and vice versa, recognition, handling and treatment is the first stage of facing, treatment and reducing the negative effects.

Yarmohammadian et al. (2016), Abu Moamer (2011), Al-Saeed (2011) & Jad Al-Rab (2010) classified crisis into three stages:

1. Pre- crisis: prevent the crisis and prepare for it.
2. Response: deal and respond to the crisis.
3. Post-crisis: improve preparedness for future crises and record the flow of information which happened during the crisis and take advantage of any future crisis.

Appropriate response toward the unexpected events requires providing facilities and suitable plans. Different societies always look for managing the damages of the unexpected events. Therefore, the organization's manager always needs to be prepared to encounter the crisis and think to decrease the effects of crises on the organization [35].

As the main aim of the crisis management plan is to provide the most appropriate services to most of injured people, it is necessary to develop a specified plan with scientific and precise management at all stages before, in progress and after crisis by taking precautionary actions, establishing the crisis management committee, education familiarizing the staffs, and doing the periodical maneuver to get prepared and facing the crisis, giving an appropriate response while the crisis occurs and taking actions for rebuilding after the crisis occurs. These actions should be on the basis of the activities, strategies, and the crisis plans at the national level [23].

2.5 Strategic and operational planning and Crisis management

The recent events throughout the world have brought about an increase in paying attention to strategic and

operational planning and getting ready against crises. Although major human's progresses have increased his power to counter crises and to respond to the unexpected events, he has not totally been able to have control over them yet.

Explore the future vision for a crisis is the essence of strategic and operational planning to deal and monitor the stages and steps for it is development. Reliance on accurate prediction that expansion scope and help to prepare the appropriate scenarios, processing of human, technical, physical and administrative resources to cope with future crises and reduce their impact in the shortest time and at the lowest cost and effort [9].

Strategic and operational planning oriented to face crisis require full support and assistance from top management, well-defined communications plan, gather information as input to strategic detect signs of the crisis and the beginning and the extent of its development through integration between quantitative methods and how to plan for crisis management by choosing appropriate strategies [1, 2,11].

For designing any strategic and operational plan to address the crisis we must take into account the following variables [6, 13, 35] :

1. Objective: Be prepared to face the crisis.
2. Definitions and abbreviations: Risk, exposure, elements exposed to hazard.
3. Country specifications: Terrain, climate, statistics, population distribution, industry, energy sources and regime.
4. Threat description: Historical background, types of crises and its origin.
5. Leadership and coordination: The authorities, powers and responsibilities for crisis management.
6. Planning team and different sectors in the organization.
7. Foreign aids: Grants power and authorities to request foreign aid to the affected sites.
8. Identify emergency centers: Set site emergency centers and secure transport and communication among them.
9. Notification and warning: Determine the receipt of broadcast news and alerts and create a data base system.
10. Support associations: Ministries and institutions such as health, police, medical centers and specialized medical devices.
11. Sub-plans: Find a complementary basic service plans such as rescue and relief, ambulance, nursing, police, transportation, electric power, etc. ….

Adding to previous variables mentioned above and cause of each country have its own specifications; other domestic factors should be included in the strategic plan for facing crisis [20, 32]:

1. Geographical factor: Total area of the country, areas that can be supported as soon as possible, the border with the neighboring countries and the possibility of cooperation with them in the attribution urgency of the border area, if possible, depending on the political situation between these countries.

2. Demographic factor: Identify the population of the areas, distribution of manpower, population distribution and density.
3. Work activities in structures and the nature of manpower activities.
4. Important economic and financial resources in the country.

According to literature review, following is the main hypothesis for the study:

H1: There is a statistically significant relation between strategic and operational planning and crisis management (before, during, after) in UNRWA- Gaza Strip.

And that lead us to the next sub-hypotheses:

H1-1: There is a statistically significant relation between strategic and operational planning and before crisis in UNRWA- Gaza Strip.

H1-2: There is a statistically significant relation between strategic and operational planning and during crisis in UNRWA- Gaza Strip.

H1-3: There is a statistically significant relation between strategic and operational planning and after crisis in UNRWA- Gaza Strip.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Study population and sampling:

This study conducted at UNRWA- Gaza Strip Field–Palestine. UNRWA is the biggest supporter for Palestinian refugee all over the world in almost all fields. In Gaza Strip lives about (1.50 M) refugee (for more information, http://www.unrwa.org). The UNRWA managers population in Gaza Strip Filed are (881), stratified random sample was (268) and the usable sample was (235).

3.2 Research instrument

The first dimension instrument is about strategic and operational planning and contain (9) statements. The second dimensions of the instrument which measure crisis management contain three sub-fields. Depending on other research literatures, those statements were further revised and modified by experts in a subsequent stage before drafting the final version of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Research Instrument

Dimension 1: Strategic and Operational Planning	No. of statements	Dimension 2: Crisis Management	No. of statements
	9	Before Crisis	6
		During Crisis	6
		After Crisis	6

A five-point Lekert scale of agreement was used for measurement, running from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree", with a Neutral category for scale midpoint.

3.3 Validity and reliability assessment:

The study adopted Cronbach's α to measure the internal consistence reliability of the questionnaire. The results showed that Cronbach's α value for all dimensions were > (0.5). It indicated that the design of the questionnaire had a high internal consistency.

3.4 Statistical procedures:

Several statistical tools were used for data analysis and hypotheses testing, including reliability Correlation using Cronbach's alpha, "ANOVA", Pearson Correlation Coefficient, and Scheffe.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

T test used to examine the dimensions and hypotheses. The results of the analysis are shown in table 2.

Table 2. T test for dimensions

sig	T	SD	MAR	MA	Dimension	Index
					FD	
0.000	16.06	0.6300	73.19	3.66	Strategic and operational planning	1
					SD	
0.000	8.69	0.694	66.30	3.31	Before Crisis	2
0.000	17.28	0.581	73.11	3.66	During Crisis	3
0.000	7.49	0.557	68.34	3.42	After Crisis	4
0.000	15.08	0.491	69.66	3.48	TR for SD	

For the first dimension (Strategic and operational planning), the sample agreed that strategic and operational planning are practicing in wide range in UNRWA (73.19%).

The second dimension (crisis management) has three sub-dimensions. The mean average for first sub-dimension (before crisis) was (66.30%) and for the third sub- dimension. Those results infer a shortage in crisis management for the period before and after crisis happened.

Second sub-dimension (during crisis) was (73.11%), this mean that the UNRWA treat well with crisis only when it happened. The hypotheses test showed that there is a weak static relation between strategic and operational planning and crisis management with Pearson Correlation Coefficient (0.431). This finding is shown in table 3.

Table 3. Hypotheses Test

Crisis Management	Correlation	Crisis			Top Management Support
		after	during	Before	
0.431	Pearson	0.597	0.583	0.503	

The weak relation comes from the lack in strategic and operational planning before the crisis. The authors refer that to the sequential crises passed out generally in the Middle East and in Palestine in particular. Also shortage in funds, resources, facilities, abstention of some donors states in UN and other crises in the world, all that affects the ability of UNRWA in general.

5. CONCLUSION

UNRWA is a multi-service organization. It is role in the world is very operative, not just in Palestine, but it also serves millions of Palestinian refugees all around the world (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan). UNRWA human development and humanitarian services encompass primary and vocational education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict. With such responsibilities which been adopted since 1949, and with more than (5.3 M) refugee all over the world, and with a huge lack in finance and resources, crisis might form a real humanity disaster in the area.

Strategic and operational planning in UNRWA are an important factors to deal with crises. Crises management must be reinforcement by resources, team- work, strategic analyses, etc. Such organization cannot stop services cause of crises. Therefore, one of it is basic priorities is to design a solid system to manage crises before, during and after it happened.

The current study shows some weakness in crisis prediction, which might be normal thing in ordinary organizations, but for UNRWA this issue must be solved so fast.

Strategic and operational planning is not the only tactic for crisis management, but it is the most reliable and effective systems that suit such huge organizations and make them work in a clear environment and help them to have better decisions and effective operational planes.

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