

Regional Cross-border Disaster Collaboration: A Joint Standard Operating Procedure between Jordan Israel and Palestine

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Abstract

This case study research aims to identify the enabling factors and challenges for developing a joint Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Disaster Response Preparedness between Jordan, Israel and Palestine. Twelve qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts either involved in the SOP project, the region and/or with extensive experience in developing cross-border SOPs. Three key factors were identified that enabled the development of the joint SOP. Effective partnership building; the neutrality of the project and actors; and conducting exercises to test the SOP were the critical enabling factors. The nine main identified challenges include political sensitivities and conflict; access restrictions; organisational issues; information exchange; participation of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; shifting priorities; unequal power relations; adherence and sustainability SOP; and finalising the exercise scenario. The results revealed that developing an SOP between Jordan, Israel, and Palestine is a challenging endeavour; on the one hand, the SOP project faces generic challenges related to the SOP development process, which are often encountered in other Disaster Risk Management projects. On the other hand, a majority of the challenges and enabling factors are directly related to or exacerbated by the conflict dynamics. Nevertheless, this case study suggests that regional disaster collaboration between Jordan, Israel and Palestine is not impossible provided there is sufficient political will, a strong partnership and the project and actors are perceived as accepted and neutral by all three entities.

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Summary

Conflict often characterises the Jordan, Israel and Palestine (JIP) region. However, the conflict dynamics also overshadow the region's vulnerability to natural hazards such as earthquakes, landslides and floods (Siedentopp, 2016). Indeed, the JIP region shares a common hazard profile, where the shared impact of disasters drives the development of a common approach for disaster preparedness. The *Professional Dialogue Exercise – Jordan Israel Palestine* (PDEX-JIP) project aims to create such a common disaster preparedness approach by strengthening regional cross-border disaster collaboration. More specifically, the project's purpose is to develop a common Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for international disaster response and conduct a Table-Top Exercise and a Full-Scale Exercise to test the SOP and strengthen collaboration between the three parties (Abdilwahid, 2022; Dimopoulos, 2022). However, the conflict dynamics pose a unique challenge to the PDEX-JIP project as meetings are often cancelled, and the complex and volatile political context makes it difficult to reach agreements between the parties. This research aims to contribute to the field of regional disaster collaboration in conflict-affected contexts and cross-border SOPs, as there is a lack of research that specifically addresses this. Given the uniqueness and the multitude of challenges the PDEX-JIP faces, this research aims to identify the enabling factors and challenges for developing a joint SOP between JIP as part of the PDEX-JIP project.

This research aims to identify the enabling factors and challenges for the creation of a joint SOP between JIP as derived through 12 semi-structured expert interviews. In total, three enabling factors and nine main challenges were identified. The challenges and enabling factors are categorised as either being procedural and having to do with the SOP development process in general terms or related to the conflict dynamics. The procedural enabling factors identified consist of partnership building and having a realistic exercise scenario. In contrast, the procedural challenges consist of organisational issues, shifting priorities and the adherence and sustainability of the SOP. The enabling factors that are linked to or exacerbated by the conflict dynamics are the neutrality of the project and actors. At the same time, the challenges consist of political sensitivities and conflict, access restrictions, participation of United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), finalising exercise scenario, information exchange and unequal power relations. Conclusively, it is argued that regional cross-border collaboration is possible provided that: sufficient political will is present; there is a strong partnership between the parties, and the project is seen as neutral and away from politics. However, whether the SOP will be developed and implemented remains to be closely monitored in the future of the PDEX-JIP project.

List of Abbreviations

DRM Disaster Risk Management

DRR Disaster Risk Reduction

EU European Union

JIP Jordan, Israel and Palestine

NEMA Israeli National Emergency Management Authority

OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

oPt Occupied Palestinian Territories

PDEX-JIP Professional Dialogue Exercise – Jordan Israel Palestine

SOP Standard Operating Procedure

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1. Introduction

Regional collaboration initiatives for Disaster Risk Management (DRM) have been rising recently (Hollis, 2015). Disasters do not respect borders and often have cross-border impacts, requiring strong regional collaboration (UNISDR, 2015; van den Homberg, 2017). However, cross-border collaboration does not go without its challenges, especially in conflict-affected contexts such as in Jordan, Israel and Palestine (JIP), where conflict dynamics often overshadow the region's vulnerability to natural hazards (Siedentopp, 2016). Indeed, the region shares a hazard profile characterized by floods, droughts, seismic activity, cold spells and landslides, which increase the region's vulnerability and causes resource scarcity (Beck, 2015; UNDAC, 2014). Additionally, the JIP region is highly prone to earthquakes as it is in close proximity to the Jordan Rift valley, which is created by the movement of two tectonic plates and is an active seismic region (Simon et al., 2015). Scientists have predicted that a large-scale earthquake will occur in the region in the coming 25 years (Beck, 2015; CADRI, 2017a). According to an Israeli national scenario, most of JIP's population lives within a 100-kilometres radius of the earthquake's epicentre (Simon et al., 2015). In Jordan, 75% of the population lives in the major cities within 30 kilometres of the main fault line, making them highly exposed to earthquake risk (CADRI, 2017a; CADRI, 2017b). With an expected recurrence of 80-120 years and the last large earthquake taking place in 1927 (Al-Dabbeek, 2010; Shapira et al., 2018), there is a significant need for regional collaboration for disaster response preparedness, as neither of the three entities will be able to handle such a large-scale disaster by themselves (Simon et al., 2015).

The *Professional Dialogue Exercises - Jordan Israel and Palestine* (PDEX-JIP), is an ongoing project funded by the European Union (EU) that kicked off in February 2022. The project is led by an experienced project consortium on request by the three parties. It aims to strengthen regional disaster preparedness and international disaster response by developing a joint Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for international disaster response and closer operational collaboration in complex emergencies (Abdilwahid, 2022; Dimopoulos, 2022). The project's objectives further consist of preparing and conducting a Table-Top Exercise, training for Host Nation Support and performing a Joint Full-Scale Exercise to test the SOP and collaboration between the three parties (Abdilwahid, 2022). Having an SOP can help clarify roles and responsibilities and enable contingency plans to be carried out according to previously established criteria, thereby strengthening disaster preparedness (IFRC, 2012). However, given the sensitive and volatile political situation between the three entities, this might prove to be a

challenging task. As a result, meetings are often cancelled or postponed due to conflict dynamics, delaying the project.

1.1. Research Objective

Previous literature has researched multi-organizational disaster response coordination (Berchtold et al., 2020; McEntire, 2002; Uhr, 2009) and multi-agency collaboration (Abdeen et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2022). However, there is a lack of research that specifically addresses the issue of cross-border collaboration in disaster situations (Simon et al., 2015), and the development of joint SOPs for cross-border disaster preparedness in conflict-affected areas. One practical reason for this might be that such initiatives are sensitive and collaboration between conflicting parties is not easy to sell politically; and therefore, it is simply not prevalent. A study by Simon et al. (2015) is one of the few studies that researched the development of a joint SOP for cross-border coordination between Jordan and Israel.

This research aims to contribute to the field of cross-border disaster collaboration and joint SOPs development in conflict-affected environments by researching the enabling factors and barriers for the SOP creation between JIP. Furthermore, a secondary goal of this thesis is to support the SOP development on the ground by contributing to the theorization of the SOP development process in this particular context. Therefore, researching the SOP development within the PDEX-JIP constitutes a core element of the project since it will be tested during the Full-Scale Exercise. While the SOP will be created for a multi-hazard purpose, a large-scale earthquake hazard is the main focus of this research. This is because a large-scale earthquake will be the scenario tested in the Full-Scale Exercise. It should be noted that this research does not aim to be generalizable to other regions or joint SOPs, as the complex humanitarian landscape in the region is highly contextual. Instead, this research should be seen as an exploratory case study on joint SOP creation and cross-border disaster collaboration in a complex and conflicted-affected context. Therefore, the research question guiding this thesis is the following:

“What are the enabling factors and challenges for the joint SOP development between Jordan, Israel and Palestine as part of the PDEX-JIP project?”

1.2. Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 will contain a conceptual framework which defines the key concepts used in this research. After that, Chapter 3 will provide some contextual and background information by briefly discussing the JIP region's historical context, the PDEX-JIP project's background, and JIP's disaster response preparedness. Then, in Chapter 4, the methodology that was used throughout this research will be explained. Afterwards, Chapter 5 will present the findings of this research, while Chapter 6 will discuss the findings in relation to the literature. Finally, Chapter 7 will contain a conclusion to this research.

2. Conceptual Framework

Since concepts may be defined differently both across and within disciplines, the key concepts used throughout this research will be specified below to avoid misunderstanding.

2.1. Disaster Preparedness

As defined by UNDRR (2017), a disaster is “*A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts*”. Disaster preparedness is defined as anticipatory actions before a disaster that provide an adequate response to its impacts and relief and recovery from its consequences (Coppola, 2020). Although it is possible to view disaster preparedness on different organisational scales, in this thesis, disaster preparedness will be used to refer to the national and governmental preparedness levels for disasters (Granberg, 2013).

2.2. Cross-border Disaster Collaboration

Cross-border Disaster Collaboration refers to the cross-border cooperation element of neighbouring countries in responding to a transboundary disaster. DRM is closely related to the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) concept and refers to the management of actions to achieve DRR by combining prevention, mitigation and preparedness with the response (Begum et al., 2014; van Niekerk, 2007).

2.3. Standard Operating Procedure

An SOP is the link between a contingency plan and the operational response during an emergency and guides responders in a crisis by laying out predetermined steps to manage anticipated events (IFRC, 2012; Harwood & Porter, 2020). An SOP contains information on what should be done, how it should be done, who is responsible for implementing it and the available resources (IFRC, 2012). In other words, SOPs ensure that tasks laid out in contingency plans are operationalized quickly and according to predetermined criteria (ibid).

2.4. Contingency Planning

Contingency planning is commonly referred to as an anticipatory process (Eriksson & McConnell, 2011). According to Choularton (2007:3), contingency planning is “*A process, in*

anticipation of potential crises, of developing strategies, arrangements and procedures to address the humanitarian needs of those adversely affected by crises.”. More concretely, it can be helpful to think about contingency planning by breaking it down into three questions: “1) *what is going to happen?* 2) *what are we going to do about it?* and 3) *what can we do ahead of time to get prepared?*” (IFRC, 2012:7). When talking about contingency plans, an important aspect of it is the informal planning, in addition to the formal contingency plan, which is the written contingency plan (Choularton, 2007). Moreover, it is essential to highlight that different types of contingency plans exist. The most common type is scenario planning, which refers to developing specific scenarios used as a basis for creating response plans (ibid). Furthermore, preparedness planning refers to identifying gaps and barriers to effective emergency response and subsequently identifying actions to strengthen response capacity (ibid). Lastly, all-hazard contingency planning refers to establishing clear roles and responsibilities, command and control, and using standard procedures (ibid). This type of contingency planning is widely used by governments and emergency planning agencies and often involves inter-agency planning (ibid). In this research contingency planning is used to refer to the all-hazard contingency planning type, as the PDEX-JIP project takes place on a governmental level.

3. Context and Background

3.1. *Historical and Political Background JIP*

The complex humanitarian landscape in the JIP region has significantly been characterized by the Israeli-Arab and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Factors that affect the humanitarian context are the more than 50 years of Israeli occupation, intra-Palestinian political division, and recurrent hostilities and escalations between the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and Palestinian armed groups (UNDAC, 2014). A brief overview of the historical and political context will be given to understand the current landscape. This overview does not aim to provide a detailed description of all the events that have occurred in the JIP region. Instead, it aims to provide context to the current situation in which the PDEX-JIP project occurs.

After the First World War, the League of Nations granted Great Britain the mandate of Palestine and Iraq, consisting of the present-day countries of JIP (Caplan, 2010; Gelvin, 2014). During the war, Britain had made various pledges and promises that led to competing claims between the Arabs, Palestinians and Zionists (ibid). As violence and tensions grew in Palestine, Britain could not contain the situation, and the matter was handed over to the United Nations (UN) in 1947 (Cleveland & Bunton, 2019). The UN adopted Resolution 181, which recommended the termination and the partition of the mandate in a Jewish and Arab state, with Jerusalem being under international administration (Caplan, 2010; Cleveland & Bunton, 2019; Gelvin, 2014). While the Zionist leaders accepted this result, the Palestinians and Arabs rejected this resolution. Following the withdrawal of the British troops, which was followed by Israel's declaration of independence, the 1948 war for Palestine broke out (Caplan, 2010; Gelvin, 2014). The 1948 war, also referred to as the *War of Independence* by the Israelis or *the Catastrophe* by the Palestinians, started in 1948 when Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian and Iraqi forces invaded Israel, launching a regional war (Caplan, 2010; Cleveland & Bunton, 2019). The war resulted in the defeat of the Arab forces and an enlargement of the Israeli territory. Meanwhile, Palestine was partitioned among Israel, Egypt and Jordan, leaving over one million Palestinians that fled or were expelled stateless (Cavanaugh, 2003; Cleveland & Bunton, 2019).

With the conquest of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, following Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel's territory was enlarged, resulting in 1.3 million Palestinian refugees in 1968 (Caplan, 2010; Cleveland & Bunton, 2019). Ever since, Israel has retained control over the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, which are referred to as the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) under international law (HRW, 2021).

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization ‘recognised’ each other in the Oslo Accords signed between 1993-2000 (B’Tselem, 2002; Fawcett, 2019). However, the Oslo Accords did not end the occupation of the oPt (HRW, 2021). Around the same time, Jordan and Israel normalised their diplomatic relationships by signing a peace treaty in 1994 (Eisenberg & Caplan, 2003). Despite this peace treaty, the relationship between Jordan and Israel remains tense, as there is a strong pro-Palestinian sentiment in Jordan (ibid), and relationships often get strained because of tensions regarding the Al-Aqsa mosque (Al Sharif, 2015).

Originating from the Oslo Accords is the division of the West Bank into three administrative zones of varying Israeli control (Figure 1). In Area A, 18.2% of the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority (PA) is responsible for most of the internal affairs, including security and construction (B’Tselem, 2002). In Area B, 21.8 % of the West Bank, the PA is in charge of civilian matters, while the IDF holds security control and can freely enter the area (ibid). Finally, Area C, 60% of the West Bank, is under complete Israeli control, consisting of security matters, planning, and construction (ibid).

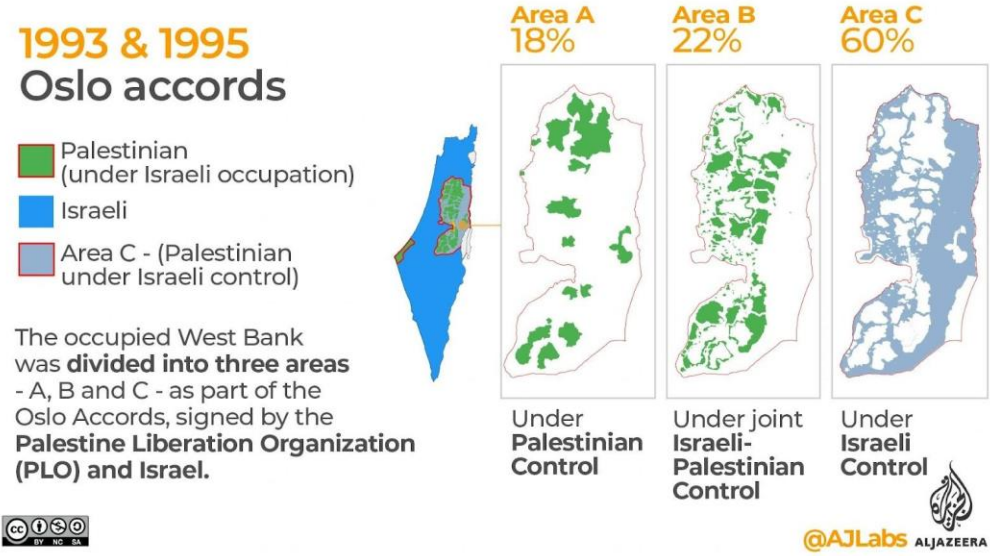


Figure 1 The Occupied West Bank division in Area A, B, C (Haddad, 2020)

Additionally, Israel controls land crossings and entry points in the West Bank, which means that goods can only enter the West Bank if authorized by Israel (UNDAC, 2014). In Gaza, the movement of people and goods is also restricted by the Israeli and Egyptian authorities, who have control over the sea and land (ibid). The Oslo Accords failed to bring a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestine question and left many issues unresolved, such as the status of Jerusalem, existing settlements and refugees (Cavanaugh, 2003). To this date, Israel continues to expand and support its settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem by expropriating

Palestinian land and demolishing buildings while at the same time restricting the movement of goods and people in the West Bank (HRW, 2021). Generally, Israel is the sole governing power with limited Palestinian self-rule. In the oPt, Israeli authorities control most aspects of life by remaining in primary control over borders, airspace, movement of people and goods, security, and the registry of the entire population, dictating matters such as legal status and eligibility for identity cards (ibid).

The conflict described above has vast consequences for one party's ability to manage the humanitarian consequences alone, while natural hazards threaten all three entities (Beck, 2015). Furthermore, access restrictions form a significant obstacle to contingency planning, as natural hazards may be made worse, and conflict-related vulnerabilities could aggravate, paving the way for rapid escalation of conflict and human rights degradations (UNDAC, 2014). While contingency plans have been tested on a smaller scale, and access restrictions can be worked around in such localized emergencies, access restrictions in a wide-area disaster are not fully addressed in contingency plans (ibid).

3.2. JIP Project

The PDEX-JIP project is part of a bigger overarching project called the *Joint Jordan Israel Palestine Disaster Preparedness Project*, also referred to as the JIP project. Initially, the project was divided into the JIP project and the Professional Dialogue, which was only the political discussion between the three disaster management authorities. However, nowadays, the JIP project or Professional Dialogue project refers to both elements (Project Document, 2015). The JIP project has its origins in a joint German/UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) training course for Israel in 2012 (Siedentopp, 2016). It expanded in 2013 by including Palestine for a joint Table-Top Exercise. Jordan subsequently joined the JIP project, as it shares many operational needs while also having the role of a third balancing party (Beck, 2015). There is a common interest for the three parties to collaborate because the conflict dynamics generate complex disaster management landscapes as there are "*isolated areas where no party can respond as they are either in no man's land, out of bounds for civilian response organizations, or where responders can only provide relief under very difficult circumstances*" (Beck, 2015). Furthermore, although Israel has significantly more capacity to respond to a potential hazard, in the case of an earthquake, there is a realisation that this can happen at any point, and there is uncertainty about what infrastructure gets damaged. Therefore, the JIP project aims to build an overall framework for DRM collaboration between the three

entities' institutions and civil society by creating an enabling environment, building capacities and developing an SOP (Beck, 2015; UNDAC, 2014).

The PDEX-JIP project consists, amongst other things, of developing an SOP and organizing a Table-Top Exercise and a Full-Scale Exercise. Although the project consortium only consists of organisations based in the EU¹, the project consortium has to decide with the three national civil protection authorities of the region, as they are ultimately responsible. Therefore, the project consortium's role is merely a supportive one. The national authorities of the three entities are the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) of Israel, the Palestinian Civil Defence and the Jordan Civil Defence and they are the owners of the dialogue, while OCHA is the only facilitator (Siedentopp, 2016). Recently the facilitation role moved from OCHA Geneva headquarters to the Amman office. Regarding the purpose of the SOP, the general aim is to enable mutual response and to support each other in large-scale disaster cases. There is a big focus on enabling cross-border access to different population groups, and it contains both the international component of how to coordinate international assistance in the region and the regional component on how the parties can support each other. The SOP development process is currently still in the negotiation stage.

Despite the three parties' commitment to collaborate within this project's scope, the JIP project does not always go as planned due to political sensitivities and day-to-day politics within the JIP region (ibid). Therefore, the project also aims to strengthen national capacities as a "backup plan" besides strengthening regional preparedness, enabling the project to be operational most of the time (ibid). For example, during the 2014 Gaza crisis, the JIP project was the only active regional project, and after the crisis, the three parties agreed to continue with the project (ibid). Furthermore, the three national civil protection organisations have agreed to always keep the project running, independent of any tensions.

3.3. Disaster Response Preparedness JIP

In general, there is a clear difference in capacities for DRM between the three entities (Siedentopp, 2016). Nevertheless, the shared geographical impact of disasters and vulnerabilities, consisting of highly populated and industrialised areas, drive the development of a common approach to disaster preparedness (Project Document, 2015). Therefore, the three

¹ The project consortium consists of the following six organisations: DMAT Consulting, Prepared International, Resilience Solutions International, Johanniter, Ministry of Interior of Cyprus and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus.

parties depend on developing a common SOP, as this would ensure the most effective response and recovery in the case of a disaster (ibid). Furthermore, having a joint disaster preparedness approach will enable each entity to complement their own capacity development efforts in disaster preparedness while simultaneously strengthening the ability of the region to respond effectively to disasters (ibid).

3.3.1. Jordan

Although natural, biological and technological hazards are of relatively low occurrence in Jordan, the impact of hazards can be severe because of high vulnerabilities and the low coping capacity of the Jordanian population (CADRI, 2017a; UNDP, 2019). These vulnerabilities to natural hazards and climate change-induced disasters in Jordan are due to the high population density in cities because of rapid unplanned urbanization, water scarcity, a disenfranchised population amongst refugees, a limited proactive approach to disaster prevention and mitigation, insufficient institutional capacities, lack of awareness amongst senior officials and communities about disaster preparedness, an unsatisfactory implementation of existing policies, and an overstretched capacity of social services and infrastructure (ibid).

3.3.2. Palestine

Similar to the situation in Jordan, the rapid urbanization and the high number of cities in earthquake-prone areas make Palestine highly vulnerable to disaster risk (Al-Dabbeek, 2010). Palestine's vulnerability is high, which means that the consequences of a disaster are amplified, affecting all aspects of disaster preparedness, response and mitigation. The main factors contributing to Palestine's vulnerability to hazards are access and movement restrictions related to the occupation, infrastructural, economic and social vulnerability and a lack of institutional capacity (Al-Dabbeek, 2010; UNDAC, 2014; UNOCHA oPt, 2017). The access and movement restrictions in Palestine related to the Israeli occupation have considerable implications for Palestine's vulnerability. Not only do the access restrictions have a detrimental effect on the Palestinian economy, but also impact disaster-resilient development because of the difficulty for national and international rescue services to provide assistance after a disaster strikes (UNOCHA oPt, 2017). In emergency planning, there is a need to mitigate the impact of the current access restrictions regime, as this makes communities inaccessible for the Palestinian Civil Defence (Isotalo, 2013).



Figure 2 Disaster Risk in Palestine (OCHA oPt, 2017)

3.3.3. Israel

Traditionally, Israel's emergency management is based on a military-centric single-hazard approach focused on security-related threats of social origin, such as warfare and terrorism (Adini & Peleg, 2013; Altshuler, 2016; Rozdilsky, 2009). The NEMA is part of the Ministry of Defence and has been responsible for coordinating Israel's emergency and preparedness policies since its establishment in 2007 and is a focal point for international assistance (Adini & Peleg, 2013; Ministry of Defence; Rozdilsky, 2009). Previously, the Home Front Command Unit of the IDF was responsible for the coordination activities, but it still has the primary role in emergency management (Siedentopp, 2016). While Israel has a strong tradition of war-related emergency preparedness, there is a preparedness gap for other types of emergencies, such as major earthquakes (Altshuler, 2016; Elran & Altshuler, 2015). Moreover, the seismic risk for Israel is amplified because of an increasing population density and industrial and commercial infrastructure growth (Nof et al., 2021). Nevertheless, Israel's earthquake preparedness levels are increasing, as an early warning system for earthquake will be operational from this year onwards (Schuster, 2022).

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

A qualitative case study research design is employed for this research because of the exploratory and complex nature of the research topic (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is an umbrella term for a wide range of research approaches that are primarily but not exclusively non-quantitative in character (Saldaña, 2011). Conducting qualitative research is deemed appropriate when a phenomenon needs to be explored and cannot be easily measured by using predetermined information or literature, and a complex detailed understanding of the issue is needed (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, a qualitative research strategy is suitable for this research because it enables the researcher to attend to the contextual richness of the settings of interest (Yin, 2016). Furthermore, because of the unique context of the PDEX-JIP project, having a case study as a research methodology will enable gaining an insider’s perspective of the project. More specifically, an intrinsic case study will be used to evaluate the creation of a joint SOP in JIP, as intrinsic case studies focus on the case itself rather than striving for generalizability and enable an in-depth examination (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2011). The case study of this research is the PDEX-JIP project which takes place in the geographical location of JIP and has a duration of 18 months starting from 15 November 2021 (Figure 3).



Figure 3 A map of Jordan, Israel and Palestine (MapChart, 2022)

4.2. Interviews

Semi-structured expert interviews were conducted to gain in-depth information about the challenges and enabling factors for creating an SOP between JIP. The advantage of conducting semi-structured interviews is that they are sufficiently structured by having predetermined questions while at the same time retaining the flexibility that allows participants to offer new meanings to the research topic (Galletta & Cross, 2013). Since in-depth knowledge about the PDEX-JIP project and cross-border SOP creation is not widespread amongst the general public, expert interviews were conducted with disaster risk experts involved in the project and/or region. Additionally, interview participants were selected based on their experience with cross-border SOPs creation for natural hazards in other geographical regions (Appendix B). An expert interview can be defined as a qualitative interview based on the expert's knowledge, which is characterized as specific knowledge in a particular field (Döringer, 2020). The advantage of conducting expert interviews is that specific knowledge is made available when it is difficult or impossible to gain access to a particular field (Bogner et al., 2009; Döringer, 2020). However, there are also several issues with conducting expert interviews, such as the tendency of individual relevancies of the experts to be overshadowed by the researchers' interest in collecting data and high-ranking professionals lacking time and having tight schedules (ibid). To attempt to counteract this issue, experts were selected and approached based on the following criteria:

1. Involvement in the JIP project
2. Experience in disaster response preparedness in the JIP region
3. Experience with joint cross-border SOP creation
4. Availability and accessibility of contact details
5. Willingness and time to participate in this research

Online interviews were conducted out of practical and financial considerations, as well as the possibility of extending recruitment geographically and the inclusion of diverse participants (Oliffe et al., 2021). A limitation of conducting interviews digitally is that non-verbal communication and cues will be more challenging to pick up (ibid). However, these limitations can be overcome by observing facial expressions and participants' voices more closely (Self, 2021). The interviews were conducted in English and ranged from 25:50 minutes to 59:16 minutes. Prior to the data collection process, an interview guide was designed to answer a set of predetermined questions, which were expected to be answered within 30 minutes and 60

minutes (Appendix A). For example, participants were asked what the enabling factors and challenges were for the SOP development process. To ensure that the interview protocol and interview questions were appropriate, a pilot interview was conducted in early March 2022. The pilot interview was conducted by video conference with a participant involved in the JIP project. The pilot interview aimed to identify questions that needed modification or procedures that did not elicit appropriate responses (Malmqvist et al., 2019).

Furthermore, pilot interviews enable the researcher to practice interviewing, as interviewing is an interactive art often best learned by practice (Dilley, 2000). Following the pilot interview, the researcher adjusted some questions in the interview guide. Given that the role of the interviewer is of critical importance when conducting interviews, the researcher should try to minimise its influence by making the participants feel at ease and create a comfortable atmosphere (Galletta & Cross, 2013). This was done by, for example, clearly stating before the start of the interview that participants were allowed to decline to answer any questions they did not wish to answer; and that they could withdraw their consent at any time during or after the interview. Additionally, the participants were informed about who would receive access to their interview transcripts. Participants were asked for permission to use direct quotations from their interviews in this thesis. Because few people and organisations are involved in this project, and the context is highly sensitive, all participants are anonymised by removing personal and identifiable information such as name, exact role and employer. The interviews were recorded after obtaining the participant's consent. Consequently, the recordings were transcribed using intelligent verbatim for better readability of the transcript. Subsequently, the data was analysed by conducting a thematic analysis (chapter 4.4).

4.3. Selection of Participants

Participants were selected through purposeful and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling enables finding experts with an in-depth understanding of the PDEX-JIP project, while snowball sampling enables finding other participants with an equivalent knowledge level through the network of interviewees. Fifteen participants were recruited through snowball sampling and the first contact was provided by a participant involved in the PDEX-JIP project. Participants were invited to participate in an interview via email. A total of 65 emails were sent out, of which six emails were rejected because of a non-existent email address, and 18 responses were received. Three out of the 18 respondents replied that they did not have the required knowledge to participate in this research and referred the researcher to their colleagues. At the same time, one person declined to participate because they did not have

enough time (Figure 4). Two other participants replied that they were interested in participating in this research but did not answer the requests to schedule an interview. The low response rate of 30,5% to the email invitations could be interpreted as a confirmation of the time constraint issue when conducting expert interviews. Another explanation for the low response rate is the sensitivity of the research topic and the fact that the emails were sent out during Ramadan. The low response rate is a limitation of this study because this might bias the findings of this research, stemming from the voluntary response bias. This voluntary response bias refers to the possibility that the participants in this study have a strong motivation to participate in this research. In contrast, the nonresponses might have a more neutral opinion about the topic.

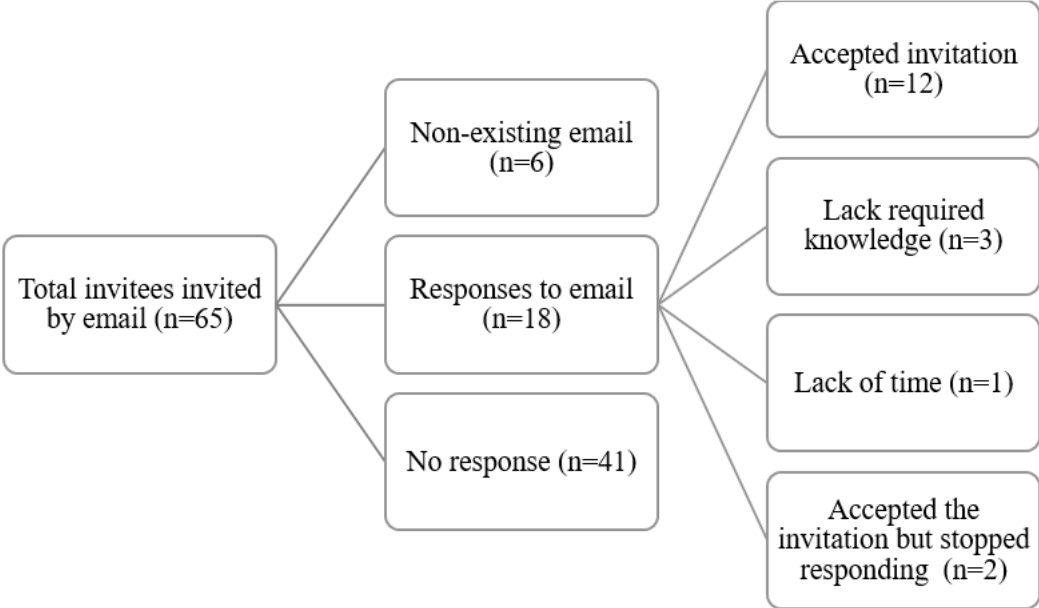


Figure 4 Overview of Responses to Research Invitation

Another limitation of this study is that none of the civil defence organisations of the three parties replied to the research invitation, meaning that a national perspective of the key entities involved in this project is lacking. Instead, most of the participants are working for international organisations. It was attempted to counter this overrepresentation of international organisations by sending out more emails to national organisations involved in the PDEX-JIP project. Nevertheless, no response was received suggesting that the project is perceived as a highly sensitive matter on the national level by the three parties. In total, 12 interviews, including a pilot interview, were conducted via the video conference platform Zoom between 25 March 2022 and 10 May 2022. Information on the reason for interviewing the specific participants can be found in Appendix B.

4.4. Thematic Analysis

For the data analysis, a thematic analysis was conducted. Braun and Clarke (2006:6) describe thematic analysis as a "*method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data*". The thematic analysis aims to identify themes and to use these themes to say something about a matter (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis is a flexible research method that provides a complex and rich account of the data and enables the identification of common threads across a set of interviews (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). It is a suitable data analysis tool in this research because it identifies different participants' perspectives and highlights similarities and differences (Nowell et al., 2017).

A thematic analysis should analyse and interpret the data, as opposed to merely summarising and organising the data (ibid). For this thesis, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted, as it is the most appropriate approach to use in cases where there is little research on this specific research topic (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In contrast to a deductive approach, where categories are predetermined and derived from theory, an inductive approach derives the codes directly from the "raw" text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The data corpus was the transcripts of all the interviews conducted as part of this research. The qualitative data analysis software *NVivo® 12* was used to facilitate the analysis. The data analysis was conducted following Braun's & Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to doing thematic analysis (Figure 5). The phases should not be followed as a linear process but should be seen as a recursive process where back and forth revisiting of phases is needed (ibid). The first phase involves familiarising yourself with the data by actively reading and re-reading the data, in this case, the interview transcripts (ibid). In the second phase, initial codes are generated. Since this is an inductive analysis, coding was done line-by-line (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The codes were generated by open coding, meaning no pre-set codes were used when going through the interview transcripts (ibid). Subsequently, the third phase consists of searching for themes, which involves sorting through the different codes and considering how various codes can be combined to form an overarching theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase includes considering the relationship between codes, themes, and different levels of themes, such as overarching and sub-themes (ibid). In the next phase, the themes are revisited, as some may contain too little data or be too diverse to be considered a theme (ibid). Additionally, multiple themes might merge into one theme (ibid). In the following phase, the themes are named and defined, which refers to defining the core of each theme and the aspects of the data the theme

captures (ibid). In the final phase, a report is produced, the themes are presented beyond description, and an argument is made in relation to the research question (ibid).

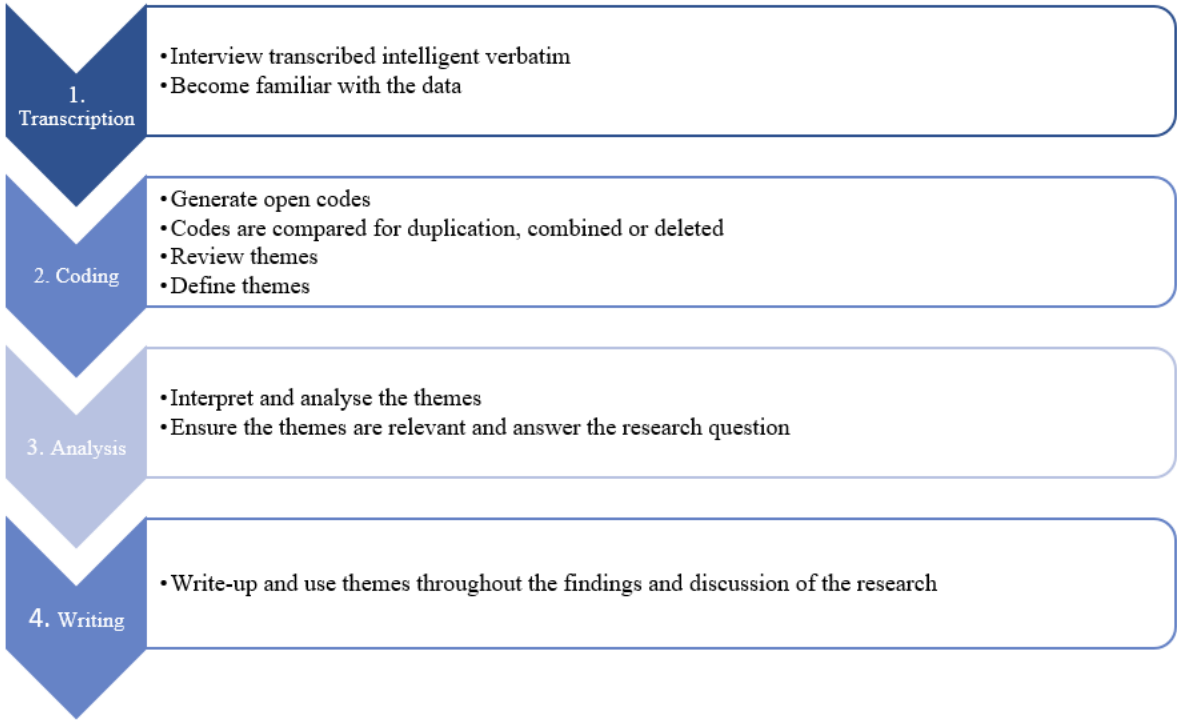


Figure 5 Conducting a thematic analysis as adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006) and Cliffe (2019).

5. Findings

This chapter summarizes the findings of the interviews by introducing them through the various themes. In total, 243 open codes were generated from the raw data, which were then categorized into four themes and various sub-themes. The themes created are 1) Enabling factors, 2) Challenges, 3) SOP Opinions and Expectations, and 4) SOP Recommendations and Needs. To avoid duplications in this section, the enabling factors can be interpreted as challenges by reducing them to a minimum and vice versa². For instance, in the absence of the enabling factor of trust, this becomes the challenge of a lack of trust. A complete overview of the identified themes can be found in Appendix C.

5.1. Enabling Factors

This theme refers to the factors that would facilitate the creation of the joint SOP between JIP. Three main enabling factors were identified and four sub-themes (Figure 6).

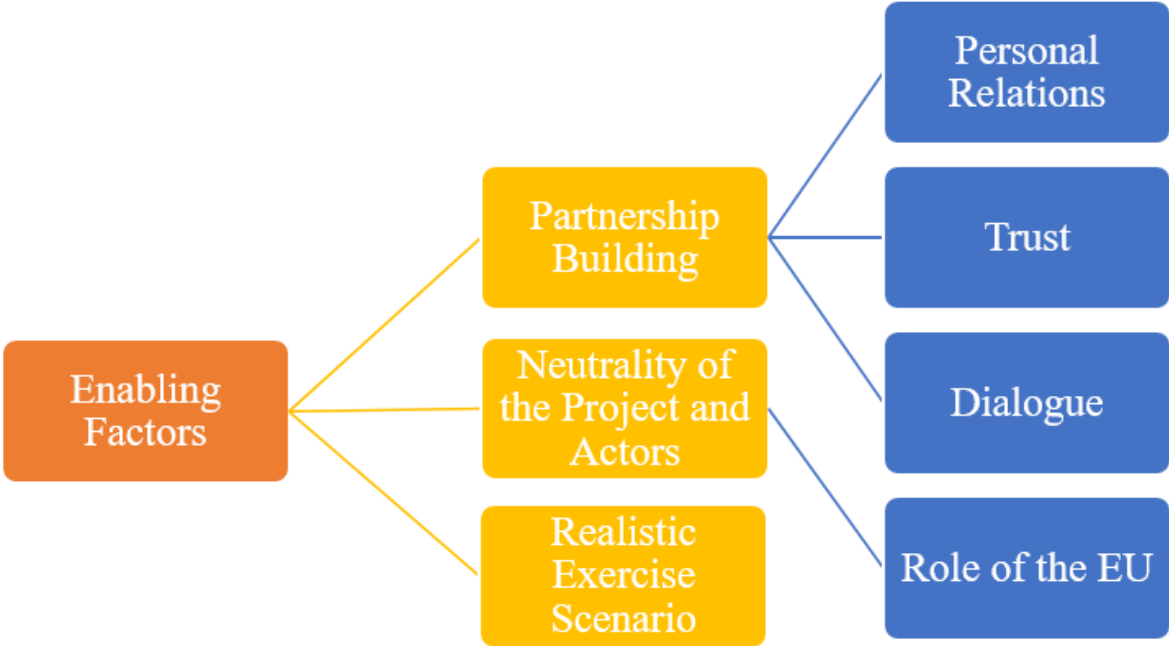


Figure 6 Enabling Factors

² Enabling factors and challenges are two sides of the same coin. Whether a factor is considered an enabling factor or a challenge is based on how the participants referred to that factor in the interviews.

5.1.1. Partnership Building

The interviews emphasized the importance of partnership building for creating an SOP. Personal relations, trust and dialogue were mentioned as sub-themes contributing to partnership building between JIP.

Personal Relations

Personal relationship building was mentioned by half of the participants (n = 6) as an essential part of creating an enabling environment when asked about the enabling factors for creating an SOP between JIP. One participant highlighted this importance by stating, *“When we talk about cross-border and collaboration between countries, it sounds very nice, but it’s hard to achieve. What’s easier to achieve is if you start from a partnership and it builds trust. You know, the ability to collaborate on a personal level.”* (Interview 12). However, the same participant also mentioned that relying too much on personal relations can harm projects, as people may change jobs. Furthermore, the value of personal relationships in past cross-border collaboration projects such as training and exercises in the JIP region was mentioned several times by participants, as Jordanians and Palestinian emergency responders assisted Israel during the 2013 wildfires, which *“happened because of relations through the Professional Dialogue project”* (Interview 9). Finally, personal relationship building was often mentioned in relation to trust-building, which is discussed below.

Trust

Trust was mentioned in eight interviews as a crucial part of creating cross-border SOPs, *“especially between organizations or countries who are on paper enemies, the more interaction they have, the more they see it’s not only one state but that they are individuals over there”* (Interview 1). Furthermore, the importance of trust-building was highlighted by one participant who mentioned that the goal of the exercise is to build some trust between the parties and create a framework for cooperation. Another participant mentioned bringing the technical ability to the table to build some trust in OCHA. Regarding the trust levels between the three entities involved in the PDEX-JIP project, the interviewees revealed that trust seems to be there. However, this trust was not present from the onset of the Professional Dialogue as *“It happened that the Israeli military intervened and attacked the headquarters and took people out from the Palestinian side, so there was obviously this issue. But nowadays both civil protection work, and we can trust each other, and people are working for each other. So that helps, I think it’s absolutely needed to make this dialogue work”* (Interview 1).

Another participant confirmed the trust between the three entities when asked about it: *“You never know what politically happens, but in the end, those people who are normally talking to us in the field of preparation for this SOP, they trust each other I think”* (Interview 5).

However, when talking about the trust between the three entities on a broader political rather than individual level, the interviews revealed that there are low trust levels between the governments and the societies.

Dialogue

Dialogue refers to the negotiations between the parties that fall under the Professional Dialogue and informal dialogues between the parties. Three interviewees highlighted the importance of regular dialogue as being key to completing the project. Moreover, face-to-face meetings and political will were mentioned by participants as essential factors in the dialogue and negotiations. One participant explained this by stating, *“You want to do something with SOPs or work together and build trust, so you need to have a physical aspect of that. You cannot just meet online, especially when the tensions are different politically”* (Interview 4).

Political will has been mentioned in half of the interviews as an essential enabling factor for the SOP creation. One participant exemplifies this by stating that political will needs to be present from top-down:

You need support from top-down, there must be a part of the system that supports and accepts these negotiations. It is not enough if the head of disaster management or Palestinian civil defence is supporting it, it must be above really supported in Israel. It would be the national security council that needs to support that (Interview 1).

Two participants mentioned that only doing projects at the technical level is not enough, and political will is needed to complete a cross-border project. A participant highlighted this by saying the following when talking about a cross-border DRR SOP project between two countries in the Caribbean: *“in that sense that is a highlight that you got, this recognition that you need both a political commitment reflected in agreements as well as SOPs, which is more a technical tool that everyone can make, and then you put in on the shelf”* (Interview 7).

One of the participants seemed optimistic about the prospect of an SOP between JIP and, suggested that there is political will since *“each of the entities wants to have something like this in hand”* (Interview 5). However, another participant differed in opinion and stated, *“Imagine if this Professional Dialogue was happening between three countries that are bordering each*

other without any conflict, probably the SOP would have happened a long time ago. So why is it not happening? It is the politics and conflict" (Interview 9).

5.1.2. Neutrality Project and Actor

Additionally, the interviews revealed that it is essential to have actors that all three parties accept, and several interviewees highlighted the value of having technical actors involved in the project. Furthermore, participants mentioned the role of Cyprus several times as being a neutral actor in the project and providing a neutral location for the parties to meet. Providing a neutral location for conflicting parties involved in regional projects does not only seem valuable for this project, as a regional project between Jordan and Israel also used Cyprus as a neutral location. Moreover, three interviewees have mentioned that the three parties' behaviour differs depending on the parties involved in the project and *"we need to be extra careful whom to invite"* (Interview 2). Therefore, they all concluded that equally accepted and supported actors are needed in the PDEX-JIP project.

Role of the EU

Although the EU mainly plays a supportive and technical role within the PDEX-JIP project, four participants expressed that the project would benefit from more EU involvement. The reasoning behind this was due to the fact that one participant expressed that *"I think they have more leverage, I would say in terms of negotiating, for instance, commercial agreements in particular with the Israelis"* (Interview 10). In addition to this, another participant suggested more EU involvement as a carrot to push the three parties into more collaboration, as the EU has economic agreements with the three entities. However, more EU involvement was not believed to be likely to happen but the exact reason for this was not mentioned.

5.1.3. Realistic Exercise Scenario

When asked about the effect of the exercises on the SOP creation, all participants agreed that both the Full-Scale Exercise and Table-Top Exercise will help to create the SOP by creating a recognition between the parties that the SOP will be utilized and that the parties will need each other during an emergency. Furthermore, a participant hypothesized that PDEX-JIP could be used as *"a base to organize an internal incentive that cooperation will go further"* (Interview 2). When asked about the enabling factors for the exercise, three participants talked about that the location of the exercise needs to be a neutral environment where the three entities can meet without many problems. Cyprus was mentioned as such a neutral environment by the participants. Another factor that was brought up regarding the Full-Scale Exercise was the fact that parties agreed from the beginning on the scenario of an earthquake during a pandemic.

However, there is disagreement on what the three parties want to test. One participant explained the rationale for opting for an earthquake scenario in another regional project in the JIP by stating that "*it doesn't have any sensitivity and any complexities. It's complex enough to try a cross-border collaboration, taking into account the geopolitical situation here in the Middle East, so earthquakes were always a bridge to be able to work together*" (Interview 12). One participant recalled that in a past cross-border SOP project, having a realistic scenario and good representation of the parties contributed to the success of the exercise, and stated that "*I think it's a challenge when it becomes too theoretical and unrealistic that people won't find it interesting to do.*" (Interview 7). Finally, two participants mentioned the importance of measuring gaps and strong points in the exercise as being key to the success of the exercise.

5.2. Challenges

This theme refers to the barriers that provide an obstacle to the SOP creation process. In total, nine main challenges and four sub-themes were identified (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Challenges

5.2.1. Political Sensitivities and Conflict

When asked about the project's challenges, all participants agreed that the conflict and the political situation between JIP is the biggest challenge the project faces. The interviews revealed that the political sensitivities and conflict on a national level lead to practical issues such as the suspension of the dialogue and potentially prolonging the project, as well as issues with agreement on information exchange. Regarding the suspension of the dialogue, one participant

stated, *"In the JIP, every one or two years, there is a big disconnection between the parties and a long period of suspension of the dialogue due to security or political changes. During this period, we hope all the talks and diplomatic communication continues, but we realize it may stop based on changes on the ground"* (Interview 11).

The political sensitivities and the conflict also challenge collaboration in other cross-border projects in the JIP region. In one example, someone trying to cross the Jordanian-Israeli border was shot, which suspended the collaboration for a while. Furthermore, political sensitivities were also found to be a challenge in other cross-border disaster regions since *"There are often ups and downs in bilateral relationships between governance, so that's the risk every cross-border exercise will face with the high politics of everything"* (Interview 7).

5.2.2. Access Restrictions

This theme refers to the access restrictions that impede Palestinians from moving freely in and out of Gaza and within a large part of the West Bank. When asked about the most significant challenges for the SOP creation, the participants agreed that this forms one of the largest obstacles. Respondents referred to the issue of having to rely on the Israeli government for permits and the associated bureaucracy of the process as presenting a critical logistical issue for the SOP creation. One participant explained why the access restrictions are such a problem by stating that *"When it comes to the right of the borders, like Israel, that would automatically mean that they are not accepting, in a natural disaster, the military administration of the areas, and the access which is impossible to move for the Israeli side."* (Interview 1). The access restrictions do not only apply to the Israeli-Palestinian borders, but it also poses a problem with the Jordan-Israeli border. One participant exemplified this by stating that *"As long at the borders are protected, this is relaxing for the parties [...] However, once the parties feel that the border is less monitored, there is a fear of terrorism and other security concerns"* (Interview 11).

Another participant highlighted the issue of incoming teams as being a challenge due to the access restrictions by stating that *"The question is how can you get as fast as possible into the country on-side to start because, especially after earthquakes, you have 72 hours and afterwards it's not so sure you will find a lot of people alive"* (Interview 5).

Movement of Goods

Related to the access restrictions, the participants highlighted the movement of goods as being a key challenge during a large-scale disaster, which would require a response from the international community. The interviews revealed two critical challenges related to the

movement of goods. One of the challenges pointed out by several participants was transporting goods into Palestine. Although Palestine can request international assistance, the critical issue, according to participants, was that these goods would arrive at Tel Aviv airport since Palestine does not have its own airport. One participant noted that *“You will always have the problem if something or everything arrives, most of them will arrive after the equipment and goods arrive in Tel Aviv. You will have the discussion about how much is going to Palestine or is everything only for Israel.”* (Interview 5). Another participant mentioned that a solution during small emergencies would be for the Israeli military to transport the goods. However, the participant also admitted that in a large-scale emergency, this would be unrealistic because Israel would also need humanitarian assistance and would likely prioritise its own needs over transporting goods for Palestine. The second problem identified in the interviews is that Israeli security does not allow specific equipment to be shipped to Palestine, as there is a concern that it would be used for other purposes. Examples of this equipment are compressed gasses for search and rescue operations and equipment used for digging.

5.2.3. Organisational Issues

This theme includes the sub-theme of funding, staff turnover and, organisational competition and refers to issues having to do with everyday organisational management.

Funding

Five participants mentioned a lack of funding as a challenge for the SOP creation and a general problem in funding for DRM. A lack of funding was identified by participants as a challenge on the national level in Palestine as well as for international organisations. One participant referred to the lack of funding as a challenge as this would delay the implementation of the JIP project.

Staff Turnover

Staff turnover refers to the pace at which people working in an organisation change. Three participants identified a high turnover rate as a challenge in the JIP project, while one participant referred to the high turnover rate as a challenge in SOP creation projects in general. One participant expanded on the issue by stating, *“It’s not always those people who actually were in charge of writing all these SOPs are in the same position when things happen. [...] So it’s not always that they have access, that there is an organisational memory of what is available”* (Interview 12). Three participants explicitly stated that the turnover rate in Jordan is high, delaying the JIP project, while one participant talked about Palestine, which experienced a change of its line ministries.

Organizational Competition

The theme of organisational competition refers to the competition within the three entities that are part of the JIP project. The participants expressed the challenge of having organisational competition particularly within Israel and Palestine. Regarding Israel, the large number of organisations that are dedicated to emergencies leads to competition within Israel for funding, according to one participant. In addition to this, one participant highlighted that the role of NEMA is comparably weak, even though it is part of the Ministry of Defence. The participant exemplifies this in the following excerpt: “*NEMA is not strong enough, even if our counterpart would like to move things in the SOP, it can be that it’s getting blocked simply because there are just too many organisations in Israel*” (Interview 1). Another participant expressed that also in Palestine, there is competition between Palestinian organisations. One participant said the following about the implications of this: “*The whole Palestinian structure has to be organised and work in harmony among themselves to be able to work with the Israelis*” (Interview 6).

5.2.4. Information Exchange

Four participants identified information sharing between organisations as a general challenge for cross-border collaboration projects. This challenge was confirmed various times throughout the interviews, as participants involved in the JIP project and other regional projects in the area brought up the issue of information exchange. For example, one participant explained that the issue of information sharing closely relates to the political sensitivities between Jordan and Israel as “*information sharing is a very sensitive topic because it is associated with security concerns [...] there is always a fear that this information would be leaked or used for other purposes in the future*” (Interview 11).

5.2.5. Participation OCHA

The participants seemed to disagree to what extent OCHA is an accepted and neutral facilitator for the three parties. One interviewee framed OCHA’s presence in positive terms for the collaboration, as parties can be more open to each other, with OCHA guaranteeing the neutrality element. On the other hand, some participants revealed that there is limited acceptability of OCHA by the three parties as “*OCHA is perceived as a very complex partner, particularly for the Israelis*” (Interview 10) and “*has been in a very weak role for the time because being very one-sided on the Palestinian side, but also not supporting the Palestinians really [...] and not build them up that it could be equal*” (Interview 1). One participant explained that the Israeli government dropped out of one of the official meetings as they did not like how it was managed

by OCHA. Another participant confirmed this by explaining that Israel initially objected to moving the mandate from OCHA Geneva to Amman, as they found it would be more neutral if it remained in Geneva.

5.2.6. Shifting Priorities

Several participants mentioned a shifting priorities as a challenge for funding DRM in the JIP region, especially in Palestine. According to a few participants, this shift in focus and funding has occurred due to the situation in Syria, Yemen and Ukraine, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the climate crisis. According to two participants, this leads to economic pressure on Palestine “*that lives off these investments*” (Interview 1). Furthermore, the shifting world focus also leads to the cooperation between the three parties being stuck, as more important things are on the agenda. Finally, when talking about DRM in Palestine, one participant revealed that it had not been part of their organization’s development agenda because more urgent matters have been occurring. However, the same participant also added to this that this does not mean that the other matters are more important. Another aspect that was brought up by one of the participants was the normalisation of relations between Arab states and Israel. In other words, there are more allegiances and alliances between the Israeli government and the Gulf states, while the Arab world is simultaneously withholding its support towards Palestine.

5.2.7. Unequal Power Relations

When the participants were asked about the unequal power relations between JIP, all acknowledged a significant power asymmetry between them. However, opinions differed about the implications of these differences for the JIP project and how these differences were taken into account during the project. On the one hand, participants discussed the power asymmetry between Palestine and Israel as being highly unequal. One participant said the following about this power asymmetry: “*The Palestinian government and the Israeli government are obvious. They have all the gates in their hands [...] The Palestinians have at the moment zero ability to put pressure on the Israelis at all.*” (Interview 1). However, one participant noted that this power imbalance does not have adverse effects on the Professional Dialogue Exercise:

It seems like the most powerful entity is Jordan and Israel and have a natural care for the Palestine area which is the weakest part because of the situation and because of complications in travel and receiving aid, equipment [...] At the moment, we don't find the power asymmetry a problem, I would say it's a positive factor because, in the exercise, we will focus on how the weakest part of the three can improve the situation with the support of the other two (Interview 2).

The participant further explained that "*despite what we read in the papers, they have a good relationship with the civil protection authorities in all three areas*" (Interview 2). Instead, another participant was more cynical about the ramifications of the power imbalance between Palestine and Israel for the project, and referred to the need to have a guarantee that Israel will not be an obstacle should something happen. However, the same participants noted that this would probably not be attainable and it would depend on the political situation in Israel and how the issue is perceived. On the other hand, participants also mentioned the power imbalances between Jordan and Israel. One participant explained that there is an obvious power imbalance with the Israeli during negotiations due to high turnover in the Jordanian Civil Defence. Furthermore, another participant added that Jordan's negotiation power is also limited as they have to be mindful of the large population group in Jordan with Palestinian heritage.

5.2.8. Adherence and Sustainability of SOPs

This theme refers to implementing and updating the SOP³. Four participants stated that the implementation of the SOP and adherence to it is a general challenge in DRM. Several participants exemplified this by stating that "*You put a plan, but whenever you have an emergency, you trash all the paperwork and you start from scratch*" (Interview 6) or by referring to existing national pandemic plans in Israel where when talking about the Covid-19 pandemic "*suddenly we invented the wheel again*" (Interview 12). When asked why this seems to be a pattern, one participant referred to the issue of turnover because "*people who design the plans are not necessarily the ones who are at the head of the pyramid during the adversity*" (Interview 12).

The sustainability of SOPs refers to updating the SOPs to be relevant to the current realities. Four participants referred to the need for sustainability and updating SOPs regularly when asked what should be included in the joint SOP. One participant found that the biggest challenge with SOPs is ensuring that it is sustainable and operable when needed. Another participant referred to a past mission where all the people involved in the response were dead and highlighted the need for a continuity plan for the next person taking over. Interviewee 7 also highlighted the importance of updating the SOP because "*An SOP is outdated the moment it is made, so it's a super flexible document, the world changes already*" (Interview 7).

³ It should be noted that this category does not formally have to do with the SOP development process in itself. However, knowing beforehand that the implementation of the SOP will be a challenge could affect the SOP development process and is therefore included.

5.2.9. Finalising Exercise Scenario

Regarding the challenges of the exercise, participants mentioned mobilizing all the resources the different entities have during the exercise; managing to engage all the stakeholders in the exercise; and finalizing the scenario that is satisfactory for all parties as challenges. One participant elaborated on the latter challenge by stating that *“The problem is always if one of the parties leaves the table, so to say, then you can’t finalize it and this is always a real challenge and this can happen every day”* (Interview 5). Another participant referred to the challenge of parties wanting to test different things during the exercises.

5.3. SOP Opinion and Expectations

When asked about their opinion and expectations on the joint SOP, all participants agreed with the rationale of having a joint SOP in the JIP because the areas are almost all equally impacted by natural hazards. However, participants differed in how implementable, and attainable they believed it would be to have this joint SOP. Although all participants also expressed the difficulty of the SOP development and the project, three participants were relatively optimistic about the process. One participant expressed some slow but promising developments in the initiative, while another expects the SOP to be completed, although not endorsed immediately by all parties. The same participant mentioned that the Jordanian-Israeli border is a slow process, but it will not be a big problem. However, the participant was less optimistic about finding a compromise between the Israeli and Palestinian governments. Another participant expressed their confidence that a solution would be found *“Each of the three entities wants to have something like this in hand. It depends, and if it's not called an SOP, it will be called an entry guidance, it doesn't matter”* (Interview 5)

Two participants expressed strong scepticism on whether the SOP is attainable or implementable. One participant expressed this in the following way:

If they are still in the negotiation phase and they can't agree, they don't talk to each other. I mean they are the closest countries to one another to support. I don't know honestly if this is implementable after that, because I'm surprised this SOP never happens. Maybe it's not implementable, but maybe through the heads of delegations at least they do assessments, they do early warnings, they can just share the information and the delegation can continue to cooperate on that. I don't know if the SOP then ever takes place (Interview 9).

5.4. SOP Recommendations and Needs

In total ten participants gave recommendations and identified some elements that need to be present in the SOP for it to work (Table 1).

Table 1 SOP Recommendations and Needs

	Themes	Recommends/Needs
Practical Recommendation	<i>Partnership Building</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the roles and responsibilities of each entity and making sure to get their commitment to perform these roles
	<i>Neutrality Project and Actors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include another party that is equally accepted by all the parties and would contribute to a more neutral perception of the project such as the EU and the USA Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
	<i>Access Restrictions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A list of names and passport numbers and a list of urban search and rescue equipment for international teams to enter the country quicker
	<i>Information Exchange</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Annexe which sets out the procedures and ways the three entities communicate with each other to help find connections between the parties
	<i>Other</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-evaluating or supporting some of the recommendations made in the 2014 UNDAC Mission to Palestine.
Needs	<i>Partnership Building</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frame the cooperation in such a way that it will bring good for all parties, especially because of the fact that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are in close proximity to any Palestinian villages and could potentially solicit for each other's support To have cross-sectoral representation in the project and the exercise as the joint SOP cannot be handled from one perspective
	<i>Political Sensitivities and Conflict</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to agree on a framework and the SOP very fast given the limited timeline of the project and the volatility of the political context
	<i>Access Restrictions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a realistic solution between the three parties on the movement of goods and people instead of trying to change the landscape of the Middle East
	<i>Other</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technological support is needed both for DRR and having the capacity on the ground to implement SOPs and for integrating communication and information flows in the project's exercise

6. Discussion

This research has presented enabling factors and challenges for creating a joint SOP between JIP as derived through 12 semi-structured expert interviews. The purpose of this research was to contribute to the field of cross-border disaster management and the secondary purpose was to support the SOP development on the ground. Identifying the enabling factors and challenges of the SOP development can be helpful in the future of the PDEX-JIP project, as this informs what factors are seen as challenges for the project's completion and provide a starting point for overcoming the existing obstacles. However, the findings illustrate the difficulties the SOP development faces, as more challenges than enabling factors were identified. While opinions and expectations on the SOP differed, all participants acknowledged the complexity and difficulty of creating a joint SOP between JIP. The enabling factors identified were: 1) *partnership building*, 2) *neutrality of the project and actors*, and 3) *realistic exercise scenario*.

On the other hand, a wide range of challenges was identified regarding the SOP development process ranging from more systematic challenges in the humanitarian field, such as a lack of funding and turnover (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2019), to more context-specific issues, such as access restrictions and political sensitivities (Mena & Hilhorst, 2021). The challenges that were identified were 1) *access restrictions*, 2) *political sensitivities and conflict*, 3) *organisational issues*, 4) *information exchange*, 5) *participation of OCHA*, 6) *shifting priorities*, 7) *unequal power relations*, 8) *adherence and sustainability of the SOP*, and 9) *finalising exercise scenario*. It is clear that, when looking at the identified challenges and enabling factors, one part is inherently linked to the process of development projects in the field of DRM in general, and the other part is linked to the contextual conflict dynamics in JIP (Figure 8). In this section, the findings mentioned above will be presented based on this categorisation and discussed in relation to the existing literature.

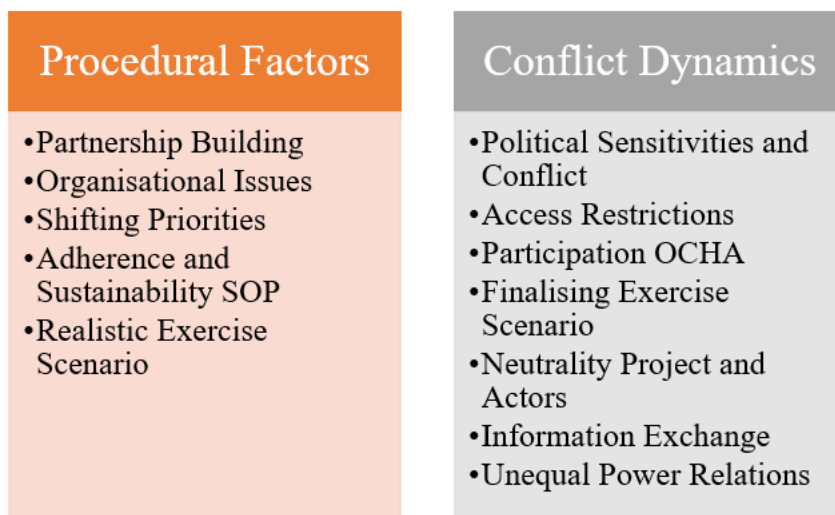


Figure 8 Procedural and Conflict Dynamics related factors

6.1. Procedural Factors

In general, the enabling factors and challenges identified in this research as being procedural in nature are in line with the DRM, capacity development and international relations literature. Procedural factors refer to enabling factors or challenges that are inherently related to the SOP development process and are often generally encountered in DRM projects. The procedural factors identified in this research are the crucial role of partnership building; organisational challenges; shifting priorities; difficulties in the adherence and sustainability of the SOP; and the importance of exercises.

Organisational issues such as a lack of funding, high staff turnover and DRM projects competing with other government priorities are not unique to this case study and are frequently cited as issues in DRM projects in contexts that are not affected by conflict (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2019; van Riet & van Niekerk, 2012; Scott & Few, 2016). Additionally, partnership building and conducting exercises to test contingency plans have generally been cited as critical enabling factors in capacity building and disaster response initiatives (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2019; Auf der Heide, 1989). Nevertheless, having a strong partnership and exercises between parties operating in conflict-affected areas is particularly important for the success of cross-border collaboration projects.

6.1.1. Partnership, Trust and Personal Relations

The results of this research indicate that partnership building is an indispensable requirement for creating a joint SOP between JIP and that trust, personal relations, and constant dialogue are central aspects of partnership building, especially between conflicting parties. This finding is in line with Abramov (2010), who found that trust is at the core of a successful partnership

and Becker (2014), who found that partnerships require open and transparent dialogue and clear communication between the partners. With regard to trust-building between the three civil protection agencies, the interviews indicate that this was closely related to constant dialogue and personal relations. These results coincide with previous studies where the role of open communication channels, time, and personal relations in trust-building for capacity development for DRM was highlighted (Bachmann & Inkpen, 2011; Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014). Moreover, face-to-face meetings were vital for trust-building between the three parties. This finding corresponds with a previous study that identified face-to-face meetings, trust-building, and a shared understanding between the collaborating parties as crucial factors for a collaboration's success (Kapucu et al., 2010). Wheeler (2018) refers to previous psychological studies that found that face-to-face interactions give actors cues to another person's trustworthiness through facial expressions and body language. Consequently, he concluded that face-to-face meetings are essential for trust-building, particularly for states in conflicting relationships, as it further humanizes the other negotiating party (ibid).

In the case of the PDEX-JIP project, partnership building has been going on for almost ten years as part of the overarching JIP project, where parties were encouraged to engage in direct face-to-face dialogue with each other and personal relations were created during joint training and exercises. This might explain the finding that there is trust between the three civil protection organizations in the PDEX-JIP project, despite the fact that there is a large amount of mistrust between the three entities on a political level. A DRM project in Lebanon, led by the Lebanese Red Cross, similarly confirms that building trust among communities with a history of violent conflict is possible through establishing long-term relationships, which enables the promotion of collaborative mechanisms for emergency preparedness (Peters et al., 2019)⁴. Another regional collaboration project between JIP, which started in 2014 and aimed at training local residents as first responders in case of an earthquake, similarly referred to personal relationships and friendships as proof that regional collaboration is possible between conflicting parties (HSNW, 2017). The Dominican Republic's humanitarian assistance to Haiti in 2010 also confirms that regional assistance and collaboration can be successful despite a lack of trust between the two countries (Forman & White, 2011). This suggests that it is possible to build trust on a technical level between countries that are enemies on paper and engage in regional collaboration despite the complexity and the long duration of the trust-building process.

⁴ It should be acknowledged that examples from other contexts and regions are not mentioned to compare them with the case study of this research. Instead, projects in other regions and contexts were brought up for exemplary purposes and were mentioned by participants during the interviews.

However, it remains questionable whether trust-building between the civil protection agencies would be sufficient to offset the challenges the project faces, which are predominantly related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one of the world's most enduring conflicts (chapter 3.1).

6.1.2. Organisational Issues, Sustainability and Adherence

While personal relations were highlighted as key enabling factors in the findings above, it was also found that personal relations can damage a project by creating an overreliance on the people involved. This coincides with Mawdsley et al. (2005), who reported that greater personal interaction could improve and erode trust by creating an overreliance on personal relations. This risk of overreliance was exacerbated by the high staff turnover experienced at the Jordan Civil Defence and consequently negatively affected personal relations and the SOP development. Loquercio et al. (2006) further confirm this link by stating that turnover negatively affects projects by delaying them and causing a loss in institutional memory and important stakeholder relations. Additionally, staff turnover and coordination problems have been cited as the main reason for the failure of disaster relief initiatives (Dubey et al., 2016), and it has been argued that it is particularly prevalent in fragile states where recruitment is more complex (Scott & Few, 2016). This indicates that staff turnover should be considered an important issue since it can seriously impact the success of the PDEX-JIP project, which is already suffering from the risk of being delayed due to conflict dynamics. However, addressing the issue of staff turnover seems to be a systemic challenge that can only directly be addressed by the civil protection authorities, and thus falls outside of the PDEX-JIP project.

Furthermore, it has been found that the issue of staff turnover does not only challenge the SOP development process but also its implementation. Turnover negatively affects the implementation of SOPs or contingency plans because it can lead to institutional memory loss in which the people who create the plans are not the same people who implement them. The challenge of adherence to the SOP is, in turn, closely related to the challenge of SOP sustainability, as not having updated plans will make them outdated and difficult to implement under changing circumstances. Auf der Heide (1989) refers to a previous study where disaster plans were not followed because of a lack of understanding of the plans or a lack of knowledge about the existence of such plans. A large body of literature has highlighted the importance of updating plans regularly as disasters are highly complex and uncertain (Alexander, 2005; Perry & Lindell, 2003). Therefore, adherence and sustainability of the SOP are essential aspects to be considered for implementing the SOP and the disaster response plans. However, it should be acknowledged that already creating a joint SOP between JIP seems to be a challenge suggesting that thinking about adherence and sustainability might not be as much of an immediate

challenge. Despite this, having a holistic approach to the DRM cycle and project implementation would likely benefit regional disaster response preparedness in the future. Therefore, continuous updates should be planned and included in the SOP document.

6.1.3. Political Will and Exercises

Political willingness and commitment were also found to be a requirement to allocate resources for preparedness and DRM in general terms, as well as for information sharing and enabling cross-border cooperation projects such as the joint SOP. The vital role of political will in investing resources and prioritising DRR in the national agendas has widely been supported in previous studies (Gaillard & Mercer, 2012; Hagelsteen et al., 2022; Lassa et al., 2019). However, a shifting world focus is a challenge for funding cross-border disaster preparedness collaboration projects in the JIP as other competing priorities are considered more urgent. Lassa et al. (2019) support this finding by referring to the fact that DRR governability often becomes an issue because of limited resources or other competing development problems. Furthermore, a UNDP (2011) case study report on the disaster-conflict interface in Haiti found that violent conflict can hinder DRR by diverting political attention away from the importance of disaster issues. In Haiti, for instance, the government and the UN partners paid little attention to the risk of earthquakes prior to the 2010 earthquake, as violence reduction issues were considered to be more urgent (ibid). In regards to enabling DRM projects, Sumaryana et al. (2019) found that political will is needed to overcome disaster management collaboration ineffectiveness within a government. However, no literature was identified on the importance of political will for enabling cross-border cooperation projects. Based on the enabling factors of this research, a political will should be present on the national civil protection authority level and the broader political level. In other words, bottom-up and top-down support is necessary for the JIP project. However, the results indicate that even if NEMA would move forward with the SOP creation, it would still get blocked on a higher level as many organisations in Israel compete over project funding, suggesting a lack of political will on a governmental level. Furthermore, the recent change of leadership in Israel has negatively impacted the SOP negotiations suggesting that the project does not only have to deal with a complex political landscape but also a dynamic one. Indeed, in November 2022, Israel will head for its fifth election since 2019 (Al Jazeera, 2022), making it unlikely that endorsing the PDEX-JIP project and supporting closer regional collaboration with the Palestinian and Jordanian disaster management authorities will be on the top of the Israeli government's priorities.

Finally, the exercises and training were major enabling factors for the SOP development, as they created trust, enabled parties to test the procedures, and identified the gaps and strengths.

This finding closely corresponds with the literature, emphasising that plans must be tied to exercise and training to be functional (Auf der Heide, 1989). Furthermore, Perry and Lindell (2003) state that training is an integral part of the disaster planning process as it provides crucial feedback to the plan and allows the different actors to develop personal relations. They further pointed out that officials tend to see disaster planning as a product and a static document rather than a process in itself (ibid). This should be especially avoided in the case of the common SOP between JIP due to the volatility of the environment, which requires continuous updates. However, it should refrain from having too much detail, as research has pointed out that this might tend to get outdated quickly and requires a lot of time and resources to update (ibid). For the PDEX-JIP project, having fewer details in the SOP might be a great way to move regional cross-border collaboration forward, as this would require less commitment from the parties. However, this would also mean that disaster preparedness collaboration would be limited to several aspects of the response. Nevertheless, the SOP development could also be seen as a process where regional collaboration and an expansion of the JIP project will increase gradually.

6.2. Conflict Dynamics

This research identified that political sensitivities and conflict were among the most considerable challenges. They were the root cause of the challenges of negotiating access, movement of goods, and information exchange. Furthermore, the conflict dynamics exacerbate issues that are often considered a challenge in themselves in DRM projects, such as unequal power relations between the involved parties. The findings related to the negative effects of conflict dynamics on the JIP project generally coincide with that of previous authors, who found that DRR projects are largely restricted by the conditions of conflict in conflict-affected contexts and problems with capacity development are typically influenced by underlying political issues (Mena & Hilhorst, 2021; Scott & Few, 2016). Siedentopp's (2016:84) findings similarly confirm the "*overwhelming weight of conflict dynamics on the prospects of cross-border emergency and disaster management between Jordan, Israel, and Palestine*". This also became apparent in the SOP opinions, where scepticism on the development of a joint SOP was significantly related to the conflict dynamics and the political relations between JIP. Therefore, it should be no surprise that most of the identified challenges in the SOP development process are linked to or exacerbated by conflict dynamics.

6.2.1. Access Restrictions and Information Exchange

The findings of this research suggest that the fundamental challenge in the SOP negotiations is finding an agreement for receiving humanitarian assistance to Palestine and negotiating timely access to the affected areas in the event of a large-scale disaster. Israel's access restrictions, that are imposed on Palestinians, are a significant obstacle to receiving timely assistance and are inherently linked to the conflict dynamics. A UNDAC (2014) report confirms this by stating that humanitarian relief would likely face challenges in getting timely to the affected areas unless access restrictions were lifted. While some access restrictions were lifted in response to the 2013 Winter Storms that hit Palestine and caused floods, power outages and a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, this was restricted to several crossings (OCHA, 2013). Indeed, in response to the closure and inaccessibility of the Erez Crossing at the height of the winter storm, Israel temporarily facilitated medical evacuations to hospitals and other humanitarian movements through the Kerem Shalom Crossing (ibid). Israel also allowed an increase in the number of travellers to leave Gaza via Erez instead of the Egyptian-controlled Rafah Crossing, which was closed intermittently (ibid). However, fully addressing the access issue in the SOP remains a challenge in the negotiations. Lifting these entirely would automatically mean bypassing the Israeli military, which would be politically impossible for Israel due to the conflict and the associated security concerns. While it must be highlighted that the political context of the JIP is unique, it is not the only DRM project that faces challenges in negotiating access. A case study on DRM in Afghanistan also found that the conditions of the conflict create significant challenges for DRM projects in terms of negotiating access and the logistics of DRM (Mena & Hilhorst, 2021). This illustrates that access restrictions are not only a challenge in the current case and might suggest that they are mainly an issue in conflict-affected areas. However, more research is needed on the challenges faced in DRM projects in conflict-affected regions.

The access restrictions also challenge transporting certain goods such as compressed gasses into Palestine, as these are highly explosive and raise security concerns amongst the Israelis. A practical solution recommended by a participant was to include a list containing equipment used by search and rescue teams and a list with names and passport numbers of rescue teams. Nonetheless, access restrictions will likely remain a fundamental challenge for SOP creation. Challenges related to access restrictions were not only found to be a problem in this joint SOP development. A study by Kunz & Reiner (2016) identified access barriers, bureaucracy and control of activities as government restrictions imposed on humanitarian supply chains, especially by states associated with state fragility and government ineffectiveness. While some

restrictions are based on specific regulations such as import barriers, some of the access restrictions result from highly bureaucratic procedures that delay humanitarian supply chains (ibid), such as the one the Israeli government imposes on goods and incoming teams to enter or transit through the country. Furthermore, access restrictions can pose significant challenges for transporting and distributing items to the end-user (Maghsoudi & Moshtari, 2020). This research might suggest that this is not solely a contextual challenge for disaster response preparedness. However, given the central role the access restrictions have in the conflict and Israeli security politics, this indicates that temporarily lifting access restrictions for technical matters such as civil defence might be impossible.

Another closely related issue to political sensitivities and conflict is the issue of information exchange. A lack of sharing and exchanging information was a sensitive issue connected to security concerns due to the conflict and general mistrust between the parties and populations. Without adequate information sharing between the three parties, disaster response collaboration between the three entities will be harder to coordinate. This challenge seems to be a general challenge in JIP, in particular between Israel and Palestine, as information sharing during the Covid-19 pandemic was initially ongoing but became a “*victim of the deteriorating political situation*” (Dahdal, 2021:4). However, following pressure from the international community and from within Israel itself, cooperation on sharing Covid-19 related information resumed (ibid). This suggests that for information exchange and sharing for DRR and DRM to occur, there must be international and societal pressure on Israel to do so. However, it is unclear whether this would also apply in the same manner to Jordan and Palestine.

Likewise, Berchtold et al. (2020) found that a lack of information sharing, not having a shared vision, and understanding of the aim to collaborate poses a vast challenge to inter-organizational collaboration in the EU, where resistance to sharing information plays a considerable role. Furthermore, they found that political and juridical challenges such as security concerns and organizational and sociological factors such as a lack of trust and personal relations between organizations contribute to this reluctance (ibid). Similar to the findings of this research, it was found that organizations are afraid the information will be used against them, which means that good communication, trust, and agreements on what can be shared are required (ibid). However, despite this being made explicit in the JIP negotiations, parties still seem to have this fear and resistance to information sharing. This suggests that the conflict is responsible for the limited political support and the lack of trust between organizations. This will likely harm the PDEX-JIP project as sharing information is essential to disaster response coordination and collaboration.

6.2.2. Power Inequalities, Acceptance and Neutrality

Interestingly, this study also found that the high turnover rate was a driver for larger power inequalities between Jordan and Israel in the SOP negotiation meetings. This is because the Israeli counterpart often has been in the same position for years and has more experience on the project. A possible implication of this might be that larger power inequalities will lead to unequal negotiation power in the SOP development process, which could diminish the likelihood of developing a successful SOP that all three parties accept. However, it was also suggested that the power inequalities do not necessarily pose a problem for the exercise. On the contrary, it was found as a positive factor because the exercise will focus on how the weakest party can improve with the support of two other parties. This peculiar finding might imply that power inequalities are problematic for the SOP creation but not for the planned exercises. A possible explanation for this might be that exercises are more hands-on than the SOP negotiations, and the actors involved in the exercises are perceived to be more neutral. However, this is merely speculation, and more research should be conducted on power relations and their impacts on contingency planning, SOPs, and exercises.

A key enabler for the SOP development is the neutrality of the project and the actors involved in the project. The neutrality of the project was found to be an enabler because collaboration between conflicting parties on neutral and technical matters is seen as more viable on a political level which closely relates this to the enabler of political willingness. This also accords with previous research, which suggests that promoting DRR in conflict-affected and highly politicised environments presents opportunities for project implementation due to DRR's neutral and non-threatening political perception (Mena & Hilhorst, 2021). Additionally, the interviews revealed that an equally accepted and neutral party should be facilitating the PDEX-JIP project. For example, Cyprus was often mentioned as a neutral party that could also provide a neutral location where the parties could meet each other. Schwarz (2002:41) defines a facilitator as "*a substantively neutral third party, acceptable to all members of the group, who has no substantive decision-making authority.*"

Interestingly, accepting OCHA as a neutral facilitator is a contested issue especially for Israel, as they perceive OCHA to be partisan, favouring the Palestinian side. Furthermore, the shift in leadership from OCHA headquarters in Geneva to OCHA Amman was similarly perceived with some resistance. This indicates that a neutral actor equally accepted by all three entities is currently lacking, which might have negative implications for the SOP creation process and future negotiations between the three entities. Alternatively, it was recommended by interview participants to include the EU and/or the United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance as

key facilitators or partners to the project, which are seen as more accepted actors by all three parties. This raises further questions about the possibility of creating an SOP between the three parties, as identifying a neutral and equally accepted party has proven challenging in JIP. However, it must be noted that enabling factors should not be seen as a strict requirement but rather as a facilitating factor for the project.

6.3. Recommendations and Opinions

The challenges discussed above suggest that the SOP development will be complex. Barriers related to the conflict dynamics, such as political sensitivities and access restrictions, are challenging to overcome without political willingness. Furthermore, more systemic and procedural challenges in the humanitarian field, such as staff turnover, funding, and a shifting priorities, seem difficult to tackle. Nonetheless, there are some enabling factors. The current trust level between the civil protection organizations is a promising finding for the SOP development and the PDEX-JIP project.

Furthermore, the positive expectations and opinions about the SOP development from people who have been involved with the project for a longer time suggest that the PDEX-JIP is likely to achieve some of its goals. On the other hand, while the neutrality of the project and actors was identified as a critical enabler, an equally accepted neutral facilitator seems to be lacking, which might have negative implications for the political will to engage in the PDEX-JIP project. Therefore, the recommendation of including the EU or the USA Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance might be an appropriate suggestion. Furthermore, information exchange combined with political sensitivities remains an obstacle, suggesting that the current trust levels between the three entities might not be sufficient. However, it should be noted that information exchange in multi-organization coordination is already a challenge between countries that are not in conflict (Berchtold et al., 2020) and that the three civil protection organizations depend on national policies and politics.

Nevertheless, as suggested by one of the participants, an annexe could be created to clarify the way the three entities want to communicate with each other. Furthermore, the exercises might enable a larger trust-building between the three parties and potentially pave the way for a more significant regional buy-in for the SOP. Finally, while the above challenges are difficult to overcome, ensuring the sustainability of the SOP might be relatively easier to ensure future adherence to the SOP implementation. This could be achieved by including regular revision of the SOP periodically. Conclusively, having an SOP between these three entities would be a

significant achievement as it could enable strengthened disaster collaboration in the future by having a pre-existing framework as a starting point.

6.4. Strengths and Limitations and Future Research

Although previous research has been conducted on the JIP project by Frutig & Reymond (2014) and Siedentopp (2016), the SOP development between JIP is an interesting and novel phenomenon worth exploring, given its unique characteristics. This exploratory research contributes to the field of cross-border disaster collaboration between conflicting parties by identifying what enables and challenges the creation of a joint SOP for DRM. The identified enabling factors and challenges for the joint SOP creation demonstrate that establishing an SOP will be challenging and should not be seen in isolation from the Full-Scale Exercise that will take place. It should be noted, however, that the identified barriers and enabling factors do not claim to be representative or exhaustive for the entirety of the actors involved in the PDEX-JIP project. Furthermore, given the volatile political context in which this project takes place, the SOP development and the exercises should not be seen as a static document or an end goal. Instead, it should be seen as a flexible planning process where the plan is constantly updated to reflect the dynamically changing circumstances.

Although the SOP is aimed to be developed for a multi-hazard approach, the Full-Scale Exercise is conducted based on an earthquake scenario during a pandemic. As a result, the earthquake scenario was frequently discussed by asking questions about it in the interviews and could have potentially affected the results by making them more focused on the earthquake hazard as opposed to other hazards which also threaten the region. A consequence of this could be that the research findings are suitable for the development of an SOP for an earthquake but become unsuitable for other hazards. Therefore, it is important to take the contextual nature of each hazard into consideration when applying the results of this research. Furthermore, it should be noted that given the particularity of the JIP context, the finding of this study might not be generalizable to other contexts. Additionally, with small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings may not accurately represent the view of all the participants involved in the PDEX-JIP project. Furthermore, the findings of this research need to be interpreted with caution, as a national perspective was lacking because none of the JIP's civil defence organisations participated in this research. Finally, the low response rate of this study is possibly explained by the sensitivity of this topic, indicating that representation from all the participants might be challenging to obtain for future research. However, the low response rate might also indicate this project's lack of political will.

A possible way future research could increase the participation rate in studying this particular topic would be to make a trip to the region and meet the experts personally or to recruit participants through local organisations. Similar regional studies confirmed the difficulty of receiving email replies and decided to meet experts in person instead (Simon et al., 2015). Additionally, future research must validate and generalise these findings to other contexts or joint SOPs for disaster management projects. Research on joint SOPs and disaster response exercises is generally lacking, especially between conflict-affected parties. Moreover, it would be interesting to research the lessons learned from the PDEX-JIP project when it is finalised.

7. Conclusion

This case study aimed to identify the enabling factors and challenges for developing an SOP between JIP as part of the PDEX-JIP project. Based on 12 semi-structured expert interviews, this research identified three main enabling factors and nine main challenges. One of the most significant findings to emerge from this study is that the challenges and enabling factors were either linked to or exacerbated by the conflict dynamics or linked to more generic, systemic and procedural challenges faced in the DRM field. The procedural factors consist of 1) *partnership building*; 2) *organisational issues*; 3) *shifting priorities*; 4) *adherence and sustainability SOP*; 5) *realistic exercise scenario*. The conflict dynamics factors consist of 1) *political sensitivities and conflict*; 2) *access restrictions*; 3) *participation OCHA*; 4) *finalising exercise scenario*; 5) *neutrality project and actors*; 6) *information exchange*; 7) *unequal power relations*. In general, the findings of this study suggest that the challenges the PDEX-JIP project faces are primarily related to the conflict dynamics and the volatile political situation in JIP. The findings of this investigation complement those of earlier studies that have found that the conditions of the conflict dynamics restrict DRM projects in conflict-affected areas. In addition to this, challenges associated with the SOP development process were also found to be in line with the findings of previous studies on DRM and capacity development projects.

This thesis has provided a deeper insight into the SOP development process and what challenges impede or facilitate the creation of this process. Furthermore, this present study lays the groundwork for future research into joint SOP development between conflicting parties and how the challenges faced in this project can be overcome. Despite the exploratory nature of this research, this study suggests that regional cross-border collaboration between JIP is challenging but not completely impossible, provided that sufficient political will, partnership and neutrality of the project are present. However, expectations on the actual development and endorsement of a common SOP between JIP must be tempered by the realities of the conflict dynamics and volatile political situation. Whether the SOP will be adhered to by the parties in the event of a large-scale disaster also remains uncertain, given the conflict dynamics between JIP. Therefore, it is worth closely monitoring what the end results will be of the PDEX-JIP project. This exploratory analysis did not aim to be exhaustive or representative of other joint SOP or DRM projects between conflicting parties. Although exploratory and limited in scale, this study should be a starting point for further research and analysis on how these challenges can be tackled.

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Appendix A - Interview Guide

This interview guideline is created to answer the following research question:

- What are the enabling factors and barriers for creating a Standard Operating Procedure between Jordan, Israel and Palestine?

Name of the interviewee:	
Organization:	
Position/ role:	
Date & place:	
Interview duration:	

INTERVIEW STARTS

- Introduction
 - Introduction researcher
 - Thank you the participants for their time and participation
 - Ask for permission to record the interview
- Explain the purpose and relevance of the interview
 - [The research is supposed to support the development of the actual SOP on the ground]

START RECORDING

- Address terms of confidentiality

- Inform the interviewee about their right to withdraw their consent from the interview at any point
- Inform the interviewee about their right to decline answering any questions they wish not to answer
- Explain who gets access to their answers and how they will be analysed in the thesis
- Ask for permission to quote them directly and tell them I will email them for their explicit consent to be quoted in the thesis document
- Explain the format of the interview
 - Type of interview and the duration of it
 - Specify that if they have questions, they can ask these during the interview
 - Tell them how to contact me if they want to do so later
 - Ask them if they have any questions

INTRODUCTION

Inform the participant about the purpose of the research and adapt language based to the role and background of the participant.

- Research Purpose
 1. To support the development of the actual SOP on the ground as part of the Professional Dialogue JIP Project.
 2. To identify the enabling factors for the development of an SOP between Jordan, Israel and Palestine.
 3. Identify the barriers and challenges to the development of an SOP between Jordan, Israel and Palestine from different perspectives and actors involved in the project.
 4. Understand the different expectations and perceptions the three parties might have about the SOP creation.
 5. Grasp the role of international organizations in the creation of the SOP.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. I would like to begin by asking you to tell me something about yourself in relation to the JIP Project
 1. What organization do you work for?
 2. What is your role in the organization?

3. How is your organization involved in the JIP project?
4. What is your role in the PDEX-JIP project?
5. Do you have experience with joint SOP creation?

2. SOP COMPONENTS

1. What are your opinion and expectations about the creation of a joint SOP between Jordan, Israel and Palestine?
 1. Do you think it is attainable, implementable, and relevant to have this project?
2. Do you think it is a priority to create an SOP between JIP? If so, why do you think it is a priority?
3. What are the most important components that need to be included in the SOP?
4. Which components/ what aspects of the SOP do you anticipate being the most challenging to agree upon in the SOP negotiation process?

3. ENABLING FACTORS

1. What factors need to be present in order to create an SOP between JIP?
 1. Is it possible to attain this?
2. What characterizes the negotiation process of the SOP?
3. What aspects do you think are most important to take into account when engaging with different parties/stakeholders?
4. What are your expectations and perceptions about the creation of the SOP?
5. What has been working in the past when creating an SOP between different parties?
6. Do you perceive trust to be the most important factor for creating an enabling environment?
7. Can you tell me something about the exercises and training?
 1. What are the enabling factors for conducting successful exercises between JIP?
 2. What is the added value of conducting training for the creation of the SOP?

4. CHALLENGES

1. What do you consider to be the main challenges in creating the SOP?
2. Do you consider the complexity of the situation to be the biggest challenge in this project? If so, can you elaborate on it?
 1. How do you deal with such a complex context?
 2. How does the political context and conflict setting affect the SOP negotiations and creation procedure?
3. How do the access restrictions present a problem for effective emergency response?
 1. How can you work across the access restrictions?
4. What types of incentives, if any, would have to be provided to strengthen cross-border disaster cooperation?
5. How do you rate your chances of tackling/solving that problem?
6. Do you perceive the smooth movement of goods and people to be the biggest challenge for cross-border collaboration between JIP?
7. Do you perceive coordination between the different emergency organizations to be the biggest challenge?
8. How are collaboration problems managed?
 1. How do you consider the communication to be between different actors?
 2. Do you perceive the power relations between the three parties to be a challenge during the negotiations?
 3. How are power relations taken into account during the negotiations as an international organization's facilitating role?
 4. What do you do when communication is broken off?
 5. How do you experience the SOP process? What is the atmosphere?
 6. Is there a protocol for when tensions get high?
9. What is the added value of conducting training for the creation of the SOP?
 1. Can you tell me more about the training exercises that are planned for the future?
 2. Can you tell me about past training experiences?
 3. Do you consider these to be successful?
 4. What were the lessons learned?
10. How do you integrate the lessons learnt in the SOP?
 1. Is it an iterative process?
 2. What kind of approach will you have to follow to improve the SOP in the future?

5. WRAPPING UP

1. Is there anything else that you think is important to know?
2. Is there anything I missed bringing up or that I should have asked you about that I did not?
3. To whom should I talk to find out more about the enabling factors and barriers to the creation of an SOP between JIP?
4. Do you have any other questions?

Thank the participants for their time and participation.

END OF THE INTERVIEW

Appendix B – List of Participants

The table below provides more information about the interviewees and the reason for why they were selected for this case study research.

Interview Number	Reasoning	Recording Time
Interview 1 (Pilot Interview)	Involvement in the JIP project, experience in the JIP region, experience with Disaster Response Preparedness	55:21
Interview 2	Involvement in the JIP project, experience with disaster response preparedness	56:29
Interview 3	Experience in Disaster Response Preparedness, knowledge about the JIP region	26:01
Interview 4	Knowledge about cross-border disaster preparedness and SOPs	48:20
Interview 5	Involvement in the JIP project, experience in the JIP region, experience in Disaster Response Preparedness	42:05
Interview 6	Experience in the JIP region, experience with disaster response preparedness	43:52
Interview 7	Experience with cross-border SOPs	27:59
Interview 8	Experience in the JIP region, experience with disaster response preparedness	43:21
Interview 9	Experience with DRR and the JIP region	50:13
Interview 10	Experience with disaster response preparedness in the JIP region, experience with cross-border SOPs	25:50
Interview 11	Experience with cross-border SOPs, experience in the region, experience with disaster response preparedness	59:16
Interview 12	Experience with cross-border SOPs, experience disaster response preparedness, experience in the JIP	33:05

Appendix C – Complete Overview Themes

The table below summarizes the themes and sub-themes that were created during the data analysis process.

Theme	Sub-themes	Files	Excerpts
1. Enabling Factors SOP Creation	Partnership Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Relations • Trust • Dialogue 	9	<p><i>“When we talk about cross-border and collaboration between countries, it sounds very nice, but it’s hard to achieve. What’s easier to achieve is if you start from a partnership and it builds trust. You know, the ability to collaborate on a personal level.”</i></p> <p>(Interview 12)</p>
	Neutrality Project and Actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of the EU 	6	<p><i>“this initiative should be neutral. We wanted it to be non-politicised. [...] It has to be away from the political changes on the ground.”</i> (Interview 11)</p>
	Realistic Exercise Scenario	7	<p><i>“What we want to achieve with the exercise is to test these SOPs. Even if it’s only a draft or whatever, we want to test it”</i></p> <p>(Interview 5).</p>

2. Challenges SOP Creation	Political Sensitivities and Conflict	9	<i>“In the JIP, every one or two years there is a big disconnection between the parties and a long period of suspension of the dialogue due to security or political changes. During this period, we hope all the talks and diplomatic communication continues, but we realize it may stop based on changes on the ground”. (Interview 11).</i>
	Access Restrictions	5	<i>“When you say cross-border access, you need the SOPs to ensure that you have access. Access to the people in need as well. This is what I think OCHA negotiates, access wherever you go for cross-border assistance to reach the people. [...] You have to ensure that access is granted in these SOPs. It has to be very clear how it is guaranteed by the three entities, and probably that’s where the problem is” (Interview 9).</i>
	Organisational Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Staff Turnover • Organisational Competition 	Funding (5)	<i>“The turnover is very high and lack of institutionalized work is also a problem. So every time you need to go back to build the capacity of new people. With the frequent turnover or retirement of key counterparts, the knowledge is not being transferred to their successors. This is an issue faced in every</i>

		Staff turnover (4) Organisational Competition (2)	<i>region, at the global level, not only in the Arab region.” (Interview 9).</i>
	Information Exchange	4	<i>“information sharing is a very sensitive topic because it is associated with security concerns [...] there is always a fear that this information would be leaked or used for other purposes in the future” (Interview 11).</i>
	Participation OCHA		<i>“As you know, I think OCHA was not very liked by the Israeli authorities. We had a very good relationship with the Palestinian Authority, civil society as well as the international community. But despite this perception, in terms of natural disaster response, it was recognized by all parties OCHA’s high level of capacity and expertise as coordinator of international mechanisms such as INSAGAG and UNDAC and clear supportive role of the Governments affected by natural</i>

			<i>disasters. This made the exercise possible and successful.” (Interview 10).</i>
	Shifting Priorities	3	<i>“It's a little bit stuck honestly other things are getting more important and also for the Palestinian it's very difficult at the moment the focus of the world is not on them. I mean there was presumably in Syria the big war close by. Everybody looked to Syria to Yemen to Covid now to Ukraine. So it's like and even it's a little bit tough to say, but compared to other humanitarian topics or scenarios Palestine was always overfunded, comparable” (Interview 1).</i>
	Unequal Power	5	<i>“Despite what we read in the papers, let's say, they have good relationships with the civil protection authorities in all three areas. So we have channels of communication and of course there's an obvious asymmetry in the power between let's say Israel and Palestine and Jordan and Palestine and their working, you can also see the influence of the American factor in Jordan and Israel how they cooperate” (Interview 2).</i>

	Adherence and Sustainability of SOP	3	<i>“An SOP is outdated the moment it is made, so it’s a super flexible document, the world changes already” (Interview 7).</i>
3.SOP Opinions and Expectations		11	<i>“Each of the three entities wants to have something like this in hand. It depends and if it’s not called an SOP it will be called an entry guidance, it doesn’t matter” (Interview 5)</i>
4.SOP Recommendations and Needs		7	<i>“I think it would be interesting just to have it as an Annex with the way in which the two countries and the territory deal with actual disaster response internally. So how it is communicated, so this is the way in which the Palestinian authorities would proceed in the context of an emergency because such SOP comes to practice or not. This would be a practical way to find the gaps in communication and the obvious connections” (Interview 10)</i>