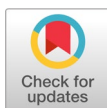


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# State–NGO Partnerships in Service Delivery under Uncertainty: Roles and Challenges for Equitable Performance

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## Abstract

The current study aimed to explore the challenges in the partnership of powerful forces between the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in service provision and the state. NGOs have become major players in education, health, charitable relief, and other important sectors, especially amid uncertainty and resource shortages thus, complementing the state's efforts. Between June and August 2023, three rounds of data were collected using the qualitative Delphi method, in collaboration with 44 specialists from the NGO sector, government sector, private sector, and academia. The results showed 75 challenges to this effective partnership which have been categorized under six themes. These include structural indifferences, procedural variances, imprecise roles and tasks, shortages in trust and communication, power irregularities, and weak legislative structures. The most serious barriers highlighted were trust shortages (91%), lack of matching mechanisms (88%), and nonaligned objectives (72%). These results emphasized the need to explain roles, substantiate the administrative direction platform, clear roles and their responsibilities as well as enact welfare legislation. In order to promote a strong and strategic partnership, overcoming these shortcomings is crucial.

**Keywords:** Palestinian authority, partnership challenge, performance, service delivery, state–NGO partnerships, uncertainty

## Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in situations when institutional volatility and state resources are scarce. This is especially true in the Palestinian context, where these groups serve as vital pillars of the social and service delivery infrastructure, including humanitarian help, healthcare, and education. In order to accomplish both national development goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Palestinian Authority (PA) has legally

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recognized its significance and openly committed to a culture of partnership and collaboration with civil society (AMAN Transparency Palestine, [2025](#); Zaher, [2022](#)).

However, there is a big gap between this rhetorical commitment and the actual situation. Evidence indicates that State-CSO/NGO collaborations in Palestine are still mostly consultative, restricted, and frequently marked by state control rather than true collaboration, despite established regulatory frameworks and coordination mechanisms (AMAN Transparency Palestine, [2025](#); Al-Hasan et al., [2024](#)). Effective collaboration is consistently hampered by structural disconnections, ambiguous roles, and relational problems with trust and power imbalance, which keep these partnerships from realizing their full potential in meeting the urgent demands of the populace.

By methodically examining the difficulties and possibilities present in public-CSO/NGO relationships within the Palestinian context, this study aimed to fill a significant gap in the literature. Although the importance of these actors is well acknowledged, there is a shortage of studies that thoroughly examine the challenges to their productive collaboration with the government and investigate potential solutions.

## Research Questions

The current study aimed to address the following research questions:

- What are the main institutional, relational, and structural obstacles obstructing the successful formation of public-CSO/NGO partnerships in Palestine?
- How can these partnerships be strengthened, and is it possible to create and maintain fruitful alliances in this situation?

The study used the Delphi approach to address these topics, involving professionals from academia, the private sector, CSOs/NGOs, and the state sector. The objective was to offer practical suggestions in order to create more cohesive, long-lasting, and successful alliances.

## Literature Review

According to standard academic practice, CSOs and NGOs are interchangeable words that have grown in importance as development actors on a global scale (Banks & Hulme, [2012](#)). The neoliberal changes of

the 1980s and 1990s, which decreased government spending and increased discontent with top-down development models, gave rise to this prominence and made room for NGOs appreciated for their adaptable, community-based methods (Banks et al., [2015](#)). Due to their strong ties to community needs, they now work across a variety of policy domains, promoting social development and problem-solving (Abiddin et al., [2022](#); Laraswati et al., [2022](#)). CSOs and NGOs are essential social capital that fill important service delivery gaps when states are faced with administrative or technological challenges (Berkvens & Verschuere, [2025](#); Tsegaye, [2023](#)). Due to their limited administrative structures and relative independence from political systems, they are thought to have operational flexibility, cheaper costs, and accountability to beneficiaries (Roman & Fellnhofner, [2022](#); Tian & Chuang, [2022](#)).

### **Implementation Gaps and Barriers to Effective Partnerships**

Despite formal frameworks and verbal commitments, a large implementation gap remains. According to recent assessments, partnerships remain "limited and largely consultative", with no meaningful collaboration or institutional structures to assure openness and accountability (AMAN Transparency Palestine, [2025](#), p. 26). According to surveys, NGOs perceive insufficient coordination, particularly in terms of data exchange, which is critical for a true partnership to accomplish the SDGs (State and Administrative Control Bureau, [2018](#)).

Scholarship finds a complicated set of barriers that are causing the disparity. The connection is frequently characterized by uncertainty and persistent hindrances, such as structural misalignment, unclear roles, and weak legislative objectives (Al-Hasan et al., [2024](#)). This is consistent with patterns in other emerging environments where state-nonprofit relations are defined by state control and parallel operation rather than synergistic collaboration (Dilnawaz & Pasaribu, [2025](#); Toepler et al., [2023](#)). Furthermore, relational obstacles, such as trust issues, poor communication, and uneven power dynamics significantly limit both actors' ability to reach their full potential (Al-Hasan et al., [2024](#); Gacula, [2025](#)).

However, the literature clearly confirms the crucial relevance of CSOs/NGOs in Palestine's socioeconomic environment and documents the Palestine Authority's (PA's) formal, while regulated, relationship with them. It also highlights a significant gap between partnership policy and

practice, outlining a number of structural and relational constraints. However, there is still a lack of systematic, focused research that thoroughly studies the specific challenges and explores concrete prospects for improving these collaborations in the Palestinian context. The current study is well-positioned to fill this gap, going from problem identification to expert-driven solutions for more productive partnerships.

NGOs/CSO are crucial to development theory and run-through. They work as mediators between societies and the state system, form resources, and deal with community subjects (Waddell, [1998](#)). By law, NGOs have different rights. For instance, right of access to information for NGOs and states' faithfulness to independent laws and procedures are essential for successful partnership (Coston, [1998](#)). In order to deliver public services and accomplish mutual objectives, NGOs and governmental agencies collaborate to form such partnerships (Murphy & Stott, [2021](#)). In addition to delivering services, NGOs care of community development by increasing human, commercial, social, and high-tech resources; proceeding knowledge and skills; inspiring involvement; and involving local populations with larger governing bases. According to Abiddin et al. ([2022](#)), these initiatives encourage strength, enablement, and sustainable growth results.

NGOs are portrayed in literature as complex players that drive grassroots change, build strategic public alliances, and advance global development goals. A foundation for analyzing State-NGO relationships in Palestine is provided by the necessity of open communication, fair policy frameworks, and common goals for effective cooperation. By combining the state's power and resources with NGOs' adaptability, community trust, and specialized knowledge, state-NGO partnerships typically improve public service delivery performance. The "performance of State-NGO partnerships" in research and practice typically refers to how well these partnerships fulfill their stated objectives in terms of service delivery, community support, and development.

Performance refers to the effectiveness, efficiency, fairness, and sustainability of the combined determinations of the public and NGOs (Banks et al., [2015](#); Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, [2011](#); Lewis & Kanji, [2009](#)). In areas where governments encounter managerial, financial, or practical constraints, such collaboration develops service quality, awareness, and availability (Tsegaye, [2023](#)).

Partnerships can also stimulate innovation, cost-effectiveness, and accountability (Banks et al., [2015](#)). However, these collaborations may work poorly, resulting in fragmented services and limited impact, when roles are unclear, resources are limited, or trust is lacking (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, [2011](#)). Clear institutional structures, openness, and shared accountability are often necessary for partnerships to be successful since they increase the group's ability to address social issues.

### **Theoretical Views on State-NGO Partnership**

Numerous theoretical frameworks that address resource exchange, legitimacy, trust, cooperation, and accountability explain state-NGO cooperation. By emphasizing reliance on external resources, Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, [1978](#)) promotes collaboration. According to the Institutional Theory, organizations must adhere to social norms, laws, and expectations in order to gain legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, [1983](#)). The Network Theory (Wasserman & Faust, [1994](#)) highlights the ways in which organizational and social networks foster cooperation and information exchange. Stakeholder consensus-building and collaborative decision-making are highly valued in the Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell & Gash, [2008](#)).

According to the Social Capital Theory, collaboration is facilitated by networks, norms, and trust (Camps & Marques, [2014](#); Putnam, [2000](#)). Some examine questions of service delegation to NGOs and accountability (Meckling & Jensen, [1976](#)). Stakeholder Theory stresses balancing stakeholder interests to preserve partnerships (Freeman, [2010](#)). According to Barney ([1991](#)), resources that are rare, valuable, unique, and non-replaceable, such as, social capital offer long-term advantages that raise the possibility of collective development (Chan et al., [2018](#)).

### **Context of Service Provision in Palestine**

The state provides most services in Palestine, and the Israeli occupation and COVID-19 have reduced the economic activity. Extreme unemployment and financial hardships are experienced by vulnerable groups, including women, children, and young people. The PA was established in 1994 and is responsible for over forty areas, including agriculture, trade, employment, water, telecommunications, education, municipal administration, and healthcare. The service sector's GDP share rose from 50% to 73.2% between 1995 and 2020 (Ghokal et al., [2024](#);

Morrar & Gallouj, [2016](#)). Palestinian organizations in the West Bank including Jerusalem and Gaza employ three administrative levels: local 405 municipalities and village councils, regional of 16 governorates (Dodin, [2016](#); Shaheen & Salim, [2012](#)). The areas are home to 2,845 charitable associations. While taxes are the primary source of revenue for local governments, the lack of resources offers opportunities for partnerships with non-governmental organizations (Ali et al., [2021](#); Tadem & Tadem, [2023](#)).

The NGOs provide infrastructure, conduct trial projects, assist communities in communicating with the government, offer technical assistance, conduct assessment and research, and carry out particular tasks. The six pillars of health systems—service delivery, workforce, information, access to pharmaceuticals, financing, and governance—are aligned with these projects, which show strategic contributions across sectors (Doshmangir et al., [2025](#)).

Some of the measurable community advantages that have come from state-NGO collaboration include better healthcare, education, gender equality, poverty reduction, and infrastructure development (Adzakor, [2024](#); Shakoor et al., [2024](#)). However, structural weak alignments, bureaucratic barriers, unclear responsibilities, and a lack of confidence often impede collaboration (Læg Reid & Rykkja, [2022](#)). These difficulties must be fixed for long-term, fruitful partnerships that make the most of service delivery.

The involvement of CSOs and NGOs is important in the particular context of Palestine. CSOs and NGOs are essential suppliers of basic needs, such as healthcare, education, humanitarian aid, and human rights advocacy, operating in a vulnerable and resource-constrained setting throughout the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem (NGO Development Center, [n.d.](#); PNGO, [2021](#)). They operate in more than 14 sectors and are essential for fostering resilience (State and Administrative Control Bureau, [2018](#)). Furthermore, they have a major economic impact; estimates indicate that their assets make up about 1.5% of Palestine's GDP, without counting the significant indirect contributions they provide through service and employment. Surveys showing more public trust in NGOs in the Middle East and Africa than in many Western states further support this integrated function (Edelman Trust Barometer, [2023](#)).

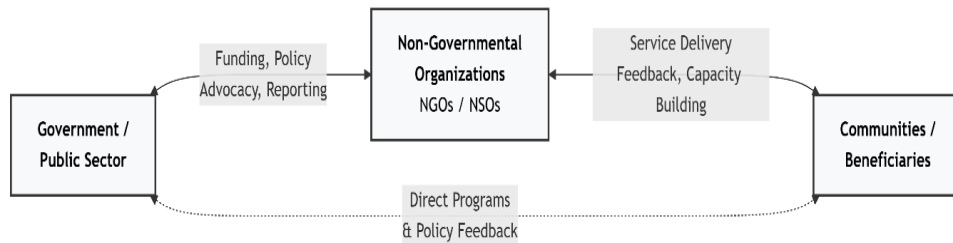
However, there are significant obstacles in the way of this vital duty. In the health sector, for instance, NGO-run hospitals alleviate pressure on public facilities but are frequently significant debtors to the state. This endangers their financial stability and underscores the need for more sustainable collaboration arrangements (World Bank, [2025](#)).

A developing regulatory framework reflecting a conflict between oversight and partnership has influenced the PA's interaction with civil society. NGOs were first managed by the President's Office's National Institutions Office in the early 1990s. Later, the Ministry of Interior took charge, signaling a change to official state supervision (Alashqar, [2018](#); Hammami, [2000](#)). Regulations, such as the 2022 cabinet resolution for non-profit company registration followed this trend (Al-Haq, [2021](#); Dodin, [2016](#)). The 2012 Presidential Decree No. 11, which created the Commission for the Affairs of Civil Society Administrations and absorbed the assets and duties of its predecessor, was a significant step towards centralization (DCAF, [2012](#)).

The PA has always maintained a partnership discourse in connection with this regulatory tightening. Promoting "dialogue, transparency, and accountability" through collaboration with CSOs has been highlighted in official declarations (Zaher, [2022](#)). In line with international objectives, such as the SDGs, where the PA has given multi-stakeholder participation top priority, this desire is ingrained in governmental statements and national development plans (AMAN Transparency Palestine, [2025](#)). A civil society working for advocacy and transparency inside this system is demonstrated by the establishment of independent organizations, such as the NGO Development Center (NDC) and the Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO) (NGO Development Center, [n.d.](#); PNGO, [2021](#)).

### **Conceptual Model of Services Delivery**

Figure 1's conceptual services delivery model shows how the state, NGOs, and communities interact and exchange resources, services, and communications. Effective collaboration is made possible by trust, open communication, common goals, and regulatory backing. This guarantees that community needs are satisfied even in the face of limited resources and complicated political circumstances.

**Figure 1***Model of Services Delivery***Methodology****Research Design**

In order to investigate the difficulties, barriers, motivators, and crucial success elements of partnerships between the state and the nonprofit sector in Palestine, this study used a participatory research methodology utilizing the Delphi technique directed by the next research inquiries: 1) What problems position in the way of the State-CSO/NGO partnerships' successful procedure, and what probabilities are there to develop them? Besides 2) is it viable to generate and keep successful partnerships between the state and CSOs/NGOs in the Palestinian context? The Delphi method was selected due to its ability to produce agreement among a variation of specialists on difficult, multidimensional subjects.

Through repeated rounds of surveys with controlled feedback, a panel of experts reached an agreement using the Delphi method which is an organized process (Linstone & Turoff, [2002](#)). It works particularly well when studying problems with conflicting views, institutional difficulty, and ambiguity (Hsu & Sandford, [2007](#)). It produces visions built on participant knowledge by prioritizing deepness of familiarity over statistical typicality (Okoli & Pawlowski, [2004](#)).

Data was collected between June and August 2023 and a qualitative Delphi technique was utilized, enriched by panel discussion (Sekayi & Kennedy, [2017](#)). Delegates from the state, CSOs and NGOs, academic institutions, and the private sector selected the expert panel.

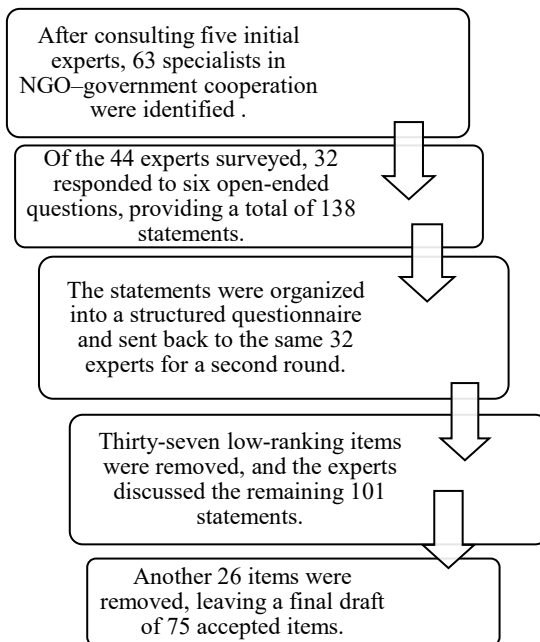
The panel experts were chosen based on their professional background, areas of expertise, and participation in decision-making. In order to map

institutional, relational, and structural constraints and evaluate the viability of partnership models in the Palestinian context, participants were asked to identify, refine, and validate partnership opportunities and difficulties throughout several rounds.

The steps of the Delphi study approach, from expert selection to iterative feedback and consensus-building on State–NGO partnership, are shown graphically in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*The Delphi study method for Refining Statements and Selecting Experts*



## Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

A total of 63 specialists from four different sectors made up the research population: the president's office, the prime minister's office, ministries (such as national economy, labor, social development, health, agriculture, and local state), and official organizations, such as the Palestinian Investment Fund, the Civil Society Commission, and the Anti-Corruption Commission comprised the public sector (15 entities, 34%). Industry federations, chambers of commerce, contractors' unions, business groups, investment centers, and private firms made up the private sector's 12

entities (27%). NGOs and civil society (11 entities, 25%) included the Masaraat Center, MIFTAH, Agricultural Relief Society, NGO Network, and other service and advocacy groups. Universities, such as Al-Quds, An-Najah, and Bethlehem, as well as policy research institutions including MAS and the Palestine Institute for National Security Research, made up academia and research institutes (6 entities, 14%).

Purposive sampling was used to choose experts (Skulmoski et al., [2007](#)) based on factors, such as specialty, professional experience, active participation in decision-making, and acknowledged contributions to the area (Graham et al., [2003](#)). A final panel of 44 experts was selected from the 63 candidates that were assessed, guaranteeing sectoral representation and respect to inclusion requirements.

### Three-round Delphi Data Collection

Three Delphi rounds of data collection were conducted in addition to in-person conversations:

**Round One: Initial Questionnaire and Expert Selection.** Institutions received an initial 138-item questionnaire through mail and in-person, together with a cover letter outlining the goals and guidelines of the study. Experts had to pledge to take part in every Delphi round. 37 items were eliminated after screening and analysis, leaving 101 eligible items.

**Round Two: Iterative Questionnaire.** Based on round one's responses and pertinent material on state-civil society collaborations, a redesigned questionnaire with 101 items was formulated. Challenges, obstacles, motivators, success factors, priority areas, and partnership impacts were the key topics of this tool. Following analysis, 26 items were eliminated, resulting in a final questionnaire with 75 items that were given to the 44 experts by hand. The following was the distribution by category: There were four potential partnerships, twenty-three barriers, eight drivers, fifteen success factors, fourteen priority domains, and thirteen impacts. Thirty-two completed questionnaires were returned, representing a 73% response rate. MAXQDA was used to code themes, find frequencies, and assess consensus levels in the responses.

**Round Three: Panel Discussions on Strategy.** To accommodate participants, the panel was split up into three discussion groups, each convening at a different time. Experts were situated to evaluate round two's consequences, recover answers, and confirm significant themes. The goal

of the discussions was to find new tendencies and develop a stronger agreement. To keep the highlighting on state-NGO/CSO partnerships in service delivery, unrelated statements were removed.

### **Data Analysis**

To address data from experts' state, CSOs/NGOs, academia, and the private sector about state-CSO/NGO partnerships and collaborations, the study employed a mixed-method research methodology. This made it possible for the study to gather in-depth insights, complex relationships, and quantifiable connections. This is consistent with Uprety (2024) study.

The degree of expert consensus on items collected from the Delphi questionnaires was measured using the quantitative analysis method, which computes frequencies and percentages. Method of Qualitative Analysis: MAXQDA software was used to enable thematic content analysis. A total of 32 experts responded to the surveys. After conducting a thematic content analysis, the resulting themes were investigated and validated through group discussions. Six categories, that is, partnership possibilities, barriers, drivers, success factors, priority domains, and impacts, were used to group the themes and subthemes.

### **Results**

The final questionnaire analysis, utilizing MAXQDA 2020 for qualitative analysis of 32 respondents, revealed themes and subthemes that identified 75 constraints that NGOs and state partnerships must overcome. These challenges were categorized into six main themes and fifteen subthemes. The main themes included structural issues, procedural issues, issues related to roles and responsibilities, issues of trust and communication, control and power relationship issues, as well as legislative and legal issues.

### **Themes and Sub-themes**

Table 1 shows six main themes of challenges and fifteen subthemes of sub challenges. Themes reflect complex, multi-level barriers to effective collaboration between the state and NGOs. Whereas, fifteen related subthemes summarize the sub challenges in State-NGOs partnership.

**Table 1**  
*Main Challenges of State–NGOs Partnership*

Main Theme	Subtheme	<i>f</i>	%
1. NGO's Function	Service Delivery	18	0.53
	Objectives and Priorities	23	0.72
2. Structural Issues	Differences between the Public Sector and NGOs	17	0.53
	Differences in Procedures between Public Sector and NGOs	22	0.69
3. Procedures /Process Issues	Absence of an Independent Coordinating Body	28	0.88
	Low Levels of Collaboration between State and NGOs	19	0.59
	Unclear Roles and Lack of Mutual Understanding	23	0.72
4. Roles and Responsibilities	Lack of Accountability and Transparency in NGO Performance	14	0.44
	Lack of Formal Ties and Widespread mistrust	29	0.91
5. Trust and Communications	Public Sector's Unfavorable Perception of NGOs	22	0.69
	Public Sector Dominance over NGOs	19	0.59
6. Control and Power Relations	NGOs' Limited Independence and Autonomy	19	0.59
	Lack of Relevant Legislation	22	0.69
7. Legislative and Legal Issue	Duplicity of State Policies	19	0.59
	Lack of Political Support	19	0.59

### ***NGO's Function***

Provision of services (18; 0.53): Although service delivery is seen as a key NGO function, its comparatively low frequency (53%) indicates that stakeholders believe NGOs' responsibilities go beyond providing direct services. This suggests that although NGOs cover crucial gaps, their potential is overshadowed by structural and governance issues.

### ***Structural Issues***

Goals and priorities (23; 0.72) and distinctions between NGOs and the state sector (17; 0.53): There are clear structural issues, namely misalignment of objectives (72%), which shows that sectors continue to lack a common vision. Despite being widely used, these misalignments make collaborations more difficult, as evidenced by the lower percentage of changes (53%).

### ***Protocols and Process Problems***

Lack of an independent coordinating body (28; 0.88), disparities in public sector and NGOs' procedures (22; 0.69), and low levels of cooperation between the state and NGOs (19; 0.59). There are significant procedural challenges, primarily due to the 88% lack of matched devices. In general, this is one of the most significant issues. In the absence of such institutions, cooperation between the state and NGOs is nonetheless fragmented (59%) and delayed by bureaucratic differences (69%).

### ***Roles and Responsibilities***

Uncertain roles and mutual understanding (23; 0.72) and a lack of accountability and transparency in NGO performance (14; 0.44): A lack of position clarity (72%) greatly contributes to inefficiency, even if accountability issues are less frequently stated (44%). This suggests that governance bodies highly prioritize coordination than performance monitoring.

### ***Trust and Communication***

The public sector's unfavorable perception of NGOs (22; 0.69) and mistrust and lack of official ties (29; 0.91): This is the most prevalent issue (91%), suggesting that a lack of trust is the primary barrier to collaborations. A culture of suspicion that is further strengthened by the state's unfavorable assessments (69%) undermines cooperation.

### ***Control and Power Relations***

Public sector control (19; 0.59) and NGOs' limited autonomy (19; 0.59): Power disparities are moderately prevalent (59%). Due to the state's dominance, NGOs are less autonomous, which restricts their ability to act critically or creatively.

### ***Legislative and Legal Issue***

A Lack of Legislation (22; 0.69), policy duplicity (19; 0.59), and a lack of political support (19; 0.59) are examples of legislative and legal issues: Weak legislative frameworks (69%) and policy duplication (59%) are indicators of systemic governance issues. Lack of political backing also limits NGO contributions, illustrating how legal frameworks influence operational reality.

**A Lack of Trust and Communication:** The most pressing problem, according to Table 1's main findings, is a lack of trust and communication (91%). This highlights the relational component as a major contributor to partnership failure. The lack of coordination mechanisms (88%), which suggests institutional rather than just relational constraints, is almost as significant.

### ***Structural Misalignment***

Structural misalignment (72%) and unclear roles (72%) are the primary findings of ongoing strategic and organizational fragmentation. Legislative faults (69%) and procedural differences (69%) reveal systemic governance and process impediments. Power differences (59%) and negative opinions (69%) demonstrate how political culture and control hamper collaboration. Accountability concerns (44%) appear to be voiced less frequently, possibly because structural and trust issues are more important than performance monitoring.

In summary, Table 1's findings indicate that State-NGO cooperation is more likely to be hampered by structural fragmentation, a lack of coordination, mistrust, and insufficient legislative frameworks than by NGOs' capacity to deliver services. The combination of institutional flaws (coordination, regulations) and relational deficits (trust, perceptions) is the primary barrier to fruitful cooperation in Palestine.

### ***Priorities of NGOs***

The topic of NGOs' priorities highlights the possible role that these organizations could play as proactive service providers, helping the government deliver essential services in a range of industries. Table 2 indicates these sectors:

**Table 2**  
*Priority Areas of NGO Service Delivery*

Rank	Priority Area	<i>f</i>	%	Priority Level
1	Health	21	65.6	★ High
1	Humanitarian Relief and Emergencies	21	65.6	★ High
3	Education	15	46.9	★ High
3	Human Rights	12	46.9	★ High
3	Governance and Democracy	11	46.9	★ High
3	Civil Organization Development	18	46.9	★ High
3	Media and Communication	13	46.9	★ High
8	Infrastructure	12	37.5	★ High
8	Social Care Services	14	37.5	★ High
10	Water and Sanitation	18	28.1	↑ Medium
10	Agriculture	16	28.1	↑ Medium
10	Livestock and Fisheries	16	28.1	↑ Medium
10	Culture, Sports, and Arts	9	28.1	↑ Medium
10	Income Generation	13	28.1	↑ Medium

**Note.** Percentages (%) were calculated by dividing frequency (*f*) by *N* = 32. Multiple selections were allowed, the % total higher than 100%. Priority levels include: High ( $\geq 30\%$ ), Medium (20-29.9%), Low (10-19.9%), and Very Low ( $< 10\%$ ).

Considerable attention has been given to critical human needs and key services, according to NGO priority areas analysis. The frequency of (21) and a high level of priority (65.6%), humanitarian relief and health, and emergencies were distinguished as the top priorities, representing the unrelenting need to address instant well-being of others and crisis-response activities.

While at less common (11–18; 37.5–46.9%), education, human rights, governance and democracy, civil organization development, media and communication, and infrastructure all had high priority. This implies that NGOs are recognized as the long-term sources of capacity building, governance aid, and social infrastructure in stability and growth.

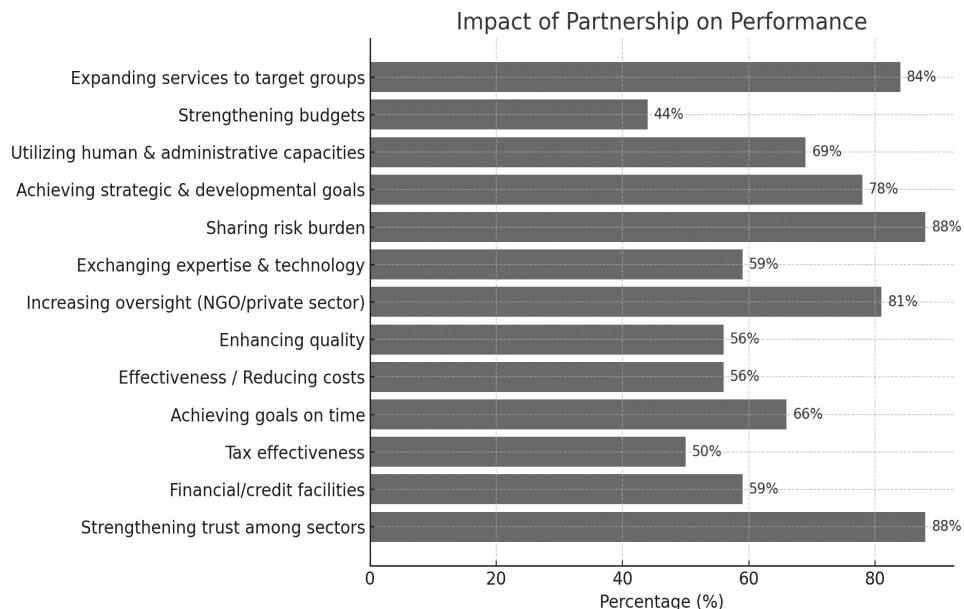
Water and sanitation, agriculture, livestock and fisheries, culture, sports and arts, and income generation (28.1%) make up the second tier of medium-level objectives. Despite their relevance, these sectors may receive less immediate attention than more critical health and humanitarian

challenges. Finally, other community activities showed a relatively low grade of 9.4%, showing that current NGO agendas lay minimal emphasis on specialized or niche activities.

Overall, the pattern indicates that NGOs prioritize programs that directly benefit human rights, survival, and institutional development, whereas secondary services—which are critical for both economic growth and quality of life—receive relatively less attention.

**Figure 3**

*Impacts on Performance*



### **Influence of Partnerships on Organizational Performance**

There is little doubt that partnerships greatly enhance organizational performance in a number of ways, according to the research. The outcomes with the highest scores are expanding services to target communities (84%), increasing oversight by NGOs and the commercial sector (81%), and fostering trust and risk-sharing among sectors (88%). These findings show that partnerships are not only operational tools but also enhance governance, accountability, and inclusiveness.

From an organizational standpoint, partnerships improve the utilization of administrative and human resources (69%), guarantee timely fulfillment

of goals (66%), and help achieve strategic and developmental goals (78%). The availability of financial facilities (59%), tax effectiveness (50%), and stronger budgets (44%) show that partnerships can help mobilize resources but may require improved institutional structures. In relation to finances, the role is reasonable but significant.

As indicated, partnerships enable innovation and performance perfection, sharing of technology and expertise (59%), and improve quality and efficiency (56%). In conclusion, as shown in Figure 2, partnerships enable financial stability, resource utilization, strategic alignment, risk-sharing, trust-building, service expansion, and accountability.

### **Discussion**

The study highlighted the debate outcome in the following section: More than four-fifths of respondents believed that State-NGO relationships have great potential. Frequency analysis and percentage of partnership potential showed that 81% of respondents had high potential, 9% had medium potential, 3% had low potential, and 6% had no opportunity.

Mistrust (91%), lack of coordination mechanisms (88%), structural misalignment (72%), inadequate laws (69%), and limited NGO autonomy (59%) were the main obstacles. Civil society and private sector organizations were conspicuously left out of the state's 2024 emergency plan for relief, reconstruction, economic recovery, and social welfare in the West Bank and Gaza, despite the state's positive language.

Their role in emergency policy creation was limited to consultative meetings at a later stage. Furthermore, no laws were passed to correspond with welfare and social assistance indicators. This discrepancy between stated goals and actual execution draws attention to persistent flaws in the institutionalization of genuine multi-sector cooperation. Additionally, the Palestinian presidency has not received any draft of law or legislation in accordance with social assistance and welfare indicators. This disparity between the state's words and deeds draws attention to insistent problems with the institutionalization of genuine cooperation (AMAN Transparency Palestine, [2025](#)).

### **NGOs' Role in Service Delivery**

Concerning to the theme one, experts think that NGOs support state initiatives actively by supply essential services in a variety of industries.

The areas of greatest impact and demand are reflected in different priority levels of their contributions: Top Priorities (33%): The areas in which NGOs play the most crucial role are health and humanitarian relief and emergencies. Second Tier (24%): Notable contributions in the areas of media and communication, education, human rights, governance and democracy, and civil society development. Moderate (18%): Supportive positions in social services and infrastructure that enhance state initiatives. Low (15%): Minimal participation in income generation, livestock and fisheries, agriculture, water and sanitation, and culture and arts. Minimal participation in other community services is the lowest percentage (6%).

According to one expert (P7), "NGOs can cover all the respective activities, such as education, health, humanitarian relief and emergencies, and social care services, as far as they can afford to". NGOs are also especially active in agriculture and water. "Some NGOs provide aid to the agricultural sector through establishing and operating livestock and fisheries, food producing after acquiring the license to provide services", stated participant P4.

### **Delivering Services Methods**

According to experts, NGOs offer services in two primary ways:

- **Direct Service Delivery:** NGOs use their own facilities and personnel to provide services. According to P10, "They have a service center that belongs to the NGO and provides the clients with their required services".
- **Contracted Services:** In order to guarantee service delivery, NGOs work with public or private organizations, frequently negotiating cost savings. "We buy services from private and public sectors, so they provide clients' needed services with some discounts in the cost of services", P15 clarified.

### **Structural Issues and Challenges**

Regarding theme two, experts discovered that structural problems are one of the main obstacles to fruitful partnerships between state and non-governmental groups. These challenges, which obstruct collaboration, are mostly caused by conflicting objectives, priorities, and interests. The experts' primary, recurring issues on the theme are as follows: Differences in institutional interests; ambiguous roles and duties;

conflicting priorities and objectives; and programmatic and operational disparities. g) There is no coordination or shared vision between the state and NGOs.

Organizations frequently oppose goal alignment, which weakens collaboration (Bolton et al., [2023](#)). For instance, authorities prioritize infrastructure development over NGOs' service delivery (Abiddin et al., [2022](#)). Such differences indicate a broader divergence in strategic priorities.

Conflicting objectives can also result in adversarial relationships, reducing the likelihood of collaboration. According to Karampini ([2023](#)), NGOs frequently work in non-state's prioritize areas. This imbalance, along with competing relational dynamics, leads both sectors to avoid collaboration, even when it could improve service outcomes.

In general, structural issues are caused by power imbalances, poor communication, and institutional misalignment (Anheier, [2023](#)). Such inconsistencies affect decision-making and planning, as well as service execution and evaluation (Lewis et al., [2020](#)). Long-term collaboration necessitates a more cohesive structure and improved alignment of roles, goals, and expectations.

### **Institutional and Procedural Differences**

In topic three, experts suggested that mismatches between state and non-governmental entities may limit successful partnership; • Distinct work cultures and procedures; • Government bureaucratic processes; • Absence of a uniform foundation for partnership. As professionals have pointed out: "Divergences between the NGOs and state, the state bureaucracy, and the absence of a defined framework of partnership".

### **Ambiguous Roles and Responsibilities**

Regarding theme four, participants connected operational friction to unclear tasks, including job uncertainty, overlapping duties, and ambiguous authority. According to P5, miscommunication arises from "ambiguous duties and unclear roles". In connection to issues with responsibility, the theme also highlighted the significance of trust and inadequate communication.

Significant shared distrust was found in the data, as demonstrated by mistrust across organizations and sectors, especially state suspicion regarding NGO transparency and public mistrust of NGOs. Effective

partnerships require trust, which is diminished by the absence of clear communication frameworks and independent coordination bodies. Respondents (P13) stated "absence of trust, negative views, and the state's hostile attitude toward NGOs", while P15 highlighted "lack of transparency and accountability".

### **Poor Communication and Coordination**

Regarding inadequate coordination and communication, experts observed that collaboration is severely hampered by the absence of autonomous coordinating entities and clear, consistent communication mechanisms: There is a lack of shared data, interactions are dispersed, as well as there is a lack of coordinated preparation in addition to irregular communication. "Poor communication, absence of a functioning coordination forum means the lack of structured working relationships" is one of its points.

### **Centralization of Power and Limited NGO Influence**

Conferring to experts, state configurations frequently stop NGOs from contributing in decision-making and planning due to: • Centralization of governance; • Limited engagement of NGOs; • Bureaucratic rejection and obstacles of NGOs contributions. According to analysts, states restrict the authority and involvement of NGOs. "NGOs' capacity limitations affect a number of program components."

### **Legislative and Legal Issues**

The results show that among the biggest obstacles to successful State-NGO cooperation are insufficient legislative frameworks (22; 69%), policy duplicity (19; 59%), and a lack of political support (19; 59%). These results imply that systemic governance issues have their roots in the legislative and regulatory framework and go beyond organizational misalignment. NGOs are put in ambiguous positions by a lack of supportive and clear laws. This weakens accountability and makes it harder for them to interact with official institutions (Anheier, 2023). P26, the advisor: " P26, the advisor: In a similar vein, policy duplicity—the existence of overlapping, conflicting, or contradictory regulations—causes confusion and inefficiency and deters long-term collaboration".

Moreover, NGOs' contributions are constrained by the lack of political backing. Although states may accept NGOs as service providers, they

usually don't provide the political and legislative backing needed to formalize their role in development (Banks et al., [2015](#); Chaudhry, [2022](#); Karampini, [2023](#)). According to P11, this not only restricts the range of NGO operations but also maintains power imbalances amongst sectors.

All things considered, these results show how the political and legal environments affect operational realities. Without significant legislative frameworks, clear policies, and strong political support, partnerships are weak and prone to dispute. In addition to organizational alignment, effective collaboration requires a regulatory framework that supports cooperative governance and verifies NGO's contributions.

## Conclusion

In this study, the delicate functions of State-NGO relations in Palestine were observed, where on the responsibilities and roles of the NGOs and the state that either weakened or strengthened the respective effectiveness were examined. The outcomes explained that even though NGOs have a strong service delivery and community development but cooperation with state actors is occasionally impeded by challenges. Biggest obstacles can be identified as disjointed coordination, inadequate accountability, power disparities, as well as mistrust and unclear roles and responsibilities. This endangers not just the general credibility and longevity of cooperative governance initiatives but also the effectiveness of operations in general.

The study highlighted that the above-mentioned issues cannot be addressed by policy frameworks. Despite the importance of clear legislation and strategic guidance, effective partnerships are still restricted by complex political and organizational realities. The capabilities of NGOs as independent entities to make effective contributions are hindered due to control by governmental players, trust issues, and poor communication. Due to many divisions and diversity of functions of NGOS, they are unable to provide clear roles and responsibilities that represent the interests of all NGOs. These factors in result weaken the collective voices.

The study may help practitioners, researchers, and decision-makers in understanding the resources and time needed to establish, develop as well as maintain an effective partnership between NGOs and the state. This research provided a strategic framework to understand how partnership evolves.

Both NGOs and the state should assess their respective organizational

roles and responsibilities in terms of capabilities and resources. This decision should be made before proceeding to begin a new partnership. By using a portfolio strategy, the importance of managing partnerships was also highlighted in this research. Stakeholders may enhance alignment with national development priorities, decrease duplication, and boost resilience in times of emergency by allocating resources efficiently among multiple collaborations. Improved legislative and leadership changes, as encouraged by this research, offers openness, procedures for accountability, and trust-building. These are vital when there is political unpredictability and resource scarcity due to weak cooperation or risk of fragmented cooperation.

The results provide support to current arguments in development studies and public management by highlighting certain significant areas for future studies. These issues to be addressed in this partnership include difficulties in finance that are interconnected, trustworthiness, governance, and sustainability. The findings also show the importance of understanding the extent to which partnerships require specialized technical abilities and professional labor needed to handle this complex issue. Lastly, the comparative and longitudinal research is required to have a concrete understanding of how partnerships lose or gain legitimacy and have their respective effect when economic and political conditions shift.

There can be no doubt that State-NGO collaboration in Palestine is both crucial and complicated and has many shortcomings, which can be investigated to further improve national development objectives. However, they are hindered by organizational, structural, and relational issues. Focusing on these issues is not just simply about policy change; it pushes forward to make an effort on trust, improve accountability, define responsibility, and set clear rules for how everyone would work together in the system. By emphasizing both potential and difficulties, this research contributed to a stronger understanding of partnership governance and explained the groundwork for a collaboration that is more effective in Palestine and similar conditions.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Even though the dynamics of State-NGO relations in Palestine are explained in this research, there are certain deficiencies that should be recognized because they introduce new interests for investigation. Firstly,

the Delphi technique applied in this research limits the generalizability of the outcomes, keeping in mind that it is helpful to achieve expert consensus only. These results guaranteed to show the opinions of a group of people with competence and specialization, rather than of a broader sample of NGO and state practitioners. A selective sample of 44 experts representing important sectors was chosen for this evaluation. A vital viewpoint on the success of service delivery may have been achieved by obtaining the perspectives of grassroots community members directly, who in return, are the prime beneficiaries of these partnerships.

Secondly, the perceptual and qualitative aspects of the data were analyzed. The experts' experiences and perspectives identified problems, such as insufficient coordination (88%), trust deficits (91%). While these observations are vital, they are not directly correlated with quantitative measurements of partnership service outcomes or success. Issues, such as "what" and "why" accurately mapped the collaboration barriers without statistically quantifying the influence on particular performance measurements, such as service coverage, cost efficiency, and beneficiary satisfaction.

As the nature of this study was both contextual and regional in character, the results showed relevance to the Palestine's economic, political, and social situation. The pervasive impact of internal political division, specific Palestinian legislative framework, and Israeli occupation are strong factors.

The findings of the study cannot be easily applied to or assumed true for other conflict-affected regions because the situation in Palestine is quite unique. The special political, legal, and social conditions in Palestine make it different from other places experiencing conflict, so the results might not work the same way elsewhere.

Since the data collection period was confined to June -August 2023, the research did not include significant changes that took place after the deepening of the conflict in Gaza in October 2023. The humanitarian crisis would have drastically changed the partnership landscape due to enormous burden on the coordination mechanism and service delivery systems. The priorities mentioned in this research may have changed or worsened in nature, causing the need for more research to have a better understanding of the dynamics of partnerships in a large-scale emergency context.

This work should be highlighted in future research by comparing the

Palestinian setting with other fragile nations to discover general vs particular issues, as well as by performing longitudinal analyses to comprehend how relationships change during political and economic upheavals. In addition to sector-specific in-depth analyses of fields, such as healthcare and education, more research is required to determine how digital platforms might help break down barriers to transparency and communication. A crucial, sometimes overlooked viewpoint would be to evaluate community-level perceptions of partnership efficacy and accountability. Research could also look at the internal governance of CSOs and the impact of international donor policies on partnership dynamics.

#### **Author Contribution**

**Issa Smirat:** sole author

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The author of the manuscript has no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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