

UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

June 2010

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In brief

- In June, UNICEF videolinked over 80 water & sanitation, nutrition and health professionals in the West Bank and Gaza to workshop new methods for bringing about social and behaviour change to protect children from unsafe water across oPt, but especially in Gaza. Funding for the workshop was provided by the Swedish International Development Agency. The workshop report and resources will be available on the UNICEF-oPt website in July. See www.unicef.org/oPt
- UNICEF was awarded the 2010 Communicator Award of Excellence by the New York-based International Academy of the Visual Arts for a five-minute video story on "Protecting Childhood", documenting the real-life impact of an UNICEF-ECHO programme to reach children and their caregivers in the West Bank with psychosocial support. See the story at: www.unicef.org/infobycountry/oPt_54088.html

Overview

Growing into adulthood in a context of protracted military occupation and ongoing violence with Israel, along with rising poverty and division within their own communities, the 590,000 Palestinian adolescents between 13 and 18 years old in Gaza and the West Bank represent a particularly vulnerable group in need of opportunities to learn critical life skills, and to participate creatively in their communities and beyond.

ISOLATION: Around 228,000 live in Gaza, and 40 kilometres to the east, 362,000 reside in the West Bank. There is virtually no physical interaction between both populations, and fragmented internal

CONNECTING YOUNG MINDS



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Students from across the West Bank gathered at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in February to present the findings of year-long scientific and social research projects conducted under the UNICEF-supported Young Researchers Programme implemented by Al Nayzak. The project connects the young researchers to each other, and to their peers in Gaza. To read up on their projects, visit: <http://www.alnayzak.org/en/articles/view/thread/id/53/>

connectivity within the West Bank itself. Gaza has been under an Israeli blockade for more than three years; and across the West Bank, over 500 physical obstacles severely restrict internal access and movement. Most adolescents have never visited Jerusalem, the vast majority of West Bank teenagers have never been to Gaza's beaches; while their peers in Gaza have never seen Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin or Hebron. In Gaza, many students have been barred from going to the West Bank or abroad to further their studies.

Most adolescents have no access to learning or recreational programs outside schools, and spend the majority of their time at home. While there are around 400 youth clubs in the West Bank and Gaza, most lack funding, and are poorly managed and equipped. Programmes offered by these youth clubs are usually limited to simple sporting activities, mostly for boys.

CONFLICT-RELATED DEATHS AND INJURIES: As at May 2010, 1,333 Palestinian children had been killed in conflict since the beginning of the second intifada in September 2000, according to Defence for Children International-Palestine. Of them, 871, or 65% were adolescents. The vast majority of deaths took place in Gaza (973, or 73%). In the West Bank, Nablus (92, or 6.9%), Jenin (77, or 5.8%), Hebron (49, or 3.7%) and Ramallah (48 or 3.6%) were most

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affected. Primary causes of death were air and ground attacks (653, or 49%), followed by armed clashes (260, or 19.5%).

As at end-June, 178 children had been injured in conflict-related incidents since the beginning of 2010, with almost 60% (106) of the injuries among 13-17 year olds. More than half of the injuries among adolescents (59 incidents) occurred during demonstrations, primarily against the barrier in the West Bank. At least 13 children had been injured in settler-related incidents, and seven through unexploded ordinances.

MILITARY DETENTION: Palestinian children are prosecuted through Israeli military rather than civilian courts. Israeli Military Orders permit prosecution of children as young as 12 years of age and define a Palestinian child as below 16 years old, in contrast to Israeli domestic law, where majority is attained at 18.

Around 700 Palestinian adolescents between 12 and 17 years old are detained by the Israeli military each year. As at end-April 2010, there were 335 children being detained. Detainees routinely report violations of their human rights during arrest, interrogation and imprisonment. Few receive adequate health or education services, and all but one of six prisons that hold children are located in Israel, in contravention of international law, significantly limiting family visits.

There are serious concerns regarding the rise in the number of younger adolescents, from 12 to 15 years of age, being detained, with 42 children in that age category being held in Israeli detention in December 2009 compared to 30 in December 2008. In 2008, the most common offense was stone throwing (26.7%), which under Israeli Military Orders carries a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment. Bail was denied in over 90% of cases.

FALLING ENROLMENT: While almost all children of primary school age are enrolled in schools, enrolment rates plunge for 16 year and 17 year old students, both male and female, with almost 30% dropping out after Basic Education (10th grade). Boys most often cite the need to financially support their families; girls most often cite pressure to get married.

Serious questions about the quality of education are also being raised following poor performances in international maths and science testing. The 2007 Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed a marked deterioration in the performance of Palestinian 8th graders who scored 42nd in Math and 43rd in Science, out of 48 participating countries. This was significantly lower than in 2003, when Palestinian

PROTECTING ADOLESCENCE



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For many adolescent girls in the occupied Palestinian territory, schools often provide the only structured space for interaction among peers. UNICEF's long-established community-based partners work directly with families to ensure that boys and girls can equally access a broad range of services at 110 UNICEF-supported Adolescent Friendly Spaces across the occupied Palestinian territory.

students ranked 38th in Math and 34th in Science, out of 45 participating countries. Palestinian Authority examinations also show a deterioration in student performances. The 2009 "Tawjihi" matriculation exam results showed West Bank Tawjihi literature scores dropping 12.7 percent and Gaza Tawjihi numbers in science dropping 9.6 percent compared with 2008. In 2007-2008, just one in five of 16,000 sixth-graders in Gaza passed standardised tests in Math, Science, English and Arabic while only one in two passed the same tests in Nablus and Jenin.

ADOLESCENT FRIENDLY SPACES PROGRAMME (AFS)

Working through existing youth and community centres, UNICEF piloted a programme in 2006 dedicated to providing vulnerable adolescents with structured after-school remedial learning and recreational opportunities. The programme, initially established in four facilities, now operates in 110 sites across the West Bank and Gaza, reaching over 50,000 adolescents in 2009. In the aftermath of "Cast Lead" in 2009, 11 AFS in Gaza were converted in Family Centres that provide an even broader range of services also tailored to include younger children and caregivers.

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The AFS provide adolescents with support in keeping up with their academics; guidance in learning critical life skills such as conflict management and how to avoid high risk behaviour; and much needed recreational opportunities including music, sports, art, and interactive technology. The AFS are equipped with IT equipment, art and music supplies, and a library, and staffed with trained teachers and facilitators. Girls' participation is ensured through networking with the local communities as well as special measures such as allocating a day per week for girls' activities.

UNICEF support focuses strongly on building the capacity of institutional and community based organisations to provide services that meet the needs of vulnerable adolescents. Since 2006, AFS programmes have been implemented by two NGOs with an established community presence (Tamer Institute for Community Education, and Ma'an Development Centre), with support from the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) and the National Committee for Summer Camps.

To establish strong linkages within the community and ownership among adolescent participants, each of the spaces are run by local management committees including five adolescents and five adults (parents, municipal staff and other community members), that have been trained on child rights, facilitation, and project management. The committees receive ongoing training and technical support.

In 2010, UNICEF will reach up to 54,000 adolescents through the AFS. Local management committees will undergo further training, and UNICEF is developing an essential package of minimum standards for AFS. This year, 10,000 adolescents will also conduct an oPt-wide advocacy campaign that kicks off the International Year of Youth in August.

EVALUATING THE ADOLESCENT FRIENDLY SPACES PROGRAMME

In 2009, UNICEF conducted a sustainability assessment of AFS in the West Bank to determine if activities implemented by the programme would continue if donor funding were withdrawn. Information was collected through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, focus group discussions with adolescents, parents, and members of local management committees, and visits to nine centres.

Five aspects of sustainability were assessed: social and cultural; economic and financial; institutional accountability and management capacity; availability

IN THEIR WORDS (AND LENSES)



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In 2009, UNICEF organised photography workshops for adolescents in Ramallah and Gaza with the goal of producing, for the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an exhibit of daily life in Gaza and the West Bank, through the eyes (and lenses) of adolescents. The workshops and exhibit were intended to breathe life into Articles 12, 13, and 31 of the CRC that are related to freedom of expression and participation. The powerful images capture the often grim reality surrounding children and adolescents in the occupied Palestinian territory, but they also attest to their spirit. To view photoessays of their work, visit:

<http://www.unicef.org/photoessays/53757.html>

and <http://www.unicef.org/photoessays/53758.html>

of technology and skills; and policy or institutional support. Key findings of the study were that:

- While the centres studied covered costs of rent / utilities and provided volunteer help, the evaluation identified a major gap in economic sustainability, with each of the centres providing only minimal, token support towards much larger programme costs.
- Despite strong support among adolescents and parents, the study identified the need for more representative local management committees (LMCs), including more members directly involved in programming. UNICEF will also develop guidelines for managing responsibilities / accountabilities between the LMCs and the boards of the host centres.
- The programme is not specifically included in Palestinian Authority planning / budgeting

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tools, and political commitment to adolescent activities is insufficient.

Key recommendations to UNICEF and partners were to:

- Formulate agreements between the centres and municipalities and MoYS directorates, so that centres are integrated into municipal and MoYs plans and budgets.
- Further strengthen the capacity of hosting centres (not implementing partners) through training in project management, and by setting defined management structures and accountabilities.
- Support centres in developing financial strategies based on sustainable funding sources that include income-generating projects and community volunteer work.
- Build on strong adolescent participation and ownership by strengthening their role in LMCs either through added representation or through training.
- Develop a plan for making supplies provided to the centres, notably IT equipment, more accessible to the wider community, with a view to generating income.
- UNICEF and its implementing NGO partners are to develop, with the MoYS, a long-term agreement that will progressively hand over project management to local institutions and communities, as development assistance is phased out.

FEATURE: In Jerusalem's poorest neighborhood, few make it out

Ahmed Hamu is a survivor.

Surrounded by drug use and poverty, peers who drop out of school or get married early, the seventeen-year-old with a shy grin has managed to turn his back on all that and concentrate on his future.

"I see what happens here, how some of the families don't care, and I want something different for myself," says Ahmed.

But he acknowledges he wouldn't have done it alone. UNICEF's Adolescent Friendly Space programme was key in convincing Ahmed to continue his

AGAINST THE ODDS



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A 2009 evaluation of the AFS programme in the West Bank showed evidence of self-reported behavioural change on the part of adolescent participants and their parents, and broader benefits on the community and programme partners. Focus group discussions pointed to improved academic performance, increased self-confidence, and a reduction in violence.

education, he says. "I only decided to stay in school after the training," he laughs. "I was going to drop out and get married."

Now he plans to go on to higher education so that he can work at the same community center, the Burj Al-Luq Luq Social Center, where he spends so much of his time.

Learning confidence

The life skills training that was crucial for Ahmed teaches young people how to lead and communicate effectively with others, how to handle conflict, drug prevention, HIV prevention and other usually-taboo subjects.

"The importance of this programme is that UNICEF views adolescents in their full potential," says UNICEF Specialist Linda Sall. "They have a big role in society and are not just passive beneficiaries."

The AFS programme is run in cooperation with 110 community-based centres (40 in Gaza and 70 in the West Bank). Nine are in Jerusalem. Burj Al-Luq Luq Social Center serves the surrounding Bab Hutta community, home to 12,000 people squeezed into Jerusalem's Old City walls. Every month 175 adolescents participate in the AFS programme here.

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Survival skills

“The programme is very important,” says Jamila Qwaider, Center Coordinator. “In each house here [in Bab Hutta] there might be 10 living in a small room. There are social problems, like early marriage and drug use. At 14, girls are being married off. A large portion of girls and boys smoke. The neighborhood is closed, traditional.”

Just over 65% of East Jerusalem residents, including 95,000 children, live below the poverty line, according to the Association of Civil Rights in Israel.

Adolescents in East Jerusalem face the risk of displacement, either due to demolitions of homes constructed without permits, or evictions. Burj Al-Luq Luq Social Center has a tent used for activities that has been issued with a demolition order by Israeli authorities, along with seven adjoining homes.

On the rest of the property, it runs a kindergarten, a computer centre, a sports centre, a place for adolescents and young people to learn new skills, as well as a centre for disabled adolescents.

The AFS programmes are free to students, supported by international donors. UNICEF’s programmes are funded by the Canadian international Development Agency, Swedish International Development Agency, the Italian, Norwegian and Spanish governments, and the Italian and Dutch National Committees for UNICEF.

“When you see the kids with a smile on their faces, this is a reward,” says 30-year-old Qwaider, who clearly loves her work. “Our impact isn’t seen in a day or two, but when it is, it is incredible.”

Against the odds

Outside, in the centre’s shaded courtyard, a group of boys is hanging about. Many of them seem shy and unsure.

Ahmed is playing chess with his best friend at the center, Khaled. He knows he is an exception here. He says that of a class of 25 students, all but three or four have dropped out to become day laborers. Many of his peers he says are addicted to drugs.

New UNICEF photos and video are available to be used by UN agencies, partners, and international media outlets. To request photos, please contact: photo@unicef.org; to get videos, please visit: thenewsmarket.com/unicef

A SPACE TO BE YOUNG



Ahmad in a game of ping pong at the Burj Al-Luq Luq Social Centre.

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At the Burj Al-Luq Luq Social Centre in the heart of Jerusalem’s Old City, UNICEF supports an adolescent friendly space (AFS) that offers teenagers much needed opportunities to catch up with their school work, learn critical life skills, and most importantly perhaps – a safe space for the young to be young.

To view a photo essay on Burj Al-Luq Luq, visit the UNICEF-oPt website at www.unicef.org/opt

“They treat me like I am not one of them,” he admits. But he seems to have no regrets.

“The pressure that is on him is very strong,” says Qwaider. “But his family is very supportive, and his confidence has increased day by day. I think he will succeed,” she says with a nod.