



## SHAREK Newsletter July & August 2007

### **Sharek Overview**

*Sharek Youth Forum, a leading Palestinian organization run by youth and for youth, works to enhance Palestinian society through youth empowerment.*

*There are three core programs that Sharek implements in the field. The first one, "A step forward", aims to empower youth through facilitating their entry into the labour market. In addition, as part of A Step Forward, Sharek has launched the "Dynamic Human Rights Unit" [DHRU] to raise awareness on human rights and provide youth with legal assistance and advice. Moreover, "Bridges", Sharek's second program, focuses on establishing services in remote areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip for child development. Lastly, there is "Partners", a program devoted to the capacity building of youth organizations and to the support of youth initiatives.*

### **Sharek's latest Actions**

#### **Presentation of a paper during a conference on Youth Welfare Law in Bethlehem**

On 28 July 2007 a conference on the Youth Welfare Law and youth needs, organised by the Student Forum, took place at the Shepard Hotel in Bethlehem. The conference was attended by PLC members, about 200 representatives of several youth and woman's NGOs and employees of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Sharek presented a paper on the evolution of youth rights and gave recommendations on the Youth Welfare Law, which is still in draft format. The general findings of Sharek are that the draft law is weak and does not provide a sufficient legal framework to protect youth rights and enhance their situation in the Palestinian society.

#### **International Youth Day: 12 August**

On the occasion of the International Youth Day (August 12) Sharek Youth Forum joined the efforts of other Palestinian organisations to advocate for youth's needs. A seminar on youth needs and rights was organised in Gaza City (Al Jazeera Hotel). It was attended by more than 250 people among youth and representatives of youth and human rights NGOs. In addition, 1,500 youth participated in marches in Bethlehem, Ramallah and Gaza. Moreover, on the same day Sharek presented the booklet "*Palestine Youth – Figures and Statistics*", published in cooperation with the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics, and participated in a press conference held in Ramallah on the situation of Palestinian youth in 2007.

#### **➤ DHRU**

#### **135 youth participate to a Training of Trainers' session in 6 locations**

During the months of July and August, 135 volunteers between 18 and 28 years old participated to a Training of Trainers' session on *human rights education* which was organized by the DHRU. The trainings took place in 5 different locations: Ramallah (2), Nablus, Bethlehem, Gaza City and Al Maghazi camp in Gaza. A total of 135 youth, mainly from refugee camps, received 18 hours training on human rights and human rights education. In fact, the goal of the training was to enable the participants to give workshops on basic concepts of human rights in 26 refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

#### **Production of training manual and other tools on human rights education**

In August 2007, the DHRU published a training manual on *Human Rights Education*. 200 copies of the manual were printed distributed among the participants of the DHRU trainings and workshops. The manual contains contributions by human rights experts, a list of useful websites, the full text of 4 essential human rights treaties, case studies and practical exercises. Each manual is accompanied by an interactive CD with PowerPoint presentations on several human rights topics. In the same period, the DHRU launched alternative non-formal educational tools to facilitate human rights education in the field. Among the others, a new game entitled "Human Rights' Race" was

developed by the unit to raise awareness about human rights issues. The game has been used during workshops, training sessions and other human rights educational activities.

### **Child's Rights Day in Cooperation with Balata Youth Centre**

The DHRU was approached by the Youth Club from Balata refugee camp in Nablus to help organizing a "Child Rights Day". The activity was carried out successfully in August and about 60 children from Balata participated. Apart from child rights games directed by the DHRU staff together with local volunteers, a mural focusing on the right to play was painted in the wall of the youth centre by children living in the refugee camp.

#### **➤ *Bridges program***

### **Establishment of 6 playgrounds under the umbrella of the "Safety Playground Project"**

Throughout the year, a total of six playgrounds were established in marginalized areas lacking any recreational facilities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In early 2007 the playgrounds in Halhoul (Hebron areas), Al-Abidiyah (Bethlehem area), Rameen (Tulkarem area) and Beit Hanoun (Gaza Strip) were constructed. In May another two playgrounds were opened in Al-Khadr (Bethlehem area) and Saffa (Ramallah village). Many children participated in the activities carried out at the opening of the playgrounds and enjoyed their free time by playing with Sharek staff and the local volunteers.

### **Closing ceremony of the project Sea Camps "Safety First" in Gaza Strip**

In August the closing ceremony was held for the Sea Camps "Safety First", a project implemented in the Gaza Strip in cooperation with UNRWA for the Summer Games 2007. Five permanent beach locations were established along the Gaza Coast and more than 12,000 children and youth enjoyed the swimming trainings, water and beach based games and sports under the supervision of trained life guards.

### **Closing ceremony of the project Summer Activities 2007 in the West Bank**

In the end of July a closing celebration was held by Sharek Youth Forum for children and youth that had participated in the 2007 Summer Activities in the West Bank. More than 900 children had benefited from activities organized during the summer which offered children such opportunities as sports, theatre, music, recycling waste, folklore and workshops on communication skills.

### **Opening of 10 Homework Centres**

From the middle of 2007 an additional 10 Homework Centres were established by Sharek Youth Forum in collaboration with local partner organizations or municipalities both in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The establishment of the homework Centres allows for supervision of children in order to assist them with their homework duties and provide them with fun and enriching extra-curricular activities.

### **Establishment of 3 IT Community Centres for Children and Youth**

In August three IT Community Centres for Children and Youth as part of the "Shababeek" project were opened in the Gaza Strip (North, Khan Younis and Rafah). Over 100 children benefited from the centres through activities related to IT implemented by trained youth mentors.

### **Launch of a Cultural Networking between Palestinian and American youth groups through "Why Not" project**

Sharek Youth Forum, in cooperation with Mercy Corps, launched the "Why Not" project at the beginning of June 2007. "Why Not" aims to establish a cultural exchange among Palestinians and Americans youth aged from 13 to 17 years. A total of 9 groups of youth benefited from the project through writing poems, producing short films, and organizing photo exhibitions and murals. The material produced will represent the social and cultural perception of the daily life of youth and will be exchanged with the Americans participants. A website was established to upload the activities implemented by the youth groups as well as to create a forum through which youth from different realities and backgrounds could share their experiences and opinions.

➤ *Partners program*

**Launch of 26 NGO projects and 11 youth initiatives all over the West Bank and Gaza Strip**

Partners program aims to support original and creative youth initiatives and to assist youth through the provision of grants to youth groups and youth NGOs active in their local communities. Under this umbrella, starting from the beginning of August a number of 26 NGO projects as well as 11 youth initiatives were launched. Of the 26 NGOs, 20 were located in the West Bank and 6 in the Gaza Strip and of the 11 youth groups, 3 were from Gaza and the rest from the West Bank. Some examples of the NGO projects supported by Sharek are: the Palestinian Youth Creativity Association in Qalqilyah launched the "We like our environment clean" initiative; "Hope for Disabled People" project implemented by Ehsan Charitable Organization in Hebron; volunteers workshops organized by the Dalal Institution for Culture and Arts in Bethlehem; and under its youth training initiative "Jaffra website" the Baladna Society in Haifa implemented in partnership with Sharek a workshop for connecting Palestinian youth inside the West Bank and Israel through electronic communication. An example of a youth group initiative was the Building Tomorrow Group, which focused on social awareness through folklore, on issues like smoking and drug use.