



SHAREK Newsletter

November & December 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 2 units: the "Dynamic Human Rights Unit" [DHRU] to raise awareness on human rights and provide youth with legal assistance and advice and the "Youth Business Support Unit" [YBSU] to foster entrepreneurship and business incubation. 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

➤ **A Step Forward program**

Sharek signs the "Academic Counselling for Women" project with UNIFEM

Early in December 2007, Sharek Youth Forum signed a new project, called "Academic Counselling for Women," with the United Nations International Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The project focuses on raising women's awareness on the importance of education as a tool for the empowerment of women. The main objective of this project is to encourage women's participation in secondary and third level education as well as to promote women's involvement in the community at large. Moreover, the project will also address the issue of female early school-leavers encouraging them to return to their education.

The implementation of the project is planned to begin in January 2008.

Sharek implements a training course in the "Bisan Accounting System" in Al-Quds University, Abu Dis

During November 2007, Sharek Youth Forum, in cooperation with Al Quds University, began a one-month training course in the "Bisan Accounting System" based in Al Quds University, Abu Dis. 16 Accounting students participated in the training course.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in cooperation with Sharek announced 3600 new job opportunities for youth in Palestine

The PCBS, in cooperation with the Recruitment Centre, announced 3600 job opportunities for the youth sector. The announcement provided for a wide range of opportunities for youth to work in the field for a period of one month between November and December, 2007. For instance, 63 youth were recruited by Sharek Youth Forum to work for the PCBS for one month on the General Census of Population and Housing for 2007.

➤ **DHRU**

Sharek DHRU meets with representatives of Ministry of Labour in Ramallah

On 4 November 2007, four Sharek staff members from its Dynamic Human Rights Unit (DHRU) met with a representative of the Ministry of Labour in Ramallah to discuss the current employment difficulties faced by youth in Palestine. As part of the meeting, the DHRU provided the Ministry with a comprehensive list of recommendations to help solve youth unemployment. These recommendations were formulated on the basis of extensive research undertaken by the DHRU throughout 2007 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip through field visits and discussion groups. Some of the suggestions offered by the DHRU staff included positive discrimination of youth by employers, more vocational training opportunities for youth, an increase in the annual budget of the Ministry of Labour and an increase in the number of employment offices.

Sharek DHRU implements 78 workshops on human rights in 16 refugee camps

During the months of October, November and December, a series of interactive training workshops were held in several refugee camps spread over the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The workshops were given by volunteer-trainers that had been trained by the DHRU staff in August and targeted refugee youth from 15 to 18 years of age. The goal of these workshops was to raise awareness about human rights and to give a general introduction on the concepts of humanity, needs and rights. The educational tools employed in the workshops included drama, educational quizzes and role-plays.

International Human Rights Day: 10 December

To celebrate the International Human Rights Day (10 December 2007) the DHRU staff, both in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, organized an event to gather 80 youth volunteers who had been trained by the DHRU and implemented several human rights training workshops in refugee camps. During the course of the event, the volunteers engaged in several interactive activities focusing on human rights such as a human rights quiz and a competition on facts and statistics related to Palestinian refugee youth and their rights.

Also on the same day, the DHRU staff released the initial results of a survey on the human rights situation in refugee camps in Palestine as perceived by youth. The participation of nearly 600 youth from twenty-five refugee camps in the survey led to a comprehensive report on the problems affecting the fundamental human rights of refugees, and specifically refugee youth.

➤ *Bridges program*

Signing of a cooperation agreement with the UNDP for 10 new homework centres

In November 2007, Sharek Youth Forum in cooperation with the United Nation Development Program signed an agreement under the UNDP program "Helping Palestinian People". The agreement aims to establish 10 Homework Centres in West Bank and Gaza

strip for children and to provide children with social activities in a safe environment after school. The implementation of the project will begin early 2008.

Establishment of 3 new Playgrounds in the West Bank

During the months of November and December 2007, under the umbrella of the "Safety Playground Project", Sharek established 3 new Playgrounds in Qabatiyah, Dhahariyah, and Al-Tireh (Ramallah). At the opening of the Playgrounds Sharek staff, together with the help of local partners, organized various fun recreational activities for the children.