



## SHAREK Newsletter 2008 : Issue 2

### *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, "Bridges", focuses on establishing services in remote areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip for child development. "Partners" is our second program which is devoted to the capacity building of youth organizations and to the support of youth initiatives. Lastly there is the "A Step Forward" program, which aims to empower youth through facilitating their entry into the labour market. In addition, the "Youth Business Support Unit" [YBSU], has been launched under the "A Step Forward" program to foster entrepreneurship and business incubation. Lastly, Sharek Youth Forum has also launched an "Advocacy Unit" to campaign, both locally and internationally, for better youth rights in Palestine.*

### *Sharek's latest news*

#### **Sharek Youth Forum signs two agreements with UNRWA in the Gaza Strip**

Sharek Youth Forum is delighted to announce that it has signed two agreements with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for projects in the Gaza Strip. The first agreement will see Sharek, in partnership with UNRWA, create 15 beach activities centres in the Gaza Strip providing safe and enjoyable beach recreation for nearly 24,000 youth and children as part of the UNRWA *Summer Games 2008* project. The second agreement is a gender initiative in which Sharek Youth Forum will establish 5 computer training centres, one in each of Gaza's five governorates. These centres will focus on the training of women in IT

courses such as ICDL and will initially benefit over 1,000 Gazan women.

#### **Sharek Youth Forum celebrates International Women's Day at its headquarters in Ramallah**

The International Women's Day was celebrated by Sharek Youth Forum in cooperation with UNIFEM (the United Nations Development Fund for Women) on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2008. A large event, attended by almost 200 people, was held in the Sharek headquarters in



Ramallah and Gaza City. All activities were shaped around the central 2008 theme: "Investing in Women and Girls". For instance, female youth were invited to learn about women's rights, the right to education and the right to work through entertaining activities such as role-plays, group games and an educational quiz. Participants were given the opportunity to express themselves and voice their opinions on the situation of women in Palestine through discussion groups or video interviews.

#### **Youth in Palestine**

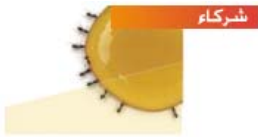
Sharek Youth Forum in cooperation with other Palestinian youth organisations and youth volunteers gathered together in Ramallah on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March to discuss the format of a publication on youth issues in Palestine. Through focus group discussions potential questions relating to youth's economic, social and political situation were discussed and formulated. These questions will form the basis of a research survey to be carried out for the publication in the coming months and the publication will provide a valuable source of information for organisations dealing with youth and will be a reference point for youth themselves.



#### **VISIT NOW!!**

**The Sharek Youth Forum website contains details of all of Sharek's core programs, activities and initiatives**

**[www.sharek.ps](http://www.sharek.ps)**



## Partners Program

### 42 community organizations and more than 3,000 children and youth have now benefited from Sharek's motivational partnership grants

Sharek Youth Forum has begun its preparation for the third phase of its program *Partners* which aims at building the capacity of youth institutions and their young personnel. Sharek has enjoyed great success with the first two stages of this program, which was launched during the second half of 2005. During the first two phases 42 community organisations working in urban, rural and marginalised areas and more than 3,000 youth benefited from Sharek grants.

The program coordinator Hazem Abu Hilal stated that the community institutions working in the youth and children sectors have so far benefited from training activities on management of civil society organizations, financial management, fundraising and working with donors. In addition, theoretical and practical training on sound management, proposal writing, reporting and developing work plans for donors has provided better coordination and implementation of activities by youth organisations in Palestine. As Abu Hilal emphasized, "The program was successful in reinforcing partnerships and coordination between different civil society organizations, exemplified by strong relations between these organizations following the implementation of the program."



## A Step Forward Program

### Sharek launches the sixth phase of the A Step Forward program with 50 Palestinian companies and institutions

Sharek Youth Forum announced the launch of the sixth phase of its *A Step Forward* Program with the participation of around 50 institutions, universities, institutes and firms. The launch was announced during a meeting of Sharek's *A Step Forward* partners held in the Sharek premises in Ramallah.

During the meeting, Sharek's Executive Director Bader Zamareh explained how the program seeks to bridge the gap between what students learn in higher education institutions and the requirements of the Palestinian labour market. This is achieved by equipping youth with the necessary practical skills required for joining the labour market thus facilitating their contribution to Palestinian economic development.



## Advocacy Unit

### Sharek Youth Forum and partner youth institutions organize a discussion session on retaining volunteering youth by Palestinian institutions

Seeking to encourage and sustain the participation of youth volunteers in Palestine Sharek Youth Forum invited representatives of various organisations to partake in a workshop on its premises in Ramallah on "Retaining Volunteers in Palestinian Youth Institutions." Organisations from Gaza were represented through a video-conference link on the day.



There was a lot of fruitful discussion about youth volunteerism in Palestine and its importance in the development of a strong civil society. The workshop participants underscored the importance of supporting voluntary-based institutions and developing bylaws to regulate youth voluntary work or a law to address the social, economic, political and cultural aspects of youth work and voluntary work.

The participants also called for the creation of a board or commission on voluntary work in each municipality to be comprised of youth and voluntary-based institutions. The mandate of such body would be to advance youth activism, develop plans and strategies and assist youth institutions within the respective municipalities.