



SHAREK Newsletter January 2008

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 Actions

Sharek Youth Forum moves to its new premises in Al-Tireh, Ramallah



The brand new building of Sharek Youth Forum houses the core program offices as well as the general and financial management offices.

Moreover, in the building there is an activity centre that provides space for Sharek to undertake its various youth-orientated initiatives. In addition, the building offers an outdoor playground and a homework centre for children. Also, there is a community IT centre to help youth learn about computer and internet skills on the premises.

Sharek would like to welcome visitors to the new Sharek premises and to have a chat with staff about any of Sharek's activities!!!

Launch of the new Sharek Youth Forum website

Sharek staff is delighted to announce that the new Sharek website has been launched online in English, Arabic, Italian and Dutch. The website provides visitors with all the information regarding the organization, its core programs and all the activities and events carried out in the field. Also, there are sections which explain how to get involved, how to donate, how to subscribe to Sharek's mailing list, where to find Sharek's field offices, and what the latest news from Sharek is. Furthermore, Sharek's website gives information on Palestinian children and youth as well as policies about youth and youth employment.

VISIT NOW!!

The new Sharek Youth Forum website is available in Arabic, English, Italian and Dutch at the address www.sharek.ps



Bridges Program

10 new Homework Centres

Thanks to an agreement with the United Nation Development Program, Sharek, under the Bridges program, is in the process of selecting locations in order to establish 10 new homework centres. Sharek's policy in selecting these locations prioritises marginalised and remote areas of both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The purpose is to create a safe environment for undertaking social and educational activities for children residing in these areas.

Establishment of 5 new Playgrounds in the West Bank

At the beginning of 2008, under the umbrella of the "Safety Playground Project", Sharek Youth Forum finalised the establishment of 5 new playgrounds in the following locations: Aqbat Jabe Refugee Camp, Hajja (Qalqilieh District), Deir Istea (Salfeet District), Kharas

(Hebron), and Salfeet. At the opening of the Playgrounds Sharek staff, together with the help of local partners, organized various fun recreational activities for the children.

Sharek Youth Forum signs with Mercy Corps the extension of the project "Why Not"

Late in December 2007, after a successful pilot project of 6 months, Sharek Youth Forum signed an agreement with Mercy Corps for an extension of the project "Why Not" for an additional 4 months. During this period, the project will offer to the beneficiaries a wide range of activities focusing mainly on cultural exchange through on-line communication and research. The implementation of this project began early January 2008.



A Step Forward Program

The Youth Business Support Unit (YBSU) establishes 4 local offices

The YBSU based in Sharek Youth Forum, Al-Tireh, Ramallah has recently completed the establishment of its four regional offices in Nablus, Hebron, Gaza City and Rafah. These offices will implement the unit's anticipated activities for the upcoming two years. Currently, the project manager and the field coordinators are in the process of selecting 60 youth that will benefit from an extensive training on how to establish a small business. At the end of the training, the candidates will prepare a proposal for their own business venture. An ad-hoc committee will select the successful proposals and will give the candidates the opportunity to start their own business through a small grant.

Sharek YBSU signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Portland Trust and the Small Enterprise Centre of GTZ

On the 28 of January 2008, the YBSU signed a MoU with Portland Trust and the Small Enterprise Centre of GTZ with the purpose of giving trainings to youth on how to start a business. The trainings in business management will be given by CEFE certified Palestinian

trainers. Sharek is particularly involved in the selection and nomination of the candidate beneficiaries and will contribute towards the cost of the training, as well as supplying the premises for the trainings throughout the West Bank.



Advocacy Unit

Sharek signs an agreement with the Open Society Institute [OSI] for an extension of the DHRU project

After a year of intensive trainings on human rights issues, workshops in 25 refugee camps, legal aid and lobbying for improved youth policies, the DHRU project of Sharek Youth Forum has been extended. The agreement on the extension was signed at the end of December 2007 between Sharek Youth Forum and the Open Society Institute. The Institute is providing Sharek with a grant to continue the project for the rest of the year (2008). During this period, the DHRU will focus more on internal and external advocacy on the human rights situation of refugee youth, as well as developing a more pro-active strategy towards human rights violations.

DHRU meets the Minister of Youth and Sports

On the 21st of January 2008 a delegation from the DHRU met with Mrs Tahani Abu Dhaka, the current Minister of Youth and Sports. After introducing the DHRU and its objectives, Sharek staff discussed with the Minister the new Youth Welfare draft law, the National Youth Policy document and the budget of the Ministry for 2008. In addition, the DHRU advocated for the development of national policies that prioritise youth. In particular, the DHRU focused on establishing a better representation and involvement of youth in the Palestinian Legislative Council and local municipalities. On this point, the DHRU presented a letter suggesting the introduction of a representative quota for youth and a decrease of the minimal age of candidacy for both decision-making bodies.