

Sharek Youth Forum

Youth in Action: Promise for the Future

Progress Update 2008 - 2009 - 2010





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Sharek Youth Forum





Table of Contents

07

List of Acronyms

08

Foreword

09

Introduction

10

Supporting
Palestinian Youth to
Lead: Sharek Youth
Forum

Background
Mission Statement
Vision Statement
Key Organizational Objectives
Getting the Work Done:
Organizational Structure and
Development

14

Promise for the
Future: Sharek
Moving Forward in
2010

Advocacy and Human Rights
Step Forward
Bridges

22

Activating Youth:
Sharek Core
Programmes in 2008
and 2009

Partners
Step Forward
Bridges
Advocacy and Human Rights

48

Youth in Crisis,
Youth in Action:
Responding to
Aggression in Gaza

Meeting humanitarian and
educational needs
Humanitarian Crisis
Education system depleted

54

Reaching Out: Sharek
Activities and Centers
in Geographical
Focus

Halhul Municipality Youth
Center
Rafah Youth Center
Hamdi Manko Youth Center
Training and Volunteerism
Centre Partnership with Al
Quds University and Al Quds
Open University

62

Past and Present:
a 1996-2010 Timeline

66

Thanks: Donors and
Supporters who make
Participation Possible



List of Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organization
CHF	Cooperative Housing Foundation
CHF	International Cooperative Housing Foundation International
CISS	Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud
COOPI	Cooperazione Internazionale
DVV	International International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association
GEF	The Global Environment Facility
IBSA	India-Brazil-South Africa Trilateral
IDF	Israeli Defence Forces
ILO	International Labor Organization
LDR	Local Democratic Reform program
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PADICO	Palestinian Investment and Development Company
PWRDC	Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center's
PYSL	Palestinian Youth Sports league
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SYF	Sharek Youth Forum
TCC	The Carter Center
UNDP/PAPP	United Nations Development Program/ Program of Assistance to the Palestinian People
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
VET	Vocational Educational Training

Forward



Promise or Peril? Sharek's 2009 report on the status of youth articulated the reality facing Palestinian youth: a crossroads with two very different futures ahead. Infringement of international humanitarian law and human rights laws by Israel, the occupying state, leave youth with difficult social, political and economic conditions. The situation is exacerbated by a fragmented and uncertain national infrastructure. Sharek Youth Forum, however, chooses 'promise' and despite the challenges and the reality, we have developed and grown, continuing to support youth through these difficult times.

2008-2009 saw Sharek's continued efforts in delivering a promising future to Palestinian youth. Step Forward, Bridges and Partners, our core programmes, all went from strength to strength. Meanwhile our advocacy and research work has been consolidated into a new Advocacy programme, highlighted by the publication of "Promise or Peril". 2008 was distinguished by Sharek's revitalization of its voluntary activities and in recognition of its high standards and leadership, Sharek was awarded the Palestine International Award for Distinction and Creativity. 2009 was marked by the war on Gaza and Sharek's response: the 30,000 campaign. Sharek mobilized its networks and started to provide humanitarian and psychological assistance within days of the war starting. As the fallout continued to affect

youth over 2009, Sharek continued to put in place support for communities.

Towards the end of 2009, as the turmoil created by "Operation Cast Lead" eased, Sharek began to look to the future and develop its five-year mid-term strategy. As we reflect on the successes of the past two years, we eagerly anticipate the plans and developments we have now put in place. There are major developments that are particularly exciting including the empowerment of youth to advocate for their own rights through the Youth Shadow Local Councils and the empowerment of youth to become economically active through Step Forward.

With this progress report: Youth in Action: Promise for the Future, Sharek Youth Forum would like to express its gratitude and appreciation to our staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to make Sharek work, as well as our donors and partners who make all our work possible. We would like, in particular, to highlight the incredible fortitude and steadfastness of our staff and volunteers in Gaza who have worked on, harder than ever, despite the most adverse conditions.

We dedicate this report to positive change for the lives of the young people of Palestine. Together, we are striving for a promising future.

The Board of Directors

Introduction



Youth in Action: Promise for the Future provides a progress update on the activities of Sharek Youth Forum from 2008 to 2010. The report provides an overview of the extensive activities of the organization over the last two and a half years and points to an organization that is entering the next phase of its lifecycle as a resilient, dynamic, thriving and leading advocate on youth issues in Palestine.



In section one, **Supporting Palestinian Youth to Lead**, you will get an impression of the Forum with up to date information on the mission and vision, some key organizational objectives and how Sharek goes about its business.

Promise for the Future, section two, provides a summary of the activities which have already taken place in 2010 and new activities planned for 2010 and beyond.



Section three, **Activating Youth**, presents a synopsis of programmes and projects which Sharek implemented during 2008-2009. Here Sharek's core programmes are described in five parts:

1. 'Brief overview' gives a summary of the programme's origin and objective
2. 'At-a-glance' details the general aims of the programme, activities and a list of specific projects

3. 'In Focus' provides an in-depth review of one or two key projects in each programme
4. 'Other Projects' details the other projects under the programme, their timeframe, location and donors/partners

Youth in Crisis, Youth in Action section four, gives perceptions and accounts of how Sharek experienced and responded to the war in Gaza, which took place between December 2008 and January 2009. It focuses on how young people were impacted and made a difference during the war and in its immediate aftermath.

In section five, **Reaching Out**, you will get an overview of Sharek's geographical reach, snapshot impressions of several Sharek centers and perceptions of volunteers from four Sharek field offices, one in Gaza - Rafah, one in Jerusalem and two in the West Bank - Nablus in the North and in Halhul in the South.

Section six **Past and Present**, presents a timeline of significant events in the life of Sharek Youth Forum.

Finally, in section seven: **Thanks**, Sharek expresses its thanks to the donors who have contributed in 2008-2009 and who are contributing in 2010 and beyond.



Supporting Palestinian Youth to Lead: Sharek Youth Forum



Supporting Palestinian Youth to Lead: Sharek Youth Forum

Background

Now in its fourteenth year, Sharek Youth Forum has positioned itself as one of the leading independent, apolitical and impartial youth organizations in Palestine. Sharek is today a national and internationally recognized platform for youth-to-youth, youth-to-community, and youth-to-children interaction. It was established in 1996 at which time it was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and the United Nations Development Program/ Program of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP /PAPP). Sharek then gained its autonomy in July 2004 when it registered with the Palestinian Ministry of Interior as a non governmental organization with charitable status.

Mission Statement

As an independent Palestinian organization, Sharek Youth Forum seeks to contribute to the development of youth through designing, supporting, and implementing youth initiatives, programmes and projects in Palestine. The organization strives to get the voice of youth heard, and acts as a platform for advocacy on social, economic, cultural and political youth issues.

Vision Statement

Sharek envisions a Palestine where youth have opportunities to fulfill their potential as leaders in state-building and as active participants in the economic, social, cultural, and political life of Palestine.

Key Organizational Objectives

- Develop the political, economic, social, and cultural capacities of the Palestinian youth so that they can tackle youth issues in the most effective manner.
- Enhance the exchange of knowledge and experience between Palestinian children, adolescents and youth.
- Provide opportunities for youth to participate in the economy either by enhancing their employability for their integration into the labor market or through the establishment of new businesses.

- Foster partnership between civil society organizations, private-sector, government, and international stakeholders towards the creation of opportunities for youth.
- Raise awareness locally and internationally on the specific needs and issues affecting youth in Palestine.

Getting the work done: Sharek's organizational structure and development

From its inception Sharek has understood that only youth can truly understand and connect to the issues affecting them and for this reason it has relied on youth volunteers to get the organization's work done. Sharek has retained this principle throughout its growth and development. Without the commitment and dedication of its volunteers, Sharek would not be the organization it is today.

Sharek's General Assembly and a Board of Directors follow a principle of decentralized management where coordinators and executives in each governorate branch have independent powers.

Notwithstanding this, Sharek endeavors to balance these demands with the need to retain flexibility in its operations in order to cater to a dynamic youth sector.

Sharek, the Arabic word for "participation", reflects the fundamental approach to the organization's work, which is "working together not apart". On this basis Sharek works in partnership with: local authorities, the private sector, community-based organizations (CBO's) academic institutions, the Palestinian National Authority, and national and international development institutions.

Recognizing the depth and breadth of issues facing young people in Palestine, Sharek programmes operate on a philosophy of transferring knowledge, building capacity and creating ownership. These principles are wholly integrated into each of the strategies the organization implements. In addition to this, Sharek is also committed to positioning itself as one of the most geographically spread organizations in Palestine.







Promise for the Future: Sharek Moving Forward in 2010

Promise for the Future: Sharek Moving Forward in 2010

Partners: From Programme to Approach

Building on the successes of 2008-2009 and reflecting on lessons learned, Sharek moved into 2010 with some strategic changes to its approach to the work.

With the belief that in every initiative strengthening Partners is necessary and in recognition of the strategic importance of the principles and methodologies established through Partners, it has ceased as a specific programme. From 2010, the methodologies and approach employed in the programme are now integrated across all of Sharek's programmes and projects. In addition Sharek is placing considerably more focus on developing its advocacy strategy, including capacity building, advocacy networks and debating.

New Projects for 2010 and beyond

Advocacy and Human Rights	
<p>Project: Youth Shadow Local Councils Time frame: April 2010 – June 2011 Location: West Bank Donor: CHF</p> <p>Many Palestinian youth no longer believe that their opinions matter or that their voices can be heard. Years of political factions' exploitation of young people's efforts and failure to deliver any significant political change has led many of today's youth to withdraw from political participation. The dangers of youth disengagement are present and real, but they are not yet permanent.</p> <p>This project is a direct response to these concerns and has established, activated and supported ten Youth Shadow Local Councils (YSLCs) from the following local governmental units in the West Bank: Halhul, Izhna, Beit Sahour, Jericho, Taybeh, Anabta, Qalqilya, Beit Fajar, Salfeet, Al Ram. Through this initiative Palestinian youth will gain understanding of local governance functions and good democratic governance practices.</p>	<p>Project: "SHABAB" for Promoting a Culture of Dialogue, Reconciliation and National Unity among Young Male and Female University Students Timeframe: April 2010- May 2011 Location: West Bank Donor: NED</p> <p>In recognition of the need to promote a culture of dialogue, reconciliation and national unity among Palestinian youth, this project will develop a network of community and university-based Debate and Campaigning Clubs (DCCs) in four strategic universities in the West Bank. A key element of the project is that the consensus created during the debate and dialogue events will be used as the basis for campaigning and advocacy by the volunteers and debate-participants.</p>

Fact Box

- Agreements signed with 10 local councils
- 5,000 youth participated in the selection process
- 135 young people elected to Youth Shadow Local Councils

Fact Box

- 4 DCCs established
- 80 participants engaged in DCCs
- 12 trainers identified to provide training in related areas including campaigning techniques, debate and conflict resolution
- Arabic Advocacy and Debate Manual will be published in August

Project: Palestinian Ministry for Youth and Sports National Youth Intersectoral Strategy 2011

Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip

Timeframe: February 2010

Donor/Partner: UNDP

Sharek Youth Forum, in cooperation with the UNDP, ran a series of workshops to consult with young people on the development of the National Youth Intersectoral Strategy for 2011-2013. The strategy is an effort to direct resources and long-term investment in the youth sector. Affirming the belief that youth have a role in building communities and the youth sector, Sharek organized and facilitated the workshops in which youth from various social and professional sectors were able to reflect their needs

Project Fact Box

- 19 facilitators conducted 30 workshops across all governorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip
- Workshops were attended by 691 participants

Project: Life is a Right

Location: Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt

Timeframe: 2010 - 2011

Donor: European Commission through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

Partners: Leaderships (Palestine) in partnership with Namaa Society (Jordan), the Lebanese Association for Active Learning (Lebanon), Andalus Center for Tolerance Studies and Combating of Violence (Egypt)

This project aims to contribute to changing concepts and ideas related to death penalty at both the official and societal levels in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. The project will be implemented in participation with official personalities and the public in the four Arab countries

Project Fact Box

- Mobilization and building of local and regional networks of the active young persons.
- Dissemination and making available knowledge related to the abolishment of death penalty in the four targeted Arab countries. Implementation of a number of activities to gain support and advocacy in which official persons participate in addition to the public in the cities, villages and rural areas in the four countries.

Project: We Are Here**Location:** Gaza Strip**Timeframe:** March 2010 - June 2010**Donor/Partner:** Action Aid

This project included the production of films and documentaries about the situation of young people in the Gaza Strip aimed at strengthening the capacity and skills of young Palestinian

Young People were trained in the use electronic media and the production of documentary films in addition to the exchange ideas about the cultural, social, economic and experiences among Palestinian youth and their counterparts in the outside world

Project Fact Box

- 2 documentary films about the conditions of youth in the Gaza Strip produced
 - 25 hours of training provided to 35 young people
-



Step Forward: the Center for Youth Economic Empowerment

Project: Steppingstone Vocational Training “Mehani”
Timeframe: Feb 2010 - 2012

Location: West Bank, Gaza Strip

Donor: European Commission

In recognition that the low quality of vocational training is restraining economic and social development, the focus of Steppingstone Vocational Training is to improve vocational education and training.

The initiative will contribute to youth poverty reduction. The specific objective of the project is to increase income opportunities of youth.

Project Fact Box

- 15 Vocational Education and Training school assessments completed
- Public launch in July 2010
- Workshop on modern Vocational Educational Training Management & Strategic planning in July 2010
- Workshop on Curriculum Development in August 2010

Project: Be the Change
Timeframe: February 2010 – February 2011

Location: West Bank, Gaza Strip

Donor: Canadian International Development Agency through UNFPA

Be the Change is a Sharek concept that has been brought forward and expanded through a new project in cooperation with the UNFPA. The project aims to support marginalized youth and encourage community work and activity. The project will support youth to work in their communities and support those communities indirectly through this work. The project targets marginalized and under-served communities. Now in its pilot phase, the project has already started to give youth a chance to improve their situations.

Project Fact Box

- 1,000 young people will be supported over the coming year through employment and capacity building
- 11 governorates targeted

Project: Strengthening Community Livelihoods
Location: Gaza Strip

Timeframe: March 2010 to 2014

Donor: World Vision

Sharek is implementing part of the World Vision 5 year strengthening livelihoods project in Gaza starting in 2010. Sharek will provide support to households in establishing income-generating projects or improving existing projects damaged in the past year.

Project Fact Box

- The project is in the launch phase
- It will support around 50 households in the first phase including provision of business planning support, financial grants and business training

Bridges

Project: Catch Up Training for Tawjihi
Timeframe: March 2010 – September 2010

Location: Gaza Strip Governorates: North, East, West and Central Gaza, Khan Younis and Rafah

Donor: UNESCO

Building on the successes of the catch up training provided in 2009, Sharek will fill an essential gap in student achievement by providing catch up training and giving careers and academic guidance to students on completion of their Tawjihi. The 2010 project includes psychosocial and remedial support for a range of students and includes teacher training.

Fact Box

- Provision of support to 6,000 students for a 6-month period
- 500 teachers will be recruited
- 20 Career Counselors will provide career counseling

Project: Summer Games 2010
Timeframe: August 2010

Location: Gaza Strip

Donor: UNRWA

Building on the successful implementation of the Summer Games in the Gaza Strip over the last 3 years, Sharek will once again collaborate with UNWRA to implement the project. The most important consideration of the games will be to raise the morale of the participating children making them happier and raising their spirits.

Fact Box

- 38 different locations on Gaza beaches
- 60,000 children expected to participate
- 2,000 Sharek volunteers to implement the project

Project: Youth Summer Camp 2010
Timeframe: Summer 2010

Location: Gaza Strip

Donor: GTZ

This project is in the preparation stages and builds on the success of last year's project. It will have many dimensions including helping to raise the optimism and confidence among youth aged 16-22, providing employment and capacity building to young people who will act as coaches and guides and contributing to the local economy through purchasing supplies and services from local suppliers.

Project Fact Box

- 2,400 youth will be targeted in the 12 camps
- 120 coaches/guides and 10 female trained photographers engaged for the project

Project: Family Center's Phase II
Timeframe: July 2010 – December 2010

Location: Gaza

Donor: Save the Children (Sweden)

Another project in the planning stages and building on the implementation of a similar project in 2009 is the Family Centers. These centers will provide learning support and remedial education to children aged 6-10 years.

Project Fact Box

- 3,840 children will benefit from the learning support sessions
- 48 activators will be trained in Teaching the Palestinian National Curriculum

Project: Social Arts Centre

Timeframe: April 2010, Current

Location: Gaza Strip

Donor/s: The Danish Centre for Culture and Development and Foregnignen Roskilde Festival.

The overall aim of this project is to strengthen the capacity of youth in Gaza in Social Art forms.

The Social Arts Centre is a place for creativity, music, movement and other forms of youth self expression. The Social Arts Centre will open a documentary club where relevant documentaries will be screened and discussed. Workshops on hip hop, rap, graffiti, deebka and break dancing will take place.

Project Fact Box

- Workshops on social art forms
- Screening of documentaries

Project: Video Games

Timeframe: 2010

Location: West Bank

Donor/s: Activision and Paltel Group Foundation for Community Development Foundation.

This project provided training, assistance, tools and equipments for computer games to youth centres in the West Bank.

Project Fact Box

- 84 Xbox 360 provided to youth centres
- 346 games provided to youth centres
- Training Guide completed

Project: From Al-Wataniya Mobile we Celebrate the Eid with the Children

Timeframe: September 2010

Location: West Bank


Donor/s: Wataniya Mobile

During this event, a number of artistic, recreational and sports activities were implemented in 16 locations throughout the West Bank

Project Fact Box

- 3515 children participated in 16 locations across the West bank children
- 386 volunteers participated



A photograph of a music classroom where several young girls are playing violins. The girl in the foreground is in sharp focus, looking intently at her instrument. Behind her, another girl is also playing a violin. In the background, other students are visible, some wearing orange shirts. The room has large windows with red and white striped curtains, and the lighting is warm and natural.

Activating Youth: Sharek Core Programmes in 2008 and 2009

Activating Youth: Sharek Core Programmes in 2008 and 2009

Overview

While the past two years were busy and challenging ones for the organization, Sharek saw the growth and development of its core programmes:

Partners

With children and youth in Palestine constituting two thirds of the population Sharek Youth Forum is at the center of creating spaces and opportunities for youth to make their voices heard. The Partners programme which has been running since 2004 assists youth organizations in their growth and development and meets a critical need for the development of strong youth participation in civil society.

Step Forward

Now in its sixth year “Step Forward” is an innovative programme that helps young people in the transition from education into work or self-employment. As unemployment among 20-24 year olds is at the highest rate of any group in Palestine, “Step Forward” is meeting the challenge of youth employment.

Bridges

The rights to play and education must be strongly upheld and sustained in order to secure the development of future generations. In the face of continuing trauma, ongoing occupation and war (particularly in the Gaza Strip), Sharek endeavors to sustain these rights through the Bridges programme. Bridges focuses on creating fun and safe environments, providing enrichment, supporting education and providing psychosocial support.

Advocacy and Human Rights

Consolidating the work of the campaigns and awareness-raising unit, Sharek is capitalizing on the capacity of young people to engage with new media as a means of creating opportunities for youth to make their voices heard. Sharek is developing its emphasis on advocacy, debate and dialogue.

Sharek's core programmes are combined with one-off initiatives that respond to arising needs. Together Sharek's work represents a holistic, responsive, and creative set of opportunities for youth to lead on the issues that affect them.

Partners Programme

Brief Overview

In 2008 the Partners programme entered its third year and continued to focus on empowering youth organizations and supporting youth initiatives to fulfill their ideas. The Partners programme is a central component of Sharek's work. In addition to ongoing projects, the last two years have seen the design and implementation of several new projects and initiatives: of significance during 2008 – 2009 was the establishment of The Mahmoud Darwish Fund.

Partners at a glance

General aims

- Empowering youth organizations
- Supporting youth initiatives to fulfill their ideas

General Activities

- Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations
- Be the Change
- Capacity building
- International Youth Day
- Conferences

Specific Projects in 2008-2009

- Mahmoud Darwish Fund
- "Identity of the Soul" – Mobile Cinematic Show
- Improving the Economic and Social Conditions of Marginalized Women
- Springs Rehabilitation Project
- Kufr Na'ime Educational Garden

In Focus

Project:	Mahmoud Darwish Fund (MDF) for the Support of Cultural Initiatives & Participations
Timeframe:	November 2008 – December 2009
Location:	West Bank and Gaza Strip
Donor/s:	SDC, Welfare Society, Sharek self funded

In recognition of the outstanding status of the deceased, Mahmoud Darwish, his prominent role in the human and cultural life, his patriotic contribution and his cultural heritage to mankind, it was decided to establish the Mahmoud Darwish Fund for Cultural Initiatives in Palestine.

The Mahmoud Darwish Fund was established as an initiative of Sharek Youth Forum through the support of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation and funded by the Welfare Association. The Fund was supervised by a Higher Committee of activists in the Palestinian civil and cultural society that outlined the criteria and policies. Sharek Youth Forum fully manages the fund and provides it with the necessary technical and financial support. The Fund was promoted in various locations in Palestine, with a focus on marginalized communities. It provided support to creative and educated youth including thinkers and editors, to encourage their contributions in writing, storytelling, poetry, novels and music, which all have a manifest role in enriching social, cultural, and literary life.

Twenty initiatives were selected to receive support from the fund, including activities in art, poetry, photography, theatrical productions, storytelling, radio programmes, documentaries, a cultural website, a calendar, an art exhibition and cultural contests to develop literary talents among school students.

Project Facts Box

- 8 Workshops held in 5 locations briefing young people on the fund.
- The fund received 200 submissions
- 20 winning initiatives selected (5 from the West Bank, 7 from Gaza Strip, 8 from Jerusalem)

Mahmoud Darwish Fund Initiative profiles

Initiative Name: Ola Anwar Al-Helw Type of activity: Stories from the brutal Israeli aggression in Gaza Location: Gaza	Initiative: Calendar Type of activity: Cultural Initiatives Location: Ramallah
Description of the work: The initiative aimed to develop the creative writing skills of 20 youth by documenting the events of the war on Gaza. Activities of the initiatives included <i>preparation</i> : announcing the project and conducting workshops with creative youth. It also included <i>training</i> for the participants on the skills of creative writing, linguistic diction and the resources of creative writing. The result was the <i>publication</i> of a book by Sharek that contained the participants' stories.	Description of the work: Waleed Ayoub worked on creating a calendar that spoke about twelve notable Palestinians in the fields of arts, literature and poetry. The initiative aimed to introduce Palestinian society in general and Palestinian youth in particular to Palestinian figures who had an impact on the culture of the Palestinian society. The twelve Palestinian figures were embodied through a paragraph talking about their achievements and lives along with drawings and illustrations by Waleed.

Other Projects

Project:	"Identity of the Soul" – Mobile Cinematic Show
Timeframe:	August 2008-October 2008
Location:	Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, Abu Dis, Qalqilya, Jericho, Halhul, Bethlehem
Partners:	A.M Qattan Foundation and Arts Alliance Productions
Donors:	Patel Group and Padeco Company

Identity of the Soul was a cultural cinematic project, implemented by Sharek Youth Forum in cooperation with partners. The project was based on a live show focusing on the human being and the conflict between revenge and forgiveness.

The show was produced with the assistance of the late Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, who was involved since the beginning of the production, and recites in his voice the two poems: "TerjeVigin" by Henrick Ibsen and Darwish's own 'A Soldier Dreams of White Lilies'. This was accompanied by a spectacular show visualizing the content with an astonishing musical background.

Project Fact Box

- 21,900 people in 8 governorates in the West Bank attended screenings of the show
 - 816 volunteers participated in the implementation of the screening
 - 22 Partner organizations contributed in the implementation of the show
-

Project: **Improving the Economic and Social Conditions of Marginalized Women**

Timeframe: March 2009- December 2009

Location: Hebron

Donor/s: Italian Cooperation (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The project focused on empowering women through job creation, training and capacity building in collaboration with Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud (CISS). Sharek participated in this project through the provision of a Gender Expert Team which added value to the project through the exchange of expertise and information.

Project Facts Box

- Capacity building for 14 women's NGOs
 - 74 women participated in training courses
-



Project: Springs Rehabilitation Project
Timeframe: March 2008-October 2009
Location: Ramallah
Donor/s: Ath Municipality / Belgium

In keeping with developing young people's capacities to respond to identified needs within their communities and to develop an awareness of environmental issues, Sharek undertook to rehabilitate springs in three Ramallah villages. Sharek met with the village councils and a youth group who were involved in coordinating and planning the rehabilitation to be undertaken.

Project Facts Box

- Created more jobs in rural areas.
 - Built the capacity of young people from the target communities.
 - Raised awareness about the use of water resources and environmental issues in Palestine.
-

Project: Kufr Na'ime Educational Garden
Timeframe: October 2009 – December 2010
Location: Ramallah
Donor/s: GEF/UNDP

With biodiversity undermined on a large scale, this project aims to build an educational garden in Kufr Na'ime as an initiative to increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation of biodiversity. It provided resources for environmental groups to experiment, improve and document their knowledge about the Palestinian environment. The Educational Garden focused on the concept of environmental sustainability. It filled an educational need, and benefited the community by creating a tourist attraction, increasing employment and contributing to the local economy.

Project Facts Box

- Created jobs in rural areas
 - Generated awareness about environmental issues
-

Step Forward

Brief Overview of Step Forward Programme

2008-2009 have been busy years for Sharek’s Step Forward Programme with several projects running at the same time including: academic and career counseling, vocational education, capacity building and youth enterprise support. Of particular importance over the last two years is the establishment of the Centers for Youth Business and Employment Services.

In addition to specific projects taking place through the Step Forward programme there are weekly activities that continue on an ongoing basis and special one-off events that take place throughout the year. These include: the introduction of careers centers aimed at bridging the gap between the Palestinian labor market and the local academic and vocational training institutions. These centers work in coordination with Palestinian universities and help students locate employment in governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations. The career centers offer services including career guidance, career days and specialized training. Partnerships with the private sector support the sustainability of the centers.

Step Forward at a glance	
General aims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and Job creation • Careers Centers 	General Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and training days • Business guidance and training • Business networking • Business start up • Finance provision • Employer partnerships • Career days • Workshops • Career and academic counseling
Specific Projects in 2008-2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Business Support Units • Academic Counseling for Rural Women • Local Economic Development through Appropriate Technology (LEDAT) • English Course for Researchers in Social Science • Steppingstone (Pilot Project) • Supporting TVET in East Jerusalem • Women’s Computer Center • IT Training 	

In Focus

Project: Youth Business Support Units
Timeframe: January 2008 – January 2010
Locations: Ramallah, Jerusalem, Tubas, Jericho, Jenin, Qalqilya, Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus, Gaza City and Rafah
Donor/s: UNDP-PAPP, Islamic Development Bank Al-Aqsa Fund

Youth Business Support Units provided all the necessary services and resources for a start-up business to succeed. All units were equipped with computer labs, working spaces, training halls, and most importantly a competent team that provided guidance and support to young entrepreneurs.

The Youth Business Support Units project aimed to:

- Provide self-employment opportunities for young people and their families with a view to reducing household poverty
- Establish youth focused mixed-use business incubation units

The target group was youth aged 18-30 with a business idea who were also facing household poverty. Youth were selected, then given training and direct support establishing their business, including a grant. They were given extensive support in starting the business followed by ongoing support from local youth business counselors.

Particular lessons learned

The project highlighted a number of external factors that challenge young entrepreneurs in Palestine, in particular: occupation, economic performance, lack of skills and training, culture and attitudes and competition. Youth require extensive support in developing good ideas and in adapting their attitudes to be able to succeed in starting a sustainable business.

Project Fact Box

- Expert training provided to 413 individuals
- 182 households received business start up grants
- 87 households experienced increases in monthly income
- 161 businesses sustained over the lifetime of the project
- 2 business incubation units established and operating



Shadi Saed al-Batar takes a step forward

Having previously worked in Hebron's shoe industry, Shadi Saed al-Batar dreamed of starting up his own shoe factory. Coming from a very poor family, Shadi believed that by opening his own enterprise, he would be able to generate sufficient income to meet the needs of his family. The grant that he received from Sharek Youth Forum provided him with the means to establish a shoe factory with his brother Jawwad, both of whom benefited immediately with full-time employment. Since then, the factory has been very successful and has expanded to employ eight other individuals, who, without their jobs, would most likely be unemployed.

Shadi and Jawwad continuously work on improving the business by increasing the number of machines and hiring new workers as demand for their products increases. As a direct result of opening the business, both Shadi and his brother have experienced significantly higher incomes, which have directly contributed to improved economic stability for their entire family.

Other Projects

Project: Academic Counseling for Rural Women
Timeframe: November 2007 – November 2008
Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip
Donor/s: UNIFEM

Academic Counseling assists young people in being prepared and informed about opportunities for them to become active participants within the labor force and develop a sense of orientation for their future. The project created a Guidance Manual for Career and Academic Counseling for this purpose.

The central aims of the project were to: raise awareness about the importance of education and encourage the participation of youth in the community at large. Specifically, the project aspired to reduce the number of young early school-leavers and encourage them to return to education and increase the number of youth high school graduates continuing to further education.

Project Fact Box

- Academic counseling provided in 24 centers across the West Bank and Gaza
 - Academic counseling sessions provided to groups of 5-7 participants
 - 241 female participants visited universities to build knowledge
 - 441 women informed of opportunities provided by academic counseling centers through the project's "Home to Home" campaign
-

Project: Local Economic Development Appropriate Technology (LEDAT)
Timeframe: 2009 — 2010
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: International Labor Organization (ILO)

LEDAT is a means of enhancing knowledge, information gathering and sharing for youth between national and international stakeholders in the field of youth economic empowerment. The project created knowledge-platforms and innovation hubs to assist young people in the development of new and innovative ideas. The target group is young people with innovative and creative ideas.

Project: Palestinian Youth Employment Action Plan
Timeframe: August – September 2009
Location: West Bank, Gaza Strip
Donor/s: Sharek self-funded

The white paper put in place a comprehensive and concise analysis of the employment challenge and associated recommendations. The recommendations focused on local and international actors, youth organizations and importantly, the Palestinian Authority. A workshop engaging the targets of the recommendations was held and the white paper is continually used as a basis for Sharek's advocacy in this field.

Project: English Course for Researchers in Social Science
Timeframe: December 2008 – June 2009
Location: West Bank
Donor/s: PWRDC, UNESCO

Specialized language courses built to cater to the needs of youth integration in the public and private sectors constitutes a key element in the career guidance programme in Sharek. The English Course for Researchers in Social Science aimed to enhance the capacities of researchers and employees, in particular women, working in various private and public Palestinian organizations.

Project Fact Box

- 17 students successfully obtained a certificate for the English Course
 - Student's class average increased from 68.6% to 80.2% in the final exam
 - 144 hours of intense English sessions delivered
-

Project: **Steppingstone Pilot Project**
Timeframe: Oct 2009 – Feb 2010
Location: West Bank, Gaza Strip
Donor/s: DVV International

The Steppingstone Pilot Project was an initiative focusing on Vocational Educational Training (VET) with the specific purpose of increasing awareness and improving the perception of VET among students. The success of this pilot means that the project will be implemented in full by Sharek during 2010-2012.

Project Fact Box

- 150 students received career counseling
 - 105 participants attended the debate on the reality of Vocational Education and Training in Palestine
 - Guide on Vocational Education Training in the West Bank and Gaza published
 - 12 short videos produced on VET professions
-

Project: **Supporting TVET in East Jerusalem**
Location: Jerusalem
Timeframe: August 2009 to February 2010
Donor: COOPI

Sharek implemented a component of COOPI's project funded by the European Commission to support training and vocational education in East Jerusalem through a 2-year intervention. Sharek's component developed a comprehensive report on the perceptions of students as well as a locally designed interactive computer game to inform children about the opportunities in the vocational sector and to improve their perceptions of vocational professions.

Project Fact Box

- Research and report on the perceptions of young Jerusalemites towards VET produced
 - A unique interactive computer game and learning aid for VET produced containing rich information on 11 professions from nursing to carpentry
-

Project: Women's Computer Center
Timeframe: 2008-2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: UNRWA

The Women's Computer Center project undertook to provide access to computers and training for marginalized and vulnerable Palestinian women in Gaza. The project aimed to develop the capacity and skills of women and girls and improve women's computer literacy.

Project Fact Box

- 140 training courses implemented
 - 35 computers provided to participating organizations
 - 1000 women benefited from training in 5 centers
 - 2933 women and girls benefited from using the centers in leisure time
-

Project: IT Training
Location: West Bank & Gaza Strip
Timeframe: Ongoing
Donor: Sharek (self-funded), SDC

The IT centers are a resource that Sharek has developed for the communities around its centers by providing IT courses for students and recent graduates around the West Bank and Gaza. Students are often left unequipped for a real working environment by their university courses and this service has provided hundreds of students with an opportunity to fill that gap.

Project Fact Box

- IT centers have provided courses in diverse topics from basic ICDL (International Computer Driving License) to 3D MAX (complex 3D graphic design software)
 - The most popular course is Bisan which is provided for accounting students by trained Bisan trainers, allowing them to operate the Bisan accounting software
-



Bridges

Brief Overview of Bridges Programme

The problem of unoccupied youth, adolescents and children in the oPt due to poor or damaged recreational and educational infrastructure, especially for young people with disabilities, has severe effects on community development. Instead of supervised activities, children spend their spare time watching television and older youth gather in the street, which can lead to various social problems such as drug abuse, delinquency or violent behavior.

Children, adolescents and youth must have the ability and right to play, the right to innovate, and the right to education in order to ensure the healthy development of future generations. In recognition of this, Sharek's Bridges Programme aims at building bridges with an emphasis on establishing fun and safe environments, providing enrichment, supporting education and providing first-level psychosocial support.

In addition to special projects under Bridges, there are weekly activities delivered by volunteers based on four components: joy and fun activities, enrichment activities, education and twinning activities. Sharek's Youth Enrichment Incubators are spaces where priority is given to children with disabilities, special learning needs or who are from poorer backgrounds. Homework centers continue to provide children with the necessary improvements in the academic and educational field. According to its approach, Sharek transfers the knowledge and experience of running Homework Centers to partner organizations.

Bridges at a glance

General aims

- Creating fun and safe environments
- Providing enrichment, psychosocial and educational support

General Activities

- Fun days
- Homework and enrichment centers
- Playgrounds for children
- Workshops and conferences

Specific Projects in 2008-2009

- Summer Games
- Summer of Youth
- Family Centers
- Educational Support Programme
- Palestinian Youth Sport League
- Blue Balloon
- Catch Up Training for Tawjihi

In Focus

Project: Summer Games
Timeframe: June 2008-August 2008, June 2009-August 2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: UNRWA

The Summer Games provide a safe and fun environment for children. They are a direct response to addressing the psychosocial needs of children in Gaza by providing children with the opportunity to move out of their daily routine and engage in fun, entertaining and educational activities. Sharek has been supporting the delivery of summer games in cooperation with UNRWA and other community based organizations since 2006. Building on the success of these camps in 2008-2009 Sharek will be a key contributor to the 2010 Summer Games.

Summer Games were delivered in 25 locations in 5 governorates providing activities such as visual arts, aerobics, water games and swimming. The human resource demands were high, requiring 68 staff and 1,000 volunteers to implement the project. In order to deliver the camps, training was provided to volunteers in active learning, education, philosophy, safety, supervision and management skills.

Project Fact Box

- Provided throughout 5 governorates in 25 locations
- 31,315 (2008) and 36,892 (2009) children benefited
- Camps provided with the commitment of over 1,000 volunteers
- 450 hours of training provided to volunteers

Happiness for children: rewards for volunteer's

13 year old Amjad Abu Hmaida took part in the summer games in 2009. He is from Yebna and is so clever and full of determination to try new things. Amjad needed special support to help him engage in the games because he cannot hear or speak. A volunteer who knew sign language assisted Amjad and supported him to take part in all the activities and games. Volunteers were touched with his satisfaction and happiness for participating in the project.

Other Projects

Project: Summer of Youth
Timeframe: August 2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (GTZ)

The Summer of Youth Camp targeted youth aged 16-22 providing them with an opportunity to socialize, relax, and explore in a fun environment. The activities included media and journalism, community activities and life skills. The project aimed to contribute to the recovery and relief from the impact of Operation Cast Lead.

Project Fact Box

- 2,636 young people participated in camps across the 5 governorates

Project: Family Centers
Timeframe: November 2009 – April 2010
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: Save the Children (Sweden)

Family centers are designed to provide a holistic response to the needs of children in twenty communities. Family centers will address four fundamental needs: education, health, child protection and psychosocial support.

Project Fact Box

- 40 youth volunteers targeted for training and capacity building in education support and teaching methods
-

Project: Educational Support Program
Timeframe: May- December 2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: War Child (Holland)

The Educational Support Programme supported the educational development of children with learning difficulties. This was achieved by developing the capacity of mentors to provide educational support to children. As part of this project Sharek participated in 3 emergency clusters related to childhood including psychosocial support, education and child protection.

Project Fact Box

- Capacity building for 50 mentors
 - 370 children with learning difficulties supported
 - 5 supportive education centers set up to implement supportive education sessions
 - Quality teaching manuals and materials developed
-



Project: Palestinian Youth Sports League (PYSL)
Timeframe: 2009 – ongoing
Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip
Donor/s: UNDP/PAPP, IBSA

The PYSL is a National Youth Sports League newly formed in 2009 to provide youth with a competitive amateur sports league. The league aims to engage young Palestinians in sports and team building exercises, promote positive role models and encourage family participation. The league also promotes youth leadership skills, volunteerism and acts as a catalyst for social unity. It also seeks a sustainable future by offering private sector businesses the opportunity to be active in their corporate responsibility through sponsoring teams and equipment.

Project Fact Box

- 820 young people benefited from the league across 3 governorates
 - 8 Schools participated in league
 - 45 volunteers are active
-

Project: Blue Balloon
Timeframe: September – November 2009
Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip
Partners: UNRWA, the Hoping Foundation, European Commission

2009 marked the 60th Anniversary of the establishment of UNWRA. Sharek, in partnership with UNRWA, the Hoping Foundation, and the European Commission, implemented fun activities across the West Bank and Gaza Strip to mark this anniversary. Sharek coordinated the events, provided volunteers and managed the logistics of the project.

Project Fact Box

- 432 volunteers in 21 Refugee Camps implemented fun activities
 - 4,192 young people benefited from the activities
-

Project: Catch up Training for Tawjihi
Timeframe: April – May 2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: UNESCO

For details on this project, please see the section on Sharek Responding to Aggression in Gaza.





Advocacy and Human Rights

At Sharek Youth Forum, advocacy is seen as a deliberate process of speaking out on issues of concern to young people, in order to exert influence on public policy and resource allocation decisions that directly affect young people's lives. Sharek defines advocacy as the pursuit of influencing outcomes within political, economic, and social systems and institutions. Advocacy is not restricted to an activity, a project or an area of intervention, it is implemented throughout all of Sharek's programmes and activities.

During 2009 a significant aspect of Sharek's advocacy strategy was to develop the capacities of young journalists to become active participants in the promotion, enhancement and monitoring of Human Rights.

Advocacy and Human Rights at a glance

General aims

- Creating media and space for young peoples' voices to be heard
- Influencing policy, systems and institutions

General Activities

- Advocacy & Research
- Debates and Dialogue
- Campaigning
- Monitoring human rights

Specific Projects in 2008-2009

- Students for Dialogue
- Spread the Word – Youth Journalist for Human Rights
- Reflections on Gaza
- Students in Solidarity with Gaza
- Dynamic Human Rights Unit
- Promoting Palestinian Products (Intajuna)
- 30,000 Campaign
- Filistin Ashabab Programme
- Research and studies on the Status of Youth



In Focus

Project: **Students for Dialogue**
Timeframe: November 2009-October 2010
Location: Gaza City - Gaza Strip
Donor/s: UNDP, The Carter Center

Students for Dialogue are young people who are building their capacities in conflict resolution, transformation, tolerance and communication. The project aims to promote a culture of dialogue, reconciliation and national unity among young male and female students in the Gaza Strip and to form a student assembly to represent two of the main universities in Gaza¹.

Nominations of students representing various student groups were made on the basis of their extensive experience in volunteerism or community activism, academic achievement, good communication skills, open mindedness and respect for diversity.

As part of this pioneering initiative, Sharek Youth Center in Gaza, in cooperation with TIDA (The Center for Strategic Research), held a Question and Answer video-conference session with Professor Noam Chomsky in January 2010. The sessions focused on American foreign policy and Palestinian Statehood.

Project Fact Box

- 40 students were interviewed, 20 students selected
 - All student groups engaged in dialogue and activities
 - Debate with Noam Chomsky held in January 2010
-

Working and learning together

Khaled Sa'id Sa'id Nabhan is 21 years of age. He is a student at Al Azhar University studying science. He is the representative of the Students Union Block. Khaled said, "I was motivated to participate in the Students for Dialogue Project firstly in order to meet the representatives of the various students bodies that exist in other universities and to get to know them better and deeper in the hope one day to be friends far away from partisanship. The second reason is to benefit from the project's activities such as the training courses and discussion sessions". The most interesting thing in the project according to Khaled is, "the good relations between the participants and their respect for each other". Khaled also said, "when we cleaned the wall of Al Azhar university it proved that all the student bodies could work together as one".

¹ Al Azhar University Student Council represents Fatah party (Fatah Youth Organization); Al Islamic University Student Council represents Hamas party (Islamic Block).



In Focus

Project:	“Spread the Word” Youth Journalists for Human Rights
Timeframe:	November 2008 - June 2010
Location:	West Bank, Gaza Strip
Donor/s:	European Commission

Youth Journalist for Human Rights aimed to enhance human rights awareness in the oPt. It developed out of the Dynamic Human Rights Unit which identified a severe gap in the ability of young people to advocate effectively for their own rights. The project provided young journalists with the necessary skills and capacities to allow them to effectively monitor, enhance and report on human rights issues and fundamental freedoms in the oPt.

Students were selected by the project staff with the assistance of the departments of journalism in participating Universities. A survey and several focus groups were conducted to understand the participants' general awareness and knowledge of human rights and journalism skills. The students were given extensive training in fields as diverse as graphic design and political participation. Training topics were accompanied by manuals and guidelines which enabled the students to continue learning. Finally, the students went about producing innovative media interventions supported in the field by young professionals. A highlight of this was the production of 12 short videos on youth rights issues which were also displayed in a Youth Film Festival hosted by Sharek.

Project Fact Box

- 267 students interviewed from 7 universities
 - 189 participants selected and participating in the project
 - Training and workshops in media (animation, graphic design, e-media, documentary film-making) and human rights: democracy and political participation, right of expression, right of association
 - Web based media forum established
 - 12 short videos Youth Human Rights Issues produced
-

Making sense

One of the participants commented: “I realized the importance of simple tools like a cell phone camera in focusing on important events ... I have learnt that the success of the journalist does not depend on the type of camera he or she uses, but rather on the way he or she can use the resources available.”

Other Projects

Project: Reflections from Gaza
Timeframe: September 2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: Austcare-ActionAid

This two-week project examined issues related to protection problems encountered by youth, children, NGO staff and community service volunteers. The result was the production of two documentaries highlighting issues such as lack of proper coordination and increasing people's dependency on food aid instead of supporting beneficiaries to find long-term solutions for their problems.

The documentaries have created a space and opportunity for children, youth and local CBO/NGO staff, volunteers and beneficiaries facing protection problems to express their understanding of these issues. For example, children, youth and NGO representatives were interviewed and shared their stories and experiences on these issues.

Project Fact Box

- 2 documentaries produced on security issues facing youth, staff and volunteers
 - 200 copies of the documentaries were produced
 - Films were shown at a number of International conferences related to youth
-

Project: Students in Solidarity with Gaza Initiative
Timeframe: May 2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: Sharek Self Funded

As a student-led initiative, a student delegation from Code Pink Women for Peace visited the Gaza Strip in cooperation with student entities in Gaza (Solidarity Bridge and Students in Solidarity with Gaza). The purpose of the programme was to increase the delegate's understanding of the impact of the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip and to increase understanding of the impact of the January 2009 Israeli offensive.

A daily programme of speeches, discussion groups and field visits on relevant themes was implemented and a home-stay system was arranged where a number of families agreed to host around five delegates each.

Project Fact Box

- 34 persons between 20-30 years came to Gaza in solidarity with the people in the Gaza Strip
 - Delegates received letters from Gazans and delivered these to the members of the international community
 - Delegates documented and recorded case histories
-

Project: **Dynamic Human Rights Unit**
Timeframe: December 2007- September 2008
Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip
Donor/s: Cooperation with the Open Society Institute (OSI) under the Middle East/North Africa Initiatives (MENA) Program

Every day, human rights violations occur in Palestine. These violations are related to the occupation, but also arise within Palestinian society. The Dynamic Human Rights Unit (DHRU) was launched to actively address this deteriorating situation. The main objective of the DHRU was to contribute to the enjoyment of human rights for youth in Palestine, and refugee youth in particular.

The first step towards this objective was to inform youth about their rights. Workshops were implemented by project volunteers after they had participated in extensive Train the Trainers trainings. The DHRU acted as a resource point for youth and youth organizations, providing them with information and training materials. Additionally the DHRU, with the input of its beneficiaries and volunteers, advocated for favorable youth policies within Palestinian legislation and public institutions. The project was followed with the Spread the Word project for Youth Journalists which developed the skills among youth to advocate for their own rights.

Project Fact Box

- 2,580 young people (1,036 male and 1,544 female benefited from the project)
 - 144 workshops (36 sequences of four workshops) were implemented by 101 volunteers in 36 locations including 22 refugee camps
-

Project: **Intajuna: Promoting Palestinian Products**
Timeframe: November 2008 – March 2009
Location: West Bank Gaza Strip
Donor/s: SDC through Solutions for Development Consulting

Intajuna was a multi-sectoral initiative supporting Palestinian small and medium enterprises in the fast moving consumer goods and fresh fruits/vegetables sectors to grow their market share within the domestic market. Sharek trained and supported young Palestinian product representatives to work in supermarkets to increase sales of Palestinian-made products.

Project Fact Box

- 1,950 people benefited
 - 20 workshops took place
 - Partnerships with 10 companies established
 - 95 promotion events took place
-

Project: 30,000 Campaign
Timeframe: January 2009-March 2009
Location: West Bank, Gaza Strip
Donor/s: OCHA, Al Quds University Employees Union, Private Sector, Personal Donations

For details on this project, please see the section on Sharek Responding to Aggression in Gaza.

Project: Filistin Ashabab Programme
Timeframe: 2009 - 2010
Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip
Donor/s: Al-Wataniya Mobile
Partner: Filistin Ashabab Magazine and Jeel for Publication

“Filistin Ashabab” is a weekly radio dialogue program addressing vital issues related to Palestinian youth affairs. The first part of the programme (Palestinian Youth Issue) is about the life of young people, their aspirations and experiences. The programme hosts young people and specialists to talk together about different topics that affect the everyday life of young Palestinians.

Due to the lack of media programmes that attach importance to the social and cultural issues of youth in Palestine this creative programme aims to present good quality interactive media material that targets the youth and is produced and presented by youth.

The programme broadcast through Radio Raya FM in Ramallah. will mobilise young people to interact, express themselves and present their issues.

Project Fact Box

- Discussion of 25 youth related issues with senior officials, decision makers and young persons
 - Hosting 44 Palestinian personalities to discuss the youth issues
-

Project/s: Research and studies on the Status of Youth
Timeframe: 2008-2009
Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip

Throughout 2008-2009 Sharek’s Advocacy and Human Rights unit conducted a number of pieces of research and studies addressing the Status of Youth. These studies represent Sharek’s commitment to fill an identified gap in research on issues pertaining to youth

Study: “Promise or Peril”: The Status of Youth in Palestine.

Timeframe: 2008-2009

Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip

Partner: Sharek self funded

“Young people are destined to guide the fortunes of mankind”. They play a fundamental role in the development of society. In situations of occupation, injustice and oppression the potential of young people take is of fundamental and critical importance. This study considered some of the barriers affecting young Palestinians’ ability to contribute to the development of their society including education, poverty/unemployment, health, justice and security.

Some Study Facts

- 10 focus groups conducted with 15-25 year olds in the West Bank and Gaza
- 4500 young people participated in focus groups and research

Study: The Reality of Education in Palestine

Timeframe: May 2009

Location: West Bank, Gaza Strip

Partner: Near East Consulting

Giving due consideration to the potential impact that the Palestinian Education system has to affect the attitudes and capacity of youth, Sharek, in partnership with Near East Consulting, undertook a survey from a representative sample of citizens in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on the status of education.

Some Study Facts

- 1,013 people took part in the survey
- 52% of respondents were male and 48% were female

Study: Mapping of Organizations Working with Youth in the oPt

Timeframe: October 2008 – November 2008

Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip

Donor/s: UNDP/PAPP

This piece of research mapped all organizations working with youth. Some organizations were involved only in youth related activities while others are involved in some projects related to youth. Sharek conducted the interviews and collected the data.

Some study facts

- 540 organizations took part (300: West Bank and 240: Gaza Strip)

Study: “Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Critical voices of young Palestinian Refugees”

Timeframe: March 2007- February 2008

Location: West Bank and Gaza Strip

Partner/s: SDC, Open Society Institute, Soros Foundation Network

Sharek’s Dynamic’s Human Rights Project conducted this piece of research which examined the socio-economic situation and awareness of Human Rights among refugee youth.

Some study facts

- 600 young people from 25 refugee camps participated in surveys and focus groups



Study: "Youth Talk": Perceptions of Palestinian Youth on their living conditions

Timeframe: May 2008

Location: West Bank, Gaza Strip

Partners: Near East Consulting

Sharek undertook this research to gain further understanding of the perceptions of youth on their living conditions, to assist with better programming and to provide a basis on which to better advocate for the rights of youth. The study examined youth identity and outlook, social values, media, employment, health, migration and politics.

Some study facts

- 25 trained interviewers conducted telephone interviews/questionnaire with 1,220 young people



Youth in Crisis, Youth in Action: Responding to Aggression in Gaza

Youth in Crisis, Youth in Action: Responding to Aggression in Gaza

The children and young people of Palestine are born in an occupied country, they do not experience freedom, peace, equality or democracy. They grow up in an environment of frequent conflicts, which destroy their fundamental human rights. Young people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are geographically separated by the Israeli siege and occupation. Despite this, their unity of spirit, courage, ideas, patience and resolve to care for each other, their communities and their country cannot be broken.

This unity was never as evident as during the war in Gaza in December 2009. The devastating military campaign killed or injured more of our brothers and sisters than in any previous Israeli offensive. Yet in the face of this onslaught, the young people of Gaza and the West Bank rose out of the physical and psychological rubble of the war to make the impossible possible.

During the war, young people were determined to continue to work and contribute to the relief operations. Sharek supported these young people to enable them to show their commitment by putting their ideas into action and making their voices heard. Within days of the outbreak of war, young people in Gaza, full of natural energy, were mobilized and taking responsibility not just for themselves but also for the children, their communities and their country. Their peers in the West Bank worked around the clock, putting aside their day-to-day work and lives, to mobilize funds and support to meet humanitarian needs from national and international donors. They also provided ongoing personal support by staying in touch 24 hours a day, reminding their brothers and sisters in Gaza that they were not alone. Despite the apparently hopeless conditions, the actions of young people across the Gaza Strip and West Bank in response to the war truly exemplifies the idea of Mahmoud Darwish that, “on this land lays something special worth living for”.

The situation remains very complicated, basic human rights continue to be violated under the atrophy of the social, economic and political situation. With the continued deterioration in living conditions and lack of security due to Israeli aggression and the siege, the internal division and the difficult working conditions, young people in the Gaza Strip are in desperate need of services and care now more than ever before.

Meeting humanitarian and educational needs

The 1.43 million people (54% are under the age of 18) who call the Gaza Strip home have been living under an Israeli blockade since June 2007. As a result, 98% of private businesses have closed, more than 100,000 jobs have been lost, leaving 79% of the population dependant on aid.

On 27 December 2008, Israel initiated “Operation Cast Lead”, a war on Gaza beginning with air strikes and progressing to ground operations on the 3rd of January. The war ended on 18 January 2009 having caused the

deaths of 1,380 Palestinians (including 431 children). 5,380 people were permanently disabled (including 1,872 children)². Tens of thousands of homes were destroyed and 140 school buildings were severely damaged. More Palestinians were killed and more properties were destroyed in the 22-day military campaign than in any previous Israeli offensive in Gaza.

Humanitarian Crisis

The Humanitarian crisis in Gaza continued to deteriorate during 2008 as a result of the Israeli blockade, a situation that was profoundly exacerbated in 2009 as a direct result of the war and remains into 2010. A UNDP survey conducted from the 25 January 2009 to 1 February 2009 revealed the following:

- 65% of Gazans live below the income poverty line and 37% live in extreme poverty.
- 66% of the unemployed are extremely poor: an increase from 56% prior to the Gaza war.
- Most households in the Gaza Strip have suffered from limited access to basics such as food, water, electricity, sanitation and money but their greatest need now is personal security.

Education system depleted

With the absence of 4,000 teachers from schools because of political conflicts, the quality of children's education was further compromised by the war. Schools were suspended and students missed critical lessons. As reported by OCHA in the aftermath of the war:

"Restrictions on the amount and type of materials being allowed into Gaza continue to hamper efforts to support education in Gaza, resulting in a continued shortage of textbooks and other materials for school children. Repairs to damaged schools are also not possible. Drinking water in schools is still lacking. Psychosocial support for children in schools and adolescents remains a priority."³

Sharek's network of committed volunteers responded immediately to address humanitarian requirements and developed creative responses to support young people with their education.

2 UNOCHA: Humanitarian Overview Gaza Strip March 2009 accessed 15 June 2010

3 UNOCHA: Field update on Gaza from the Humanitarian Coordinator 24 February 2009



Project: 30,000 Campaign
Timeframe: January 2009-March 2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: OCHA, Al Quds University, Private Sector, Personal Donations

Using the resources of Sharek's Campaigns and Awareness Raising Unit, Sharek launched the 30,000 Campaign in January 2009. With the support of its staff, personal donations, and Al Quds University employee donations, Sharek Youth Forum raised \$24,372.

The private sector contributed an estimated \$65,000 in necessary goods and items, and Sharek received commitments of approx \$100,000 from international organizations. Five operation rooms were hosted in Sharek's offices in Gaza and operated as focal points for other organizations to coordinate efforts in providing assistance. Sharek was also able to mobilize in-kind support from private-sector companies. The first batch included more than 21,000 packs of baby food provided by Jaffar Company in Bir Nabala.

Sharek provided practical assistance with the support of experts in the fields of psycho-social therapy, health and safety. Publications were also distributed on issues such as dealing with terrified children, how to act in case of an emergency and preventing damage that can be caused by phosphorous bombs.

Through the 30,000 campaign, Sharek responded by providing both practical and psychosocial support to people living in shelters in Gaza. Over 100 Sharek volunteers from Gaza and countless volunteers in the West Bank participated in this intervention.

Project Fact Box

- 5,000 recreational kits (toys, crayons, play-dough and books) were distributed
 - 3,000 milk bottles distributed
 - 500 children's pajamas distributed
 - Psychosocial activities including art, literature and drama therapy provided
-



Project: Catch up Training for Tawjihi
Timeframe: April – June 2009
Location: Gaza Strip
Donor/s: UNESCO

Tawjihi⁴ exams occur at the end of upper secondary education in Palestine and are crucial as they are a major deciding factor in the student's path to higher education. During the War, schools in Gaza closed and students fell one month behind in their course work. This meant that it was challenging for the students of the Gaza Strip to be on equal terms with students in the West Bank. The setback caused major difficulties for students in most school-subjects, most notably in mathematics, physics, chemistry and English.

To counter this gap and in order to raise the educational level of students in the Gaza Strip in preparation for the Tawjihi exams, Sharek Youth Forum and UNESCO worked together on the "Catch-up Teaching for Tawjihi Students" project.

In consultation with the Ministry of Education (MoE), 12 education centers (6 male and 6 female) were identified. 210 teachers from six governorates were recruited on the basis of specific criteria and the project was publicized on radio stations across Gaza. A total of 2,889 Tawjihi students were supported by the project and the success of the intervention with these students has ensure that the project has been continued and expanded for 2010.

Project Fact Box

- 2,889 people across 4 governorates benefited from the project
 - 458 session hours on 20 subjects delivered
 - CDs of Exam Curriculum Material distributed to all participating students
 - MoE provided with 1 million A4 sheets of paper to ensure that exams were printed properly
-

Making a difference

One student, Isra' heard about the catch up teaching sessions from her college. She said afterwards, "Really, these sessions helped me a lot and enabled me to understand 80% of the chapters that I was facing difficulties to understand. The teachers were really very qualified and they supported me very much".

Other projects that were a direct response to the war in Gaza included (they are outlined under their respective programmes):

- Summer Games 2009 (Bridges)
- Reflections on Gaza (Advocacy and Human Rights)
- Students in Solidarity with Gaza (Advocacy and Human Rights)

⁴ General secondary examination





Reaching Out: Sharek Activities and Centers in Geographical Focus

Reaching Out: Sharek Activities and Centers in Geographical Focus

Sharek maintains a strong presence across the country, with an extensive network of centers around the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These centers are a mix of field offices and centers where partnership agreements for the delivery of services exist between Sharek and CBOs or municipalities. This geographical reach makes Sharek a well placed mechanism for youth mobilization and development. Sharek has also supported the development of playgrounds across the West Bank.





Snapshots of Sharek Centers

Center: Halhul Municipality Youth Center - Sharek	Number of volunteers: 120+
District: Hebron, West Bank	Municipality: Halhul

In 2008, Sharek was the first organization to establish a community center in Halhul. The center, through active youth participation within the different projects implemented under Sharek's umbrella, is now a dynamic forum for positive change in the community.

A Typical Day at Halhul Youth Center

Halhul Youth Center is a hub of activity. The day starts at 8am when the center opens its door to volunteers and visitors. On each day there is a set programme of activities and a typical day includes a session for women in computer training which happens in the computer lab. After the women's session, the lab remains open and there is free access for volunteers and young people to use the computers to access email, do school work and work on their voluntary activities. In the afternoon the Bridges programme takes place for 2 groups of 50 children who are in 1st -3rd grades. Six volunteers come in each day to help with the homework support and encourage the kids to learn through play.

Volunteers said that one of the highlights for 2008-2009 was the cinematic show – 'Identity of the Soul', "over 4,300 people came to see the show". Another highlight was a community volunteering day when the community came together to clean and paint the town. A big challenge for the center is the large number of volunteers, "it can sometimes be difficult to find work for so many volunteers".

Volunteers in focus

Nimeer is 20 years of age. He has been volunteering at Halhul Youth Center for over one year now. Nimeer says, "I like to volunteer for Sharek because it gives me opportunities to meet other young people and exchange ideas between people my own age". He also said, "because I am not working I like to fill my free time with community volunteering and making a daily programme for myself. It gives me an opportunity to experience new activities and new challenges". Nimeer volunteers in summer camps and enjoys the training he receives from Sharek. He says, "I developed my skills in communication and I am building my capacity to work with people". According to Nimeer, "volunteering with Sharek is easy you just fill out a one page form and then you can get a daily programme".



Center: Rafah Youth Center	Number of volunteers: 85
District: Rafah, Gaza Strip	Municipality: Rafah

Since 2001 Sharek has maintained strategic relations and has worked in partnership and cooperation with Rafah Municipality, which hosts the Rafah Youth Center. This agreement facilitates the implementation of various developmental programmes and projects such as the homework center and activities in the field of technology. In addition, the Municipality hosts the Youth Action Development Unit in Rafah.

A Typical Day at Sharek Rafah Youth Center

A day full of activity begins for the Sharek Rafah Youth Center at 8am every morning when the center is opened by manager and administrative assistant. It is hard to describe a typical day in Rafah Youth Center as there is so much going on with over 85 volunteers implementing activities. On any given day you might find volunteers delivering sign language courses, youth poets meeting for cultural exchanges, children being supported with their homework, local NGOs attending training or partner organisations giving psychosocial drama training.

Conducting so many activities in such a small place and with no defined budget is a challenge for the center. Despite these challenges the center reports that the highlights of 2008-9 were, “the development and implementation of psychosocial support for children, the summer camps run in partnership with UNWRA and regular activities being done with five local organizations under the Bridges programme”.

Volunteers in focus

Neda has been volunteering with Sharek for seven years because in his opinion, “Sharek believes in the concepts of freedom and equality”. He is a mentor for youth and children and an administrative assistant/facilitator for youth and children’s camps. Neda enjoys “delivering Sharek’s message to other partners, helping young people to develop their creative souls and making connections between the generations”. He says the biggest challenges in volunteering with Sharek are “the social challenges resulting from a society that is against community based organizations”.



Center: Sharek Hamdi Manko Youth Center

Number of volunteers: 75

District: Nablus, West Bank

Municipality: Nablus

Sharek maintains a five-year partnership and collaboration agreement with Nablus Municipality to implement a number of programs and projects aimed at developing the skills of children and youth through activities conducted in the center. In addition, the Municipality hosts the Youth Work Development Unit.

The center is making great strides to achieve its objectives such as providing education for children and promoting self-realization using the principle of learning through play, providing children with opportunities in various fields including human knowledge and promoting freedom of expression. Also, the center works on spreading awareness and innovation, developing the spirit of volunteerism, promoting youth initiatives, increasing young men and women's skills and capabilities, strengthening the role of women in planning, increasing participation and integrating marginalized sectors and groups with special needs in the community.

A Typical Day in the life of the Hamdi Manko Sharek Center

The day begins early at 8am when the center is opened. On any given day you will find volunteers running clubs for children, taking part in training or using the center's business support unit. According to volunteers at the center, the key achievements in 2008-2009 included "improved relationships with partner organizations, the possibility of attending training courses, developing new skills and the centers increased capacity to manage volunteers."

Volunteers in focus

Haneen has been volunteering at the Sharek Center for one year. She is an IT teacher by profession and assists the center manager with the administration and day to day running of the center. She says she enjoys volunteering for Sharek because "every day is different and I get an opportunity to learn many new skills. I also like to be able to give a little to my community". Having volunteered at the center Haneen is now taking part in Sharek's "Be the Change", project meaning that she will now have an opportunity to gain further valuable work experience and to continue to develop the work of the center.

Center: Training and Volunteerism Centre Partnership with Al Quds University and Al Quds Open University	Number of volunteers: 15
District: Jerusalem	Municipality: Jerusalem

The Training and Volunteerism Centre Partnership with Al Quds University and Al Quds Open University is relatively new, arising from a long and successful partnership with the University. The purpose of the center is to assist students (particularly those in the 2nd- 5th year) with finding training and employment opportunities. The center works in cooperation with the university's faculties to help to bridge the gap between university and employment.

A Typical Day at Sharek Abu Dis Center

In the Center, you will find students attending for career guidance, participating in interview training and CV writing. The center runs career day lectures and seminars on time management and other relevant topics and contributes to raising awareness about the requirements of the labor market.

Volunteers in focus

Hanan is 19 and is the first volunteer in the center. She says, "I am very happy to join the center as I have enrolled in several important training programmes". Hanan plays an important role in identifying other students who can benefit from the programmes. She assists them in developing their personalities and their roles as students in the university.





A group of young people, mostly of South Asian descent, are gathered along a long, grey concrete wall. They are actively painting graffiti on the wall using spray paint. The graffiti includes various colors like green, red, black, and white, with some abstract shapes and a small black flag-like symbol. The wall appears to be a barrier or a fence, with some barbed wire visible at the top. The background shows a hazy, overcast sky and some distant structures.

Past and Present: a 1996-2010 Timeline


Past and Present: a 1996-2010 Timeline

Since Sharek was formed in 1996, the organization has grown and developed. The complex reality of Palestine under Israeli occupation creates to an unpredictable and often dangerous external environment. Despite this reality, Sharek continues to address with the young people of Palestine issues relating to their social, cultural, economic, political and educational rights. This timeline also highlights some significant internal and external events that have shaped and continue to shape the work of Sharek over the last thirteen years.

Sharek	Palestine
1996 – 1997	
<p>The concept of Sharek began to emerge through pioneering donors (UNDP/PAPP and SDC) and individuals who recognized the need for an alternative to just providing services to youth.</p> <p>The broad concept of taking a risk supporting young people to identify and address their own needs was at this time highly innovative and dynamic.</p> <p>A key factor in the process was the relationship built on trust between the donors and the forums founders.</p>	<p>(1997, Jan) Hebron Agreement signed by Israel</p>
1998 – 2000	
<p>During the period 1998 – 2000 Sharek set about developing the work. The naming of Sharek, which means “participation” in Arabic, as a Youth Forum was a very conscious one. A forum invoked principles of an environment that facilitates discussion, debate, opportunity as well as an organization that values systems and structures.</p> <p>At this time, the primary activities of Sharek included providing financial support for youth needs and youth engagement in community activities.</p>	<p>(2000) Camp David II</p> <p>(2000) Ariel Sharon visited Nobel Sanctuary accompanied by 1000 armed guards</p> <p>(2000, Sept) Second intifada begins</p>
2001 - 2002	
<p>During this time the idea of the Forum moving towards independence began to emerge. This process would take 2 years to complete. Sharek began to identify and cultivate young people who had the potential to lead the Forum. It was at this point that Sharek began to employ young people to grow and develop its work. A number of these young people remain central to Sharek's work to this day.</p>	<p>(2002) Israeli forces begin Operation Defensive Shield in the West Bank</p> <p>(2002) Israel begins building the Separation Barrier</p>

2003	
<p>In agreement with the UNDP and SDC, Sharek's programmes began to move to independence from primary donors but remained financially under the donors control.</p> <p>Programmes began to emerge under the following areas: creativity and culture, ICT, testing innovations, education, employment and sport.</p>	<p>"Road Map for Peace", a plan for a two-state solution is introduced.</p>
2004	
<p>At this point, Sharek had developed the capacity for financial independence. Sharek registered as a Not-for-Profit NGO with the Palestinian Authority – Ministry of the Interior.</p> <p>Step Forward Programme initiated</p>	<p>(Jul) Separation barrier is declared a violation of international law</p> <p>(Oct) Israel conducts 17-day offensive Operation Days of Penitence in the northern Gaza Strip</p> <p>(Nov) Yasser Arafat dies</p>
2005	
<p>The core programmes continued to be established with the Partners and Bridges Programmes. "Be the Change" introduced.</p>	<p>(Jan) Mahmoud Abbas is democratically elected President of the Palestinian Authority</p> <p>(Aug) Israel withdraws unilaterally from Gaza</p>
2006	
<p>Now well established, Sharek continued work in each of the core programmes and initiated campaigns on, participating in elections, anti smoking and the environment.</p> <p>It also took part in the Summer Games in Gaza</p>	<p>(Jan) Hamas wins election and governed the Gaza Strip</p>
2007	
<p>Building on the campaigns from 2006 Sharek established the Dynamic Human Rights Unit Project, continued the Safe Playgrounds for Children project, Sea Camps "Safety First" Project in Gaza and introduced the "Why Not" – Internet exchange project</p>	<p>(Jun) Israeli blockade of Gaza begins</p> <p>(Dec) Annapolis Talks</p>

2008	
2008 was a busy year for Sharek. The Youth Business Support Units Project was launched, the International Award for Excellence and Creativity was given to Sharek for its work and a youth delegation met former US President Jimmy Carter. The advocacy and research work continued with the publication of several reports and the initiation of a stream of reports to increase the understanding of youth issues.	<p>(Feb) Israel launches “Operation Warm Winter”</p> <p>(Dec) Israel begins War in Gaza “Operation Cast lead”</p>
2009	
2009 began with the continuation of the War in Gaza and Sharek activities focused on responding to the immediate crisis by launching the 30,000 Campaign. Providing psychosocial and educational supports to children and youth in Gaza was a strong feature of the year including participation in Annual Summer Games in Gaza. Once the situation in Gaza began to stabilize, Sharek developed its new 5-year strategy to take it into the new decade.	<p>(Jan) War in Gaza “Operation Cast lead” ends</p> <p>(Sep) Goldstone Report : United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict</p>
2010	
<p>Sharek Youth Forum started to develop and apply their lobbying and advocacy strategy.</p> <p>Forum’s premises in Gaza and Rafah broken into and materials confiscated Deterioration of status of rights, freedoms and democracy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.</p> <p>Implementation of “Life is a Right” project (first regional project run by the Forum) in addition to starting the preparations for the launch of an initiative aiming at empowering the Palestinian youth in Lebanon.</p> <p>Continuing the implementation of quality projects in the field of education, vocational training, social creativity, capacity building of graduate young persons and preparation of position papers on sensitive issues related to the youth reality in Palestine.</p>	<p>Failure of all negotiations that aimed to end the Palestinian division</p> <p>Deepening of the political, economic and social gap between the West Bank and Gaza Strip</p> <p>Postponement of the elections of the Palestinian local councils in the West Bank</p> <p>Intensification of Israeli settlements in Jerusalem Attack on the Freedom Ship in the international waters opposite to Gaza coast</p> <p>Entering in direct negotiations with the Israelis</p>



**Thanks: Donors and
Supporters who make
Participation Possible**

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Sharek would like to extend its sincere appreciation to the numerous international and local donors for their dedication, generous support and contribution to the empowerment of Palestinian youth through their support of Sharek Youth Forum and its various programmes, projects, campaigns and initiatives.

Sharek would especially like to thank the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation that has funded Sharek since its initiation. The SDC has provided continual support to Sharek through the process of becoming independent and into the implementation of its three core programmes (Bridges, Partners and Step Forward) and it has pledged its renewed support until the end of 2010. The following donors have also generously funded Sharek's projects since 2008.

Donor	Website
Al Quds University Employees Union	www.alquds.edu
Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development	www.arabfund.org
Ath Municipality / Belgium	www.ath.be
Austcare-Action Aid	www.actionaid.org.au
Canadian International Development Agency	www.acdi-cida.gc.ca
Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF)	www.chfinternational.org
Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)	www.coopi.org
Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud (CISS)	www.cissong.org/it
dvv International (International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association)	www.iiz-dvv.de
European Commission	www.delwbg.cec.eu.int
GTZ (German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development)	www.gtz.de
India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Trilateral	www.ibsa-trilateral.org
International Labor Organization (ILO)	www.ilo.org
Islamic Development Bank Al-Aqsa Fund	www.isdb.org
Italian Co-operation (Italian Ministry for foreign Affairs)	www.cooperazioneallosviluppo.esteri.it
MS Action Aid	www.ms.dk

National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	www.ned.org
Open Society Institute and Soros Foundation Network	www.soros.org
Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center's (PWRDC)	www.pwrdc.ps
Paltel Group Foundation for Community Development Foundation	www.pgfoundation.ps
Save the Children (Sweden)	www.savethechildren.se
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	www.sdc.net.ps
The Carter Center (TCC)	www.cartercenter.org
The Danish Centre for Culture and Development	www.dccd.dk/dccd/
The Global Environment Facility (GEF)	www.thegef.org
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM),	www.unifem.org
United Nations Development Program/ Program of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP)	www.undp.ps
United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	www.unesco.org
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)	www.ochaopt.org
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	www.unfpa.org
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	www.unrwa.org
UNAIS (International Service)	www.internationalservice.org.uk
War Child Holland	www.warchildholland.org
Wataniya Mobile	www.wataniya-palestine.com
Welfare Society	www.welfare-association.org
World Vision	www.worldvision.org

