

DU HAR IKKE ET LIV UTEN FRIHET TIL Å LEVE



Operasjon Dagsverk ANNUAL REPORT 2021

KFUK-KFUM Global (YGlobal)

Together with
YWCA of Palestine
East Jerusalem YMCA
YMCA Gaza

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Summary in Norwegian

Det tredje og nest siste året av OD-prosjektet ble heldigvis et år nærmere normalen enn 2020. Koronapandemien og restriksjoner har ikke bydd på nevneverdige utfordringer for gjennomføring av prosjektene, med noen mindre unntak. En ekstraordinær hendelse vi likevel vil trekke frem er eskaleringen i voldshendelser som skjedde i løpet av året som følge av den pressede politiske situasjonen i Palestina og Israel. Denne typen hendelser oppleves dessverre som en del av normalen i det okkuperte Palestina. Voldelige sammenstøt skjedde i Jerusalem i mai, med en påfølgende bombing av Gazastripen. Dette satte et tydelig preg på konteksten våre partnere jobber innenfor, særlig på Gaza, men også i Øst-Jerusalem og på Vestbredden. Kontorene til YMCA Gaza ble delvis ødelagt under bombingene, hovedkontoret til YWCA Palestina ligger i et område som er sterkt truet av bosettingsutvidelser, og EJYMCA har behandlet betydelig flere traumatiserte ungdommer som følge av den intense situasjonen. 2021 var det dødeligste året for palestinske barn og unge siden 2014.

På tross av vanskelighetene er arbeidet og måloppnåelsen til alle partnere gode, også i 2021.

YWCA Palestina

YWCA Palestina fikk i 2021 etablert og arbeidet tett sammen med et nasjonalt studentparlament bestående av 45 medlemmer (27 jenter, 18 gutter) fra 19 ulike lokalsamfunn – et studentparlament som med dette dekker store deler av Vestbredden. Parlamentsmedlemmene har mottatt omfattende opplæring i planlegging, påvirkningsarbeid og demokratiske prosesser, med mål om å gjennomføre en nasjonal kampanje om en tematikk stemt frem av studentparlamentet. Kampanjen ble implementert av alle de lokale partnerne, og ca. 500 ungdommer var del av planleggingen og implementeringen av kampanjen. YWCA Palestina arbeider fortsatt i partnerskap med lokale aktører, og etter en rekke skoleringer av omkring 500 ungdommer gjennomførte ungdommene selv 46 skoleringer med andre ungdommer i ulike lokalsamfunn. Etter suksessen fra 2020, gjennomførte YWCA Palestina også i 2021 en utstilling med fokus på menneskerettigheter. Utstillingen mottok 360 bidrag fra unge palestinere, hvorav 60 ble valgt ut til selve utstillingen som ble holdt fysisk i Ramallah.

East Jerusalem YMCA (EJYMCA)

Som tidligere har EJYMCA i 2021 fortsatt sitt viktige arbeid med traumebehandling og psykososial oppfølging av ungdommer som har sittet israelske militærfengsel eller hatt andre traumatiske opplevelser. I løpet av 2021 ble 75 gruppetimer og 1278 individuelle timer gitt totalt 201 ungdommer som på ulike måter har hatt traumatiserende erfaringer med den israelske okkupasjonen. I tillegg har familier og andre i lokalsamfunnet også fått oppfølging, og ungdommene som har deltatt i rehabiliteringen har fått støtte til å komme tilbake på skolen eller ut i jobb. I tillegg ble det etablert syv Peacemaker-grupper i syv ulike lokalsamfunn, og alle har gjennomført ulike ungdomsstyrte aktiviteter. Det er særlig bemerkelsesverdig å se hvordan traumatiserte ungdommer som har gått gjennom omfattende rehabilitering tar styringen, peker ut relevante samfunnsutfordringer og utvikler initiativer som bidrar til å rette søkelyset mot, og løse, disse utfordringene.

YMCA Gaza

I løpet av 2021 har Gaza KFUM skolert over 500 ungdommer fra ulike organisasjoner over hele Gazastripen i menneskerettigheter, likestilling og andre temaer som er viktige for å skape en mer rettferdig verden. Gjennom samarbeid med åtte ulike ungdomsorganisasjoner når KFUM betydelig bredere enn sin egen medlemsmasse, og fungerer på denne måten som et senter for ledertrening med fokus på unge ledere i Gaza. 23 ledere fra de åtte nevnte organisasjonene har gjennomgått et 240 timers skoleringsopplegg med fokus på blant annet kvinners rettigheter, demokratiske rettigheter og lederskap, som de så bringer tilbake til sine respektive organisasjoner. Etter bombingene av Gazastripen ble det også iverksatt en rekke psykososiale utadrettede tiltak for å skape trygge rom for Gazas unge befolkning.

Part 1: General program Information

Basic information	
Name and year of ODW Campaign	<i>Du har ikke et liv uten frihet til å leve, 2018</i>
Planned duration of cooperation	4 years (2019-2022)
Name of the program	<i>Together building Just Peace in Israel and Palestine</i>
Local partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YWCA of Palestine (YWCA) - East Jerusalem YMCA (EJYMCA) - YMCA Gaza
Geographical location the project takes place	<p>Palestine YWCA: (19 communities in 7 different governates in the West Bank) Tulkarem Governate; Jenin Governate; Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governate; Tubas Governate; Jericho Governate; Bethlehem Governate; Hebron Governate</p> <p>EJYMCA (West Bank) Hebron, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Nablus/Salfit, Jenin/Tubas, Tulkarem Qalqilia and Bethlehem Governorates</p> <p>YMCA Gaza Rafah Governate, Jabalia Governate, Beit Hanon (Bedouin village) and Gaza Governate</p>

Introduction

We were happy to see that 2021 turned out to be a year closer to normal than 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic still affected the projects to some degree, but this year not as a surprise, rather as a challenge that it was possible to adjust to and plan for. Unfortunately, “normal” in the case of Palestine is, as we know, a constant state of uncertainty and consists of a variety of both internal and external challenges. Most notably, 2021 turned out to be the deadliest year for Palestinian children and youth since 2014 with the assault on Gaza in May as a low point. This has also affected the context in which the Palestinian partners operate, and illustrates the importance of youth-led and youth-focused initiatives aiming at creating safe spaces, new opportunities and long-lasting change in Palestine.

YGlobal continues to be impressed by the work laid down by our three Palestinian partners. As we conclude the third year of the ODW project, we are also very happy to see that the partnership with ODW has contributed to the increased awareness and focus on meaningful youth participation at all levels of the programs. Youth participation was always an important focus for YGlobal and our partners, but because of the partnership with ODW we experience an overall increased focus on these topics – a focus that has a positive spill over to other projects and partners.

Achievements, objectives, and indicators

We consider the overall achievements of results in accordance with the agreed result framework to be good. Palestine YWCA reached most targets as stated in the result framework, except for the targets linked to activities relying on participation from a big number of young people. Several of the planned activities were cancelled due to Covid restrictions resulting in the underachievement visible under indicator 1.1.2 and 2.1.1. The youth participating in the project were unable to carry out these activities during the first half of the year, resulting in an achievement of approximately 50% on these indicators. Other targets that to a lesser extent relied on participation in bigger numbers were reached fully.

Except for minor deviations, EJYMCA reached all targets agreed upon in the result framework. The biggest deviations are in terms of overachievements on some of the indicators, namely indicator 4.1.3, 4.1-4.4 and 3.3.1. Indicator 3.3.1 as a result of more sessions with fewer participants due to Covid-19 restrictions, 4.1-4.4 measures the effects of the counseling services and indicates that the effects of

the services are above expectation, and 4.1.3 as a result of the actual needs of young people in local communities and a strong local presence by EJMCA, as further elaborated on under 2b.

Also at Gaza YMCA, most targets were reached in accordance with the result framework. We have not seen the expected increase in new participants in Peacemaker groups, but what we have seen is that several of the previous participants stay with their groups and continue their efforts with the local previous CBO partners. These partnerships continue on an informal basis and is therefore not visible in the results framework. Please see elaborations on this under the analysis of long-term effects and under point 2c. Please also note an error that has occurred in indicator 2.3.2, where the actual target that have been communicated to Gaza YMCA was 500, not 270 as originally stated. This also explains the deviation.

Analysis of the estimated long-term effects of the program

As we have finished the third year of the program, the long-term effects appear clearer than previous years. Both because the projects now have been in action for some time, but also due to the extraordinary circumstances the partners operated in, in 2020. The program has continued to build on the three levels described in the 2019 and 2020 Annual Report, and you can find some highlighted concrete examples under each of the long-term goals listed below:

1. The program ensures sustainability through the empowerment of the *youth themselves*. All partners focus on building strong and confident Palestinian young leaders and help restore the hope for a better and more just future. Examples of this can be seen in the individual cases of young, ex-detained youth – both the ones that reenter education or are able to join income generating activities – but also the ones that join advocacy initiatives focusing on enhancing living conditions in the local communities and challenging the unjust policies of local, regional, national and occupational authorities. Another example is the extensive knowledge and leadership skills gained by young leaders in local CBOs in different locations of the Gaza strip, as further elaborated on under 2c.
2. The program ensures sustainability through the establishment of structures and spaces, where the youth can learn and evolve. In 2021 the national student parliament with 45 members from schools all over the West Bank is one of the more prominent examples of this. The partnerships established with local organizations, both by YWCA through the young citizen project and by YMCA Gaza through the bridges project, is another. Both organizations report that they are confident that these partnerships will continue after the project period. This is already becoming evident in the continuation of previous partnerships between YMCA Gaza and the local CBOs, as explained under achievements, objects and indicators.
3. The program ensures long-term sustainability through awareness raising and advocacy. This is being done through youth led initiatives, local and national campaigns, meetings with relevant stakeholders. Examples of this can be seen in the seven different advocacy initiatives initiated by ex-detained young people through EJMCA (further elaborated on under 2b), advocacy initiatives initiated by YWCA and the campaign activities initiated by youth leaders that have finalized the leadership program at YMCA Gaza.

As highlighted in last year's report, the digital literacy and strengthened ICT skills forced upon both the partners and YGlobal by the Covid-19 pandemic can also be considered an unintended long-term effect, although not as a direct result of the program, but more as a result of the circumstances the program has been operating within.

Youth participation and empowerment

All three partners are youth organizations and continue to be good at involving and engaging youth on different levels of the program. As a result of the ODW project and the increased focus on active

and real youth participation, we continue to see an improvement on this from all partners. As part of our mid-term review of the Norad funded projects, several young people highlight the fact that the programs enable them to create the space to plan, design, lead and implement interventions that are highly connected to their needs. Further, one of the participants stated that: *"(...) this is the only project we took part in that adopts an approach which allows us the space to think, decide, plan and implement initiatives which are our own instead of dealing with us as executors of pre-defined activities for us"*. The mid-term review is, as mentioned, done of the Norad program, not the ODW program, but this illustrates how youth participation is perceived by the young participants that is part of YWCA and YMCA programs. We have no reason to believe that the youth participation is weaker in the ODW funded projects than the Norad funded ones. On the contrary, our understanding is that the strong focus and conditionalities linked to youth participation in the ODW projects has had a positive spillover effect to the Norad funded projects, securing an increased focus on youth participation and decision making on all levels of YMCA and YWCA programs.

Please find more information about youth participation under each partner narrative (2a, 2b and 2c).

Finance and planning

Unlike 2020, where the partner had challenges with the unstable USD-NOK exchange, 2021 turned out to be a more predictable year. As counter measures to the experiences from 2020, the budgets were developed with a slightly higher exchange rate, and the exchange rate prior to each transfer were closely monitored. This led to a surplus for the partners and the revised budgets were submitted to ODW and approved mid-year.

All the partners have received three transfers each in 2021. The first transfer is a bridge funding (20%) and is transferred by the beginning of the year to be able to cover some running costs. The first disbursement (50%) is transferred after the budget is approved and the contract signed, which is normally by the end of February/early March. The second disbursement (30%) is transferred in September after the semi-annual reports and the half-year financial reports are submitted. All the partners have met all the deadlines this year.

YGlobal was not able to visit any of the partners in 2021 due to the travel restrictions. However, close follow up has been made on teams and zoom, where we have had regular meetings regarding the budget, planning and reporting. Recommendations from the audit report for 2020 have been looked at and a plan for implementation has been put in place. According to the new audit reports for 2021, the majority of the recommendations have been implemented.

All partners met for a one-week workshop in Amman, Jordan, in October 2021. YMCA Gaza was unfortunately denied their travel permit and had to participate online. Each partner sent the financial staff, together with the program staff and director. Several bilateral meetings were conducted throughout the week, as well as full day joint seminars with all partners. We went through all the financial routines, the budget, the reporting mechanisms and the anti-corruption policy.

Annual accounts and audit

All three partners had separate audits. Their audits showed that the funds had been spent in accordance with the plan.

The YGlobal audit report for the ODW program 2021 is attached with no remarks.

YGlobal collaboration with partners

Visits

The Covid-19 pandemic and strict travel restrictions made it impossible to conduct a visit to the partners, but during an opening in October we managed to gather the Palestinian partners in Jordan for a four-day meeting with joint discussions and bilateral meetings. All partners were invited and planned to participate, but Gaza YMCA was denied a travel permit from Israel and was therefore unfortunately not able to join physically, but participated online. The four-day meeting provided strategic opportunities to discuss collaborations between the partners, to review budgets and plans, and to point out a joint direction moving forward. Youth participation in the programs and organizations, and the continuation of the different projects and initiatives after the ODW funding ends, amongst other topics, were given priority.

Since a proper partner visit was not conducted during 2021, we increased the digital contact with the partners and are planning a partner visit in 2022 (mid-year).

Local collaboration

The internal and programmatic cooperation between the partners continue to improve, especially between the partners operating in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Strict restrictions on movement make active cooperation between Gaza YMCA and the other Palestinian partners more difficult, but a good dialogue is being kept. The Jordan meetings were important to identify potential areas of cooperation. Some of the topics that were discussed are listed below:

- YWCA youth from Student Parliament and local youth groups are invited to take part in the EJMCA Peacemaker groups' initiatives in the different locations of implementation.
- YWCA's safe spaces in the West Bank could be used to provide psychosocial counselling through collaboration with EJMCA. Either directly towards EJMCA-youth, or training of YWCA youth and volunteers.
- Photo/Art exhibition: YWCA and YMCA Gaza will invite youth from each other to take part in the exhibition. Both digitally and/or as own "corner" in the physical exhibition.

All partners are encouraged to use the opportunity of closer collaboration to draw learning from each other on M&E-tools campaign/program development.

Part 2a: YWCA Palestine

Achievements – Activities carried out

National Student Parliament

This year marked a milestone in the work to establish student parliaments in Palestine. The project succeeded in establishing a national student parliament consisting of 45 students (27 girls, 18 boys) between the age of 13 and 17 from 28 influential student groups spread among 19 local communities in the West Bank, including refugee camps. The student parliament was established late 2020, but entered into force in 2021. The parliament gathers every week, and all regular meetings are based on an agenda created by the council and relevant partners. The parliament has agreed on three core values: democracy; human rights; and quality, and have developed six overall objectives for the parliament's work:

1. Building the capacity of the members in leadership, communication, planning and managing advocacy campaigns, and implementing activities.
2. Offer opportunities for living experiences that qualify students to participate in local and international forums, through developing the personalities of student parliament members.
3. Raising awareness of student groups about students' rights.
4. Promote the national identity and the culture of voluntary work for youth.
5. Highlight societal issues and work to advocate on the public and decision-makers.
6. Build up connections and networks between the parliament members and local society.

The student parliament members received extensive training on planning, advocacy, and campaign management with the purpose of developing and launching a joint national campaign on a topic elected by the parliament. By a variety of topics ranging from bullying to alternatives to violence, to non-formal education for youth, the parliament decided to develop a campaign focusing on the Palestinian heritage and national identity among youth. This must be understood in the context of the existing huge divides between Palestinians from different geographies, social classes, citizenship status etc. resulting from the special history of occupation and displacement. The campaign was carried out by all partners in all locations involving approximately 500 youth in the planning and implementation.

Advocacy and campaign training

As a starting phase of the 3rd year of the Young Citizen project, the YWCA of Palestine organized training sessions for youth groups in all project's locations on advocacy and community change. The Joint Advocacy Initiative contributed to these sessions by providing a trainer, content about advocacy, and introducing JAI's work to the youth as well as part of raising awareness of the YWCA/YMCA role in the advocacy work on the national and international level. 216 youth participated in a total of 10 training sessions aimed to educate them on how to develop a better understanding of different advocacy elements, the identification of relevant advocacy issues and necessary steps to run meaningful and efficient advocacy initiatives.

Following the training and activities done through the young citizen project in 2021, the youth groups (around 500 youth) succeeded in leading 46 awareness sessions with the participation of 1246 youth/peers (784 Female 462 Male) covering a variety of topics such as children rights, leadership, online harassment, campaigns building and initiatives, communication skills, first aid, the role of student parliament, and more.

Exchange visits and networking between local organizations and groups

To enhance networking and to ensure the continuity of groups collaborations, the project's local partners with their youth groups conducted exchange visits between themselves in which voluntary

activities were made. The host group was responsible for introducing the visiting group to their activities, hometown and culture. This activity is encouraged to be continued during the next year where potential collaboration may rise and sustain the work of the project and the activeness of the youth groups and local partners.

Annual media contest and exhibition

Following the success from 2020, the YWCA arranged a human rights-focused media contest aimed at enabling youth to play active roles in their communities and to raise awareness about their rights and defending them. The contest had four themes: (1) National identity of Palestine, (2), Active citizenship, (3) Community change and (4) Alternative to violence/bullying. Youth were invited to participate by providing personal art, photos, videos, literature, poem, and any relevant works/products they created and related to the thematic subjects of the contest based on promoting human rights. 360 contributions were received (an impressive amount compared to the 33 contributions received in 2020) and evaluated, including videos, poetry, short stories and essays.

In 2021, the YWCA team managed to organize the exhibition physically in Ramallah after the restrictions on mobility and health issues were reduced during the covid-19 pandemic. The exhibition had more than 60 photos, paintings, videos, and artworks produced by project young participants as part of a contest the YWCA launched in cooperation with local partner organizations. It included the best and awarded contributions of the contest of 2020 as the exhibition was not possible to be organized due to the covid restrictions last year.

Contextual update, challenges and risk factors

Challenges related to Covid-19 and the restrictions posed by the government continued to be present in 2021, as in 2020. The political tension that lasted for a few months during the spring and summer of 2021 due to Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip and the clashes in Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem also complicated the context. The unstable conditions and official directives from the Ministry of Education regarding denying student participation in extracurricular activities at school made working directly with the schools, as originally planned, impossible. Consequently, the Students' Parliaments in schools were replaced by one national Students Parliament for all project's locations, as an alternative working approach to overcome the challenges and restrictions during the pandemic.

Activities were carried out both virtually and physically in a blended approach, especially for the first half of 2021. Some of the local partners faced difficulties during this time and reduced their active participation in the project. This again affected the engagement of the youth groups they support in their locations. Despite the difficulties in some locations, the team was able to adapt and find alternatives with relevant actors to overcome the challenges.

Changes in the program

Most of the planned activities were implemented, except for the community initiatives and the changes made to the student parliaments as explained above. It was not possible to follow through with the local initiatives as planned due to the rapid changes in regulations from the Palestinian Authorities relating to lockdown, restrictions on assembly and the closing of districts. This had a direct impact on indicator 1.2 and 2.1.1, as noted in the RF comments.

Relationship with national and local authorities and relevant civil society actors

The nature of the project and the fact that it is implemented in partnership with local CBOs across the West Bank has further enhanced the YWCA's partnerships with relevant local civil society actors in 2022. Bi-monthly partner meetings with relevant local stakeholders are conducted to ensure good and viable local partnerships. This space is open both to local partners and their volunteers and aim at harvesting best practices, as well as providing a space to give input and contributions to the

development of the project. As of now, this forum consists of 13 committed local partners who form a strong network of CBOs, NGOs, municipality, and informal youth groups. They are all committed to the partnership and wish to advance their work with youth groups in their local communities.

In many of the localities, the local authorities were engaged in the project in various ways and roles. Examples of the involvement of local authorities include the local authorities as part of the committee selecting or evaluation activity proposals by youth at a local level, participation in local initiatives organized by youth groups, or as stakeholders addressed by the local youth groups with the aim to improve local services and policies.

YWCA remains a well-connected organization in Palestine. This is a huge advantage as they can refer youth participants to other relevant organizations and institutions if they need special follow-up or support that the YWCA themselves cannot provide.

Youth participation

An unexpected and positive effect of the ODW program, is that YWCA Palestine reports that the ODW program contributes to an overall higher and more meaningful youth participation, both at the YWCA and at the local partners' work in the field. This is also the understanding of YGlobal. The ODW model and practice have inspired the organizations and the youth to find their suitable and adaptable approaches to encourage active citizenship and youth participation in the Palestinian society. The project has become well-known among other youth, schools, communities, and organizations who are not taking part in it. This reputation enriches the image of the project and those who supports it.

An example of this is the design of peer-to-peer based awareness sessions. The youth were guided and empowered to lead their designed activities, with the support of adults, but with allowing space for experimental learning and practicing. For instance, the awareness sessions were delivered by the youth after being discussed and revised by the volunteers and local partners in all locations. The youth were responsible to invite other peers and local communities, preparing agenda, distributing roles among facilitators, running the activities, and doing an evaluation when needed.

Another relevant example is the Students Parliament meetings, where members play a crucial role in facilitating the regular meetings, deciding on the agenda and relevant topics, creating videos and media content, etc. Moreover, the last activities in 2021 organizing training sessions on electoral and democratic processes had co-facilitation and participation by the former youth members in the Student Parliament. This was a great experience for the youth to transfer the practice of a one year, as part of the Student Parliament, to their peers using the methods and activities designed by the youth themselves.

Part 2b: East Jerusalem YMCA

Achievements – Activities carried out

The activities carried out in 2021 are the same ones as in previous years, with 2021 being closer to normal than 2020 in terms of Covid-19 restrictions. The description of activities and targets reached highlighted below shows how the East Jerusalem YMCA seeks to rehabilitate survivors of the Israeli occupation, reintegrate them into society and enable them to be active citizens that participates in positive initiatives in their local communities. In this way, young people that could have been reduced to victims of a brutal military occupation, are empowered to be positive agents of change.

Psychosocial counseling for ex-detainee youth

Still central in EJMCA's ODW-program is the psychosocial counseling of Palestinian youth that have been arrested by, or had traumatizing encounters with, the Israeli military. Encountering the traumatizing experience of detention, regardless of the duration, often leave emotional, cognitive, behavioral, psychological, academic, and social adverse impacts that the EJMCA works to urgently address to prevent a deteriorated situation. 75 group sessions and 1278 individual session each targeting 67 and 134 youth were conducted in 2021. The individual sessions mainly took place in the homes of the young people in question to ensure a safe environment. Each participant usually participated in 10 to 12 weekly sessions where the counselors equip them with techniques to release their negative emotions like stress, and encourage them to speak about their traumatic experiences. Determining the type of sessions, whether group or individual, is dependent on the assessment made by the counselors on actual needs in coordination with area supervisors. In some instances, the need for individual psychosocial counseling is detected while the beneficiary is engaged in group counseling and vice versa. As in 2020, Covid-19 as an additional stress factor has been addressed during the sessions, and 81% of the participants reported that they are better able to handle everyday stressing situation after participating in the rehabilitation program.

Psychosocial counseling for families of the beneficiaries

The incarceration of youth is not only traumatizing for the youth themselves but also for their family. Many struggle with the reintegration into the community, and both past trauma and present difficulties, combines with a lack of communication between the youth and their family can aggravate the situation. For some parents, the lack of communication can be frustrating and enraging, and others end up being overly cautious and protective of their child. In both cases lack of communication and the distance between the youth and its family can cause an even more difficult situation. To meet this need, EJMCA arranges individual and group psychosocial counseling sessions for family members to be involved in the healing journey of their children. Families are also provided with the opportunity to share experiences with other families going through similar experiences.

It is very common in such interventions that the participation of mothers far exceeds that of the fathers; fathers are usually the breadwinners who are out of the house most of the day at work, which leave mothers with the responsibility of childcare. It's also common for male adults not to show emotional reactions which explains the low participation of fathers. The EJMCA has been making remarkable efforts over years of work with ex-detainee children and their families, to get fathers engaged, and have had several successes in the past years. The EJMCA believes in the role of fathers in childcare and is therefore actively working towards increased participation of fathers in these sessions.

In 2021, EJMCA counselors conducted individual and group counseling sessions for a total of 94 parents and family members. The general feedback from the parents has been very positive, with 86 % noting that they to a much larger extent are being aware of their children's psychosocial need and possess the knowledge and ability to offer support.

Remedial education

After tackling the psychosocial impacts of detention, and towards the reintegration and full rehabilitation of children, the project provides youth with interventions facilitating their reintegration into the formal education system through the provision of remedial education classes. This helps children catch up on the classes they have missed while detained, enhance their academic attainment and mitigate the potentials of dropping out. It is worth mentioning that the formal education system does not facilitate for the detained youth to rejoin their old class after incarceration, making it even harder to reenter formal education.

EJYMCA relies on its database for the selection of tutors and/or academic training centers who have been previously contracted and had proven competency, efficiency, and credibility as well as acquaintances with children's needs and circumstances. The counselor would either refer the child with a group to attend remedial education classes in an area that is as close as possible to their residence (for safety considerations), or would arrange with a tutor to reach out to the child at their place of residence, or alternatively at the tutor's house, to avoid having children crossing checkpoints and conflict areas and get caught into un-needed clashes with soldiers or otherwise be exposed to the threat of being re-arrested.

During 2021, 10 participants received 13 remedial education services, and all of them was successfully reintegrated into the formal education system.

Vocational assessment and training

Assessment

The Vocational Rehabilitation is a component encompassing multiple sequential stages through which the beneficiary is accompanied by the counselor across those stages. Children 15+ who experience interrupted education due to detention, and whose reintegration in the formal education system is denied, are engaged in vocational rehabilitation. Before referring any child above 15 to vocational training, they must undergo a *vocational assessment* at the YMCA's Vocational Assessment Unit in Beit Sahour, or through the mobile vocational assessment unit, to be able to determine the most appropriate vocation. Participants from Nablus/Salfit, Ramallah, Hebron, Tulkarem/Qalqilia and Jenin/Tubas are usually assessed through the mobile unit due to the high risk of getting them re-arrested due to exposure to checkpoints. Determining the most fitting vocational field is concluded against a set of criteria, mainly the beneficiary's competences, skills, inclinations, physical and cognitive abilities as well as available options at the labor market.

During the 2021, EJYMCA conducted 29 vocational assessment sessions for 29 beneficiaries, which were helpful to decide their future careers and hence promote their employability options.

Vocational training

After the vocational assessment, vocational training is the next step into economic independence. The goal of vocational rehabilitation is to enable youth to set a vocational goal and become competent to join the labor force. During 2021, 8 participants received vocational training on multiple themes. They were followed-up by the counselors to ensure they get jobs, or to start their own projects after finishing the vocational training in order to ensure economic independence.

Peacemaker groups (trainings and workshops)

Focusing on the root causes of injustice is an important part of all YGlobal programs. As the Rehabilitation Program started out as a way of supporting young people that had encountered physical difficulties after resisting the Israeli occupation, it is in its DNA not only to remedy the consequences of the abnormal and stressful status quo in Palestina, but to also focus on the root

causes of the injustice and contribute to fighting it – both on a local and a national level. Trainings, workshops and mobilization of young people is an important part of this strategy. This is especially challenging when working with traumatized young people that are already on their occupier's radar, but nonetheless important because it provides concrete and viable alternatives to violent resistance.

Seven groups were formed in seven different areas of the West Bank and East-Jerusalem. The trainings conducted in 2021 included human rights, communication skills, UNSCR 2250 & 1325, leadership, conflict transformation, stress management, identity and citizenship, and non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation. The trainings were conducted for a total of 55 participants with an overall goal to enable them to make positive changes locally (ea. community initiatives), nationally (ea. the situation for young people in Palestine) and globally (ea. ending the occupation).

Peacemaker groups (initiatives)

The seven different groups all initiated different initiatives in their local communities. These varied from place to place depending on the needs in the local communities and on what the youth themselves wanted to focus on. Two examples are included below.

The group from Hebron and Tulkarem conducted an initiative they named (translated) “We are children, and we have rights!”. The target group was their fellow students and their local community, and the aim of the initiative was to educate youth about their rights, with a special focus on their legal rights in detention and interrogation. Building on their own experience, the students got to learn about their fellow students' experiences from detention, interrogation and incarceration, and the mental impacts these events can have on young people. In order to deliver the initiative, the youth coordinated with the Ministry of Education to present the aims of this initiative and to allow them to enter the schools. These sessions also included legal awareness by professionals from DCI (Defense for Children International – Palestine)¹ for the students and their rights after their release from detention, right to education and the right to health care. Finally, the youth published a poster that included all the children's rights during detention and, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, distributed it in all schools in the West Bank. Utilizing social media platforms of the Ministry of Education, they have also published a short video that tackles the theme of their initiative.

In another example, the participants from Ramallah implemented an initiative in Silwad with a dual purpose both to promote steadfastness and agricultural work. Silwad is a town located north-east of Ramallah that has been under occupation since the six-day war of 1967. The town has been subjected to numerous Israeli confiscations for the benefit of the various Israeli objectives, represented in the construction of Israeli settlements, military bases, outposts and Israeli bypass roads on the town territories. Therefore, the youth decided to conduct an initiative that tackles their own town's steadfastness and called for a big planting campaign in the town. They coordinated with the village council, Ministry of Agriculture, media and related CBOs in Ramallah Governorate. In addition, the youth published a brochure about the importance of activating the role of the youth in the agricultural field, and by doing so protecting lands from occupation. The brochure was distributed in schools, mosques, and residential communities to promote community awareness. Moreover, social media platforms were utilized to highlight the initiative in order to show the importance of the youth's role in society, and to encourage people to cultivate their lands that are threatened by confiscation. Colonization of Palestinian land is a huge issue and one of the biggest hindrances to a viable two state solution. The potency of this issue was once again actualized in the Norwegian media in May 2021², and this initiative enters straight into the core of the conflict.

¹ One of the [six Palestinian human rights organizations banned by Israel in 2021](#). The decisions have met harsh criticism from the international community, included from the Norwegian MFA

² (In Norwegian) see for example: <https://www.nrk.no/urix/derfor-er-det-brak-i-jerusalem-1.15490347>

Other topics that were raised by the groups in 2021 were the problem of child labour, bullying and stigmatization of ex-detainee children and safe spaces for young people in Palestine.

Contextual update, challenges, and risk factors

The Palestinian context in 2021 continued to encounter the same protection threats of occupation violence, compounded with COVID-19 complications. Yet 2021 witnessed a less-challenging operational environment, with fewer nation-wide restrictions imposed. Despite conforming to all safety rules, action in the field was carried out as planned.

Israeli occupation violence and the illegal expansion of settlements continued through 2021. To establish new settlements or expand the current ones Israel targets Palestinian-owned structures and lands through partial or complete demolition and confiscation. Demolitions continued in the reporting period, increasing the tension and possibility of clashes between young Palestinian citizens and the Israeli army. Child detention is one of the systematic occupation practices used against Palestinian. The traumatizing experience of detention, regardless of the duration, leaves profound emotional, cognitive, behavioral, psychological, academic, and social adverse impacts. According to the Military Court Watch, as of 31 December 2021, 145 children aged 12-17 were in Israeli military detention. The Rehabilitation Program engaged a total of 218 ex-detainee children in its rehabilitative and empowerment packages, in 2021.

Relationship with national and local authorities and relevant civil society actors

The EJYMCA, over years in operation on the implementation of its programs and projects, has coordinated its work with relevant stakeholders. Coordination has been going on with Save the Children International (SCI) oPt, Defense for Children International (DCI) Palestine section, Commission of Detainees and ex-Detainees Affairs (CoDEDA), the Prisoners' Club, the ministries of Education, Labor, and Social Development as well as a number of I/NGOs that work in the field of Child Protection. The EJ-YMCA is also active in attending Child Protection Cluster and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Working Group, as well as the Child Protection Networks meetings and liaising with other stakeholders.

During the reporting period, field teams focused on contacting multiple stakeholders related to child detention to identify beneficiaries and contact them. Very good coordination has been made with DCI - Palestine in terms of sharing lists of their beneficiary ex-detainees who needed psychosocial rehabilitation, which made it easier for EJYMCA to reach out. It is also worth noting that the EJ-YMCA has been actively participating in national efforts made by the government through relevant clusters and working groups. For instance, the EJYMCA has been delivering interventions contributing to the attainment of the Ministry of Education's emergency plan for the pandemic and post pandemic stage.

Youth participation

As discussed in the 2019 and 2020 reports – youth participation in the EJYMCA is a bit different to the one in YWCA and YMCA Gaza. A large part of the program (psychosocial counseling/sessions) is conducted by professional counselors and the interventions are quite set, as it deals with often very traumatized youth. This being said, there are still a number of ways in which the youth are engaged more as actors than in the more passive role as beneficiaries.

One example is how the youth, through the peacemaker groups and their local community initiatives, have been provided a space to plan and implement youth led local initiatives. Amplifying the voices of young, often traumatized, people, allowing them to become represented in society, engaged in social forums and act as young leaders of their community is becoming increasingly

important in the work of EJYMCA – also increasing real youth participation as an important component of the rehabilitation program.

Another example is directly linked to the opportunities to give input and feedback to the rehabilitation program as a whole. The most prominent recent example of the participatory approach that leads the Program's action, is the recent external and comprehensive evaluation of the Program, which included the engagement of all relevant stakeholders. Conclusions of the evaluation process will feed in the upcoming strategic planning assignment; this is an example of engaging beneficiaries and stakeholders at the decision-making level.

Part 2c: YMCA Gaza

The ODW-program in Gaza continued in 2021 as a joint program funded both by ODW and by Norad, with a total of 800 000 NOK (400 000 from each donor).

Achievements – Activities carried out in 2021

Selection of local partners and participants

In 2021, 13 CBOs applied to be part of the program. After conducting an assessment visit to all applying organizations, YMCA selected 8 local partners to join the one-year program. The CBOs cover large parts of the Gaza strip and were selected upon the following criteria: geography, they can relate to the values of YMCA Gaza, they have an elected board of directors, they are registered CBOs and have working bank accounts, and the fact that they do not belong to any Palestinian political group.

An introduction meeting was conducted with the new partners to orient them on project activities and enhance their knowledge on its implementation. Following this, each of the eight partners nominated and selected qualified animators (aged 18-25) from their organizations. In addition, YMCA Gaza selected three animators, making the total number of participants 23.

Training courses for the animators

In 2021, 23 local youth leaders from the YMCA and 8 different CBOs have been trained in a 10-month leadership program. The program consists of eight different in-depth training sessions on different topics ranging from human rights and advocacy to leadership skills and human relations. The program is built on a ToT (training of trainers) model, where the goal is to strengthen the participants' skills in local leadership, gender equality and different justice issues in the Palestinian society. The young leaders participating in the program are all local leaders in their respective CBOs. The YMCA then, as a trusted and experienced youth-focused actor, acts as a hub for the empowerment of young leaders across the Gaza strip.

The ToT-model helps the YMCA to reach out to marginalized youth in a variety of areas across the Gaza strip – from the far north to the border cities in the south. These areas are often targeted heavier than the central Gaza strip, including Gaza city, in Israeli airstrikes, and is therefore in big need of networks and relevant community-based initiatives. Several of the participants in the animators training program have stated that this program has provided them with their first opportunity to leave their local community and travel to a different city. The input and experience they gain from the trainings, and the network of CBOs they are included in, is then brought forward to strengthen their own CBOs in their highly important local work.

Peacemaker groups

In 2021, 20 peacemaker groups were created by the young leaders (animators) trained in the leadership program mentioned above. Through the groups, more than 500 13–19-year-old youth got the opportunity to attain new skills and knowledge in human rights, gender justice issues, democracy and other related topics. We are happy to report that several of the groups from previous years are still operating in different capacities, although not reported on in the results framework.

The local peacemaker groups are important as they contribute in changing the local organizations' focus on youth and youth work – pushing them to see youth as not only recipients of services and programs, but active participants and a resource. Furthermore, the peacemaker groups contribute in challenging the local organization gender perspective.

Campaigns

In collaboration with four of the local partners, YMCA Gaza planned and implemented five different campaigns focusing on different issues relating to the overall topic of democratic citizenship. The campaign topics were selected by the young people participation in the local CBOs, in a process facilitated by the animator trained by the YMCA. The basis for the youth's decision-making was their local communities and the needs they saw and experienced in their local context.

One of the campaigns targeted the local authorities and focused on the rights of people with disabilities (PWDs), and another was an awareness campaign focusing on the challenges of young people growing up in Gaza. In the latter one, well known Gazan influencers were contacted and challenged to participate in the campaign. Several influencers joined, contributing to an online reach way exceeding what would have been possible without these partnerships.

Photo and media exhibition

Young people from the partner CBOs, as well as members and others affiliated with YMCA Gaza, were all invited to an exhibition at the end of the program period. The exhibition was held at the YMCA compound and attended by approximately 700 people. The idea of the exhibition was to create a space where young people could gather and share films, photographs, paintings, poems, dance and other creative activities illustrating every-day life in Gaza, with a special focus on the challenges facing young people.

External psychosocial outreach

Though this activity was not a part of the original program plan, the assault on Gaza during the spring created a massive and urgent need for psychosocial activities targeting young people in Gaza. YMCA Gaza was in a good position to provide activities targeting this need and decided to do so. Through different outreach initiatives, approximately 1100 young people were provided contemporary safe spaces and psychosocial support. The outreach activities were organized by YMCA Gaza, but carried out by all partnering organizations. An outreach kit was handed out to the different CBOs (through the animators) and all animators were expected to carry out one outreach activity in their local community every month. YMCA Gaza reports that the need for psychosocial support is ever growing, and especially needed in the aftermath of terrible events, like the events experienced in Gaza in May. It is also important to note that minor similar events to the May offensive happens on a regular basis, creating a constant need for these kinds of activities.

Saving and investment groups

The saving and investments groups is a new, Norad-supported component in the YMCA Gaza program from 2020, addressing the high rate of youth unemployment in Gaza. Selected youth from eight of the peacemaker groups received entrepreneurship training and support to establish saving and investment groups. In 2021, 9 groups were established at the YMCA and at the 8 local partners.

Contextual update, challenges, and risk factors

In May 2021, Gaza was again faced with a terrible bombing of civilian infrastructure. The bombardment lasted for approximately two weeks, where all regular program activities at the YMCA had to stop. Youth leaders at YMCA Gaza described the bombing as seemingly random and the heaviest they had experienced. The combination of these two factors (the feeling of random targets in densely populated areas and unusually heavy bombing) led to insecurity and was described to have a traumatizing effect on the young Gazan population. The joint ODW/Norad-project was also suspended during the assault, but all activities were carried out as planned within the year.

The most notable effect on YMCA Gaza after the assault was that parts of the YMCA compound, where most activities are carried out, got destroyed in an indirect hit. This included the offices of YMCA staff

working to implement the ODW/Norad-program. No staff, volunteers or members got injured in the attack and the offices are now cleaned up and rebuilt. Another notable effect is that YMCA Gaza's focus and efforts on activities providing different kinds of psychosocial support has increased.

Youth participation

Active and meaningful youth participation remain a central component in the program. The training of young leaders from local CBOs contributes to the organization's conception of young leadership in an adult dominated, patriarchal society. This context makes meaningful youth participation and awareness on the topic a challenge, but a challenge that the program contributes to address.

As explained under achievements and activities, the ToT-model contributes to a two-folded gain: both in the strengthening of the skills of the animators themselves, and in the increased youth focus and participation in the local programs in the CBOs facilitated by the young animator during and after the training. As an example, when the CBOs create their local campaigns, this process is facilitated by the animator, but driven by the young(er) members of the local youth groups in the CBOs. Through the training provided by the YMCA, youth leadership is put at top of the agenda and contributes in strengthening this focus both at the YMCA and in all collaborating CBOs.

Case Story - Kareem Radwan (EJYMCA)

Kareem kommer Azzun, en liten landsby nord i Palestina. I løpet av sitt 18 år lange liv har han blitt anholdt av det israelske militæret en rekke ganger, men militæret har aldri funnet en grunn til å fengse Azzun over en lengre periode. Selv om ikke arrestasjon alltid fører til fengsling, forteller både unge mennesker som selv har opplevd å bli arrestert og fagfolk at arrestasjonen i seg selv ofte er det mest traumatiserende ved opplevelsen. Kareems historie kan vitne om nettopp det.

Etter gjentatte arrestasjoner utviklet Kareem symptomer på depresjon, og forteller om sterke følelser av ensomhet, sinne og mangel på motivasjon. Dette førte til at han trakk seg gradvis tilbake fra venner og sosiale sammenhenger. På skolen hadde han problemer med å konsentrere seg om undervisningen, og han kjente på en sterk følelse av håpløshet. Han forteller at han mistet helt troen på at han skulle klare å fullføre avgangseksamen og få vitnemål fra videregående skole.

Like før Kareem droppet ut av skolen, ble han kontaktet av en rådgiver fra rehabiliteringsprogrammet til YMCA. YMCA skulle arrangere gruppetimer for ungdom som Kareem på skolen der han gikk, og han ble invitert til å delta. Etter gruppetimene ble han mer komfortabel med å snakke om sine egne vonde erfaringer, han fikk verktøy til å håndtere utfordringene sine, og han fikk mye bedre konsentrasjon. Han fikk ny tro på at han likevel kunne fullføre videregående og kanskje få den fremtiden han håpet på.

Da eksamen kom, bestod han og fullførte videregående mot alle odds. Han engasjerte seg videre i en av ungdomsgruppene til YMCA der han, sammen med andre ungdommer med lignende erfaringer, startet en informasjonskampanje for å gi andre ungdommer kunnskap om barn og unges rettigheter i møte med okkupasjonsstyrkene. Kareem har nå fått jobb som elektrikerlærling, og har nettopp kommet inn på universitetet hvor han skal studere engelsk.



Kareem i gruppetime sammen med andre skoleelever. Foto: EJYMCA