Adolescents Engagement in Palestine
Economic and social empowerment of young people
The current situation in the State of Palestine has been shaped by decades of protracted conflict. This difficult political and economic environment, a lack of opportunities and hope, and movement restrictions continue to negatively affect young Palestinians.

Palestinian children and adolescents, accounting for almost half of the total population, have limited opportunities for participation and civic engagement in an environment marked by economic hardship, violence, conflict and a lack of career prospects.

Wide spread poverty, youth unemployment, and the constraining political environment fuel a sense of frustration and despair.

As a result, there has been a growing sense of powerlessness and hopelessness among a generation of adolescents who has only known life under the protracted conflict, has been exposed to violence and has accepted it as an approach to resolve conflicts.

Empower Young People to Become Agents of Change

One of the goals of UNICEF’s programmes in Palestine is to positively harness the energy of youth, improve their education and readiness for employment and active citizenship, and promote a culture of pro-social behaviour and non-violence. Through UNICEF’s programmes adolescents get the opportunity to acquire core life skills that facilitate their transition from childhood to adulthood, and to practice these skills by actively engaging in their communities.

“Giving young people a sense of purpose and empowering them to play meaningful roles in their communities can change their lives - especially in a society where violence has become a normalized phenomenon.”

Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa

Picture: Young men paint a wall in Gaza as part of a beautification project.

**ADOLESCENTS IN THE STATE OF PALESTINE**

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

Young people$^1$ as % of total population:

- 10 - 14 years old: 12%
- 15 - 19 years old: 11%
- 20 - 24 years old: 10%

Total: 33% or 1.5 million

**VIOLENCE**

Adolescents between 10 and 19 years that were subject to at least one form of domestic violence and/or psychological violence$^2$:

- Westbank: 46%
- Gaza: 59%

Students reporting violence at secondary school during the previous year$^3$:

- 51% were subjected to physical violence
- 69% experienced verbal violence

**YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

Only 1 out of 5 adolescents$^4$ in Palestine are engaged in volunteer activities in their communities.

4 out of 10 young people are unemployed. The figure disproportionately rises for young women and residents from Gaza (61% youth unemployment)$^5$.

$^1$PCBS, 2015. UNICEF age definitions: Adolescents – 10 to 18 years old; Youth – 15 to 24 years old; Young People – 10 to 24 years old. The three terms are used interchangeably in this document.

$^2$ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 2011

$^3$ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Annual M&E Report 2015

$^4$ PCBS, Youth Survey, age group 15-29 years, 2015


Like many young Palestinians who live in Gaza, 17-year-old Asma did not have much of a chance to engage in any social activity beyond going to school. Being a girl limits her choices even further.

During a UNICEF supported training, she acquired the skills, knowledge and confidence to educate her peers about important topics like early marriage and drug abuse.

“Raising awareness about child rights issues has become my passion, and I feel proud that I am giving something back to my community and initiating a positive change.”

Picture: Young palestinian discussing issues of their concern.

UNICEF objectives for young people
UNICEF’s key objectives are: building adolescents’ life skills to improve their work readiness and ability to positively contribute to their communities; strengthening their resilience; reinforcing social cohesion within the communities; tackling gender stereotypes; and promoting a positive perception of youth. UNICEF seeks to mobilize decision-makers and leaders to engage in discussion with adolescents and youth, and to address their needs and concerns.

The targets for 2017 support these objectives:

- **Capacity building of young people**: Provide life-skills training for 17,000 adolescents through UNICEF’s civic engagement and entrepreneurial programmes.

- **Capacity building of partners**: Institutionalize life-skills training through capacity building for national and local partners. Support will also be provided to partners in impact measurement, routine monitoring and documentation to ensure an effective system to track and improve programme quality.

- **Technical support**: Maintain innovation labs to encourage adolescents’ innovation and community participation, including exchange of information through social media platforms. Provide support to the national volunteer platform to promote adolescent civic engagement, participation and volunteering.

Over 17,756 disadvantaged adolescents reached, 57 per cent of whom girls.

Through UNICEF’s civic engagement and entrepreneurial programmes, young people developed critical life skills and are now well equipped to continue their educational path, to support their communities and enter the labour market.

542 teachers, facilitators, volunteers from community based organizations, and staff from local partners were trained to deliver sustainable quality services to adolescents. 60 per cent of whom were female.

Key elements to ensure the sustainability and quality of the service are institutionalizing the training mechanisms, strengthening monitoring and evaluation system, and supporting policy development processes.

581 volunteers and 132 organizations from the private or public sector enrolled in National Youth Volunteer Platform.

558 community and entrepreneurial initiatives were implemented by adolescents participating in UNICEF’s programmes.

6 Innovation Labs are providing adolescents with a space for creativity and innovation.

Map Sources: OCHA. The information shown on this map does not imply official recognition or endorsement of and physical, political boundaries or feature names by the United Nations or other collaborative organizations. UNICEF and affiliated organizations are not liable for damages of any kind related to the use of this data.
Most young Palestinians have high levels of education, but four out of ten remain unemployed. The unemployment rate for young females is about one third higher than that of their male counterparts, and in 2015 only every second graduate found a job. The gender gap further increases with regards to the labor force participation rate that measures who is working or actively looking for work.

**Youth unemployment**

42 per cent of youth aged 15-24 years old do not have a job and are actively looking for work. Youth unemployment is particularly worrying in Gaza where 61 per cent were unemployed in 2016.

- 66% of young females
- 36% of young males

**Youth labor force participation rate**

32 per cent of the country’s total working-age population between 15 and 24 are actively engaged in the labour market.

- 12% of young females
- 52% of young males

In order to improve youth's employability and workplace readiness, UNICEF focuses on providing youth with skills in demand in the job market. Key elements are:

**UNICEF in Action**

In order to improve youth's employability and workplace readiness, UNICEF focuses on providing youth with skills in demand in the job market. Key elements are:

**Capacity development**

UNICEF trains adolescents on core life skills, such as leadership, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving, as well as technical, project management or business development skills. Adolescents are also trained in identifying community needs and creating innovative solutions.

**Facilitate entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship projects are ideas, initiatives and opportunities developed and put into action by young people to create economic or social value for them as individuals, their peers and their communities.

UNICEF also supports job shadowing, career counselling, and is linking adolescents with entrepreneurship opportunities in the private sector.

**Partnership and networking**

UNICEF and its partners are building partnerships with the private sector in order to enable and sustain youth-led entrepreneurship initiatives and create a supportive environment for adolescents.

---

1,2 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Youth Survey 2015

©ALNAYZAK/2017

"Adolescents have a wonderful potential to become leaders and agents of positive change in their communities and society. Our programmes build on this to further strengthen and nurture their creative, innovative and social entrepreneurship skills. The results are inspiring."

June Kunugi, UNICEF State of Palestine Special Representative

Picture: Young women present their project as part of the Young Entrepreneurship program.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
As a result of the protracted conflict and humanitarian emergencies, there has been a growing sense of powerlessness and hopelessness among young people in Palestine.

Opportunities for adolescents to actively participate and take responsibility in their communities remain limited, especially for girls who have very limited access to suitable services and safe recreational spaces.

**Strengthening social cohesion**

The promotion of community dialogue and social cohesion for peaceful and supportive social interactions is an important element that reduces the fragmentation, exclusion and social disruption.

When adolescents and youth are empowered to play meaningful roles in their communities, given a sense of purpose, evidence shows that they make positive choices, increase their self-esteem, improve their relationships with others and contribute positively to their communities. In a politically unstable context, these conditions are paramount to establish a nurturing enabling environment conducive to peace and social cohesion.

**UNICEF in Action**

Through its civic engagement programmes, UNICEF Palestine targets the most vulnerable adolescents with capacity building programmes on core life-skills which they afterwards apply in youth-led initiatives, enabling them to voice issues of their concern and take an active role as agents of positive change in their communities.

1. **Outreach & Targeting**
   Adolescents and target communities are selected based on vulnerability criteria, such as poverty and prevalence of violence. Special considerations are given to encourage the participation of girls and young people with special needs. Community-based organizations (CBOs) and schools provide the entry points for UNICEF’s interventions.

2. **Capacity Building**
   In the first stage of the project, participating adolescents receive training on core life-skills which also strengthen their ability to actively contribute to civic engagement. This includes skills such as critical thinking, communication, problem solving, cooperation and respect for diversity among others.

3. **Youth-led initiatives: Planning**
   Following the life-skills training, adolescents apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills. With the guidance of professional facilitators, adolescents form groups and identify issues of their concern, and plan interventions to improve the situation.

4. **Youth-led initiatives: Implementation**
   After the planning stage, each group implements the selected project with their peers and community members. Youth-led initiatives aim to tackle the issues identified by adolescents, for example environmental problems in target communities or violence against children and women.

5. **Accountability Sessions**
   To encourage young people to be engaged in civil society and give them an opportunity to have their voices taken into consideration at policy level, accountability sessions with decision makers from municipalities and other bodies are organized. Adolescents present identified needs and suggest solutions in their communities. As such, they hold responsible bodies accountable, and discuss actions for tackling the issues.

6. **Project close-out**
   All initiatives and projects are documented and best practices and lessons learned are captured for future interventions. CBOs continue to provide support to participating adolescents after the project has ended and some of the initiatives are continued and scaled-up with the support of community members and local authorities.

"We don’t have a library in our school. This is why we wanted to create a unique and creative library. We recycled old objects, painted them ourselves and used them as furniture. I feel really proud with what we did, this made me feel that I left my fingerprint in my school."

Mayar, 16, is one of 600 students who were trained in civic engagement and leadership in 11 secondary schools, before implementing adolescent-led initiatives to help address some of the issues their communities face across the Gaza Strip.
Palestinian adolescents and youth have a crucial role in the establishment of an independent and developed state, yet this is a generation that has only known protracted conflict. Palestinian adolescents and youth are continuously exposed to psychological and physical violence.

The involvement of many young people in violence, both as victims and perpetrators is alarming:\(^1\):

- **Normalisation of violence:** Actions related to the protracted conflict, economic hardship and increased poverty, coupled with the resulting sense of hopelessness and frustration, have all contributed to increased acceptance of violence as a means to resolve disputes and problems.

- **Violence against children and violent discipline:** The use of physical, verbal and/or psychological violence against children is widely accepted, and violent discipline is a common practice used by parents and teachers.

Non-violent alternatives to conflict resolution

UNICEF-supported peacebuilding programmes seek to address and combat different forms of violence and to strengthen social cohesion within the Palestinian society. They aim at providing young people with a sense of hope and stake in the future in order to build a more cohesive society.

UNICEF encourages young people to take an active role in these programmes and engages them to constructively participate in their communities as agents of social transformation.

Furthermore, UNICEF’s interventions emphasize the importance of role models to establish a culture of non-violence and of the education system to promote peace through policies and practices as well as the role of parents, caregivers and community leaders.

These factors are addressed through UNICEF’s holistic approach to combating violence which also includes capacity development of education personnel on effective classroom management and positive discipline, the establishment of school-based mechanisms to address violence in schools and the involvement of parents and community members through awareness raising sessions.

Apart from schools, community-based organizations (CBOs) also constitute an important point of entry for UNICEF and its partners to reach disadvantaged adolescents, engage them and build their skills to become agents of positive change to break the cycle of violence.

---

Example of planned project for June 2017 until February 2018

**Promoting non-violence among adolescents focusing on violence against girls and bullying**

**Geographic focus:** East Jerusalem and Hebron governorates

**Partners:** Palestinian Vision, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Higher Council for Youth and Sports

**Reach:** 2,000 adolescents (15 to 17 years old)

To combat violence against girls and physical and psychological bullying among peers, adolescents will be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to raise awareness among their peers, parents, teachers, and community members by utilizing different forms of expression to convey their key messages, such as:

- Advocacy campaigns
- Debates
- Acting sketches

The programme uses different communication tools and approaches that empower adolescents to take action to combat violence in its various forms. It will be accompanied by advocacy messages targeted to duty bearers such as parents, teachers, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ministry of Social Affairs and the community members.

---

\(^1\) Almost every second adolescent between 10 and 19 years was subject to at least one form of domestic violence and/or psychological violence. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 2011
"After graduating from the university, I was looking everywhere to find an internship opportunity to gain some experience that will qualify me to find a job. What made it easier for me, is when a friend of mine told me about an electronic platform for volunteering.

I had the opportunity to volunteer with the government employees association. And my job was to promote this association, by distributing brochures and by visiting ministries and presenting the associations work and what kind of services it offers. And it was a great start for my journey to find an appropriate job.

This experience helped me to get to know a lot of people and gain basic labor skills and experience."

Lama Kokash, 23, young volunteer, Gaza

Volunteering provides young people with the opportunity to meaningfully engage in their community while strengthening their social and professional skills such as problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, communications, teamwork and leadership.

Moreover, the improvement in community life that may result from volunteer activities can contribute towards trust, tolerance, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens within and between communities.

In order to promote volunteerism, UNICEF supports the free volunteer match platform “Palestine Volunteers”, where non-profit organizations can post volunteer opportunities and volunteers can find an opportunity to engage and develop their skills.

In addition to matching volunteers and recruiters, the platform provides both parties with tools and resources to help enhance their community engagement programmes.

PALESTINE YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering provides young people with the opportunity to meaningfully engage in their community while strengthening their social and professional skills such as problem-solving, creativity, critical thinking, communications, teamwork and leadership.

Geographic focus: All governorates of Palestine
Partners: Higher Council for Youth and Sports
Reach: 581 registered volunteers and 132 organizations (end of 2016)
Duration: Ongoing
Link: www.palestinevolunteers.org

Moreover, the improvement in community life that may result from volunteer activities can contribute towards trust, tolerance, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens within and between communities.

In order to promote volunteerism, UNICEF supports the free volunteer match platform “Palestine Volunteers”, where non-profit organizations can post volunteer opportunities and volunteers can find an opportunity to engage and develop their skills.

In addition to matching volunteers and recruiters, the platform provides both parties with tools and resources to help enhance their community engagement programmes.

KNOWLEDGE CENTER

The platform provides guidance and examples for young people as well as organizations, including:
- Templates for young people
- Sample CV and Cover Letter
- Templates for organizations
- Recommendation letter
- Exit interview

OUTREACH

Matching
The platform acts as an online matchmaker, connecting volunteers looking for an opportunity to acquire and strengthen skills, and organizations looking for support.

Online Matching

VOLUNTEERING

Capacity building of organizations
The platform provides guidance to organizations in managing volunteers. Key areas include:
- Planning volunteer involvement and develop clear position description.
- Recruiting volunteers: advertisement, shortlisting, final selection.
- Capacity building of volunteers: How to invest in volunteers while they are dedicating their time and talent to your organization. Identifying opportunities for growth and making them available to all volunteers.

Capacity building of youth
By volunteering, adolescents and youth strengthen their professional skills. Further training is provided by the host organization and through the online resources available on the Volunteer Platform.

"On-the-job" training

TRANSITION TO WORK LIVE

Exit interviews
When a volunteer leaves the organization, an exit interview provides the organization as well as the volunteer valuable feedback and inputs.

Recommendation letters
The organization provides volunteers with a recommendation letter, clearly indicating the duration of engagement, tasks, and achievements.
Through the design and implementation of community-based initiatives and pioneer projects, the "Badir" programme works to build adolescents’ capacity in the areas of critical and creative thinking, research skills, communication, teamwork, advocacy and awareness raising.

On the basis of scientifically conducted observations and identification of problems, young people suggest specific solutions to the issues they observe in their communities. As such, Badir puts the emphasis on changing the reality and finding solutions that contribute to the development and advancement of society through scientific and technological initiatives and inventions. By equipping adolescents with critical life skills and providing them an opportunity to practice these skills, the Badir programme prepares youth for a swift transition from the educational to the professional life.

At the same time, teachers and staff members from the National Task Force receive capacity building training and are engaged in the programme as volunteers in the coaching and facilitation of the sessions, contributing to the sustainability of the projects.

Youmna Hmeid, 16, young entrepreneur from Nablous

"Badir was a unique experience! My colleagues and I decided to create support arms and legs for people with atherosclerosis, a neurodegenerative disease that leads to difficulty in movement. I enjoyed collaborating with my peers, but also with people from our community that are affected by this disease, as well as pitching our project in front of successful businessmen and -women."

Picture: A young entrepreneur shows his intervention during the "Entrepreneurship Festival".

SCIENCE-BASED SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Training of trainers
Teachers and staff from the National Task Force receive training on how to train young people in life skills, social entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and youth-led community initiatives.

Capacity building
Students receive training on entrepreneurial and community engagement skills that help them to come up with ideas for innovative entrepreneurial initiatives, to think about their future careers, at the same time as promoting volunteerism. As part of the training, young people identify a problem or a need in their community, and develop a proposal on how to address it.

Development of prototypes
Students develop prototypes for scientific projects that address different issues through innovative ideas and projects in the fields of medical equipment, electronic applications, and agricultural engineering.

Pitching and seed funding
Young people present their prototypes to a jury of experts from the private as well as the non-profit sector, investors, and government institutions for feedback and advice. The entrepreneurship festival provides a great opportunity to receive support and raise funds for their projects.

Partnerships and Scaling Up
Al Nayzak supports students to actively link with the private sector in order to create start-ups. In 2015 for example, three projects received a seed fund of 3,000 USD each by the private sector, establishing three private startup companies.

The National Task Force includes more than 10,000 adolescents who are graduates of previous Young Researcher and "Badir" programmes and have implemented volunteering activities and entrepreneurial initiatives in Palestine.
Adolescents Engagement in Palestine

www.unicef.org/oPt
www.facebook.com/unicefpalestine
www.twitter.com/unicefpalestine

Contact
UNICEF Palestine
P.O. Box 25141
Shu’fat, East Jerusalem

Ms Maysoon OBEIDI
Youth and Adolescent Specialist
Email: mobeidi@unicef.org