



Emerging Voices

Ruwwad

Palestinian Youth Empowerment Project

مشروع رواد لتعزيز قدرات الشباب الفلسطيني

December 2010 Issue

Ruwwad Expands to New Territory

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Ruwwad has launched two new subgrants, one working to increase environmental awareness and the other to develop drama programs in Palestine. In a ceremony held on December 16, Ruwwad embarked on these projects by signing agreements with the Palestine Wildlife Society (PWLS) and the Inad Center for Theater and Arts. Both subgrants will extend to many corners of the West Bank through working with the YDRCs and ACs.

Areej Rasul, Ruwwad's subgrants manager, explained: "This project will reach new areas throughout the West Bank and target marginalized communities."

The first sub-grant will focus on creative arts through drama, as Inad will launch *Strengthening the Skills and Capacities for Youth Through Drama and Theater Training Project*. Inad will hold an initial round of trainings for selected youth, offering workshops in areas such as theatrical theories, drama games, and team-

building. After the training, the participants will manage theater activities themselves for children at two Youth Development Resource Centers (YDRCs) and 20 Affiliated Clubs (ACs), providing them with a safe space to express their creativity through drama.

In the second sub-grant, the PWLS will implement the *Enhancing Environmental Awareness Among Palestinian Youth Project*. Similar to Inad, they will begin by working with trainers-to-be (18-26 year-olds). These trainings will introduce the youth to ideas of environmental awareness and protection. Following these sessions, the

youth will create environmental units at all the YDRCs and 17 ACs, offering workshops of their own about the environment. They will also work with the members of each unit to implement projects and activities in their local communities that focus on environmental protection and restoration.

Environmental issues often do not receive the attention they deserve in Palestinian society. Mohammad Saed, from the PWLS, explained that Ruwwad and the PWLS are working to build the foundation for long-lasting change in Palestine. "This is the starting point," he explained, "of increasing the environmental awareness of Palestinian youth."



The new sub-grant signing ceremony at the Ruwwad office.



Working in Underprivileged Communities

Ruwwad is bringing change to distant corners of Palestine by helping some of the most underprivileged communities in the West Bank. On December 30, the leaders of the *Health First* youth-led initiative traveled to the Bedouin village of Alimlehat, outside of Jericho. The village has no electricity, limited running water, and many of the residents live in poverty. The volunteers set up a clinic at the village's school, providing a health day to all 60 students. Shahd Shqeirat, one of the leaders of the initiative, explained: "this village is the most in need of all the places we have been."

In each of the past five weeks, the volunteers, most of whom are medical students, have set up one-day health clinics in different villages in Palestine.

At the Bedouin village, the health day consisted of checkups and activities to encourage healthy daily habits. The volunteers also offered face painting and other games, as they hoped to decrease the



Children from the Bedouin village of Alimlehat receive health checks during the *Health First* initiatives most recent health day.

children's fear of doctors and build a positive experience around health. Tayseer Deraghmeh, the principal of the school, reflected: "In this village there are no hospitals or places to go for medical needs. It is very good for our students to have these checkups and to learn about taking care of their health."

The volunteers were also grateful for the learning opportunity they had. Shahd Shqeirat said: "for all of us it is the first time we've been to a place like this. We are getting to explore our country,

practice medicine, and help people."

Dina Abdellatif, another of the initiative volunteers, explained: "I am a third year medical student and I have the chance to practice in a hands-on environment, which is very different than what happens in the classroom."

Shahd Shqeirat concluded: "What really makes us happy is the appreciation of all the people. I'm willing to go to as many places as possible. For me, it has something to do with humanity."

From Students to Teachers

Ruwwad has launched the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) training as the first part of the AMIDEAST sub-grant: *YDRC English Language Training Program*. In this project, 14 youth from

throughout the West Bank (recruited by YDRCs and ACs) are developing their English teaching skills. In the second phase, they will provide English classes to over 900 students at all three YDRCs.

During the TEFL training, fourteen enthusiastic recent college graduates took part in games, observation activities, online exercises, group discussions, and sample lessons. In one workshop

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Shahd Shqeirat

“We need people to be teachers in Palestine and these youth are the ones to do it. They want to be leaders.”- Tina Rafidi

they visited AMIDEAST to observe English classes currently in session. After returning to the training, they shared positive tips they picked up and critiqued areas where they felt improvement was necessary. Building off of experiences like this and using the theoretical methods covered in the training, they then designed sample lessons of their own to give in front of the other participants.

Rosi Afaneh, from Qalqilya, concluded after this exercise: “We learned a lot from sessions such as this one and

developed many techniques and ways for us to approach teaching.”

Yousef Jumah, from Bethlehem, explained that he was interested in this project “because of the opportunity to take part in a different teaching experience, outside of the conventional classes at schools.” The workshops surpassed Jumah’s expectations, as the trainers used a variety of interactive teaching methods, such as games and activities. This approach had a positive effect on multiple levels. Not only were the participants in a creative

learning environment, but they will also be able to take these interactive exercises and use them in their own classrooms when they begin teaching English at the YDRCs.

The workshop sessions were alive and filled with excitement, as the participants were eager to talk and share their experiences. Tina Rafidi, one of the trainers, concluded: “We need people to be teachers in Palestine and these youth are the ones to do it. They want to be leaders.”

Building a Network of Leaders Across Borders

As part of its ICT program, Ruwwad has partnered with Cisco in the *Mediterranean Youth Technology Club* (MYTecC), which works to build Palestine’s future leaders and give youth a chance to connect to their peers in other countries. MYTecC is an afterschool program that spans the length of a full year. It offers children ages 14-18 courses in IT and English, as well as trainings in social education.

A central component to MYTecC is also a virtual community, as students have access to an online database where they not only interact with other youth in Palestine, but they have the opportunity for cultural dialogue and exchanges with

peers in other countries. Hazem Biseleh, 15, has been involved with MYTecC for almost a year. He explains: “I made new friends not only in Palestine, but in Morocco too. I talked to them about Palestine and shared about my life here.”

The IT component of MYTecC is preparing youth to be technological leaders locally and globally. Ahmad Rajabi, 16, explains that what he learned in MYTecC went beyond the technology curriculum taught in schools. Now, he says, “my friends come to me when they have questions and I help other students in school.”

In December, MYTecC participants in the West Bank took a trip to Jeri-

cho, which illustrated the valuable leadership and communication skills students are learning. Rajabi explained: “I used to be afraid of talking to everyone and meeting people, but now I can talk to anyone.” For Rajabi, the trip to Jericho “was different than other trips I’ve been on because I was open to everyone. I used to be alone or just with my group of close

friends, but in this trip I interacted with students from all over Palestine.”

Rajabi is one of 83 youth currently enrolled in MYTecC. Like many of the participants, his enthusiasm is strong. He wants to continue with MYTecC for as long as possible, before “making similar trainings so I can share this information, rather than just keep it for myself.”



MYTecC students during the trip to Jericho in December.



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Ruwwad is a Palestinian Youth Empowerment project implemented by the Education Development Center, Inc (EDC) and funded by USAID. From the Arabic word for “pioneers”, Ruwwad carries the vision of providing Palestinian youth between the ages of 14 and 30, including those in marginalized areas, with opportunities to explore their potential and contribute to social and community development in the West Bank and Gaza. It is Ruwwad’s belief that Palestinian youth are already empowered, carrying within themselves creative capacities for change; therefore, the program’s role is to provide platforms for youth to incubate their ideas and dreams and launch them into reality in their communities.

No matter who you are, an interested youth, community member, government official or organization, don’t hesitate to contact us!

December 2010 Blurbs

Thirty-four youth took part in the final training as part of Al Mawrid’s Learn and Serve Palestine project, one of Ruwwad’s ongoing subgrants. The session focused on remedial education and psychosocial skills. These youth will go on to develop their own service learning projects by teaching remedial education courses in Hebron area clubs.



A youth participant receives a certificate during the Young Pillars Project graduation ceremony



Participants take part in one of Al Mawrid’s Learn and Serve Palestine project trainings

The Young Pillars Project, implemented by Ta’awon Youth Forum, had its closing ceremony at the Al Bireh YDRC. The program, which lasted one year, focused on addressing issues of youth unemployment and conflict trauma. Over the course of the sub-grant, 445 youth took part, either as trainers, trainees, or both. During the graduation event youth participants presented projects and initiatives such as media center awareness spots, sketches, and a song.