

Seminar Report

Cope with the Impacts of Israeli War in Gaza 2014:

Youth as a Supportive Team.

16 July, 2015

Executive Summary

Cope with the impacts of Israeli war on Gaza 2014. Youth as a Supportive Team seminar was held in Gaza on 16 July 2015 hosted by Abrar Charity Association and organized by a group of young people. The seminar was dedicated to one of the greatest challenges facing youth in Gaza: how to respond effectively to the effects of the 2014 war.

The seminar brought together 10 participants representing a variety of fields (civil engineering, environmental engineering, business administration, accounting and geographic information system) to find answers and to give recommendations to the most pressing questions of youth's role in coping with the war.

Seminar participants discussed the effects of 2014 Gaza war on three important sectors:

- ❖ *Environmental sector*
- ❖ *Social sector*
- ❖ *Economic sector*

Introduction

The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated areas around the world, inhabited by approximately 2 million people with youth representing 35% of the total population. Gaza sustained immeasurable damage in the 2014 war. Its effects pervade all aspects of Gaza life: economic, political, social and environmental. This war resulted in more than 2131 fatalities and 11000 casualties, more than 65% of which were youth.

The seminar discussed the most important sectors influenced by the 2014 war on Palestinian society. The team identified the main effects of the war and a plan was developed to deal with these effects through several events and activities such as dissemination of ideas to the largest possible number of educated youth groups to utilize their potential in serving Palestinian community.

The first topic up for discussion was environmental effects of the war and how young people can help mitigate these effects. Second, the team discussed the social impacts and some recommendations were given. Finally the group debated the effects of the war on the economic sector.

The outcome of each of these discussion sessions are presented at the end of this report and include all the suggested events and activities to take place in the next days.

Environmental Sector

Gaza strip is suffering from accumulated environmental problems over the years, which increased after every armed war and especially after the war in 2014. Several studies have shown that the Gaza Strip has come under thousands of tons of explosives which has directly affected the three basic environmental elements: water, air and soil.

These explosives have deposited large amounts of dangerous chemicals into water sources, polluting the water. They exhibit a presence of heavy metals at rates far beyond what the World Health Organization (WHO) deems safe. These pollutants have seeped into the soil and plants, causing environmental degradation.

Youth as a supportive team can give hand to minimize the environmental effect of the war. At the seminar we discussed the aspects and the possibilities of coping with these effects. Mohammed El-Shafei (Environmental Engineer) presented the results of this war on environment, which concluded as follows:

- *Solid Waste: As a result of 50 days of war thousands of tons of rubble gathered in domestic areas. This has left many casualties and decreased the efficiency of the transportation network. Also, the water and sanitation infrastructure has been destroyed in several areas, causing a health nuisance to the residents.*
- *Sea Water: Gaza blockade and 50 days of war has lead to a breakdown and destruction of many wastewater pumps. As a result, decision makers have begun disposing of waste by pumping it out onto the sea, which has resulted in disease and illness for hundreds of holidaymakers as well as affecting marine life.*
- *Agriculture: According to several studies, agriculture is the second-affected sector. The war did a lot of damage to agricultural land. A post-war assessment estimated that 51% of farmland, greenhouses, animal shelters and irrigation systems were destroyed during the war. Agriculture is vital to many Gazan families for food security and providing income.*

Especially with unemployment rates reaching nearly 55%, and 80% of population relying on external assistance for food according to UNDP reports 2014.

After this presentation, debate opened to find a practical ideas about youth assistance to face theses effects. Increasing citizens' awareness about environmental risks, awareness campaign through social networking sites it will access the largest segment of citizens and field awareness visits especially for farmers to inform them about ways to overcome the environmental problems and provide advice to them through youth groups. In addition, a competency cooperation with NGOs to support farmers will be initiated in order to reach largest number of beneficiaries.



Social Factors

The Palestinian community and its age related categories most affected, as a result of the recent war in Gaza and the 8 years of full blockade, still ongoing. All these disasters followed one by the other has resulted in a state of despair especially among young people who are feeling disappointment, their eyes in sad faces are looking out to the outside world in hope of a better future.

As a direct result of the wars on Gaza, the number of people seriously injured and damaged is increasing, in particular the permanently disabled young age group who lost one or both of their limbs which increases their feeling of pain and suffering due to inability to move freely without any assistants from others. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health reports 2014, there are more than 300 disabled people who lost one of their limbs in the war on Gaza, most of them are young people.

As a result of psychological stressors (economic and social ...), lack of job opportunities and increasing numbers of unemployment which has reached 55% among the young people, especially university academics holding certificates according to UNDP reports, the phenomenon of narcotic abuse among this age has seriously increased but there is under reporting for this issue. All the above-mentioned factors have left a negative impact on the mental state of this age group and demand a lot of work in order for it to be addressed.

After the open discussion that followed the presentation some recommendations were provided as follow:

- 1. A campaign that will be titled "Defeat Disability to Win Life Back" through communication and cooperation with specialized institutions in the Palestinian community to serve the disabled people. Qualified members may be trained and prepared to deal with disabled people and psychologically support them.*
- 2. Organizing campaigns including Gaza provinces trying to bridge the gap between the disabled and the community in order to utilize their remaining abilities and to deal with them*

as an essential and active part and productive in the society and supporting them to move forward without feeling as burden on the community as possible.

3. *Organize a workshop in August 2015, to discuss the social risks of being drug abuse, including Tramadol. This workshop aim to raise awareness among the youth group. A qualified lecturer will be invited to present the impacts of drug abuse on individual, family and community and how to help them overcome this problem.*
4. *Organize a workshop related to the migration of young people from Gaza and how to limit it and what lies behind their risking attempts of life and suggesting alternatives to help young people through external support and community participation including authorities and NGOs.*



Economic Factors

One of the outcomes of Israeli war 2014 is that a large portion of the Gazan population lost their productive assets. According to the Palestinian ministry of national economy 419 business and workshops were damaged, with 128 completely destroyed. Activities on the agriculture and fishers-sector were almost completely paralyzed during the 50 day war, with sustainable direct damage to Gaza's 17000 hectare of crop land, as well as much of its agriculture infrastructure including green house, irrigation system, animal farms, feed-stocks and fishing boat.

Roughly 30,000 Gazans lost jobs because of last summer's July-August war, according to Frode Mauring the UN Development Program's special representative for Gaza and the West Bank. The war cost Gaza \$200 million in economic losses, causing the Palestinian economy to contract for the first time since 2006, the International Monetary Fund said in late January.

At the end of discussion many ideas were generated such as:

- Holding seminars with small enterprises to enhance and encourage them to start up new projects.*
- Holding workshops for unemployed youth to help them set up small projects.*
- Organize workshops for awareness of young to joint technical disciplines in order to find a job in the local market.*



Proposed Plan:

THE CHANGE WE WANT <i>(OUR PLAN)</i>	<i>Contribute to minimize the effects of Gaza war 2014 by using youth as a supportive team.</i>		
WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS CHANGE HAPPEN?	1. <i>Increasing citizens' awareness about environmental risks.</i>		
	2. <i>Providing psychological support for those affected by 2014 war.</i>		
	3. <i>Empowering small enterprise and new graduates to start up new projects.</i>		
HOW	TO DO	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
<i>Increasing citizens' awareness about environmental risks.</i>	• <i>Awareness campaign through social networking sites.</i>		
	• <i>Field awareness visits especially for farmers.</i>		
	• <i>A competent cooperation with NGOs to support farmers.</i>		
<i>Provide psychological support for those affected by 2014 war.</i>	• <i>Holding seminars about migration, suicide and drugs; Awareness and prevention.</i>	<i>Dr. Khader Abbas</i>	<i>28/07/2015</i>
	• <i>Organize workshops about helping youth realize their potential in coping with war, rehabilitation and creation.</i>	<i>International Speaker</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
	• <i>A campaign that will be titled "Defeat Disability to Win Life Back".</i>		
	• <i>Involving disabilities in some activities to break the gap between them and the community.</i>		
<i>Empower small enterprise and new graduates to start up new projects.</i>	• <i>Holding seminars with small enterprise to enhance and encourage them to start up new projects.</i>		
	• <i>Holding workshops for unemployed youth to help them set up small projects.</i>		
	• <i>Organize workshops for awareness of young to joint technical disciplines in order to find a job in the local market.</i>		
MANAGING RISK	RISK	AVOID	DEAL WITH
	• <i>Neglecting / Lack of enthusiasm</i>	<i>Realistic about expectation</i>	<i>Involve family member in decision making</i>
	• <i>Loss of motivation</i>	<i>Injection of energy</i>	
	• <i>Ignored by external agencies</i>	<i>Convincing them on the</i>	

		<i>benefit</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Rejection some of the disabled</i> 	<i>Show the importance of participation</i>	<i>Reassure resources (transportation, logistic ...)</i>
MONOTRING SUCCESS	WHAT TO MONITOR	SOURCES	WHEN
	<i>Number of Participants</i>	<i>Attendance sheets</i>	<i>Start and throughout</i>
	<i>Impression both on social media and in the field</i>	<i>Interaction / Number of views.</i>	<i>Throughout and after</i>
	<i>External agencies support</i>	<i>Number of Supporter</i>	<i>Before and throughout</i>
	<i>Perception</i>	<i>Other groups offers involvement</i>	<i>Start and throughout</i>