



## USAID West Bank and Gaza

# A Decade of Support to Non-Formal Education in the West Bank and Gaza

### Overview

USAID/West Bank and Gaza has been actively supporting the Palestinian education system since the early 1970s. Over this period, USAID support has ranged from providing assistance to school facilities, infrastructure improvements, and scholarship programs to strengthening human resource capacity. In the past 10 years, USAID has introduced innovative programs designed to improve the quality of basic and higher education and enhance the competitiveness and good citizenry of Palestinian youth in preparation for the demands of the twenty-first century workforce.

USAID recognized early on that in order to reach the greatest number of youth, interventions in the non-formal sector would be needed to complement the efforts in the formal education sphere. First Ruwwad, and then the Partnerships with Youth Program, was conceived to expand educational and leadership opportunities for young people aged 14–29 in the West Bank by creating sustainable hubs for youth innovation and learning called Youth Development Resource Centers.

### Youth Development Resource Centers

The **Ruwwad Program** (2005–2011) introduced the Youth Development Resource Center (YDRC) as a community-based model for youth engagement, development, and empowerment. Ruwwad worked with youth clubs whose primary mission was to sponsor young men to participate in sporting activities. Ruwwad sought to transform them into YDRCs by financing the initial capitalization to enhance their facilities and service offerings and by working with their ownership and board to adjust policies related to gender inclusion, mission, and community engagement. The **Partnerships with Youth Program**, implemented by IREX, has expanded the number of YDRCs, building on the model

introduced under Ruwwad. Support to YDRCs has evolved from highly capitalized, resource-intensive facilities established under Ruwwad, to service-oriented centers supported by the Partnerships with Youth Program. Today, many of the YDRCs are generating their own revenue and directing their core service offerings independent of USAID support. These developments augur well for their long-term sustainability.

### Overcoming Barriers

YDRCs have had to overcome several challenges in terms of transforming their mission and membership. Notably, the YDRCs' mission can create conflict between those youth who are active members of YDRCs and the "old guards," particularly board members of some local centers that host YDRCs. In addition, conservative social norms of the community can inhibit membership and participation of female youth in YDRC-led activities. In addition, YDRCs are constantly challenged to identify operating funds to support their non-sport activities.

In North Hebron and the town of Qalqilya, the YDRCs have managed to overcome these barriers through different approaches and strategies. The North Hebron YDRC was first supported under the Ruwwad Program. Under this program, large grants were provided to establish the North Hebron YDRC as a full-service, community-based, nongovernmental organization that provides a range of services to the North Hebron area. Today, the North Hebron YDRC is self-sustaining, having transformed the composition of its governing board and its organizational mission to implement youth development programs, identify external revenue, and partner with local and national governments, international development agencies and partners, and local community-based organizations to deliver sustained services.



Image of the North Hebron YDRC. Photo: North Hebron YDRC

The Qalqilya YDRC reflects the new model of support under the Partnerships with Youth Program. This model is more focused on refurbishing existing Youth Club structures to accommodate youth-led programs and activities. In Qalqilya, as in other YDRCs supported by Partnerships with Youth, the YDRC offers youth an opportunity to design and submit applications for their own community initiatives. Partnerships with Youth guides participants through the process of developing a proposal for their initiative, including creating a realistic budget and determining desired results (outputs and outcomes). This proposal preparation and project implementation experience has proven invaluable to both the youth and the YDRC leadership. In addition, the Qalqilya YDRC offers an array of programs for youth to develop soft skills and employability opportunities. These include Youth Leadership in Action, Employability in ICT, Entrepreneurship, and Business for Media.

### Evidence of Impact

From 1953 to 2014, there were no female youth members of the Qalqilya youth club. Since October 2014 when the YDRC officially opened membership to everyone, 60% of all members are now girls and young women. When asked about the reasons behind this success in attracting and recruiting girls and young women to the YDRC and its activities, Ms. Rabee Arabas, the program coordinator at the Qalqilya YDRC whom we interviewed in the center's office in Qalqilya, explained that "in the beginning parents were hesitant to send their daughters to the center because they were worried that their daughters would meet and interact with their male counterparts at the center. However, we tried to deal with

this sensitive matter carefully. Our first step was visiting women's unions and societies in the town to introduce YDRC to let them know about the activities we were planning to organize. Then we encouraged women activists from those unions to come and visit the YDRC. We also conducted some activities to reassure parents that nothing is wrong with our activities and that those activities are useful to their daughters. We, for example, organized some activities with people with social needs at Qalqilya Zoo and conducted a campaign to raise awareness among youth about the negative consequences of cigarette smoking on health and society. In short, we first built a good reputation and showed our beneficiaries that we are serious and that we 'mean business.' As a result, parents and local community started accepting the idea of allowing young women to come to the YDRC and to participate in its activities. They [parents] even started calling us to inquire about our new activities."



Participants in a filmmaking course/Qalqilya YDRC (July 2016). Photo: IREX

### Synergies with USAID's Workforce Development Initiatives

Partnerships with Youth has also worked in a variety of ways to assist the YDRCs in providing high-quality employability programming for youth. In partnership with the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program, Partnerships with Youth provided one-on-one career advising with psychometric assessments to 382 youth through the six YDRCs and introduced YDRCs to the Ta3mal website, [www.ta3mal.com](http://www.ta3mal.com), which is designed to connect young graduates to career paths. These psychometric assessments and website are also employed by career centers supported under the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Program.