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UN Theme Group on Young People Action Brief

2021 ESCALATION IN PALESTINE

IMPACT ON YOUTH

There are 1.14 million young people in Palestine. Youth make up 22% of the population in the Gaza Strip and 23% in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The recent hostilities in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the 11 day bombardment of the Gaza Strip has affected them deeply. Among the total number of Palestinian casualties, over half were between 10 and 29 years old. Among the injured, the number is much higher.

The most recent crisis has heightened risks and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of youth in Palestine, resulting in high rates of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. These often result in negative coping mechanisms and including high-risk behaviour including violence, drug use, and suicide.

At the same time, however, ***Palestinian youth are actively shaping the narrative on the recent hostilities. Their call to action transcends Palestinian political fragmentation, reinforcing the idea that the solutions to Palestinian suffering can spring from the youth themselves****. By using new forms of mobilisation, such as social media, youth are challenging political paradigms and deliberately working to dismantle political and economic exclusion.*

The youth of Palestine are actively engaged in reconstructing their communities and communicating to the world the realities of life in Palestine. It is the responsibility of the international community to support their meaningful work for the future of their country, and to support their access to education, livelihood opportunities, as well as their political, social, and economic engagement.

> "WHAT DO THE YOUTH OF GAZA HAVE BUT THE SEA TO GIVE THEM HOPE?
>
> – *Hussam from Gaza*

Photography by Abdelkareem Elreefi

UN AGENCIES' RESPONSE

The first priority of the United Nations Agencies in Palestine is to ensure that youth have access to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and psychosocial first aid to mitigate the long-term negative health impacts on youth in Palestine. The members are engaging youth in the reconstruction process and the humanitarian response in Gaza as active and empowered participants.

The UN Agencies in Palestine are working to support young people in the current situation. The most urgent priority is to provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and psychological first aid to mitigate long-term mental health impacts. In parallel, the agencies realize that it is important to understand young people as actors and participants, not only as beneficiaries. It is critical to their recovery, and to their futures, that they be taken seriously, offered a seat at the table, and included as partners.



"I FEEL INSECURE WHILE TRAVELLING BETWEEN CITIES, AS A RESULT OF THE PRACTICES AND ASSAULT OF SETTLERS ON THE HIGHWAYS. THIS HAS AFFECTED MY WORK AS A VOLUNTEER AND AS AN ACTIVIST."

– *Nadine from Ramallah*

Photography by Abdelkareem Elgafi

UN AGENCIES' RESPONSE

The International Labour Organization (ILO)

*The **ILO** is planning to support smart recovery solutions in private sector companies in Gaza, including green technologies and innovation that address key challenges related to local resource scarcity. This project targets 25 young, recently graduated women and men and matches their skill sets with local small and medium sized enterprises.*

With support from ILO, the Business & Technology Incubator (BTI) at the Islamic University of Gaza will create a team of experts/mentors and young graduates, and provide the technical guidance and access to resources and material to develop solutions to identified challenges.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

*The **UNDP** is actively supporting the youth in Gaza through a youth-led volunteering campaign "Making Gaza Prosperous Again," where over a 100 youth engaged in restoration efforts in the Bashir Al Rayyes School in Gaza City, Al Rimal area center of Gaza City, and Coastal Road west of Gaza City. Thanks to these activities, the main streets were reopened, contributing to a healthier and cleaner environment for the people.*

***UNDP** is also engaged in providing psychosocial support through the Al Fakhoora Programme, where youth have offered help to over 100 children in Beit Hanoun, one of the hardest-hit areas in the Gaza Strip.*

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

Consultations were held with youth members of the Palestine Chapter of the Gender Innovation Agora, a forum for youth and gender innovation and the Arab States Chapter conveying youth's concerns on the unfolding crisis and advocacy support.



UN AGENCIES' RESPONSE



Photography by Abdelkareem Elreefi

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Over 150 young volunteers are active in humanitarian first response and have joined the Gaza municipality in its "We will Rebuild Gaza" campaign, with support from UNFPA. The youth volunteers participated in street cleaning, and the volunteers who are trained in basic psychosocial first aid offered psychosocial support to the women and children in Gaza shelters. Youth peer helpers are also engaged in distributing food packages to 100 affected families in shelter schools, and conducting a needs assessment for rehabilitation work for damaged houses and public playgrounds through the national campaign "Solidarity with your People."

***UNFPA** is scaling up the provision of mental health counselling to young people through the mobile application Mostashari ("My counsellor") together with the Palestinian Medical Relief Society. In the coming weeks, UNFPA and its implementing partners are setting up summer camps for 600 adolescents in schools in the Gaza strip, as well as organising recreational activities for 700 adolescents living in marginalized and affected communities in the Gaza Strip led by youth volunteers.*

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

***UNICEF** has partnered with young people to lead community awareness-raising around the conflict. 1000 adolescent and young people were mobilized by UNICEF to support Gaza Municipality to initiate a campaign "We Will Rebuild It" engaging the youths' families and civil society organizations. Thousands of young people are now leading consultations within their communities to design community-led initiatives that respond to critical social needs after the escalation.*

***UNICEF** has supported the Ministry of Education in Gaza to procure emergency stationery kits to support online and home based learning for 60,000 children and young people for immediate response. A programme to support at least 3000 young people from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza with basic foundational skills and knowledge on 21st century skills, design thinking, social innovative projects including digital skills and technology is currently in progress. This summer, UNICEF is planning to offer summer camp activities to at least 40,000 adolescents in Gaza, between the ages of 10 and 18 years.*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Palestinian young people are taking action to respond to the recent crisis. Thousands of young people are volunteering with their local communities and participating in political and civic activism. It is critical to actively invest in young people and support their meaningful contribution in the humanitarian response and recovery process. Young people support communities' resilience and social cohesion, conflict prevention, and sustaining peace with full inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized among them.

Below are specific recommendations for a comprehensive approach in working with and for young people in Palestine:

SERVICES

Promote and increase age-and gender-responsive and inclusive programmes that contribute to the protection, health and development of young women, young men, girls and boys within humanitarian settings

Apply an age sensitive, youth-centered approach in all phases of emergency responses and provide them with safe platforms to voice their priorities and needs, recognizing their right to freedom of expression.

Apply the 'do no harm' principle and ensure safe and ethical participation of young people. Ensure that providers are trained in youth-friendly communication techniques and basic response to GBV along with issues related to adolescent girls, such as child marriage.

PARTICIPATION

Support systematic inclusion of engagement and partnership with youth, in all phases of humanitarian action through sharing of information and involvement in decision-making processes at all levels, including budget allocations.

Strengthen the cooperation between Palestinian youth organizations and groups with regional and global networks of solidarity, especially within international civil society and youth organizations working on promoting human rights, security and peace in Palestine.

CAPACITY

Recognize and strengthen young people's capacities and capabilities to be effective humanitarian actors in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, and empower and support local youth-led initiatives and organizations in humanitarian response, such as those targeting affected youth, including young refugees and internally displaced persons.

RESOURCES

Increase resources intended to address the needs and priorities of adolescents and youth affected by humanitarian crises, including disasters, conflict and displacement, and identify ways to more accurately track and report on the resources allocated to young people in humanitarian contexts

Fund youth-led initiatives that promote tolerance and dialogue, non-violence, and preserve the Palestinian heritage and culture, with a particular focus on leaving no one behind, including marginalized youth, youth in refugee camps, people with disabilities, liberated prisoners, adolescent girls, and other groups living in difficult social, economic and political conditions.

DATA

Ensure the generation and use of age-and sex-disaggregated data pertaining to adolescents and youth in humanitarian settings.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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