

REPORT ON SUMMER SCHOOL IN GAZA



THE CANAAN INSTITUTE OF NEW PEDAGOGY
& CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION



1. Introduction

This is a report on a summer school in the Gaza Strip, Palestine, supported by the Centre for Global Education, a development non-governmental organisation based in Belfast. The summer school was delivered in partnership with the Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy in July 2012 to support education provision in Gaza for young people.

The main objectives of the summer schools were to: provide therapeutic play and learning opportunities for 1,000 young people aged between 8 and 12; hold the summer school in eight geographically dispersed community centres across the Gaza Strip; and train eighty facilitators to work with the young people during the summer school.

This is a narrative and visual report on the delivery of the summer school and its outcomes.

2. Background

The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely population regions in the world with 1.7 million people living in an area 45 kilometres long and 5 - 12 km wide. Most of its population are refugees dependent on food aid, health and education services provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Since 2007, Israel has intensified its siege of Gaza in response to a takeover of the territory by Hamas and allows only a trickle of basic humanitarian items into the area. This has created immense social and economic hardship for most of its impoverished population including an unemployment level at 45 percent, shortages of food and medicines and, more recently, a rationed electricity supply due to inadequate fuel imports.

Children are in the front-line of Gaza's humanitarian crisis. Schools are over-crowded and, according to a recent Save the Children report, 58 percent of school children suffer from anaemia caused by an iron deficiency in their diet. These problems are compounded by the fuel shortages that make it difficult to study at night and the constant drone of generators that some families are able to use for a back-up supply. The fuel shortages also reduce the water supply available to families because electricity is needed to pump water to people's homes. Many young people are therefore required to collect water for cooking, sanitation and washing clothes.

The Centre received funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation NI to support a summer school to provide young people with some welcome relief from the social burdens created by the siege of Gaza. The summer school was held between 30 June and 15 July 2012 from 8.00am to 12.30pm daily.

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- All of the children participating in the summer school received a t-shirt and cap plus snacks and drinks.
- A total of 1,000 young people participated in the summer school at eight different sites.
- The children were aged between 8 & 12 years and mostly came from refugee communities.

3. Delivering the Summer School

The summer school was delivered at nine geographically dispersed sites in Gaza to ensure that young people across the region had an opportunity to participate. Each site accommodated 130 young people with a total of 63 facilitators (7 per site) working with the children. The sites chosen for the summer school were: Beit Hanoun (North-East edge of Gaza), Gaza City (450,000 inhabitants), Khan Yunis (city and refugee camp in southern Gaza), Maghazi Refugee Camp (Central Gaza, south of Bureij refugee camp), Nuseirat Refugee Camp (8 km south of Gaza City), Deir el Balah, (an area beside the sea in the middle of the Gaza Strip), Rafah (the southernmost refugee camp located next to the border with Egypt), the village of Wadi al Salga (east of Deir el Balah), and Shatti refugee camp near Gaza city on the beach.



Children from the Deir el Balah community in central Gaza.

The Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy trained the facilitators who work with the young people. The facilitators receive training in active learning methodologies and how to engage young people in education activities through play, drama and arts and crafts. The facilitators work in community and youth centres that are partner organisations of the Canaan Institute which has links with communities the length and breadth of Gaza.

The young people really benefit from a structured play environment with trained facilitators. Without the summer school the young people would be bored and restless and there would be a greater burden on their parents to keep them entertained over the summer. Moreover, the summer school sites provide counselling to young people enduring the residual effects of the trauma caused by Israel's bombardment of Gaza in 2008-2009 that killed 1,419 Palestinians, including 318 children. Many of the children suffer from hyper-tension, fear and behavioural problems resulting from Israel's land invasion and aerial attacks on Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009.

These problems manifest themselves in the education performance of some young people who find it difficult to concentrate in the classroom and suffer psychological distress that requires long-term counselling. A counsellor working with a group of eight children at the summer school in Rafah had one child who lost a left eye, another who had a bullet wound to the ankle, and a third who had her house demolished during the incursion and had to flee with her family to Gaza City. Given the extent of the bombardment and its resulting deaths, destruction and injuries, just about everyone in the territory knows a victim or was personally affected by the invasion and its consequences.

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A facilitator with twin sisters attending the summer school in Deir el Balah



*Children are led through a game by a facilitator in the summer school held in Rafah.
This centre is close to the southern border with Egypt.*

4. Summer School Activities

Despite limited budgets, each of the summer school sites managed to provide a wide array of activities for the young people that included puppetry. The children wrote and performed the puppet shows that commented on their lives in Gaza. They also designed the puppets and created the characters.



Children playing ball under a tarpaulin protecting them from the sun

The children also work with clay, draw pictures, make decorations, practice their reading and writing, and take part in outdoor games.



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Young people perform a puppet show for their peers in the summer school at Deir el Balah. The children design the puppets, write the performances and act them out. The performances can be humorous or touch on some of the issues they face in their lives in Gaza.



5. Fuel shortages

One of the critical issues for the Gaza Strip at present are fuel shortages which have limited the electricity and water supply. Israel's blockade has always meant electricity cuts for most Gazans but the breaks in supply have become longer and more frequent as Egypt too has cut its oil supply to Gaza. This has resulted from a dispute with Hamas over the smuggling of cheaper fuel through the tunnels between Rafah and Gaza.

The lack of electricity for 10-12 hours a day at irregular times means that children often can't study at night without light. And the use of home power generators for those that can afford generator fuel brings its own problems: there is the constant drone that makes concentration on study very difficult and the generators can also represent a health hazard for children playing at home. Hady Mattar, a child of five, playing in Gaza's YMCA, had bandaged hands caused by burns from a domestic generator.

The fuel shortages also mean that water is not pumped into homes which can require children to help out by collecting water in buckets for drinking, sanitation and washing clothes. There is too the damaging psychological effects of living without any connection with the outside world through television, the internet or even the capacity to read at home.

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Hady Mattar, a child of five, playing in Gaza's YMCA. His bandaged hands are the result of burns caused by a domestic generator. Many families in Gaza use these generators to provide power during the frequent and lengthy periods when the mains supply is off owing to severe fuel shortages.

The fuel shortages have added to the social and psychological problems faced by Gaza's children as a result of Israel's intensified siege of the territory over the past five years.

A young blogger from Gaza recently described herself as part of Gaza's 'blindfolded generation'.

6. Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy

The Centre for Global Education is grateful to Issa Saba, Director of the Canaan Institute, for inviting us to participate in the summer school and become a partner in its delivery. We are also extremely appreciative of the work of the eight centres that delivered summer schools in their area. It was gratifying to see the benefits of the summer school for the young people and the dedication that the staff brought to their work. The summer school ended with a celebration day where all of the eight centres presented their work to each other and the children performed songs and dance.



Front Row, from left to right: Issa Saba, Director of the Canaan Institute; Dr. Mansour N. El Looh, President of the Deir el Balah Centre; Stephen McCloskey, Director, Centre for Global Education; Mohammed Abu Amara, Director of Al-Jamer'a Youth Society where the summer school was held in Deir el Balah with the staff of the Canaan Institute and the summer school.

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The CGE and Canaan Institute logos on the entrance to the summer school.

7. Future Work in Gaza

The Canaan Institute and CGE aim to collaborate over the next year on an educational and psychosocial programme for Gaza's children in marginalised areas. The programme aims to enhance the educational progression of children through schools by helping to address psychosocial problems that are not adequately tackled during school hours. It will strengthen the activities of three social and educational organisations who work with marginalised children in Gaza. These organisations support children with special needs and enable young people to share issues and problems they have through expressional activities. The programme will span five months and will aim to benefit 300 children from 7 to 10 years. It will be delivered by nine facilitators, three from each centre. CGE looks forward to our continued collaboration with the Canaan Institute in 2012-13.

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