

THE CANAAN INSTITUTE OF NEW PEDAGOGY
& CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION



BUILDING CAPACITY FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN THE GAZA STRIP



THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN SUPPORTED BY LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

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1. Introduction

This is a report on a project in the Gaza Strip, Palestine, delivered by the Centre for Global Education (CGE), a development non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Belfast, in partnership with the Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy, an NGO based in Gaza. The project was supported by the Lloyds Bank Foundation for Northern Ireland International Grant Programme and delivered from January to May 2014.



Children in a workshop in Maghazi

The project's aim was "to build the capacity of community organisations to delivery education services in the Gaza Strip". It was delivered to 450 young people aged 7 to 12 in three locations in Gaza: Deir El Balah, Nuseirat and Maghazi which are all located in central Gaza. These are areas with high concentrations of refugees where communities are subject to acute poverty levels and young people attend school for half a day. The Centre's project aimed to use active learning, therapeutic education methodologies as a form of psycho-social support to young people suffering from stress and trauma caused by the ongoing conflict in Gaza and Israel's siege of the territory.

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

2. Background

The Gaza Strip is in a state of economic collapse largely resulting from an Israeli blockade imposed in 2007 which has reduced to a trickle the amount of food, aid and resources needed for day-to-day living from entering the territory. With tight Israeli restrictions on imports and exports, Gaza's economy is in freefall and its society in the grip of a humanitarian crisis. Most of Gaza's 1.7 million people are refugees largely dependent on food aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the UN's humanitarian mission in Gaza. UNRWA is finding it increasingly difficult to cope with Gaza's rising population because its operating budget has been steadily reduced. Moreover, Israel's restrictive blockade prevents UNRWA from accessing the construction materials it needs to build the new schools, houses and health facilities desperately needed by Gaza's growing population. This problem is compounded by a dwindling water supply as Gaza's underground aquifer, the main source of its drinking water, could be unusable by as soon as 2016.



Nowhere to play: children in Bureij refugee camp

Lack of food and clean water has resulted in 58 percent of children in Gaza suffering from anaemia with typhoid fever and diarrhoea other common causes of illness among young people. In terms of education, 90 percent of schools in Gaza operate a double shift with different school populations in the morning and afternoon which means that children attend school for half a day in over-crowded classrooms. This is the result of inadequate school buildings with 221,000 pupils attending 243 UNRWA schools which leave teachers contending with over-crowded classrooms.

In 2012, UNRWA published a report titled *Gaza in 2020: A Liveable Place?* which argued that 'without remedial action now, Gaza's problems in water and electricity, education and health will only get worse over the coming years'. This report preceded Israel's third military onslaught on Gaza in six years. On 8 July Israel launched Operation "Protective Edge", a 51 day military attack which pounded Gaza from the air, land and sea and, which, by 26 August had killed 2,131 people, of whom 1,473 were civilians, 501 were children and 257 women. On the Israeli side, 71 were killed, of whom 66 were soldiers, one a security co-ordinator, three were civilians and one was a foreign national. For any child in Gaza aged six "Protective Edge" represented the third war in their short lives following "Pillar of Cloud" in 2012 and "Cast Lead" in 2008-09. But the most recent attack has been the most devastating with the infrastructural damage including: 18,000 housing units destroyed, 45 health centres damaged (17 forced to closed) and 122 schools damaged, 26 completely destroyed.

But even more worrying is the psychological toll the war has taken on Gaza's children. The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) has estimated that over 370,000 children in Gaza need "immediate psycho-social first aid" as a first step toward recovery from Israel's recent onslaught. This may be a conservative estimate in a territory where nearly half the population comprises young people. The project activities described below both supplement the education of young people and also help to address the psychological effects of the conflict in Gaza and the Israeli siege.

Siege of Gaza

The Centre for Global Education decided to work in the Gaza Strip given the worsening humanitarian situation resulting from Israel's siege of



the territory which was intensified in 2007 and has exacerbated poverty levels that have particularly impacted on children. The Israeli siege has devastated the economy and reduced humanitarian aid entering the region to a trickle. Most of Gaza's 1.7m people are refugees living in a small slither of land just 45km long and 5-12km wide. The effects of the siege include: fuel shortages that reduce the electricity supply to 12 hours a day; the lack of sewage treatment plants which render the water supply 90 percent polluted; food shortages that cause stunting and malnourishment among children and leave 60 percent of people 'food insecure'; and unemployment which has soared to over 40 percent as the economy has flatlined. The UN has said that Gaza's economy which is heavily reliant on intensive trade, communication and the movement of people is 'fundamentally unviable under present circumstances'.

Education

Prior to Operation "Protective Edge", the UN estimated that Gaza needed an additional 250 schools to meet the anticipated demand for school places arising from a projected population increase to around 2.1 million people by 2020. There are already 558,000 children aged between 6 and 18 years in education, a total that will rise to 673,000 by 2020. 85 percent of schools in Gaza double shift which means that they

have two school populations using the same building every day. This is a direct result of the Israeli siege which prevents the UN from importing the construction materials they need to build new schools. During “Protective Edge”, many of the existing schools were used as shelters to house internally displaced people and some of the schools are still used for this purpose because much of the housing stock was destroyed. With 26 schools completely destroyed in Israel’s recent operation, Gaza is in the throes of an education crisis lacking the buildings it needs to get young people into schools. Only a lifting of the siege and restrictions on imports and exports will enable Gaza to construct the school buildings it needs to house its young people.



3. About the Project

3.1 The Project Aim was:

To build the capacity of community organisations in the Gaza Strip to strengthen education provision to young people.



Community facilitators in Nuseirat

3.2 The Project Objectives were to:

- To provide capacity-building training to 12 staff members working in three community associations in Gaza to strengthen their facilitation skills using active learning methodologies;
- To enable 12 facilitators to deliver education services to 450 children attending three community organisation in Gaza who attend school for half a day;
- To deliver the services in liaison with local schools to ensure that the project complements the schools' curriculum and enhances the formal education of young people;

- To provide psycho-social support to children suffering particularly acute forms of stress and trauma caused by the ongoing conflict in Gaza and effects of the Israeli siege;
- To organise Celebration Days in each community association as the culmination of the project to showcase the learning of the young people;
- To evaluate the programme and its impact on the facilitators and children.

3.3 Project Delivery

Enrolment of Children (January 2014)



Children in a group workshop in Nuseirat

The 450 children enrolled on to the project were selected by the three community centres in consultation with surrounding schools and visiting psychotherapists working with children in each school. The project enrolled children according to two criteria. First, children who had special educational needs in covering core areas of the curriculum such as Literacy and Numeracy. Second, those children identified by teachers and psychotherapists manifesting the most acute forms

of trauma and anxiety caused by conflict and poverty were enrolled on the project. A key component of the project was its joined-up approach to the children's education and therapy by involving their families, schools and the local community organisation. This ensured that the education activities were delivered in conjunction with teachers and also provided psycho-social care in partnership with families and schools. The three community organisations involved in project delivery were:

- Al-Jamer'a Youth Society (Deir El Balah)
- New Horizons Association (Nuseirat)
- Hope and Love Association (Maghazi)

Training of Facilitators (January 2014)

Four members of staff from each centre were recruited to work with the children for the duration of the project. A significant project outcome is the enhanced skills base of the three centres through the training delivered to their staff. All twelve facilitators were trained together by the staff of the Canaan Institute in the use of active learning play and learning activities that were designed to strengthen



The project facilitators in Al-Jamer'a Youth Society, Deir El Balah

the learning of young people through participative learning methods. The facilitators participated in an intensive ten day training course in Canaan in January 2014 in preparation for their work with the children. The training included: use of participative methodologies consistent with good practice in development education; guidance on linking training content to the schools' curriculum; using group discussion activities, play and art to enable children to express problems related to stress and trauma; referral advice in the event that children needed outside expertise from a trained psychologist; and using cultural traditions (songs, dance and music) in child activities. The twelve facilitators were:

Facilitator	Centre	Town
Jawaher N. El Looh	Al-Jamer'a Youth Society	Deir El Balah
Aziza A Abu Bohery	Al-Jamer'a Youth Society	Deir El Balah
Hanan A. Abu Ammra	Al-Jamer'a Youth Society	Deir El Balah
Mona A. Abu Ammra	Al-Jamer'a Youth Society	Deir El Balah
Maher M. Abu Hada	New Horizons Association	Nuseirat
Mohamed M. Abu Shawish	New Horizons Association	Nuseirat
Randa F. Abu Shamal	New Horizons Association	Nuseirat
Ahed T. Abu Shawish	New Horizons Association	Nuseirat
Faten S. Shaloot	Hope and Love Association	Maghazi
Hanan A. Abu Masdeed	Hope and Love Association	Maghazi
Hanan M. Abu Nassar	Hope and Love Association	Maghazi
Besan S. Ammar	Hope and Love Association	Maghazi



Project facilitators in Maghazi

Training Delivery to Children (February to May 2014)

In February 2014, the training began with 150 children involved per centre facilitated by four staff members. The facilitators worked with the children as follows:

The 150 children were divided into six groups of 25 each. Three groups worked on Saturday, Monday and Wednesday and the other three groups on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. This meant that 75 children attended workshops every day in each centre except Friday. Facilitators worked with each group over two periods in the morning from 9.00am to 11.00am and another group from 1.00 - 3.00pm in the afternoon.

The facilitators used dynamic, interactive methodologies using drama, art, stories, poetry, song, dance and games. The activities focused on strengthening knowledge, skills and confidence in the areas of literacy, numeracy and discussion. Also, every child received psycho-social support through the learning activities delivered by the facilitators and through professional support from psychotherapists. This support was provided in liaison with the families of the young people.



The programme included open days which enabled each centre to showcase the work of the young people and bring the facilitators and children together from the two other centres. The skills learned by the facilitators and children through the programme will ensure its impact is sustained well beyond the end of the project.



Psychotherapy

The psycho-social counselling provided by the facilitators helped to address the residual effects of conflict manifested in behavioural difficulties and learning problems among the children. The facilitators discussed some of the problems they find in young people suffering stress. They include: behavioural difficulties such as being unable to

work within a group or concentrate in school; children sometimes become quiet, withdrawn and unwilling to communicate; bed-wetting is a common problem among children suffering stress; and another symptom is becoming violent, aggressive and swearing.



A child's drawing showing a helicopter attack in Beit Lahia

The main causes of stress are twofold: one is the ongoing conflict in Gaza, which even between the high intensity bombardments in Gaza like Operation "Protective Edge" amounts to regular attacks on communities particularly in border areas close to Israeli forces. The second is the highly stressed domestic environment that most children live in caused by high unemployment, lack of food and clean water, and fuel shortages. The stresses of domestic life regularly bear down on children from their parents.

The therapeutic activities delivered by the project aimed to draw children into discussion on the causes of their trauma and how these problems can be managed with support from family, teachers and community workers. In some cases children enrolled on the project were unable to settle into the activities because their symptoms were so acute. In these cases the children were referred to a trauma centre where specialists are better able to provide more effective support.

Working with Families

A key part of the project activities involved liaising with the families of the children enrolled on the programme. The facilitators consulted with parents to help them monitor the progress of their child and identify areas of learning in which they needed specific support. Many parents struggle to manage children subject to stress and trauma and so the assistance provided by the community centres and schools is invaluable. The work with parents enabled them to continue the psychosocial support of young people at home building on the training delivered by the facilitators in each centre. The facilitators also advised them on how to manage young people in times of crisis and how to use play and therapeutic learning in domestic life to alleviate stress.

Celebration Days (May 2014)

Each of the three centres organised a Celebration Day in May 2014 to mark the end of the project and celebrate the students' achievements over the previous three months. The Celebration Days were organised jointly by the facilitators and the children and family members were invited to attend. The days involve children performing song, dance, poetry, rap and role plays on topics such as good hygiene and bullying. They performed songs and dance in traditional dress with the help of their facilitators. The Celebration Days also allowed family members to



Celebration Day, Maghazi



Celebration Day, Nuseirat



Celebration Day, Deir El-Balah

see the work carried out by the children in Art, Design, Mathematics, English and Arabic reflecting the high quality activities delivered by the facilitators.

Monitoring and Evaluation (May to June 2014)

The final phase of the project involved the Centre for Global Education's Director, Stephen McCloskey, visiting Gaza from 18 May to 19 June to

evaluate the project outcomes. The visit included:

- Attending the Celebration Day in each Centre;
- Meeting the facilitators and getting feedback on project delivery;
- Meeting the Director of the three community centres;
- Meeting the Director and staff of the Canaan Institute;
- Attending an evaluation workshop with all of the project facilitators in the Canaan Institute at the end of the project.

Feedback from Facilitators

The facilitators were interviewed individually in their centres and then attended an evaluation workshop in the Canaan Institute when the project ended. They all welcomed the intensive ten day training programme provided by Canaan at the start of the project. It was useful to work with the other facilitators before commencing delivery of training to the children. It assisted team building and strengthened project co-operation between the centres. They valued learning new skills and techniques in facilitation and the opportunity to apply these skills under the auspices of the Canaan Institute who played a mentoring role for the facilitators throughout the project.



Evaluation workshop with facilitators at the end of the project in the Canaan Institute

The challenges of working in the centres and facilitating workshops with children included the lack of physical space in the centres which are small and lacking natural light. Children lacked the space in some cases to move freely in small rooms but all three centres had a central space or stage large enough to hold the Celebration Days. There is simply a lack of equipped buildings in Gaza with the space and facilities necessary for hosting child activities. This is due to the population density of Gaza and the lack of land and construction materials needed to build new facilities.



CGE Director Stephen McCloskey with the project facilitators after an evaluation workshop

The facilitators also commented that each working day was long and intensive as they had four x one hour sessions with children plus two hours preparation time in the mornings. But they found the work rewarding even if they had challenges with some of the children who had behavioural problems caused by trauma and stress. They emphasised the importance of liaising with the schools and working with the teachers to ensure continuity between school and community education. This was particularly important as the project was delivered in the period leading up to end-of-year examinations which are mandatory for all children attending school in Gaza. Teachers referred

the facilitators to those areas of the curriculum that needed particular attention and they were addressed in the project training.

Feedback from Children



The children attending the three centres thoroughly enjoyed their participation in the project. They had opportunities to play and learn with other children from the neighbourhood. When they attended the centres they received juice and snacks, and every day they had a mix of activities such as arts and crafts, games, singing and dancing, and learning English. It was less formal than school but they still learned a lot and had opportunities for day trips, particularly visits to the beach. The project for them was too short. They would have welcomed a longer project with more time to work with the facilitators and other children.

The facilitators and psychologists saw real progress made by the children during the project. They expressed their psychological problems through art, in group discussions and on a one-to-one basis with psychologists / facilitators. The group activities enabled the children to become less withdrawn and more engaged with the other children and their local environment. They also enjoyed working on role plays and cultural activities for the Celebration Days.



“The project used dynamic, interactive methodologies using drama, art, stories, poetry, song, dance and games. The activities focused on strengthening knowledge, skills and confidence in the areas of literacy, numeracy and discussion”.

Feedback from Parents

For parents the project brought several benefits to their families. They valued the additional education their children received through the community activities. This really strengthened their learning and education which is crucial to the life prospects of children in Gaza given the lack of job opportunities. The parents also valued the psychological relief offered to their children through the project activities. They could see the difference made to the children through regular access to expert facilitation. Also, the availability of a structured and safe play environment for children when they were not at school made a huge difference to parents who are always anxious about children playing in Gaza's environment which has so many hazards. And, lastly, parents commended the support provided to them through the project which helped to explain the behavioural changes in children caused by the conflict and domestic pressures and how to address these in the household.

Feedback from Canaan Institute

At the end of the project, the Canaan Institute convened a meeting involving all of the facilitators and their training staff to carry out a final reflection on the project and how it was delivered. The CGE Director attended this meeting and discussed the methodologies and learning approaches used in the project and their benefits for the children. The



facilitators seemed very satisfied with the training input from Canaan and didn't see a need to amend the content of the programme if used again in the future. Some of the facilitators commented on the need for more staff inputs to manage such a large group (4 facilitators working with 150 children) but regrettably the resources were not available to pay additional staff to work on the project given the competing costs related to materials, refreshments, the Celebration Days and training inputs by Canaan. But overall they valued their participation in the project and the skills and training experiences it provided them.

Summary of Project Outcomes

In summary, the outcomes of the CGE / Canaan Institute project were:

- 450 young people received supplementary education provision in literacy and numeracy;
- The children also received psycho-social support in managing the effects of trauma and stress;
- 12 project facilitators learned new training and facilitation skills supporting the provision of psycho-social support to children;
- Training and advice was delivered to family members on how to extend psycho-social support into the household;
- All of the young people had opportunities to visit other parts of the Gaza Strip and the other Centres involved in the project;
- The three centres organised Celebration Days to showcase the work of the children;
- The Centre for Global Education carried out a comprehensive project evaluation of the project during a five week visit in May and June 2014;
- The project supported stronger links between CGE, the Canaan Institute and the three Centres involved in the project that we can build on in the future.

4. Sustainability

The lifelong skills provided through the project will benefit the three community associations beyond the duration of the project. They will be used in the training activities delivered to future cohorts of young

people attending each centre and have thereby enhanced the educational capacity of the primary project stakeholders. The Canaan Institute and Centre for Global Education have been working in partnership since 2011 and look forward to continued collaboration going forward. The recent onslaught in Gaza has sadly greatly added to the distress and suffering of children who will continue to require professionally delivered psycho-social support for many years to come.



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