

THE CANAAN INSTITUTE OF NEW PEDAGOGY
& CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION



A REPORT ON A PSYCHO-SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME GAZA STRIP, PALESTINE 2017



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PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT TO CHILDREN IN THE GAZA STRIP
2017

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Introduction

This is a report on activities delivered in year two of a two-year project in the Gaza Strip, Palestine, jointly managed by the Centre for Global Education (CGE), a development non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Belfast, and the Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy, a Palestinian NGO based in Gaza. The project was funded by the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) Developing World Fund and delivered from January to May 2017.



Maghazi Refugee Camp, Gaza

The project had three aims. The first was to provide psycho-social support to 400 children aged 7-14 years suffering from the acute effects of trauma caused by three wars in the Gaza Strip since 2008 and the grinding poverty created by a ten-year Israeli siege. The second aim was to supplement the children's education by providing community-based learning focused on core areas of the school curriculum. The

third aim was to

deliver workshops to the children's parents with a view to extending psycho-social care into the household. The project was delivered in four locations in Gaza: Bureij (central Gaza), Deir el Balah (central Gaza); Khan Yunis (southern Gaza); and the village of Moghraga, 10 km south of Gaza City.

The project was delivered in the same locations in year two as year one in order to reinforce the positive learning outcomes resulting from the project activities in year one. These locations were chosen for project

delivery as they are based in particularly impoverished and marginalised areas of Gaza where the Canaan Institute has developed strong links with community partners. The children in these areas have been severely impacted by the effects of conflict, particularly Israel's most recent war in Gaza, Operation 'Protective Edge', which spanned 51 days in July and August 2014. The project aimed to provide psycho-social support to children manifesting the severe effects of trauma using active learning, educational methods that supported structured play and group discussion activities. These activities enabled children to express psychological issues they were experiencing through art work, role play and theatre as well as one-to-one sessions with facilitators and psychotherapists.

The project also provided workshops to the parents of children enrolled on the project to guide them on how to best provide psycho-social support in the household. A total of 128 workshops was held in the four communities during the project to advise parents on how to recognise and deal with behavioural changes in children suffering the effects of trauma. This represented a joined-up approach to psycho-social care that involved local schools, community centres and families. In the recruitment of children onto the programme, each community centre liaised with the local school and discussed how the activities could best meet the educational and psycho-social needs of young people.

Background to project

The context in which this project has been delivered is one of extreme poverty and conflict. 2017 marks the tenth anniversary of Israel's illegal siege of the Gaza Strip and many leading human rights organisations have published reports alerting the world to a deepening humanitarian crisis in the territory. Perhaps the starkest warning has come from the International Committee of the Red Cross (2017) in suggesting that 'a systemic collapse of an already battered infrastructure and economy is impending'. What distinguishes this crisis from the disasters and emergencies that normally push civilian populations to the edge of catastrophe is that it is not the result of a hurricane, flood, tsunami, drought or famine but the calculated policy of the Israeli government. As Harvard scholar Sara Roy, who has meticulously researched the impact of Israel's policy-making on Gaza for thirty years suggests, 'What is happening to Gaza is catastrophic; it is also deliberate, considered and

purposeful' (Roy, 2016: xxi). Roy argues that Gaza has been subjected to 'de-development' meaning that it has been 'dispossessed of its capacity for rational and sustainable economic growth and development, coupled with a growing inability to effect social change' (Roy, 2016: xxi). So, what we are witnessing in Gaza today is the 'logical endpoint' of this policy; 'a Gaza that is functionally unviable' (ibid).

The social problems created by Israel's blockade of Gaza have been compounded by three wars since 2008: operations 'Cast Lead' (2008-09), 'Pillar of Cloud' (2012) and 'Protective Edge' (2014) which have collectively claimed the lives of 3,741 Palestinians and injured 10,741. Operation 'Protective Edge' resulted in the highest number of Palestinian civilian casualties than in any year since 1967. 547 children were killed from a total of 1,462 civilian deaths and 'nearly 68 percent of the children killed by Israeli forces were 12 years old or younger'. According to Unicef, 370,000 children were left in need of 'psycho-social aid' and Euro Med Monitor for Human Rights has found that:

“1 in 4 children needs psychosocial support because of trauma and losses experienced during violence, including physical injury, fear of bombing sounds and deaths of family members or friends” (2017: 20).

In the midst of the conflict in August 2014, Unicef's field officer, Pernilla Ironside, said: "There isn't a single family in Gaza who hasn't experienced personally death, injury, the loss of their home, extensive damage, displacement'. The Israeli casualties in the same conflict totalled 67 soldiers and six civilians.

The infrastructural damage in Gaza caused by 'Protective Edge' included 18,000 housing units partially or completely destroyed and 73 medical facilities and several ambulances damaged. The United Nations reported that 22 schools were completely destroyed and 118 schools damaged by the conflict which has exacerbated a crisis in education in Gaza. In 2012, the United Nations published a report titled *Gaza in 2020: a liveable place?* which argued that 250 additional schools were needed to address the present shortfall and accommodate a rising population predicted to increase to 2.1 million from the present 1.8 million by 2020. With the

number of school buildings depleted further by 'Protective Edge', the education system is under unprecedented strain. 90 percent of schools in Gaza had to double shift - house two separate school populations in the same building every day - before the 2014 war so schools will now be under even greater pressure to accommodate rising pupil numbers.



A mother and child walk past the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli military operation.

The problems created by the creaking infrastructure of the education system are compounded by the psychological effects of war and poverty. In commenting on the multiple effects of war on Gaza's population, Pernilla Ironside said:

““The impact has truly been vast, both at a very physical level, in terms of casualties, injuries, the infrastructure that's been damaged, but also importantly, emotionally and psychologically in terms of the destabilizing impact that not knowing, not truly feeling like there is anywhere safe to go in Gaza”.

This is particularly the case with children on whom the psychological effects of conflict manifest themselves in many ways including fear, tension, aggression, becoming withdrawn and silent, difficulties in concentrating in school, and increasing isolation from family and friends. These psychological problems are also related to the 'pressure cooker'

environment of households under severe economic pressure as a result of Israel's siege.

Gaza under siege

Even before the 2014 conflict, the Gaza Strip was already in a state of economic collapse largely resulting from a decade long Israeli siege 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 with unemployment reaching over 43.2 percent of the population. Most of Gaza's 1.8 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.

The explicit aim of the blockade was made clear by Dov Weisglass, an advisor to former prime minister Ehud Olmert, when he said 'The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger' (BBC, 2012). A 'Red Lines' document disclosed in 2012 showed that this policy included calculating the minimum number of calories needed by Gaza's population to avoid malnutrition (ibid). Amnesty International is among many international human rights organisations that have deemed the blockade illegal under international law calling for it to be lifted without delay. In 2015, Amnesty said:

““Gaza's suffering is unacceptable and must end now. Israel has an obligation to end its collective punishment of Gaza's civilian population, and completely lifting the blockade is the right thing to do”.

The Project

The Centre for Global Education / Canaan Institute project had three main aims:

- To provide psycho-social support services to marginalised young people in four locations in the Gaza Strip with the support of the local community, schools and families.
- To supplement the formal education of young people through community-based learning focused on core areas of the school curriculum.

- To deliver workshops to the parents of the young people registered on the programme to enable them to extend psycho-social care into the household.



Project Objectives:

- To provide psycho-social support to 400 children aged from 7 to 14 years suffering acute effects of conflict-related trauma in the Gaza Strip;
- To supplement education provision to 400 children to enable them to reach their full potential in school;
- To deliver 128 training workshops (8 per month in each community) to the families of the children to enable them to provide 'joined-up' psycho-social support in the household;
- To co-ordinate project delivery in liaison with local schools in order to best meet the educational and psycho-social needs of young people;
- To deliver the project in partnership with four grassroots community centres in marginalised areas of the Gaza Strip;
- To provide training in facilitation to a total of 12 staff in the four centres to support their work with the children;
- To evaluate the programme and its impact on the facilitators and children.

Project Activities

The project had six stages of delivery that are described below:

STAGE 1: Enrolment of Children (February 2017)



The 400 children enrolled on to the project were selected by the four community centres in consultation with surrounding schools and visiting psychotherapists working with children in each school. The project enrolled children manifesting the most acute forms of trauma and anxiety who were identified by teachers and psychotherapists. A key component of the project was its 'joined-up' approach to the children's therapy by involving their families, schools and the local community. This ensured that the education activities targeted areas of the school curriculum in which the children needed support as well as providing psycho-social therapy to address the causes of stress. The four community organisations involved in project delivery were:

- Never Stop Dreaming Center (Khan Yunis in southern Gaza);
- Heker El Jame Youth Association (Deir el Balah, central Gaza);
- Palestinian Women's Development Center (Bureij, central Gaza);
- Rural Family Development Association (Moghraga, 10 km south of Gaza City).

STAGE 2: Training of Facilitators (February 2017)

Three members of staff from each of the four centres were recruited to work with the children for the duration of the project. A significant project outcome has been the enhanced skills base of the four 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 therapeutic play and learning activities that were designed to address the behavioural and learning needs of the children. The facilitators participated in an intensive three-day training course in Canaan from 20 - 22 February 2017 in preparation for their work with the children.



Project facilitators' meeting in February 2017

The training included:

- Facilitation techniques used to lead children in games and play, arts and crafts, and expressive mediums such as theatre, dance and rap.
- Training in the use of teaching activities designed to support learning in Arabic, English, Health and Science, and Mathematics which are key areas of the school curriculum.
- Active learning concepts, aims and methodologies consistent with good practice in development education.
- Facilitation methods used to support discussion on problems caused by trauma.
- Developing a teaching plan of activities and field work.

- Advice on liaison with schools during the project.
- Techniques to support the effective monitoring and evaluation of activities.

The training agenda was as follows:

Time	Day One	Day Two	Day Three
09:00am - 10:30am	Introduction to training Project review of year one.	Active learning methodologies based on good practice in development education.	Tailoring activities to the educational needs of children focused on key areas of the school curriculum.
10:30am- 11:00am	BREAK		
11:00am - 01:00pm	Overview of student needs in terms of education and psychosocial support.	Psychosocial and educational support activities - an overview of activities and methodologies.	Field planning – guidance on how to plan and evaluate activities for the duration of the project.



Facilitators participating in an activity as part of their training in the Canaan Institute

Facilitators' feedback on training

- The training succeeded in sharing new skills, methodologies and information with trainees.
- Particular benefits of the training included games, structured play exercises and how to deliver workshops to parents.
- The trainees learned new facilitation skills in how to manage active learning activities that maximise the participation of young people.
- The facilitators gained a lot of experience on how to provide psychosocial support using activities and discussion exercises.
- The trainees liked the flexibility of the activities in that they could be used with different age groups and were easy to implement.
- The training venue, hospitality and materials were excellent.
- The training provided lifelong skills that could be used in other areas of their work in the community and with young people.

Evaluation by percentage:

Subject	
Overview of students needs	91%
Introduction to active learning, development education.	89%
Psycho-social and educational support activities.	95%
Tailoring activities to educational needs.	88%
Field planning.	89%
Training as a group.	92%
Venue, Hospitality and materials.	90%
Facilitation of training.	96%

The facilitators were given work contracts for the duration of the project and received mentoring support from the staff of Canaan during the delivery of activities. This included assistance with the preparation of materials used in the training.

STAGE 3: Training Delivery to Children (February to May 2017)

In February 2017, the training began with 100 children enrolled in each centre facilitated by three staff members. The children in each centre were divided into groups of 25 along age lines. Two groups of 25 worked

on Saturday, Monday and Wednesday and the other two groups on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. This meant that 50 children attended workshops every day in each centre except Friday. Facilitators worked with each group over two periods in the morning from 8.00am to 2.00pm in the afternoon.



Facilitators leading a group activity with young people

The education activities used with the children aimed to strengthen their classroom performance in four core areas of the schools' curriculum:

- Arabic
- Mathematics
- English
- Health and Science.

The sessions combined formal school learning with play which included games, role play, theatre, dance, cultural expression and art. The activities were implemented using active learning methodologies and the outcomes of the children's work included: wall designs, dramas and songs, puppet and contemporary dance, stories, and art and embroidery. The facilitators used dynamic, interactive methodologies including drama, art, stories, poetry, rap and Dabka (traditional Palestinian song and dance). The activities focused on strengthening knowledge, skills

and confidence in the areas of literacy, numeracy, talking and listening. The formal sector work was delivered in liaison with teachers in local schools who advised on the key areas of the curriculum that needed to be addressed in the work with children. Teachers could advise on subject areas in which children were particularly weak and needed additional support. The activities were evaluated with the children through oral feedback and written questionnaires at the end of the programme.



Psychosocial Activities

A total of 128 psychosocial support meetings or “open days” was held over the duration of the project with 8 held per month in each of the four community Centres. The psychosocial support activities included:

- Games and structured play activities;
- Free expression activities and a psychological ‘dump’ exercise;
- Drawings and art work;
- Popular cultural tradition activities;
- Puppet theatre.



Having fun on a day trip

The children were also taken on day trips to the zoo and to parks to take them out of their normal living environment to a green space where they could relax and play. These trips enhanced the psycho-social therapy of children and were a high point of the project.



Children participating in an activity during a day trip to a park

STAGE 4: Family Workshops (February to May 2017)

A key part of the project activities involved the delivery of workshops to families of the children enrolled on the programme. The facilitators in each centre organised eight workshops in each month of the project (32 in total) and they had a high level of take-up.

The workshops focused on:

- Continuing the psycho-social support of young people at home that built upon the training delivered by the facilitators in each centre;
- How to recognise symptoms of trauma;
- How to manage young people in times of crisis and stress;
- How to use play and therapeutic learning in domestic life to alleviate stress.

The facilitators consulted with parents on a one-to-one basis 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.



Parents attending a family workshop aimed at strengthening psychosocial support for children in the household

	Name of Organisation	Attendance
1	Heker El Jame Youth Center Association	252
2	Palestinian Woman Development Society	119
3	Rural Family Development Association	112
4	Never Stop Dreaming Center	187
TOTAL		670



A facilitator delivers a family workshop on psycho-social support to children

The facilitators monitored the behaviour and progress of the children in responding to the psycho-social activities during the project and regularly met with parents to discuss the individual needs of each child.

STAGE 5: Celebration Days (May 2017)

Each of the four centres organised a Celebration Day in May 2017 to mark the end of the project and celebrate the students' achievements over the previous four months. The Celebration Days were organised jointly by the facilitators and the children and family members were invited to attend. The days involved children performing song, dance, poetry, rap and role plays. They often performed songs and dance in traditional dress with the help of their facilitators. The Celebration Days also allowed family members to see the work carried out by the children in Art & Design, Mathematics, Health & Science, English and Arabic reflecting the high quality activities delivered by the facilitators.



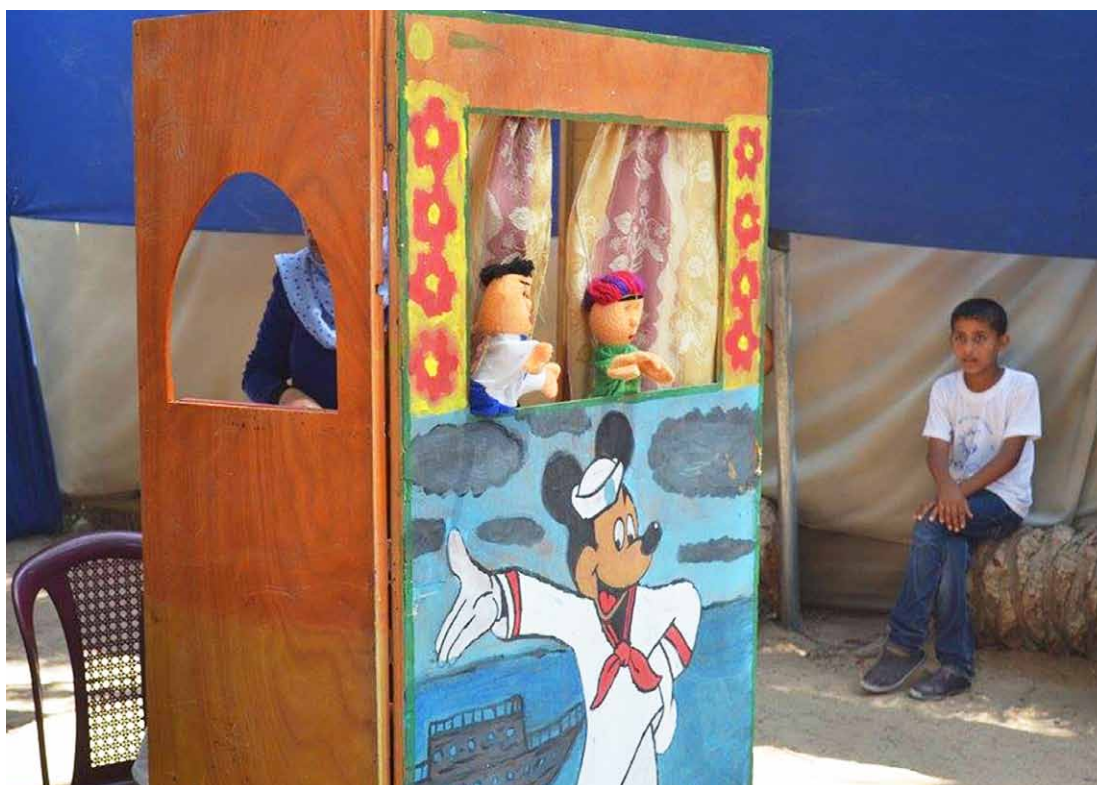
Issa Saba, Director of the Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy, the Centre's partner organisation in Gaza, attends a Celebration Day in Heker El Jame Youth Association, Deir El Balah. This was one of four community organisations that worked with Canaan in providing education and psycho-social services to children in Gaza.

The Celebration Days included:

- Exhibitions of wall murals, art, craftwork and drawings;
- Theatre performances written and performed by the children;
- Songs and Palestinian traditional dance (Dakba);
- Poetry written and performed by the children;
- Puppet shows;
- Clowns and dance shows.



The performances were attended by the children's families, local community members, the staff of Canaan Institute and the board of directors of each community association participating in the programme



Puppet theatre demonstration during a Celebration Day

STAGE 6: Monitoring and Evaluation (May to June 2017)

Throughout the delivery of the project, the staff of Canaan organised a total of 84 educational and administrative follow-up visits to the four partner organizations (6 visits to each organisation per month). These visits dealt with monitoring and evaluation, administrative issues such as how to securely store data records on parents and children, providing advice on workplans and providing advice on the delivery of activities.

The twelve facilitators also attended an end-of-project evaluation day organised by the staff of the Canaan Institute. This was a day of reflection on the project outcomes and the methodologies and materials used in the project activities. The table below summarises feedback received from the four project community organisations as part of the project evaluation.

Organization	Strengths of the project	Weaknesses of the project
Never Stop Dreaming Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous team work by the facilitators. • Strong desire of children to learn. • The children's participation in the activities. • The availability of IT resources. • The availability of games, activities and stationery. • Trips to outdoor facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some children struggled to concentrate at times. • The organisational facilities could be better. • Some children were absent from activities during exam time.
Heker El Jame Youth Center Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork spirit during the implementation of the program. • Administrative support. • Continuous follow-up by the Canaan Institute team. • The provision of activities and materials. • Availability of venues for activities. • Continuous full attendance of children. • Support of parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The period of program is short, it is for the second semester of the school year only.
Palestinian Women's Development Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continuous follow-up from Canaan Institute team and their notes to the facilitators. • The desire of children for learning and participation. • Teamwork spirit. • Administrative support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the beginning of the program children were not fully enrolled. • Fewer parents attended the workshops in year 2. • Some of the stationery provided was not good quality.
Rural Family Development Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of activities. • The continuous support of the Canaan Institute team. • Administrative support. • Good venues for activities. • Cooperation with other partners. • Partnership and work with parents. • Children were fully engaged in the activities. • Children enjoyed the activities and games. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The change of location for activities in year 2. • The enrolment of new participants because of the change in location. • Not enough furniture in the new location center (chairs, tables). • Some of children were absent during exams time. • Lack of hygiene among some children.

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