

**PROVISION FOR POST-PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF-PAL-09-311 – Youth local councils for civic engagement and social
change in Palestine (Occupied Palestinian Territories)**

Date: 05 December 2013

Acknowledgements

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participants through targeted learning, the meetings organized in Bethlehem and Ramallah that brought the six YLCs together for more training and ideas exchange, and the project's ability to mobilize stakeholders crucial to the success of the YLCs and thus the project itself: municipal councils, community members, families, schools, the media and relevant ministries. The project was considered to be effective.

The project was judged to be **efficient**. T

these risks and were actively seeking ways to mitigate them. Despite these risks to sustainability, the sound structure and ongoing commitment of Alkawrid, which was mentioned by many of those interviewed (including UN agencies) provide a solid foundation for youth community action, either individual or within an organized community group.

In attempting to identify **UNDEF value-added**, the evaluators spoke to representatives of relevant UN agencies and NGOs. In particular, the evaluators interviewed another Ramallah-based NGO, CHF, which is also engaged in setting up what it calls “shadow councils” for young people in some villages in the West Bank. The evaluators learned that CHF and Alkawrid had at one time been partners in this

interviewed gave numerous examples of how the project had had a positive impact on their self-esteem, confidence, knowledge and relationships, especially in a social system traditionally evolving around adults with little trust or space for young people's initiatives. Many of them specifically mentioned how much closer they had grown to their communities and their long-

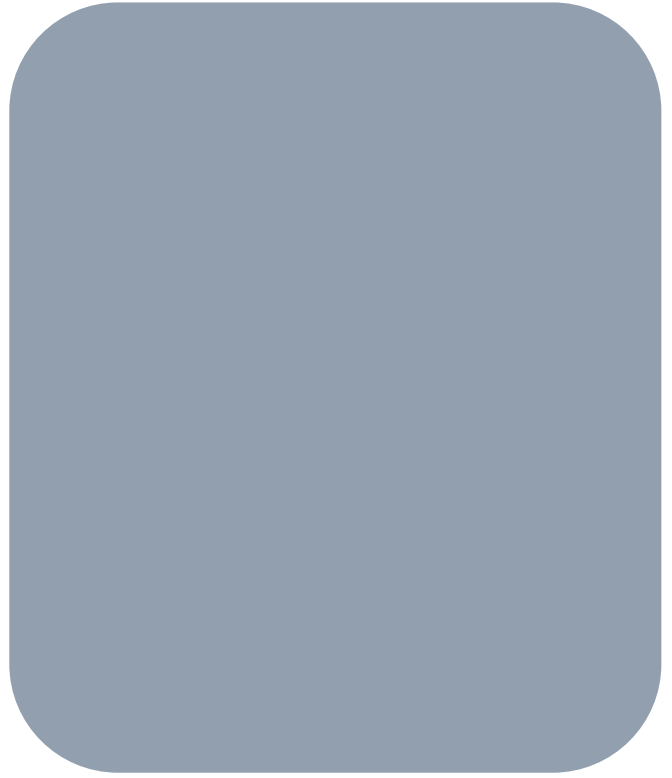
strong commitment to volunteerism created and promoted by the project, it would be a good idea to increase the attention given to fundraising during the training given to the elected YLC members and to bring in an experienced fundraiser to do that training so that the young people have the resources necessary to carry out their many creative ideas.

Given scarce resources, mentoring and networking arrangements/events might profitably be priority considerations for future phases of the YLC project. Helping the older participants who might otherwise move away from the YLCs to train and then act as mentors to younger participants would additionally contribute to sustainability, and further enhance the skills and confidence of the young people concerned. The networking events organized during the project were well received and similar meetings (including on-line forums) would be a good way to support continued engagement and improvement. Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter have been naturally used by the young people to communicate on community activities and during elections, creating a demand for information. The momentum should be exploited and focus put on further sharing information and good practices among the communities (youth, officials and

involved in the project and to debrief the Director and Project Manager of Alkawrid to share preliminary conclusions and ideas. Interviews were conducted in English and Arabic. The full list of people interviewed is included as Annex 3.

Information was collected, analysed and is presented in this report according to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation questions





roles and responsibilities of councillors and the rights and responsibilities of those who elect them.

Young people, especially, are reported to be disconnected from their communities and, with high rates of youth unemployment, suffer isolation, depression and feelings of helplessness.

It is in this context that the current project was conceived and implemented.

II. Project strategy

i. Project approach and strategy

Almwarid's strategy was designed to respond to the problem of citizens' social disengagement and disconnection with the political and public realms in the West Bank. The project document describes the political and public sphere as a locked domain, offering little room for dialogue and debate which are crucial to democracy. The project strategy was developed to address the following circumstances:

The population in general, but young people in particular, is largely unaware of its rights and duties, and about elected representatives' obligations.

As a consequence there is either limited or no communication between voters and elected representatives and this leads to a progressive disengagement and favours the rise of impunity.

In addition, young people consider themselves as voiceless at school, in their family and in society in general, because of traditional perceptions but also because of the hardship in which they are living and growing.

Young people dominate in terms of population and should contribute significantly to the development of communities. On the contrary, however, the project document (UDF-PAL-09-311), drafted in January 2009, stressed that 70 per cent of young Palestinians defined themselves as politically inactive or nearly politically inactive. Sixty per cent of 18-24⁵ year-olds said they would often or sometimes be afraid of expressing their views on a political subject.

The project document underscores how this general disconnection and passivism impacted on young people, namely:

Heightening of a sense of uselessness, feeding low-self esteem and confidence, frustration and depression;

Distancing young people from the system not only for lack of faith in it but in the future in general.

This analysis indicated a need to first build bridges between people; making local councils accessible and citizens, whatever their age, aware of the value of individual contributions for the global improvement of their environment. In light of this, the project document called for the following three areas of action:

- Basic civic education for citizens in general and young people in particular;
- Appeals to public entities for inclusive governance,
- Stimulating the concrete involvement of young people in community action.

⁵ The Status of Youth in Palestine, 2009 survey Sharek Youth Forum and UNDP 2009 Survey

ii. Logical framework

Each YLC developed – in consultation with the registered participants (their primary

Broad stakeholder outreach

Galvanizing the stakeholder support on which the project would depend at a number of junctures – at start-up, during elections, when the YLC was constituted, as the young people implemented their projects and as the young people work towards sustainability – was a crucial element in the effectiveness of the project.

Almawrid

The evaluators were able to inspect invoices, financial reports and documentation and to interview the financial controller of Alkawrid. It is clear that the financial arrangements for the project were logical, transparent and designed to allow the project to run efficiently. The evaluators note in particular that the funds provided to the YLCs were appropriate (even if the young people's

"I'm just an accountant; I never get to the field. But I heard all about the huge impact on the young people, their families, the community... it was not just about teaching in the class, but about action and energy."

Bashar, Finance Officer, Alkawrid

“The main lesson we have learned is that nothing is impossible if you want to make it happen.”
YLC member, Tarkoumea

“In my opinion, they [the young people] did great things. They came to me and said they wanted to do a big job. I warned them their idea – painting six of the eight schools in town – built in the 60s – was a very ambitious project and was in fact the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. They insisted that they wanted to undertake this maintenance project. They mobilized the whole community and received support from many volunteers. It took them one month to

practice in a number of ways, learning and implementing lessons on leadership, transparency, consultation and justice.

These young people are potentially the leaders of the future – one young YLC councillor said

volatile region where politics is an everyday factor in people's daily lives. Most of those interviewed believe that the YLCs will not be seen as a threat to the authorities at any level, however individual young people who rise to prominence partly as a result of their leadership within the YLCs will undoubtedly be watched with interest.

There is also a risk that a change in municipal council leadership or make-up might result in the important support that is currently given to the YLCs dissipating or disappearing all together. One councillor expressed the view that, although he is happy to allow the YLC to meet in the council offices, in time he believes the young people should find a place in which to hold meetings away from council. This was a lone voice among the authorities at this time, however lack of support from municipal councils remains a possibility in future.

One mayor expressed the belief that the YLC members should receive a small emolument, as municipal councillors do. This would be difficult given funding challenges, and it might endanger the spirit of volunteerism to which the young people seem committed. However it is a means of ensuring continuing engagement if, in the future, there is a dip in enthusiasm for the YLCs. While not recommended at this time, it is something that should never be completely dismissed.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (vii).

A note on the future

In a debriefing with the grantee, the evaluators had the opportunity to share ideas on the future of the YLCs and Almarid's work with them. Almarid would like to support the creation of more YLCs, but believes that the impetus should now come from young people themselves; in fact the evaluators were told by two of the project managers that they had already been approached by young people in other villages for help. Almarid has concerns that YLCs should not just be set up without the basis of training and consultation that marked this project, and remains ready to help young people source funds for such training.

The six YLCs have approached Almarid with the idea of setting up a "union" of YLCs that will bring them together periodically for networking and exchange of ideas.

The idea was also floated of extending the age group of participants in the YLC elections and body to young people up to the age of 25. This would allow more university students to participate. Almarid believes, however, that older participants might make it more difficult for younger participants to express themselves and participate fully. An alternative might be for 22 – 25 year-olds in the community to become mentors to the YLC members and others; this would also allow those participants who move outside the age range to remain engaged with the YLCs and youth activities.

These findings contribute to Conclusion (viii)

vi. UNDEF value-added

In the course of the evaluation mission, the evaluators learned about another Ramallah-based NGO, CHF, which is also engaged in setting up what it calls "shadow councils" for young people in some villages in the West Bank. The evaluators learned that CHF and Almarid had at one

"It wasn't enough just to learn. I wanted to live the experience of democracy."
YLC member in Tqu'a

The evaluators consider that UNDEF’s support of the work being done by Alkawrid was particularly important because it maintained the focus on education and training in democracy, governance and leadership and that, in the long term, this is crucial for the future of democracy in Palestine and that the prominent positioning of the UNDEF logo on all materials, banners and voting documentation reinforced the role of the UN in supporting democratic processes at grassroots level.

This finding leads to Conclusion (ix).

It is worth recording here that the representatives of UNDP interviewed, who were wholly supportive of Alkawrid’s methodology and professionalism, mentioned that they believe mid-term visits to projects are extremely valuable both to the implementing agency and also agencies like UNDP which frequently are seeking suitable partners for project activity.

This finding leads to Conclusion (x).



Youth environmental activities

IV.

vii. Sustainability will remain a challenge. Despite ongoing commitment from all those involved in the project, from the grantee to the young people and those they depend on for support, it will be vital to remain vigilant to change and to shore up the YLCs by identifying funding sources that will allow them to operate independently of municipal councils and NGOs.

viii. There is great potential for the YLC initiative to be further developed. The youth participants and Almawrid see a number of ways in which the project's results might be developed. In particular, the bringing-together of the YLCs in networking meetings (potentially with shadow councils created through the CHF project?) and training and promoting a mentoring system to support new participants and retain the experience and expertise of young people past the age of 22 were mentioned by a number of respondents.

ix. The project provided important value-added for UNDEF. Although similar initiatives to this exist in the West Bank, funded by other donors, none has democracy, governance and leadership at its heart to the extent that this project did. The high visibility given to UNDEF in all project outputs and permanent signage and the insistence on fundamental principles of democracy differentiate this project from others and signal the unique nature of UNDEF support.

x. Mid-term visits to the project are useful both for the project and for agencies seeking information on possible grassroots partners. This was underscored by UNDP.

V. Recommendations

i.

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Background documents

CIA World Facts: West Bank, 2012

UNDP Human Development Indicators 2012 (www.undp.org)

UNRWA website: www.unrwa.org

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics website: www.pcbs.gov.ps

Statistical website: www.indexmundi.com

Project outputs

Brochure

Newsletter

Election materials

Campaign and other information products

Project documentation

Project Document, UDF-PAL-09-311

Mid-term Progress Report, UDF-PAL-09-311

Final Project Narrative Report, UDF-PAL-09-311

Milestone verification mission report

Annex 3: People Interviewed

19 & 21 September 2013 – Arrival in country	
23 September 2013	
Mr Ismail Njoum	Director, Almawrid
Mr. Waleed Ihsheish	Project coordinator, Almawrid
Mr. Bashar Qara'	Finance officer, Almwarid
Ms. Lubna Taha	Project assistant
Ms Mira Abdallah	

Mr. Odaya Yamani	Youth council member
Ms. Lubna Abu-Zneid	Social worker/teacher
Ms. Sa'ida Titi	School principal
Mr. Mohammad Samir Al-Nammourah	Mayor
Mr. Abel Al-Majeed Al- Masharqa	Local Facilitator
Mr. Saleh Ahmed	Trainer
Mr. Waleed Dasseh	Trainer
26 September 2013	
<i>Ramallah</i>	

Ms Siham Rachid

Annex 4: Acronyms

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EQ	Evaluation Questions
HAMAS	Islamic Resistance Movement
HDI	Human Development Index
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	New Israeli Shekel
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	