

Peace Building and Resilience

Strengthening the Influence of Palestinian Refugees on their Living Conditions (PART)

Background and Objective

The future of Palestinian refugees remains one of the core unresolved challenges of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Currently, there are more than 5.6 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Approximately 1.7 million of the Palestinian refugees live in refugee camps in the region in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. In the context of ongoing conflicts and violence, they have hardly any possibilities to participate in influencing and shaping their living conditions for the better. Psycho-social support is not readily available to Palestinian refugees.

PART (short for PARTicipation), cooperates with UNRWA and other strategic partner organisations on:

Implementing reforms in the fields of psycho-social support and social participation: The project supports UNRWA and host government institutions in the Palestinian Territories, Jordan and Lebanon in their reform and political processes. The main goal is to improve the structural framework conditions to empower Palestinian refugees to increase their influence and improve their ability to act, as well as to be part of the decision-making processes in their own communities and host societies.

Project name	Strengthening the Influence of Palestinian Refugees on their Living Conditions (PART)
Commissioned by	The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria
Partners	UNRWA, host governments, NGOs, CBOs
Duration	November 2018 - October 2021

Empowering young Palestinian women and men to shape their living conditions: Through networking platforms and qualified local organisations, PART helps to interconnect youth and empowers them to develop and implement innovative initiatives for improving living conditions. At the same time, host government institutions in the Palestinian Territories, Jordan and Lebanon are provided with in-depth expert advice. The project supports them in increasingly including the expertise and interests of young Palestinian women and men in decision-making processes.

Networking and knowledge transfer between regional stakeholders: PART aims to connect more closely with stakeholders in the region as well as in the national and international levels in order to strengthen their influence and agency. The PART team provides advisory services on strategy and policy processes to strategic partners in creating and organising networks as well as in assuming more effectively a role as multiplier. Also, funds are made available to exchange the skills and know-how and introduce them in international platforms.



Vision Workshop on International Youth Day, 12.08.2019 in Amman, Jordan: Refugee youth jointly plan and visualise initiatives to increase their social participation in host communities.



On the left: Learning Journey to Amman in 2014: Palestinian refugees travelling to Jordan to get new impressions and ideas for their social innovation hub – a place of interaction between the different groups in the West Bank

On the right: Youth from Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon reflect on their contact styles and practice interventions with therapists in Beirut, Lebanon, 2019.

Governments as well as with UNRWA, the Advisory Committee to UNRWA or the Arab League.

Approach

The project applies a tailor-made conflict transformation method. The project thus improves psycho-social support on the one hand and social participation, i.e. influence, on the other. Better possibilities of influencing and shaping their own living conditions can have a positive effect on the psycho-social well-being of the Palestinian refugees. Conversely, the willingness and ability to play an active role in society and participate in shaping their living environment often requires a certain degree of psycho-social stability and the capacity to act. The two approaches are therefore mutually re-inforcing and, in this way, an essential part of the applied conflict transformation method.

Achievements

Reform processes in UNRWA: In the past years, PART increased its support to UNRWA's internal reform processes in form of a far-reaching re-structuring of its Relief and Social Service (RSS) Programme. PART support also includes the implementation of management initiatives (e.g. the installation of an ombudsperson) and the establishment of a counselling system.

Technical Exchange Committee of the Host Government Institutions: With the support from PART, the Technical Exchange Committee was formed in 2019 including mainly technical staff. Since then, this Committee convenes regularly (bi-weekly) to exchange information, experiences and challenges on issues relevant to Palestinian refugees and their institutional setup while at the same time enhance coordination on positions related to the Palestinian cause. This coordination is crucial in connecting the issues on the ground and refugee communities with decision-makers within the Host

Youth Initiatives: Since the end of 2019, young Palestinian refugees in Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan have been planning and developing around 100 innovative initiatives to implement in their communities through multiplier groups. To achieve this, young Palestinians are accompanied by mentors who help them improve their skills and support their negotiation processes with decision-makers in the camps. This is intended to provide the youth with experiences and spaces to exercise and strengthen their influence in their own communities.

Covid-19 Response

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, PART has been supporting UNRWA with extra funds to fight the spread of the virus and its socio-economic impacts in the camps in the West Bank and in Lebanon. The support consists in the establishment of safe (self-)isolation centres in the refugee camps, where up to 13.250 families are being supported in maintaining home quarantine and receiving hygiene articles, food and partial cash assistance. Additionally, 96 schools have been adapted to ensure their adequate operation under the pandemic conditions. In this way, PART enables the continuation of school operations for over 45.000 pupils in the refugee camps of the West Bank.

In Lebanon, PART supports the task force formed by its government partner, the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), with international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), UNRWA, and UNDP. The response entails increasing the capacities of health care centres, providing staff with protection material and extended training as well as increasing testing capacities, establishing and running isolation centres. Given the current economic crisis in Lebanon, UNRWA also provides cash assistance to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon including those coming from Syria.

Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

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On behalf of The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)