

## Governance

# Strengthening Youth for the Stabilisation of Palestine Programme

## Background

The Palestinian Territories have suffered crises and conflicts for decades. Palestinians face restrictions on their freedom of movement, high unemployment rates and rising poverty. The ongoing conflict and political status quo pose a lack of prospect for young Palestinians, who make up more than half of the Palestinian population.

Youth lack adequate spaces and platforms to interact and are insufficiently involved in local and national decision-making processes. As a result, their feeling of social and political agency on the national level and in their local communities decreases and creates a growing fatalism. Furthermore, the impact of the recurring conflict in the Gaza Strip is specifically severe for children who need urgent psychological support.

## Objective

The German Federal Foreign Office supports Palestinian youth and children through the *Strengthening Youth for Stabilisation of Palestine Programme* (SYSP). Its objective is to strengthen their personal skills and increase social participation to improve the way they deal with their difficult living conditions.

*The focus of the programme lies on:*

- (1) psychosocial support of children and young people and psychological crisis intervention in the Gaza Strip;
- (2) the promotion of youth initiatives in communities and
- (3) the development of safe spaces for children and youth.

Project name	Strengthening Youth for Stabilisation of Palestine
Commissioned by	The German Federal Foreign Office (AA)
Project region	Palestinian Territories (Gaza Strip, Area B and C)
Partners	Civil Society Organisations
Duration	September 2019 – Oktober 2021

The programme is carried out by GIZ in cooperation with selected civil society organisations. This is being done mainly in the marginalized areas in the West Bank (Area B and C) and in the Gaza Strip.

## Our Approach

**To enhance the social and political participation of youth**, the project promotes youth initiatives. Young people are trained to design and run projects to address issues that are important to them in their communities. They learn to overcome obstacles that limit their involvement in social, political, cultural and community life. Youth act as multipliers; they apply and pass on the knowledge they have gained in the trainings and through their experiences.

Sport and culture-based psychosocial support (PSS) programmes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip **enhance the psychosocial wellbeing of children**. They focus on decreasing the negative psychological impact of war and conflict on children and youth. Youth workers and coaches who are in contact with young people receive trainings in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) measures and increase their knowledge on referral

Sport activities within "Sports for Smiles" project by Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP) in the Gaza Strip, 2020





Youth activities as part of "Hand in Hand – Together we can make a difference" project by PYALARA, 2019

systems for further psychological support. This approach is complemented by a crisis intervention project to support traumatized children and their families. Mobile satellite teams conduct home visits to affected households in particularly marginalized areas of the Gaza Strip. They provide psychological first aid and help manage experiences of violence and trauma. Those in need of further support can be referred to mobile clinics, set up to improve access to specialized mental health services.

Furthermore, the project aims to **provide "safe spaces" for youth and children** in existing premises of local civil society organisations, in which youth can exchange ideas freely and implement their own activities and initiatives without violence or discrimination. This creates protected opportunities for exchange and participation.

## Covid-19 Response

Covid-19 presents a challenge to physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing. Anxiety, fear and the various stresses of lockdown are taking their toll across Palestinian households and communities.

With the support of Germany's Federal Foreign Office, the SYS programme therefore broadened its activities in Gaza to include mobile and tele-counseling and public service announcements on the importance of mental health during the corona crisis and to supply basic hygiene kits to low-income families. In addition, SYSP has supported local governorates in the West Bank to procure protective gear.

## Achievements

- ✓ **7 safe spaces** for children and youth have been developed in a school, sports clubs and facilities of community-based organisations
- ✓ **79 youth workers** and sport coaches have been trained in implementing psychosocial support measures for children in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank
- ✓ Over **1,200 children** have participated in regular psychosocial support measures. The activities are based on music, sports, drama and reading sessions that help the children dealing with stress and improve their psychological well-being
- ✓ Over **7,500 people** received psychological first aid measures by psychologists in the Gaza Strip
- ✓ Over **200 youth** received trainings on community organizing. The trainings helped youth to identify needs in their community and mobilize community members to carry out initiatives that address their demands.
- ✓ **10 youth initiatives** were implemented in marginalized communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

## Example: New Health Unit in Khan Younis through Youth Initiative

Youth in Khan Younis, Gaza set-up a health unit in their local community center in coordination with the community and local decision-makers. Residents have access now to volunteer doctors, medicine and medical analyses. SYSP worked with the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA) to empower young people as change agents and support them in implementing self-chosen projects.