



OXFAM



# PUTTING YOUTH FRONT & CENTRE

SUPPORTING PALESTINIAN YOUTH IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS

November 2021



**OXFAM**

# **PUTTING YOUTH FRONT & CENTRE**

A summary report of recommendations derived from OXFAM's Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal (PESTEL) analysis of youth activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

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Mohammad Khader

# INTRODUCTION

Youth engagement is critical to forward-thinking, sustainable development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Young people aged 18-29 comprise nearly one in four Palestinians, while facing high levels of unemployment, under-representation in political and decision-making bodies, and gender barriers—all of which impact their mental and physical health.

Oxfam has conducted a comprehensive study exploring youth activism (both online and offline) in the OPT in order to provide strategic, informed advice on youth mainstreaming within existing programmes implemented by Oxfam and its partners, as well as among other humanitarian and aid agencies working in the OPT.

The main objectives of the study are:

- **To provide a comprehensive PESTEL Analysis** (political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal) on youth online and offline activism.
- **To support Oxfam in its outreach** by building new partnerships and resource mobilization for scaling up initiatives on youth and strengthening collaborations among youth groups and alliance.
- **To foster social innovations and cohesion related to youth** and youth civic space and engagement in partnership with Palestinian youth actors.



## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted jointly with Oxfam OPT and ABC Consulting. The research is based on a combination of desk research, 19 key informant interviews with youth organisations and the Higher Council for Youth and Sport, an online activism analysis, an online survey including 233 youth and youth activists and 57 youth organization representatives, and five focus groups discussions (see box).

The sample of research participation aimed to be gender-balanced and to cover different geographical areas across the OPT. Selected youth and youth activists were between 18-29 years old and from seven West Bank governorates, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

### SURVEYS CONDUCTED ONLINE IN SPRING 2021

- 233 youth and youth activists (between 18-29 years), 3% from East Jerusalem and 67% from the rest of the West Bank, and 30% from the Gaza Strip, and 57 youth organization representatives from all 3 regions.

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

- 17 Key Informant Interviews with youth organizations: 9 in the West Bank (Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, Tulkarem, Bethlehem governorates), 7 in Gaza, and 1 in East Jerusalem.
- 2 Key Informant Interviews with representatives of the Palestinian Higher Council for Youth and Sport (HCYS).<sup>1</sup>

### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS CONDUCTED

- 2 focus groups (online) in Gaza, consisting of 10 participants (7 males and 3 females) and 13 participants (7 females and 6 males, 25-30 years old).
- 1 focus group (in-person) in the Bethlehem Governorate, consisting of 10 activists, 20-25 years old.
- 1 focus group (in-person) in the Hebron Governorate (Al-Aroub refugee camp), consisting of 6 participants (6 males), 24-27 years old.
- One focus group (in-person) in East Jerusalem with 8 youth activists (2 males and 6 females), 20-25 years old.



Ramadan Agha

# STUDY FINDINGS

## ABOUT YOUTH IN THE OPT

Palestinian society is referred to as a “young society.” The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) defines “youth” as those in the age group between 18 and 29 years old. The population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip combined in July 2021 was about 5.23 million<sup>2</sup>, with youth comprising 22% of society.<sup>3</sup> The gender ratio among youth is 105 young men to every 100 young women.<sup>4</sup>

Over the years, Palestinian society has faced a rise in conservative norms and a dominance in gender norms, gender expectations, and patriarchy. Young women, are at high risk of early marriage, especially in vulnerable areas such as isolated Area C communities, while men usually face the burden of financially supporting a family at a young age.<sup>5</sup> The many obstacles to which Palestinian youth are exposed hinder their civic engagement and limit their participation in society. Despite the presence of adolescent and youth centres in both the West Bank and Gaza, such institutions are characterized by low participation rates for young women due to gender-dominant societal constraints.<sup>6</sup>

Statistics indicate that Palestinian youth tend to be well-educated. In 2018, the tertiary enrolment rate for the West Bank and Gaza was 43% (compared with 33% average in the Arab World).<sup>7</sup> However, youth unemployment in the OPT is a significant issue. The unemployment rate among young graduates stands at 64% (39% for males and 69% for females).<sup>8</sup> One in three (32%) of the country’s total working-age population between 15 and 24 years old are actively engaged



in the labour force, although stark gender discrepancies persist—52% of males are active, compared to only 12% of females.<sup>9</sup>

Youth in the OPT are largely disengaged from politics. A key reason for this is the lack of a transfer of power or responsibility over the past decade, which generally limits youth from participating in leadership roles in their communities and in political affairs. Most Palestinian youth have never participated in an election, and the PCBS indicated in (2017) that only 40% of young people reported willingness to participate in an election event (29% in the West Bank and 57% in the Gaza Strip).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the political division between the West Bank and Gaza has contributed to their disenfranchisement.<sup>11</sup> According to a 2016 survey conducted by Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD), 42% of youth in the West Bank and Gaza had participated in social/ community work. The percentage of youth who participated in politics was, however, much lower at only 14%. Furthermore, only 13% of youth were members of a political party.<sup>12</sup>

**“Youth activism”** is defined as the participation of persons between the ages of 18-29 years old in community organising that contributes to achieving political, social, or economic change. It is considered to be an essential tool to transform communities and advocate for issues that are important to activists in their society. Youth activism can, however, focus on both national issues and wider issues and goals, such as regional and transnational goals. Youth activism can be practiced by youth online and/or offline.

## STUDY CONCLUSIONS: WHAT DOES YOUTH ACTIVISM IN THE OPT LOOK LIKE?

- **Youth activism in the OPT is mainly focused on community work and social activism, rather than political activism.** Political youth activism poses more limitations and risks. Political criticism, or expressing different political opinions, is deemed unacceptable by many individuals in positions of power and is suppressed, including by use of force. Youth activists in the OPT focus predominantly on the following matters: 1) awareness of and defending the rights of marginalized groups in the OPT, 2) volunteering, supporting groups in need, issues around unemployment, 3) lack of job opportunities and poverty, 4) the Israeli occupation and its impact, 5) political criticism regarding national politics and the political environment, 6) women and youth rights, and 7) the non-application of laws.
- **Youth activism takes place both online and offline, although online activism has increased in the past two years due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.** Both online and offline activism face different challenges and risks for activists. In-person activism, protests, and demonstrations are largely banned in the Gaza Strip by the de facto authorities.<sup>13</sup> Surveillance and monitoring of youth activists by Palestinian and Israeli authorities is a barrier and risk, regardless of whether activities are online or offline. Online activism is popular among youth

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that self-identify as activists, as well as those who do not. Youth activists prefer to use a combination of online and offline methods to achieve their goals and have a tangible impact.

- **Facebook and Instagram are the most popular online platforms used for activism by youth in the OPT.** Technology, not just social media, can be used to support activism and activists. There is **a need for long-term sustainable support in the use of technology and new technologies** as they come online to improve the effectiveness of activism and associated initiatives.
- **Youth activism is taking place in all regions within the OPT– the West Bank (Areas A, B and C), including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.** Activism appears to be more prevalent in refugee camps and cities than in villages. Villages in the OPT are particularly defined by stronger conservative values that make awareness-raising and campaigning on sensitive issues more challenging. There is a belief among respondents that youth activism is dependent upon the presence and operation of organizations (mainly CBOs and CSOs). While East Jerusalem benefits from a greater number of youth CSOs, Israeli authorities restrict any activity supporting Palestinian heritage or political life. Gaza, the Jordan Valley, and villages in rural areas of Area B and Area C in the West Bank have very few CSOs and therefore, fewer youth activist opportunities. The geographic space for youth activism is always impacted by the presence of the occupation, travel restrictions and proximity to the military or Israeli settlers.
- **Young men and women both participate in activism in the OPT, although barriers remain for women’s participation** in certain types of activism, such as demonstrations against the Israeli occupation at confrontational locations.
- **A lack of knowledge of activist groups, a fear of retaliation from the Palestinian Authority, and doubt that activism can make a difference are the main reasons that youth in the OPT do not participate in activism.** Those who do participate in youth activism benefit from feelings of self-satisfaction and that they are helping others.
- **Support for youth activists in terms of funding, capacity-building, and networking is present in the OPT, but has gaps, is conditional, and is not sustainable or long-term.** Youth activists in all five focus group discussions comprising the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem have reported this challenge. Provided support should be both practical and moral in nature, and the achievements and contributions of activists recognized, publicized and celebrated. Youth activism and youth activists should be included more in the strategies, programs and projects of organizations. Furthermore, youth activists should play an active role in devising and implementing such strategies, initiatives, and activities to ensure that their needs are met, and their goals and effectiveness achieved.
- **Social youth activists provide crucial support in communities, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups,** filling in political/institutional/social service support deficiencies and vacuums. They provide economic provisions to groups in need, and advocate for the rights of marginalized groups to be recognized and respected.



Moataz Azaizah

- **Youth policies in the OPT are outdated, irrelevant, or not effectively applied.** Youth reported that laws are outdated or not applicable to the civic space context, or that the existing laws are used as a tool of repression against youth activism.
- **Political and social support for youth activists is limited and conditioned, for example, on the types of activism, its goals and the nature of the activities.** Even if support is offered, it is conditional and often also serves the needs of others, i.e., does not originate from the youth activists themselves. Achievements by youth activists are largely not acknowledged or celebrated, such as in the media. More study

“The quality of youth policies that guarantee youth rights is weak to the extent that if you ask a guy from Gaza what freedom is for you, he will respond, ‘The ability to write what I want on Facebook without having to think at least 100 times before posting it.’”

—Youth organization interviewee, Gaza

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is needed to explore why the media, particularly local media, does not report on youth activism.

- **Youth activists reported important successes and impacts** (the study relied on their perceptions to generate impact). Among political youth activists, these examples included campaigns to raise the minimum wage in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour; producing an animated film to raise awareness about the need to participate in the elections; a campaign to remove religion from the national ID card, and establishing a unified Palestinian movement against the Social Security Law. Among youth social activists, examples included collecting donations and creating recreational activities for autistic children, providing aid to poor households, producing internationally screened short films on the challenges women face in Jerusalem, cleaning up beaches in Beit Lahia and increasing environmental awareness, advocacy for people with disabilities calling for observance of the law ensuring representation, and implementing a range of recreational activities for women and children in remote areas of Gaza affected by the 2014 war.



### CASE STUDY: #SAVESHEIKHJARRAH AND PALESTINIAN ACTIVISM

In May 2021, the use of #SaveSheikhJarrah (both English and Arabic) brought world attention to this occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood. Sheikh Jarrah residents led the fight for Palestinian rights by broadcasting live on Instagram and other social media platforms, and by mobilising a new generation of Palestinians and international activists in solidarity with families in Sheikh Jarrah that are facing forced displacement. Influencers from Sheikh Jarrah called upon influencers from the Arab world and globally to upload and share video content about attacks on residents and activists by Israeli forces and settlers.

Many Palestinian users reported that their accounts were censored, limited or shut down on various social media platforms and slammed social media companies for removing their content. Activists directed complaints about digital discrimination against Palestinians to Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, complaining about their content being restricted with notifications that they had violated the apps' community guidelines. Instagram disseminated a statement explaining that the restrictions were related to a technical bug that had removed millions of stories, including some related to Palestinian content. But the content was not restored.

In response, Palestinian (youth) activists started an online campaign to downgrade Instagram and Facebook's app review ratings to protest censorship of Palestinian accounts and posts (including #SaveSheikhJarrah or #GazaUnderAttack). This resulted in review rates dropping considerably—in one week the average star rating of Facebook decreased from over 4 out of 5 to 2.3 out of 5 on Apple's App Store<sup>14</sup>, proving the success of the coordinated campaign. Subsequently, Instagram's Middle East and North Africa team reached out to a number of youth influencers and held a meeting to discuss the issue of censorship on social media platforms.<sup>15</sup> The activists flexed their muscles, showing the power that they had as a collective to hold large companies to account for violation of their digital rights. Moreover, #SaveSheikhJarrah became an international symbol of Palestinian resistance against occupation and gained solidarity from international politicians, artists and celebrities, changing the narrative.



# SUPPORTING PALESTINIAN YOUTH ACTIVISM



Palestinian youth face numerous barriers to active community participation, among them high unemployment, political malaise or lack of engagement, and societal resistance or indifference to their leadership. These recommendations are based on focus groups, interviews and a survey of 233 youth in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### ISSUE: LACK OF SOCIETAL ACCEPTANCE OF YOUTH ACTIVISM AND LEADERSHIP



**17%**

of youth activists said they experienced threats, warnings or intimidation due to their activities.



**60%**

of youth respondents said that Palestinian politicians extend youth activists "little" or "very little" support.

### How can civil society and aid organizations encourage the Palestinian community to be receptive to and support youth activism, movements, and rights?

- Raise awareness in the community, and among youth activists, about youth rights.
- Publish the success stories of youth activists and their achievements.
- Increase self-confidence among Palestinian youth and youth activists by enhancing skills and capacities.
- Support youth organizations and civil society organizations, especially with increased cooperation and networking.
- Encourage Palestinian ministries and government institutions to support Palestinian youth activists.
- Organize youth activities that the community is likely to support.

### ISSUE: WEAK FINANCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES AND THE ABSENCE OF LEGAL SAFEGUARDS

“Activities, initiatives, and events are effective when they start, but after a short period of time, their effectiveness greatly diminishes... because they do not receive support from the government or political parties, youth organizations or CSOs.”

—Gaza focus group participant

### How can civil society and aid organizations empower young people and provide opportunities for youth to lead change within their communities?

- Provide funding.
- Offer representation and advocacy support.
- Avoid project-driven support to organizations and groups in order to better ensure sustainability and longer-term support.
- Involve youth activists in decision-making and leadership positions.
- Offer economic empowerment and job opportunities.
- Provide safe spaces and enact legal safeguards for youth and youth activists.
- Provide needs assessment and monitoring support.

### ISSUE: STARK GENDER INEQUITIES IN SOCIETAL AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION



54%

youth respondents and



96%

of female respondents said that women youth activists face greater barriers and challenges than male peers.

### ISSUE: ABSENCE OF ACCESS, INCLUSION, AND PARTICIPATION FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

“ There is a need to support the activities and initiatives undertaken by women activists, people with special needs, and any other marginalised groups.”

—West Bank Higher Council for Youth and Sport representative

### ISSUE: MISSING YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION OF YOUTH VOICES

“ Organisations in the Gaza Strip are not that supportive of youth activism.”

—Gaza focus group participant

### ISSUE: LACK OF SUSTAINED SUPPORT AND VISIBILITY FOR YOUTH CAUSES



88%  
from the  
Gaza Strip



72%  
from the  
West Bank

cited “likely” or “very likely” resources/skills/outreach barriers.

### How can civil society and aid organizations further the rights movement of young women suffering from injustice?

- Addressing underlying constraints on rights of girls and women.
- Ensure accessible and Inclusive mental health and legal services.
- Consider safe spaces to ensure women and girls’ participation in organization activities and services.
- Adapt a more effective advocacy towards eliminating violence against women and youth.
- Ensure accessible and inclusive programming for girls/women empowerment.

### How can the rights of persons with disabilities be supported, and their participation in activism or activities be increased?

- Ensure integration of people with disabilities in youth-related economic empowerment programming, supporting both accessibility and affordability including through financial support.
- Guarantee the rights and freedoms of people with disabilities by increasing advocacy on their rights and freedoms.
- Increase cross-sectoral cooperation and support between organizations and stakeholders.

### How can youth organizations support youth activists in becoming leaders that drive sustained local and global impact?

- Enhance cooperation between schools, universities, families and CSOs.
- Provide programmatic support and nurturing through customized (i.e., contextual and age-appropriate) programming targeting youth.

### How can political youth activists and social youth activists be further included in civil society programs?

- Increase meaningful involvement of youth activists in activity and strategic planning.
- Establish permanent relationships and a degree of sustainability.
- Help youth activists to be more involved in the media, and increase media attention to youth and youth activist issues.
- Revive the volunteer spirit amongst Palestinian youth.



Lama Khater

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## HOW CAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID ORGANIZATIONS GENERATE CHANGE FOR YOUTH ACTIVISM?

How can civil society and aid organizations encourage Palestinian communities to be receptive to and support youth activism, movements, and rights?

- Raise awareness in the community and among youth activists about youth rights.

Youth activists are demanding to exercise their fundamental rights, such as the right to freedom of speech and expression and the right to civic engagement and participation, and thereby facing different challenges and risks. Youth activists seek to both apply their rights through their activism and seek to develop and secure their rights. International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) can use their past and current experiences of rights awareness-raising to advocate and promote the rights of youth activists, for example, knowing what forms of rights awareness-raising is most effective for audiences in the OPT.

Youth activists themselves require awareness-raising or increased awareness-raising on issues or topics deemed relevant to Palestinian society and important for their activism. In this study, youth activists and youth organizations state that increased awareness-raising on topics and issues is an area of need. INGOs can support them by organising these workshops or seminars. Organizations may have in-house professional expertise in specific awareness-raising content areas, or are able to contract consultants in these areas of expertise to conduct workshops/seminars that youth activists can attend and learn from (contributing to a greater knowledge base).



To support inclusiveness and participation, the planning for such workshops/seminars should also be carefully considered. INGOs can hold workshops/seminars in all three regions of the OPT (West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem) in a venue that supports large attendance numbers. If possible, workshops/seminars should be conducted in different governorates to allow for travel accessibility. If the events are only going to be held in one venue in one governorate, INGOs should either fund travel costs or organize transportation to allow for access and participation (practically and financially). Furthermore, given travel limitations and restrictions in the OPT, organizations should offer awareness-raising through digital means and platforms. For example, the live-streaming of workshops/seminars would allow youth activists to participate from a distance. INGOs can also record and share the workshops/seminars on a shared digital platform accessible by youth activists. Privacy and security should, however, be carefully considered and respected.

- **Publish the success stories of youth activists and their achievements.**

Publishing the success stories and achievements of youth activists in the OPT can easily become an effective part of awareness-raising and outreach programs, both local and international. Oxfam, for example, has its own successful outreach, both on the ground and through digital channels, such as the Oxfam international website and regional website in Arabic. Other recommendations included strengthen INGO direct work, engagement, and networking with youth activists. Close relationships can more easily uncover activist goals, achievements, contributions and impacts. These can be the source of case studies and general moral support.

- **Increase self-confidence among Palestinian youth and youth activists.**

Increasing the self-confidence of Palestinian youth and youth activists is a long-term objective to be achieved by incorporating it into all INGO programmatic development related to youth activism. In working with youth and youth activists, organizations should offer motivation, encouragement, and praise for endeavours and achievements. Second, providing opportunities for youth and youth activists in the OPT to apply and/or develop their skills, for example through skills workshops or project creation, is an important way to increase the self-confidence that youth and youth activists have in their own skills and capabilities.

- **Support youth organizations and civil society organizations, especially with increased cooperation and networking.**

Oxfam supports youth and youth activists in the OPT in different ways. It works closely with youth and youth activists, gleaning needs and providing support for youth activists to carry out their activities and goals effectively. This includes the provision of needed resources, and supporting activism outreach. INGOs are well-positioned to encourage and facilitate increased cooperation and networking that supports youth activists in the OPT. They can identify project partners, such as governmental institutions, CSOs, youth organizations, NGOs, and international governmental partners who can work on joint/combined projects dedicated to Palestinian youth and youth activism.

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- **Encourage Palestinian ministries and government institutions to support Palestinian youth activists.**

Youth and youth activists in the OPT are largely excluded from involvement in Palestinian political institutions and political decision-making positions. INGOs already have connections and interactions with Palestinian ministries and government agencies that they can leverage to network for youth activists and organizations, also raising awareness about the importance of youth activism, and the critical impacts of youth activism and activists.

- **Organize youth activities that the community is likely to support.**

Activities that have clear goals, stay away from religious issues, do not use sharp or negative criticism, and are sustained and well-organized are deemed more likely to be accepted by the community. Moreover, if an activist group seeks to achieve a benefit for all of societal members, not only for a particular party/group, the activity is more likely to be received positively by the community. Youth activists in the OPT are very aware of local customs and traditions and what is acceptable to the majority of Palestinians, taking these into account. It is important that INGOs also listen closely to their youth partners and consider objectives carefully.

### CASE STUDY: YOUNG DEVELOPERS HAVE ANSWERS FOR GAZA'S MEDICAL QUESTIONS

Abdulrahman Ahmad and Mohamad Ghuneim are two ambitious young innovators in their mid-20s. While training at hospitals in the Gaza Strip, they witnessed many patients who were subjected to delayed care, resulting in complications. To prevent this, they decided to develop an online platform where patients are able to consult practitioners about their health issues. The entrepreneurs were driven by the desire to raise health awareness and combat medical misinformation.

In 2018, the duo began to develop the platform, Tebfact, at their own expense. The platform engaged about 100 medical editors who aimed to ensure that the information presented was factual and medically sound. The platform also provided those without the time or resources to access the appropriate medical treatments with healthcare offers at a low cost.

In late 2019, the two passionate activists and entrepreneurs launched the application, in coordination with the Palestine Doctors Association. Online medical consultations are provided via text message, voice message, and video call. Consultations are provided for about 10 Shekels (approximately USD 3). After the outbreak of Covid-19, consultations were provided free of charge through the UNCAS incubator and the United Nations Development Programme.

"The application went viral in its first year," said one of the board members of the application, Othman Al-Aga in an interview. "The number of consultations exceeded 6,000 within one year of launching the app. In addition, more than 10,000 users downloaded the application within the first year." Abdulrahman and Mohamad's hospital training made them aware of problems and needs in the health sector. They combined their passion, activism, motivation, and entrepreneurial skills to make a vital contribution to Palestinian society.

### How can civil society and aid organizations empower young people and provide opportunities for youth to lead change within their communities?

#### ● Provide funding.

Lack of funding, money, and financial support can constitute a barrier to youth activism and youth activists directly in different ways. Financial support can be used for areas of need, e.g. funding resources, activities, and travel costs. The provision of such funding and financial support from a supportive partner organization can therefore significantly help to overcome financial barriers and limitations in place for youth activism and activists in the OPT. New youth may join an activist organization or engage in activism throughout the year, potentially requiring additional or rolling support. This support should be distributed equitably by geography and other variables.

INGO partners should be mindful of two aspects. First, funding and financial support should have a degree of sustainability as youth activism is ongoing, organic, and not bounded by time frames. There are many entrenched and complex issues/topics which youth activists focus on, and youth activists target both short-term goals and long-term goals. Furthermore, given the PESTEL environments in the OPT, new areas of activism focus continuously emerge. With all of these realities, there is therefore a need for sustainable financial support/funding. INGOs should try—as much as possible—to make this support non-conditional. Finally, funding should be specifically focused on supporting the rights and participation of women/girls and persons with disabilities.

#### ● Offer economic empowerment.

Youth and youth activists in the OPT require job opportunities, and support/opportunities for income-generating projects, including empowerment to create their own income-generating projects/businesses as part of its economic and economic empowerment programmes. INGOs should also dedicate funding and support for youth and youth activists in the OPT to institutionalize their own income-generating ventures and youth businesses. The ideas and plans that youth have for their own means of empowerment, including economic, are often overlooked. Rather than waiting for opportunities to be created and provided by external sources, institutions or organizations, youth can create their own opportunities. Youth activists possess a range of skills, e.g. strategic thinking and organization which are not only important for activism but are transferable. Furthermore, youth activists especially possess the knowledge and awareness of need in the OPT, from which they can plan and develop their own economic projects and business creation to support these needs and fill gaps in the market, society, and economy. What youth require is support to practically implement ventures. Furthermore, given the poverty resulting from unemployment and economic empowerment deprivation, such support can also be provided through INGO's humanitarian and development programmes.

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- **Provide needs assessment and monitoring.**

INGOs can build upon this comprehensive PESTEL Research Study Report and accompanying data to focus on specific needs and assessments, as well as other relevant reports and sources. To uncover further needs and aspirations, organization partner MEAL/Research teams can design and conduct the surveys and assessments. Alternatively, INGOs can provide further consultancy opportunities to conduct these surveys and assessments, thereby providing qualitative and quantitative needs/aspirations. In order to support youth activists in conducting their own needs assessments and monitoring, INGOs can organize specific seminars or workshops on monitoring and learning tools and techniques, ensuring that those workshops/seminars are inclusive and enable participation.

- **Offer representation and support.**

Currently youth activism in the OPT is confined to the side-lines of society. Youth activists, and youth as a whole, do not generally have representation or channels to communicate formally with decision-makers and governmental authorities. Until this is the case, INGOs can conduct advocacy and lobbying campaigns on the governmental level, targeting executive and legislative in-



stitutions/ministries. INGOs can conduct wider public advocacy and lobbying campaigns to encourage political parties and governments (in the West Bank, Gaza, and representatives in East Jerusalem) to provide more support for youth at all levels, and for youth activists in particular.

While the HCYS acts as the Ministry for Youth in the West Bank, its support for and representation of youth activists is limited. In Gaza, no such Higher Council or Ministry for Youth currently exists. In both the West Bank and Gaza, and if possible in East Jerusalem, one effective ministry supporting and representing youth and all forms of youth activism in the OPT should be created and effectively implemented. While geographical divisions exist, ministries should be created in each geographical region.

INGOs should consider the prospect of creating a designated Youth Activism position as part of their youth programming in the OPT. The focus and efforts of this position would be to work closely with youth activists and ensure that they have the representation and support needed to empower them to lead change in their communities. The individual would ensure such support and representation both within the organization, and in wider spheres of representation and support. The creation of such a position would also increase sustainability of support for youth activists throughout INGOs, vis-a-vis their wider efforts and support.

- **Involve youth activists in decision-making and leadership positions.**

INGOs should encourage social, public, private, and governmental institutions to integrate youth activists into decision-making positions. Furthermore, utilizing their experience in developing strategic plans, civil society and aid organizations (in coordination with youth activists) can help partnership organizations develop strategic plans for incorporating youth activists into decision-making positions. INGOs can facilitate the communication and interaction of youth activists with government figures and decision-makers, for example, organizing different joint events to allow for this networking and communication. Finally, they can incorporate youth activists into decision-making positions within programming and planning.

- **Provide safe spaces and enact legal safeguards for youth and youth activists.**

There is an absence of safe spaces for Palestinian youth in the OPT, particularly in Gaza. The creation of safe spaces where both activists and youth can 'escape' from the frustrations, pressures and challenges in their environment is important in INGO programming, producing social as well as mental health benefits. Furthermore, lobbying for legal safeguards for youth should be a com-

**“ There is a need to support the activities and initiatives undertaken by women activists, people with special needs, and any other marginalised groups. There is a need to support and rehabilitate youth who have criminal records. There is a need to make more efforts by the responsible bodies to confront issues related to the spread of violence, drugs and weapons among youth, in addition to issues related to the negative use of the Internet and social networking sites. There is also a need to provide more support for female youth activists to overcome the challenges they face.”**

*—Higher Council for Youth and Sport representative, West Bank*

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ponent of general legal and justice programs. If laws are implemented that safeguard youth and youth activist freedoms and rights, INGOs should closely monitor their roll-out, identify if these laws have been violated, and advocate for their enforcement. This is crucial for legal and political accountability (including from Palestinian security forces).

### How can civil society and aid organizations further the rights movement of young women who suffer from injustices?

- **Increase awareness-raising by holding sessions on issues and rights pertaining to girls and women.**

Increase the awareness of girls/women about their rights. Increase the awareness of girls/women about how to defend themselves. Increase the awareness of girls/women of bodies and authorities they can turn to if they are exposed to any kind of violence or rights violations. Encourage and support girls/women not to remain silent when exposed to violence, and encourage them to turn to the relevant authorities. Crucially, do not just offer trainings and awareness-raising sessions to girls/women, but offer them to men in particular, and to society in general in order to try to change mindsets and respect for women's rights. INGOs should not just incorporate youth activists into gender and rights awareness-raising programming, but rather youth should be equal partners in such programs.

- **Increase legal and mental health support services/provisions.**

Civil society organizations and INGOs can consider creating and funding legal and mental health support services for women and girls in need. Alternatively, they can work with or support other organizations working in the OPT who already provide such services and have expertise and resources in place. Civil society and aid organizations should network with these groups and determine how they can contribute. Psychological support and provisions can also be considered as a humanitarian need. Organizations can also support the needs of girls and women in the OPT through awareness-raising and outreach.

- **Provide safe spaces specifically for women and girls.**

INGOs should consider locations/venues where such spaces can be created, and what factors would make such spaces 'safe.' The creation of safe spaces is an important practical measure that organizations can implement to help support women's safety, security and rights. It is also very likely outside of the means available to youth activists, while being an important practical and moral difference for women in need and their dependants.

- **Support bringing perpetrators of violence/violations to justice through official means.**

The importance of bringing perpetrators of violence/violations to justice through official means can be part of INGOs' awareness-raising, advocacy, and the development of rights programming. In bringing perpetrators of violence/violations against women/girls to justice, it is crucial that women/girls are not

victimized. The implementation of official justice for girls/women should be grounded in a rights-based and justice-based approach.

- **Support the empowerment of girls/women.**

Civil society and INGOs can create projects dedicated to providing or enhancing economic or social opportunities for women and girls to increase their empowerment and self-reliance. Empowerment can also be supported and strengthened through specific rights, gender, and women/girl empowerment projects.

**and other female youth “cannot engage in activities that go late, especially in Jerusalem, because there is no feeling of security due to the occupation and the settlers.”**

—focus group participant, East Jerusalem

### **How can the rights of persons with disabilities be supported, and their participation in activism or activities be increased?**

- **Provide opportunities for participation.**

INGOs can help institutions design vocational training courses, providing training to institutions and staff that strengthens awareness-raising on disabilities, provides resources needed in the creation and implementation of opportunities, and facilitates trainer expertise in opportunities and courses for people with disabilities.

- **Provide facilities and resources to support people with disabilities, enabling participation.**

As part of rights programming, INGOs can allocate funding to support the purchase or implementation of needed resources, such as physical infrastructure that allows wheelchair access. Organizations can also undertake needs assessments with people with different disabilities in the OPT and share its findings with different institutions and activity venues, thus allowing them to develop plans and practical measures that support people with disabilities and enable participation.

- **Guarantee the rights and freedoms of people with disabilities.**

INGOs can play an important role in encouraging and lobbying for the rights and freedoms of the disabled. The creation of effective and inclusive policies and laws that protect and advance the rights of community members (including marginalized groups such as people with disabilities), and seeks to support community members through effective dedicated policies, are central to the development of an open, inclusive, fair, tolerant, and supportive society and state.

- **Increase cross-sectoral cooperation and support.**

INGOs can engage in lobbying and awareness-raising efforts to heighten the importance of cross-sectoral support. Organizations should utilize their existing networks and contacts, as well as expand networking and contacts with public,

## PUTTING YOUTH FRONT AND CENTRE



private, governmental and civil institutions/organizations to develop support across sectors.

### How can youth organizations support youth activists in becoming leaders that drive sustained local and global impact?

- **Enhance cooperation between and with schools, universities, families and CSOs.**

Families, schools, and universities are three immediate 'sites' of importance for youth activists, as this is where youth spend much of their time. If families, schools, and universities have a greater understanding and awareness of what issues youth activists focus on, the goals that they have, the important contributions and impacts that youth activists have made through their activism, then families, schools and universities may be more likely to support youth activists. INGOs can encourage families, schools, and universities to support youth activists. Particular focus should be placed on holding such campaigns and awareness-raising sessions in hard-to-reach areas or in areas where there is limited or no presence of CSOs and therefore a likely deficit in awareness regarding youth activism. Organizations should first coordinate with the Ministry of Education, building on its existing contacts and relationships. Again, the creation of extracurricular activities should be based on a needs-assessment and the active involvement of youth activists themselves.

- **Provide programmatic support and nurturing.**

If INGOs are committed to supporting youth activism/youth activists in the OPT, support should not just be in the form of ad hoc projects for youth activists, or making youth activism/youth activists a secondary addition to projects. Achieving impact requires the commitment of activists as well as organizations. As these recommendations have discussed, while 'youth activism' can form part of different programs that civil society and aid organizations already have in existence, it is highly recommended that they designate and customize programs that specifically target and support youth activists in the OPT.

### How could political youth activists and social youth activists be further included in civil society programs? What should organizations do to further support and strengthen youth activism?

- **Increase active involvement of youth activists in activity and strategic planning.**

Youth activists should be involved in developing the plans and strategies of CSOs, and CSOs should allow young people to help in developing the organizations' programs and plans. Youth activists are in a vital position to actively engage in strategic planning. Through their work as activists, they know what their own needs are, the needs of specific societal groups that they have interacted with and/or supported in their activism, the needs and nature of Palestinian society as a whole, and particular areas that require support. They are familiar with what works and what doesn't work, the barriers and risks they face, and degree to which objectives are achievable.



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- **Establish permanent relationships and a degree of sustainability.**

For youth activists to be further included in INGO programmes, and for youth activists and activism in the OPT to be further supported and strengthened, permanent relationships with youth activists should be forged, and a degree of sustainability established. A crucial way for INGOs to practically achieve these degrees of permanent and sustainable support, and for this reality to be communicated to youth activists, youth, society, and organizations and institutions in the OPT, is for INGOs to create a designated Youth Activism Program.

- **Help youth activists to be more engaged with the media, and increase media attention on youth and youth activist issues.**

Youth activists require marketing and promotion for their initiatives in order to reach the largest possible audience. They need skill and capacity training in social media use, as well as engagement in other media forms. INGOs can organize training workshops on these areas so activists are able to communicate more on these platforms, allowing for empowerment. There should also be discussion of the safety and privacy risks of using social media.

- **Revive the volunteer spirit amongst Palestinian youth.**

While youth activists across the OPT engage in different forms of voluntary work, making important contributions, there is a perception by some that the spirit of volunteer work amongst Palestinian youth needs to be strengthened. INGOs can integrate voluntarism into their programming and communicate the importance and benefits of volunteering—for example, the opportunity to learn new skills, improve social interactions, and make important contributions to society. INGOs can help in advertising volunteering opportunities, such as those available through the HCYS in the West Bank. Organizations may also be able to support youth in overcoming barriers, for example by paying for travel.



**OXFAM**

## ENDNOTES

- 1 This Palestinian Authority body is responsible for 1) Assisting in the development of the sport and youth legislative agenda, 2) Promoting a facilitative environment, 3) Partnering with international organizations to support youth work, volunteering and development, 4) Establishing minimum standards for youth and adolescent centres. See CoR, "Palestine Youth and Sports" (europa.eu), available online at <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/Palestine-Youth-and-Sports.aspx>
- 2 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) & UNFPA. "On the Occasion of the International Population Day," 11 July, 2021, available online at <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4024>
- 3 PNN, "PCBS releases report on situation of youth in Palestine,"
- 4 PCBS, "On the Occasion of International Youth Day," 12 August 2021, available on-line at <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4046>
- 5 UNFPA website, "Young People," available online at <https://palestine.unfpa.org/en/node/22580#:~:text=Youth%20in%20Palestine%20comprise%2030,61.9%25%20aged%2020%2D29.&text=The%20high%20youth%20concern%20in%2C18%2D24%20reaching%2060%25.>
- 6 Interpeace and Mustaqbalna, "Palestinian Youth Challenges and Aspirations," Palestine 2017, available on-line at <https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018-IP-case-study-Palestine-v3.pdf>
- 7 World Bank, "School Enrolment," available online at [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR?name\\_desc=false](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR?name_desc=false)
- 8 PCBS, "On the Occasion of International Youth Day," August 2021, available online at <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4046>
- 9 UNICEF, "Adolescents Engagement in Palestine," available online at [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/unicef\\_-\\_adolescents\\_engagement.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/unicef_-_adolescents_engagement.pdf)
- 10 PCBS, "International Youth Day" press release, 12 August 2017, available online at [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi6vMbmh7D0AhUPSjABHdH9DvgQFnoECAYQA-Q&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pcbs.gov.ps%2Fportals%2F\\_pcbs%2FPressRelease%2FPress\\_En\\_10-8-2017-youth-en.doc&usq=A0vVaw3W44Tgbkhc-YIDgBkqkNWT](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi6vMbmh7D0AhUPSjABHdH9DvgQFnoECAYQA-Q&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pcbs.gov.ps%2Fportals%2F_pcbs%2FPressRelease%2FPress_En_10-8-2017-youth-en.doc&usq=A0vVaw3W44Tgbkhc-YIDgBkqkNWT)
- 11 UNFPA, "Youth in Palestine: Policy and Program Recommendations to Address Demographic Risks and Opportunities," October 2017, available online at [https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Youth%20in%20Palestine%20-%20Oct%202017\\_0.pdf](https://palestine.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Youth%20in%20Palestine%20-%20Oct%202017_0.pdf)
- 12 AWRAD, "Youth Survey: Political Activism and Awareness," April 2016, <http://www.miftah.org/Doc/Polls/PollAWRAD120416.pdf>
- 13 Since 2014, protests, marches and demonstrations have not been permitted in Gaza. (The <Great March of Return> protests in 2018-2019 were directed at the Israeli occupation and international community/audiences were an exception.)
- 14 NBC News, "Pro-Palestinian activists target Facebook with 1-star app store reviews," 22 May 2021, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/social-media/pro-palestinian-activists-target-facebook-1-star-app-store-reviews-n1268258>
- 15 Leaked documents indicate that Facebook's response (Facebook owns Instagram) was criticized by employees inside the company as a result of the complaints. See <https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-facebook-employees-voiced-concerns-at-palestinian-activist-s-censorship-leak-shows-1.10339091>