



RUWWAD Report

The Palestinian Youth Empowerment Program

أخبار رواد

Monthly News – June 2008

Youth on the Airwaves: Ruwwad and *Amwaj* Radio Team Up To Give New Graduates A Youth Radio Show

“When was the last time you turned on your radio and heard a young person’s voice?” asks Ruwwad Media Coordinator Ziad Nazzal rhetorically. “Whether it’s in North America or in the Middle East, you often hear adults on the airwaves: Adult viewpoints, adult news, adult ideas. Meanwhile, two-thirds of Palestinians are youth under 30. We think it’s time their voices were heard too”. Starting this summer, radio listeners in the West Bank will indeed start to hear something younger and fresher on their radios: This month, the Ruwwad Media Center and *Amwaj*, a leading Ramallah radio station, launched an innovative training program for promising young media students. The program will train groups of youth on radio production over a two-month period, putting them at the consoles alongside *Amwaj* staff in local studios. By the end of the program, the youth will produce their own weekly radio show.

This initiative is part of the Ruwwad Media Center’s larger mandate to provide jobs and training opportunities for media students in a range of disciplines--by giving them hands-on instruction together with practical work experience at local television stations, news agencies and advertising companies. Zakaria Hasasneh, a young journalism student from Bethlehem, sees the training program as an ideal way to learn more skills and access job opportunities. “I graduated a year ago and haven’t been able to find a good job yet. I’m hoping that the Ruwwad radio internship program will help me by get real-world experience and meet different people that work in media. This could really help me get a foot in the door for long-term contracts.”



Through Ruwwad’s new media internships, young radio students will get the chance to broadcast their own programming across the West Bank.

“What we’re offering is something new and unique,” explains Ruwwad’s Nazzal: “Usually, students learn about media production in an extremely theoretical way. When they finish school, they have very little experience actually *doing* the things they’ve been taught. Here, in contrast, we’re putting youth in the studio for two to three days each week. They sit with the editors, the sound technicians, the producers, and learn by doing. The best way to gain skills and expertise in this field is to get right in there and do it!”

Ruwwad youth aren’t the only people benefiting from the training: For the radio station, the internships are also a win-win concept: “We always need new program ideas,” explains Haya Rizq, Public Relations Coordinator at *Amwaj*. “We want to be innovative and do new things. The chance to partner with Ruwwad really helps us offer something new and exciting for our listeners: We know people will tune in specially to hear what these youth have to say”. Adds Nazzal: “This is just the first step. If this program goes well—and we think it will—then you might very well see an entire radio station run entirely by youth in the near future. We want youth, who make up the majority of Palestinians, to have media that speaks to them and their needs; we think this is very needed here”.

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This Month In Brief

Investing in Youth: Jericho Workshop Lays Foundation for New Youth Development Resource Centers

Ruwwad and the Palestinian Ministry of Youth and Sport are about to create massive change in the West Bank—by launching four Youth Development Resource Centers and an affiliated network of 66 local youth clubs. These hubs will provide much-needed services, training and recreational activities for young people across the West Bank. With renovation of the center buildings now underway, Ruwwad and the Ministry are now turning to an equally important task: Finding the right people to staff these local hubs, and deciding what equipment and resources they can offer to help youth. These topics were at the core of a three-day workshop held in Jericho in late May for over 40 Ministry staff and Resource Center members. In a dynamic series of planning sessions, the group tackled big picture issues—like developing a shared mission, vision, and brand for the Centers—but also delved into the details: Center volunteer recruitment, and program budgeting were all discussed at length.

For Walid Atatrah, Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the conversations weren't always easy, "but the most important thing was that we were able to come together and lay a strong foundation for the Centers. The Ministry is committed to empowering youth in Palestine, and we're confident that these centers are a step in the right direction". Atatrah's support for youth empowerment was also visible at the workshop itself: Each Center was asked to bring a group of its youth volunteers to take part in the discussions. Ihab Nijm, a volunteer from the Al-Bireh Youth Center, was one of the young delegates: "Our decisions actually had an impact," he reflected. "It's great to see that we, the youth, are getting the support and attention we deserve."

Monthly Snapshot: June 2008

- 43 staff from the Ministry of Youth and its local Resource Centers take part in Ruwwad planning workshops in Jericho.
- Close to 800 students view photos taken by Ruwwad youth photographers, at galleries in Jenin and Hebron.
- Youth researchers conduct a Rapid IT Assessment in 55 community centers, to determine local clubs' IT needs.

First Person: Lethargy, or Lack of Opportunity?

By Nimr Abd al-Raziq, Ruwwad Youth Volunteer

Going through my day at the university, I often feel that young people aren't living up to their potential. Whether they're rushing out of class to sit and chat with their friends about the latest episode of "Super Star" (our version of "American Idol"), surfing Facebook in the computer lab, or whiling away the afternoon smoking hookah and playing cards in a nearby café, these University students seem less than focused on their futures. As a student myself, I know that it's easy to be productive by taking extra courses, reading, and searching for volunteer and work opportunities. At the same time, I sometimes wonder if young people are completely to blame for their idleness. Are University students and graduates simply lazy, or are they just not getting enough support?

In the end, I think it's a little bit of both: It's time for youth to wake up and begin creating opportunities by themselves, for themselves. At the same time, society must support youth and help them to realize their dreams by providing them with chances to contribute to their communities—just like Ruwwad is doing right now. Someday soon, I hope to see the library, not the hookah café, filled with students pursuing their goals and making use of their education.

Profile of a Ruwwad Youth Leader: Haneen Hamdan

Haneen Hamdan has a mission: To bring a smile to the faces of as many children as possible. As a leader in the *Hakawati* initiative, a Ruwwad campaign that promoted literacy in local elementary schools, Haneen is well on her way to achieving her goal. A key member in the team behind *Hakawati*, the 21 year-old Birzeit University IT student worked with her fellow volunteers to develop an educational play that shows young children the benefits of reading...but in a series of skits presented entirely by clowns. With face-painting and storytelling by costumed characters also part of the program, Hamdan and her partners made sure that every child left with grin—and a new-found love of reading. The best part of the experience? "Two things stand out," says Hamdan. "First of all, I was able to help others learn to read, which is really such a crucial skill. In the age of 24-hour satellite TV, we always need to encourage children to read more. Second, I helped myself too: When I saw how much the kids enjoyed reading, I really rediscovered it for myself too—now I read close to four books a week!"



A Closer Look: From Introvert to National Youth Leader

Tariq Assaf is a very shy person. Or at least he was, until an internship with Ruwwad gave him new confidence—and the chance to become a national youth leader. A self-described introvert, the 24-year-old sociology graduate of Najah University in Nablus always liked volunteering, but never dreamed that he himself could actually lead local community activities: Since childhood, Tariq suffered from acute shyness and a fear of public speaking—realities that kept him from taking charge in public settings, and earned him the schoolyard nickname “Quiet One”.

All that changed with Ruwwad: In early 2007, Tariq first got involved with Ruwwad’s Youth Corps by taking part in one of the forum’s leadership training courses. Encouraged by the experience, and buoyed by the support of his fellow Youth Corps members, Tariq suddenly found himself volunteering to help lead a regional water conservation project. “I don’t know what made me do it,” Tariq recalls with a smile. “It was totally out of character, but I really felt comfortable in the environment, so I decided to just go for it”.

Barely two months later, Tariq not only found himself managing a team of volunteers and giving talks about water use to area students—he was also selected to make a presentation to the Governor of the entire Jenin region, where he detailed the project’s progress in front of regional planners and decision-makers.

For the youth team involved, the chance to speak frankly and directly with the governor about their work on water conservation was an incredible achievement. “The point of our project was to raise awareness about the need for conserving water—and the problem of water wastage in local agriculture,” explains Tariq’s fellow organizer Yousef Saqallah. “Bringing this key issue to the attention of decision-makers who have the power to make real changes was amazing”. But for Tariq, the success was two-fold. “Yes, we had government officials taking us seriously—and that was incredible. But for me personally, presenting the initiative to the governor was surreal: I couldn’t believe that I had become confident enough to talk in front of so many people, especially at that level. I can definitely say now that I’m not shy anymore!”

After leading such a high-profile campaign, some might find it hard to know what to do next. But not Tariq: “My goal now is to draw on what I’ve learned, and help others who are shy or timid to realize the leadership potential they have inside them. Ruwwad has really turned my life around. I have a full-time job and I support my family. Now I want to help bring this change into the lives of others”.



Ruwwad youth leader Tariq Assaf teaches Jenin students about the basics of water conservation.

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