



## Young leaders talk, as a minister listens

Over four fun-filled days in late January, a group of 25 young Palestinians engaged in the intensive 30/30© leadership training course, offered by EDC as part of the partnership program of the Youth Development Resource Centers (YDRC).

At the highly participatory training, the youth played team-building games, studied basic leadership skills, and developed their own ideas on how to impact their community.

The unique 30/30© training is at the heart of Ruwwad's approach to youth service learning. Designed to train 30 youth for 30 days, the 30/30© model is a five-step experience that guides youth from orientation, through training, and out toward external placements that help communities—while preparing the youth for working life.

All members of the four YDRCs, the 25 youth had traveled from across the West Bank to take part in the training, which was hosted in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS).

At the end of the four days came an unexpected surprise: a visit from the Minister herself.

Minister Tahani Abu Daqqa joined the youth as they evaluated the training. Forgoing all formalities, she joined them in a circle on the floor and invited the youth to tell her what they had learned.

The youth responded with enthusiasm. For the first time in their lives, a governmental leader was sitting amongst them and listening to their opinions. As the Minister and the YDRCs' governing boards and directors listened, the youth took turns to talk about how the training had changed each of them.

The youth felt the 30/30© training had already helped them grow as leaders. "The topics addressed in the training were extremely beneficial and important," commented Omar, from the Jabal Al Nar YDRC. "Now I know how to

Minister Abu Daqqa with the YDRC members



plan projects to serve my community in a real and tangible way."

The participants gave rave reviews to the EDC staff who had led the course. "The training was different from the trainings I've attended in the past," said Husam, a member of El Bireh YDRC. "The trainers were young like us and very qualified. They set a real example that we can follow."

Others focused on their new confidence and motivation. "Before the training, my lack of knowledge made me doubt myself," said Nana, a member of Beit Al Tifil YDRC. "But now that the initiative that I proposed with the other members of my YDRC was voted the best idea, I feel like I can speak about making a difference with great confidence."

## Jawwal joins EDC in helping youth make a difference

As part of its drive for corporate responsibility, Jawwal, a leading Palestinian telecommunications company, is helping EDC stay connected to National Youth Corps members, no matter where they are, by providing free SMS messaging to the Ruwwad project.

Since 80 percent of Palestinians use cellular phones (compared to only

50 percent owning telephone landlines), SMS is the quickest way to get in touch with young Palestinians. With the free service provided by Jawwal, the Ruwwad project can communicate instantly with thousands of young Palestinian volunteers, giving them updates on job and training opportunities and staying in touch with them on what matters most to youth.



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## What a difference an opportunity makes!

### Youth of the Month: Osama Diab



Osama performing at the launch of a campaign for pediatric cancer.

Over the last seven months, hundreds of young Palestinians participated in a nation-wide drive to raise funds for the Smile of Hope campaign for pediatric cancer care. Airwaves rang with calls to donate – and with the voice of one young and talented man.

In July 2008, 21-year old Osama Diab recorded a song that quickly became synonymous with the high-profile campaign. Set to a toe-tapping score, the song celebrates the power of youth to make a difference together (“A million hands, a million voices, and a million help a million”). But the story behind the song – the story of Osama Diab, a rising Palestinian singer – is just as compelling and inspiring.

Osama always loved music. “I started performing when I was just 14 years old,” he recalled recently. With performance in his blood from an early age, Osama threw himself into music. He joined the National Conservatory, based in

Ramallah, and started training on different musical instruments. “But my dream was always to be part of a band,” he said.

But unlike most careers, music is a profession that needs more than just talent and enthusiasm. Getting the opportunity to shine can make all the difference in a musician’s career. Osama had the skills but had no stage on which to showcase his talents.

Then Osama participated in one of the first 30/30© leadership training courses, offered by EDC through its Ruwwad project, and became an active volunteer at EDC. When EDC staff heard that Osama sang, they organized an impromptu performance at the Ruwwad offices in Ramallah. As he sang, staff members gathered in the hallways, spellbound by the voice emerging from the young man they had known only as a volunteer.

*[Continued on the back page]*

### The nightmare of unemployment!

By Mohammed Abu Thaher (Ruwwad Print Intern)



With no work, Ahmed can only smoke and wander the streets.

For a new university graduate, unemployment is like a slow-working toxin. With each failed job application, hope withers and dies, self-confidence falters, and the future looks bleak.

For 25-year old Ahmed, unemployment has already poisoned his dreams. Ahmed has not been able to work since he graduated from Al Najah University three years ago. At first, he was confident that he would be able to find work easily because of the high grades he had received while studying law. “I used to hear the sad stories of friends or acquaintances who had become depressed after they lost hope of getting a job,” he said. “But I thought that my experience was going to be different.”

After six months of fruitless applications, Ahmed’s belief in himself began to waver. “If they responded at all, most organizations told me that I didn’t have the necessary experience, that my English language skills are poor, or that I needed other skills,” he remembered. As door after door slammed in his face, the new graduate be-

gan to worry that his future would never start.

With no job prospects and unable to afford training courses, Ahmed took the path of many other young unemployed Palestinians and left the country to look for opportunities abroad. “I was feeling hopeless, extremely depressed and ashamed not to have work,” he said. “So I implored my father to borrow money for a ticket to the Gulf.”

But, even there, Ahmed had no luck. After a month of searching, Ahmed returned home, more dejected than ever. “I felt that there was a nightmare that was following me everywhere,” he said. Back in Palestine, Ahmed fell into a deep depression and stayed in the house, smoking heavily and watching TV. “Whenever I would see my degree hanging on the wall, I would get depressed,” Ahmed recalled. “I would light another cigarette or go out to wander in the streets aimlessly.”

*[Continued on the back page]*

# Spotlight on the YDRCs

*New beginnings as renovation continues...*

With funding from the USAID, the improvement of YDRCs continues. With the renovation of **Beita YDRC** completed in November 2008, USAID partner CHF is now focusing on the **Jabal Al Nar YDRC**, the **Beit Al Tifil YDRC**, and the **El Bireh YDRC**.

At the **Jabal Al Nar YDRC** in Nablus, work continues on adapting the YDRC's new site – an old house purchased by the Ministry of Youth and Sport (pictured right) – to its new more youthful purpose while preserving its heritage.

The transformation of **Beit Al Tifil YDRC** in Hebron is underway, with the renovation of two buildings and the creation of an outdoor athletic space.

At the **El Bireh YDRC**, volunteers spent Valentine's Day cleaning up the center's existing building following the YDRC-led collection of clothes for the Gaza Strip. CHF continues to work on the new site by expanding the first floor and adding another floor to provide dedicated rooms for youth programming, such as the new media center and



*...and new projects for youth are funded.*

With funding from EDC, two local NGOs are about to launch new youth-focused initiatives in the Jenin and Nablus governorates.

Using \$30,000 in sub-grants, Juhoud for Social and Rural Development will work with the Beita YDRC and clubs in Jenin (funded by USAID partner ARD) to provide projects in business incubation. Ta'awon will work with the Jabal Al Nar YDRC and ARD-affiliated clubs to provide programming in crisis management and conflict resolution.

*Youth gain skills in supporting their YDRCs in media...*

In January, 13 volunteers from the **Jabal Al Nar YDRC** took part in an intensive five-day media training program. In the coming weeks, similar training will be held at the other two YDRCs.

These training courses prepare young members to work in the Media Centers that EDC is developing at three of the YDRCs.

At the end of each training, the six most qualified trainees are tasked with managing the media activities at their YDRCs for two months and developing media projects for national distribution.



**YDRC members practice their media skills.**

*New YDRC staff arrive...*

As part of the scaling up of YDRC resources, six youth coordinators were hired in January to work at the YDRCs in Beita, El Bireh and Hebron.

At each center, the male and female youth staff members will coordinate youth programs and recruit volunteers.

*...while others are trained.*

Since the YDRC Executive Directors were appointed last year, EDC and the Ministry of Youth and Sports have provided ongoing hands-on orientation as part of the UPP's focus on building the capacity of the four centers.

So far, the Executive Directors have participated in six meetings on financial and procurement policies, monitoring and evaluation, grants management, and establishing and activating the media centers. Further trainings will be held in 2009 to strengthen their ability to administer and lead their YDRCs.

## YDRC members learn about leadership...

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After she listened for over an hour and a half to their passionate comments, Minister Abu Daqqa applauded the commitment and enthusiasm of the youth sitting before her.

“Today, I see the real youth leaders who have genuine courage, confidence and motivation,” she said. “These are the characteristics of a successful leader. I am confident that you are going to energize the YDRCs and use them to serve Palestine.”

The Minister also expressed her excitement at seeing the UPP in action. “I am extremely happy today,” she explained, “as I see the goals of the UPP manifested in the establishment of the YDRCs, which are tools accessible to all Palestinian youth who aspire to improve themselves and contribute to building their nation.”



**YDRC members working as a team to develop a youth-led project.**

## INTERN ARTICLE: A way out of unemployment?

[Continued from p.2]

Ahmed is not alone in his nightmare. Around 34 percent of young Palestinians do not find work after graduating from university.

As a result, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian youth cannot start their professional career – with a significant social cost.

Without a job, they are at risk of poverty and depression, unable to make a positive contribution to the society around them.

With this in mind, the US-Palestinian Partnership (UPP) is providing access to professional training through the four Youth Development Resource Centers (YDRC) so that young Palestinians can reclaim their future.

Also regional hubs for another 80 youth clubs, these four YDRCs will offer thousands of young Palestinians trainings in information technology, English language, leadership, and other professional trainings to give them the skills to find a job and contribute to building the Palestinian society.

Ahmed still hopes that he will one day fulfill his professional ambitions. “I dream of being a judge sitting in front of the court. I dream that everyone will know who I am,” he says wistfully.

Then he comes back to reality with a thud. “But with the way things are now,” he adds, “I only dream of getting a job that will take me out of my depression.”

## Osama Diab [Continued from p.2]

“When we first met him, he was such a shy person,” explained Sana Abu Baker, EDC’s National Youth Corps (NYC) Coordinator. “We had no idea that he could sing like that.”

And so, an opportunity to shine appeared. When EDC began working with NYC members to launch the Smile of Hope campaign, Osama was chosen to sing the campaign song. Suddenly, his voice was everywhere – on the radio, as cell phone ring tones, and at each campaign event.

Osama now sings with his friends in a band called Bailasan. He says that it was hard at first. “In the beginning, we were scared,”

he explained. “But the only way to get known is to perform. People have been very supportive.” The band has already begun to make a name for itself. After a recent show at a concert hall in Ramallah, Bailasan was featured on national TV and radio.

Osama says that he definitely wants success for himself. “I dream of growing into a Palestinian artist whose songs will be well-known,” he said. But he also wants to succeed so that other young Palestinians will see that it can be done, explaining, “I want my band – Bailasan – to become a model for Palestinian youth, who also dream of realizing their ambitions, despite the many difficulties facing them.”

## The voice of Youth

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