

Adolescent-Friendly Spaces

United Nations Children's Fund Middle
East and North Africa Regional Office



unicef Adolescent-Friendly Spaces¹

Region	MENA
Country	Jordan, Lebanon, State of Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic
Organization	United Nations Children’s Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
Name	Adolescent-Friendly Spaces ²
Category	Civic engagement
Start date	2004
End date	2013
Partners	State of Palestine: UNRWA; NGOs – Tamer Institute for Community Education, Ma’an Development Center, Al Nayzak; CBOs; Higher Council for Youth and Sports (HCYS). Jordan: UNRWA and Women’s Programme Centres (WPC). Lebanon: UNRWA; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS); Ministry of Health. Syrian Arab Republic: UNRWA and the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees (Syrian government agency).
UN involvement	UNICEF
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1. Background and description

Of the estimated population of 4.42 million in the State of Palestine, one third are youth aged 15-29 years³ and 25.1 per cent are adolescents aged 10-19 years.⁴ A large number of these young people do not benefit from the education system; 55.2 per cent are out of school, while those who are able to pursue university education face very high unemployment rates.⁵ School dropouts and a persistently deficient unemployment structure are only two of the many factors limiting young people’s social and economic development. Violence, conflict and destruction, lack of freedom of movement and participation, limited basic services and systematic violation of human rights characterize the environment in which adolescents and youth develop. Palestinian adolescents in neighbouring countries – Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic – are

1 Desk review (9 October 2014); Internal validation (15 December 2014-2 February 2015); Implementer validation (June 2015); Final validation (October 2015).

2 Adolescent-friendly spaces were a core component of the four-country programme, ‘Palestinian Adolescents: Agents of Positive Change – Towards an Environment Promoting Peace and Reconciliation’, implemented by UNICEF and its partners between 2004 and 2013 with support from the Government of Norway.

3 ILO and PCBS (2014).

4 UNICEF Info by country: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/oPt_statistics.html

5 The youth unemployment rate of a university graduate is 1.5 times that of a person with no education, 47 per cent and 31.2 per cent respectively. (ILO and PCBS, 2014).





to varying degrees excluded from decision-making processes affecting their lives and are also systematically exposed to the political, social and economic constraints of their environment. In Lebanon, Palestinians are denied citizenship and thus deprived of basic rights including work and education.⁶ Palestinians in refugee camps in Lebanon face poverty, deplorable living conditions and a restrictive legal, economic and social system. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the ongoing conflict has dramatically worsened the daily lives of these young people. By November 2014, 44,000 Palestinian refugees from that country had sought refuge in Lebanon and 15,000 had registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Jordan. In Jordan,⁷ most Palestinians have full Jordanian citizenship; however, nearly 370,000 Palestinian refugees⁸ live in the 10 recognized refugee camps, facing economic hardship and discrimination in the provision of public services. The common threads for these adolescents are economic, social and political marginalization, and the lack of symbolic and physical spaces for interaction and development.

In 2004, the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office started coordinating a four-country programme with the overall goal to fulfil the rights to self-development, education, protection and participation of Palestinian adolescents (age 10-18 years) living in the State of Palestine and in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Grounded in the concept of positive adolescent development, the programme, 'Palestinian Adolescents: Agents of Positive Change – Towards an Environment Promoting Peace and Reconciliation' (2004-2013),⁹

sought to develop the skills of young people and create opportunities and spaces for their meaningful participation in their communities and beyond the more traditional and often constraining environments of home and school.

One of the four pillars of the four-country Palestinian programme implemented by UNICEF and its partners was the development and establishment of adolescent-friendly spaces (AFS). Grounded in an approach based on positive adolescent development and participation, the AFS are housed in/by youth centres, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), sports clubs and centres run by community-based organizations (CBOs), where adolescents have the opportunity to meet in a space where they can feel safe to network and socialize with their peers. These spaces offered adolescents a diverse range of skills-building programmes and activities, including life-skills training and action research. The AFS also offered adolescents recreational sports, drama, theatre and arts, and the opportunity to engage with the community, identifying issues of concern and implementing solutions through their adolescent-led activities. The different programmes offered in the AFS aimed to build adolescents' skills in critical thinking, creativity and collaboration, supporting them to become more resilient.

The AFS proved to be particularly successful in increasing the participation of adolescent girls by offering a space where they could meet, hiring more female facilitators and holding activities of greater interest to them. In the countries/areas where AFS were developed, girls are often confined to school, home and family networks as a result of social pressures and practices that limit their participation in the public sphere.

6 Basic education is provided to Palestinian refugees by UNRWA.

7 United Nations (November 2014).

8 UNRWA: <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>.

9 This 10-year programme was implemented in four phases. Phase I (2004) focused on: (i) Providing safe spaces; promoting skills development; (ii) Providing life skills for adolescents; (iii) Undertaking action research to support adolescent-led initiatives; and (iv) Developing leaders who could mobilize other adolescents for community action. This model served as the basis for the program's subsequent three phases. Phase II (2005-2007) added a focus on enabling adolescents to participate in the management of safe spaces; supported networking among adolescents; and coordination with other organisations working with adolescents. Phase III (2008-2010) placed a stronger emphasis on mainstreaming and institutionalizing adolescent programming within the overall programme priorities of UNICEF starting in 2009 by strengthening cooperation with UNRWA and other United Nations agencies as well as strengthening links between and with NGOs. Phase IV (2011-2013) expanded its scope and integrated rights-based and gender equality perspectives, and adopted an assets-based and life-cycle approach. (Kartini International, 2015).

10 Kartini International, 2015.





The development of minimum standards for the AFS in the State of Palestine was a core achievement of the programme.¹¹ These standards serve as guiding principles for establishing and sustaining spaces that are adolescent-friendly in terms of programming, facilities and management of the centres. The standards ensure the quality of services and are addressed to various stakeholders including governmental and non-governmental organizations, youth centres and young people themselves.¹² The standards were developed through numerous consultations and discussions with the Higher Council of Youth and Sports (HCYS), NGO partners, UNICEF staff and young people. An assessment survey was also conducted in a sample of existing youth centres. The AFS minimum standards were endorsed by the authorities in the State of Palestine in 2014,¹³ and Jordan has shown significant progress towards appropriate implementation of an adaptation of the model.

This good practice document focuses on the successful experience of the establishment

and implementation of AFS in the State of Palestine. However, the AFS model is part of the larger four-country Palestinian programme for adolescents and as such, was also implemented in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Each country adapted the model according to its particular context, needs of the young people and available resources.

Organization profile

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) "is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential".¹⁴ UNICEF works with decision makers and partners at the global and grass-roots levels to prevent child mortality and improve children's lives by providing health care and immunizations, clean water and sanitation, nutrition, education and emergency relief.¹⁵



¹¹ See Annex.

¹² Kartini International, 2015.

¹³ Media coverage of the announcement: <http://www.alquds.com/news/article/view/id/523737>.

¹⁴ UNICEF Mission Statement: http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html.

¹⁵ UNICEF Innovation: <http://www.unicef.org/innovation/>.



2. Goal and objectives

2.1. Goal

The overall goal of this programme was:

“To fulfil the rights to self-development, education, protection and participation of Palestinian adolescents (age 10-18 years) living in the State of Palestine and in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in collaboration with government authorities and other key actors in society, including young people themselves.”¹⁶

As part of the multi-country programme, the overall goal of the AFS component was to fulfil the rights to self-development, education, protection and different forms of participation of Palestinian adolescents (ages 10-18 years) living in the State of Palestine and in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.”¹⁷

2.2. Objectives

The objectives of the AFS are to:

- Facilitate networking among Palestinian adolescents;
- Build the creative and critical thinking skills of adolescent boys and girls through life-skills training and recreational activities;
- Promote adolescent participation at the community level through the implementation of adolescent-led initiatives.

3. Target group

3.1. Age group

The age group reached through the AFS is adolescents and youth aged 10-24 years, but the primary beneficiary group comprises adolescents aged 10-18 years. Parents and community members represent secondary beneficiaries.

3.2. Gender considerations

AFS adopted a gender-sensitive strategy, seeking the increased participation of adolescent girls in public spaces.

The external evaluation found that the programme employed two major advocacy strategies to achieve this. It actively promoted the inclusion of adolescent girls

in the programme activities, for example by facilitating equal access to boys and girls.

The other advocacy strategy included setting up programme activities tailored to the needs of adolescent girls that were separate from adolescent boys. This included involving community leaders, outreach sessions to parents, especially fathers, holding activities for girls at separate times or days and hiring female facilitators in some locations. The latter had a positive impact on the participation of adolescent girls, as it allowed them to take part in public activities in the context of a safe space and to interact with peers beyond the traditional networks of home, family and school.

¹⁶ Proposal Phase IV, Palestinian Adolescents: Agents of Positive Change – Towards an Environment Promoting Peace and Reconciliation’ (2011-2013), 29-12-2010.

¹⁷ UNICEF (December 2014) Final Donor Report: Palestinian Adolescents: Agents of Positive Change – Towards an Environment Promoting Peace and Reconciliation. UNICEF MENARO.



The external evaluation of the Palestinian adolescent programme implemented in four countries, of which AFS were a core component, revealed that the combination of the strategies employed increased the rate of participation by adolescent girls from 10 to 20 per cent in Phase I (2004), to 40 to 65 per cent in Phase IV (2011-2013).¹⁸

The feedback from focus group discussions that were part of the evaluation revealed 'an increase in adolescent girls' confidence in public settings and in themselves and in their willingness to take on leadership roles'. For instance, during a focus group discussion conducted in the West Bank,¹⁹ parents noted that the AFS was the only place where adolescent girls could participate safely in out-of-school activities.²⁰

The evaluation also noted, however, that the inclusive programme approaches were more effective with the younger girls aged 10 -14 years than with the older girls aged 15-19 years. This cohort faced additional challenges as their parents and family members became more concerned about their safety, contact with the opposite sex and pressures to stay at home or get married.

3.3. Ethnic / disability considerations

No specific ethnic or disability considerations were systematically applied as part of the programme. However, implementing countries worked to different extents in outreach to and integrating adolescents with disabilities. The evaluation found some level of systematic efforts in the Syrian Arab Republic to integrate these adolescents into the activities. While the other UNICEF offices involved also mentioned activities conducted for adolescents with disabilities, there was no consistent tracking of the type and number of beneficiaries.

3.4. Targeting the most marginalized / most at risk

The AFS targeted adolescents in the State of Palestine (the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip). Within the prevailing limitations imposed on the population, several areas in the West Bank and Gaza are particularly vulnerable due to the occupation. Lack of freedom of movement and restricted areas, including multiple check points for movement across the different areas, compounded by forced displacement and systematic socioeconomic marginalization, result in very limited opportunities for civic engagement and interaction for adolescents. The AFS were created to address the needs of adolescents in these areas. The model has moreover proven to contribute to building the skills of this cohort in the context of humanitarian crises and emergencies. The evaluation revealed that in some areas of the State of Palestine,²¹ efforts were made to reach out to the most disadvantaged Palestinian adolescents living in rural or remote areas by providing transportation to join the AFS.²² The evaluation found that no consistent system was devised for quantitatively registering the number and type of vulnerable adolescents²³ reached. It was thus difficult to fully assess the extent to which each country was able to reach the most vulnerable adolescents. The evaluation concluded that some of the groups which were not comprehensively reached were Bedouins, youth, married adolescents and the extremely poor.²⁴

3.5. Human rights programming

The AFS model is built on a human rights-based approach, encouraging the exercise of the right to participation (Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 12). As stated in the minimum standards, young people

18 Kartini International (2015).

19 Focus group discussion conducted 18 June 2014 as part of the Palestinian programme evaluation by Kartini International (2015).

20 Kartini Evaluation (2015).

21 Yabad and Bardala.

22 Kartini International (2015).

23 Ibid.

24 Kartini International (2015).



should be “perceived, valued and respected as rights holders, agents of change, vital resources and strategic participants in their own as well as national development”.²⁵

3.6. Youth involvement

Adolescents and youth were involved in the AFS in a variety of ways. With the programme grounded in a participatory approach, the young people acted as facilitators of the activities that were implemented and as practitioners developing and implementing their own adolescent-led initiatives. The latter focused on improving the surrounding environment and on raising awareness about their rights and issues of concern.

4. Strategy and Implementation

4.1. Strategies / theoretical approaches / methodologies

The programme is grounded in a positive approach to adolescent development and participation which defines young people as assets and as persons with resources who can contribute positively to the community, as opposed to being a liability. Programmes based on this premise adopt a holistic approach that takes into account not only the needs and interests of adolescents but also their role and meaningful participation in the community. Adolescents take part in the decision-making processes in the AFS and at the levels of the community, home and school, and in the development and implementation of adolescent-led initiatives that address issues of concern to them and their communities. Through this method, adolescents develop critical skills for the twenty-first century,²⁶ increase their self-confidence and develop their capacities to their fullest.

4.2. Activities

The AFS offered a diverse series of programmes and activities: remedial education; life-skills training (including non-violent conflict resolution); interactive learning; recreational programmes (drama, theatre, arts, sport); and action research. Not every AFS offered the full range of programming as much depended on the resources of partners at the local level. However, all AFS offered at a minimum remedial education, action research and life skills. In some AFS, life-skills education was offered as a separate programme while in others it was integrated in the remedial education or action research programmes.

Adolescents participated in these activities throughout the week after school and on weekends. In the State of Palestine, the activities were developed in collaboration with HCYS and through the implementing partners Ma’an, Tamer and CBOs were located in the refugee camps.

The AFS model created safe spaces for adolescents to meet, socialize and learn new skills. In the State of Palestine, the AFS model was introduced in 2004 at the onset of the UNICEF MENA Regional Programme, “Palestinian Adolescents: Agents of Positive Change – Towards an Environment Promoting Peace and Reconciliation.” Ten years later, and based on this experience, the minimum standards were developed to define what an AFS should be and provide a framework of the minimum requirements for its operation.



²⁵ State of Palestine, Minimum Standards for Adolescent- and Youth-Friendly Centres in the State of Palestine. East Jerusalem, UNICEF State of Palestine.

²⁶ Twenty-first century skills are a broad set of knowledge, skills and habits which have been identified by facilitators/educators, education reformers and practitioners as critical for the preparation of adolescents for the needs of the twenty-first century, particularly the workplace. The P21 organization in the United States defines these as life and career skills; learning and innovation skills – the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity); and information, media and technology skills. Accompanied by core subjects and twenty-first century themes, these skills are also coupled with contemporary learning support systems. For more information: <http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework>.



The standards provide a series of indicators grouped into four main thematic areas: (1) building and facilities; (2) programme and activities; (3) human resources, including staff training and development and volunteers' roles and responsibilities; and (4) governance of the centre, which stipulates involving young people. The standards enable centres that work with young people to generate an understanding of the essentials that constitute an AFS in terms of programming, facilities and management of the centres. They outline the basic elements and practices for working with young people and serve as a guide for involving the young people.

The AFS are typically located in existing facilities in the community – youth centres, CBOs and NGOs – which are located in a safe environment and can be easily and safely accessed by adolescent boys and girls. Facilities should be well maintained and adapted to all needs, including those of adolescents with disabilities. While the programme and activities on offer may vary and are conceived according to the local context and needs, they respond to young people's needs and include them in the planning and implementation of activities. The standards also stipulate the active engagement of young people in the centres' management, including their engagement in the election process and selection of the centres' board members, and the creation of an adolescent and youth advisory committee. The AFS also strive for gender equality in both their programming and management, ensuring equal participation of adolescent boys and girls. Finally, the AFS make an effort to hire qualified young adults, including former users of the AFS centres.²⁷

In the State of Palestine, the implementing partners Ma'an and Tamer trained facilitators to deliver remedial education, life skills and other recreational activities for adolescents; and adolescents were trained in peer-to-peer education, notably in delivering life-skills sessions.²⁸ In each of the AFS, facilitators and youth workers were trained to address topics or issues of relevance to the adolescents as part of the life-skills programme, including time management and gender equality.

The life-skills training offered by the AFS depended on the context, capacity and resources of the implementing partners, but an important achievement was the inclusion of how to address conflict in a non-violent way. Based on the experience of implementing life-skills training, a standard package is now being developed in the State of Palestine. This curriculum includes 24 hours of skills-building at the youth centres and after-school clubs, 24 hours of coaching and civic engagement-related activities and 24 hours of online learning.²⁹ The life-skills package in Jordan is slightly different, with a 40-hour life-skills training package with more hours included for each component.

As in the case of the life-skills training, the remedial education and recreational programmes and activities depended on the context, capacity and resources of implementing partners. In the State of Palestine, Ma'an and Tamer provided remedial education in Arabic language and mathematics and offered expressive arts courses, including theatre and different forms of visual arts and music.

The action research programme taught adolescents how to use research methodologies to identify a research

²⁷ Minimum Standards for Adolescent- and Youth-Friendly Centres in the State of Palestine.

²⁸ The training of facilitators and adolescents varied; for example, Ma'an conducted a five-day training on peer education for adolescents and Tamer conducted a 30-hour training for facilitators in remedial education and the expressive arts. (Final reports, Ma'an and Tamer).

²⁹ UNICEF (2014).





topic or issue in the community, design a research plan and organize an initiative to address key issues identified through their research. The methodology for the action research programme was originally created by the NGO partner Al Nayzak and adapted to the context of the AFS, with the action research in the AFS having a much shorter duration.³⁰

Adolescents in the AFS received action research training that lasted between three and four months, and the outcome of this process was the adolescent-led initiatives and volunteer activities in which the adolescents took part. Some of the initiatives addressed environmental issues – a street cleaning campaign and repainting walls in the community – while others raised awareness of health issues such as smoking or organized a book collection for the local library (the ‘I Donate a Book’ campaign). The adolescents also implemented social media and multimedia campaigns³¹ on issues such as violence, climate change and protection of the environment.³²

Networking among adolescents took place through local-level events, summer camps, day trips, adolescent-led initiatives and festivals. The common thread in these activities was to connect adolescents with others in the same community and from other communities, especially through joint summer camp activities organized by different NGOs. The duration of these summer camps and festivals varied, but for instance, Ma’an organized a five-day summer camp for the adolescents in Ramallah and West Bank, with activities including drama and art workshops, sports, swimming and trainings on identity and culture.³³

4.3. Innovativeness

The AFS, grounded in a positive approach to adolescent development and participation, were innovative in the context of the implementing countries, Jordan, Lebanon, State of Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic. The establishment of AFS involved the creation of safe spaces in existing facilities where adolescents could feel safe to network, socialize with others and learn new skills. The programmes on offer were diverse and depended on the context and resources available. The introduction of action research gave adolescents the opportunity to engage in experiential learning. Young people learned how to research issues of concern at the community level and develop and lead their own community initiatives.

4.4. Cost and funding

The AFS and related activities carried out and the establishment of minimum standards were largely funded by the Government of Norway as part of the multi-country programme, ‘Palestinian Adolescents: Agents of Positive Change’. At the country level, funding was obtained from different donor Governments and agencies. The adoption of the AFS model has allowed partners to secure other sources of funding beyond those allocated as part of the UNICEF-led programme. For instance, the partner Ma’an was able to obtain funding from the Government of Japan by continuing its work with the AFS model.³⁴ The partner Tamer has generated its own funding and has continued the activities launched as part of the AFS model. In some cases, local funding was obtained for community-level activities implemented by the adolescents.

30 The NGO Al Nayzak runs in parallel its own action research programme, which lasts three years, while the action research in the AFS has a much shorter duration.

31 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyuGe-jCrDVHU2GMhmY0wvPE5BoPEu6CW>; 2013: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyuGe-jCrDVGxQvAR5ne0CKk3nb_v6PQj_

32 UNICEF (2014).

33 Ma’an (2013).

34 Kartini International (2015).





4.5. Sustainability

The establishment of AFS was intended to create a model and standards which can be endorsed by the government and supported by active involvement of partners on the ground – NGOs, CBOs, youth centres – which can pursue the implementation of AFS activities.

The programme was particularly successful in achieving sustainability with regards to building the capacity of implementing partners and adolescents, and establishing institutional arrangements with UNRWA, notably in the replicating countries of Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. However, it has been less successful in securing financial sustainability. This is in part due to the nature of the protracted conflict in the State of Palestine.

Implementing partners that have worked with the AFS model have been introduced to the positive approach to adolescent development. The evaluation found that civil society organization partners were applying this approach. In the State of Palestine, the local organization Ma'an has established a specific youth programme and strengthened its capacity to identify and put adolescent and youth issues on its agenda. Tamer has adopted a modern active learning philosophy instead of traditional learning approaches.³⁵

Buy-in from the authorities in the State of Palestine has grown slowly, but the most significant achievement is the development and endorsement of the minimum standards by the HCYS, which ensures the incorporation of AFS in future work addressing adolescents and youth. In 2013, HCYS, supported by UNICEF, conducted a baseline assessment survey in 517 of 534 registered adolescent centres as a first step towards establishing a

monitoring system to operationalize the AFS standards developed that year. A key finding was that 74.27 per cent of the centres were operational and used by adolescents, thus opening the opportunity for implementation of AFS standards.

This baseline assessment was the first analytical review conducted by the HCYS, and it is the first step towards the institutionalization of AFS standards in the existing centres and improvement of monitoring mechanisms.

4.6. Replicability

The AFS model has been applied in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in the Palestinian refugee camps, with some country-specific modifications. At the regional level, the AFS model was replicated by a UNICEF programme funded by the Swedish International Development Corporation in nine countries.³⁶

In Jordan, the AFS operated through 14 Women's Programme Centres (WPCs) where youth committees were established, reaching 21,800 adolescents, half of them girls. The youth committees, each with 30 members, were involved in the running of the AFS centres. Following training and support, the youth committees conducted adolescent-led initiatives with a strong emphasis on improving the skills of their peers. Activities included promoting awareness of adolescents' rights to quality education, gender equality, tackling the issue of dropout and violence in schools. A concrete example was the organization of two advocacy campaigns which reached 1,400 adolescents and raised awareness of the rights of adolescents with disabilities and the role of young people in protecting

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Kartini International (2015). The nine countries are the four targeted by this programme in addition to Algeria, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Morocco and Tunisia.





the environment. Furthermore, recreational activities were organized for 400 students at UNRWA schools and debate sessions were organized among 200 adolescents from four schools in Zarqa and Souf camps.³⁷ Facilitators of the debates previously had been trained in the art of debate.

With the aim of moving towards the institutionalization of AFS, UNICEF and its partners – UNRWA and 14 WPCs – developed the ‘National Criteria and Guidelines for Adolescent-Friendly Spaces’ with a particular focus on adolescent girls. The AFS model is being implemented across the network of WPCs, and UNRWA has adopted the action research programme offered in the context of the AFS as part of the curricula in the 172 schools it operates.

In Lebanon, Palestine refugees represent an estimated 10 per cent of the population. They do not enjoy several important rights; for example, they cannot work in as many as 20 professions. Because they are not formally citizens of another state, Palestine refugees are unable to claim the same rights as other foreigners living and working in Lebanon. Around 53 per cent of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon live in the 12 recognized Palestine refugee camps, all of which suffer from serious problems, including poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, poor housing conditions and lack of infrastructure.³⁸ The arrival of additional refugees is exacerbating the resources of communities, and stretching the services supported by the Government of Lebanon and UNRWA. Palestinian refugees are mostly hosted by the poorest communities in Lebanon.³⁹

The programmes implemented as part of the AFS in recent years have focused on

summer activities and local events that give adolescents the opportunity to experience space outside the refugee camps. For instance, the partner Children and Youth Centre in Shatila camp has held summer camp activities in the mountains of Lebanon (10 days for approximately 100 adolescents per year). Eight youth clubs and two safe play areas have been supported, reaching 9,300 adolescents. Through the partnership with the Permanent Peace Movement and UNRWA, peer education workshops were conducted for 150 students in UNRWA schools in 2013. The workshops raised adolescents’ awareness of their right to participation and addressed conflict resolution. The peer education project enabled participants, including school parliament members and active students in each UNRWA school, to play a major mediation role among their peers. In 2014, the trained peer educators, with support from school officials, formed peace and conflict resolution units in their schools. Each unit consisted of three mediators who worked to prevent and solve problems with their peers and others, and documented and followed up conflicts in schools. The peer education project was to benefit 33,000 students in UNRWA schools in 2014 and also contributed to providing the trained peers with experience of being mediators and facilitators of conflict management methods.⁴⁰

In 2012, 35 adolescents from eight gatherings conducted participatory action research on the educational and social conditions in their communities, completing a community needs assessment that targeted the gatherings⁴¹ in South Lebanon. The research was conducted in four major gatherings in South Lebanon plus four small gatherings. The research methodology employed an ‘equity lens’ approach, a questionnaire

37 UNICEF (December 2014).

38 UNRWA (<http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>).

39 UNICEF area programme document for Palestinian children and women in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine, 2015-2016 ((E/ICEF/2014/P/L.7)).

40 UNICEF (December 2014).

41 Gatherings are defined as informal communities of Palestinian refugees.





(quantitative data), focus group discussions and interviews (qualitative data) with service providers, community members and other adolescents.⁴² The action researchers also used data triangulation methods in which they had been trained to ensure the credibility and reliability of their research. The results of their research were finalized under the supervision of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and disseminated by adolescents in April 2013 to the community leaders of the gatherings.⁴³

The partnership with the Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts allowed Palestinian refugee adolescents to participate in the Janana summer festival and in activities promoting learning and creative expression. These encounters gathered NGOs, civil society organizations and youth clubs working with Lebanese and Palestinian adolescents, offering them the opportunity to learn new skills, share experiences and interact with each other.⁴⁴ In addition, the AFS model (i.e., the creation of safe spaces and offering of AFS programming in life skills, remedial education and action research) is being replicated in 63 UNRWA schools.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, the outbreak of the war and protracted conflict have drastically worsened the situation of Palestinian refugees since 2012. As of December 2013, six AFS continued to operate in the Palestinian camps and two gatherings in Damascus, reaching an estimated 22,400 adolescents. Activities included training in resilience and coping mechanisms, vocational training and sports for development. Anchored primarily in life skills-based education, these activities aimed to provide equitable opportunity for adolescent boys and girls to engage with their peers in a safe and conducive environment and to feel safe amidst a challenging social

context. Sport for development activities were introduced as an additional opportunity for adolescent boys and girls to interact and practice the acquired skills of teamwork, communication and collaboration.

In 2012, 140 adolescents from five camps participated in action research projects addressing school dropouts and intergenerational dialogue. The findings were shared with peers and 700 parents in AFS.⁴⁵ In El-Hessenia camp, a 'Safe Feast Initiative' was developed where adolescents were able to practice games and sports in a safe, closed area. One of the participants declared, "through this initiative, we were able to practice the problem-solving skills we acquired from the training we had received".⁴⁶

Both UNRWA and the Syrian General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees have adopted the AFS model, particularly the life skills and action research, which are being implemented in the refugee camps where these partners operate. The programme in the AFS has been adapted to the security and mobility challenges resulting from the conflict, developing a peer-learning approach that uses mobile training units to provide services, particularly to those residing in the harder-to-reach areas.⁴⁷

5. Evaluation of effectiveness⁴⁸

The evaluation of AFS did not systematically differentiate results by country. Therefore, this section discusses the overall evaluation overall, not only in the State of Palestine.

A total of 149,348 adolescents accessed the AFS and received basic life-skills training in the State of Palestine and in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.⁴⁹

42 An equity lens is a tool for identifying and understanding vulnerabilities. In this case, it was employed to understand the vulnerabilities of the gatherings.

43 Kartini International (2014a).

44 UNICEF (2014).

45 Ibid.

46 Kartini International (2015).

47 Ibid.

48 Information on this section has been retrieved from the external evaluation of the programme conducted by Kartini International (2015).

49 UNICEF (December 2014).





Of this total, 25,782 adolescents received specialized training on peer education, action research and the implementation of adolescent-led initiatives. Some 13,800 participated in the recreational programmes and 41,579 benefited from the peer outreach activities. In the State of Palestine, 56 AFS were supported and an estimated 73,000 adolescent boys and girls took part in the programmes they offered.⁵⁰

The evaluation also found that the Palestinian adolescent programme in the State of Palestine had developed minimum standards for adolescent and youth-friendly centres, a number of minimum requirements to be met under four thematic areas which establish the guiding principles for establishing and operating AFS and youth centres. The figure below summarizes the categories of minimum national standards.⁵¹

AFS NATIONAL STANDARDS CATEGORIES FOR ADOLESCENT- AND YOUTH-FRIENDLY CENTRES

STATE OF PALESTINE

The AFS standards are clustered under four main thematic areas, each comprising a number of variables with specific standards:

Thematic area	Category of standard (refer to annex for details of the standards)
Centre	Location; the type of facilities, materials and equipment; working hours; safety and hygiene; participation and engagement of young people in centre matters
Programmes and activities	Programme design and planning; programme delivery and approach; programme monitoring and evaluation; membership
Human resources	Staff interaction/work with young people; staff training and development; volunteers; volunteers' roles and responsibilities
Governance and management	Board of Directors; committees; management and oversight; outreach and relationships; ethos and accountability



⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See annex for a more comprehensive explanation of the AFS.





Positive changes at the individual level

Some key findings in the external evaluation of the programme of the impact of the activities offered in the AFS are:

(a) Enhanced skills and positive changes in self-perception and behaviour

“90 per cent of the programme beneficiaries that participated in the evaluation focus groups discussions⁵² reported positive changes related to: their confidence in dealing with school, community and families; increased ability to interact with their peers; increased participation in decision-making and sharing ideas and opinions with their families and communities; increased ability to identify problems and priorities; increased sense of ambition and ability to set clear life goals; and strengthened communication skills.”⁵³

The results were corroborated during focus group discussions with educators and parents.⁵⁴

During the focus group discussions, where adolescent girls accounted for an estimated 60 per cent of participants, the adolescents reported the programme’s positive impact on their skills and that they had experienced positive changes in at least one of the following areas:

- Personal level: Increased self-confidence, ability to interact, increased participation in decision-making;
- Life skills: increased ability to identify problems and priorities and knowledge of how to be involved in the community;
- Mental health: increased sense of hope and direction;
- Education: reduced dropout rates; improved capacity to think critically;
- Community: a more positive view of society;

- Violence: increased knowledge on how to protect themselves and ability to seek non-violent solutions to conflict.⁵⁵

Adolescents who participated in focus group discussions for the evaluation in State of Palestine reported that through their participation in the programme, they had acquired time-management skills, were able to better prioritize and organize how they prepare themselves for exams and had acquired tools and exercises to reduce stress. They also explored areas of interest in education and/or careers, and how to choose a career or subject for pursuing higher education.

The evaluation reported that the most effective programme⁵⁶ component for increasing adolescent skills and resilience were the life skills and action research training and activities.

It was noted that the action research component had contributed to an increase in the participants’ research skills, knowledge of how to implement and become involved in community initiatives, and leadership and facilitation skills.⁵⁷ This was corroborated throughout the evaluation, where evaluators directly observed 71 adolescents participating in the evaluation methodology workshops. The diverse life skills acquired were most consistently and frequently mentioned by the adolescents who took part in the focus group discussions as well as by the stakeholders working with them.

In a focus group discussion in the West Bank,⁵⁸ a parent said, “my son had discovered his passion to using wood in art. I saw kids drawing tanks and they were scared, art activities helped reduce their fears”. Others said that “participation in the program had helped our children to enhance their self-

52 Evaluation focus groups consisted of 263 adolescents and youth ages 11-24 years conducted in the four countries.

53 Kartini International (2015).

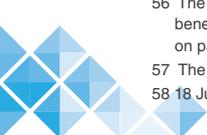
54 These discussions involved interviews with 65 facilitators/educators, 39 parents and 29 implementing partners in the State of Palestine.

55 Kartini International (2014a).

56 The evaluation team employed an adapted, simplified version of the most significant change (MSC) methodology to assess and document the programme outcomes on programme beneficiaries. The MSC methodology used by the evaluation relied on focus group discussions in which participants were asked key questions and discussed the issues raised, and on participants telling their own stories reflecting the most significant changes experienced.

57 The findings are based on the focus group discussions with adolescents in the four countries where the programme was implemented.

58 18 June 2014.





confidence which has resulted in greater interaction with their peers”. Parents stated that their older children “learned how to keep themselves busy, take responsibility, and become independent”.

(b) More positive attitudes towards and commitment to school

Adolescents developed a more positive attitude towards and commitment to school. This has helped to keep male adolescents away from child labour and to reduce the risk and rate of early marriage for female adolescents. According to the evaluation, parents and facilitators/educators noted the positive effects of the programme on the participants’ academic performance. Through an adolescent-led initiative implemented in El-Hessenia camp in the Syrian Arab Republic, adolescents were able to record a 12.5 per cent decrease in the dropout rate following the participation in the AFS programmes. In Gaza, the focus group discussions with adolescents also noted the positive effect of the programme on their academic performance and attitudes towards school.

(c) Increased resilience, ability to deal with conflict and seek non-violent solutions

Findings from the evaluation revealed that: “[...] AFS programming contributed to a significant change in the adolescents’ ability to deal with violence and bullying, with approximately 30 per cent of focus group discussion participants reporting that they were better able to deal with personal violence/ bullying inside the school environment; developed increased knowledge about protection of children from abuse; and 20 per cent [of the adolescents] experienced decreased violence within the family; with 70 per cent reporting an increased ability to seek non-violent solutions to conflict.”⁵⁹

In Gaza, the NGOs Ma’an and Tamer and many CBOs confirmed the significant improvement in the adolescents’ personal behaviour and decreased violence. The adolescents started to prefer dialogue and tolerance to violence in solving their disputes.

In Lebanon, conflict resolution training was integrated into the life-skills training. Focus group discussion participants and stakeholders reported that those involved in this training were able to reduce the amount of their violent or aggressive behaviour by 50 per cent.⁶⁰

In a focus group discussion with youth workers/facilitators in the State of Palestine, it was reported that the adolescents had learned how to interact with each other, which in turn reduced their aggressive behaviour and enhanced their desire for personal growth and integration in society.⁶¹

(d) Increased sense of hope and direction

Another crucial finding of the evaluation was that ‘approximately 70 per cent of adolescents interviewed stated they felt an increased sense of direction and hope in their lives.’⁶² The focus group discussion demonstrated that participants had increased their resilience and ability to deal with challenging environments.

Community engagement through the action research and adolescent-led initiatives

The most visible outcome of the action research training was the adolescent-led initiatives. The evaluation noted that these initiatives had contributed to a change in perception on the part of the community members, who indicated that the adolescents and youth were valuable members of the community as demonstrated by the initiatives aimed at improving the surroundings.

59 Ibid.

60 Focus group discussions with former participants; five stakeholder interviewers. Lebanon. June – July, 2014. Kartini International (2014a).

61 Kartini International (2015).

62 Ibid.





The evaluation also noted that in all four countries/areas where the AFS were established, some adolescents who had been involved in adolescent-led initiatives were working as volunteers in several non-profit or community organizations. This is noted as an unexpected positive result, which emerged from an increased sense of engagement with the community and increased skills to act as volunteers. Another unexpected positive outcome was recorded in the Syrian Arab Republic, where 50 to 70 of 100 participants trained as facilitators in the AFS were able to find jobs with other NGOs.⁶³

In a focus group discussion with youth workers in State of Palestine held in May 2014, the youth workers stated that the adolescent participants with whom they worked had learned that positive alternatives existed to their often bleak view of the future, and they developed a desire for volunteering.

Increased participation of adolescent girls in AFS

The evaluation found that the programme had made significant efforts to increase the participation of adolescent girls, which at the start was as low as 10 to 20 per cent as compared to adolescent boys in Phase I of the project. By Phase IV, the participation of girls had increased to 40 to 65 per cent of participants in any given programme activity and country. In a focus group discussion with parents in the West Bank, it was noted that the AFS was the only place where adolescent girls had the ability to participate safely in out-of-school activities.

Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring tools and strategies have varied from country to country, and the evaluation reported the weakness of monitoring frameworks and the necessity for systematic frameworks.

The UNICEF programme for Palestinian adolescents (2004-2013), of which the AFS was an important component, was evaluated in 2009 and again in 2014. The most recent external evaluation determined the extent to which the programme had achieved its overall goals. It is noteworthy that the majority of the evaluation was qualitative and that the quantitative data analysis was limited due to insufficient data.

6. Strengths and opportunities⁶⁴

- AFS as a model which creates a safe space for interaction and networking, which can ultimately have a positive influence in enhancing tolerance and peacebuilding;
- Creation of leadership at the horizontal level, where facilitators and participants in the skills programme at the AFS are treated as equals, and promotion of the values of cooperation, partnership and mutual respect;
- Improved individual skills through the life-skills approach;
- AFS as a model which provides adolescents a safe space to discuss their individual and collective challenges and to analyse their role in society;
- AFS as a space where participants can build their skills and foster a sense of belonging to the community. In particular, the adolescent-led initiatives allowed the adolescents to identify issues affecting their communities, plan and implement a solution, working in teams with other adolescents;
- The life-skills programming presented alternatives to conflict and violence and showed adolescents that change is

63 Kartini International (2015).

64 Ibid.





possible; it also focused on enhancing the adolescents' self-expression and self-confidence;

- Incorporation of AFS in local CBOs and centres enhances the sustainability of the model and encourages its incorporation into community life;
- Establishment of management committees that enhanced the adoption of the AFS approach and community ownership of the programme, as well as increased adolescent participation in the leadership of the AFS and the development of local partnerships;
- The interactive methodologies used by facilitators, friendly communication, trust among facilitators and adolescents, non-school settings and the trust built between parents, community and AFS;
- Consistent efforts for increasing the participation of adolescent girls in the AFS and related programmes.

7. Challenges⁶⁵

- Short duration of the action research training, which was only of three months in the context of AFS in State of Palestine;
- Reluctance on the part of parents and communities to accept discussion of certain issues in the context of the AFS, e.g., child marriage;
- Implementation of certain activities during exam periods (the Tawjihi), putting stress on adolescents;
- Limited platforms for adolescents to continue the skills training after the initial three months;
- Negative impact of violent environments in which adolescents are confined every day;

- Monitoring and reporting of issues beyond the individual level was scattered;
- Distance between the home and the AFS for certain adolescents made their participation impossible or very difficult, especially in the State of Palestine.

8. Next steps and the way forward

Institutionalization of the AFS in the State of Palestine and Jordan has made significant progress. Work is underway in the State of Palestine for implementation of the minimum standards at the national level, and Jordan is following.

9. Lessons learned and recommendations⁶⁶

The following key lessons learned and recommendations emerged from the external evaluation of the programme:

- AFS programming needs to be offered on a year-long basis in place of the shorter three- to four-month version in order to consolidate results and build a more sustainable programme. However, the shorter nature of the programme that was offered showed that even relatively small investments in adolescent programming have a positive impact on the lives of adolescents;
- The life-skills approach is an effective way of teaching adolescents to address conflict in a non-violent way;
- The action research component had a positive impact on the participants and their communities;
- More equal participation of adolescent girls was achieved by effectively

65 This is a summary of the challenges identified by the evaluation – Kartini International (2015).

66 This is a summary of the lessons learned and recommendations which emerged from evaluation - Kartini International (2015)





employing methods such as outreach to parents, holding separate programming (different times or days for boys and girls), hiring female facilitators and increasing programming options of greater interest to girls;

- A regional approach to programmes for Palestinian adolescents proved to be an efficient approach given the dispersion of Palestinians across the region;
- An environment of trust and confidence for the adolescents is created in AFS staffed by peers rather than authority figures;
- Change in society's perceptions and attitudes towards adolescents requires the involvement of the community and parents;
- Development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systematic monitoring at all levels.

Other relevant lessons learned and recommendations include:

- Holistic approaches rather than series of activities, long-term planning;
- Facilitators in the AFS should be qualified as mentors/counsellors and/or trained in adolescent issues, with the ability to speak to adolescents on their level;
- Facilitators should be remunerated and not solely rely on volunteer work to ensure continuity and strengthen the sustainability of the services offered;
- Integration of parental programming and participation to ensure and increase support for the participation of adolescents in the AFS, especially girls;
- More efforts in bringing together adolescents from different locations; an

entry point is the use of technology and social media;

- Alignment of the activities with the academic year to avoid overburdening adolescents and activities during the summer time;
- Increase peer-to-peer support and involve older adolescents in the programme implementation.

10. Components to consider for scale-up in MENA

The AFS approach, with its flexibility and adaptability of the model and the minimum standards as a guideline for implementation.

11. Resources

AFS Minimum Standards.

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Annex. The National Standards for Adolescent and Youth Friendly Centres⁶⁷

The National Standards for Adolescent and Youth Friendly Centres are clustered under four main thematic areas, each comprised of a number of standards:

1. Centre building

1.1. Location: The centre is located in a place that is appropriate for all groups of young people in the local community to access; the centre is located in a safe environment and young people can reach the centre easily and safely at different times of day.

1.2. Facilities: The centre has basic, safe and well-maintained facilities that are available every day and are accessible to all young people including those with disabilities. Centre facilities are based and serve the centre's scope and purpose in relation to its work with young people.

1.3. Material and equipment: A range of basic material and equipment is available for young people to use regularly at the centre; the centre has needed materials and equipment for the programmes and activities it conducts with young people and for administrative support functions.

1.4. Working hours: The centre opens on a regular basis and at times that are appropriate for young people from different backgrounds and circumstances to attend; the centre is open after school during the school year and during school holidays. Centre opening hours are publicized and the centre is open regularly and consistently at those times.

1.5. Safety and hygiene: The centre building





is in good repair and physical condition. Centre facilities, materials and equipment are clean and safe and emergency procedures are in place, checked and practiced periodically. Centre staff are trained on what to do in an emergency and safety reporting mechanisms are established and shared with staff and young people attending the centre.

1.6. Participation and engagement of young people in centre building matters: The centre ensures young people's participation in all centre building matters, including opening hours, selection of materials and tools for centre activities, use of space and decorations. Young people are trained in first aid and emergency procedures.

2. Centre programmes and activities

2.1. Programme design and planning: The centre has a defined plan and direction for its work with young people that is created through the involvement and participation of young people themselves. The centre's programmes and activities are designed in response to young people's needs and the centre's plan includes young people's participation in the implementation of centre activities. The centre has a clearly defined and publicized programme of its daily, weekly, monthly and annual activities and young people are aware of these. Young people are involved in planning and selection of centre activities. The centre has programmes that include outreach to non-members/users that also involve young people.

2.2. Programme delivery and approach: Young people participate in the delivery of centre programmes and activities that are different every year and relevant to the

lives and concerns of young people. The centre follows participatory, experiential, learning approaches and peer training in delivery of its trainings and activities. The centre aims to include and make provisions for young people, both boys and girls, and including young people with disabilities in all different programmes.

2.3. Programme monitoring and evaluation: The centre has a monitoring and evaluation system in place that documents, monitors and evaluates young people's participation and use of centre facilities, activities, materials and equipment. Young people take part in all centre monitoring and evaluation activities that are taken into consideration in further planning activities of the centre. Different groups of young people (that change regularly) from different backgrounds and circumstances are involved in the monitoring and evaluation activities of the centre. The centre engages non-centre users/members, staff, parents and community members and organization in evaluating the centre's work with young people.

2.4. Young users/members: The centre is used by young people of all ages and various backgrounds and circumstances for extended periods of time. The centre reaches out to a variety of male and female young people with different socioeconomic and political affiliations. There is a flow of new users/members every year and young male and female users are equitably accessing and using centre facilities and activities. Young people's participation in centre activities is promoted and acknowledged publicly.

3. Human resources

3.1. Staff: The centre provides equal job opportunities and has defined hiring and





recruitment procedures for its staff that are followed systematically, consistently and according to the centre's organizational structure. Centre staff are hired based on defined qualifications and competencies, including knowledge, skills and values according to the centre's purpose and mandate for its work with young people. The centre makes sufficient effort to hire qualified young adults, including former users, as staff members. Staff qualifications and competencies are demonstrated in theory and in practice in their work with individuals and groups of young people in the centre and in the community.

3.2. Staff's work with young people: Centre staff members spend considerable amount of their time working with and reaching out to young people. They ascribe to and demonstrate commitment to ethical standards and beliefs including protection, participation, safety, non-discrimination and gender equity and equality. Staff encourage, provide guidance, coach and mentor young people in their interests and learning.

3.3. Staff training and development: The centre has a human resource development programme of ongoing basic and post-qualifying training, coaching and development that is provided to staff working with young people and all training is assessed. Staff participate in assessing their own development needs.

3.4. Volunteers: The centre reaches out to and recruits volunteers based on defined opportunities, roles and responsibilities according to the needs of the centre and the young people. Young people and adults volunteer in the centre and in the community. Volunteers' work is supervised and the centre has a programme of basic training for

its volunteers in line with the training for staff.

3.5. Volunteers' roles and responsibilities: The centre has a volunteering policy that identifies volunteers' roles, responsibilities, rights, benefits and tasks depending on the needs and opportunities of the centre. Volunteers adhere to the principles and practice of participation in facilitating group work. Volunteers may address individual concerns and/or refer to staff or relevant services when necessary and their work is supervised and coordinated.

4. Centre governance and management

4.1. General Assembly and Board of Directors: The centre maintains up-to-date licensing and registration requirements with the respective government institute(s) according to its mandate. Centre membership/general assembly and board of directors are in line with centre bylaws and the centres has a mechanism in place to ensure equitable participation of male and female board members who are representative of the centre users/ members in terms of sex, age and family associations and are democratically elected.

4.2. Committees: Young people are actively engaged in all centre elections and selection of board members and adolescent and youth and parents' advisory committees. Their engagement includes awareness of the election process or selection criteria and they participate monitoring of these to ensure equitable and fair representation.

4.3. Management and oversight: The centre has a clearly defined mission statement and strategic plan and direction for its work





with young people and it has been created through consultations with them and is reviewed annually with their participation. The centre actively seeks to continue its operations in the short and long terms through various resource mobilization strategies that include local and external resources. The centre has a mechanism and plan in place to enable young people to assume management responsibilities, and young people are aware of and take part in allocating the centre's budget for programmes and activities.

4.4. Relationships: The centre has an outreach and awareness program that engages with parents, community members, cohort centres, educational institutes, media, other civil society organizations and local government. The centre collaborates and builds linkages with relevant organizations in its programme offerings.

4.5. Ethos and accountability: The centre's operating ethos and social and learning environment include principles focused on non-discrimination and inclusion, safety and protection, and participation. Young people and centre staff can demonstrate these. The centre rules that are created with young people are in place and publicized and clear measures are taken if the centre's ethos is violated.

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