Hope is a Necessity, Despair a Luxury:
Youth Research on Conflict in the Palestinian West Bank

Preface

This publication is part of the 2019 project "Palestinian Youth Protecting Civic Values in Conflict" led by the Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem, occupied West Bank. It summarizes the researches conducted by 8 groups of Palestinian youth (13-17 years) in the larger Bethlehem district. They did research about major conflicts and tensions that impinge upon their communities, with an eye to understand and formulate the issues on which they will do advocacy within those communities later in the year.

This magazine is designed to give insight into an extracurricular track at Palestinian schools which is relatively new but which may contribute to the revitalization of local communities so much affected by conflict.
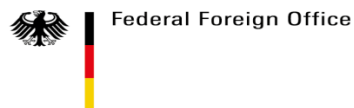
Chapter 1: Youth advocacy and research

The student researches have been intended to support conflict advocacy in the occupied Palestinian West Bank. What do we mean by the term "conflict advocacy"? Essentially, it is about an improved understanding and dealing with conflicts with the ultimate purpose of reducing conflict potential, and especially the occurrence of violence. It aims at understanding the problematic issues related to the causes, occurrence and potential solutions of conflict. As in all types of advocacy, It aims at involving stakeholders and decision-makers, and disseminating the advocacy message to the broader society, directly or through media.

Obviously, conflict advocacy is in any context and certainly in Palestine not just a technical matter. In the present situation of occupation, all participants share the opinion that any solution to the conflict in Palestine and a real peace should be based upon recognition and implementation of basic Palestinian rights, including national rights and human rights.

The advocacy we favor rests on the assumption that in order to understand the direct sources of violence as expressed in attitudes, feelings and values, it is necessary to work on structural or institutional violence: the broader context, systems and structures which in the case of the West Bank includes the Israeli occupation and its connections to locally based problems and conflicts. When advocating for conflict transformation it is also necessary to work on long-term processes. For AEI, any conflict transformation is dependent on strengthening the inner structures of Palestinian society that help people to stay 'steadfast' or resilient [sumud].

The participants in this conflict advocacy project come from school communities in the larger Bethlehem district that are affected by occupation and violence, in part due to their location close to settlements, checkpoints or the Separation Wall.

The involvement of schools in this community-oriented advocacy is important for two main reasons. First, since a long time the Palestinian educational system has wanted to move beyond hierarchical classroom-centered learning to emphasize active learning based on critical and creative thinking. The Ministry of Education supports extracurricular activities which challenge rote-learning and promote a broad view of student-centered learning.

Secondly, Palestinian educators want to promote a learning which contributes to supporting the broader community, sometimes called learning "in, through and for" the community.

Both types of education come together in what AEI calls sumud-based education. Such education understands sumud not just as staying on the land - the traditional rather static meaning of the concept – but as actively learning about and working toward the creation of conditions for Palestinians to stay on the land, and be able to develop their communities and keep their human dignity.

Such sumud education connects to a central concept in Palestinian education; that of citizenship – youths being aware of their civil rights and duties, even in the absence of a state. The value of citizenship demands from youths to care for their society and to contribute, even under the hard circumstances of occupation, to the inner strength, peace and development so much needed in their communities. In the context of conflicts, this value of citizenship is realized when Palestinian youths show respect to others in their own society and to those outside, as well as to the environment and earth where they live – more than ever important in a time of climate change.

To do conflict advocacy while valuing sumud and citizenship requires that both educators and students are well aware of the needs of the local and broader Palestinian communities.

Research

Here we arrive at the subject of this magazine: the community researches done by Palestinian youth in the 8 communities. Educational research helps youth to become more aware of the community needs, and understand and define them. Obviously, such understanding is necessary before any effective advocacy can be done.

Youth research is helpful as a condition for advocacy but is also important for developing a broad range of learning processes and skills acquisition, involving

emotional, cognitive and social skills. Think of intellectual curiosity, planning, the commitment to implement a research plan, the process of working together as a team, the psychological en emotional skills needed for good communication – all important life skills.

The term 'research' sounds ambitious, certainly so for schools. Sure, we should not forget that youth research is in the first place a learning or educational exercise involving the skills mentioned. This however does not mean that the researches cannot contain and communicate important insights, though the researches do not necessarily target full-fledged academic standards.

Thus, young people as well as their educators may develop new and unheard, 'fresh' approaches to societal problems. Schools usually have detailed information about the needs of the local society and have many opportunities to learn about possible approaches and solutions through the school's access to the members of the school community: teachers, headmasters, students, parents and families.

Moreover, schools can recruit technical advice about the subjects they choose and the methods and techniques of doing research. In Palestine as elsewhere, technical advisers and professionals will not quickly ask for payment of a fee when approached by a class or group of students.

Themes

Against this background the 8 selected school communities in the Bethlehem district chose a range of subjects relevant to their broader communities, sometimes after considerable reflection and preliminary discussions, part of which were held during the last four months of 2018 during an earlier project stage.

Here below is the list of the research themes.

School communities	Themes
Battir, boys	How to improve the safety of domestic and international tourists in the village of Battir to the west of Bethlehem? What is the school's role in supporting tourism in a conflict zone?
Artas, girls	Palestinian youth confronting the challenges of agriculture and supporting the sumud or steadfastness on the lands: What is the impact of the negligence of lands and their expropriation in the village of Artas? How can community cohesion in the face of conflict be supported?
Al Khalifa Al–Rashadeen – Doha, boys	Doha town to the south of Bethlehem is overcrowded with lack of public services, leading to tensions and violence. What are the reasons for this overcrowdedness, the impact on life

	quality, and the consequences for the overall development of Doha?
Masqat – Doha, girls	Doha faces shortage of water due to the political conflict, and because of misuse and mismanagement of water, including water theft, resulting in tensions in the community. What can a school community do to confront this issue?
Deir Saleh, boys	What is the present situation of lack of traffic safety along roads near the eastern villages, especially Wadi Nar and roads near the separation wall? What are relevant Israeli policies, Palestinian initiatives, as well as resulting tensions in the school environment and impact on the academic level at schools? What can be done by a school community to face this issue?
'Abediyyeh, girls	Idem
Beit Jala, boys	What is the impact on Palestinian youth, family and community of digital crimes – such as hacking, blackmail, sexual abuse, verbal violence? What are the crimes involved, the effects on life, the educational techniques of combating, and the role of the society?
Beit Jala, girls	What are the social and psychological tensions faced by families where one or two parents work for long periods in Israel? What is the task of the school?

Note that in their problem statements, most schools explicitly opt for investigating actual or potential roles for the school community in constructively dealing with the various issues.

Methods and techniques of doing research

In the context of their researches, the school communities learned about research methods in three areas, which we will briefly outline here.

1. **Problem definition, conflict mapping and data analysis**.

   Think about brainstorming, mapping the problem, defining the actors involved, dissecting the conflict- and tension-related factors, seeing linkages, compare and contrast, developing hypotheses, and making scenarios.

The Beit Jala Boys School compared and contrasted traditional crimes and digital crimes as for their causes, motives, and requirements of effective law enforcement. They used a flipchart in the school courtyard to together debate and map out the problem and its various contributing factors.

The Al Khalifa Al –Rashadeen school in Doha formulated and classified questions to map the problem and make hypotheses that made it possible to quantify the responses. The participants also developed scenarios: What would happen after 10 years when problems remain unchecked?

2. **Gathering data and opinions**.

The participants applied qualitative and quantitative approaches, sometimes observational approaches, sometimes participative ones like fieldtrips, in addition to Internet research.

All researches included *interviewing* persons such as authority bearers (mayors were interviewed by many schools), specialists (NGO or media professionals and activists), school community members (parents), and victims or those otherwise seriously affected by the problem.

Besides reading studies about tourism available on Internet and collecting statistics and quotes ("by the tongues of the citizens"), the boys of the Battir government school Interviewed the mayor of Battir, staff at the Ministry of Tourism of the Palestinian Authority, school headmaster Ahmed Saleh, the local activist Marian Mammar, the leading educator Nadia Butmeh, as well as staff at heritage and tourist centers, older community members talking about the past situation, and local farmers.

The students in 'Abediyyeh, focusing on the values involved in the violence on the roads, met the mayor Naji Rodaydeh, media personality Mohammed Al-Laham and members of the school parent council. They also interviewed PNA departments and local NGOs.

Schools made use of the opportunity to set out *questionnaires* among the families of the students, assuming that parents are motived to cooperate in a project of their children:

The youth at Deir Saleh developed a questionnaire which was set out among 30 families. Moreover, they sent draft questions ("pre-questionnaire") to members of the school council for comment, and also approached other schools for input in an attempt to formulate questions as neutral and objective as possible.

The Beit Jala girls' school developed a sample from among the participating girls where one or both of the parents are working and sleeping in Israel. The youths

drafted a questionnaire for 50 families which met the criteria. Also here several reviews of draft questionnaires were made and a draft was submitted for comment to staff at the PNA Ministry of Labor.

An example of *participative research*:

The Artas Fardoos school submitted 20 questionnaires to farmers. The youths improved the quality of answering by building trust and cooperation with those farmers. They developed connections during a bazaar of local agricultural products and volunteered in joining seasonal work on the land.

Making *observations*:

Like other schools, the Masqat participants interviewed authorities like the local mayor, made interviews with a professional organization like the Arab Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ), but also collected stories about observations on water use by families at home - the focus of their research.

3. **Disseminating results**.

Schools have many ways and means to disseminate reports and also have access to traditional or modern media. Interesting to us is especially the so-called school morning broadcast, applied by many schools, when all students at school are brought together in the school court yard. At the beginning of the school day they are still attentive and 'fresh', and parents may be present as well. An oral reporting about the research, brief as it may be, reaches out to many at school. The school youths also gave talks in classes not involved in the project, and mentioned the project in exchanges with other schools. In the coming summer, the researches will be discussed in local summer workshops where results will be shared among the broader school community.

The documentation of the researches, including the implementation of the researches and their results, was taken care of by all the school communities. All groups submitted reports, the results of questionnaires, and CDs, to project staff.

In conducting the researches, the supportive and encouraging roles of the educational team members and project staff was crucial. However, cooperation and encouragement came also from among the youths themselves. They organized themselves in committees; approached experts and stakeholders, and discussed results among themselves. The learning process was comprehensive, enjoyable, and helpful in building personality.

Obstacles in doing the researches were few. in some individual cases parents did not participate because of suspicions about how research results could possibly be used

against them (such as by income tax authorities). Of course, the educational teams faced the well-known constraining influences of homework and exams.

Overview of the research methods and tools employed, and challenges faced

Collecting information	Analysis	Presentation and dissemination	Challenges
Making action plan	Brainstorming Formulating questions	School broadcast daily, sometimes with parents	Limits: time, place, human, procedural.
Interviewing authorities Documentation of interviews	Mapping a (not yet well recognized) problem Seeing connections local and broader	Carton posters just brief so that youth read	Healing psychological cases: shyness, loneliness, openness
Questionnaires Prequestionnaire: Testing q. arbitors.	Hypothesis: no differences	Media and school: use	Questionnaire: was a learning process
Collecting data, statistics Collecting stories	Compare/contrast Neutral formulation of Hypotheses and	Thematic week Lecturing at	Parents sometimes not answering: sensitive

Collecting quotes ("by the tongues of its citizens") Internet research Reading studies, articles Observations, also by participating in activities Diary with observations Field visits	questions Relations between local conflict and conflict with occupation Classifying and organizing materials Working with samples Interpretation: Debating Dialogue sessions, Discussion Coming up with conclusions Using flipchart in school courtyard Hypothetical scenarios – toward solutions: What will happen after 10 years	schools Environmental club: spreading positive news Exchanging video of other school's concerns. External media	Shortage of experience in research Exams and homework, time School entered the project late. No research centers, no funding. Traditions: No critical thinking, authoritarianism.

Chapter 2: Researches

We grouped the eight school researches into 'couples' because the communities and selected conflict issues resembled each other in specific cases due to geographical proximity, the nature of the community, and chosen theme.

Doha

Khalifa al-Rashadeen school

The city of Doha is a large community located to the south of Bethlehem and to the west of the large refugee camp Dheisheh. In the past many of the residents of Doha used to come from families of the camp but nowadays the population is more mixed. The Khalifa al-Rashadeen school community chose to research the 'crowdedness' of Doha because many of its new inhabitants come from elsewhere, especially areas in Jerusalem, where the inhabitants are unable to stay due to high costs of living, lack of development opportunities and other constraints. As a result, by moving to Doha, many Jerusalemites "go from one conflict to another," the research report says.

The society is under pressure and this shows itself in some of its inhabitants' and youth's behavior. The school community focused on "lack of respect in dealing with each other," and "aggressiveness and irritation" in living together. Community life is

sometimes at risk due to "robbery and fights among people, aggravated by corruption and poverty," among other sources of tension. The presence of nearby Israeli settlements trigger violence as well, like incidental clashes between Palestinian youth and the Israeli army near neighboring Dheisheh refugee camp.

Through interviewing, Internet research, and questionnaires, the school group attempted to map out the various interlocking issues involved. It was said that Doha has become a "pressure cooker" and that people feel "strangled, suffocating." The main causes were listed as:

- Considerable immigration from the Jerusalem area and other areas

- the Separation Wall: until 300 meter from the wall no building is allowed

- the expropriation of lands for Israeli settlements in the environment of the town which restricts development and expansion possibilities

- the high prices for housing as a result of the pressures on the land leading to poverty levels and inequality.

Due to the sudden and fast demographic growth of the town and the scarcity of and pressure on the land, development has been highly uneven. A great many simultaneously developed housing projects took place over the last ten years leading to a lack of proper standards in services also because Doha municipality was basically unable to plan and control properly:

- Overhasty and improper implementation of housing projects, including deficient building standards

- Deficient services like sanitation, water and electricity

- Much vertical building, not in an orderly fashion

- Lack of recreation facilities in the community

- Neglected environment: lack of harmony and beauty

- Social and environmental costs, including pollution and piles of garbage.

While this deficient environment and concomitant decrease in the quality of life leads to an atmosphere in which violence can come up, it also happens that the community's sumud – so important to address the structures behind the violence –has been negatively affected by this distressful, demotivating environment.

The research report speaks about an underlying erosion of norms and values important to the community bond. This has been aggravated by the rise of new classes in society;

unequal levels of poverty and wealth; and a growing social and cultural differentiation due to the different backgrounds of the new immigrants. Other factors shared with communities elsewhere in the West Bank include high youth unemployment levels and a general despair about prospects for a just peace.

Masqat School

The Masqat girls school group, again in Doha near Dheisheh refugee camp, started also from the problem of an overall unhealthy living atmosphere in Doha but zoomed in on a specific example: the scarcity of (potable) water for the households in Doha. It is well-known in the Bethlehem area that not all areas receive sufficient public water. Refugee camps like Dheisha in particular face shortages in the hot summer months. The school community investigated the limitations which Israel set on water consumption, noting that Israel takes 86% of the water in the area, part of which are consumed by settlers to the south of Doha.

The relative shortage of water in Doha leads to conflicts between neighbors and to water theft. At the same time, there is misuse and a basic lack of knowledge about how to consume water. The participating youths observed their families about water use so as to come to recommendations.

Wadi Nar and roads leading to the eastern villages Deir Salah and 'Abediyyeh

Both the 'Abediyyeh girls school and Deir Salah boys focused their researches on the situation of the safety on the roads in the eastern villages of the Bethlehem district; a choice which at first sight may look remarkable given the project focus on conflict and violence. However, the situation on the roads is actually felt as violent and is also heavily influenced by the overall political situation of conflict and occupation.

The 'Abediyyeh school focused on the erosion of values which leads to violence on the roads, while the Deir Salah school took more efforts to get an overview of the state of affairs and the families' opinions. Both though tried to map the many interlocking factors affecting the lack of safety on the roads and both also looked at the ways how the school communities could positively contribute to deal with the issue. For the fluency of this account the researches of both schools are therefore combined.

The fact that both schools chose this topic already underlines the severity of the situation. The responses to the questionnaire by the Deir Salah group spoke about just 6% of the families selected felt the school environment was safe; that in 24% of the cases the health of students was directly affected; that just 3% said that families living along the road felt any measure of "harmony," and that 20% of the respondents felt really worried about the subject. One school documented the type of accidents that frequently occur in the school's environment - ranging from collisions, knocking down youths crossing the street; the overriding of animals; electricity poles hit, and the willful

neglect of car maintenance. There was even a distinction made between unintentional and intentional accidents. It was stressed that the effect of the situation was most on children below 10 years and the elderly and persons with special needs. The behavioral issues researched focused on the psychological state of the driver: recklessness, restlessness and nervousness, speeding due to the need to make a profit (Ford taxis, trucks), and sleeplessness.

Special attention was given to the Wadi Nar Rd, the main circling road which connects the southern West Bank to the northern West Bank to circumvent Jerusalem and which is rather dangerous in various areas, especially in case of bad weather. Many drivers take irresponsible risks here, according to the opinions of persons living here or using the road and its various side roads. Called the "road of death" it has a major Israeli checkpoint, the so-called 'container' checkpoint where it may happen, as one of the researches quotes a driver, that "you go through without a problem, or you may be stopped for five hours." Sudden traffic jams are here quite common. The checkpoints include sudden, mobile checks, for instance when the Israeli army is searching for certain people, or the overall political situation that day is tense.

Among the stories collected are ones of parents being worried all the time for their kids, especially boys, being checked by soldiers – do they arrive at school in time? A boy says he was regularly checked both on the way to school and on the way back home. Another story tells that Palestinian youths were taken out of the car by soldiers to be beaten up out of view behind a hill. Still another story relayed a soldier taking a selfie with himself smiling and behind him queuing cars – "Look, I can stop hundreds of cars!" "The Wadi Nar Road is eating our bodies" is one slogan which underlines the tensions. As a result, the parents tell about the presence of mental illnesses among the youths including depressions and addictions, and also the translation of tensions into internal community strife. It is broadly acknowledged that tribal Bedouin-like conflicts are familiar in the eastern villages.

As in the other researches, the schools particularly emphasize how the values and social cohesion of the villages and surrounding dwellers are under pressure. Lack of respect for basic traffic rules is in fact an indicator of an eroding community spirit where living out your emotions in an uncontrolled manner or speeding for one's own profit stand opposed to the mutual care needed for a functioning community. It is mentioned that there is "no culture, no education" among some drivers, for instance, about the rights of pedestrians. There is also a widespread skepticism about any change possible: "Arab society is fawda [chaos]," is one common stereotype. The overall situation of occupation and associated lack of predictability in social, economic and political life adds to a basic sense of despair.

The schools list a wide range of structural factors which either cause or contribute to the unsafety on the roads:

- Parts of the road go through densely inhabited areas unsuitable for a highway. Crowded villages do not have the opportunity to expand due to lack of control

over surrounding areas, while Israeli settlements take over land areas for the building of roads or other purposes. Though near the desert, the eastern villages sometimes face overcrowding. One school emphasized the great differences in safety along the road.

- Bottleneck effect: Crowdedness of the Wadi Nar Rd because it is the only highway connecting the southern and northern West Bank, with the city of Jerusalem inaccessible for most Palestinians. One school mentions that 22.000 cars take the road daily. The roads are also taken by daily commuters with a permission to work in Israel.

- Lack of (good) pavements for pedestrians like school youngsters; shopkeepers piling up their supplies; parking of cars on pavement, or absence of pavements so that youth are forced to walk on the street.

- Cars: often old and without proper or no maintenance; drivers and passengers not wearing the safety belt, and cars without modern equipment to prevent accidents.

- Palestinian police do not have authority to regulate the traffic in areas C (the larger part of the West Bank), nor do municipalities have the authority in those areas to do urgent maintenance and development tasks in relation to the road system. An underlying political question is whether the authorities should give priority to the Wadi Nar Rd even if they can, since doing so represents in a way accepting the politically intolerable situation that Jerusalem is excluded from the West Bank.

What can the schools and their communities do? It is mentioned that only a small minority of accidents happen because of youths crossing the streets in a careless and dangerous way. One hopeful story tells : "I always used to suffer and worry about my little brother. But then I started to help my friends at schools by helping students to cross the street." Yet the schools found several ways to raise awareness, and raise the issue of traffic and road safety on the communities' agenda.

Artas and Battir

The villages Artas and Battir are both not far from Bethlehem and both located in a remarkably beautiful environment. Battir is a World Heritage Site, a fact which helped them to prevent the building of the separation wall as it would irrevocably damage the environmental beauty of the area – the single argument that convinced the Israeli government, under pressure of environmental groups in Israel, not to build the wall in that area. Battir is close to several settlements, especially Beitar, and borders the Green Line located in a valley through which the old railroad passes, dating from British mandate time.

In the case of Artas, the wall has been built close to the village. It provides space for the settlement of Efrata which recently expanded with the building of a quarter close to the lands of Artas. Artas, too, has a history of tourism, especially in connection to the large Roman pools to the west, the so-called Solomon Pools.

The commonality between both sides rests in the strong feeling among the population and the school communities there that more can be done to protect and develop the local economy and the lands even while they are under pressure of neighboring settlements and an Israeli policy in area C (in which parts of the village lands are located) which hinders the development and expansion of the village. Any development project there requires permits of the Israeli civil administration which as a rule are not given.

The violence both communities experience are primarily related to tensions with the neighboring settlements as a result of land expropriations and expanding roads (in the case of Battir).

Ownership of lands in the Artas fields is threatened by military orders. In the case of Battir, soldiers are patrolling along the railway where the school is located. As a result, the male students at the school are sometimes 'provoked' and frictions may occur. According to a spokesperson in Battir, "settlers and soldiers come closer to tourism areas to frighten people," while there is also an attempt to open an Israeli road in a touristic region for use by settlers. "From time to time, Palestinian residents come to prevent the opening of the road." A case of violence is emphatically mentioned: the lack of safety for domestic or international tourists, especially hikers.

Both Artas and especially Battir are visited by hikers who according to spokespersons in Battir such as of the heritage centers, may be harassed, verbally or physically. Another potential source of (future) conflict are the springs in Artas and Battir, which gives less water than years ago. The drilling for water sometimes leads to environmental pollution, which is neither good for agriculture nor tourism. Increasingly, families in Battir and especially Artas face water shortages during summer. Still another familiar source of friction are the checkpoints which hinder the transport of agricultural products or the reaching of their destination.

In Battir, the school group focused on cultural traditions and values which hinder or promote local tourism. The research group emphasized in its recommendations the need for deepening values and knowledge among the villagers about the local cultural roots and civilization, as a condition for people's sumud. This also applies to the farmers who are sometimes said to "only care for agricultural products" and less so for the preservation of nature and the beauty of the environment. Knowledge of such values would help preventing youth delinquency, it is said. On the organizational level, the need for coordination between Municipality, Ministry of Tourism and cultural centers was emphasized.

In Artas, the school looked for ways how to support keeping the farmers working on their lands rather than outside the village. Specifically, the school students looked for practical ways of showing interest in agriculture and help the farmers. Importance was given to translating awareness about the need to protect the land into a respectful attitude toward the farmers and the land. The youth stressed and practiced team cooperation and taking responsibility in the planning of the research work.

Aida camp and Beit Jala

In the last two researches, we move to two areas of conflict which have affected the internal, interaction in families and at schools but at the same time are felt to affect the overall sumud or internal cohesion of the society in its capacity to respond to challenges and broader conflicts. In the case of the girls school community in Beit Jala, the school chose the phenomenon of parents working in Israel, usually the father and sometimes the mother, and its impact on family life and the mentality of children at home and at school.

At the boys government school in Beit Jala near Aida refugee camp, the subject of Internet crime and bullying was chosen as a reminder that the Palestinian situation is not left unaffected by global developments among youths.

Beit Jala school for girls

The school did research between specific tensions among the youths and the fact that one or both parents worked in Israel, and was absent from family life for longer periods of time. A significant proportion of families are affected by this situation.

The behavioral problems detected and listed included: morning delays, overall negative behavior like quarrelling and rebelliousness, non-cooperation, strongly emotional expressions and anger, expressions of loneliness and isolation, showing lack of self-confidence, expressions of feelings of inferiority, laziness, and worrying – in general, what is often called here: a lack of inner peace. The behavioral issues affect the youth's academic levels and their social life inside and outside school. The research group does not claim that all behavioral problems are directly related to the issue of parent's work in Israel, it is rather said that the behavioral problems come more clearly forward in the case of families where parents work in Israel. The research report says that in raising the family in a healthy atmosphere it is important to have a father's (and sometimes mother's) presence. Long absences can lead to broken homes which in their turn may lead, when happening on a large scale, to a community disrupted.

The young researchers looked also at the broader context of economic dependencies. Many male adults in the West Bank work in the Jerusalem area or in Israel because of high unemployment levels in the West Bank and the pull factor of higher rewards in

Israel, also for manual daily labor. The research says that the West Bank is a satellite of the Israeli economy. The separation Wall and land expropriations (or inaccessibility to lands) in the West Bank bring farmers and others to look for work in Israel, with or without permit.

It is relevant to note that many Palestinian workers stay overnight in Israel, even though their permit does not allow for that – leading to continuous uncertainty and nervousness among the workers as well as their families and children, as there is always the risk of detection by police. Presently the number of West Bank laborers with permits is estimated at 128.000, including 20.000 merchants, and possibly some 50.000 more workers without permits who climb over hills such as to the west and south of Bethlehem where the Wall is not yet built.

The report calls for national citizenship, sumud and the application of nonviolent religious values in educating people not to work in Israel but to contribute to the Palestinian economy as a source of inner peace and strength that increases society's capacity to respond to tensions and conflicts, whether inside or outside.

Beit Jala School for Boys

At the government school for boys Beit Jala near Aida camp, tensions among peers at school or in the home were related to 'digital crimes' – whereby 'crime' is understood as not just legal transgression but also forms of bullying through Internet and social media. The internal tensions and behavioral problems were documented against the background of the worldwide technological revolution which has also gripped Palestine. The following digital crimes were researched:

- 'blackmailing' between boys, and boys and girls, by creating and disseminating fake social media posts including 'shameful' photos

- Internet fashions and addictions with negative individual and social behavior as a consequence

- Israeli intelligence making use of Internet to pressure youths and recruit informants.

The school researched the legal situation and the law enforcement policies, or lack thereof (legal loopholes). Like in the case of the girls' school, the boys emphasized the need for strong values to protect the youths and their future. It is pointed out that the motives behind digital misbehavior are opposing values of mutual respect and care: bullying motives, revenge, the stereotyping of groups, political gain, and in some criminal cases financial profit-making. Again, strong values and internal cohesion or sumud makes the society more able to respond to tensions inside and outside.

Both schools saw their researches and advocacy topics as wake up calls to issues which are not sufficiently taken seriously in the society but which have long term consequences for its viability.

Chapter 3: Factors of conflict and intervention

A conflict analysis, in our view, needs an analysis which does justice to the complexity of the conflict environment in which Palestinians in the West Bank live. It needs to show the interconnections between the conflict of Palestinians with the Israeli presence of army and settlements and the multifarious conflicts within Palestinian society itself. Further, it should show the distinction between deeper and more superficial causes of tension and violence on the one hand, and the capacity to respond to conflicts and violence on the other.

See here below a summary of the main factors as we saw them showing up in the various researches:

Conflict schema

- Appearance and expression of tension
    - Main sources of tensions in families and within and between communities
    - Expression of tensions: Youth showing dysfunctional, sometimes conflict behavior
    - Targets of tensions, and connections between local and national conflicts

- Facilitators of tensions
    - Triggers such as provocative or reckless behavior in situations of power inequality
    - Presence of geographical friction points such as (mobile) checkpoints, places where settlers and their families and Palestinian youths meet, and living/working near areas of tension

- Causes of tensions
    - No agency and control with regard to development opportunities due to dependencies in resources and services
    - Shortage of spatial expansion opportunities, especially in area C where settlements are located, and crisis-like phenomena as a consequence
    - Problems of mobility which affect all fields, checkpoints

- Society becoming less cohesive and feeding tensions: lack of cohesion, fragmentation, and erosion of sumud and other values
    - Fragmentation as a result of the unequal political situation, occupational policies and dependencies
    - Divisive traditions in the society that have a negative effect on present-day life, and feed upon conflicts and tensions.
    - Global influences such as the neo-liberal economic model and the influence of modern technologies engendering new forms of inequalities.

- Inadequate response to potential or actual tensions and conflicts
  - Aforementioned lack of control over development such as in areas C; the fragmentation of society, and divisive traditions
  - A shortage of authority, coordination, knowledge and experience, and human and material resources among authorities responsible for law enforcement

- No sufficient recognition among the local communities of the seriousness of the problems for the long-term future of Palestinian society
  - No sufficient understanding of the issues involved among the relevant actors
  - No sufficient urgency and priority given
  - No sufficient education and awareness-raising on the issues.

When involved in the project youth became more engaged in the affairs of their communities, and became stakeholders in voicing their communities' needs. We believe that dissecting the various issues during the research led them to see the complexity of the issues but also brought the need more clearly to the fore to keep the society strong so as to be able to face conflicts and challenges. Nobody believes that any of the conflicts treated will be resolved soon, given the paralysis in the overall situation and the continuing occupation of the West Bank. However, the researches brought to realization that changes at a local level can be made and are meaningful and necessary. As is sometimes said here, "hope is a necessity, despair a luxury."

Making changes validates the role of students, young as they are, as actual and future citizens. Citizenship for sumud is a central value Palestinian educators embrace.

Here below is a table which summarizes the various ideas brought forward by the youths during their researches:

School communities	Suggested/actual actions by school and students	Suggested actions by families and community	Suggested actions by institutions and NGOs	Suggested actions by PNA agencies
Battir, boys	Deepening values relating to culture and civilization Specialized program in developing tourism and environmental	Social media use to promote tourism Educating farmers about land use Developing	Setting up plans for raising tourism awareness in Battir Dealing with tourism as	One Ministry in charge of the development of Battir as World Heritage Site One person at

	awareness Planting trees 22 students trained to accompany visitors as guide. Investing in school holidays in the service of sustainable tourism, helping school students with some pocket money.	alternative tourism tracks	science Marketing and publicity for tourism Cultural education of media professionals Encouraging student fieldtrips with modest fares.	Ministry of Tourism responsible for Battir Strengthening tourism concepts in textbooks
Artas, girls	Youth contributing to agricultural work and marketing agricultural products Cultural awareness Constructing plastic green house on roof of school Forming a pressure group	Cultural awareness Agricultural advocacy initiatives by families to strengthen sumud Parents group dedicated to cultural awareness		
Al Khalifa Al – Rashadeen – Doha, boys				
Masqat – Doha, girls	Using scarce water in proper ways			
Deir Saleh, boys	Student committees raising awareness about road safety. Traffic safety week Exhibits on traffic safety		More institutions working on road safety	Managing traffic

	Improving school environment Traffic counselor at school New methods for relieving psychological pressures Guiding students across the street: "I used to suffer and worry about my brother already after 1 hour. I started to helping out by moving students from one side of the street to the other."			
'Abediyyeh, girls		Awareness about safety road problem among different age groups Coordination with authorities to remove obstacles on the streets, instructing vendors		Declare state of emergency Healthy planning when building roads and sidewalks Clear painting signs on streets More coordination authorities Ambulances available Traffic police protecting school students
Beit Jala, boys	Schools involving	More awareness	Information	Which penalties,

	police in issues of digital crimes More religious education needed	raising in community	efforts: Public magazine, brochures, episodes in media Specialists needed Cooperation local NGOs Security computer programs	legislation, updating digital crimes unit
Beit Jala, girls	Planting national and religious seeds to keep the Palestinian Moslem/Christian identity	Public awareness to amend attitudes Importance to follow-up on meetings with (male) parents More debates with parents about well-being family	Support for finding work in Palestine	Ministry of Labour: Support for finding work in Palestine

The various suggestions reflect that the conflict issues relate to different types of advocacy levels. In some cases the projects raise awareness about an issue still not considered as a main problem among local communities (like the two Beit Jala schools), while in most other cases the conflict issue is understood as central and urgent but school communities were investigating how to trigger the advocacy efforts and how schools can make a valuable contribution.

From the above it is clear that the schools can take on an important role in raising awareness in the community, live the values espoused, and do advocacy towards authority bearers and important stakeholders.