



**FACT SHEET**

**EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

**PROJECT PROFILE**

**Shara'a' Simsim Project**

**JANUARY 2011**



Season five filming at the Shara'a Simsim studio in Ramallah.

**Project Overview**

The Sesame Street Project, known as *Shara' Simsim* in the West Bank and Gaza, builds local capacity to provide quality educational television and radio programming. USAID improves children's educational programming in Palestine by taking a localized approach; by building local capacity for program production; creating unique Palestinian characters and storylines with which the children can identify; and providing training and technical assistance to local media professionals. USAID also mobilizes local organizations that target educational programming for children and provide them with assistance to ensure long-term sustainability of quality programming for Palestinian children.

**Goals**

- Promote childrens' sense of their Palestinian identity.
- Build local capacity to develop quality children's educational media.
- Illustrate a means of dealing with the emotional challenges of Palestinian children, specifically boys.
- Support the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's new Education Development Strategic Plan.
- Create a network of stakeholders and partners with a vested interest in *Shara'a Simsim's* mission – e.g. to use media to reach children and families with educationally sound and socially positive messages.

**Activities**

*Shara'a Simsim's* primary objectives are to provide quality educational programming for children, strengthen Palestinian organizations' ability to produce it locally, and conduct educational outreach programs at the community level. The Sesame Street Workshop partners with two local Palestinian organizations – PEN Media and Al Quds University Institute for Modern Media –to create *Shara'a Simsim*. By training local producers, directors and script writers, the project ensures the long-term sustainability of quality children's educational media production.

A significant focus of the *Shara'a Simsim* project is the replication of real-life situations for Palestinian children. The stars of the show are unique Palestinian puppets – Haneen and Kareem. Scripts are developed with age-appropriate current events and likely interactions. By illustrating real-life situations, *Shara'a Simsim* provides children with relevant coping mechanisms and peaceful conflict resolution strategies

**CHALLENGES**

- Limited availability of quality children's programming which addresses current Palestinian social constructs/conflicts.
- Few numeracy and literacy learning options prior to formal education.
- Complexities of approvals and access and movement into and out of Gaza.



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*Shara'a Simsim show in Jerusalem's Old City.*

The *Shara'a Simsim* project is carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and supports the new Education Development Strategic Plan. Through consultations with MOEHE staff, education specialists, educators, producers, content specialists, and researchers, the *Shara'a Simsim* project develops the educational focus of the television series and the related outreach materials. The resulting Statement of Educational Objectives serves as the guidebook for writers, directors and producers throughout the filming season.

In addition to the production of *Shara'a Simsim* episodes, the project is in the process of developing a website that will provide content for children, parents, caregivers and preschool and first grade teachers. The main feature of the site will be interactive games and songs that are educational and entertaining to Palestinian children four to seven years of age. The project will also reach out to parents and children through 40 radio episodes.

Outreach material (posters, storybooks, calendars and teacher training videos) is being developed based on the themes identified in the Statement of Educational Objectives. The training videos will be used to train supervisors and caregivers on the use of media for educational purposes, basic tenets of early childhood education, activities that support specific learning objectives, and the use of the outreach material of *Shara'a Simsim*.

**Successes**

- Completed filming seasons four and five of *Shara'a Simsim* which includes 52 unique episodes.
- Conducted 30 public events with the *Shara'a Simsim* puppets, Haneen and Karim.
- Completed 20 public service announcements for television.
- Developed educational posters covering the Five Senses for preschoolers that were distributed in the West Bank.
- Created the *Shara'a Simsim* outreach material – five storybooks, an evergreen calendar, and six training video episodes.

**Project Detail**

Implementing Partner: Sesame Street Workshop; Life of Project: 09/26/2008-09/29/2011; Total Estimated Cost: \$2,499,523.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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