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EVALUATION OF THE
A.I.D.-FUNDED PVO DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
IN THE
WEST BANK AND GAZA

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION - A GENERAL OVERVIEW

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WEST BANK/GAZA PVO PROGRAM EVALUATION

Preschool Education in the West Bank and Gaza

A General Overview

General. Preschool education is not an "official" element in the educational system on the West Bank or Gaza. Aside from UNRWA support for classroom facilities within refugee camps, preschool education does not receive government funding from either Jordan or Israel. Preschool activities are entirely dependent on the local associations, foreign assistance, or private funding.

Approximately 200 preschool programs are operating in the West Bank and Gaza, with an estimated 15,000 children between three and five years of age attending. These programs, which function without official government support, are highly diverse with curriculum supervision and professional program guidance usually lacking. The majority of teachers have had no formal preschool training. Physical facilities are often limited to available space in buildings designed for other purposes and often lack proper lighting and ventilation. Educational materials and playground toys are minimal.

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) conducted a survey in 1983 of preschool centers in the West Bank and Gaza. The survey found that there are basically three types of institutions and groups providing preschool programs: registered charitable societies, UNRWA-affiliated, and private. One hundred and fifty-four societies are providing preschool programs for over 11,000 children. Some of these programs were found to be of a reasonably professional quality with trained teachers. The UNRWA operates 18 preschools in refugee camps and three in villages in the West Bank and in 9 refugee camps in Gaza serving over 1,200 children in the West Bank and 1,435 in Gaza. The survey also found that four preschool programs are operated privately for over 200 children with professional staff, a defined curriculum and with adequate materials and equipment to support the programs. These operate within accepted international standards for kindergarten activity.

SUMMARY STATISTICS¹

A. Preschool Centers in Charitable Societies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

¹ Figures are from CDF survey noted earlier.

District	Kinder- garten	Classes	Children	Teachers
Ramallah	22	37	1,210	50
Hebron	28	58	2,635	58
Bethlehem	21	43	1,105	36
Jericho	2	3	150	5
Jerusalem	24	48	1,450	48
Nablus & Jenin	13	206	2,131	73
Tulkarem	30	53	1,272	45
West Bank Total	140	448	9,953	315
Gaza Strip Total	38	70	3,000	120
West Bank & Gaza	176	518	12,953	425

B. UNRWA-Affiliated Centers

1. West Bank

<u>Location</u>	<u>Name of Sponsor</u>	<u>Number of Beneficiaries</u>
Agbat Jaber	YMCA Jerusalem	62
Jalazone	YWCA Jerusalem	56
Kalandia	YMCA Jerusalem	70
Am'ary	Quakers	60
Shu'fat	Holy Land Mission	60
Deir Ammar	Holy Land Mission	58
Ramallah	European Quakers	30
Fawwar	Holy Land Mission	60
Arroub (1)	Holy Land Mission	60
Arroub (2)	Holy Land Mission	60
Dheisheh	Holy Land Mission	48
Balata	Self-Help Local Group	124
Askar	Self-Help Local Group	75
Askar	Self-Help Local Group	52
Fara's	Self-Help Local Group	43
Jenin	Self-Help Local Group	88
Tulkarem	Self-Help Local Group	60
Nur Shams	Self-Help Local Greoup	39
Nur Shams	Self-Help Local Group	23
Rummaneh	Self-Help Local Group	30
Aida	Holy Land Mission	48

1,266

2. Gaza

In the Gaza Strip UNRWA administers preschool programs in 9 camps; services are provided to 1,435 children. The following list includes the UNRWA kindergarten centers in the Gaza Strip:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Number of Kindergartens</u>
Rafah	2
Khan Younis	1
Deir El-Balah	1
Al-Maghazi	1
Al-Nasairat	2
Al-Burg	2
Al-Shargay'a	1
Al-Shata	2
Jabalia	2
Beit Hanoun	1
Camp Canada	1

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Teacher Training. In addition to the lack of an assured, reliable funding source for these preschool activities to pay teachers, improve facilities and provide materials and equipment, training for teachers and curriculum development are areas of concern.

Most preschool teachers have received no specialized or formal training beyond high school (Tawjihi Certificate). There is a definite need to upgrade the level of training for teachers. Until recently, Tireh, an UNRWA-administered teacher training center, was the only institution in the West Bank providing preschool teacher training. However, only teachers working in UNRWA preschool programs were eligible to attend.

The courses offered include the following elements: child psychology, education, arts and crafts, Arabic and English language, mathematics, general science and health education. Teachers do a practicum at an UNRWA kindergarten center at Tireh.

In 1981, Bethlehem University established a special preschool teacher-training program in collaboration with the Jerusalem Union of Charitable Societies and the Hebron Red Crescent Society. It is a nondegree, two-year program, designed to benefit teachers associated with preschool programs in the West Bank. The program provides three semesters of course work, including: child development, music for children, preschool

education concepts and practices, physical education, sociology of the Palestinian society, creative activities, literature and management of preschool children.

The second year is supervised instruction in which Bethlehem University staff observe for two hours the preschool teachers in their own classrooms once a month and conduct follow-up sessions with them. The individual in charge of the program at Bethlehem University state that two groups of approximately 25 each have completed the programs. No evaluation or assessment of the results has been made.

The Hebron Red Crescent Society teacher-training program offers courses in child psychology, education, music for children and various workshops dealing with various aspects of preschool education.

The CDF survey determined that there are approximately 270 preschool teachers in charitable society-sponsored preschools in the West Bank conducting preschool classes for about 9,950 children. Of the 315 teachers, about 75 teachers of approximately 2,000 children have participated in training programs at Bethlehem University and the Red Crescent Center in Hebron.

Curriculum. Most preschool programs up until now have not utilized a curriculum. Day-to-day classroom activities have been left to the imagination of generally less than adequately trained teachers. The combination of the two has resulted in uniform, unstructured and relatively low quality preschool education program.

Various organizations are addressing the area of curriculum development. In 1981, Holy Land Christian Mission International (HLCMI), with A.I.D. financial assistance, began work on a highly structured curriculum aimed at providing a detailed day-to-day set of developmental activities for presentation by a teacher lacking formal preschool education training. The curriculum has been field-tested for two school years and is being finalized for printing late in 1984.

HLCMI operates seven kindergarten classrooms in six West Bank refugee camps, as well as two classrooms at its elementary school in Bethlehem. Results from use of the curriculum at these centers indicate that teachers with a minimal amount of training can successfully utilize the curriculum and provide children with a high-quality preschool education program.

Following finalization and printing of the curriculum, HLCMI plans to conduct workshops and disseminate it to all interested organizations with preschool programs in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Jerusalem Union of Charitable Societies, with assistance from CDF, has developed a curriculum for use by interested member societies for initial use during the 1984-85 school year. In-service training will be provided to the approximately 90 teachers by the Jerusalem Union of Charitable Societies in its utilization.

According to CDF, the Hebron Red Crescent Society will be developing its own curriculum for its member societies during the coming year. CDF will provide professional guidance.

Resource Centers. The Israeli Military Government did not approve a CDF request to work directly with charitable society preschool programs in Jerusalem District. However, approval was granted last year for its subproject with the Jerusalem Union of Charitable Societies, and it maintains a three-year-old relationship with the Hebron Red Crescent Society. Both of these entities are comprised of individual charitable societies, most of which operate preschool classes and resource centers, enabling AID-funded CDF assistance to reach a large number of kindergartens in the West Bank.

These preschool resource centers assist kindergartens in the West Bank and Gaza upgrade their curriculum and provide a system of professional program guidance. They operate a "library" for educational preschool equipment and materials which can be borrowed by teachers. Instruction is provided to the teachers for materials new to them. The centers organize lectures, seminars and conferences on child development for preschool teachers and serve as a meeting place for exchange of ideas and experience.

Preschool teachers welcome the assistance offered at the training/resource centers. The center director in Jerusalem organizes in-service training for groups of 14 or 15 teachers every week. With a total of 90 member society classrooms in the district, she is able to assist each teacher on a regular basis every six weeks. In-service training provides the teacher with tips on pedagogical methods, education material usage and ways of handling classroom problems common to many. Video and host lecturers add variety and interest to the program. In addition to these organized in-service training sessions, an average of 30 teachers visit the center each week to borrow education materials and toys.

Growing Interest and Requirements. Interest in preschool education in the West Bank and Gaza is growing rapidly. Parents realize the benefits gained from the experience of attending kindergarten, and are eager to enroll their children. The majority of existing preschool programs are operated by a large number of local charitable organizations, usually without the benefit of a curriculum or teachers trained in preschool education. There is no official, government-assisted preschool program within the education system, therefore, no uniform standards.

With the increased interest in preschool education, efforts are now being made to develop curriculum and provide teacher training. Organized assistance from both local and non-Palestinian groups is being directed to these constraints and toward improving the classroom facilities and availability of appropriate educational materials, playground equipment and toys. These efforts are improving the general situation.