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Impact through Technology Program

Impact through Technology Program



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Table of Contents

LIST OF ACRONYMS	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
PROGRAM OVERVIEW	11
BASELINE/ENDLINE SURVEY.....	11
SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES	16
INTERMEDIATE PROGRAM RESULT 1: STRENGTHENED COOPERATIVE PEACE ADVOCACY INITIATIVES AMONG PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI ACTIVISTS AND YOUTH	16
Activity 1.1: Advocacy and digital and social media training for representatives of peace activist groups 17	
Activity 1.2: Advocacy and digital and social media training for youth.....	19
Activity 1.3: Development of social media tools tailored to needs of peace activist groups....	23
INTERMEDIATE PROGRAM RESULT 2: DEVELOP THE ICT CAPACITY OF PALESTINIAN YOUTH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ISRAELI ICT COMPANIES.....	32
Activity 2.2: Mobile ICT training lab.....	37
Activity 2.3: Internship Program	41
Activity 2.4: Cisco’s CCNA and Microsoft academy certification	44
PROGRAM INTERMEDIATE RESULT 3: PROMOTE COOPERATIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS IN THE ICT SECTOR.....	45
Activity 3.1: Organize entrepreneurial events for youth and ICT entrepreneurs and professionals (hackathons and startup weekends)	46
Activity 3.2: Facilitate Palestinian visits to Israeli companies and ICT networking events for Israelis and Palestinians	56
Activity 3.3: Support Joint Business Ventures	67
VISIBILITY AND OUTREACH.....	71
MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION.....	73
IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES	76

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AOTR	Agreement Officer's Technical Representative
CCNA	Cisco Certified Network Associate
Geo-MIS	Geographic Management Information System
HHCOT	Hisham Hijawi College of Technology
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
LA	Cisco Local Academy
League	TVET League for NGO Institutions
MC	Mercy Corps
MEET	Middle East Education through Technology
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PPU	Palestine Polytechnic University
RA	Cisco Regional Academy
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UN	United Nations
VTC	Vocational Training Center
Y1	Fiscal year one (October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012)
Y2	Fiscal year two (October 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mercy Corps has completed 21 months of implementation of the Impact through Technology Program funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Cooperative Agreement #AID-294-A-11-00016. The primary focus of the program has been to bring together Israeli and Palestinian participants in positive action through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The program experienced several key events that proved to be challenging and forced us to change some of the ways we operate. We have seen continuing influence of the Boycott movements against Israel (*see challenges section for more details*). The atmosphere following the Palestinian Authority bid for UN recognition of statehood and Operation “Pillar of Defense” in November 2012 affected some planned activities and may have impacted the willingness of some participants to attend our joint activities. In spite of this, Impact through Technology has achieved remarkable success toward changing lives of many people. We have been able to help Palestinians and Israelis meet through shared interest in the technology sector.

Impact through Technology joined together activists and youth to use social media tools that promote cooperation and synergy, while enhancing the peace and youth advocacy efforts of the program’s partner organizations. The acquisition and application of such skills, using a people-to-people approach, forged connections between groups and increased the outreach of peace advocates. The program tapped into the groundswell of youth interest in social media to generate interest in its peacemaking potential. Mercy Corps recognized the importance of social media and networking tools to mobilize communities towards peaceful change. The program created opportunities for Palestinian and Israeli youth and local NGOs to acquire technological and digital advocacy skills while working around a common concern. Together, they developed and implemented joint social media and advocacy initiatives.

Impact through Technology provided Palestinian youth with training in market-driven ICT skills and connected them to Israeli businesses and entrepreneurs. Palestinian youth became more likely to find employment, view Israeli counterparts as partners in development and probably less likely to find appeal in extremist ideology.

Although unemployment remains high in the West Bank, the ICT sector continues to grow and is a desirable sector for youth and new businesses. The ICT sector is quickly expanding and demands qualified ICT professionals. To address this, Mercy Corps trained Palestinian youth in digital literacy, ICT, and entrepreneurship through various software and technology courses, including Intel Learn entrepreneurship courses and Cisco’s CCNA certifications. There was great demand for these courses and graduates showed notable success in securing employment quickly. In August of 2012, Impact through Technology facilitated the Cisco’s CCNA certification for 15 Palestinian youth. Mercy Corps received over 675 applications for this course. A follow-up survey at the end of the program showed that 65% of certified participants were employed shortly following their certification.

To reach participants in rural areas of the West Bank whose movements are restricted due to travel barriers and economic hardship, Mercy Corps offered trainings and activities through a mobile training

lab. Related activities will focus on young women and disabled persons whose participation may be restricted due to cultural barriers. Impact through Technology ICT trainings reached 344 underserved youth (214 females & 130 males) in rural locations across the West Bank.

Mercy Corps successfully implemented initiatives to bring Palestinians and Israelis together around ICT. Some of these initiatives have already resulted in sustained business partnerships and new jobs for Palestinian and Israeli youth. Impact through Technology has established Mercy Corps' reputation among Palestinian and Israeli ICT firms and entrepreneurs by facilitating mutually beneficial cross-border partnerships. Apolitical, profit-motivated business-focused activities are an effective way to provide opportunities for cross-border collaboration. Mercy Corps brought Palestinians and Israelis together around concrete business ideas. Impact through Technology implemented a range of activities piloted and implemented by Mercy Corps in Israel and the West Bank, including entrepreneurial events and private sector ICT conferences. These events created a safe, dynamic and collaborative environment for technologically savvy entrepreneurs to exchange ideas. As a result of entrepreneurial events and continued support from the program, four joint business partnerships (ventures) between Palestinian and Israeli entrepreneurs and companies were launched. These ventures range from the development of e-learning solutions, outsourcing services to Intel-Israel for management software, increasing integration through Israeli and Palestinian ICT companies by creating a unified code of standards, and the development of new web and phone applications.

In addition, Mercy Corps facilitated visits between Palestinian ICT professionals and Israeli technology companies to develop business relationships, catalyze cross-border initiatives, and launch entrepreneurial business ventures. The visits provided Palestinians opportunities to engage in a professional environment that promotes development, and Israeli companies were exposed to the diversity of highly skilled Palestinians.

Key activities achievements include:

- Digital advocacy skills trainings created **seven new online advocacy initiatives** led by Palestinian and Israeli NGOs. This activity enabled peace activist groups in Palestine and Israel to broaden their reach and increase awareness of peace-oriented ideologies and activities in the region. Mercy Corps provided tailored trainings on the use of social media for advocacy and peacebuilding to strengthen the effectiveness of peace activist NGOs. Social media tools were used to facilitate communication and disseminate information widely. Participants reported that while they previously received trainings in digital media production, none received training in the use of social media as a means for capacity building.
- MC, in cooperation with MEET (Middle East Education through Technology), organized two Social Media trainings. The MEET Summer Program (Camp) at the Hebrew University campus in Jerusalem hosted the trainings in 2012 and 2013. A total of 273 youth participants (*122 Palestinians and 151 Israelis, including 50% females*) engaged together, side by side, while attending sessions on social media. This activity aimed to harnesses the students' interest in technological creation while fostering relationships between Israeli and Palestinian youth and building advocacy and social media skills.

- The program organized and facilitated **17 ICT trainings** that reached **344 youth (214 females & 130 males)** in remote locations across the West Bank. Rural Palestinian youth increased their digital literacy skills and gained access to new technologies. Mercy Corps exceeded the original target of 12 short trainings or workshops for a total of 17 trainings.
- A total of 80 **unemployed and youth university graduates** received certifications in new technologies since the beginning of Impact through Technology, exceeding the original target of 62. The 80 youth (38 females & 42 males) attended trainings at Cisco Academies in Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron. All of the participants successfully passed the exams and became CCNAs - Cisco Certified Network Associates. A follow-up survey at the end of the program showed that 65% of beneficiaries were employed shortly following their Cisco CCNA certification.
- The program facilitated apprenticeships/internships for **30 Palestinians** with 10 Israeli ICT companies. This activity proved successful as a way to introduce Palestinian engineers and developers to new technologies and working standards. Interaction with Israeli companies helps support the participants' professional development. The Israeli companies were pleased with the performance of the Palestinian interns and requested more time for this activity. The companies hope to strengthen their relationship with the apprentices and further develop their on-the-job training.
- The program, in cooperation with MEET, facilitated Software and Technology trainings, including Intel Learn Program "Technology and Entrepreneurship" courses, that engaged **280 Palestinian and Israeli youth** in technology, business and entrepreneurship.
- The program, in cooperation with other Mercy Corps programs/donors (i.e. EU), facilitated 22 events including entrepreneurial workshops, ICT networking events and visits. The events strengthened understanding among Israelis and Palestinians.
- The program supported 4 joint projects/business ventures between Palestinian companies and Israeli ICT companies.

Implementation Performance Measured Against Targets

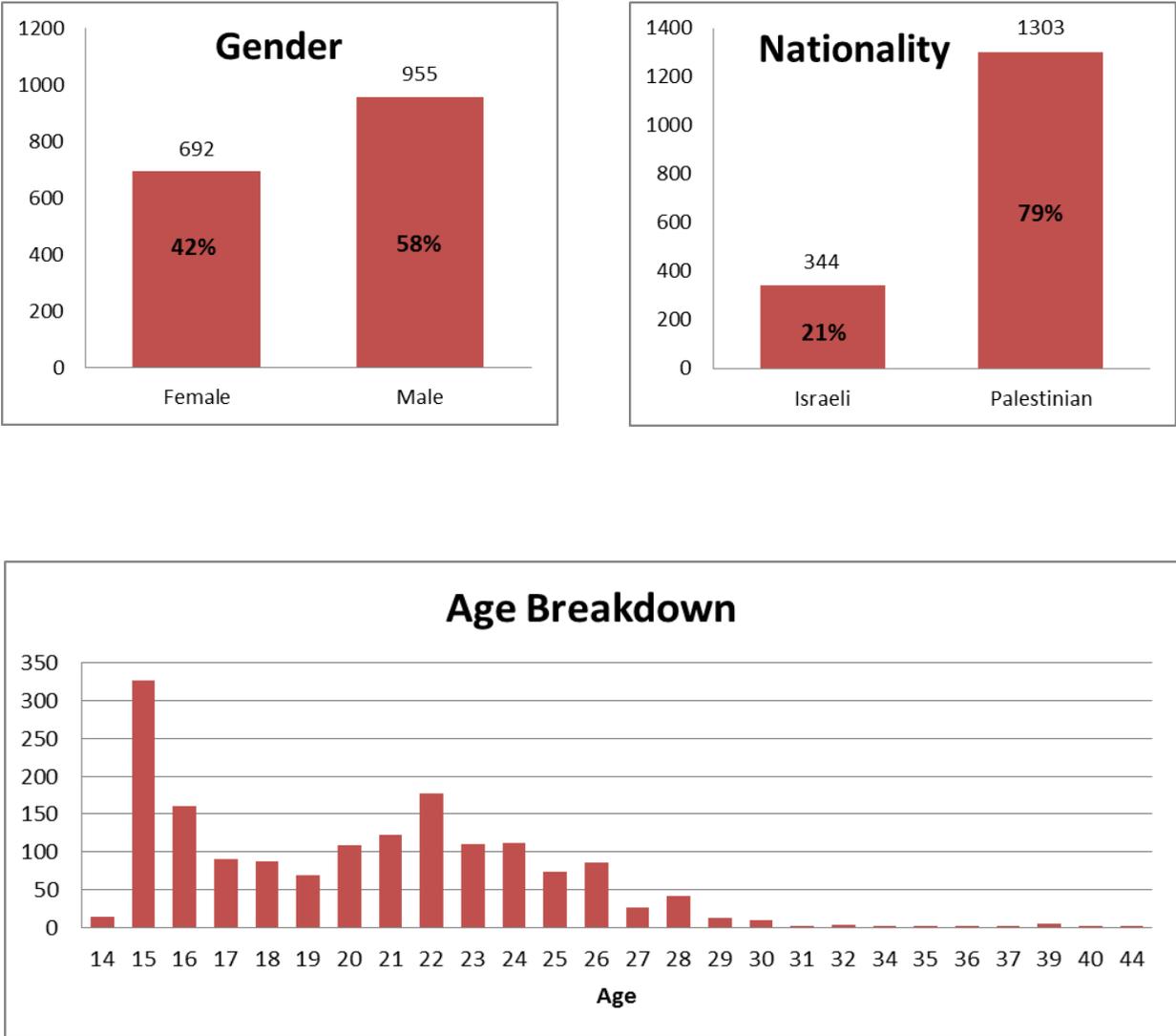
	Indicator Description			
		Target	Actual ¹	% of Target Achieved ²
Program Goal: Enhance cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli youth, peace activists and entrepreneurs through information and communication technology (ICT) knowledge transfer and its use for advocacy and economic development.				
PI 1	% change in attitudes toward the other (e.g. among participating Palestinian and Israeli youth and ICT professionals)	25%	17%	68%
PI 2	1.6.2-12 Number of USG-funded events, trainings or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation on a mass scale	55	59	107%
PI 3	1.6.2-14 Number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.	1280	1647	129%
PI 4	1.6.2-14a Number of men	730	955	131%
PI 5	1.6.2-14b Number of women	550	692	126%
Intermediate Program Result 1: Strengthened cooperative peace advocacy initiatives among Palestinian and Israeli activists and youth.				
PI 1.1	# of youth and peace activist groups representatives (staff/members) trained	350	423	121%
PI 1.2	# of advocacy initiatives using digital and social media introduced or implemented by youth or peace activist groups	7	7	100%
PI 1.3	# of joint advocacy initiatives introduced or implemented	4	4	100%

¹ Actual = Actual results / numbers accomplished

² % of Target Achieved = (Actual / Target) * 100. To measure actual achieved numbers against planned targets and compare difference + or - between planned targets and actual results

Intermediate Program Result 2: Develop the ICT capacity of Palestinian youth in partnership with Israeli ICT companies.				
PI 2.1	# of youth and ICT professionals trained in ICT and social media	360	624	173%
PI 2.2	% change in digital literacy and collaborative problem solving skills	35%	56%	160%
PI 2.3	# of Palestinian youth and ICT professionals placed in apprenticeships with Israeli ICT companies	35	30	86%
PI 2.4	# of Palestinian youth, ICT professionals and high achievers certified in new technologies	62	80	129%
Intermediate Program Result 3: Promote cooperative economic partnerships between Israeli and Palestinian private sector actors in the ICT sector				
PI 3.1	# of entrepreneurial and ICT events and visits to Israeli companies attended by Palestinian ICT entrepreneurs, ICT professionals and youth	14	22	157%
PI 3.2	# of youth and ICT professionals participating in entrepreneurial and ICT events and visits to Israeli companies	200	470	235%
PI 3.3	# of joint business ventures developed and implemented between Palestinian entrepreneurs and Israeli ICT companies	5	4	80%

Figure 1 – Gender, nationality and age distribution for program participants



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The overall objective of the Impact through Technology program was to mitigate conflict by promoting positive cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli youth through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Impact through Technology was expected to contribute to reconciliation and peaceful dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians by promoting cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli youth, peace activists, and entrepreneurs through ICT knowledge transfer and its use for advocacy and economic development.

In order to achieve this goal, Impact through Technology brought together Israelis and Palestinians in environments that offered a safe, trusting and productive place to engage with one another. These cooperative initiatives prioritized dialogue, learning, and creation over differences, histories, and disputes. Impact through Technology contributed significantly to mitigating conflict between Israelis and Palestinians by promoting cooperation among companies, professionals, peace activists and entrepreneurs through concrete, mutually-beneficial activities and economic development ventures. The 21-month program aimed to strengthen the ability of Palestinian and Israeli social and private sector entrepreneurs to collaborate through ICT to meet their respective and mutual interests in peace, youth development and economic growth. *Three objectives contributed to the overall goal:*

Objective one: Strengthen cooperative peace advocacy initiatives among Palestinian and Israeli activists and youth.

Objective two: Develop the ICT capacity of Palestinian youth in cooperation with Israeli ICT companies.

Objective three: Promote cooperative economic partnerships between Israeli and Palestinian private sector actors in the ICT sector.

Mercy Corps implemented Impact through Technology through a multi-tiered approach. Targeted groups included grassroots civil society peace activists, young Palestinians interested in ICT business and entrepreneurship, and Israeli and Palestinian ICT business firms. The Program aimed to broaden the outreach capabilities of peace activist groups by developing ICT tools and facilitating online social networking trainings. The program also aimed to increase awareness and resources among Palestinians and Israelis of apolitical peace building movements and activities. Mercy Corps brought together long-term, diverse, and technical experience in Palestine that was crucial to the success of Impact through Technology.

BASELINE/ENDLINE SURVEY

The survey assessed 15-39-year-old Palestinian program participants using an online survey. Respondents were asked a series of questions at the beginning (baseline) and end (endline) of their program experience focusing on relations between Israelis and Palestinians, including:

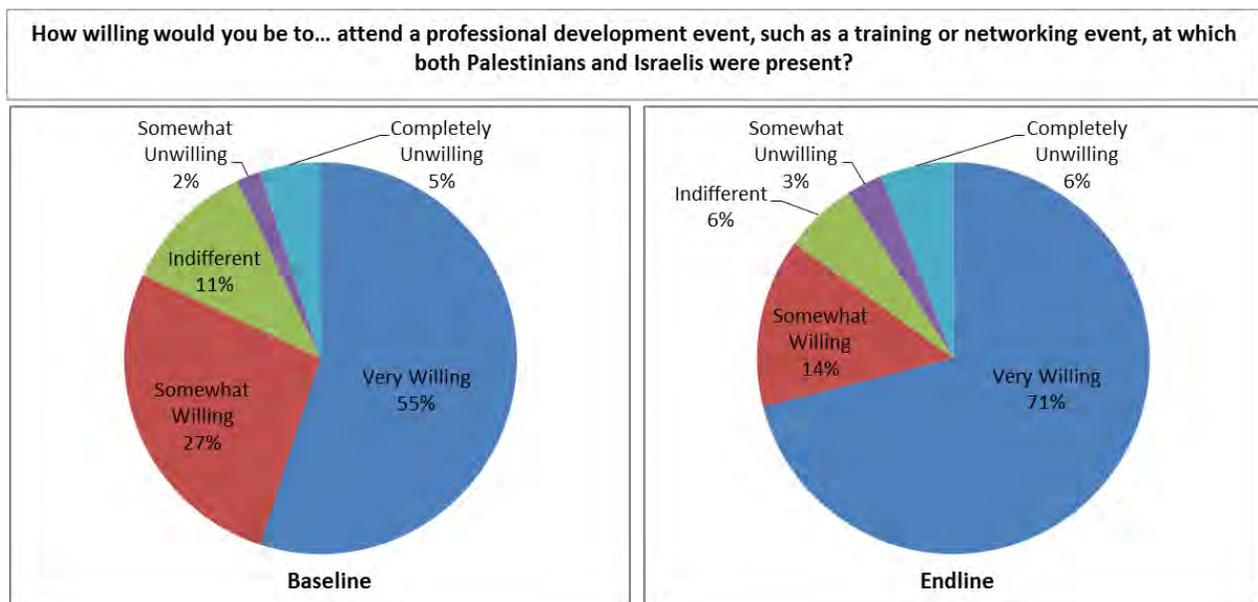
- Respondent's age, gender, employment status and education
- Willingness to be part of joint cross-border trainings or activities where both Palestinians and Israelis were present
- Social engagement, through online social media (Facebook & LinkedIn) and in-person meetings (professional meetings or social gatherings)
- % change in attitude toward the other (among participating Palestinian and Israeli youth and ICT professionals and entrepreneurs)

- Agreement/disagreement with stereotypes

At the start of the program there was also a baseline survey designed for Palestinians and another similar survey for Israelis. However, and in spite of continues attempts and efforts from program staff to send to each Israeli participant, very few Israelis completed the online survey. Due to the low number of Israelis who filled out the baseline survey the survey analysis focused on the Palestinian feedback. By contrast, surveys conducted with other Israeli stakeholders, like the Israeli IT companies who participated in the IT apprenticeship, yielded useful data. The program administered a targeted survey to these companies. The companies completed a 12-question follow-up survey where they reflected on their experience with their Palestinian apprentices with very positive feedback from the Israeli companies (see Activity 2.3: Internship Program).

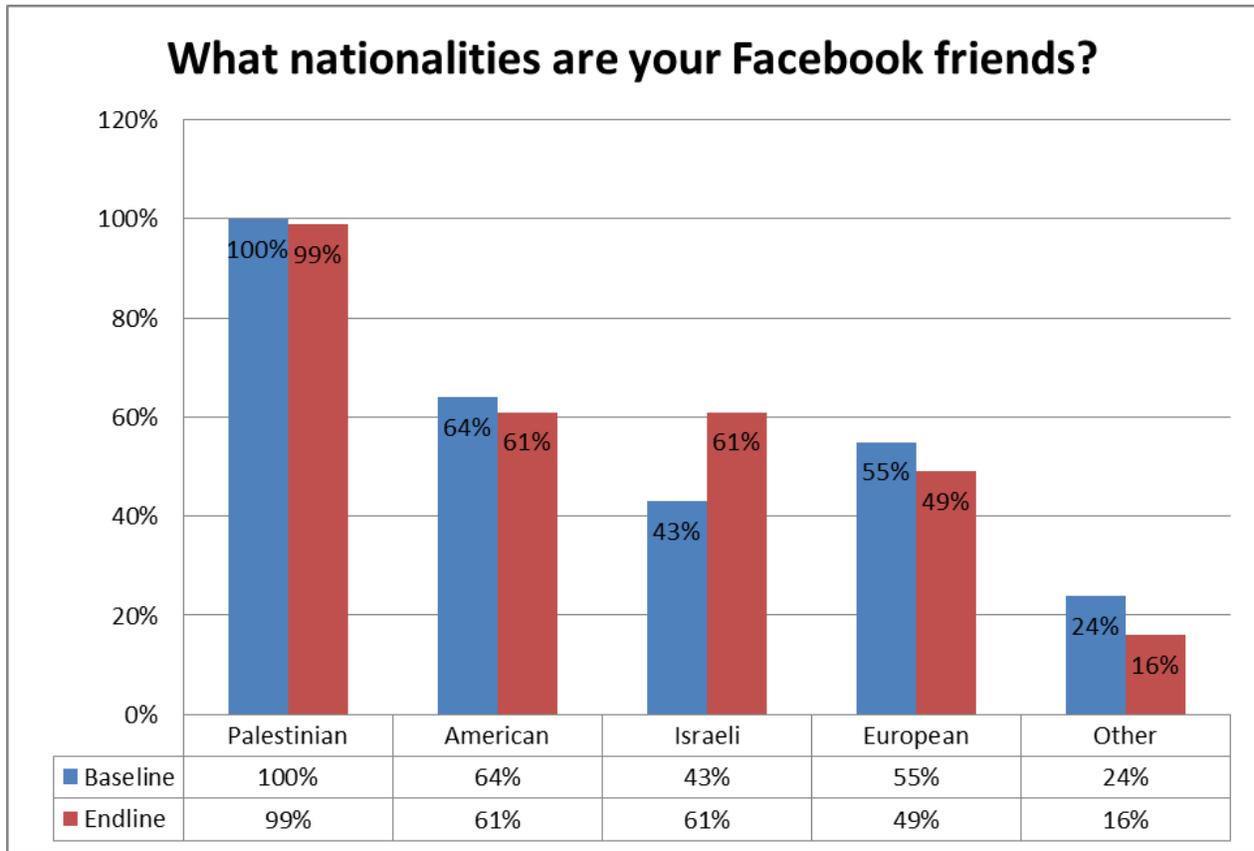
Baseline surveys were administered when new participants joined program. Baseline data was also collected from participants over the life of Impact through Technology because program participants could only be identified as each program activity/event began. Towards the end of the program, an endline survey, consisting of the same questions featured in the baseline survey, was administered to all participants who took part in the baseline survey. Comparisons between baseline and endline data collected from Palestinian participants revealed several positive improvement trends for the program interventions. Some of the key findings are highlighted below:

Figure 2 – Willingness to be part of joint cross-border training or activities



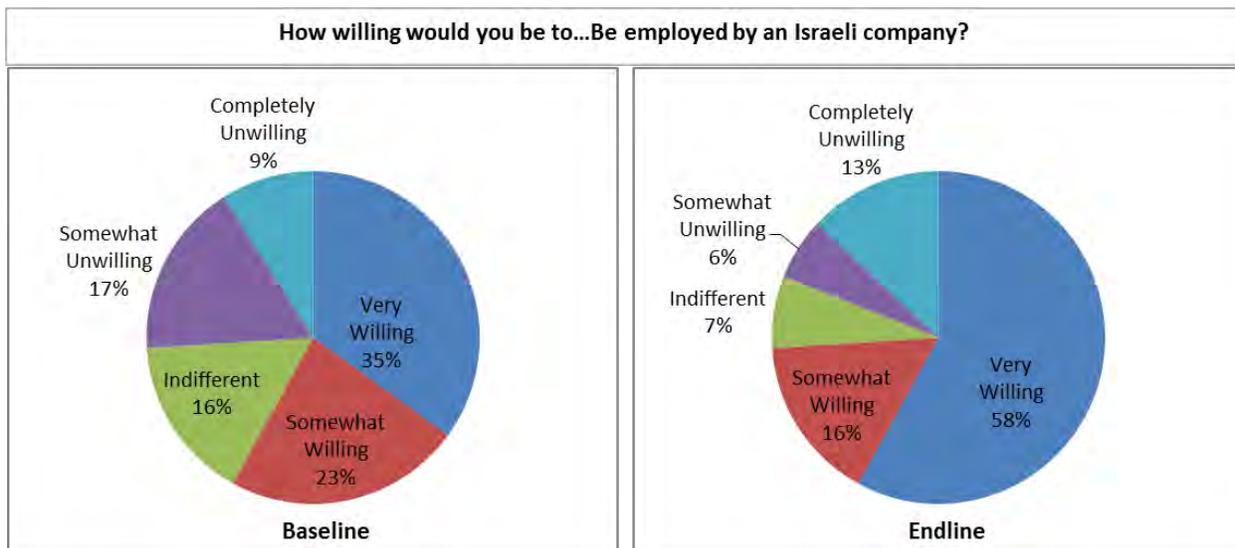
Note: Increase of willingness to meet, train and interact in person (people-to-people) in a professional development environment considering all the political and social obstacles on the ground throughout the program life (see challenges section for more details).

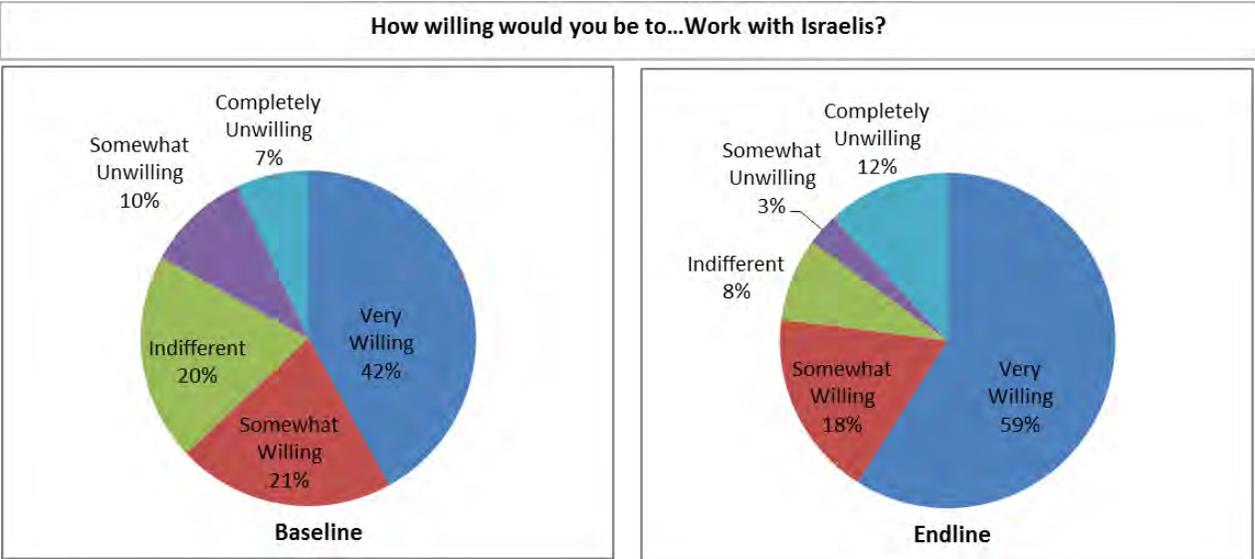
Figure 3 – Online Social Media engagement



Note: People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%. Data showed an 18% positive change in attitudes toward the other regarding online social media engagement (Facebook Friends).

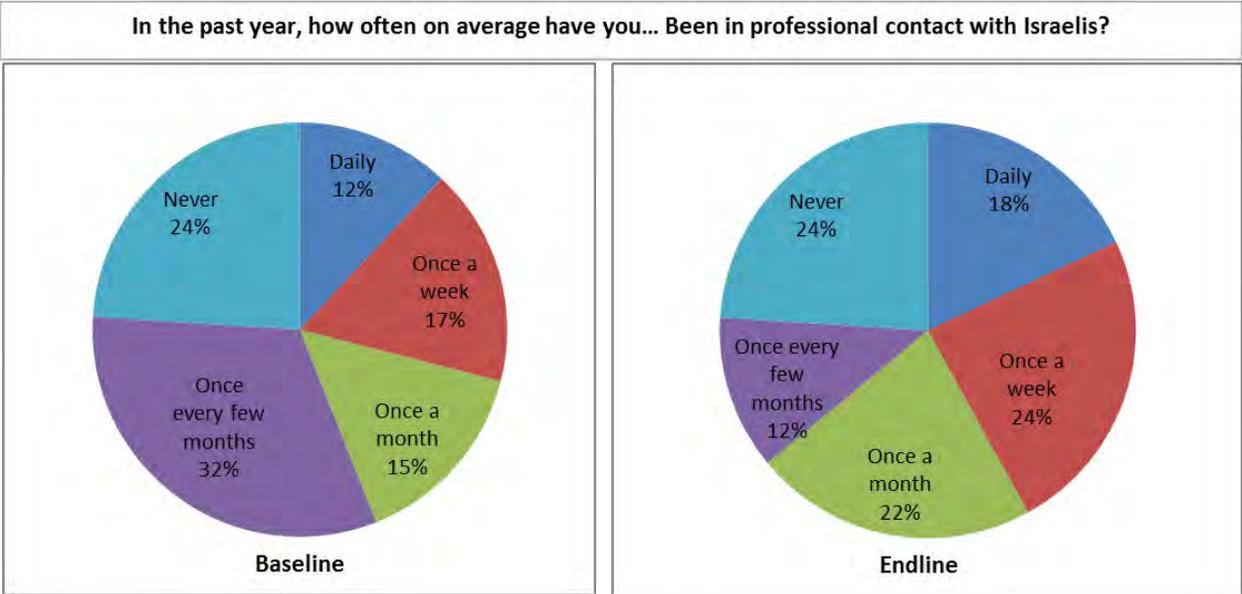
Figure 4 – Working with each other



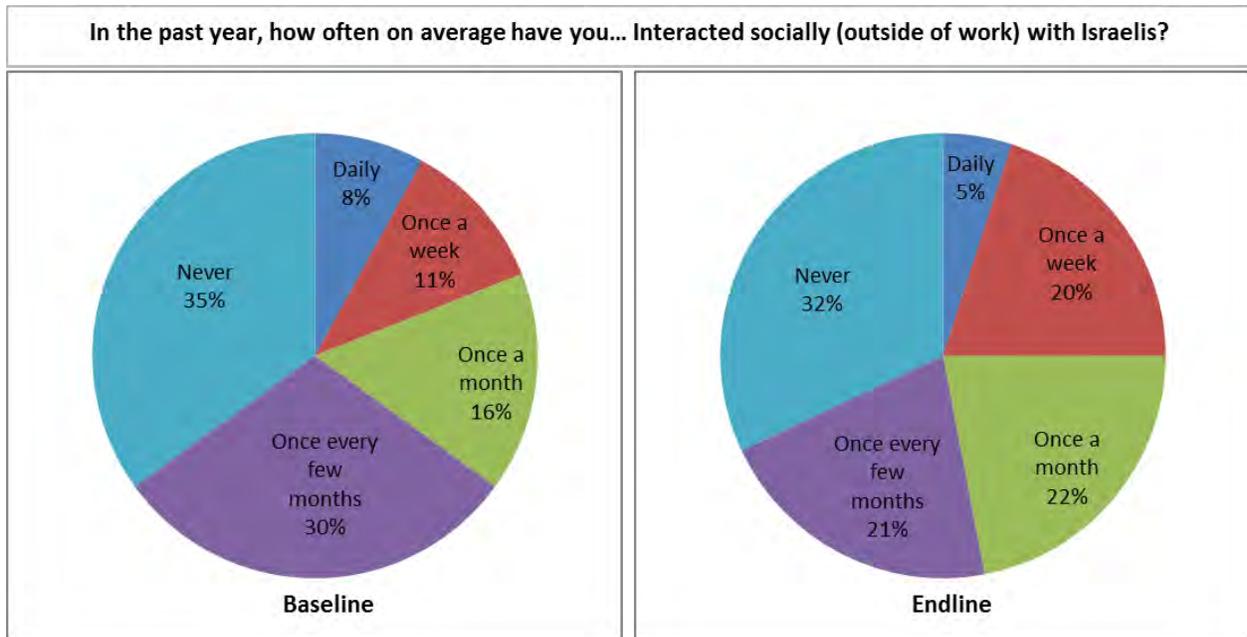


Note: Considerable increase of 23% regarding cross-border in person (people-to people) business.

Figure 5 – In person professional and social engagement:



Note: Noticeable increase from 29% to 42% engagement in professional contact on daily and weekly basis.



Note: Noticeable increase from 35% to 47% social interaction (outside of work) at least once a month.

% of positive change in attitudes toward the other (by Topic):

Topic	Description	Baseline	Endline	% of positive change	% of positive change in attitudes toward the other (by Topic)
Online social media engagement	LinkedIn - Israeli Friends	36%	49%	13%	16%
	Facebook - Israeli Friends	43%	61%	18%	
Willingness to be part of joint cross-border trainings or activities	Attend events where both Palestinians and Israelis were present (includes travel inside Israel)	55%	71%	16%	16%
Work with each other	Work with Israelis	42%	59%	17%	20%
	Be employed by an Israeli company	35%	58%	23%	
Average		42%	60%	17%	17%

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES**IR1****INTERMEDIATE PROGRAM RESULT 1: STRENGTHENED COOPERATIVE PEACE ADVOCACY INITIATIVES AMONG PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI ACTIVISTS AND YOUTH**

Rationale (Theory of Change): *If Palestinian & Israeli youth and peace activist groups collaborate through social media to promote a common agenda for peace, they will elevate their influence both in Israel and in Palestine as advocates for realistic stability.* The program joined together activists and youth to use social media tools that promote cooperation and synergy to enhance the peace and youth advocacy efforts of the program's partner organizations. The acquisition and application of such skills, using a people-to-people approach, forged connections between groups and increased the outreach of peace advocates.

The program tapped into the groundswell of youth interest in social media to generate interest in its peacemaking potential. Mercy Corps recognizes the importance of social media and networking tools to mobilize communities towards peaceful change. The program created opportunities for Palestinian and Israeli youth and local NGOs to acquire technological and digital advocacy skills while working around common concerns. Together, they developed and implemented joint social media and advocacy initiatives.

According to a mapping study conducted by Mercy Corps, local NGOs possess limited knowledge about the use and effectiveness of social media, particularly in a conflict context. The program provided tailored trainings on the use of social media for advocacy and peace building to strengthen the effectiveness of peace-activist NGOs. Social media tools were used to facilitate communication and widely disseminate information. Participants reported that while they previously received trainings in digital media production, none received training in the use of social media as a means for capacity building. Digital advocacy skills trainings resulted in seven new online advocacy initiatives led by Palestinian and Israeli NGOs. This activity enabled peace activist groups in Palestine and Israel to broaden their reach and increase awareness of peace-oriented ideologies and activities in the region.



Activity 1.1: Advocacy and digital and social media training for representatives of peace activist groups



Staff members from 8 activist groups and NGOs during social media training in East Jerusalem.

During the first year, two experienced consultants in social media use for education and advocacy were hired to conduct the social media training and worked closely with organizations on the development of seven outreach and advocacy initiatives using digital and social media. The consultants, George Halabi, Palestinian and Itamar Weizman, Israeli, have extensive experience in the social media field. They also provide new media support to a number of non-governmental organizations in the West Bank and Israel. Through two intensive training workshops, the program trained a total of 31 representatives and staff members from 8 peace activist groups/NGOs on the effective use of social media for advocacy. The training strengthened the capacity of Israeli and Palestinian NGOs to use digital and social media for advocacy. The training targeted NGOs/grassroots organizations. NGOs that participated in the three-day training were:

1. All for Peace Radio
2. Grassroots Jerusalem
3. Peres Center for Peace
4. Parents Circle-Families Forum
5. Holy Land Trust
6. Israeli Palestine Center for Research and Information
7. MEET – Middle East Education through Technology
8. Palestine Conflict Transformation Center in Bethlehem

In the second year, as a follow up to the training, the consultants looked for creative and innovative solutions tailored toward communication facilitation, information dissemination and outreach. The consultants worked with the same NGOs who participated during the first year of the program. They worked with the NGOs on the development of social media tools and project initiatives (*see activity 1.3 for more details on the development of these initiatives*). Each NGOs means of activism and level of social media use varied and required tailored solutions.

(Activities 1.1 and 1.3 are related and complementary. Activity 1.3 targets Israeli and Palestinian NGOs and is designed to take place after the completion of Activity 1.1, which targets the representatives of these same NGOs through training).

Social media is a relatively new area for NGOs, particularly for peace activist organizations. According to a mapping study conducted by Mercy Corps and funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Office in 2011, knowledge is limited among local NGOs regarding the use and effectiveness of social media, particularly in a conflict context. Resources, such as learning materials and documented case studies on the use and effectiveness of social media in a conflict context are lacking.



Branded Laptops purchased through the program were utilized during the social media training and other various trainings to conduct the hands on exercises. Mercy Corps will retain the laptops for use in ongoing USAID programs.

All participants strongly agreed that social media should be an integral part of their advocacy and outreach activities and plan to expand its use. Several organizations held trainings on digital media production and orientation sessions on social media use within the framework of specific projects. However, none of the organizations held trainings on social media use or participated in relevant capacity-building programs.

To strengthen the effectiveness of peace activist NGOs, tailored trainings were provided on the use of social media for advocacy and peacebuilding. Social media tools were used to facilitate communication and widely disseminate information. Participants reported that while they had previously received trainings in digital media production, none had training in the use of social media as a means for capacity building. Digital advocacy skills trainings resulted in seven new online advocacy initiatives led by Palestinian and Israeli NGOs. This activity enabled peace activist groups in Palestine and Israel to broaden their reach and increase awareness of peace-oriented ideologies and activities in the region.

Following the circumstances that led to the postponement of the Hackathon event in early January, 2012, some groups hesitated to participate in the program activities. The Coalition of Women for Peace and the Arab Education Institute Declined Invitations organizations hesitated to participate in what they considered “normalization programming” funded by the United States government. This trend continued to impact program activities. Mercy Corps continuously assessed the situation to determine the best way to approach the activity without compromising others and without endangering the reputation of the entire program. Mercy Corps worked patiently to recruit 8 hesitant organizations and successfully facilitate their trainings.

Activity 1.2: Advocacy and digital and social media training for youth



This activity aimed to help foster relationships between Israeli and Palestinian youth while building advocacy and social media skills.

During the first year, Impact through Technology, in cooperation with MEET (Middle East Education through Technology), organized a social media workshop/training that at the MEET summer camp program at the Hebrew University campus in Jerusalem in July 2012. 123 youth participants (42 *Palestinians and 80 Israelis, including 53 females*) engaged together, side by side, while attending sessions on social media. This activity aimed to foster relationships between Israeli and Palestinian youth while building advocacy and social media skills. This activity aimed to harnesses the students' interest in technological creation while fostering relationships between Israeli and Palestinian youth and building advocacy and social media skills.



The training aimed to harnesses youth's interests in technology creating a process in which mutual respect and understanding comes from working and learning together.



MEET is an innovative educational initiative aimed at creating a common professional language between Israeli and Palestinian young leaders.

During the second year, Impact through Technology and MEET organized a three-day social media training at the MEET summer camp program at the Hebrew University campus in Jerusalem in June, 2013. 151 youth participants (80 Palestinians and 71 Israelis, 52% females) engaged together, side by side, while attending sessions on social media.



<i>Social media training summer camps</i>	Youth participants	Palestinians	Israelis	% females
2012	123	42	80	44%
2013	151	80	71	52%
Total:	274	122	151	50%

More Social Media Training: photos 2013:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/114021210087876173281/SocialMediaTrainingMEETStudents>

MEET, in cooperation with Mercy Corps, identified Israeli and Palestinian youth (age 15-17 years old) to receive training in advocacy and social media. Selection criteria included leadership and computer skills and a commitment to positive social change. Mercy Corps distributed promotional canvas bags to youth participants with USAID and Mercy Corps logos.

Founded in 2004, MEET is an innovative educational initiative working to create a common professional language between young Israeli and Palestinian young. Working together with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), MEET enables its participants to acquire advanced technological and leadership tools that empower them to create positive social change within their communities.



MEET harnesses the power of technology and business to bring together Palestinian and Israeli youth within a practical, skills-based model for intergroup interaction and conflict mitigation. MEET is a NGO based in Jerusalem and is managed by an international staff, including both Palestinians and Israelis, and volunteers from MIT.



Mercy Corps and MEET worked together to benefit Palestinian and Israeli youth and increase their knowledge in ICT with a focus on technology and social media through learning in mixed groups.

Mercy Corps and MEET worked to increase Palestinian and Israeli knowledge of ICT by creating mixed group activities that focused on technology and social media.

The social media trainings provided students with new knowledge and skills. In one of the trainings, for example, lessons focused on defining the students' message, "friendraising" and marketing through social media. The training provided insights on how to target their audience more precisely, enhance the impact of their message, and disseminate it effectively.

During the second year, the program conducted three social media workshops on the use of social networking in youth campaigns that included a total of 129 youth, 60 females and 69 males. The social media workshops aimed to harness youth interests in technology and engage them in a process where mutual respect and understanding comes from learning together while building advocacy and social media skills. They were encouraged to use the skills they learned in the training to initiate advocacy activities that raise awareness about their local community among their peers.

The workshops emphasized that information technology and social media are important tools to help build a better future for youth. One component of the workshop discussed importance of social media and how online campaigns can change societies and people. Participants watched a short film about successful campaigns implemented from around the world that use different kinds of social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.



The social media workshops aims to harnesses youth interests in technology and engage them in a process in which mutual respect and understanding comes from learning together while building advocacy and social media skills.

The use of social media in Palestine and Israel is rapidly increasing. Youth can use this social media development to advocate for their rights and beliefs. Through social media, youth can reach out to reflect on issues related to their generation.

Activity 1.3: Development of social media tools tailored to needs of peace activist groups



The majority of organizations saw a strong potential of social media in advocating and promoting peace in Israel and West Bank with some reservations related to the political situation and differences in technology advances in Israel and West Bank. Even with these reservations all groups strongly agreed that social media should be integral part of their advocacy and outreach activities

In the second year, the consultants continued work with the NGOs. Seven out of the eight NGOs that attended the social media training (*Activity 1.1*) submitted proposals. The consultants worked with the NGOs on the development of social media tools and online initiatives tailored to the needs of each organization. These tools helped facilitate communication, information dissemination and outreach that will amplify and enhance their advocacy work. This activity strengthened the Israeli and Palestinian peace activist groups' capacity to use digital and social media for advocacy.

The following is a list of the seven NGOs that submitted project proposals:

1. All for Peace Radio
2. Peres Center for Peace
3. Parents Circle-Families Forum
4. Holy Land Trust
5. IPCRI- Israeli Palestine Center for Research and Information
6. MEET – Middle East Education through Technology
7. Palestine Conflict Transformation Center in Bethlehem

Social media is a relatively new area for NGOs, particularly for peace activist organizations. The knowledge base is limited and lacks resources, such as learning materials and documented case studies, on the use and effectiveness of social media in a conflict context. The training targeted 8 NGOs and grassroots organizations (*See Activity 1.1 for more details on the training*). All participants strongly agreed that social media should be an integral part of their advocacy and outreach activities and plan to expand its use. Several organizations held trainings on digital media production and orientation sessions on social media use within the framework of specific projects. However, none of the organizations held trainings on social media use or participated in relevant capacity-building programs.



Itamar Weizman, Advocacy consultant / trainer in social media.

George Halabi, Technical consultant / trainer in social media.

The consultants, George Halabi, Palestinian and Itamar Weizman, Israeli, have extensive experience in the social media field. They also provide new media support to a number of non-governmental organizations in the West Bank and Israel. Itamar works as the Online and Mobile Communication Advisor for Greenpeace, Amsterdam since 2010, while providing new media support for NGOs in Israel. George has a background in Computer Information Systems and experience with developing websites and social media tools. He is also the Marketing Developer of Facebook Marketing API program.

Groups from the Palestinian Territories and Israel jointly designed the initiatives in cooperation with the consultants. Mercy Corps evaluated these initiatives to ensure they: (1) convey relative information; (2) are tactful when addressing politics (3) are sensitive to the tradition and culture of both Palestine and Israel; and (4) have goals relative to the objectives of the program.

Each NGO's means of activism and level of social media use varied, and required tailored solutions. The seven organizations submitted draft proposals that included an organizational profile and social media project plan. The consultants and Mercy Corps staff reviewed the social media project plans and initiatives. The consultants visited and worked remotely with the NGOs to refine and improve the proposals. These initiatives include: (1) online advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns to generate cross-border dialogue and partnerships; (2) creative online publicity, online banners, coordinated people-to-people events and activity advertisements; (3) social media tools for inter-cultural dialogue, content sharing to promote conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence advocacy.

Social media is commonly recognized as being a strong tool to advocate and promote peace and these initiatives directed activism away from reactionary methods towards proactive and united strategies. . Activism also tends to be localized and small in scale. While activists have worked for years to promote peace, dialogue, non-violent resistance, and an end to the Israeli occupation, there is little coordination of their activities. The majority of organizations and groups with social media experience cited a lack of human and financial resources that prevent them from expanding the use of social media in their organizations.

Most organizations and groups started experimenting with social media because it was easily and widely available. Currently, they are becoming more strategic in their application of social media tools and planning for its expansion. The lack of readily available evidence of social media effectiveness often prevents

organizations from prioritizing and allocating resources to the development of a refined social media strategy.

The majority of organizations that participated saw social media as a strong tool to advocate and promote peace in Israel and West Bank. There were some reservations related to the political situation and differences in technological advances in Israel and West Bank. Despite these reservations, all groups strongly agreed that social media should be integral part of their advocacy and outreach activities. The training (*activity 1.1*) encouraged them to be more actively involved in social media.

Following the circumstances that led to the postponement of the Hackathon event in early January of 2012, some groups hesitated to participate in these program activities. (*see implementation challenges section for more info*). Mercy Corps maintained a low profile, especially when the program and the program name were under attack. Mercy Corps continuously assessed the situation to determine the best way to approach the activity without compromising others and without endangering the reputation of the entire program. Mercy Corps worked patiently with these organizations to recruit them and successfully facilitate the start of this activity.

The following NGOs were selected by Mercy Corps as recipients of technical and financial assistance through Impact through Technology, a program funded by USAID. Mercy Corps encouraged the implementation of 7 social media projects/initiatives focused on outreach and advocacy campaigns:

IPCRI - Social Media Project

Building New Media infrastructure for IPCRI

Geographic Area: Jerusalem

IPCRI (Israel-Palestine-Center-for-Research-and-Information)

This project allowed IPCRI to create a new online social media “infrastructure” to provide information for researchers around the world about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. By upgrading the technology on their website, the project took IPCRI’s online identity into the second decade of the 21st century. The website features an independent content management system that allows organizations, volunteers and workers to update easily. The update also added new features to the website such as a searchable archive of studies and publications, an online sign-up form for events and projects, an integrated online donation form, and an email list sign-up form.

The projects increased the online community for IPCRI through Facebook and other social networking platforms. A system of email campaigns, administered through the MailChimp paid platform and funded through the program, maintains the newly expanded online audience. Creating an online community to support IPCRI and its activities allows the organization to campaign and fundraise online.

Fundraising: During the past year, with help from the USAID funded program, Mercy Corps created the right climate for IPCRI fundraising by creating a community to support the organization online. Mercy Corps also guided the organization through content management and online campaigning. The platforms and social media tools allowed IPCRI raise almost \$7,000 in funds through IPCRI’s new online community, without spending any direct budgets on advertising. IPCRI improved fundraising capabilities on the Facebook page and newsletter sign-up form, enabling each visitor to join IPCRI’s community and donate easily online. Prior to this program, IPCRI’s previous online fundraisers had all failed to generate funds.

With the help of the program, IPCRI has an active social media infrastructure that enables them attract new audiences and followers and stay in touch with them via Mail Chimp, YouTube, Ustream, Wuffo, Twitter, Facebook and other media tools. IPCRI initiated 32 email campaigns that reached about 500,000 recipients. With help from the program consultants, IPCRI designed new email templates for events and campaigns, and implemented sign-up capabilities in IPCRI’s online platforms including their website and Facebook. These changes decreased the “unsubscribe” demands from the email list by more than 30%. IPCRI had previously relied on word of mouth and a strong offline network for their main audience. In July 2012, IPCRI had only 2,200 “likes” in their Facebook page – they currently have 11,500. In July 2012, a post reached its highest exposure at 1,569 people. In June 2013, a single post reached 57,034 people. Their Facebook page improved in both quantitative and qualitative ways thanks to the new methods that the program introduced, such as infographics, polls, events, pictures, summaries and short videos.

Through the program, IPCRI increased their community by more than 550% and remains online. The program helped IPCRI create an infrastructure for future campaigns that will enable them to automatically reach tens of thousands of people.

MEET - Social Media Project

YouTube channel campaign - Making MEET’s mark through social media.

Geographic Area: Jerusalem

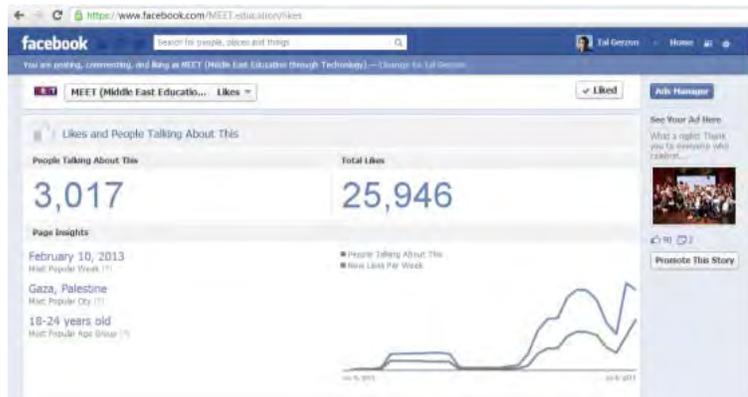
MEET (Middle East Education through Technology)

This project allowed MEET to create and brand a new YouTube channel and increase the number of channel subscribers. MEET increased their online presence and reached a larger fundraising audience. The **YouTube**

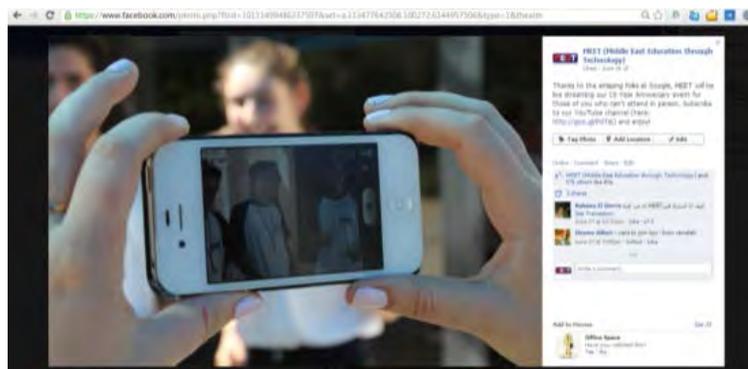


channel campaign raised awareness about MEET and helped MEET receive a Google RISE grant. RISE grants are awarded to organizations that promote and support technology initiatives for K-12/primary and secondary students around the world. In addition to the YouTube channel initiative, a 16-day Facebook campaign featuring posts and videos, ran throughout the summer. MEET also conducted a live stream of events, available on their YouTube channel, to reach out to their international network who could not attend events in person. Above is an example of their YouTube channel.

Facebook campaign: MEET successfully increased their Facebook fan base from approximately 20,000 fans to 25,946 fans. MEET posted daily updates with pictures and videos of the 2013 Summer Program to achieve this increase. The graph on the right of the photo shows the increase in the number of fans since May, 2013. By posting daily pictures, comments and videos, the Facebook page saw an increase of likes, shares and fans.



The social media training emphasized the need to post pictures and videos as an effective strategy to reach a larger audience and increase the number of shares and likes for that post. To the right is an example of a post that took place in June, 2013 during the 2013 social media summer training program supported by Mercy Corps through the USAID funded program.



HLT - Social Media Project

Bet Lahem Live 2013 Festival

Geographic Area: Bethlehem, Palestine

Holy Land Trust

Bet-Lahem Live is designed to amplify the voices of the Palestinian community. The project engaged internationals and locals to promote Holy Land Trust programs and activities. Participants were encouraged to participate in events and increase awareness, both internationally and throughout

Palestine, of the cause of peace and nonviolence. The project combined arts, faith, and a commitment to social justice through the project of Bet-Lahem (Bethlehem) Live 2013 Festival. The festival promoted nonviolence and social justice by creating an international network of peace builders. It also raised awareness within the international community about Palestinian culture and history, exposed a diverse audience of pilgrims and international tourists to the history and dynamism of Bethlehem, and focused on participatory learning through artistic and educational sessions.

Project organizers launched a Facebook advertising campaign on Holy Land Trust's official page to involve local communities to participate in the festival. The campaign targeted Bethlehem as the most popular city and 18-24 year olds as the most popular age group. Facebook "likes", comments and wall posts increased after the campaign.

The social media initiative and online project was a notable success. The campaign was well planned and helped increase public awareness of the event. The public participated in a positive way. Members of the public discussed the event, shared it on their personal Facebook accounts, and requested more information. The event involves members from the local business community, hospitality industry and community residents in the planning and execution of the event. The festival revived the city's historical merchant streets and promoted local artisans, restaurateurs and other businesses. Bet-Lahem Live provided a strong platform for Palestinians to tell their stories through a variety of mediums, sharing these perspectives with the international community. Most importantly, it provided an opportunity to strengthen relations among Bethlehem residents. Finally, Bet-Lahem Live is Bethlehem's first-ever educational music festival centered on social justice. As an annual event, festival attendees leave more socially conscious and have an opportunity to join an expanding international network of peace builders.

Peres Center for Peace – Social Media Project

Team Up for Peace

Geographic Area: Jaffa, Israel

Peres Center for Peace

The program supported the Peres Center for Peace's efforts to promote a holistic peace education program for Israeli and Palestinian boys aged 6-14. The program utilized soccer as a tool to bring the boys together. The project established links between large online communities and a larger audience. The campaign used email and social media to coordinate an end-of-year fundraiser for Twinned Peace Sports Schools called "Team-Up for Peace". The campaign functions without investing in any paid fundraising platform and will be sent annually to all supporters. The campaign expanded the program's Facebook and Twitter audience by encouraging partners with large numbers of supporters to promote the Peres Center for Peace's activities. The Peres Center for Peace was able to increase their online fundraising capabilities by expanding their online reach by reconnecting and cooperating with the

Facebook pages of people and organizations. They also encouraged partners with large numbers of supporters to promote them.

Parent Circle - Social Media Project

Against all odds.

Geographic Area: Ramat Ef'al, Israel

Parents Circle

This project allowed the Parent Circle to build and strengthen their social media presence and enabled them to increase their online donation capabilities. The campaign also aimed to crack the wall of ignorance, hatred and dehumanization to promote dialogue, non-violence, empathy and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, through the personal stories of bereaved members.

The campaign reached over 121,000 Palestinians and Israelis. The engagement on the Facebook page increased tremendously. For example:

- Before this project, there was an average of 20 “likes” per post. The campaign increased the average “likes” to 1,073 per post.
- Before the project, an average of 7 users would “share” any single post. The campaign increased the average “shares” to 266 per post.
- Before the project, there was an average of 4 comments per post. The campaign increased the average comments to 122 per post.

Media Coverage:

The Palestinian News Agency "Ma'an" published Iris Segev's story and picture. Having the leading Palestinian news agency publish a story about the loss of Israeli soldier is a major accomplishment. After reading it on Ma'an, Radio Shams (a Palestinian-Israeli radio) invited Iris for an interview.

See link: <http://www.maannews.net/arb/ViewDetails.aspx?!D=610100>



The campaign was well planned and helped increase public awareness of the organization and its programs. The public felt involved; they talked about it and shared it on their personal Facebook pages. The campaign was also mentioned in several newspapers and social media platforms.

The campaign instantly went “viral.” Niv Sarig's story³ reached almost 70,000 Israelis and Palestinians. Only 22,000 people (31%) saw it because of the paid reach. This is a good example of how well the audience received the campaign’s messages.



All for Peace Radio - Social Media Project

A New Online Radio Platform for Israelis and Palestinians

Geographic Area: Jerusalem

All for Peace

This project allowed All for Peace Radio to strengthen their social media platforms and online presence by creating a new radio-on-demand platform for the organization. Currently the radio doesn’t broadcast on FM, instead relying on online listeners. The radio would typically reach a few hundred listeners due to its outdated website. All For Peace Radio’s main goal is to broadcast programs to Israelis & Palestinians that discuss relevant issues. The previous infrastructure did not have the capacity to increase the reach of the radio’s broadcast. The program helped build a new, cutting-edge online platform that streams radio while also connecting to various social networking platforms. This updated platform will allow the radio to adapt to the digital age. The program was able to:

- Increase the audience on AFP Radio’s page by more than 50%, from 3,300 “likes” to 5,315 “likes.”
- Update the website, which is the main hub for all of the organization’s activities.
- Increase the Facebook page without investing radically in advertising by providing interesting content that reached fans and their friends. The Facebook content was derived from the radio shows.

³ <http://www.theparentscircle.com/Story.aspx?ID=305#Ue-ZO234UTA>

Wi'am - Social Media Project

Digital Infrastructure

Geographic Area: Bethlehem, Palestine

Wi'am, Conflict Resolution and Transformation Center

The campaign focused on the development of Wi'am's digital infrastructure. The program tutored Wi'am's team on best practices and utilization of social media channels, content management and increased Wi'am visibility on all levels. These activities helped promote their programs and muster support for the center.

The trainings increased Wi'am's online presence. They now have more than 7,500 online members. Their content management skills have improved. The organization can now analyze their web analytics, such as Google analytics and Facebook insights, to understand trends. Administering their social and online presence is no longer a burden as they oversee their social media channels with an online content management system. The system allows a large local audience to easily follow Wi'am's news and announcements about upcoming events and activities.

Rationale (Theory of Change): If Palestinian youth benefit from meaningful employment opportunities, they will be less likely to engage in risky behavior as a way of addressing grievances.

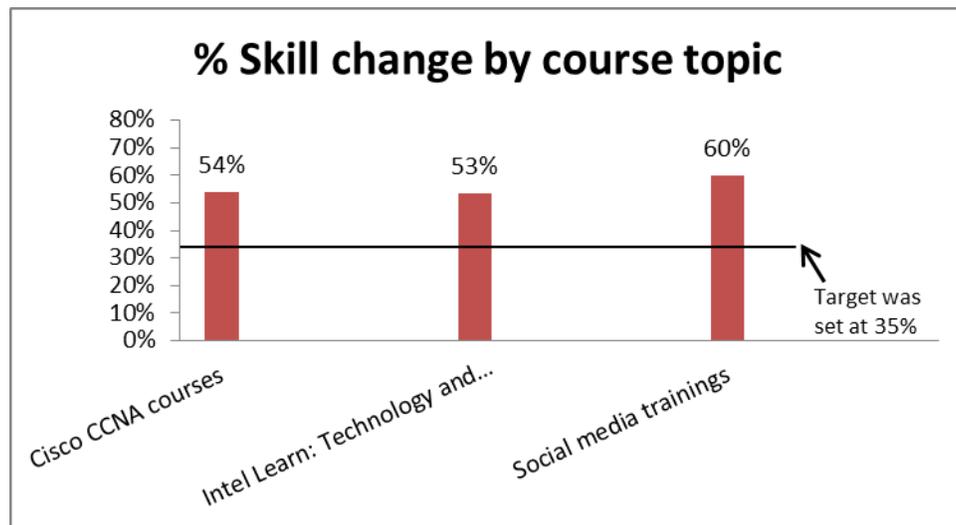
Differences in access to training and employment opportunities for Israelis and Palestinians can result in discontent. By providing Palestinian youth with training in market-driven ICT skills and connecting them to Israeli businesses and entrepreneurs, Palestinian youth will be more likely to find employment, to view Israeli counterparts as partners in development, and less likely to see appeal in extremist ideology. The ICT sector is appropriately targeted for its potential for economic and social development and, unlike other sectors of the economy, has maintained growth.

Although unemployment remains high in the West Bank, ICT continues to grow as a desirable sector. In Israel, the ICT sector is quickly expanding and is in need of qualified ICT professionals. To address this, Mercy Corps trained Palestinian youth in digital literacy, ICT and entrepreneurship. The program administered various software and technology courses, including the Intel Learn entrepreneurship course and Cisco's CCNA certification. In August 2012, Impact through Technology facilitated Cisco's CCNA certification for 15 Palestinian youth—Mercy Corps received over 675 applications for this course. There is great demand for these courses and graduates were notably successful in quickly securing employment. A follow-up survey at the end of Impact through Technology showed that 65% of beneficiaries secured employment shortly following their completion of Cisco's CCNA certification.

Mercy Corps' activities aimed to enhance youth employment by improving Palestinian youth's ICT and social media skills. Reports show that these skills will increase Palestinian's employability in the growing ICT sector.⁴ Mercy Corps' program addressed the disparity between Israelis' and Palestinians' ICT capacity. To reach participants in rural areas of the West Bank, whose movements are restricted due to travel barriers and economic hardship, Mercy Corps offered trainings and activities through a mobile training lab. Related activities will focus on young women and disabled persons whose participation may be restricted due to cultural barriers. Impact through Technology ICT trainings reached 344 underserved youth (214 females & 130 males) in rural locations across the West Bank.

⁴ *Palestinian ICT Labor Market Gap Analysis Report*, PITA Employability Program- West Bank & Gaza, March 2013

Figure 6 – % change (increase) in skills gained:



Note: based on pre-test/post-test administered immediately before and after each training

Topic	Location	Pre-test result	Post-test result	% change	% change by course topic
Cisco CCNA courses	Nablus, Korean Center	20.30%	83.10%	62.80%	54%
	Nablus, HHCOT	31.32%	83.53%	52.21%	
	Hebron - PPU	40.00%	87.00%	47.00%	
Intel Learn: Technology and Entrepreneurship courses	Qalqilya	20.10%	83.20%	63.10%	53%
	Bethlehem	35.00%	74.20%	39.20%	
	Hebron	30.70%	88.10%	57.40%	
Social media trainings	Jericho	11.00%	80.30%	69.30%	60%
	Nablus	24.00%	77.50%	53.50%	
	Tubas	18.00%	75.00%	57.00%	
Average		26%	81%	56%	56%

Activity 2.1: Software and technology training



The Intel Learn “Technology and Entrepreneurship” course introduced learners to the basic concepts of entrepreneurship and demonstrates how technology can be used to advance a business idea.

During the first year, Impact through Technology organized and facilitated technology training courses focusing on youth digital literacy and collaborative problem solving. The program, in cooperation with the Youth Development and Resource Center (YDRC) in Hebron, facilitated ICT and Technology trainings. The program administered three Intel Learn and Technology and Entrepreneurship courses for 58 youth (28 females & 30 males). The YDRC’s qualified trainers helped recruit youth participants (*see activity 2.2 for more info on the Hebron YDRC*). The three Intel courses were delivered in Hebron, Bethlehem, and Qalqilya.



The program administered three Intel Learn and Technology and Entrepreneurship courses for 58 youth (28 females & 30 males). The YDRC’s qualified trainers helped recruit youth participants (*see activity 2.2 for more info on the Hebron YDRC*). The three Intel courses were delivered in Hebron, Bethlehem, and Qalqilya.

The Intel Learn: Technology and Entrepreneurship course introduced participants to the basic concepts of entrepreneurship and demonstrated how technology can advance business ideas. Using internet tools and office applications, students researched and formulated a business idea. They then created and presented a business plan for that idea.



The training aimed to harnesses Palestinian and Israeli students' shared interests in technology to create a process where mutual respect and understanding comes from working and learning together.

During the second year, the program, in cooperation with MEET, facilitated Software and Technology trainings that reached 222 Palestinian and Israeli youth. The trainings focused on technology, business and entrepreneurship and leadership skills. This activity aimed to foster relationships between Israeli and Palestinian youth while building advocacy, technology and computer science skills. The rapid development of ICT driving structural transformation globally has a similar impact in the Palestinian territories. Information technology is particularly important for creating employment in the West Bank and Israel due to its unique ability to connect individuals and generate economic growth.

In the entrepreneurship curriculum, students focused on applying a single product idea to different business topics, such as ideation, market research and competitive analysis. At the end of each training session, bi-national and mixed gender teams presented their work. The teams increased their skills in public speaking, teamwork, creativity and meeting deadlines. In the technology curriculum, Palestinian and Israeli students managed their projects and learned how to individually program and design computer games. The students learned various programming languages, such as Python HTML, CSS and JavaScript. Each team was comprised of members and a team leader. The team structure empowered individual team members but also exposed them to the challenges of working in a culturally diverse team.



MEET, in cooperation with Mercy Corps, identified about 150 Israeli and Palestinian youth (15-17 years old) to receive training in software, technology, business and entrepreneurship. Selection criteria included leadership and computer skills, as well as a commitment to positive social change. Palestinian and Israeli participants attended the sessions side by side and engaged in team activities.

MEET is an innovative educational initiative aimed at creating a common professional language between Israeli and Palestinian young leaders. Working together with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), MEET enables its participants to acquire advanced technological and leadership skills while empowering them to create positive social change within their own communities. Founded in 2004, MEET (Middle East Education through Technology) harnesses the power of technology and business to bring together Palestinian and Israeli youth within a practical, skills-based model for intergroup interaction and conflict mitigation. MEET is an NGO based in Jerusalem and is managed by an international staff, including Palestinians and Israelis, and volunteers.



President Obama mentioned MEET in his Jerusalem speech

“That is the kind of relationship that Israel should have – and could have – with every country in the world. Already, we see how that innovation could reshape this region. One program here in Jerusalem brings together young Israelis and Palestinians to learn vital skills in technology and business. An Israeli and Palestinian have started a venture capital fund to finance Palestinian start-ups. Over 100 high-tech companies have found a home on the West Bank, which speaks to the talent and entrepreneurial spirit of the Palestinian people.”

United States President Barak Obama, from his speech in Jerusalem, during his visit to Israel and West Bank in March 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dIN4KUHIQQ>

Activity 2.2: Mobile ICT training lab



17 ICT trainings were conducted from July 2012 to January 2013 that reached out to 344 youth (214 females & 130 males) in remote locations across the West Bank.

The program organized and facilitated **17 ICT trainings** that reached **344 youth (214 females & 130 males)** in remote locations across the West Bank. Rural Palestinians were able to increase their digital literacy skills and access to new technologies.

Mercy Corps cooperated with the Ruwwad Youth Development and Resource Center (YDRC) in Hebron, and the Sharek Youth Foundation in Ramallah.. The partnership provided Mercy Corps with suitable venues, helped facilitate mobile ICT trainings and helped provide and recruit youth participants from rural areas in the West Bank.

The mobile trainings aimed to extend basic ICT training to Palestinian youth, particularly young women and disabled persons whose participation may be restricted due to cultural barriers and economic hardship. The program exceeded the original target of 12 short trainings/workshops, resulting in a total of 17 trainings.



The short- term courses extended basic ICT training to Palestinian youth, particularly young women and disabled persons whose participation may be restricted due to cultural barriers and economic hardship.



The youth centers served as bases to provide trainings to marginalized and rural areas, such as villages and refugee camps.

The program conducted the short-term courses/workshops in eight locations across the West Bank:

1. Nablus
2. Hebron
3. Tubas
4. Tulkarm
5. Bethlehem
6. Qalqilya
7. Jenin
8. Jordan Valley & Jericho

Ruwwad YDRC & Sharek used their resources and access to young people across the West Bank to reach out to participants in rural areas. Both organizations have centers in the north, south and middle of the West Bank. Their geographical reach made them an effective mechanism for youth mobilization. The youth centers served as bases to provide trainings to marginalized and rural areas such as villages and refugee camps, which, due to social or geographic remoteness, do not receive adequate services. The organizations announced the trainings through their network and finalized selection process in cooperation with Mercy Corps. Mercy Corps used 20 lightweight laptops in cases where adequate IT equipment was not available, allowing the trainings to proceed regardless of location.



20 lightweight laptops were used in trainings in cases where adequate IT equipment was not available.

The Ruwwad YDRC in Hebron and Sharek showed great interest in working with Mercy Corps on Impact through Technology and allowed the program use of their centers as needed. Mercy Corps coordinated with the organizations on the scope of work, implementation tasks and the timetable needed to conduct the trainings. The Education Development Center (EDC) founded the Ruwwad YDRC centers with funding from USAID as part of the US-Palestinian Partnership Initiative.

The continued success and sustainability of Sharek and Ruwwad Youth Centers allowed both organizations to become leading players in youth development and participation. Sharek and Ruwwad YDRC reached out to different locations across the West Bank, accessing more beneficiaries and remote locations within targeted communities. The reach of the organizations' youth centers did not overlap and their efforts complemented each other. The two organizations have extensive experience in conducting youth-focused IT trainings/workshops centered on media trainings and the Intel Learn program. Each organization has their own network of youth clubs and centers located throughout the West Bank. In addition, both organizations have strong approaches to outreach and participant recruitment. They have established an expansive network of schools, universities and community centers in rural areas to recruit youth.

*"We as undergraduates lack the basic ICT skills, this training help me discover a new area of technology that I like and became interested in." **Maha Ashour from Nablus.***

*"I have been to a number of computer based trainings but this is the first time the issue of using ICT in advocacy was addressed and I feel very confident in using the ICT in defending a cause I believe in." **Shadia Al Aidi Said from***

The three short-term course/workshop topics included:

- The **ICT and Advocacy** course introduced trainees to the basics of computer use, office software, multimedia software, such as photo and video editing, and how to apply these technologies to advocacy and campaigning.

- The **Multi-Platform Advocacy Campaigns & Social Media** course covered online tools, such as blogging and podcasting, social media tools and mobile tools that provided participants with in-depth knowledge of online campaign building. The training highlighted the need for ICT training in West Bank and the apparent lack of focus on this issue.

Participants learned about the importance of ICT tools in advocacy work. The training covered video and photo capture as well as editing techniques to support campaigns. It also covered how to integrate



The Multi-platform Advocacy Campaigns & Social Media training introduced participants to the importance of ICT tools to advocacy.

multimedia with social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace and Flickr. Another topic focused on how to build advanced campaigns through social media. These campaigns focused on integrating multimedia and social networking with traditional campaigns. Some examples of such campaigns include viral campaigning, cross-border-issue campaigning and how to build social movements. The training

discussed the uses and best practices of these social media outlets, as well as problems and issues that could potentially arise.

- The **Social Media for Community Development training** introduced youth to the daily uses of social media as a resource for themselves and a tool contribute to the development of their communities.

Training topics included:

- Using social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, to launch campaigns and bring awareness to certain causes.
- Creating websites/blogs and integrating them with social media and within the community.
- Using professional online communication methods and sharing data.
- Developing ICT community initiatives.



The Social Media for Community Development training introduced youth to using social media tools in their daily life and to contribute to the development of their communities.

Activity 2.3: Internship Program

The program facilitated apprenticeships for 30 Palestinians within 10 Israeli ICT firms. The main purpose of the Apprenticeship Program was for Palestinian youth to gain on-the-job experience, experience a developed entrepreneurship/professional business workplace, and build relationships with Israeli ICT professionals.

The Israeli companies were pleased with the performance of the Palestinian interns and requested more time for this activity. The companies hope to strengthen their relationship with the apprentices and further develop their on-the-job training. Israeli companies reported positively, expressing that they considered the Palestinian apprentices as potential employees. The internship program was a successful way to introduce Palestinian engineers and developers to new technologies and working standards. Interaction with Israeli companies helps support the participants' professional development. The internship provided hands-on training, changed negative stereotypes and built trust between Israeli and Palestinian counterparts. The Palestinians participants gained vital work experience. The 30 Palestinian apprentices were distributed according to list below:

- Three worked with BTC Technology Company located in Tel-Aviv.
- One worked with Onlinepianist Technology Company located in Tel-Aviv.
- Two worked with eToro LTD Company located in Tel-Aviv.
- One worked with Universiteam (Social Paragraph) Technology Company located in Tel-Aviv.
- One worked with Senexx Technology Company located in Tel-Aviv.
- Five worked with Nuvoton Technology Company located in Herzilia.
- Three worked with UoPeople (AKT Human Capital Solutions) Company located in Petah-Tikva.
- Six worked with Microsoft Research & Development (R&D) Center located in Herzilia.
- Three worked with Comply Company located in Hod Hasharon.
- Five worked with Cisco Company located in Netanya.

The program provided a salary stipend for the apprentice wages that lasted between four and seven months. The program asked the Israeli companies to provide a letter of commitment that indicated the number of apprentices who could jointly host. Palestinians gained vital work experience. Through the apprenticeship relationship, the program hopes that both parties will find that the partnership is valuable enough to encourage continued cooperation and employment and hopefully lengthen the business ongoing relationship.

The Peres Center for Peace helped with the apprenticeship activities and the complicated permit-request process. The center used website announcements and emails to recruit Palestinian apprentices. More than 80 Palestinians applied for the apprenticeship program, which included applications from Gaza. Mercy Corps asked the applicants to submit updated resumes, which were then sent directly to the Peres Center. The Peres Center encouraged its extensive network and contacts in the Israeli ICT sector to participate in the project's activities. The Center also worked in cooperation with Mercy Corps to help identify Israeli ICT companies who were interested in hosting Palestinian ICT professionals as

part of the apprenticeship program. The Peres Center shortlisted twenty Palestinian ICT professionals for the apprenticeship program. The selection was based on the required criteria of the IT companies and the experience and background of the applicants. The Peres Center circulated the CVs of the Palestinian candidates throughout its network of connections within the Israeli ICT industry. Eleven Israeli ICT companies agreed to conduct interviews with the Palestinian candidates.

The end of June 2013 marked the end of the apprenticeship program. As part of the monitoring process, the five participating companies in the IT Apprenticeship Project completed a 12-question follow-up survey where they reflected on their experience with their Palestinian apprentices. Below is a summary of the results:

Technical value of the program: 100% of the companies believed that the project offered the apprentice valuable experience – 80% listed technical skills and hands-on experience as a critical benefit; 40% included exposure and molding of professionalism as a major benefit.

Opportunities for future cooperation: One company did not complete this question. The other four companies listed employment of Palestinians as a viable option for further cross-border business cooperation – 60% listed outsourcing; 40% listed the creation of joint-companies between Israelis and Palestinians. For four of the five Israeli companies, this program provided their first experience working with a Palestinian. All of the companies reported that projects that bring face-to-face meetings between Israelis and Palestinians are important. All of the companies expressed a desire to participate in this program again.

Challenges: Two companies reported problems with their apprentice. One company listed the issue as being an initial gap in understanding expectations as well as initial lack of experience and knowledge on behalf of the apprentice. Working with employees and managers at the company filled these initial gaps. Three of the five companies reported their apprentices had issues with border crossing and entry permits. The reports stated that their apprentices traveled many extra hours to get to and from the office. One company noted that Palestinian's inability to stay overnight in Israel, due to permit restrictions, prevented the apprentice from attending some evening company events.

“Peace building”: When asked about Israeli employees’ initial feelings towards the program, 60% of the Israeli companies responded that their employees had “mixed feelings.” One company was indecisive toward the program and another responded that employees were happy to partake in such an initiative. When asked if the companies witnessed a change in employees' perspectives of “the other side” throughout the course of the project, 80% of the companies responded affirmatively, with 75% reporting a positive change. 100% of the companies reported that their employees gained cultural experience from this project. One company added that employees gained technical knowledge and business experience by participating in this project. Four of five companies reported that employees built relationships and friendships by participating in this project.

“We have started the Impact through Technology" program with two developers from Nablus - Allam and Sawsan. After 2 months in this project, I must say that so far it is a success - both sides are very happy with this initiative and opportunity and actually gain benefit from this project”

Miri Kedem, HR & Admin Director, eToro Company

“

Bashar was a good fit for Social Paragraph. He started out with zero knowledge about our development framework but with tons of good will and capabilities. 5 months into the program he is starting to show considerable progress in comprehension and control of our framework. He has also proven himself as a team player in the sense of active participation in product development brain storming sessions and idea production. He fits right into our family size company.”

David Fradis COO, Universiteam IT Company, Tel-Aviv.

“

Ahmed joined our company 4 months ago; despite of our and his natural fears, he became part of our team very fast. Ahmed joined the technical staff of the company and performed his duties with desire and high motivation. On a social aspect it was even bigger surprise. Ahmed has become a close friend. It's great to finely know someone from the "other side". Ahmed is professional and caring guy. He helped our company make professional and social progress in the last few months.”

Nimrod Cohen, Onlinepianist IT Co

“

I'll start by saying that taking part of this program is a beautiful experience. We believe in the values of the program and want to make it on the best side. In order to make something meaningful (more than just making projects) we try to make the best out of it and also do a lot of “team building”, like going to lunch in different areas and places in Tel Aviv so the guys can gain more knowledge about Israel. Adel is very talented. All of his work related to IOS and Android development. He takes his tasks seriously and completes his task also after working hours and on weekends.”

Shady Salah, Project Manager, BTC IT Co

“

We had the privilege to have Rawiya working with us since December. We are very happy with her technical and professional skills. Since we are an international company we have great experience working with people from different cultures and languages. At first it was hard for Rawiya who is a strict religious person to work in an all men team, but as time went by we saw improvements in that aspect as well.”

Zeevi Michel, CEO Senexx Inc.

Activity 2.4: Cisco's CCNA and Microsoft academy certification



80 unemployed and fresh graduate youth attended training at Cisco Academies and successfully passed the exams and got certified in CCNA - Cisco Certified Network Associate.

A total of 80 youth have received certifications in new technologies since the beginning of the program, exceeding the original target of 62. The 80 unemployed recent graduates (38 females & 42 males) attended training at Cisco Academies and successfully passed the exams to receive their Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) certification.



Mercy Corps staff conducted field visits and talked about the program activities and successes and how the Cisco course and Certification was made possible with the generous support of the American people through USAID.

The USAID funded TVET program established the Cisco Academies in 2009. Since then, Mercy Corps has noticed that youth and IT professionals express a great demand to enroll in the offered courses. In August 2012, for example, Impact through Technology facilitated CCNA certification for 15 Palestinian youth – Mercy Corps received over 675 applications for this course.

The Impact through Technology program organized trainings to help develop the ICT capacity of Palestinian youth and implemented activities that aim to promote economic development employment opportunities. Cisco courses offer technical skills that improve the employability of students, given recent ICT sector development and the growing demand for IT skills in other industries. The course also promotes cooperation among youth and ICT professionals through concrete, mutually beneficial activities. The Cisco courses are hands-on, lab-oriented courses that prepare participants for exciting career opportunities in the technology industry. The Cisco courses include the following six modules: IT Essentials, PC Hardware and Software, CCNA Exploration, Network Fundamentals, Routing Protocols and LAN Switching and Wireless.

The USAID-funded TVET program, implemented by Mercy Corps and completed in October 2011, established the VET-NGO League and the three Cisco certified academies. This program builds on previous USAID-funded programs, extending the sustainability of these USAID initiatives.

The VET-NGO (TVET) League represents 15 local non-governmental vocational training centers. The League is registered with the Palestinian Ministry of Interior as a non-governmental educational entity.



Technical skills offered by Cisco courses build skills that improve the employability of students.

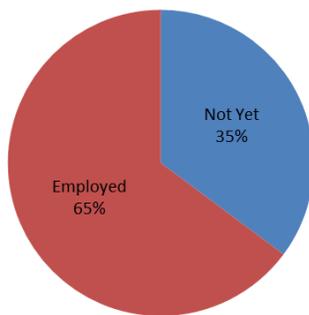
The Cisco Academies are a mark of excellence in the field of information technology. The academies feature labs equipped with the latest technology, such as Smart-boards, projectors, and computer hardware and accessories needed by the participants to complete advanced training. The centers are certified and registered as Cisco Networking Academies and have Cisco Certified trainers.

Summary of Cisco CCNA courses (2012- 2013):

Cisco Academy – CCNA Professional Certification	City	Students	Females	Males
Korean-Palestinian IT Institute of Excellence (KPITIE)	Nablus	15	8	7
Hisham Hijjawi College of Technology (HHCOT)	Nablus	19	6	13
Palestine Polytechnic University (PPU)	Hebron	35	19	16
Hope School Training Academy	Ramallah	11	5	6
Total:		80	38 (48%)	42 (52%)

A follow up survey at the end of the program showed that 65% of beneficiaries secured employment shortly following getting certified in the Cisco CCNA courses.

Got employed following the Cisco CCNA course



The Impact through Technology program organized trainings to help develop the ICT capacity of Palestinian youth, implemented activities that promote economic development, and benefit youth by creating employment opportunities.

PROGRAM INTERMEDIATE RESULT 3: PROMOTE COOPERATIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS IN THE ICT SECTOR

Rationale (Theory of Change): *If Israeli and Palestinian entrepreneurs and private sector entities collaborate in the ICT sector, they will experience the tangible benefits of cooperation, have a common incentive to protect these benefits, and serve as positive role models for younger generations looking for alternatives to violence.* Economic partnerships will nurture shared interests and act as a mitigating force should conflict erupt. Mercy Corps has successfully implemented initiatives to bring Palestinians and Israelis together around ICT. Some of these initiatives have resulted in sustained business partnerships and new jobs for Palestinian and Israeli youth.

Improving Palestinian capabilities will establish a more even playing field where joint ventures and Palestinian/Israeli business partnerships can flourish. Impact through Technology has established Mercy Corps' reputation among Palestinian and Israeli ICT firms and entrepreneurs by facilitating mutually beneficial cross-border partnerships. Apolitical, profit-motivated, business-focused activities are an effective way to provide opportunities for cross-border collaboration.

Mercy Corps successfully piloted a range of activities, including entrepreneurial events and private sector ICT conferences, in Israel and the West Bank that brought Palestinians and Israelis together around concrete business ideas. These events created a safe, dynamic and collaborative environment for technologically savvy entrepreneurs to exchange ideas. As a result of entrepreneurial events in Impact through Technology and continued support from the program, four joint business ventures between Palestinian and Israeli entrepreneurs and companies were launched. These ventures include the development of e-learning solutions, outsourcing services to Intel-Israel for management software, increasing integration of Israeli and Palestinian ICT companies by creating a unified code of standards, and the development of new web and phone applications. There is a great potential for joint business ventures to succeed but they will require continued facilitation by a neutral party.

In addition, Mercy Corps facilitated visits between Palestinian ICT professionals and Israeli technology companies to develop business relationships, catalyze cross-border initiatives and launch entrepreneurial business ventures. The visits provided Palestinians with opportunities to engage in a professional environment and Israeli companies were exposed to a diversity of highly skilled Palestinians.

Activity 3.1: Organize entrepreneurial events for youth and ICT entrepreneurs and professionals (hackathons and startup weekends)

During the first year, Impact through Technology facilitated participation in five joint Startup Weekends and workshops for Palestinian and Israeli youth and ICT entrepreneurs. Startup Weekends are weekend-long, hands-on events where entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs can test the viability of startup ideas. These events helped build relationships between the diverse participants. They offered a safe space for participants to meet colleagues across the border and exchange ideas, laying the groundwork for possible future collaboration. On average, half of Startup Weekend's attendees have technical backgrounds and

the other half have business backgrounds. Mercy Corps, in cooperation with Nablus Google Technology Users Group (GTUG), organized Nablus Startup Weekend.

Startup Weekend Events (First Year):



www.nablus.startupweekend.org

Startup Weekend Nablus was a weekend-long event (3 days) where developers, designers, business people came together to share ideas, form teams, build products and potentially launch startups. A total of 104 people attended the event – 95 participants (31 females & 64 males), including 7 Israelis, and an additional 9 people that served as speakers, judges and mentors. The event took place from 29 to 31 March 2012 in Nablus. Startup Weekend Nablus was special because it was the first event to be held in the West Bank and the second in Palestine after Gaza's event in 2011. The social and technical aspects of this event provided a unique experience for the participants.

Over the course of the three days, the teams worked to design and develop their business plans while streamlining their startup vision. On the last day, the teams showcased their prototypes for evaluation, received feedback from the judges. The top 3 teams returned home with valuable prizes which were seed investments into their winning ideas. Mercy Corps' Arab Developer Network Initiative (ADNI) provided the funding for the prizes. First place received \$5,000, second place received \$3,000 and third place received \$2,000.

The event allowed participants to explore ideas together, share and develop concepts, learn together, build teams, develop the skills required to be a successful team member and identify solutions to obstacles together. By the end of the event, there was a very positive atmosphere among participants and an increased understanding and appreciation of each other. For example, Three Israeli participants (Jouna Khalil, Sami Abboud and Bshara Rezik) from Haifa and Nazareth were so inspired by the event and people they meet, and took the lead on organizing a similar Startup Weekend in Nazareth in November 2012. They invited West Bank Palestinians to Nazareth to participate. It was gratifying to see that Impact through Technology program events and interventions were empowering both Israelis and Palestinians (and women) to replicate our activities and initiatives.



Through this event, participants explored ideas together, shared and developed concepts and learned from one another. They built teams, showed skills required to operate as a member of a team, and discovered solutions to obstacles together.

Startup Weekends are specifically designed for entrepreneurs who are interested in receiving feedback on an idea, looking for a co-founder, want to learn new skills or meet new people with similar interests. Startup Weekends are risk-free environments where everyone is expected to roll up their sleeves and dive into the exhilarating world of startups.

One of the Judges was Mr. Saed Nashef, founding partner at Sadara Ventures, the first IT-focused early-stage venture capital firm in Palestine. He is partnering with an Israeli business man, Mr. Yadin Kaufmann, who invested in Israeli startups that gave the world the USB flash drive and satellite communications systems. Both men recruited an initial \$28.7 million from companies like Google Inc. and Cisco Systems Inc. Their aim is to boost the West Bank's community of software entrepreneurs and build a robust economy for an eventually independent state.

More Startup Weekend Photos:

Day 1: <http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150899372944622.510892.118674184621&type=3>

Day 2: <http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150899850339622.510968.118674184621&type=3>

Day 3: <http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150903980694622.511585.118674184621&type=3>



Through this event, participants explored ideas together, shared and developed concepts and learned together and from one another, built teams and showed skills required to operate as a member of a team, and discovered solutions to obstacles together.

In November 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 19 Palestinian IT professionals from the West Bank to attend Startup Weekend's entrepreneurial and knowledge transfer event in Nazareth. Startup Weekend Nazareth was a weekend-long event (3 days) where Palestinian and Israeli developers, designers and business people came together to share ideas, form teams, build products and potentially launch startups. This event focused on taking an idea from concept to execution.

For the first time, an internationally renowned innovation event came to Nazareth. Palestinian software developers from across the West Bank networked with Israeli counterparts. The event included presentations of IT entrepreneurial business ideas from different participating teams.

A total of 65 participants attended the event (46 Israelis & 19 Palestinians), with an additional 10 people to serve as speakers, judges and mentors. The social and technical aspects of this event provided a unique experience for the participants. Over the course of the three days, teams consisting of Palestinian and Israeli ICT professionals worked to design and develop their business plans while constantly streamlining their startup vision. On the last day, the teams showcased their prototypes for evaluation and received feedback from the judges. The top 3 teams returned home with prizes. The prizes consisted of support from the business incubator in Nazareth and a full-day entrepreneurship workshop at Jerusalem Venture Partners (JVP) media quarter.



The event's goals were to promote Israeli awareness of the emerging Palestinian high tech sector and its high professional standards, and to expose young Palestinian software professionals to the vast experience of the Israeli startup scene.

The event allowed participants to explore ideas together, share and develop concepts, learn together, build teams, develop the skills required to be a successful team member and identify solutions to obstacles. By the end of the event, there was a very positive atmosphere among participants and an increased understanding and appreciation of each other.

The program recruited Palestinian participants through Facebook and various website

announcements. Over 100 Palestinians registered for the event, including designers, marketers, product managers, developers and startup enthusiasts. We accepted 19 participants due to space restrictions. Three of the youth from Haifa and Nazareth in Israel previously attended Startup Weekend Nablus in March 2012 and were inspired to put together this event (Jouna Khalil, Sami Abboud and Bshara Rezik). Mercy Corps helped support the Palestinian participants. Other sponsors included: Jerusalem Venture Partners (JVP), Cisco and Google.

A background success story started to develop in March of 2012. The first Startup Weekend was organized by Mercy Corps in Nablus in March 2012. Israeli participants attended the event. Mercy Corps recognized something wonderful from everyone's feedback and reaction. Three Israeli participants (*Jouna Khalil, Sami Abboud and Bshara Rezik*) from Haifa and Nazareth were so inspired by the Nablus event that they organized a similar event on their own. They welcomed West Bank Palestinians to Nazareth. After participating in the event, the three took the lead on organizing a similar Startup Weekend in Nazareth! The organizers invited Mercy Corps to help organize this event, provide expertise, recruit Palestinian participants and provide support. We are happy to see that our USAID funded Impact through Technology program events and interventions are giving rise to more joint events and empowering Israelis, Palestinians and women to replicate our activities and initiatives.



From left: Bshara Rezik, Jouna Khalil, and Sami Abboud at the Startup Weekend event in Nazareth.



122 participants (22 Israelis and 100 Palestinians IT professionals) attended the Startup Weekend entrepreneurial and knowledge transfer event in Nablus.

In January 2013, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 22 Israeli IT professionals (3 females & 19 males) to attend the Nablus Startup Weekend IT entrepreneurial event. A total of 122 participants attended the event (22 Israelis & 100 Palestinians). The event allowed participants to explore ideas together, share and develop concepts, learn together, build teams, develop the skills required to be a successful team member and identify solutions to obstacles together. By the end of the event, there was a very positive atmosphere among participants and an increased understanding and appreciation of each other.

Startup Weekend Nablus was a weekend-long event (3 days) where Palestinian and Israeli developers, designers, and business people came together to share ideas, form teams, build products and potentially launch startups. Startup Weekends are weekend-long, hands-on events where entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs can test the viability of startup ideas. On average, half of Startup Weekend's attendees have technical backgrounds and the other half have business backgrounds. The event focused on taking an idea from a concept to execution.

The Palestinian software developers came from throughout the West Bank to network with Israeli counterparts. For the second time, an internationally-renowned innovation event came to Nablus and brought together Israeli and Palestinian participants in positive action through Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Participants enjoyed their time and benefited greatly. The social and technical aspects of this event provided a unique experience for the participants. Participants benefitted from this event through networking and sharing ideas with other participants and mostly from working closely with experienced



22 Israeli IT professionals (3 females & 19 males) from Israel attended the Startup Weekend IT entrepreneurial event in Nablus.



Through this event, participants explored ideas together, shared and developed concepts and learned together and from one another, built teams and showed skills required to operate as a member of a team, and discovered solutions to obstacles together.

mentors, and getting business advice and coaching from guest speakers. The mentors offered valuable advice and shared experiences all throughout the three day event. They had one on one coaching sessions with each group in the event. Main speakers and mentors:

- Sabri Saidam, Advisor to the Palestinian President on Telecommunications, Information Technology and Technical Education, Deputy Secretary of Fateh Council, Former minister of Telecom & IT, Mr. Sabri led telecom market liberalization in Palestine in 2006 introducing the second mobile phone operator.
- Muhammad Zahalqa, Enterprise application architectures Muhammad Zahalqa is veteran entrepreneur and CTO with Experis software and has his own consultancy firm TryFinally.com.
- Saed Nashef - Founding Partner at Sadara Ventures, the first IT-focused, early-stage venture capital firm in Palestine. Before that, he spent six years at Microsoft in various software engineering and leadership roles.
- Huda El Jack - Named by Forbes Middle East as one of the “Top 100 Most Powerful Arab Business Women in Listed Companies in 2012”, Huda El Jack serves as Vice President of Investments in Siraj Fund Management Company (SFMC).
- Ibrahim Taha - Serves ThoughtWorks Ltd. as a Lead Consultant with experience in managing and coordinating projects, Agile coaching and training, defining test strategies in distributed agile projects, and test planning, including resource and release scheduling as well as extensive hands-on experience.

Over the course of the three days, the teams worked to design and develop their business plans while constantly streamlining their startup vision. On the last day, the teams showcased their prototypes for evaluation and received feedback from the judges. The best 3 teams returned home with valuable prizes. Mercy Corps through from the Source of Hope Foundation provided funding for the two top prizes. First place received \$1,500, second place received \$1,200. Connect.Me company sponsored the third place prize for \$1,000. The event was apolitical and its goal was to promote Israeli awareness of the emerging Palestinian high-tech sector and its high professional standards, while also exposing young Palestinian software professionals to the vast experience of the Israeli startup scene.



The event goal was to create awareness in the Israeli side of the emerging Palestinian high tech sector and its high professional standards and to expose young Palestinian software professional to the vast experience of the Israeli startups scene.



33 youth (15 Israelis and 18 Palestinians) that attended the IT entrepreneurship event that took place at the Givat Ram campus of The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

In February 2013, Mercy Corps cooperated with MEET to facilitate the participation of 33 youth (15 Israelis & 18 Palestinians) who attended the IT entrepreneurship event at the Givat Ram campus of The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The event aimed to empower Palestinian and Israeli youth to be creative and think big. The event lasted overnight. The two days of activities were designed to introduce the topic of innovation to MEET's Palestinian and Israeli youth students. Students were divided into bi-national and bi-gendered teams. The entrepreneurship workshop addressed issues and skills such as innovation, creativity, leadership, teamwork, communication, problem solving, goal reaching and the ideation stage of entrepreneurship.

Guest lecture: In addition to serving as Executive Director of IDC Hertzilya's Zell Entrepreneurship Program, Liat Aaronson also manages MEET's business curriculum. Liat explained the activity, the criteria for the competition and gave an inspirational lecture on the power of entrepreneurship and the importance of team work.



Students were divided into bi-national and bi-gendered teams. The entrepreneurial workshop addressed issues and skills, such as innovation, creativity, leadership, teamwork, communication, problem solving, goal reaching and practice the ideation stage of entrepreneurship.



Through this event, participants explored ideas together, shared and developed concepts, and learned from one another. They built teamwork skills, and discovered solutions to obstacles together.

Following the event, MEET management conveyed the following message: *“On behalf of MEET and all the participants of the event, we would like thank you for your generosity and support. We are grateful for the commitment of USAID and Mercy Corps. Your support sends an important signal to our young Israeli and Palestinian students regarding their capacity to ensure a more just and peaceful future for both communities and, thus, for the region. We look forward to continuing our partnership with you, as we scale and expand our unique program while ensuring the sustainability of the active network of young Palestinian and Israeli leaders who have developed a common professional language and are motivated to create positive impact in their societies.”*

Hackathon Events:

In January 2012, one of the program’s main joint-program activities, the Beit Jala Hackathon workshop, was under attack. Mercy Corps, the organizers and the hotel, received anonymous threats regarding a campaign to shut down the Hackathon. Although the workshop was sponsored by different donors, the main attack and media opposition targeted USAID, Mercy Corps and the program name. The negative campaign emphatically emphasized the name of the program.

Mercy Corps had worked hard to prepare for this event, through coordination with partners, registration, and planning to secure a venue and provide accommodations. Promotional material in accordance with USAID branding requirements and approval had been created. However, Mercy Corps did not want to put anyone in danger or create an uncomfortable atmosphere. Responding to security concerns from all sides, including participants, partners, and staff, Mercy Corps chose to postpone the workshop. The original dates for the Hackathon Workshop were January 12th – 14th 2012 at the Taltha Kumi campus in Beit Jala.

Since this event, Mercy Corps has faced significant opposition and reluctance when approaching potential participants or organizations. The original name of the event, featured in the local media and in *The Technologist*, a local magazine, gave Mercy Corps and the program negative local publicity. *The Technologist Magazine* published an article along with an online voting poll. The poll asked whether the public saw the Hackathon workshop as a “normalization” event. *The Technologist* did not inform Mercy Corps about the article, failed to represent Mercy Corps’ perspective and did not ask for permission to use the Mercy Corps logo in their magazine.

created

The Hackathon event is a weekend-long event where Palestinian and Israeli software professionals come together to work in a professional but casual and safe environment to get to know each other while also obtaining new skills and experiences and hopefully new ideas for startups. During the weekend,

participants proposed ideas for useful software applications, built mixed Palestinian-Israeli teams around selected ideas and worked on design and implementation (<http://www.beitjahackathon.org>).



In September 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 17 Palestinian IT professionals from the West Bank to attend a Hackathon entrepreneurial and knowledge transfer event in Nazareth. The event targeted software developer and engineer community who are enthusiastic about software, computers and open sourcing in Israel and the West Bank.

This event was an intensive two day event focused on taking an idea from a concept into execution. Palestinian software developers came from all over the West Bank and networked together with their Israeli counterparts' web and mobile applications. GDG (Google Developer Group) Nazareth hosted the event that was sponsored by Google, Nazareth Business Incubator, Orange, Samsung and Tsofen and the EU.

Palestinian developers networked with other developers at the event. The organizers showed interest to work with Palestinian developers in the future.



Palestinian developers networked with the organizer and other developers at the event.

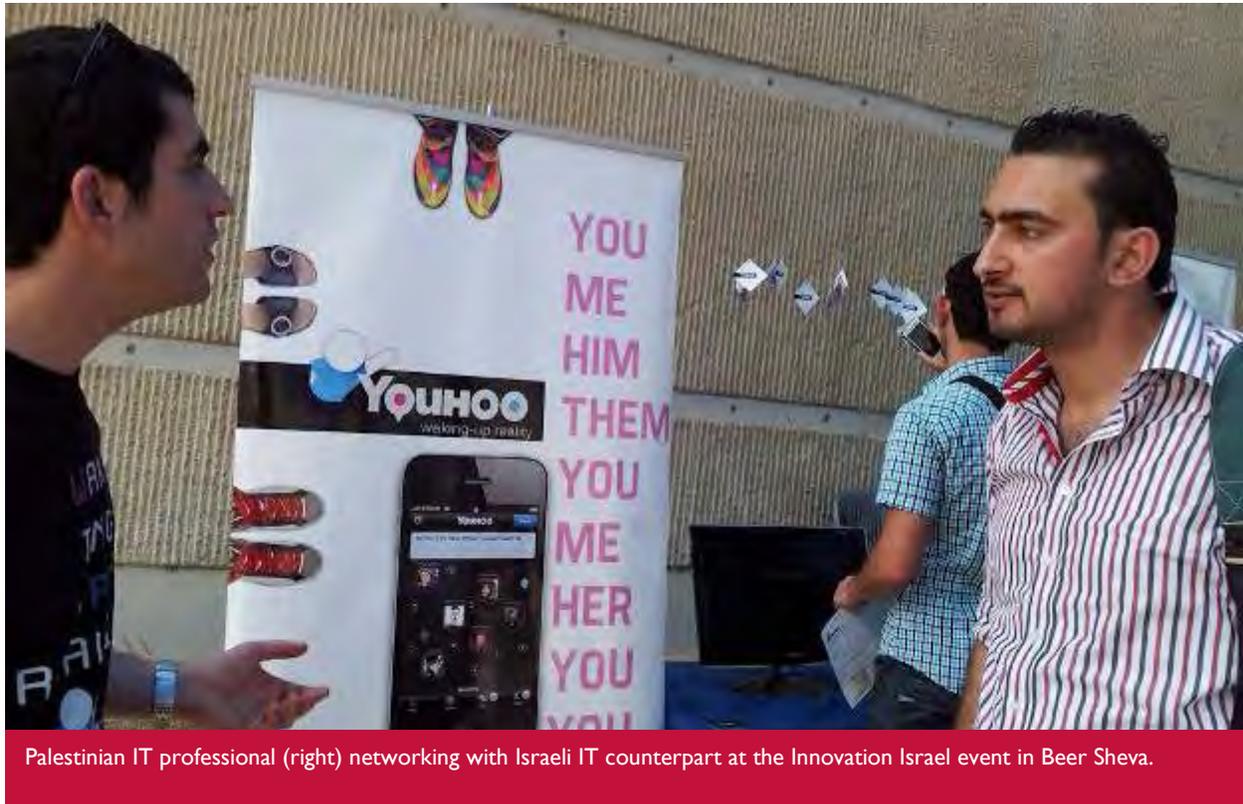
Activity 3.2: Facilitate Palestinian visits to Israeli companies and ICT networking events for Israelis and Palestinians

During the first year, Impact through Technology, in cooperation with the EU funded *Partnership for Peace* program, facilitated five visits to Israeli companies and twelve ICT networking events for Israelis and Palestinians. These events helped build relationships and promote cooperation between participating Israelis and Palestinians.

Under current political conditions, Mercy Corps' role as a third party actor, applying for permits for Palestinian participation at events in Israel and acting as the interface with event organizers, remains critical. Without such support, Palestinians would not be able to take part in the events. Through these activities and events, Impact through Technology introduces IT professionals from Israel and Palestine to one another. This relationship building will pave the way for more opportunities and participation from West Bank IT professionals in cutting edge technology events.



Palestinian IT professionals from 6 Palestinian IT companies at the AppsMania IT networking event in Tel-Aviv.



Palestinian IT professional (right) networking with Israeli IT counterpart at the Innovation Israel event in Beer Sheva.

In April 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 9 Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers from 6 Palestinian IT companies to attend the AppsMania one day IT networking event in Tel-Aviv. Going on its second year, AppsMania has become the largest mobile apps developers' event in Israel. This unique event attracts hundreds of top mobile and media developers and provides a vertical view of the apps market with an emphasis on eco-system growth and application success. The event focuses on a wide range of topics, such as multi-platform apps, discoverability, advertising opportunities, cloud computing, apps stores and more. At the event, the Palestinian participants met and socialized with Israeli IT experts and heard their forecasts for 2012. They shared and compared success stories, heard about valuable case studies and viewed live demos of mobile applications.

In May 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 3 Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers from 3 Palestinian IT companies to attend the Innovation Israel/TedX one day IT networking event in Beer Sheva. The event was held at Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva. This event is the most significant event on entrepreneurship and innovation at Ben Gurion University and is part of an ongoing effort to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in Negev. About one hundred participants attended the event; mostly students but also professors and business people. This was the third year the event took place and the first time Palestinians from the West Bank participated.



In May 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 4 Palestinian ICT professionals, including one student from An-Najah

National University, to attend the Startup Weekend event in Jerusalem. During the event Mercy Corps staff encouraged the Palestinian participants to ask questions and mingle with other event participants, such as Israeli IT professionals. Over time, the Palestinian participants seemed more comfortable approaching others, especially Israelis, and seemed to realize that most of the participants speak English and share a common interest in technology. The event was a success. There were not a huge number of Palestinian participants (*please see challenges section*); however those that came were very engaged and happy to take part of this event. The Palestinian participants said they will recommend these events to their friends and co-workers in the future. There were about 100 Israeli participants. For many of the Israeli participants, it was their first time engaging with a Palestinian from the West Bank. The Israelis were pleasantly surprised by the Palestinian's skill level and the level of mutual interest in technology.



20 Palestinians and 30 Israelis attended the one day joint ICT Networking event for MEET alumni at the Hebrew University campus in Jerusalem.



In July 2012, 50 participants attended the one day joint Networking event for MEET alumni in July 2012 in Jerusalem. 20 of the participants were Palestinian, 30 Israeli, 32 were male and 18 female. The goal of this event was to create an active network of young Israeli and Palestinian leaders who share a common

professional language and are able to work together towards creating positive social, political and economic change in their communities. (For more information on the MEET organization see activity 1.2)

More Alumni Networking event photos:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/114021210087876173281/AlumniNetworkingConference>

In July 2012, Mercy Corps arranged and facilitated the participation of 20 Palestinians to visit the Better



20 Palestinians visited the Better Place Visitor Center, in Ramat Hasharon Tel Aviv.

Place Visitor Center in Ramat Hasharon Tel Aviv. The visit took place on July 16th. Mercy Corps recruited Palestinian participants through Facebook, LinkedIn and word of mouth. Over 40 Palestinians registered for the event. Mercy Corps, through the assistance of the Peres Center, received 23 permits out of the 26 permit applications. Although 30 people were supposed to participate in this trip, only 20 attended, not including Mercy Corps and Better Place's Israelis staff.

The Better Place Company develops infrastructure to produce electric cars that are more affordable, convenient and sustainable than gas-powered cars. They use the revolutionary switchable-battery model. Founded in Silicon Valley, Better



Through visits and networking events the program aimed to introduce ICT professionals from Israel and West Bank to one another and to their business interests and work in technology.

Place is a global company with operations in Israel, Denmark, Australia, Europe, North America, Japan and China. The promotional video produced by Better Place was informative. However, the highlight of the trip was test driving electric vehicles on a closed track. Participants with a valid driver's license (Israeli, Palestinian or international) received name tags and were allowed to drive the cars.

In July 2012, Mercy Corps arranged and facilitated the participation of 26 ICT professionals and entrepreneurs (19 Palestinians & 7 Israelis) to visit the Hub, a co-working space in Tel Aviv. The



19 Palestinians and 7 Israelis visited the Hub – a co-working space in Tel Aviv.

Palestinian participants were joined by Israelis from the Tel-Aviv IT industry that expressed interest in working with Palestinian developers. First, Mr. Boaz Sapir discussed the Hub, explaining the idea of a co-working space, and the benefit of such a space to its members. Following the event, a few of the participants sat with Boaz during lunch to learn more about the Hub, inspired to open a similar space in Ramallah.

Next, Mr. Eyal Gura and Dr. Mahmoud Kaiyal told their entrepreneurship stories. Topics included their professional experience, selling companies, getting customers, and pitching to investors. They covered what did and did not work in their experience and gave advice to the audience. The audience had the chance to ask questions about the ideas presented and about building companies. Both Israelis and Palestinians participated in a lively discussion.



Mr. Eyal Gura and Dr. Mahmoud Kaiyal told their entrepreneurship stories at the co-working space in Tel Aviv

Over lunch, the Palestinian and Israeli participants mingled and met each other. Mercy Corps staff observed the Israeli and Palestinian participants exchanging contact information and was informed by participants about future meetings to discuss possible joint projects. Following the event, many participants asked about upcoming activities and the possibility of similar events in the future.

The positive feedback confirmed the need for Mercy Corps to host similar events at other Israeli companies in order to bring Palestinians to visit companies and meet with fellow entrepreneurs and developers. These types of visits and conversations lead to new joint ventures, business opportunities, apprenticeship placements and ultimately build professional respect between the Israeli and Palestinian tech communities.

Mercy Corps receives many applications from Palestinians in the West Bank to attend these events. The organization always tries to pick the most appropriate participants to attend. For example, if Mercy Corps plans a networking event for CEOs and marketing professionals, it will try to choose senior representatives instead of software programmers. Some participants apply but cannot take leave from their work due to the permitting process for Palestinians from the West Bank to enter Israel. Israeli authorities issue permits only one or two days before the requested date, regardless of the submission date of the permit request.

In July 2012, Mercy Corps arranged and facilitated the participation of Palestinians ICT professionals/software developers to visit the Microsoft office in Tel Aviv. The participants visited the Microsoft academy for entrepreneurs, Azure, inside the Microsoft offices.

Through visits and networking events, the program introduced ICT professionals from Israel and West Bank to one another. The professionals were exposed to their counterpart's business interests and work experience in technology. Palestinian participants were given the chance to build relationships with Israeli professionals with the possibility that the networking may result in joint ventures and business deals that promote cooperation between one another.



The participation in cross-border networking events and business-to-business meetings varied in size. In addition to the in-person networking activities listed below, there have been occasions when Israelis approached Mercy Corps seeking Palestinian partners for a project or vice versa. In this situation, Mercy Corps did an “e-introduction” over email and shared contact details between the relevant parties.

In October 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 7 Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers to attend the Digital-Life-Design (DLD) Conference in Jaffa-Tel-Aviv. This global conference came to Tel Aviv for the second time this year and acts as a platform for exchange of future visions and experiences. The conference is driven by the mission to create a network of innovation, digital prospects, science and culture. The event included hundreds of international visitors, local participants and distinguished speakers. While Mercy Corps expected strong Palestinian participation in this activity, some potential participants informally said, “The political situation was too volatile for such an event.” While many people registered for the event, due to Eid and other commitments a few of the registrants dropped out. At the event, the Palestinian participants met and socialized with Israeli IT experts. They shared and compared success stories, heard about valuable case studies and viewed live demos of software applications.

In October 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 3 Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers to attend the Techonome IT Conference, in Tel-Aviv, Israel. This annual event is Israel’s premier startup competition. It is an opportunity for IT companies to present their projects to a panel of judges and an eager audience. The companies have many opportunities to network with fellow attendees. The startups that are chosen to present their projects receive coaching and support. They learn about examples of how budding entrepreneurs should conduct presentations. Although more people signed up for the event, due to Eid and other commitments, only three Palestinians participated. The event focused on and promoted entrepreneurship and innovation.



In November 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 8 Palestinian ICT professionals to visit the Think Next Microsoft Center in Tel-Aviv. After communicating with several Microsoft Israel employees, they approved Mercy Corps' ability to invite Palestinian ICT professionals for a company visit. The audience had the chance to ask questions about the ideas presented and about building companies. Both Israelis and Palestinians participated in a lively discussion. Mercy Corps staff observed the participants exchanging contact information and overheard conversations about future meetings to discuss possible projects. Following the event, many participants asked about upcoming activities and the possibility of similar events in the future.



8 Palestinian ICT professionals visited the "Think Next" Microsoft Center in Tel-Aviv.

In November 2012, Mercy Corps arranged and facilitated the participation of 2 Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers to attend an open day at the Microsoft Azure Accelerator for Arab Startups in Tel-Aviv. The participants visited the Microsoft academy for entrepreneurs, Azure, inside the Microsoft offices. Under current political conditions, Mercy Corps' role for this visit and other events was as a third party actor, applying for permits for Palestinian participation at events in Israel and visits to hi-tech companies and acting as the interface with event organizers and companies.



Through visits and networking events the program aimed to introduce ICT professionals from Israel and West Bank to one another and to their business interests and work in Technology.

Also in November 2012, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 5 Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers to attend the "Rails Israel" IT Conference in Tel Aviv. This event is the first international Ruby on Rails programming language Conference in Israel. Since 2006, Rails Conference has been the largest gathering of Rails developers in the world. The conference brings high-end developers and companies together to observe state-of-the-art developments in Rails and web development, to learn about new products and tools, and for good old-fashioned networking. These activities allowed Impact through Technology to introduce professionals from Israel and Palestine to one another, their business interests and their priorities. Participants discovered that, in many cases, one firm's needs fit appropriately with the expertise of another.

As with other events where Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of Palestinian professionals, the participants felt more comfortable approaching Israelis and international participants over time. Realizing that they shared both proficiency in English and a passion for technology opened up lines of

communication. Much like at other events Mercy Corps participated in, Israeli participants engaged with a Palestinian from the West Bank for the first time and were pleasantly surprised by their technical expertise and shared interest in technology.

In January 2013, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of nine Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers to attend the Mobile Monday networking event in Nazareth. Mobile Monday is an open community platform of mobile industry visionaries, developers and influential individuals fostering brand-neutral cooperation and cross-border person-to-business



9 Palestinian ICT professionals attended the Mobile Monday networking event in Nazareth.

opportunities. The event features live networking events to demo products, share ideas and discuss trends from both local and global markets. The Nazareth Chapter is led by Mobile Monday (MoMo) Nazareth Founding Team, in cooperation with MoMo Tel Aviv Chapter, Tsofen High Technology Centers and local tech-enthusiasts. All organizations believe that the tech industry can improve neighborhoods, cities and societies. MoMo Nazareth is an official chapter of Mobile Monday™, bringing together mobile and internet industry visionaries, digital ventures enthusiasts, entrepreneurs, tech professionals and developers.

In February 2013, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 10 Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers to visit WIN.com Company in Tel-Aviv, Israel. After communicating with several WIN.com Israel employees, Mercy Corps was granted permission to invite Palestinian ICT professionals for a company visit. The audience asked questions about the ideas presented and about building companies. Both Israelis and Palestinians participated in the discussions. .

In February 2013, Mercy Corps facilitated the participation of 12 Palestinian ICT professionals/software developers to attend the DevCon IT Conference in Tel Aviv. The conference draws first-class developers and companies together to network, discuss state-of-the-art technology and programming language development and to learn about new products and tools.



Through visits and networking events the program aimed to introduce ICT professionals from Israel and West Bank to one another and to their business interests and work in technology.

In June 2013, a group of 9 Palestinians ICT professionals visited Cisco Israel. They were introduced to various departments in the company, including the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) department. The visit provided Palestinians with opportunities to engage Israelis in a professional environment. Cisco Israel staff, in turn, were exposed to a diversity of highly skilled Palestinians.



These activities allowed Impact through Technology to introduce professionals from Israel and Palestine to one another, their business interests and their priorities. Participants discovered that, in many cases, one firm's needs fit appropriately with the expertise of another.

Under current political conditions, Mercy Corps' role as a third party actor remains critical. The organization applies for permits for Palestinian participation at events in Israel and acts as the interface with event organizers. Without such support, Palestinians would not be able to take part in the events. Through these activities and events, the program introduces IT professionals from Israel and Palestine to one another. This relationship building will pave the way for more opportunities and participation from West Bank IT professionals in cutting edge technology events.



Following the event, many participants asked about upcoming activities and the possibility of similar events in the future. The positive feedback confirmed the need for Mercy Corps to host similar events at other Israeli companies in order to bring Palestinians to visit companies and meet with fellow entrepreneurs and developers. These types of visits and conversations lead to new joint ventures,



business opportunities, apprenticeship placements and ultimately build professional respect between the Israeli and Palestinian tech communities.

Through visits and networking events, the program introduced ICT professionals from Israel and West Bank to one another. The professionals were exposed to their counterpart's business interests and work experience in technology. Palestinian participants were given the chance to build relationships with Israeli professionals with the possibility that the networking may result in joint ventures and business deals that promote cooperation between one another.

Activity 3.3: Support Joint Business Ventures

Impact through Technology supported four cross-border joint projects and business ventures between Palestinian companies and Israeli ICT companies.

Since the beginning of Impact through Technology, companies submitted applications to receive support for their joint projects/business ventures. These companies included **Jaffa.Net** Company, **ASAL Technology** Company, **Art Technologies** and **2i Software Development** Company. All companies are located in Ramallah. Following the approval of the first year's implementation plan in December 2011, Mercy Corps prepared a joint-venture project application form with application guidelines, criteria for applying, and description and goals of the activity. Mercy Corps asked for formal requests from firms and entrepreneurs to receive support of their joint venture.

Mercy Corps worked hard to recruit possible company candidates for the joint projects/business ventures activity. Due to the political atmosphere on the ground and the internal resistance that IT companies are facing, Mercy Corps used a low profile targeted approach. Mercy Corps conducted meetings with Palestinian ICT companies who have current or future projects with Israeli ICT companies and are willing to conduct cross-border business.

Mercy Corps evaluated applications and received vetting approvals for all companies. Mercy Corps offered support to four joint ventures. Mercy Corps provided much-needed IT equipment and financial support to these companies. The support was tailored to the needs and use of each joint-venture project to get them running successfully and with the greatest potential for sustainability.

Summary of joint-venture businesses supported:

(1) Art Technologies Software Company, located in Ramallah, partnered on a joint project with **S.P. Data Ltd**, the sole master reseller of *QlikView*, located in Or- Yehuda. S.P. Data Ltd and Art Technologies explored this partnership through a six-month pilot project that started on January 1, 2013. At the end of June 2013 Art Technologies closed a new deal for another 6 months for the QlikView system implementation, and the partnership between the Palestinian and Israeli companies was extended. Impact through Technology supported Art Technologies as part of a joint venture QlikView project. The partnership between the two companies lacked enough staff support. To resolve the difficulties caused by inadequate staffing, Impact through Technology offered financial support (\$10,500 USD) towards staff salaries to get the joint venture running successfully. As a result of work on the QlikView joint project Art Technologies added UNIPAL company as a new customer.

The joint venture promoted QlikView in Palestinian areas by presenting the product and creating a number of proof-of-concept models. Art Technologies approached Mercy Corps for support to cover part of the investment. The joint project is expected to expand and create new opportunities for both companies by the end of 2013.

One of Art Technologies' key business lines is the provision and implementation of intelligent business solutions. Art Technologies cooperated with S.P Data to receive licenses and technical support that ensured its clients optimal implementation of its products through a regular maintenance agreement.

The core idea of the project proposal was to conduct a series of “seeing-is-believing” sessions to the most probable clients. A dedicated Art Technologies team in Ramallah in cooperation with the Israeli team:

- Reviewed the client’s business scenarios
- Selected one scenario for the “seeing-is-believing” session
- Defined the scope of required data
- Designed the required views and reports on QlikView
- Presented the outcome to the client

(2) ASAL Technologies and Top Group Solution Source Ltd promoted and sold E-learning Solutions from its main offices in Ramallah. ASAL Technologies, a registered Palestinian company established under Palestinian law, is a software and IT services outsourcing company in Ramallah, founded in 2000. Today, ASAL is the largest ICT Company in the West Bank and a premiere software solutions provider. Top Group Solution Source Ltd is a registered Israeli company, established under Israeli law, with its principle offices in Nazareth.

ASAL Technologies and Top Group solution Source Ltd developed a joint venture in Israel in March 2012 with the support of Impact for Technology’s joint venture program. Impact through Technology encouraged the creation and supported the success of the business partnership. . The joint venture, titled ASAL EDU, created full time jobs for 5 Palestinians (4 males & 1 female).

Impact through Technology provided ASAL with IT equipment needed to reinforce and support the joint venture, costing \$21,200 USD (5 laptops, 5 PCs, 1 server). The PCs and laptops facilitated the staff’s presentations and demonstrations to the Israeli partner. They also enabled the staff to work remotely. The new server solved technical issues and managed the automation process including security and back up. Moreover, the program also strengthened relationships between the two parties and helped company staff share their ideas. It helped staff invest in their ideas, resulting in the creation and marketing of more modern products that serve several sectors, in addition to creating new jobs.

The target market was government, universities, schools or any other educational institution. ASAL used their relationship with the Ministry of Education to introduce the new system in schools. In its first stage, this venture project promoted e-learning solutions to Palestinian and Jordanian schools and universities. ASAL marketed Top Group Solution Source Ltd products and conducted customization and product testing when required. Also in the first stage, ASAL assessed the potential of the services provided by Top Group Solution Source Ltd in the local and Jordanian markets. ASAL plans to explore additional Arab markets during stage two which is planned to start at the end of 2013. ASAL work on this joint project strengthened their reach into the educational software solutions, and as a result helped secure ASAL a new partnership with the University of the People (UoPeople) NGO. UoPeople was founded in 2009 by an Israeli entrepreneur Shai Reshef. UoPeople is a non-profit, tuition-free, degree-granting online academic institution dedicated to opening access to higher education globally for all qualified individuals, despite financial, geographic or societal constraints (<http://www.uopeople.org/groups/partners/asaltech>).

(3) Jaffa.Net is engaged in providing outsourcing services to **Intel Israel** in Jerusalem to develop and validate Intel Small Business Advantage (SBA). SBA is management software provided by Intel to all PC manufacturers such as Lenovo, HP, Dell, Acer, etc. SBA's main functions focus on properly managing the PC to do the following actions: USB blocking, backup and restore, security software monitoring, such as anti-virus, etc.

Jaffa.Net requested support to extend their communication infrastructure so that the company can conduct work demanding collaboration with Intel Israel more effectively. To respond to Jaffa.Net's need for closer cooperation, Mercy Corps selected Jaffa.Net as a recipient of technical and financial assistance under USAID-funded Impact through Technology program, which aimed to promote cooperative economic partnerships between Israeli and Palestinian private sector actors in the ICT sector.

Specific support provided to the joint venture partnership included provisioning a video conference system, costing \$21,700 USD, to be used by Jaffa.Net and Intel Israel. Video conferences were needed to enhance the communication between both teams. Video conferencing allowed both teams to implement the Intel Small Business Advantage project and conduct daily communication. Project tasks and responsibilities were run at Jaffa.Net with daily meetings and online collaboration with the development team at Intel-Israel. With an advanced video conference system, Jaffa.Net was able to be in much better position to support the project with Intel.

The video conferencing was installed at Jaffa.Net facilities in Ramallah and Intel facilities in West Jerusalem. Intel and Jaffa.Net used the video conferencing system to meet with all of the project team members. Before the companies had video conferencing, most meetings were conducted either by going to Intel or via a phone line (voice only). With video conferencing now in place, both the Palestinian and Israeli companies are able to conduct the meetings live. Jaffa.Net ran its tasks and responsibilities, and conducted daily meetings and online collaboration with the development team at Intel Israel using the new conferencing technology. Jaffa.Net and Intel put a significant emphasis on the Jaffa.Net internet infrastructure and communication capabilities.

This investment in new conferencing technology opened the door for Intel to expand their Jaffa.Net engagement. An important advantage of installing video conferencing was that Intel team members, especially managers, felt that Jaffa.Net was committed to the partnership and doing everything possible to improve their relationship with Intel.

Jaffa.NET started with the one Intel project. At the end of this project they were working with Intel-Israel on three ICT projects. As a result of the improved partnership between the two companies, 10 new full time jobs were created at Jaff.NET, three of which are women.

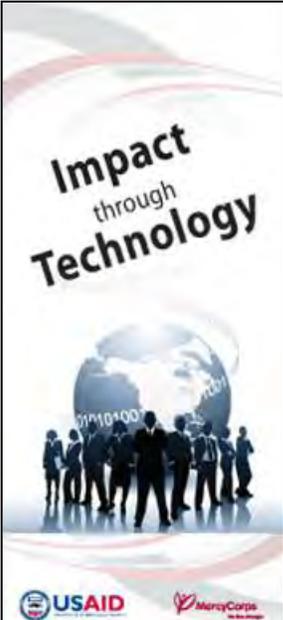
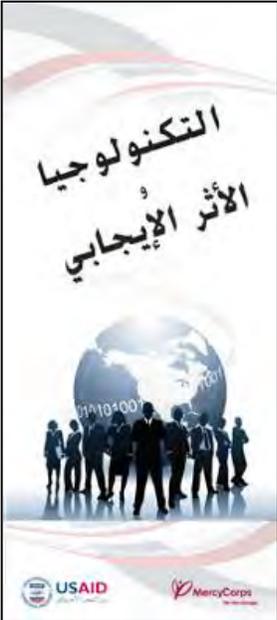
(4) 2i Software Development Company started a joint venture with **Brio Software** company in Israel. The initial phase was a six-month pilot of this project (Oct-March) project where the companies' management and developers worked together.

The partnership lacked enough staff support. Impact through technology offered financial support (\$11,900) towards staff salaries to get the joint venture running successfully.

This project aimed to create a joint venture between Brio and 2i Software where both companies work together to deliver Israeli and international projects through a collaborative approach. 2i and Brio Software unified their code standards, methodology documentation, communications and work culture.

The two companies focused on web applications development, with plans to expand into custom software and phone applications development. 2i aims had a core team of three developers working directly with Brio Software staff to collaboratively deliver projects tasks. The companies' managers and team leaders held meetings to understand and collaborate on methodologies of project delivery. These activities took place in both companies' offices. Support for the joint venture ended in June 2013 when Impact through Technology ended. Unfortunately, the joint project came to an end in September 2013 due to lack of financial support. As the case for every start-up, starting a new business involves some uncertainty and taking a few risks. Yet, in the face of this seemingly unpredictable business world, the project provided Israelis and Palestinians with the means and the motivation to work together. The ability of technology to bridge physical divides and allow people to collaborate on mutual areas of interest has resulted in the fostering of trust and coordination of efforts.

VISIBILITY AND OUTREACH



Program banners in both languages (Arabic and English) were used in multiple events, workshops, and trainings. The program designed several banners with USAID logo in Arabic and English and used Arabic banners for Arabic speaking audience.





Any activity conducted jointly by project and other donor or local organizations was promoted and presented with prominent positioning of the USAID Identity. All program-related recipient publicity included the USAID identity, along with the Mercy Corps logo.



The program also printed promotional pack bags (with USAID and MC logos) that were distributed to Palestinian and Israeli youth participants at the Start up weekend event in Nazareth and other selected trainings and workshops.



Some Photos from the joint Social media training at the Hebrew university in Jerusalem in July 2012.

The program also printed promotional canvas bags (with USAID and MC logos) that were distributed to Palestinian and Israeli youth participants at the social media training that took place in July 2012.

Any activity conducted jointly by project and other donor or local organizations was promoted and presented with prominent positioning of the USAID Identity. All program-related recipient publicity included the USAID identity, along with the Mercy Corps logo.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Administration

Mercy Corps submitted all quarterly and annual performance reports on time. The reports summarized the outcomes of the program activities during a given reporting period, reported any program accomplishments or progress towards results, compared those results to the planned tasks in the Annual Implementation Plan and discussed any potential constraints.

Over the course of the first year:

Mercy Corps worked to finalize key documents and approve them in coordination with USAID West Bank/Gaza mission. Such documents included the Performance Monitoring Plan, the detailed implementation plan, and strategy for the first year of the program.

Mercy Corps met with Impact through Technology AOR from USAID to explain and review Mercy Corps' data collection forms, indicators definitions, data collection procedures and verification tools. The meeting focused ways to apply the data quality standards, reviewed data collection and maintenance procedures and documentation for systems, activities and events. Following the meeting, Mercy Corps submitted the Data Quality Assessment (DQA) documents to USAID. These documents included: Data Quality Assessment worksheet, DQA Matrix on data collection and validation and protocols and Methodology procedures for conducting and documenting program activities (training, events, etc.). Mercy Corps staff has worked to ensure:

- Data quality standards of validity, reliability, precision, integrity and timeliness are met.
- Written procedures are applied consistently in data collection, analysis and reporting.
- Data collection relies on methods that address and minimize sampling/non-sampling errors.
- Data is collected by qualified personnel who are properly supervised.
- Quality assurance mechanisms and safeguards are in place and being used.
- Source documents are maintained and readily available.

Over the course of the second year:

Mercy Corps worked to finalize key documents and approve them in coordination with USAID West Bank/Gaza's mission. Such documents include the detailed implementation plan for the second year (Oct 2012 to March 2013) and the Program Annual Report for fiscal year one (October 2011 to September 2012).

On February 4th, 2013 Mercy Corps submitted a request and justification for a three month (April-June 2013) to USAID for a no-cost extension to complete all program related activities for the cooperative agreement listed above. Time beyond the original expiration date was required to ensure adequate

completion of the originally approved project activities and scope of work. On March 29th, three days before the program's expected end date, USAID sent the modification of assistant approval letter (Cooperative agreement amendment) to extend the program until end of June 2013.

Compliance

Mercy Corps has a robust system in place to ensure compliance with USAID regulations, specifically Mission Order 21. Mercy Corps ensured compliance with USAID regulations in all activities.

Mercy Corps' key program staff working on the Impact through Technology Program attended the following training workshops organized by the USAID from **October 2011 to June 2013**:

1. "Participant Training" workshop
 - Training and review for USAID implementing partners on policies and procedures for conducting USAID-funded training programs.
2. Data Quality Assessment (DQA) process workshop (ADS 203.3.8.3)
 - Overview meeting to complete the mandatory DQA.
 - Training to explain the requirements as well as process of conducting the DQA.
3. USAID Outreach Meeting
 - USAID Outreach and Communications team discussed challenges facing USAID projects and USAID, how we can all cope with those challenges and what communications and outreach messages, channels, tools and media are most appropriate under the present circumstances.
4. Mandatory GEO-MIS Training
 - Introduction to Geo-MIS: system overview, menus, layers, maps and usage.
 - Special emphasis on the PMP Matrix.
 - Reporting and usage.
 - Goals and achievements content, OP. DQA.
 - Basic concepts related to activities in the system and standard definitions.
5. Post Award workshop
 - Introduction to the Office of Contract Management.
 - Implementation plan discussion.
 - Technical reporting requirements.
 - Geographic Management Information System (Geo-MIS)
 - Public outreach
6. USAID-Mission Order 21 training for new CMMs and sub-awards reporting.
7. CMM Partners Retreat: CMM forward, "Enhancing local partners' capacity to prevent, manage and mitigate conflict"
8. TraiNet presentation and data entry training
9. PMP - Performance Monitoring Plan training - Simplified logical framework for CMM partners.
10. CMM partner meeting/workshop in Tel-Aviv.

- Sharing challenges, anti-normalization, recent war in Gaza, etc., how does it affect CMM programs?
 - New compliance protocols.
 - Planning future CMM programs.
11. Mandatory Vetting Training
- Mission Order 21 training.
 - Submitting vetting requests.
 - Submitting sub-award reports.
12. Training session on the new GeoMIS
- Overview of the new system with concentration on new changes and requirements.

Human Resources Management

Mission Director Aleksandar Milutonovic, led Mercy Corps' Impact through Technology until the end of February 2013. In February, Mr. Stuart Willcuts replaced Mr. Milutinovic when he left Mercy Corps. The mission director has overall responsibility for successful implementation of the Impact through Technology program, including oversight of activities. Program Manager Mahmoud Abu Rumeileh, supported the mission director, managed the program's implementation and ensured sound fiscal management of programs, including oversight of approved budgeting, preparation of donor reports and oversight of contracts. Program Coordinator Shorooq Shabillo, supported the program manager. Finance Manager Tammam Shahwan provided financial management and was responsible for compiling and submitting all financial reporting to donor and to Mercy Corps Headquarters.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Given the current political context, cooperation and partnerships between Palestinians and Israelis are not easy to develop. Some individuals and groups expressed hesitation and resistance to participating in some elements of the program, particularly those that require cross-border travel and inter-ethnic interaction. During the 21-month duration of the program, the Palestinian Authority submitted a bid for UN recognition of statehood. During the same span, the 2012 Operation "Pillar of Defense" broke out. These events created a tense atmosphere that may have impacted participants' willingness and affected some planned activities.

From the beginning, the primary focus of the program has been to bring together Israeli and Palestinian participants in positive action through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In the past year, the program experienced several challenging events that have forced Mercy Corps to change some of its operations. In early January 2012, a Hackathon workshop event, scheduled to take place in Beit Jala, was postponed due to direct pressure and threats. Many participants received calls from a West Bank youth group telling them it would be "very problematic" if they were to take part in the event. Talithakumi Hotel in Beit Jala was directly threatened and had to cancel reservations for the workshop. These events represented a significant turning point for the program. The Mercy Corps team significantly reduced its operational visibility and contacted participants and companies directly. Over the last year, Mercy Corps has seen growing influence of the boycott movements against Israel.

Following the postponement of the Hackathon event in early January 2012, the program faced hesitation from some NGOs to participate in the social media joint training for grassroots NGOs. Mercy Corps decided to keep a low profile, especially when the program and the program name were under attack. Mercy Corps worked patiently to recruit the NGOs and facilitate their training. After a lot of hard work and mitigation by Mercy Corps, 8 of the 10 NGOs agreed to participate in the joint training. However, the Coalition of Women for Peace and the Arab Education Institute declined invitations. These organizations were hesitant to participate in, what they considered, "normalization" programming funded by the US Government. This was a trend that continued to impact other program activities as well.

Since the Hackathon event in January 2012, Mercy Corps has faced significant opposition and reluctance from potential participants and organizations. Local media and The Technologist Magazine featured the old name of the program and gave Mercy Corps and the program negative publicity. The Technologist Magazine published an article along with an online voting poll. The poll asked whether the public saw the Hackathon workshop as a "normalization" event. The Technologist did not inform Mercy Corps about the article, failed to represent Mercy Corps' perspective and did not ask for permission to use the Mercy Corps logo in their magazine.

Technology for Peace, the original name of the program that brought controversy, also caused problems. The name caused unnecessary obstacles and implementation delays. Although everyone wants peace, due to current political atmosphere, the word "peace" has a very negative meaning for Palestinians. This negative perception made it hard to convey the program message and recruit participants. Various potential participants and groups were hesitant to participate in our activities due to the program name. The controversial program name posed security concerns and led to the delayed

implementation of activities on the ground in the West Bank. In March 2012, six months after program started, USAID agreed to change the program's name to Impact through Technology following Mercy Corps' request.

Cooperation and partnerships between Palestinians and Israelis in this context is not easy. Mercy Corps encountered some hesitation and resistance, from individuals and groups to participate in elements of the program, particularly those that require cross-border travel and inter-ethnic interaction. The atmosphere following the Palestinian Authority bid for UN recognition of statehood have impacted this willingness and affected some planned activities. The negativity around the Hackathon event created ripple effect that continues to affect the program to this day. These events caused Mercy Corps to ask for a time extension to the 18 month program.

In addition, Operation "Pillar of Defense" in Gaza and Tel-Aviv in Nov 2012, forced Mercy Corps to halt activities until the violence subsided, causing further delays to the schedule for joint activities. Even though the Gaza situation lasted eight days, the program still feels its aftershocks. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict, spikes in political events, UN resolution conflicts, wars and anti-normalization movements affect our preparation and recruitment long after the events are finished.

The delays caused by the uncertainty of the program extension and subsequent vetting delays have hindered Mercy Corps' achievement of the intended schedule and results. Mercy Corps could not enter into contracts or sign agreements beyond March 2013, until the receipt of the approval letter from USAID on March 29th 2013.

Preparations for some training events proved to be challenging due to USAID's vetting requirements. USAID asked Mercy Corps resubmit the vetting requests for the Peres Center for Peace and MEET in December 2011, as part of a re-vetting exercise. USAID asked Mercy Corps to ensure that services do not start prior to obtaining the re-vetting results. The unexpected circumstances of re-vetting impacted some program implementation and caused unforeseen delays, especially with the following activities: advocacy, digital and social media training, joint technology training, the internship program and the joint networking events.

Mercy Corps receives many applications from Palestinians in the West Bank to attend these events (see activity 3.2). However, some participants apply but cannot take leave from their work due to the permitting process for Palestinians from the West Bank to enter Israel. Israeli authorities issue permits only one or two days before the requested date, regardless of the submission date of the permit request.

Measuring certain outcomes and prescription surveys is a persistent challenge. Many participants are reluctant to discuss politically sensitive topics, such as trust and perceptions of the other. Several participants are also reticent to share information about ongoing business partnership negotiations.

In spite of all the above-mentioned factors, Impact through Technology has been able to achieve remarkable success toward changing the lives of many people. We have been able to help Palestinians and Israelis come together in the technology world.

Past experience has taught us at Mercy Corps lessons about how to best manage and avoid challenges. This program faced unpredictable political and logistic issues within the West Bank and Israel. Mercy Corps kept USAID apprised of all changes and unplanned delays related to activity implementation, and adjusted plans and priorities accordingly.