

KinderUSA NEWS

KIDS IN NEED OF DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND RELIEF

Academic excellence in Dheisheh Refugee Camp

While there is a paucity of research on the subject, the relationship between the occupation of the Palestinian territories and academic performance among children and youth has shown a definitive decline in scholastic achievement and therefore a need for intervention both at the individual and family level. With our partner in Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Ibdaa has been addressing this need to over 600 children through tutoring, mentoring and psychosocial support services.

Students work in small groups with educational specialists who utilize innovative instructional methods tailored to the individual needs of each participant in the subjects such as Arabic, English and mathematics.



Once the child goes home, parents are trained in child development in areas such as

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BOARD

Sadly, Palestinian children continue to face a denial of their basic human rights to food, education, and shelter and are forced to depend upon international aid for all aspects of their daily life. The 22 day military operation in Gaza significantly worsened an already wretched life brought about as a result of the blockade, now in its third year.

More than 20,000 people, the majority of whom are children, remain displaced in Gaza as a consequence of Israeli military operations from December – January 2009. With the arrival of the freezing wet winter months, children are the most vulnerable as their little bodies cannot endure the harshness of the

weather. Their lives are threatened even more by the ongoing deterioration in basic services and continual plunge into abject poverty.

“We have run out of words to describe how bad it is here”, said John Ging, director of operations for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. “We have 80% unemployment, an economy at subsistence level, infrastructure destroyed, but even worse than the humanitarian plight is the destruction of civil society.” We at KinderUSA pledge our continued support with the hope that we can expand our services in Gaza while remaining committed to assisting vulnerable Palestinian children in the West Bank and in refugee camps in Lebanon.

Eid celebration in Nahr al-Bared

For a second year, Kinder USA in partnership with the Palestinian Children and Youth Center in Nahr al-Bared organized Eid celebrations, two days in September and two days in October, for the camps children. A special segment of this project was the inclusion of the camps youth and young adults who performed plays, music, dressed as clowns, and handed out sweets and toys. For a nominal amount of funds, children were able to observe the Muslim



holiday as many children did across the globe!

A farmer in Gaza

On the southeast edge of Gaza city, there is a small isolated area in which the population is composed primarily of small farmers who live on the lands they inherited from their ancestors. The area is a frequent target from nearby Israeli military posts, adding to the already existing wretchedness and poverty of this small village.

Khaled, one of the farmers in the village of Johr El Dek lives in this area and uses his land to not only feed his 16 member family, 2 of whom have special needs, but also as his livelihood. Khaled, along with several members within this farming community had their land razed last year and is prohibited from accessing the area under the pretext that it is too close to the ‘security fence’.

During the 22 day assault of December – January 2009, Khaled’s home, along with everything inside, was demolished rendering the family homeless. With no money to rent shelter, Khaled built a room next to the heap of concrete and mangled steel rods out of tin to protect from his family from the outdoor elements. Khaled and his family, like numerous Gazan’s are living in extreme conditions, using agricul-



tural leftovers he collects to light a fire for cooking as well as heating.

As part of Kinder USA’s Ramadan farmer’s project in partnership with PARC, Khaled and his family were identified and provided with fresh vegetables and poultry to feed his family through the remainder of the year. Removing the burden of searching for food, Khaled now works on rebuilding his home and cultivating his land once again.



Bringing shoes to the children in Nahr al-Bared

Too often we forget that the plight of the Palestinian's is not only in the West Bank and Gaza, but very importantly in the refugee camps in Lebanon where living a life with dignity is often times elusive. The children living in the camp are exposed at an early age to the hardships faced by their parents which in turn affects them directly

As the winter approaches, with snow capped mountains in the distance, most of the children run through the muddy passage ways in the camp wearing only socks and plastic slippers. Kinder USA chairwoman Dr. Laila Al-Marayati accompanied by the executive director distributed over 2300 pairs of shoes to children



aged 7-12. Shopping at distribution centers in the camps with their vouchers, children were able to choose the shoes of their choice while ensuring a proper fit and all in time for Eid!



Farmers Project in Gaza

During the month of Ramadan, Kinder USA partnered with The Agricultural Association (PARC) in Gaza to provide fresh vegetables, fruit, poultry and dairy products reaching over 900 families consisting of 8-13 family members. Many of the farmers and families who benefitted from the project were victims of the 22 day conflict that took place in Gaza December-January 2009.

Over the years, local farmers in Gaza have witnessed their livelihoods disintegrate either through razing of their lands or as a consequence of the now in its third year blockade. Through our farmers project, farmers were able to cultivate their ancestral lands while women's cooperatives composed of female heads of household produced cheese, maftool (a traditional dish made of burghal),



pressed dates, thyme, and honey for distribution. Families shopped with vouchers, each worth \$110 purchasing enough foods to carry them through the month and beyond. Thank you to all who contributed to this project which continues to the close of the year.

Dallas Peace Center Awards Kinder USA

In recognition of our work in Gaza during the 22 day military offensive, Dallas Peace Center awarded Kinder USA 'Peace Maker of the Year'. Accepting the award, the executive director noted that recognition is due to our donors who came forward from across the nation to support these innocent beings who were trapped with no refuge. "No parent could sit and watch on their television and not see their own child. What happened in Gaza was tragic, and remains unacceptable." Thank you to all who made this possible!!

A Farmer in Yatta

Mahmoud struggles to eek out a livelihood for his wife and seven children, two of whom have special needs, in the village of Yatta. Since 2004 Mahmoud and his family have been recipients of our Ramadan program, one month out of the year that he knows his family will be fed. Previously employed as a day laborer in Israel prior to closure in 2000, Mahmoud has been unable to find employment neither in the nearby city of Hebron nor in Yatta.

As part of our farmers project, Mahmoud was able to start a small chicken farm employing the

help of the eager whole family. Both his eggs and chickens are distributed in the Charitable Consumer Market for our beneficiaries who shopped with vouchers for the freshest locally produced items during the month of Ramadan. Through the sale of his eggs and poultry, Mahmoud is now able to expand his farm while feeling a sense of personal worth. The family still receives dry goods from the World Food Program, but is able to care for their two special needs children while ensuring a daily meal on the table.

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parenting, study habits, and how to support children who exhibit symptoms of psychological stress and or trauma. This is our third year supporting this important

project. At Kinder USA, we believe that the continuity and growth of Palestinian Civil Society largely depends on quality education of its youth.



Farmers Project in the West Bank

With the scarcity of water and the deluge of produce coming from nearby Israeli settlements where farming is government subsidized, implementing our farmers project in Yatta with the goal of providing locally produced agricultural presented quite a challenge for our partners in the region. Farmers began planting in early March and April to make the most of the wet season and to insure locally produced crops would be ready for Ramadan.

Farmers positioned their produce and dairy at the Charitable Consumer Market where families shopped with vouchers choosing all locally produced items to prepare the family meals. Nearly 1000 families benefitted from the project and were chosen based upon need each receiving \$100 voucher. Most all of the families consisted of 9 or more members,



many with special needs children and headed by women.

With the closure of the zakat committees in the West Bank, hundreds of families in Yatta lost their only source of support thereby increasing the number of families our project targeted. Sadly, due to limited funds, Kinder USA had to turn away many who were in need.





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