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Fact Sheet

POSITIVE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

2021-2026 • $25 million • 50,000 youth • Partners: Mercy Corps, International Youth Fund (IYF), the Palestinian Charity for Youth Economic Empowerment (CYEE), Save Youth Future Society (SYF), Hebron Youth Development Resources Center (YDRC), Al-Nayzak, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and Jabal Al Nar Club (YDRC Jabal Al Nar).

Background

Youth in Palestine, who make up nearly 22% of the Palestinian population, based on a survey conducted by Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2021, are living in one of the world's most challenging contexts for equitable development and peaceful change, and facing numerous challenges that affect their economic, social, and health wellbeing.
This is due to an absence of a stable and safe economic, social, and political environment, limited job opportunities, lack of an education system to provide them with the labor market needed skills and knowledge, and limited opportunities for positive and impactful civic engagement.

Furthermore, PCBS survey on labour force revealed that Palestinian youth are experiencing an increasing unemployment rate of 53% in 2021, decreasing interest in higher education opportunities, and dwindling hopes for their futures.

In partnership with international implementing partners, national, and local organizations,

USAID West Bank/Gaza works to ensure vulnerable youth have access to knowledge, skills, attitudes, and networks they can use to strengthen their engagement and help build a stable, secure, and self-reliant future.

Activity Overview

Mercy Corps, in partnership with the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and national organizations– the Palestinian Charity for Youth Economic Empowerment (CYEE), Save Youth Future Society (SYF), Hebron Youth Development Resources Center (YDRC), The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and AlNayzak will implement the USAID West Bank/Gaza-funded Positive Youth Engagement (PYE) activity from September 24, 2021 to September 23, 2026.

To achieve this objective, PYE will support 50,000 youth (10–19-year-olds) with a transformational learning journey that includes a package of life skills training activities, ways to design innovative community-based initiatives and projects that would position them positively within their communities, families, and among their peers. Further, PYE will provide them with abilities and skills to refer them to advanced educational opportunities and/or access to the labor market as employees and social entrepreneurs. To meet the goal of transforming vulnerable youth into productive, connected, and contributing citizens, Mercy Corps, IYF, CYEE, SYFS, and Hebron YDRC will deliver a three-pronged, mutually reinforcing program segmented by gender and age across the targeted communities. This will include:

I. Core programming that supports, protects, prepares, and engages youth in safe spaces located within a strong network of community-based organizations (CBOs). The Core programming includes:

- Passport to Success (PTS) - a suite of products and services proven to foster in-demand life skills and offers solutions to global challenges and opportunity barriers.
- I:Serve - a training program developed by IYF to provide youth with opportunities to engage in civic leadership through the inception, planning and implementation of community service projects, and equips organizations with tools to guide and mentor young people.
- Psychosocial Support - Profound Stress Attunement (PSA) - an approach that provides youth with a holistic platform to develop empathy and resilience in response to their needs, and supports measurable psychosocial improvement, moreover, it supports youth to strengthen their self-esteem and efficacy and build strong ties to their families and communities.

II. Youth Pathways: Tailored packages of activities, resources, and referrals that will set youth on individually-selected pathways building on the core curriculum to increase opportunities for youth to effectively contribute to social and economic development. An adolescent may dream

of becoming an entrepreneur, engaging in local service, going to university or back to school, or finding safe and dignified employment. Youth Pathways will consist of customized packages with curricula or referrals that support these goals, such as being linked with a startup accelerator to launch a business, shadowing a Youth Council, interning with a local safe space, visiting university campuses, or receiving vocational training. For older youth, there will be a robust focus on and linkages to concrete economic opportunities, including via links to the economic programs of USAID and other donors. Building off what they learn in the core package, a work readiness-focused pathway could include enrolling in a TVET program, completing a coding class, or preparing to apply to university. The pathways will provide support for basic needs, help youth feel protected and healthy, prepare young people to access opportunities, and engage youth in beneficial interactions with family and community members.
As such, PYE will provide the following transitional pathways as part of its activity:

1. **Exploring my Future Path:** Guidance, orientation, and support to young people on future education and career options to inform formal and non-formal education choices and pathways.
2. **Staying in School:** Facilitation of subject-specific homework classes and clubs to enhance learning and support retention of young people in school.
3. **Innovations:** Specialized learning and training opportunities based on youth interests and personal plans and on partner and available outsources expertise.
4. **Giving Back to My Community:** Youth-led planning, implementation and follow-up of initiatives and projects aimed at benefiting the community according to pre-defined themes and priorities.
5. **My Social Business:** Youth-led and mentor-supported business start-up with a positive impact on community and society.
6. **Demand Driven Work:** Customized skill development and mentoring in response to pre-identified direct job requirements and including job retention follow-up and support.

III. Opportunities for sustained community engagement and leadership through youth-led pathways and councils, community and social media advocacy campaigns, and mentorship of subsequent cohorts as part of sustainable community youth networks. Youth will play a key role in the design and implementation of the activity as part of related technical teams and committees and through the youth councils and safe spaces (youth hubs) that will be established under targeted community-based organizations (CBOs).

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

- Youth gain and apply relevant skills for improved education, economic, and social outcomes.
- Marginalized and vulnerable youth have improved psycho-social wellbeing.
- Marginalized and vulnerable youth positively engage in community activities.
- Marginalized and vulnerable youth feel supported by positive enabling environment.

ACTIVITY BENEFICIARIES

- Younger youth between the ages of 10-14 and older youth between the ages of 15-19.
- Parents and caretakers. Interventions will be designed to directly address the parents as to secure their support and their endorsement of their child's participation in the program.
- Trainers and Master Trainers, who will deliver the core curriculum topics to youth mentors and youth within each of the local partners
- Youth Trainers and Mentors, who will worked closely with the youth through our network of local partners and safe spaces.
- Community Based Organizations and Safe Spaces. Adolescent-Friendly safe spaces will be established within CBOs, YDRCs, and/or Youth Clubs depending on the community and developed and promoted to spark interest and establish trust in the community. PYE will build the organizational and programmatic capacity of the safe spaces throughout the duration of the program. Our approach is built off the lessons learned and tools developed under previous capacity building programs. This will increase sustainability of the safe spaces and the program components, by giving the safe spaces the tools they need to continue to implement these types of programs in the future. PYE team will work closely with 40 safe spaces categorized as the following:

- **Primary Safe Spaces:** This category will include small to medium size Community Based Organizations (CBO)s. These entities will receive institutional capacity building from the Activity, and will manage related PTS, I:Serve, and PSA learning activities as well as mentor youth to design and implement youth-led social innovation and social entrepreneurship initiatives.

- **Secondary Safe Spaces:** This category includes start-up CBOs. Support from PYE will be focused on establishing friendly avenues for youth to practice sports, organize training activities, and create learning hubs.

Key Achievements in Year 1 of Implementation

- 6,134 youth (60% female, 40% male) participated in PYE various interventions that support, protect, prepare, and engage youth in the PYE network of local partners and safe spaces.
- Youth participants designed, led, and implemented 19 small-scale initiatives under the pathways' thematic areas of educational and social engagement. 1,373 youth (67% females, 33% males) participated in these initiatives, which took place across the West Bank and Gaza, including Jenin, Tubas, Hebron, Ramallah and Al-Bireh, and Gaza City.
- 737 parents/caretakers participated in PYE activities mainly in the adult sessions on PSA.
- 20 safe spaces received assistance to improve institutional capacity and youth friendly services.

- 69 trainers participated in training of trainers (ToT) to enhance their capabilities in delivering PTS and I:Serve learning components. In addition, 42 trainers and mentors participated in PSA ToT to enhance their capabilities in providing psychosocial support to youth and parents/caretakers.
- 25 youth researchers were trained to co-lead data collection under the baseline assessment study and 3-6 months surveys and to provide support to the partners to capture real time data collection via CommCare.