

# PROJECT HOPE UPDATE

July 2006



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Unfortunately the humanitarian situation in Palestine has deteriorated immeasurably since the January election and the accompanying funding freeze by Western donors. This only served to further exacerbate the already crisis-level conditions. Since the beginning of the second Intifada, the Palestinian economy has become completely dependent on foreign aid. The funding freeze has affected all aspects of Palestinian life. Countless non-governmental organizations and government agencies were forced to either reduce or entirely halt their activities. Children and youth are always one of the most vulnerable groups in such situations. With at least two-thirds of the Palestinian population under the age of twenty-five, the situation has become that much more acute.

### I. English & French

English as a Second Language remains our flagship program. We are also continuing to try to provide French courses whenever possible. As much as there is real educational value to these classes, at this time the psychological impact may be of much more value. The classes provide an opportunity for the child and youth participants to find a momentary escape from their difficult environment. As an example of this importance, Medicine Sans Frontiers in Nablus has, on occasion, referred trauma cases who have been under psychological supervision to Project Hope. The goal is to reintegrate them into society, including participation in our language classes.

### II. Pinhole Photography Project

The pinhole camera is a primitive camera that lacks any mechanism or lens. It is a simple black box with a tiny hole and silver photographic paper inside. Exposure periods can vary from seconds, to minutes, to hours. Each picture represents a participants' choice of place and person, and a notion of identity. Each picture is the affirmation of a precise moment in time. The medium facilitates collective artistic creations within the framework of participative workshops. This medium is recognizable to everyone, everywhere in the world, including to fellow young people from difficult social classes. The faces and silhouettes seem to tell us "I am," "I am here," and "Here I am." With the strange feelings appropriate to the practice and reading of a portrait come the question of "who is watching whom?"



This project was set up by Bir Zeit University's "Institute of Community and Public Health." Project Hope assisted in implementing the project in Nablus by facilitating activities in the Refugee Camps, New Askar and Balata. In New Askar Camp 20 children participated, of mixed sex and ranging in age, 8 to 15. In Balata Camp 20 children participated, of mixed sex, aged 12 to 16.

### III. Tree Planting

Project Hope joined two other Palestinian NGOs to plant 200 trees at Nassaria Village on Thursday 30 March 2006, which is Palestinian "Land Day, ". This included 100 olive trees. The trees were donated by the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC). Project Hope contributed three international and three Palestinian volunteers.



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