

Project Hope Annual Report: 2016



Introduction

This report summarises the work of Project Hope, a youth-focused NGO whose work is focused upon socially marginalized and disadvantaged communities in Nablus, a city with around 170,000 inhabitants situated in the northern West Bank. Since its foundation in 2003, Project Hope has, with the active support of international volunteers, external supporters and the local community, worked to provide an eclectic range of activities, classes and events, recently introducing a vocational computer program alongside its consolidated Future Hopes program (English language, French language and Creative Activities),

Project Hope's progression and development as a community organisation has only been enabled by a sustained international contribution – it is only international volunteers who have us to expand our programs and reach out to broader sections of the local community. Over time, our work has evidenced a clear progression, developing to the point where, in 2015, our work enabled in excess of 15,000 participants to engage with educational, cultural and recreational activities and classes.

In working under hugely challenging circumstances, Project Hope has continually evidenced the ability to adjust, sustaining and building upon its status as the largest volunteer organisation of its kind in the West Bank while continuing to meet community needs and requirements. The knowledge and expertise of our local staff, in addition to our developed volunteer program, mean that we are well-placed to support our international volunteers, ensuring that their contribution has maximum impact. Although our output has expanded, we have remained true to the values and principles that originally animated our work, continuing to address need within the most disadvantaged and socially marginalized sections of the community within Nablus and the surrounding area.

This annual report initially outlines future plans and strategic priorities, documenting how Project Hope will progress and develop over the course of 2017. It then offers a statistical overview, providing basic quantitative insight into the different dimensions of Project Hope's work, such as core program provision and volunteer intake. The discussion then turns to significant recent innovations such as the Arabic Language School and the vocational computer program, both of which have contributed additional dimension to Project Hope's ongoing work. The importance of both stems from the fact that they bring additional dimensions work. The report then provides an overview of additional activities that our international volunteers have undertaken (that is, additional to their teaching responsibilities) before providing an overview of the ongoing contributions of our local volunteers.

Attention then engages the cultural dimensions of Project Hope's work, which provide an important complement to our educational and recreational activities and classes, being driven, in large part, by the continued commitment and engagement of Hakim Sabbah, our incumbent director. In the concluding phases of the report, reference is made to local and international actors, with specific acknowledgement of their respective contributions.

Future Plans/Strategic Priorities

Project Hope operates within an extremely uncertain and challenging donor environment, in which access to external resources is increasingly constricted. NGOs that are reliant upon external sources of funding and support are particularly vulnerable, being exposed to both wider political developments (such as the election of an extreme and unpredictable American administration) and shifting donor priorities (aid remains strongly political in character, being directed and orientated in furtherance of external priorities).

Past experience clearly reiterates that NGO actors with weak roots within the local community and high levels of external dependence will ultimately wither and expire. Local community actors that were formed at the initiative of external donors, or which were sustained by external funding or whose goals and strategies were formulated in relation to external agendas and priorities are particularly vulnerable to the force of changing circumstances. Our work has a clear advantage in this respect in that it is driven by a genuine commitment to local engagement and participation. All too often, NGOs and donors use the language of the 'local' while engaging in actions and practices that are governed by a very different mentality and orientation. In the worst of instances, the very meaning of 'community engagement' and 'local participation' is brought into question, becoming susceptible to justifiable challenge and contestation.

From our perspective, this suggests a number of key strategic priorities. Firstly, emphasis needs to be placed upon engaging with donors who are sympathetic to our work and who are committed to our values and principles. All too often 'chameleon' NGOs have compromised their initial vision and goals, adjusting so as to align themselves with donor priorities and goals. In order to offset this risk, we commit to remain true to our original values and principles. For the time being our key aim is consolidation – with a view to achieving this end, we will consolidate links with existing donors, enhance international and local relationships while strengthening program provision. Firefly International will have a crucial contribution to make, providing support and assistance while each of these consolidations are ongoing.

Our rootedness within the local community is one of our main assets in this respect. Project Hope originated within the local community, from the outset being clearly distinguished from sterile, artificial and lacking iterations of 'civil society' engagement. Its origins and subsequent development bear the clear imprint of Palestinian influence. Its executive leadership is Palestinian, its support staff are Palestinian and its goals and priorities are rooted within local community need. From the outset, the international dimension to Project Hope's work has been directed towards enhancing local capacities and capabilities. The Nablus Cultural Festival is a particularly good example in this respect, incorporating international influences into a vibrant and eclectic celebration of local culture.

In looking back upon our development, it is important to recognise that Project Hope has rapidly grown over a very short period of time. This in large part testament to our success as an organisation, in large part reflecting our ability to engage and meet local need. This expansion of core program output has been accompanied by additional initiatives, such as the vocational computer program, the Arabic Language School and the Nablus Cultural Festival. It is therefore imperative to take a step back and to reflect upon existing program provision with a view to improving and developing what is already there. A series of internal evaluations will therefore be directed towards our Future Hopes (English Language, French Language and Creative Arts) programs over the course of 2017.

This is particularly important because these programs were initially designed and drafted by our former director and other external staff. The local team has been primarily focused upon day-to-day implementation and this has sometimes resulted in a lack of oversight, something that has been only partially mitigated by the post hoc extension of external support. In envisaging that this responsibility will be shifted to the local level, we therefore propose to ultimately appoint a Palestinian program manager, who will be responsible for the Future Hopes program. In the short-term, we will rely upon international volunteers and to local staff to fill this gap. This improvement will ultimately be to the benefit of program implementation and oversight.

In keeping with the broad theme of consolidation, we will also work to build local relationships, both in the community here in Nablus and within the West Bank more generally. We already have established relations with an eclectic range of community centres, local schools and the local municipality. This establishes our credentials as a community organisation and can be said to be one of our main strengths, which we should be looking to build upon. The consolidation of existing ties and relationships will therefore be one of our guiding priorities over the course of

the coming year. Opportunities for new collaborative relationships will primarily be conceived and developed within the context of the Nablus Cultural Festival.

We have successfully secured funding in support of the computer program and a new iteration will be taught over the course of 2017, developing IT skills that benefit a range of proficiencies. We have also secured external funding in support of our core program provision – this will provide the stability that will enable a number of internal evaluations, that will be directed towards the question of how current provision can be improved. At the culmination of the year, administrative oversight and reporting will also be shifted to the local level, with local staff assuming responsibility in both respects.

Section One: Core Programs and Activities

2016 Statistics: Core Program Provision

Over the course of 2016 Project Hope continued to increase intake into its various programs, consolidating and building upon progress that has been made in previous years. A total of 15,781 participants engaged with a variety of subjects, with program provision being focused upon the poorest and most socially marginalized sections of the community here in Nablus and the surrounding area. Our work was frequently channeled through partner organisations, thereby further establishing our status as a community organisation by enhancing community capacities. Program intake exceeded our original aim, which had been to engage 1,000 participants per month.

Our volunteer intake was a crucial part of our program provision, with classes and activities being provided by an eclectic and diverse range of volunteers, who came from a variety of backgrounds and who were able to contribute diverse experiences and skill-sets to our work. Broadly speaking the taught material can be divided into languages (English, French and German), activities (painting, music and sports) and applied skills (computing, graphic design and CV writing). The volunteer program, which has been expanded and developed since our establishment in 2003 enabled us to adjust our volunteer intake in accordance with local demand, ensuring that our activities and classes reached out, further reinforcing our established status as a community organisation.

English remained our most popular subject, accounting for 47.38% of our intake. The total number of students engaged with our English classes increased to 7,478 – this represented a 34% increase on 2015's figure of 5,577. Increased enrolment also resulted in average class size rising to around 20 students. The overall number of French students declined to 9.4% of overall

student intake, a decrease that was offset by engagement with other languages (German, Italian, Spanish and Turkish) which increased from 1.6% (2015 figures) to 4.8% of overall intake. Over the course of the year, participants engaged with additional activities such as basketball and meditation.

During July and August, we scaled up our intake of international volunteers, with a view to supporting and sustaining our extremely popular summer camps. The summer camps are coordinated through partner organisations, being focused upon the city's four refugee camps (Al-Ein, Askar, Balata and Old Askar). In July and August, 3,117 children of various ages engaged with creative (music and art) and sport. Typically, five international and five local volunteers would help with the organisation and implementation of each summer camp.

Our core programs also continued to promote core values and principles – more than half of all participants (57%) were female, a fractional increase on 2015. Our emphasis upon youth engagement and participation was also reflected in the fact that children accounted for the vast majority (83%) of our enrolment, with adults (12%) and university students (4%) accounting for the remainder of our intake. Around 95% of classes were provided free of charge, being geographically dispersed across Nablus and the outlying area.

Arabic Language School

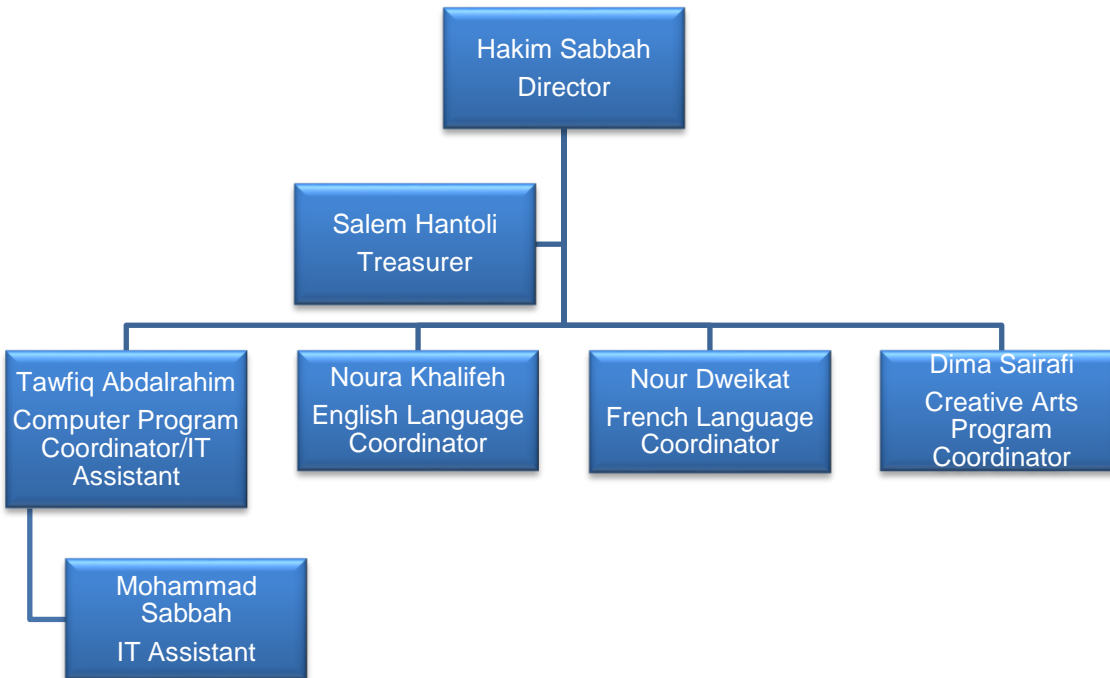
Project Hope's Arabic Language School entered its third year in 2016, with its student intake nearly doubling to engage 69 students from 16 different countries. The language school brings an added dimension to Project Hope's teaching provision. It provides students with one-on-one Arabic tuition, giving an insight into both traditional or colloquial Arabic while also providing first-hand experience of Palestine and Palestinian culture. The lessons provide an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange, also enabling cross-border friendships to be formed between teachers and students. Over the course of 2016, the school employed 15 local Palestinians as teachers, providing a unique opportunity to develop new skills and experiences. In addition, the school also provides an additional source of income that helps to fund Project Hope's other educational programs.

Arabic Language School: Student Enrolment (2016)

National Origin	Number of students
Australia	2
Austria	1
Belgium	2
Brazil	1
Canada	2
France	14
Germany	2
Holland	3
Italy	3
Poland	1
Scotland	1
Spain	2
Sweden	2
Switzerland	3
UK	15
United States	15

Section Two: Local Staff and International/Local Volunteers

Staff Organogram



International Volunteers

In 2016 Project Hope welcomed 126 international volunteers from 24 different countries. As in 2015 the majority of volunteers came from France, the UK and USA – this was attributable to the continued support of international partners within these countries (Amitié Lille-Naplouse, Firefly International and Wide Awake). International volunteers are recruited by our director, being selected upon the basis of their ability to contribute to our work and adjust to the demands of the local working context. We place a particular emphasis upon recruiting volunteers with previous teaching experience. While the energies of international volunteers are primarily focused upon their teaching responsibilities (lesson preparation and teaching), they also make a number of administrative and logistical contributions, and are sometimes directly engaged in the work of partner organisations.

International Volunteers (2016)

Country of Origin	Number of Volunteers
Australia	4
Austria	1
Belgium	3
Brazil	1
Canada	5
Chile	1
Denmark	4
France	15
Germany	6
Netherlands	5
Hungary	1
India	1
Ireland	2
Italy	3
Mexico	1
New Zealand	1
Singapore	1
Spain	4
Sweden	1
Switzerland	1
Turkey	1
UK	32
USA	32

Project Hope's intake of volunteers throughout the year was broadly consistent with 2015, reaching a peak in August. This is attributable to two factors: 1) Project Hope deliberately increases intake during this month, with a view to supporting our hugely popular summer camps; 2) participant availability is highest during this period (a considerable number of our international volunteers are students. Our ability to flexibly adjust our program provision in this manner is a major strength – this flexibility is an attribute both of a high number of international applications and the adaptability of our staff on the ground.

International Volunteer Intake: Monthly Overview (2016)

Month	Number of international volunteers
January	8
February	12
March	17
April	18
May	16
June	0 (Ramadan)
July	26
August	30
September	17
October	26
November	25
December	16

International Volunteers: Extra-Curricular Activities

During their time in Palestine, whether it is for one month, three months or longer, our international volunteers benefit engage with Palestinian culture and society. We actively facilitate this, organising tours of the Old City cooking lessons and Dabke classes. We also screen Palestinian films and organise tours of Sebastia, Bethlehem and Hebron. In helping our volunteers to integrate into wider society, we have organised football and basketball matches with local volunteers. We have also assisted international volunteers with painting murals at Ibn Qutaiba Boys School and Majdal Bani Fadil. With a view to improving knowledge of the Palestinian political situation, we have also arranged presentations by Professor Sa'ed Abu Hijle and members of the Palestinian parliament.

Local Volunteers

In carrying out their teaching duties, international volunteers will be assisted by a local counterpart, who will help with all aspects of their work. This support can take the form of lesson planning, logistical assistance and translation assistance. Most local volunteers tend to be university students – this further extends and builds upon our already strong links with An-Najah University, the largest university in the West Bank.

Local volunteers have extensive teaching experience, some of which has been attained by working with Project Hope. A number of local volunteers are also qualified teachers. Local

volunteers engage with our work for a number of reasons – these include the attainment of vocational experience, giving back to the community and attaining/developing English language skills. Coordinators are responsible for adjusting local volunteer intake, ensuring that it is adjusted to program demand.

Local Volunteer Intake: Monthly Overview

Month	Number of Local Volunteers
January	12
February	8
March	21
April	20
May	24
June	0 (Ramadan)
July	21
August	22
September	18
October	18
November	25
December	14

Section Three: Additional Events

Additional Events

In addition to its core educational program output, Project Hope is also engaged with a variety of cultural projects. This involves organizing, hosting and promoting events in cooperation with local and international partners. The Nablus Cultural Festival is an important recent innovation in Project Hope's work, meeting a clear need for cultural stimulation and engagement within the northern West Bank. PalFest is a cultural event that has been established for a longer period of time, being provided since 2008. It too helps to meet an ongoing demand for cultural engagement within the northern West Bank.

Nablus Cultural Festival

Project Hope and Nablus Municipality worked together to prepare and host the 2016 Nablus Festival for Culture and Arts, which followed on from the hugely successful festival which was held the previous year. The festival is particularly important because it is the only cultural event of its kind in the northern West Bank (cultural events more frequently tend to be centered upon Ramallah, Bethlehem or East Jerusalem). The festival was founded with the intention of bringing international and Palestinian artists together with a view to fostering cross-border collaboration and promoting Palestinian culture and heritage. It was held between 25th April and 2nd May, and hosted 39 Palestinian and international cultural events. Concerts featured performers from as far afield as Poland and Norway. The event, which was provided free-of-charge, also featured Palestinian theatrical performances, a German film festival, Palestinian and French film screenings, an Ou'd making workshop, book launches, a circus and a night dedicated to Nabulsi culture. Project Hope built upon its extensive experience of organising cultural events within Nablus. It chose acts, coordinated and supervised events and also provided information and support for performers and attendees. The festival attracted hundreds of attendees both from Palestine and abroad and provided many opportunities for further international cultural exchange.

Palestinian Festival of Literature (PalFest)

Project Hope has been involved with PalFest since 2013 and again helped to organise the event this year, helping to organise public readings in the garden of Nablus Public Library. Every year, our volunteers provide important logistical assistance in helping to prepare the event. PalFest is a travelling festival that was founded in 2008 with a view to supporting and

showcasing Palestinian culture through the organisation of free literary events in locations such as Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron. In the years subsequent to the initial festival, it has provided a framework for international and Palestinian writers to share readings, performances and discussions. In 2016, an estimated 900 attendees attended PalFest events across the West Bank and videos of the event were viewed over 55,000 times.

Section Four: International and Local Partners

International Partners

From its inception, Project Hope has possessed a strong international dimension – it was co-founded by a Canadian and its work is only made possible by the contribution and continued commitment of international volunteers. Our connections with international partners are also essential to our work. Prominent international supporters, who lend varying degrees and forms of support, include Firefly International UNRWA, Amitié Lille-Naplouse, Palestine Peace Awareness Inc and the Dundee-Nablus Twinning Association.

Sponsorship of the Nablus festival has also opened up possibilities for future engagement and collaboration. Prominent supporters in this respect included the Nablus Initiative in Nuremberg, the Norwegian city of Stavanger, Association France Palestine Solidarité and the Qattan Foundation. In addition, we have also established a partnership with the Danish House in Palestine, who have already begun sending us volunteers. This is a further development of our existing international volunteer networks, which benefit from the contribution of Firefly International, Wide Awake and Amitié Lille-Naplouse.

Local Partners

As a community-based NGO, Project Hope's work is only made possible by the contribution of the local community. Our local volunteers are key in this respect, helping to sustain and underpin our program output. Other community organisations also play a key role, enabling us to work through an eclectic range of community centres, NGOs and schools, thereby aggregating impact while building community capacities in the process. Partner organizations differ widely in terms of their resources and overall number of beneficiaries – this is one of our strengths as a community organization – we possess the knowledge and experience that enables us to align with, and adjust to, the comparative advantages of partner organizations. Close alignment with other community actors prevents duplication and maximizes the likelihood that local needs and requirements will be met. Since our establishment in 2003,

we have worked to establish long-term partnerships with community centres, schools and universities. In addition, we have also worked hard to extend our reach to the rural villages which surround Nablus. While the majority of our local partners are based within our home city of Nablus, we have also worked hard to build up relationships with community actors in the city's refugee camps and surrounding villages.

Local Partners: Overview

Nablus City

1. Adel Zaiter School
2. Al-Karmel School
3. AtfalAlghad Kindergarten
4. Awtar Centre
5. Children's Cultural Centre (CCC)
6. Edward Said
7. Fatimiya School
8. French Institute
9. Girls' Rehabilitation Centre
10. Hamdi Manko Centre
11. Happy Childhood Kindergarten
12. Janet Adan Kindergarten
13. Jarzeem Kindergarten
14. Language Centre (An-Najah University)
15. Mariam Hashem Cooking Centre
16. MCRC
17. Nablus Girls' School (UNRWA)
18. Palestinian Association for Development
19. Palestinian Women's Club
20. Queen's Girls' School

21. Samaritan Kindergarten
22. Sheikh Khalifa Centre for Disabled Rehabilitation
23. Vocational Training Centre
24. Women's Corner
25. Yallo Centre

Askar Village/Askar Refugee Camp

1. Al-Basma Kindergarten
2. Assafeer Askar
3. Safeer Centre
4. Social Development Centre
5. Sun of Hope Kindergarten

Balata Refugee Camp

1. Balata Youth Centre
2. Elite Academy Kindergarten
3. NaherOja Centre
4. Oli Azam Centre
5. Tal Balata Forum

Al-Ein Camp

1. Al-Ein Camp Girls' School
2. Local Committee for the Disabled, Al-Ein

Villages/Cities/Outlying Areas

1. Al-Kayed Palace, Sebastia
2. Al-Majd school, Tel village
3. Mother's school, Beit Forik
4. Mother's school, Beita village

5. Tal Balata, Balata village

6. Village council, Qusra village