

# A child's smile, Life and Hope



Phase 2- Weeks 2 & 3

Our youth team in partnership with Juzoor resumed its recreational activities for the children sheltering in UN schools in Rafah City- Tal As Sultan and Al-Bald for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks respectively (between 25<sup>th</sup> Nov and 6<sup>th</sup> Dec). The total number of the children targeted during this period was about 5000 females and males with an average of 500 children per day. To be noted, the number of the children targeted increased during the middle of the week to reach a peak of 600 children per day.





The recreational activities carried out by the team have varied to include Tele- Match games, which help the children to release their psychological distress resulted from the ongoing Israeli aggression, face-painting, and folk singing and dancing, which confirm the Palestinian identity. The team has focused on giving an opportunity for all children without exception in sake of creating an inclusive environment where respect is shown for all and none is left behind.







On the other hand, it was painful to notice some children not participating in the activities as they had to wait in an endless queue to get water. In other words, the war has rearranged the priorities of the Palestinian children to be food and water rather than play. So, some team members left the main circle and got to engage them in the activity.



Our team has welcomed the individual volunteering efforts that contributed to drawing a smile on the children faces through dolls and gymnastics, which were highly interacted with by both the children and their parents.





the children's parents were very appreciative, welcoming and even engaged in our recreational activities for children. Abu Mahmoud, a forty-three old man remarked; "Not only our children are happy with your presence, but we as well! Please come regularly..."



The psychological support of our team have not only been limited to the children, but also carried out for a group of adult men sheltering in a UN school in Tal As Sultan whereas they narrated their displacement stories, and most pressing needs.



Among the toughest experiences they have been through was that shared by Abu Mohammed, a refugee from the northern who is 45 years old: " While I was driving on my way to the south, I saw a woman and her child, both were covered by blood, it was obvious that they've lost the rest of their family members, they were asking for help, they needed anyone to take them away from there, but my seven- person capacity car was more than full with 20 people! Even the trunk had people! So I wasn't able to help them, I can't help thinking of them, their scene has occupied my mind...". And Fathi, who is 30 years old, also said: "We've gone an over 45 km distance from the northern border to the southern one only seeking safety...". Most of the men indicated dissatisfaction with the UNARWA services. Among their most necessary needs were mattresses and blankets in order to overcome the harsh cold winter.



In addition, the team has widened the domain of the beneficiaries in Sheltering centers to include women as they are vulnerable, and the war as well as their displacement experiences have increased their daily life's difficulty. There was a cooperation between our team and UN staff to coordinate and carry out a session for nearly 45 women including pregnant and breastfeeding moms.



The session included three axes; the first was a psychological support for women through listening to their displacement stories and the difficult experiences they have been through. The second was conducting some recreational activities, as they desired. And eventually, there were tips on how to form a supporting community within the school and in absence of external support. In the awareness-raising ax, the women were encouraged to express their inners, and to invoke their children's expression even it was by drawing, not words.



In an attempt to create an appropriate atmosphere for women to share their experiences conveniently, there was a need for two female members of our Al-Bald team to join our team in Tal As Sultan where the session was carried out. During the session, the women expressed their great longing to their homes that have been partially or fully destroyed. Their among most pressing needs is food supply that would help them and their children to get a proper nutrition.



Some team members also fulfilled the desire of the women willing to talk about their daily suffering in the refugee tents of the UN center. The tents have reflected miserable humanitarian case where among the most important needs of their inhabitants fleeing from the north is plastic nylon covers to protect them from rainwater invading their tents on rainy days. Accordingly, our male team members have estimated the amount of nylon needed to cover the tents of refugees in that center (Makkah School) to be 1000 m.



The other face of the refugees suffering was smiles of hope drawn on their lips, victory signs raised by their fingers, and resilience messages warbled with their throats. Among these messages was: "We're waiting for the war to end, so we can return back to our bombed homes...We're going to pitch a tent on the rubber and live there".

