

Evaluation Report

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Operation Palestinian Children and Youth 2005 - 2007

**A project of the Palestinian Bible Society
with support from
The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway**

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Commissioned by the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway

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List of Acronyms

BN	Bistandsnemda – Norwegian Missions in Development
FIDA	Finnish pentacostal international development agency
EFA	Education for All
ELFCN	Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, Norway
MoC	Ministry of Culture
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OPC	Operation Palestinian Children
OPCY	Operation Palestinian Children and Youth
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
OPY	Operation Palestinian Youth
PBS	Palestinian Bible Society
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PMU	Swedish pentacostal international development agency
UBS	United Bible Society
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

1. Executive Summary

Operation Palestinian Children and Youth (OPCY) is a project operated by the Palestinian Bible Society (PBS) that provides small scale educational programs to children and youth on the West Bank and training of trainers to adults working with children and youth. Through the programs offered in cooperation with the local communities, OPCY aims to raise awareness of the communities' responsibility for children's well-being, to bring joy in a situation marked by despair, to build bridges between Muslims and Christians and establish informal peace education in villages throughout the West Bank. One of the long-term goals of the project is to prepare the next generation to bridge gaps between Israelis and Palestinians.

Since 2004 the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway (ELFCN) has cooperated with PBS and provided financial support (from Norad via Norwegian Missions in Development (BN)). The initial project period ran from 2005 through 2007 and was later extended through 2008. The present evaluation was commissioned to provide input to ELFCN and BN for determining whether further financial support from Norad for the project should be sought.

The main purpose of the evaluation is three-fold:

- to describe and discuss the activities of OPCY and how the Palestinian Bible Society organizes the work to carry out the activities
- to assess 1)the extent to which the project objectives have been reached, 2)the impact of the project, 3)whether the objectives are relevant, 4)whether the project and/or results of the project are sustainable, and 5)whether the project is cost-efficient
- to give, on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of OPCY, recommendations on a possible second phase of the program

While there is room for improvement, the overall assessment of effectiveness, impact, relevance, sustainability and efficiency draws a positive picture of the evaluated intervention. Due to the continued tense political situation and declining socio-economic situation on the West Bank, which combined cause a critical situation for children and youth in the area, it is reasonable to assume that the need for outside interventions will continue. It is not reasonable to expect that other organizations will fill the role of OPCY in the near future. Thus, the evaluation team concludes that OPCY should be continued. Some adjustments should be made to ensure that the next phase of the project focuses more on activities that will ensure long-term impact and sustainability.

The recommendations are given on the presupposition that OPCY will either continue to receive external funding at the current level, or that funding will be increased. If external funding is reduced, some of the recommendations to PBS might still be valuable, but will have to be adjusted to fit the budgetary constraints.

Recommendations to the donor/cooperation partner

- a) **Continue supporting** activities for both children and youth so PBS/OPCY can keep providing programs, particularly in the rural villages/communities. OPCY has, over the past years, developed mutual trust and respect in many villages throughout the

rural areas of the West Bank and should be enabled to develop the programs further in order to ensure long term impact and sustainability.

- b) **Provide additional/increased funding** to the project on the condition that PBS/OPCY further develops the part of the project that provides training of trainers for teachers, youth leaders and other adults working with children and youth.
- c) **Raise the question of harmonization and simplification of required reporting mechanisms with other donors.** If not done already, BN should raise the issue of donor harmonization of reporting mechanisms for NGO-support with Norad to find out what the current trend is among like-minded countries. Donors should align their planning and reporting mechanisms such as not to overburden partners and hamper the holistic planning and reporting of the organizations receiving support.
- d) **Continue current practice of little direct involvement by ELFCN representative in the project, and increase efforts by ELFCN-representative to build relationships with other Norwegian organizations operating in the Palestinian Territory.** The Norwegian liason has been less directly involved with the OPCY than originally planned. The OPCY-team seems highly qualified and self-reliant and for sustainability purposes, the Norwegian liason should not be involved directly with carrying out activities/administrating OPCY, but rather serve in an advisory capacity and build relations/networks with other (Norwegian) organizations operating on the West Bank.

Recommendations to PBS/OPCY

- e) **Continue working directly with the children and youth on the West Bank** in order to bring attitudes, skills and hopes for a better tomorrow into communities where despair is threatening to take over. **And in addition:**
- f) **Increase efforts to train trainers and work with the adults in local communities.** In order to ensure follow-up of the children between each visit by OPC, and to ensure sustainability of both children's and youth program, develop a plan for increasing the workshops/seminars/training offered to teachers, youth leaders and others working with children/youth. This is necessary in order to reach the objective of raising the awareness of the communities' responsibility for the well-being of the children, and empower the community to do something about the raised awareness.
- g) **Develop a concept for how adults who follow children to programs put on by OPC can become "doers" rather than simply "audience".**
- h) **Increase advocacy role** through increased efforts to cooperate with curriculum developers, teacher training colleges, teacher education department of the MoE, head masters at schools, teacher's unions, youth union and/or other relevant organizations to promote the interest of children/young people.
- i) **Look into working more with families.**
- j) **Develop informal support network(s) among local cooperation partners.** As more adults and youth in the villages are being trained, they will probably need some

follow-up and encouragement. Organizing occasional seminars for all those who have been trained would be one way of bringing people together, allowing them to learn from each other and do “trouble shooting”.

- k) **Evaluate whether some funding from the project could be made available to partners** in the rural communities in order to enable them to do their own programs for children/youth.
- l) **Develop a strategy for the overall community development work of PBS and at the same time remain flexible.** PBS activities have, since the establishment of the organization in the 1990’s, been marked by “emergencies”. This has led to an action-oriented organization that works within a broader Bible Society context, but without time for developing clear strategic direction. The organization is growing and needs a more coherent strategy presented in one coherent document. This must, however, be balanced by the need to stay flexible to respond to emerging needs.
- m) **Develop a structure that facilitates strategic planning.** Evaluate whether there is a need for written mandate for the advisory board and ensuring that advisory board has the necessary qualifications to advice on development projects, including OPCY. Establish a leadership team consisting of all the project/program leaders of the community projects (potentially of all divisions of work, but it’s beyond the scope of evaluation to comment on that.)
- n) **Develop a clearer goal hierarchy with realistic ambitions for OPCY:** Developing separate objectives for the children’s program and the youth program, and family program if one is established, might prove beneficial for planning and evaluation purposes. Aim for only two or three main objectives and then goals with corresponding activities related to each of these objectives.
- o) **Establish a baseline against which results of next project period can be measured.** The OPCY project description from 2004 is mainly qualitative and makes it difficult to meet the current donor demand for more quantitative results. A discussion of how results should be measured, although difficult, should help focus the activities.
- p) **Align reporting mechanisms and developing an internal culture for evaluation and planning.** PBS’ internal evaluation and planning (at least for overall direction of the community development division of the work) seems to be hampered by the variety of reporting requirements imposed from the outside. Creating a culture of internal assessments, reporting of best practices and recording of challenges and how these have been attempted overcome, is recommended. To the extent possible, align reporting for all projects regardless of external requirements.

2. Introduction

Operation Palestinian Children and Youth (OPCY) is a project administered by the Palestinian Bible Society (PBS). It provides small scale educational programs intended to promote positive values and bring joy to children and youth in Palestine, and raise awareness in the communities of their responsibility for the well-being of the children. Since 2003/4 the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway (ELFCN) has cooperated with PBS on developing the OPCY programme and since 2005 the programme has received funding from Norad through Norwegian Missions in Development (Bistandsnemda - acronym BN).

The project period was initially from 2005 through 2007. It was later extended through 2008. The present evaluation has been commissioned by the ELFCN to provide input for determining whether the project should continue receiving support from the donor/cooperation partner. It will also provide input to PBS in its efforts to continually improve their programs and services to the Palestinian people.

The main purpose of the evaluation is three-fold:

- to describe and discuss the activities of OPCY and how the Palestinian Bible Society organizes the work to carry out the activities.
- to assess 1)the extent to which the project objectives have been reached, 2)the impact of the project, 3)whether the objectives are relevant, 4)whether the project and/or results of the project are sustainable, and 5)whether the project is cost-efficient
- to give, on the basis of a comprehensive understanding of OPCY, recommendations on a possible second phase of the program

Chapter 3 outlines the backdrop for the project including the socio-economic and political context in which the project is operating, the history of the Palestinian Bible Society and the role of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway. Chapter 4 presents the methodology and points out some difficulties in this regard. Then follows a chapter (5) outlining the evaluated intervention before turning to the findings and assessments in chapter 6 and 7. Chapter 8 touches on issues related to gender and operating in a conflict area and recommendations are given in chapter 9.

3 Background

The Palestinian Bible Society started the pre-cursor to the project “Operation Palestinian Children and Youth” in direct response to the Second (also called Al-aqsa) Intifada (uprising) in September 2000 when PBS put together a Christmas program for children in Bethlehem. Due to the continued negative impact of the Second Intifada and the Israeli response to the intifada, the one-time event was developed into an on-going program. Insight to the current situation creates a backdrop for understanding the context in which OPCY is operating .

3.1 Political and Socio-economic Conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) has experienced a prolonged crisis that has affected both the socio-economic and political environments, which in turn has adversely affected the living conditions of Palestinian households and individuals. The prevailing state of instability - particularly after the second Intifada in 2000 – is limiting the effectiveness and relevance of development contributions in the OPT, including the implementation of development plans and policies.

Since the Oslo accords and the formation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1993, there has been both a national and international commitment to a development agenda and institution building in preparation for the formation of an independent Palestinian State. However, the on-going political instability has had a detrimental effect on development progress.

The period between 1993 and mid 2000 witnessed relative socio-economic and institutional development progress which resulted in improved living conditions among Palestinians in the OPT. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the poverty rate stood at 21% in 1999 while unemployment rate dropped to 16%. However, this situation has been reversed since the beginning of the second Intifada. By 2005 the poverty rate was 46%¹ and according to sources the evaluation team spoke with, might now be considerably higher. The unemployment rate is also steadily increasing.

Since the elections in 2006, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has witnessed three governments; the Hamas-led government; the National Unity Government; and the current 'Emergency' Government. During this period, the PA has also faced a fiscal crisis and public sector strike. Following the election of the Hamas, donor funds were re-directed through the President's office and other channels (Temporary International Mechanism). Funding became conditional upon a commitment to the principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations including the Road Map. The on-going conflict between the two major political parties in OPT has affected development interventions and the potential improvement of Palestinian living conditions.

The formation of the Emergency Government in May 2007 led to some renewal of international donor aid to the OPT. However, this aid was sporadic and inadequate. Moreover, the internal political situation has deteriorated further with the establishment of separate administrations in the West Bank and Gaza.

As a result of the high poverty rate, development interventions have increasingly taken the form of humanitarian relief and emergency aid addressing mainly the basic needs of Palestinians. The implementation of more strategic interventions has been limited due to the unstable political and economic situation.

3.2 The Situation for Children/Youth in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)

Out of the almost 4 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, around half are children under the age of 15.² Since the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada, they have been exposed to harassment, displacement, shooting and destruction of their homes and schools. They are among the victims of the ongoing violence, not only directly by being killed or injured by Israeli forces or internal armed factions, but also indirectly. The conflict has a severe impact on children's possibilities to live a safe and healthy life, and many see their right to education, health or an adequate standard of living violated on a daily basis.

According to studies in 2001, at least half of the school children showed psychological symptoms such as crying, loneliness, fear of darkness and loud noises. About a third showed symptoms of sleep disorder, nervousness, decrease in eating and weight, feelings of hopelessness and frustration, and abnormal thoughts of death. About half of the children showed deterioration in their schoolwork and one-third were unable to concentrate³. After the

¹ PCBS labor force survey 2005.

² PCBS statistics 2006.

³ Hajal, Nadia. 2007. UNESCO Education Support Strategy 2008-2012. UNESCO Ramallah Office. Unpublish.

third incursion (June 2002), psychologists expect almost all the children to have been traumatized, as shooting, damage to property, bombing and house demolition have become regular events in all Palestinian areas.

The system of checkpoints and the 725 km separation wall are fragmenting the Palestinian population and territory into cantons with socio-economic disparities across the districts.⁴ The separation wall has so far adversely affected 159 Palestinian communities of which 40% have experienced a cut in services⁵.

3.3 Evolvement of Activities of the Palestinian Bible Society

In 1992 the United Bible Society made the decision to divide the Bible Society Israel into two separate organizations: Bible Society Israel and Bible Society of the West Bank. Under its new leader, Labib Madanat, the Bible Society of the West Bank, later the Palestinian Bible Society (PBS), added a new track of work to the traditional track of printing, translating and distributing Bibles and Christian literature. They wanted to meet the various physical and emotional needs in Palestine and established community development projects on the West Bank and in Gaza. While the PBS still operates book stores, its dealings more directly with people and communities has brought on a whole new set of projects, and along with this; new rewards as well as challenges to the organization.

One of the current projects run by the PBS is Operation Palestinian Children and Youth (OPCY). It started as a small, one-off project in Bethlehem before Christmas in 2000. But with the continued effects of the intifada, the PBS leadership and staff became increasingly aware of a great need for more consistent work with the children in the many villages of Palestine, particularly in the more rural areas.

3.4 Role of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway (ELFCN)

Cooperation between ELFCN and PBS started in 2002 with a Partnership Agreement stating the intention of the cooperation. Around this time ELFCN assigned one Norwegian ELFCN-employee to PBS to facilitate cooperation. Further terms and conditions for cooperation between the two organizations were specified in a cooperation agreement signed in 2004, covering the period 2004-2009. For each specific project on which the two organizations choose to cooperate, a separate project contract is entered into.

In 2004 ELFCN and PBS decided to partner in a concrete project to offer creative, non-conventional educational programs to communities on the West Bank. A contract guiding the cooperation was signed in the spring of 2005. An application for funding for the period 2005-2007 from Norad through the umbrella organization Norwegian Missions in Development (BN) was prepared, and approved. This became the starting point for developing a more systematic program to Palestinian children in an effort to bring joy, bridge gaps and contribute to peaceful coexistence. One of BNs goals with the projects they submit for funding from Norad is to contribute to locally based, sustainable development.

3.5 The policy of the Norwegian government regarding Palestine

The Norwegian government supports the creation of an independent Palestinian state and has contributed considerably to the development of national institutions in the Palestinian areas.

⁴ According to PCBS2006, there are 207 settlements constructed and 580 fixed checkpoints in West Bank and Gaza Strip.

⁵ Hajal, Nadia. 2007. UNESCO Education Support Strategy 2008-2012. UNESCO Ramallah Office. Unpublished paper.

For 2007 the amount was approximately NOK 540 million. Approx NOK 228 million of this was general budget support to the National Palestinian Authorities. In addition, Norway contributed NOK 160 million to UNRWA's work with Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan and Lebanon.

In addition, several Norwegian organizations operating on the West Bank receive development cooperation funding from Norad. These include Norwegian People's Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Red Cross, the Union of Education Norway, the Quaker Service Norway, the Atlas Alliance, Norwegian YMCA/YWCA and Norwegian Association of NGOs for Palestine, in addition to BN. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to look closer at the efforts of these organizations and the extent to which cooperation might be beneficial. It can only be noted that there appeared to be little interaction between ELFCN and any of these.

4. Comments on the methodology

Two evaluators carried out the evaluation in January and February 2008. Gerd-Hanne Fosen from Norway has worked as an education specialist with Norway's involvement with United Nations Education Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) for over a decade and has also been a board member of the Norwegian Peace Center. She had no prior knowledge of the OPCY project, PBS or ELFCN. Mr Maurice Bakleh from the Occupied Palestinian Territory works as a lecturer at the Birzeit University in the area of education and psychology. He has previously been contracted in to conduct some workshops for OPY on topics such as problems of adolescence, dealing with emotions, time management and creativity and thus had some prior knowledge of the youth program.

Due to the relatively small size of the evaluation, no steering group was established.

During a 10-day study visit to Israel and the West Bank the evaluation team carried out the following activities:

- 1) Full day meeting with staff in the West Bank office
- 2) Field visits to various project sites on the West Bank where programs were observed
- 3) Interviews in focus groups and/or individually with various stakeholders; community leaders, teachers, volunteers, participants and some parents.
- 4) A questionnaire was filled out by all the OPCY staff members who were also interviewed individually. (See annex 1 for complete list.)
- 5) Debriefing with staff

In addition, the evaluation team examined existing project documents, annual reports, monthly reports, audit statements and other relevant documents/internet sites. Upon completing a first draft of the report, this was submitted to PBS and ELFCN for comments, and follow-up interviews conducted with the PBS Executive Secretary and OPCY director.

This is a qualitative evaluation informed primarily by those who work with the project or who have chosen to participate in the programs offered by the PBS. It is therefore likely that the views expressed are more favourable to the program than if the evaluation team had also been able to interview i.e. parents who would not let their children attend the programs (although these were reported few and far between), or do more randomized interviews. This was not possible within the time limits and other restrictions on the evaluation.

Measuring results against a baseline proved difficult since no baseline was established in the project document. It could easily be argued that establishing a baseline a priori would have been complicated, but for evaluation purposes it would have been useful to have some sort of indicators for the situation in the villages in which OPCY operates prior to the launch of the project in order to know if the situation indeed did change as a result of the intervention. One success criteria could simply be to provide educational programs using non-conventional methods in the rural areas of the West Bank, in which case it would only be necessary to know the extent to which this was already done by other actors. This can also be established retrospectively with a high degree of certainty. Another success criterion related to the project objectives could be to determine whether the project has raised the awareness in the communities for how to promote the well-being of children. Establishing a baseline for this purpose would require more extensive studies a priori, and it is perhaps not reasonable to expect that of a project the size of OPCY with less than US\$ 500 000 a year. The assessment of results in this evaluation is based on what children, parents, teachers, social workers and community leaders said in interviews about “before” and “after”. Fully aware of the inferiority of a baseline established retrospectively, the evaluation team still felt reasonably sure that the views expressed by stakeholders gave insight to results of the intervention as compared to the situation when it started.

Language barriers played a role for the evaluation as the Norwegian evaluator does not know Arabic and therefore had to depend on translation in some interviews. This hinders a full understanding of the nuances in the answers given by interviewees. On a more positive note, it is easier for a foreigner to ask pointed questions. In some instances, the Palestinian evaluator translated, other times the director of the program to be evaluated translated, or other participants in focus groups who spoke English. The findings and discussion did not seem to change character whether the PBS-contacts were present in interviews or not. If anything, the findings were opposite of expected: respondents were more positive where PBS-contacts were *not* present in the interviews with focus groups.

5. Description of the evaluated intervention – Operation Palestinian Children and Youth

The evaluated intervention is that of OPCY. The long-term goals for the program are:

- to bring hope to children
- to work on positive attitudes
- to improve relations between Muslims and Christians
- to prepare the next generation to bridge the gap between Palestinians and Israelis.

The objectives for the project period were:

- to raise awareness in communities for the children’s well-being
- to establish informal peace-education in 100 villages on the West Bank
- to release positive emotions in children
- create friendship and partnership between Christians and Muslims and
- to inspire teachers and community leaders to use new methods when working with children.

In order to reach these goals and objectives, a series of activities have been carried out. Below is a brief description of each of the two sub-areas: the children’s program (OPC) and the youth program (OPY).

5.1 The children’s program (Operation Palestinian Children – OPC)

The children's program has two major components: day camps during summer and community programs during the school year.

The summer camps during summer school holidays last for up to five days and deal with a wide range of issues and offer a wide range of activities. During the school year, the OPC-team travels out to villages where activities for children are almost non-existent (mostly rural) with shows/programs lasting for a couple of hours. They use drama, puppet show, singing, story-telling and interaction with the children to communicate lessons about handling emotions, making difficult choices, being thankful for what you have, healthy interaction with others etc. Staff members have developed the shows/programs and continue to develop new programs. The children's team, consisting of four or five people, travels into around 50 villages (mostly rural) on the West Bank with all equipment needed to do their programs. The goal is to get to each location four times a year for some continuity and relationship building both with children and community leaders.

The primary target group of the children's program is children age 6 through 12. The secondary target group consists of the adults working with the children (parents, teachers, community organizations etc). The first couple of years the team focused almost exclusively on reaching children directly and through working with the children, building relationships in the communities. During 2007 they have provided training for puppet teams and conducted drama training in some villages. Also, some of the teachers that OPC has come into contact with, have participated in other workshops provided by OPCY or PBS.

5.2 The youth program (Operation Palestinian Youth – OPY)

The youth program is more varied. During summer holidays, the main activity is day camps lasting up to five days. Activities during the school year include workshops that stretch over a few days, weekly courses in drama, puppetry or arts, discussion groups, support to sports activities, day trips to historical sites (where participants among other things learn more about Muslim, Christian and Jewish history/identity), and training sessions for youth leaders. Topics that are handled range from dealing with teenage issues and identity to handling negative emotions and conflict management. Initially, the work with youth was an extension of the work with children, but the staff soon became convinced that longer commitments and relationship building were necessary in order to have an impact with the youth. The program was thus changed accordingly.

The primary target group is youth age 13 through 17, and the secondary target group is adults working with this age group. Training of youth leaders has become an increasingly bigger part of the program.

6. Findings and assessments regarding the program, the organization and administration of PBS and OPCY

This chapter outlines the findings of the evaluation and an assessment of these.

6.1. Project goals: Clarity and ambition

6.1.1 Clarity of the various levels of the hierarchy of goals

Three levels of goals are defined in the project description: long-term goals, concrete objectives for the project period (originally 3 years 2005-2007, extended by one additional year through 2008), and concrete results that the project was expected to achieve every year. While there is a natural logic in the goal hierarchy, going from the more visionary to more

concrete, overlap and similar formulations of results and activities in the initial project description indicate that either three levels might be one level too many, or – more likely – that there could be better distinction between the levels and more clarity on which activities lead to which goals.

The annual plans for 2006 and 2007 mix expected results and activities from original project description under the heading expected results. These documents also outline three strategies to be followed for 2006 and 2007 and these strategies correspond roughly to some of the expected results and activities described in the original project document. This indicates a need for more thorough discussions in order to reach a higher level of clarity in the planning phase in order to ensure that the more difficult to reach objectives are promoted through the right types of activities. For the first phase of the project, in which building trust in the communities has been crucial, this is unlikely to have had negative consequences. In planning for a higher degree of lasting impact and sustainability during a second phase, however, being clearer on which activities will achieve which results and objectives will be crucial.

6.1.2 Level of ambition, realism and adjustments along the way

The long term goals and the three-year objectives have remained largely unchanged throughout the project period, but annual expected results and activities have been adjusted to fit with reality as the project has developed. The ambitious target of reaching 50.000 children in 100 villages in three years (on a less than US\$ 500.000 pr year budget) has been adjusted to a more reasonable level of working with 40-50 communities. This reduction in number is also a result of realizing that in order for the project to have a lasting impact, it is necessary to work more closely with communities over time. Like one of the OPC-staff members put it: “We cannot feed children one meal and think they will stay full the rest of their lives.” At the point of the evaluation, the leaders still struggled with the issue of quality versus quantity. This is particularly difficult because of increasing number of requests from schools and communities for OPC to work with them.

6.2.Target groups

6.2.1 Primary and secondary target groups for the project

According to the project document, the main target groups are children 6 – 12 and youth 13 – 17. Upon closer examination of the objectives, however, it appears that while children and youth might be the primary target group, working with the adults who again work with children/youth are equally important for reaching the OPCY-objective of helping the communities take responsibility for the well-being of children. Also, from looking at the activities, it is not clear to what extent PBS/OPCY intended to reach the primary target group (children and youth) directly, and to what extent through raising awareness and capacity building of communities. Until recently, the emphasis has been on reaching the children and youth directly. In 2007, increased attention has been given to training of trainers, but with respect to the children’s program, the main emphasis is still on providing programs directly to the children. The program would benefit from a thorough discussion about what is a reasonable balance between working directly with the children and working with their leaders/teachers in order to encourage them to work more effectively with children.

6.2.2 Criteria for selection of participants

The children’s program offered throughout the year is open to anyone in target age group in the community/school/institution OPC is cooperating with. It is largely up to the local cooperation partner to identify groups for participation. In one location, the program/show put on by OPC had been announced from the Mosque Minaret, leading to children coming with

their parents. One community leader pointed out that the adults don't come just to observe, but because they, too, "want to have fun". Through the cooperation with the Ministry of Education, classes from various schools are sometimes brought together, or the program is offered on school premises after school. In some locations, community centers served as venue and various cooperation partners brought groups of children they work with. Due to great variation among the local partners, a great variety of groups participate. At one location where the evaluation team observed a children's program developed for children age 6 – 12, children as young as 3 and as old as 17 were present. The fact that children who are not in the target group come voluntarily, sometimes even uninvited, and stay for the entire duration of the program, is an indicator of the need for activities in the area, and possibly also of the quality/relevance of the content. On the one hand it might be more fruitful for the dialogue with the children to restrict the participation to target group, and perhaps even narrow the age span, but for these types of shorter programs, this is not a crucial element. It would, however, be beneficial to develop differentiated follow-up questions that could be dealt with in smaller groups after drama/puppet show. The adults accompanying the children, particularly when these are teachers, social workers or other professionals, could be involved in this.

For the youth programs/summer camps, the local cooperation partners are responsible for the selection. The local cooperation partners spread information about activities by word of mouth, or through schools, or community centers. For both the children and youth programs, OPCY tries to ensure gender balance.

For the family camp organized in cooperation with UNRWA, UNRWA was responsible for the selection according to criteria such as "families we knew experienced conflict" and "unemployed families". The social workers in the camps were involved in the selection process.

The selection of teachers/leaders to be invited to further training by OPCY or other programs under PBS, depends partly on expressed interest by teachers/leaders, but also the local cooperation partners are asked to identify people they see as leaders/potential leaders in the community. It was a bit unclear how this was done, and the program could perhaps benefit from a more systematic approach to working with leaders.

6.3 Organization, administration and capacity of PBS and OPCY

It is beyond the scope of the evaluation to provide a detailed discussion of the overall organization and administration of PBS. Only the elements of structure and administration of PBS, as well as the capacity of the organization, crucial to the impact and effectiveness of OPCY, will be examined.

6.3.1 The structure of PBS and OPCY

PBS is a national office under the direction of the United Bible Societies (UBS) which has its headquarters in the United Kingdom. The United Bible Societies fellowship has 145 independent member Bible Societies or offices. The annual budget and plan for all of PBS' activities are approved by the UBS. The evaluation team cannot comment on the overall budget and plan or how OPCY fits within this plan because PBS did not provide the necessary documentation. Responsibility and authority for decision-making in daily affairs are delegated to the Executive Secretary who oversees all activities of PBS. A local advisory board consisting primarily of church representatives was established a year ago.

Under the Executive Secretary there are several project leaders responsible for specific geographical and/or topical areas. In addition, there are administrative “departments” that service all projects (human resources, information and fund-raising, finance). Due to recent and on-going organizational development, the organizational chart was out-dated. Based on information provided in interviews, the organizational structure is relatively “flat”. Decisions related to each project are primarily made by project leaders and their teams. Decisions regarding issues concerning the whole organization are often made by consensus.

PBS’ activities or programs can roughly be divided into three areas: 1) translation and distribution of Bibles and other literature, 2) relief work and 3) long term community development work. This division was explained by one of the interviewees, but does not appear on any organizational chart, nor is it described in any other documentation provided to the evaluation team. There can be elements of all three areas of work under each project leader. Also, after a recent organizational change, the previous executive secretary has started in a newly created position as strategic and development director for the three UBSs in the Palestinian Territory/Israel. This position reports directly to the UBS regional area secretary for Europe and the Middle East. In addition, there are expatriates from cooperation partner organizations in Norway and Sweden working at the PBS headquarters in Jerusalem. The Norwegian expatriate has a job description from ELFCN. According to the cooperation agreement between PBS and ELFCN there should also be a written job description provided by PBS. The current Norwegian expatriate started her assignment with PBS prior to the signing of the agreement and this might be the reason no written job description for her from PBS had been developed.

With the expansion from dealing exclusively with Bibles and Christian literature to also include community development work, the organization has grown in terms of budget, staff (37 members at the time of the evaluation) and activities and receives funding from various secular sources in addition to church/individual funding (including the Swedish International Development Agency via PMU and Finland via FIDA). PBS has not, however, provided the evaluation team any written documentation that captures the entire picture of the organization’s activities. There are no annual reports that describe the totality of the work. It is therefore difficult to have a qualified opinion on how synergies between the various community development projects, and also between community development projects and the two other areas of work, are created. The evaluation found that there was some cooperation between the various projects in PBS, but there appears to be an unexplored potential for more cross-fertilization.

Furthermore, it is difficult to see how the control function that a board typically performs is maintained in the absence of holistic plans and reports and when the responsible board is in the UK and most likely set up with the traditional role of Bible societies in mind. Also, it is unclear what the exact mandate of the advisory board is and whether it has adequate qualifications for giving sound advice on the development projects, including OPCY. The absence of a consolidated annual report that capture all the activities of PBS, absence of a national board, absence of a clear mandate for the advisory board and absence of leadership team at PBS are all likely to hamper the development of an overall strategic direction for the totality of activities. This is likely also to reduce the impact of OPCY.

6.3.2 Office, infrastructure, logistics

PBS’ main office is in Jerusalem. In addition, there are several offices at the different community development project sites on the West Bank and one in Gaza. OPCY has its own

office in Aldahia, East Jerusalem which is on the other side of the Israeli security/separation wall allowing access also for team members, volunteers etc who do not have access into Jerusalem. OPCY just recently moved to a new office (from Bir Zeit) and were still in the process of getting properly installed during the evaluation study visit. While each OPCY staff member does not have his/her own office, this did not appear to be a problem for the team. Due to the nature of the work – being out in the field on an average three days every week – office space is not the primary concern. They probably spend just about as much time in the van available to the team for transporting both the team and needed equipment to the various locations on the West Bank as they do in their office.

When they are not out in the villages, the staff members work on developing new lessons, write songs, practice drama or puppets etc. One morning a week they have meetings together with all PBS staff in the Jerusalem office. The two leaders currently had offices both at the PBS main office and in Aldahia, but will have Aldahia as their main base. The drive to the office is somewhat cumbersome due to the separation wall that runs through Jerusalem.

6.3.3 Communication lines and means

The communication lines in PBS can be characterized as very informal and relational. There are weekly staff meetings at PBS head quarters in Jerusalem as well as at the various sites throughout the West Bank and in Gaza. Information on what is going on is sent out by e-mail every week. It remains unclear to the evaluation team how the decision-making by consensus at the above-project-level takes place and how decisions are followed up. The staff members of OPCY, however, did not seem to experience this as a problem, perhaps because OPCY in many ways operates as a separate organization with its own budget, and responsibility for most decisions regarding OPCY are delegated to the project director.

Because of the near Jerusalem location of OPCY, the team has so far been part of the weekly meetings at PBS head quarters. In addition, there are OPCY-meetings when deemed necessary. Since the team consists only of five staff and one part time employee, and the five people constituting the children's team travel together several days a week, the need for formal communication is not pressing. Team members expressed satisfaction with interaction both within team and with the leadership of PBS.

Aside from the weekly staff meetings, communication is more “needs based” and “how can we best meet an identified need”-based. In fact, the entire organization seems to be responding to needs, due to persistent instability in the region, rather than staking out a strategic direction. Perhaps this explains why the strategic direction of the development of the organization was difficult for an outsider to grasp fully, or perhaps the situation in Palestine does not allow for the strategic planning one would expect in a more stable political and socio-economic setting.

6.3.4 Internal monitoring

PBS activities are to a great extent dependent on external support, (church/individual donations for the books/Bible part, government support for development projects). This might explain the tendency to plan for fund raising purposes and report because of external donor requirements.

PBS cooperates with partners in Finland, Norway and Sweden who all receive funding from their respective governments, and have different reporting regiments. The requirements imposed by the Norwegian partners on the OPCY-funding, are the least demanding. For PBS

as a whole, however, having to deal with different donor reporting requirements hinders good internal planning mechanisms in the organization because the focus, rather than being on internal planning needs for the overall development of PBS, is on the needs of external partners. It is likely that this also has negative consequences for the full utilization of the potential of OPCY within the wider PBS context.

There is also the “problem” that staff members are full of enthusiasm and vision for meeting the needs of communities, and thus documentation, evaluation and planning ends up on the back burner. This is not specific for OPCY, but a wider issue for PBS, especially as it is expanding to meet an ever increasing need in the current ongoing conflict.

In the project description developed in 2004 it is indicated that quarterly reports will be developed. And in the contract between PBS and ELFCN semi-annual reports are prescribed. Since quarterly reports turned out not to be a requirement by BN or Norad, and semi-annual reports have not been requested by ELFCN, there has only been an annual report – directed at donor. For information and fund-raising purposes, monthly reports that list activities carried out the previous month are submitted to the information officer.

The annual reports that are written to fulfill donor requirements expose shortcomings, point out dilemmas and are refreshingly honest and self-examining. Yet, the potential as far as using them for more strategic planning purposes does not seem to be fully utilized.

6.3.5 Management of finances

The spreadsheets indicating the use of funding, are broken down for each month and are well organized. Based on the annual audit reports, the management of finances also appeared in order. The disbursements for 2007 are made throughout the year, indicating well planned activities and no need to “use up” funding at the end of the year.

6.4. Capacity of PBS and OPCY

6.4.1 Qualifications of OPCY staff members

The OPCY staff is adequately qualified for the kind of work it is currently carrying out. The relevance of the formal qualifications vary somewhat, but most have a bachelor degree in a relevant field. They also have several shorter courses and have done relevant volunteer work prior to joining OPCY. There is a culture for “on-the-job learning”, organizing seminars and workshops and bringing in outside experts.

Terms like contagious and astonishing best describe the enthusiasm of the team working with the project. All team members indicated that their motivation for the job was to bring some joy and positive values to the children of Palestine and give them back their childhood. The willingness to drive for hours, sometimes just to find they are not able to get through the necessary check points, or being so much delayed that the children have left before they get to the site, shows special dedication to the program and the children they are serving. Also, the willingness to do a variety of tasks from putting up a puppet stage and driving for hours several days a week to acting and writing scripts, must be considered an important qualification.

In order to expand the training of trainers and do more advocacy work, additional staff with a heart and qualifications for working with adults, might need to be hired. Also, the youth section is under-staffed with just the leader and one part-time employee who also works with the children’s team. Overall, the project seems to be vulnerable to changes in staff. The

current leader of OPCY is planning a year's leave of absence and the leader of the children's program is leaving for another position.

6.4.2 Staff policy

PBS has a human resource department (staffed by one person) that develops rules and regulations for staff, such as working hours, public holidays, sick leave, maternity leave, vacation time, use of vehicles etc. They have also developed a graded pay scale helping the organization to place employees at a reasonable salary level.

There is an unwritten understanding that PBS staff align with the vision and mission of PBS. The organization promotes further education for their employees.

Due to the hardship, and sometimes danger, of working on the West Bank under the current conditions, finding new, qualified employees can be a challenge. The salary for the OPCY-team, might be another deterrent for hiring more qualified people (such as one more person in the youth department). Employees have a three month probation period.

6.4.3 Use of volunteers

Use of volunteers directly by OPCY is not very common. OPCY had, at the time of the evaluation, one person working with them who was referred to as a volunteer, but the evaluation prefers the term part time employee because he gets paid per day he is with the team.

The use of volunteers is much more widespread among OPCY's many cooperation partners in the local villages. In the youth program, the community centers often bring their own volunteers that help lead the activities. Because OPCY has not filled the position as youth assistant, the budget for this position has also been used to encourage local leaders who work with the program and to bring in specialists in certain areas.

6.5 Cooperation and network

6.5.1 The stakeholders in the local community and their involvement

PBS has established cooperation partners in all the rural communities where they work. All programs were done in cooperation with others. The involvement by the community varies from just facilitating OPC doing a "show" to teachers and leaders joining workshops and training in order to carry on the work themselves. At the point of the evaluation, OPCY was in the process of expanding training of trainers in order to ensure more long-term impact in the communities.

6.5.2 The relationship to the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture

OPCY attempts to cooperate with the authorities, including ministry representatives, in the villages in order to ensure that their programs are welcome and in line with the existing development plans. The evaluation team interviewed only one representative from MoE and one from MoC, both in Tul Karem where the ministry representatives have been door openers for OPCY. The representative from the Ministry of Education came from the department of activities and did not know much about the OPCY-program, or have any opinion as to how it contributed to the well being of the children. The representatives from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture both pointed out, however, that there are not many after-school activities available to the children, and that the children in Palestine are in great need of outside input. Any program that works to promote positive values, attitudes and behaviour in children, was welcome. The findings of the evaluation team match those of other studies

that point out that the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to coordinate NGO-activities is limited.

6.5.3 Cooperation with local schools

Schools are one of the major cooperation partners for OPC. The degree to which schools were involved in the activities of the project, varies greatly. In some places the local schools are used merely as a venue for the OPCY team to put on their programs without the school being involved as such, but some teachers might be present. Other places, teachers are very involved, but as individuals, not because the school encouraged it. In yet other locations, the schools reportedly are more involved (the evaluators did not observe any of the latter). The teachers interviewed stressed the importance of using unconventional pedagogical methods and not just rote learning. They felt this was particularly important in a conflict area where many children are suffering post-trauma symptoms and need to be able to deal with this. But the curriculum is overloaded and the schools under-resourced, and teachers not trained in child-centered methods. The MoE is also very reluctant to promote any activities during school hours that do not fit directly within the curriculum.

6.5.4 Local NGOs and community centers

Local NGOs and community centers are another major cooperation partner. Most of the activities undertaken by OPY are carried out in cooperation with local community organizations.

6.5.5 Others

UNRWA: In the summer of 2007 OPCY cooperated with UNRWA on organizing a family camp. The UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) was established after the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948/9. Originally set up to do direct relief work, it has since then moved to more long-term development work. There are almost half a million Palestinians with refugee status living in 19 refugee camps spread throughout the West Bank. According to the supervisor of the camps in the central West Bank area, and the supervisor of the social workers serving the same camps, the cooperation between UNRWA and OPCY was very beneficial. There are now plans for further cooperation, i.e. training of social workers employed with UNRWA. While UNRWA cooperates with other organizations, very few contribute directly to activities that benefit the camp population. Due to the camps being fairly closed communities, outside input – such as getting together with families from nearby refugee camps – is considered valuable.

Churches that have active outreach programs on the West Bank are another important cooperation partner for OPCY. In 12 out of the 50 plus communities OPCY work with, the partner is a church or church-affiliated organization. The Catholic Church is the main church cooperation partner. Christians from other churches also participate in the programs put on in cooperation with the Catholic Church.

The focus for cooperation so far has been on local organizations in the villages. While there are several other Norwegian organizations that receive funding from Norad who also work in Palestine, there is little cooperation with these. Also, there is little cooperation with NGOs or other organizations that work with children and youth and promote children's rights. While the focus should remain on the local organizations, there might be an unexplored potential for creating synergies with work conducted by others.

7 Assessment of effectiveness, impact, relevance, sustainability and efficiency

This chapter discusses the findings above in relationship to five evaluation criteria: effectiveness, impact, relevance, sustainability and efficiency.

7.1 Effectiveness

Under the heading “effectiveness” we look at the degree to which the project has reached the objectives set in the project description for the three-year period 2004-7 and to what degree the activities planned have been carried out and contribute to the long term goals.

The first objective in the project description is: “To raise awareness and responsibility in the community for the children’s wellbeing and future.” All respondents expressed a clear conviction that the programs offered by OPCY raise awareness. There was more variety in the answers to what that meant precisely. Some confused raised awareness among *children* with raised awareness and responsibility in the *community* (although of course children are part of the community.)

The local adult leaders involved in facilitating the children’s program were less clear than those working with youth on their own role and responsibility, and that of the local community, for the well-being of children and youth. This also reflected the OPC-team which is more concerned with reaching the children directly than working with the community leaders in enabling them to work more effectively with children.

The local teachers/youth leaders/volunteers that had worked closer with OPCY over a longer time period, and who had attended training provided by PBS/OPCY, were the most vocal and clear on the positive effects this had on their dealing with children. Exposure to the methods (drama, puppetry, child-centered methods, social and emotional learning) used by OPCY had been valuable and changed their practices. One teacher said he used to hit children and yell at them, but had come out of the training provided by PBS with a new understanding of the value of child-centered approaches. (A couple of his previous students confirmed observing the transformation.) The evaluation team concludes that OPCY is contributing to raised awareness in communities, but that more activities targeted at the leaders would make it even more effective.

The second objective is to establish informal peace education in 100 communities on the West Bank. This objective can be assessed along at least two lines: 1) to what extent OPCY itself has established informal peace education in 100 communities and 2) to what extent OPCY has contributed to communities themselves establishing peace education for their children. It is unclear what this objective actually was. Based on the activities planned to reach the objectives, it seems this objective might have been unclear from the outset and that OPCY is trying to do both: first, themselves go in with programs that promote peaceful conflict management and through their presence build positive relations and trust, then train people in the community in those areas where there is a basis for doing so. Throughout the project period the focus has shifted somewhat towards training of trainers. Initially, the children’s team focused on getting into communities, building relationships and trust and developing the program. In 2007 they started training youth leaders in puppetry, drama and script writing, and they helped provide some groups with their own puppets and stage so that they could develop their own programs. It is still too early to evaluate the results of these efforts.

The initial goal of reaching 100 communities was adjusted during the first year as it became evident that for the program to have a real impact, it was necessary to work more in-depth with fewer communities. Today, OPC works in approximately 50 communities.

The third objective of releasing fun and laughter and promoting hope is based on studies showing that fun and laughter releases stress. In the political and socio-economic situation the children in the villages live under, this is seen as an important tool for dealing with fear, anger, resentment and other stress factors. Many community leaders pointed out that the OPC-program brings smiles and laughter to their children and they considered this as positive in and of itself. Several answers to the question, “what has been the benefit of working with OPCY” echoed one community leader who said: “We want to see smiles of the faces of our children again.”

The fourth objective is to bridge gaps between Muslim and Christian communities. According to PBS, the Christian population on the West Bank is about 2%, but declining. Since Christians are constantly leaving the area (partly due to the effects of the conflict between Palestine and Israel, partly due to persecution, partly due to other factors) and there is no updated census, the accurate number is elusive. The relationship between Muslims and Christians can be tense. The evaluators repeatedly heard stories by the Muslim youth that they had never met Christians before OPCY started working in their area, and that their prejudices had been broken down as a result of the cooperation. Some parents and/or community leaders had been sceptical to the program initially, and there had been some fear that PBS was coming to evangelize. The reluctance had subsided, however, as parents and community leaders saw the programs and heard reports about the activities.

There have been some incidents where children or youth were not allowed to come to programs, but the incidents have been few and far between. Observing the welcome of the OPCY team by the Muslim communities, and hearing the reports of how the view of Christians had changed after they started cooperating with OPCY, indicate that OPCY has had a positive effect on bridging gaps between Christians and Muslims. The evaluation team discussed with some respondents the long-term goal of preparing the next generation to bridge gaps between Palestinians and Israelis, but cannot based on these interviews draw any conclusions as to whether the OPCY-activities contribute to this.

The last objective for the project period was to inspire teachers and community leaders to use new methods and tools in their work with children. Teachers and leaders reported that the cooperation with OPCY had led to increased use of alternative teaching methods (particularly drama, puppetry, social and emotional learning techniques.) Those teachers who had also participated in training provided by OPCY/PBS had found this very useful and inspiring and reported that it contributed to changed methodology.

The evaluation did not find that the cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education has helped with respect to i.e. introducing new material into the curriculum or new pedagogical methods into teacher training. New forms of cooperation with local branches of the ministries should be explored further in the next phase of the project.

7.2 Impact

Under this heading we assess the effects of the project, both positive and negative, whether or not specified in the goals and objectives of the project.

Positive impact:

- Positive feelings are created in children and youth, as well as in leaders who participate
- Children feel better about their lives and about themselves handling tough situations
- Youth become more self-assured and able to express their views and feelings
- Young girls are less shy
- Teachers/leaders use more child-centered methods and drama in their work with children
- Cooperation between Muslim and Christian communities
- Parents and other adults who attend programs together with children, also learn lessons for handling their own lives

Negative impact:

- Some children are excluded because parents suspicious of Christian organization
- Youth, particularly young girls, become more aware of their potential, but also about their limitations in the traditional Muslim societies in which they live. This can potentially also create frustrations.

It is difficult to evaluate whether these are long or short term impacts. The greatest potential for long-term impact is probably with the adults who receive more in-depth training, and the youth that meet on a regular basis.

Although not set out as an objective in the project document, it seems clear that the funding through ELFCN also has contributed to capacity building in PBS, which is a Palestinian organization working to reach out to Palestinians. Without the external funding for OPCY, they would not have been able to work systematically with over 50 communities.

7.3 Relevance

The National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (2004 -2010) developed by the Palestinian National Authorities stress the negative psycho-social effects on children due to the political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural situation inflicted by the intifada. In a survey from 2001 quoted in the plan, over 90% of children asked, answered that they did not feel safe, 50% felt their families could not care for them adequately, 84% had moved out of their homes temporarily or permanently. Regardless of the accuracy of these numbers and other statistics that indicate a grave situation for children in Palestine, they do indicate a desperate need for interventions. The OPCY program, although fairly small scale, with its emphasis on building hope in a difficult situation, seems highly relevant.

Several of the children when asked why they like the programs, said: “it helps us know how to handle our lives” and “it is fun”. The youth interviewed were more conscious of the relevance of the programs for them. Particularly the teenage girls said the OPY-sponsored activities were the only chance they had to talk about being a teenager, about becoming a woman, how to look out for themselves, how to speak up and express their ideas. They also felt using drama and role play helped them be less shy. They perceived of shyness as a hindrance to their development in a male dominated society.

The Palestinian education system still consists of a lot of memorization and little critical thinking. During the five first years after the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was established in 1994, MoEHE focused on developing the education system and expanding the system in terms of access. Just as the focus had started to shift from access to

quality, the education system suffered a major set back as a result of the Israeli response to the Second Intifada.⁶ (Nicolai, 2007:21) The efforts to improve quality and teaching methods have since then not picked up as the ministry instead responds to constant crisis. Thus, the goal of inspiring teachers to take on board other pedagogical tools, particularly in areas with a high percentage of traumatized children with built up frustrations, is highly relevant.

In the current international education debate, the issue of quality has been on the top of the agenda the last couple of years. This was re-emphasized at the Education for All High Level Group meeting in Dakar in December 2007. Activities that promote interactive pedagogical tools, stimulate critical thinking and focus on what the OPC-team refers to as “life skills”, are considered important by ministers of education world-wide to promote a better learning environment. These methods, which also help children to be in a state of mind in which learning is possible, are even more relevant in a conflict torn area.

7.4 Sustainability

Sustainability with respect to this project can be assessed in at least three different ways:

- 1) Will PBS be able to continue with OPCY without continued external/international financial support?
- 2) Will there be any changes in any practices among cooperation partners, or will communities in villages be able to continue the programs in the villages, without further OPCY involvement?
- 3) Will children/youth who have been involved in programs have gotten something that will stay with them?

1) PBS would probably continue some of the OPCY-activities without continued financial support from Norway, but OPCY is as of today fully financed by Norway and it would require finding new financial sources. The probability of local communities financing some of the activities is not high with the current socio-economic situation and increasing unemployment on the West Bank.

2) The most sustainable aspect in the villages/communities, is that of the teachers/youth leaders who have been trained. They will continue using new methods learned through the project. The evaluation indicates that training of individuals, such as providing drama/puppetry workshops for youth/youth leaders, seminars on child-centered pedagogy, or other training provided by OPCY or other divisions within PBS, is a vital aspect of the project. Also, where community centers have gotten puppets and stage and some training, or where volunteers have received more training, some of the activities are likely to continue. Many interviewees working with children were not, however, very enthusiastic about it becoming self-sustained – they liked a team coming in from the outside. Several respondents felt it was important and encouraging with outside influence because Israeli security restrictions make movement on the West Bank difficult.

3) Whether the shows/programs put on by OPC have a lasting impact on children if nothing else changes in their school/community, is questionable. Those teenagers who have participated in training over some period of time are more likely to have gotten a foundation for further development.

⁶ Nicolai, 2007:21

Overall, the sustainability of the project is a bit fragile and should be further promoted in the next project period. OPCY has built positive relations with many communities and the basis for working more on training of trainers is there. One reason for fragile sustainability that is outside of the control of the project, is simply the continued instability and economic hardship in the region.

7.5 Efficiency

Under this heading we have considered the question of whether the resources spent on this project could yield better results if spent otherwise.

Many of the issues dealt with, both methods of working with children and youth and content dealt with, should also be a MoE responsibility. The MoE, however, lacks capacity, is overburdened and works under extremely difficult circumstances. Also, regardless of how well a society might function, there is always a need for NGO's to take a watch dog role and develop and bring in new ideas to the local communities, and work with both local and government bodies on changing counter productive practices.

Also, after-school activities are rare. PBS works with schools, youth clubs and community centers. Thus, even if the schools should provide some of the training offered by PBS, the need for after-school-activities is great.

It is difficult to see how the same amount of money could have similar impact if i.e. added to funding of MoE. During the interviews and field trips done as part of the evaluation, the evaluators have not found other organizations that reach out to some of the particularly rural villages with programs for children.

8. Special concerns

8.1 Gender issues

Working with youth in conservative Muslim communities poses challenges with respect to both gender equity and equality. Some communities would like OPCY to offer summer camps for boys. While PBS prefers to bring together boys and girls, they are sensitive to the local communities and have agreed to organize separate camps. They insist, however, that if they offer a summer camp for boys, they also offer one for girls. Girls are particularly vulnerable and in need of programs in the areas in which OPCY operates.

The teenage girls seemed to benefit the most from OPY-activities. They reported that the workshops or camps offered by OPY were the only opportunity they had to deal with issues such as growing up, expressing your viewpoints, learning to be less shy. Shyness was one issue all the girls felt was a hindrance for their development, and they reported that the OPY-sponsored activities helped them deal with their shyness. OPCY might consider working even more systematically with this group.

8.2 Operating in conflict area/fragile state setting

Whenever working in a conflict area, there are risks involved. There is both the risk of physical attacks/violence and the risk of exhaustion from working under strenuous conditions. PBS seems very aware of the situation and adapts programs according to the situation on any given day. The leader of the PBS book shop in Gaza was murdered in October 2007. The murder was most likely motivated by a dislike by someone in the Muslim community of the presence of the PBS as a Christian organization in Gaza. This has obviously further alerted the organization to the tension between Christians and Muslims and the potential danger to

the staff members. There have also previously been attacks on some of the community centers on the West Bank and staff has been threatened. PBS has therefore developed a system where they continuously work on this type of risk assessment.

Operating in a conflict area also increases the risk of not reaching the goals and objectives of the project due to unforeseen factors. PBS has so far focused on the more immediate physical risk of operating in a conflict area, and the psychological effects of this, rather than risk management with respect to reaching the objectives of their projects. Considering the current situation this is only to be expected.

8.3 OPCY's use of Bible based principles

All PBS' programs are based on Biblical principles. The mission statement of the organization is to "Live and Give, Serve and Proclaim the Word of God." In the programs funded by Norway the focus is on the "live", "give" and "serve" part of the mission statement. The values in the programs are universal values. There is no reference to the Bible or Christianity in any of the programs supported by Norad, but there is an occasional reference to God. In the Muslim communities this reference to God was a common denominator rather than a problem. In many communities there had been initial concern that PBS would evangelize/proselytize, but there were very few concerns once the community leaders observed programs.

9 Recommendations for the future/conclusions

Based on the findings and assessments of the findings, the evaluation team concludes that OPCY has a very positive impact on the children and youth they work with as well as on the communities. It contributes to a more child-centered approach to dealing with children, brings joy, builds relationships between Muslims and Christians, gives youth an opportunity to talk about difficult issues and provides positive extra-curricular activities, and provides training to some of the adults working with children. Due to the continued critical situation for children and youth on the West Bank, it is not reasonable to expect that the Palestinian Authorities or other organizations will fill the role of OPCY. The program should therefore be continued. Some adjustments should be made, however, to ensure that the next phase of the project focuses more on activities that will ensure long-term impact and sustainability. In this chapter, we turn to these areas of potential improvement.

In the following we have worked under the presupposition that OPCY will either continue to receive external funding at the current level, or that funding will be increased. If external funding is reduced, some of the recommendations to PBS might still be valuable, but will have to be adjusted to fit the budget constraints.

9.1 Recommendations to donors/cooperation partners

- a) **Continue supporting** activities for both children and youth so PBS/OPCY can keep providing programs, particularly in the rural villages/communities. OPCY has, over the past years, developed mutual trust and respect in many villages throughout the rural areas of the West Bank and should be enabled to develop the programs further in order to ensure long term impact and sustainability
- b) **Provide additional/increased funding** to the project on the condition that PBS/OPCY further develops the part of the project that works with teachers, youth leaders and other adults working with children. The current staff is well-equipped to

work with children and youth and should continue this work in order to meet an immediate need for diversion and programs for children, as well as to prove to community leaders the positive effect of using non-conventional methods. The program should be reinforced by staff qualified specifically to provide training of trainers for community leaders and work on advocacy vis-a-vis authorities.

- c) **Raise the question of harmonization and simplification of required reporting mechanisms with other donors.** If not done already, BN should raise the issue of donor harmonization of reporting mechanisms for NGO-support with Norad to find out what the current trend is among like-minded countries. Donors should align their planning and reporting mechanism such as not to overburden partners and hamper the holistic planning and reporting of the organizations receiving support.
- d) **Continue current practice of little direct involvement by ELFCN representative in the project and encourage network development.** Due to her involvement in other areas of work within PBS, the Norwegian liason has been less directly involved with the OPCY than originally planned. The OPCY-team seems highly qualified and self-reliant and for sustainability purposes, the less involved role should probably continue. As an advisor and discussion partner, the liason should continue to play a constructive role, but leave decisions to project leader(s). Having a liason at PBS is also important for capacity building of ELFCN. ELFCN could ensure coordination with other NGOs working in Palestine and specifically with other Norwegian organizations working in the area.

9.2 Recommendations to PBS/OPCY

- e) **Continue working directly with the children and youth on the West Bank** in order to bring attitudes, skills and hopes for a better tomorrow into communities where despair is about to take over. **And in addition:**
- f) **Increase efforts to train trainers and work with the adults in local communities.** In order to ensure follow-up of the children between each visit by OPC, and to ensure sustainability of both children's and youth program, develop a plan and program for increasing the workshops/seminars/training offered to teachers, youth leaders, others working with children/youth. Focus on providing teachers, community leaders etc with SET or other training aimed at helping adults help children and youth in difficult circumstances handle their lives. If financing stays at the current level, this could be done by decreasing direct involvement by OPC with children, and increase time spent on training of trainers. If budget is increased, employing additional staff specifically to take care of this dimension might be a better option. This is necessary in order to reach the objective of raising the awareness of the communities' responsibility for the well-being of the children, and empower the community to do something about the raised awareness.
- g) **Develop a concept for how adults who follow children to programs put on by OPC can become "doers" rather than simply "audience".**
- h) **Increase advocacy role** through increased efforts to cooperate with curriculum developers, teacher training colleges, teacher education department of the MoE, head masters at schools, teacher's unions, youth union (whichever organizations are

relevant) to promote the interest of children/young people (showing in practice that unconventional methods are valid and positive). PBS is showing on a small scale that there are other ways of learning than by memorization and that social and emotional well being is important in order for a child to thrive and learn. The major institutions that can spread these methods/ideas on a bigger scale (such as the Ministry of Education) should be identified and approached. If budget is increased and recruiting additional staff members is an option, keep this in mind when considering qualifications in the hiring process. Having specialized staff taking care of this dimension would also ensure that it does not “drown” in requests for the OPC-team to come to new locations with drama/puppet shows, or for the youth department to offer more programs/training to teens.

- i) **Look into working more with families.**
- j) **Develop informal support network(s) among cooperation partners.** As more adults and youth in the villages are being trained, they will probably need some follow-up and encouragement. Organizing occasional seminars for all those who have been trained would be one way of bringing people together, allowing them to learn from each other and do “trouble shooting”.
- k) **Evaluate whether some funding from the project could be made available to partners** in the rural communities in order to enable them to do their own programs for children/youth. Today, some funding is channelled to cooperation partners. If external funding is increased, it should be evaluated whether this practice should be extended to other places. (Based on success of pilots).
- l) **Develop a strategy for the overall community development work of PBS.** PBS activities have, since the establishment of the organization in the 1990’s, been marked by “emergencies”. This has led to an action-oriented organization that works within a broader Bible Society context, but without time for developing clear strategic direction. The organization is growing and needs a more coherent strategy presented in a document. The goal should be to ensure a comprehensive strategy for all of the community development category projects and how they can/should mutually reinforce each other.
- m) **Develop a structure that facilitates strategic planning.** Evaluate whether there is a need for written mandate for the advisory board and ensuring that advisory board has the necessary qualifications to advice on development projects, including OPCY. Establish a leadership team consisting of all the project/program leaders of the community projects (potentially of all divisions of work, but it’s beyond the scope of evaluation to comment on that.)
- n) **Develop a clearer goal hierarchy with realistic ambitions:** The current goal hierarchy gives direction, but it is not entirely clear which activities are supposed to reach which goals and which objectives. Having separate objectives for the children’s program and the youth program, and family program if one is established, might prove beneficial for planning and evaluating. Having only two or three main objectives and then goals with corresponding activities related to each of these objectives is one possible solution.

- o) **Establish a baseline against which results of next project period can be measured.**
The project description from 2004 is mainly qualitative and makes it difficult to meet the current donor demand for more quantitative results. A discussion of how results should be measured, although difficult, will probably help focus the activities.

- p) **Align reporting mechanisms and developing an internal culture for evaluation and planning.** PBS' internal evaluation and planning (at least for overall direction of the community development division of the work) seems to be hampered by the variety of reporting requirements imposed from the outside. Creating a culture of internal assessments, reporting of best practices and recording of challenges and how these have been tried overcome is recommended. To the extent possible, align reporting for all projects regardless of external requirements. I.e. set the first external donor deadline as deadline for all projects in order for leaders to exchange views and look for synergies between projects/programs.

Documents/internet sites consulted

Annual reports for OPCY for 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Cooperation agreement between PBS and ELFCN 2004 - 2009

DELFI, Frikirkens Israel- og Ytremisjon: Statement of Activities for the Year Ended December 31, 2006

Development Cooperation Manual. Norad/Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005.

Hajal, Nadia. 2007. UNESCO Education Support Strategy 2008-2012. UNESCO Ramallah Office. Unpublished paper.

Israel og Palestina – En økumenisk utfordring. Norges kristne råds skriftserie – nr. 14. Oslo 2006.

Looking Back, Moving Forward. Sida Evaluation Manual. SIDA. Edita, Stockholm, 2005.

Madanat, Labib. Beyond Self – Story of the Palestinian Bible Society 1993-2005. July 2006. (Unpublished paper)

Monthly reports for OPCY provided to the evaluators (developed for use by internal fund raiser/information needs) for the months of:
January, February, October, November, December 2005
March through November 2006
February, March, June and July 2007

Monthly reports for OPY provided to the evaluators for the months of:
October 2005
January, February, March, May, June, July, September, October 2006
February/March, April, May, June, July, August, November 2007

National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children 2004-2010, Ministry of Planning, PNA

Nicolai, Susan. Fragmented Foundations – Education and chronic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. IIEP/UNESCO 2007.

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The Palestinian National MDG Steering Committee. 2005

MDG: Occupied Palestinian Territory. Progress Report 2005.

OPCY budgeted cash flow for 2005 and 2006.
OPCY spread sheet indicating cash disbursements for 2007

Palestinian Bible Society Human Resource Policies and Procedures (undated)

PCBS statistics. Labor force survey. 2005 and 2007

PCBS, Assessment of the Impact of Israeli Measures on the Economic and Social Conditions of Palestinian Households, 2006.

PHDR 2004. Development Studies Programme/BZU. 2005

Project contract between ELFCN and PBS, signed March 2005

Project description OPCY, 2004

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<http://www.laughtertherapy.com/Articlebestbetforblues.htm#Laughter%20Blues>

<http://www.laughteryoga.org/>

http://www.mop.gov.ps/en/docs_archive/MoP/Freezing%20Donor%20Aid%20Violates%20Children's%20Rights.pdf

http://www.mop.gov.ps/en/docs_archive/MoP/Guide%20on%20Delivering%20Aid%20under%20the%20Current%20International%20Co.pdf

<http://www.mop.gov.ps/http://www.mop.gov.ps/>

http://www.mop.gov.ps/en/docs_archive/MoP/National%20Plan%20of%20Action%20for%20Pal%20Children%202004-2010.pdf

<http://www.pbs-web.com/>

<http://www.set.st/>

<http://www.undp.ps/en/newsroom/publications/pdf/other/enmdg06.pdf>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laughter>

Annexes

Annex 1: Institutions and persons consulted

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

Annex 3: Program for evaluation study trip

Annex I – Individuals and groups interviewed

The following PBC employees were interviewed individually:

- Labib Madanat, former Executive Secretary
- George Filemon, leader of OPCY and leader for the youth work in OPCY
- Diana Sam'an, leader of children's program
- Rawan Zahran, staff member working with OPC
- Imad Attallah, staff member working with OPC
- Mai Shaheen, staff member working with OPC
- Ghassan Soboh, time employee working with both the children and youth division of OPCY

In addition, individual interviews were conducted with:

Karin Riska, liason between ELFCN and PBS, working with PBS out of the Jerusalem office

Ingar Bø, Mission Director, ELFCN

Geir Børresen, Norwegian actor who has been conducting drama/puppetry workshops for OPCY

E-mail contact with the Norwegian representation to the Palestinian Territories and phone conversations with Norad provided additional information.

Also, the evaluation was informed by the recently appointed executive secretary together with former executive secretary the first day of the study visit. Due to his travelling schedule, an individual interview with the executive director after field visits was not possible. He was therefore specifically invited to submit comments prior to completing the report and has been interviewed on the phone.

In addition, interviews were conducted with:

- Three groups of children in the Tul Karm area (approx 20 children)
- Group of two volunteers at Dar Quandeel in Tul Karm and one representative from each of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture in Tul Karm
- One group of three boys from youth program at Hannan center, Salfeet
- One group of four girls from youth program in Yasuf and two volunteers
- 4 volunteers at Hannan Center, Salfeet
- 3 teachers at Hannan Center, Salfeet
- 2 youth workers (one who is also a teacher) with the Catholic Church in Bethlehem
- Group of head master, youth director, basket ball coach and three participants in the De la Salle Club
- 3 participants at the De la Salle Club, Bethlehem
- One group of 1 orphanage director, 4 house mothers and a social worker at orphanage in Bethany
- One group of approx 20 girls in Bidya
- A group of two social workers, an art teacher, the leader and three youth at Bidya
- The supervisor for the Ramallah, Jericho and Jerusalem area UNRWA and field supervisor for social workers and councillors in schools and health clinics supervisor of the same area social workers within UNRWA (in conjunction with observing family program at Jelazon refugee camp.)

Annex II

Terms of Reference

Evaluation of OPCY, spring 2007.

1. Purpose:

- a) Learning:
 - Environment.
 - Effect of goals of project.
- b) Planning for future operation.

2. Presentation of the project.

- History and background.
- The PBS organisation; main goals and activities.

3. a) Project document (§ 4.2)

b) Methodology:

1. Two external evaluators: 1 with development work background and 1 with 1st hand knowledge about the local situation. At least one of them also needs to have a deeper knowledge about children & youth. They need to submit their CV to ELFCN/BN.
2. Project administration and staff needs to prepare for and make appointments and the necessary arrangements for the evaluation.
3. Project staff needs to participate in evaluation.
4. Written plans and reports available for evaluators at least 2 weeks in advance.
5. PBS gives presentation / orientation on:
 - a. PBS organisation
 - b. Areas of work
 - c. PBS culture
 - d. Management and administration.
6. Interviews with staff members.
7. Field visits to project sites. Minimum 4 days in field, 2 for C-program and 2 for Y-program.
8. Observation of project activities in the field.
9. Interview with stakeholders:
 - a. Teachers and community leaders.
 - b. Parents (mothers)
 - c. Children and youth (main target group)
10. Visit ministry of education (if possible) and other organisations involved in childrens education.

4. Reporting:

- a. Oral report from the external evaluation team of the main findings.
- b. Written report from the ext. ev. team: No later than 2 weeks after their visit.
 - Containing:
 - a. Summary.
 - b. Observation and findings.
 - c. Recommendations.

5. Time schedule:

Field work: 10 days some where before the 15th of March 2007.

6. Areas of assessment / questions:

- a. Organisation:
 - Structures of PBS (organisation chart)
 - Office, infrastructures, logistics.

- Communication (lines and means)
 - Monitoring (registration and reporting routines)
 - Management of finances. Book-keeping, accounting, auditing.
- b. Human resources:
- Qualification requirements /training of staff.
 - Recruitment (availability)
 - Staff policy
 - Use of volunteers
 - Functioning of project team.
- c. Goals:
- Clarity of goals (long term, project period and annual goals).
 - Indication of impact.
 - Adjustment of goals and their reasons.
- d. Target group:
- Gender
 - Age groups
 - Criteria for selection.
 - Capacity building: Target group and stakeholders.
- e. Cooperation and network:
- Stakeholders in local communities (involvement, trust, transfer of knowledge)
 - Ministry of education.
 - Local schools and institutions.
 - Other NGO's involved with children and youth.
 - Other contributors
- f. Achievements:
- Activity plans: Performance and achievements.
 - Assessment of effects and side effects.
 - Assessment of relevance (activities and goals).
- g. Advocacy:
- Traumatized children and youth (Referral and support)
 - Promotion of the UN convention of children's right.
 - Confronting authorities / duty holders
- h. Relevance:
- Goals (needs in society, PBS philosophy and capacity)
 - Activities
 - Project (is it possible to establish in to the society. Is it worth it?).
 - Cost efficiency (travel distance/time: Is it worth it?)
- i. Sustainability:
- Lasting impact on the target group.
 - Change in attitude and practices (teachers, parents etc)
 - Local initiatives prevailing.
8. Specific questions:
- a. Integration of children and youth team. More cooperation between c & y program?
- b. More focus on quantity or more on quality?
- c. Unpredictable moving restrictions. The cost... The risk....
- What is the influence on the teams focus? Does it lead to less building of relationships with communities? Does it increase focus on achievements (quantity)?
 - Does it make an impact on development taking place?
- d. OPCY's use of Bible based principles.
- How is this perceived by the target groups and the stakeholders in the local communities. Has it a positive or negative effect?
- e. Balance between breadth and depth:

- Is OPCY spreading out to wide and thinly? (Causing less impact on long term goals)
- f. Should the project expand?
- To new areas (Gaza)?
 - To new age groups (18-25)?

Annex III

PROGRAM FOR OPCY EVALUATION STUDY TRIP 21/1 – 31/1 2008

Tuesday 22/1:

Interviews

- 09:00 Meet in Dahia office for interview of OPCY team:
 - o Karin Riska - Liaison
 - o George Fellemon – Project Leader + Youth Program Leader
 - o Diana Sam'an – Children Program Leader
 - o Imad Attallah – Team Member
 - o Rawan Zahran – Team Member
 - o Ghassan Soboh – Team Member
 - o Mai Shaheen – Team Member
- 12:00: Meeting in Dahia office for interview:
 - o Nashat Fellemon & Labib Madanant: Director of PBS
- Planning session for the evaluation team.

Wednesday 23/1:

- 08:30 Leave Jerusalem to Tul Karem
- 10:00 Meeting with Ministry of Education & Ministry of Culture
- 11:00 Meeting with:
 - o Dar El Qandeel Representative
 - o Children who have seen our programs.
 - o Parents of children
- 12:00 Children's Program in Kufur Lakef
- Interviews

Thursday 24/1:

- 08:00 Leave office to Jalazon
- 09:00 – 16:00: OPCY Family program with UNRWA.

Friday 25/1:

- 07:30 Leave office to Bethany
- 09:00 Children's program in Beit Eleazar + interviews
- Afternoon: Meeting with Youth Leaders that attended different trainings
 - o Abir and Alaa (Catholic Youth Leaders)
 - o Johnny from De La Salle Youth Leader

Saturday 26/1:

- 09:00 Leave Jerusalem to Bidya
- 10:00 Meeting Drama Team in Bidya: Saida, Im Milad, Abu Rami, Hamudeh.
- 14:00 Meeting: Nasser Sam'an, Director of Hanan Center & Youth of the Center
- 15:00 Play performed by the Salfiti Drama Team

Sunday 27/1: OFF

Monday 28/1:

- Evaluators working on reports.

Tuesday 29/1:

- Meeting with OPCY staff. Summary.

Wednesday 30/1:

- 14:00 Meeting with Norwegian representative