Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment

Global Campaign for Education (GCE) in Palestine

2010

About GCE

GCE civil movement was founded in 1999. It consists of a number of non-governmental organizations and teacher unions of more than 120 countries. GCE aims at supporting the right to education as a basic human right for all children in the world. In addition GCE seeks to increase public awareness and raise a political determination in world governments to fulfill their commitments in supporting the right to education and providing free education to all children in the world.

GCE coordinates the Global Action Week on education in April every year, (20\textsuperscript{th}-26\textsuperscript{th} of April), during which campaigns in all participating countries are launched.

In 2010, the main focus of the Global Action Week is education budgeting, where all campaigns are meant to urge governments to increase budgets and resources allocated for education.

Raising the issue of education budgets coincides with the emergence of effects of the global economic crisis and its impacts on social and educational conditions all around the world and especially in the poorest countries.

Education For All (EFA) Goals
More than 180 countries agreed on EFA goals during Dakar Education forum in 2000:

1. expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
2. ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
3. ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs;
4. achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
5. eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
6. improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

**Education and Economic Crisis**

The global economic crisis is a serious threat for education. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2009), 29 million children will stay out of schools by 2015.\(^1\)

The EFA Global Monitoring Report, “Reaching the Marginalized”, issued by UNESCO (2010), has shed light on shortcomings in raising funds for education. The report estimates that the funding gap is 16 billion US dollars, and it is a very dramatic leap compared to previous predictions. This funding gap is limiting the achievement of the main EFA goals.

Rich countries failed, as well, to meet the obligation to which they committed themselves in Dakar (2000). Although aids to basic education were increased from 1 billion dollars in 2000 to more than 5 billion dollars in 2006, they returned to decrease to 3 billion dollars in 2009,

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\(^1\) Matsadora, UNESCO Director-General during
and indicators are strong that they will continue to decrease. Scandinavian countries, Netherlands and UK have good history record in supporting basic education budgets. Whereas most of the countries (especially in the G8) didn’t meet their promises in providing 16 billion dollars annually as external aid to achieve the Education for All goals.

The complexity of this problem was increased by international organizations, especially the World Bank, as a result of complicated and unnecessary political and economic constraints imposed as a part of loan agreements. Therefore, governments are not able to increase expenditure and budgets of education.

There is a gap also between expenditure on education between high and low income countries. In 2006 the average of expenditure on each American students was 39 dollars, while in Congo, average expenditure on each student was 9.953 dollars\(^2\).

**Role of the International Community: Insights from UNESCO’s report “Reaching the Marginalized”**

The international Community should exhibit more efforts to alleviate impacts of the financial crisis on education. There is an urgent need to assess risks that threaten education as a result of dramatic increase in food prices on an international level and other factors. The following steps are demanded:

- To provide emergency aid to compensate for decrease in income and provide protection for stable expenditure on social affairs.
- Organizing a conference for funding bodies in 2010 to try to compensate for the funding gap in education.
- Increasing effectiveness of funds with focus on justice in distribution of this fund on countries with conflicts.
- Urging fund agencies to meet their obligations in education support
- Increase effectiveness of aids and focusing on just distribution especially for conflict areas.

\(^2\) UNESCO
GCE in Palestine

In 2008, Palestine which has been suffering from occupation since more than 60 years joined the Global Campaign for Education. And since then, Palestine has proved a remarkable and active participation.

The campaign in Palestine is implemented each year by the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment. The Coalition was established in 2007 by a group of Palestinian NGOs with the initiative started by Teacher Creativity Center aiming at optimizing effectiveness of all efforts exerted in the educational and development fields. The Coalition seeks to develop intervention programs in school environment to enhance education quality.

Message of the Coalition in the Global Action Week: towards a better education reality in Palestine

The Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment recognizes the limited financial resources for the Palestinian National Authority, especially in terms of resources for developmental programs. At the same time, the Coalition appreciates the PNA’s efforts for reform and development plans that will help in scaling up life conditions for Palestinian citizens. The campaign for this year aims to urge decision makers to increase educational budgets. Thus, the Coalition calls for achieving all promises and points mentioned in the National Reform and Development Plan and to apply all policies and regulations that can enhance education quality in Palestine.

The Coalition calls for:

- increasing budget specified for education development programs in Palestine especially focusing on enhancing better school environment through:

1. Increasing number of schools especially in far reaching villages and communities in area C and Jerusalem
2. increasing number of classrooms in schools to decrease classroom loads in line with international standards

3. providing all schools with scientific and computer labs

4. improving physical environment in classrooms (painting, windows, doors…)

5. rehabilitating school play grounds especially in coed schools where female students are deprived from their right to play.

6. developing teaching methods and techniques to transform the educational system into an analytical and creative thinking based system

7. increase and improve teacher education programs

8. approval of incentive system to encourage creativity among teachers

- improve teachers’ social life conditions through increasing wages to enable them of playing their role at its best.

- ensure totally free basic education to all Palestinian Children.

**GCE in Palestine**

The Palestinian Territories witnessed a variety of activities during the Global Action Week, organized by the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (20-26/4/2010).

**Coalition participates in a questioning hearing session for the Prim Minister**

The coordinator of GCE in Palestine, Intesar Hamdan, participated in a hearing session for the prim minister, Salam Fayad. The main theme was PNA general budget for 2010. The session was organized by AMAN, the Palestinian Coalition for Integrity and Transparency. Hamdan’s comments focused on the budget of the education sector which constituted only 1.5% of the general budget with 2% increase from last year. However
this increase is accompanied with 3.8% increase in students’ numbers, a close percentage to the population growth rate in Palestine.

**Free basic education:** according to the Child Law and the Basic Law, basic education in Palestine should be free and compulsory. When will this be applied on earth? School fees should be removed in order to help poor families in providing education for their children through focusing on other requirements such as stationery and uniforms.

**Lesson for All**

The majority of public schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip organized a Lesson for All during 20-26 April, 2010. About one million students participated in various activities in schools, including writing and presenting essays, stories, and poems plays tackling themes of right to education, scout marches, presentations and other activities.

Students’ marches, roamed the streets in some villages raising logos of the campaign calling for more support in funding to education. Some schools organized workshops attended by public figures and local community members where the students’ demands were presented.

**Qabatiya Educational Directorate**

40 thousand students from 84 public schools participated in the Lesson for All during 20-26 April, 2010. Activities included speeches on the school morning broadcasting, public meetings with heads of municipalities, and parent councils and other stakeholders. Mr. Hussein Araj, the Director of Activities Department at the Directorate, mentioned that activities of the Lesson for All addressed a variety of educational issues including mechanisms of community support to the teaching learning process inside schools, importance of childhood education in Palestine and school problems such as overloaded classrooms, safe school environment and teaching techniques, early childhood education, over loading in classrooms and other issues. Participants in the activities addressed decision makers and demanded more attention to education financial support for a safe
school environment. They demanded better conditions for learning through providing computer labs and science labs, and other requirements needed in schools.

**Qalqilia Directorate**

Omaria School for girls organized the central lesson for all in Qalqilia on 29/4/2010. Students of tenth grade presented a lesson for all in front of 600 students in the school. The lesson was attended by representatives of local organizations and parents, in addition to Yousif Odeh, the Director of Education in Qalqilia and Moaid Afaneh, Director of Activities Department at the directorate. Moaid Afaneh mentioned that the lesson focused on the urgent need to increase budgets for education and on the negative effects of small budgets on quality of education.

He added that 76 schools in Qalqilia with more than 32000 students organized lessons for all. These activities demanded totally free compulsory education and more support to higher education. Afana indicated that civic education classes in all schools were specified to discuss this issue.

**Southern Nablus Directorate**

74 students from schools in Southern Nablus Directorate called through the lesson for all activities for more attention to education and more budgets to develop its quality. The activities included story telling, scout shows, broadcasting and plays. Students addressed issues of illiteracy among the youth and adults and low academic achievement. Raghad Dakhil, Director of Activities Department at South Nablus Directorate, mentioned that there were various activities in all schools.

Participants in the activities demanded to form educational committees in the villages in order to integrate all efforts and roles to develop the educational process and to reactivate supportive teaching programs. They asked for more effective communication with Palestinian expatriates to help in their villages’ development. One of the main recommendations also was to activate parents’ councils and their role in projects
supportive to the schools, and to enhance relationship between parents and school representatives.

**Nablus Directorate**

Samar Qadah, Director of Activities Department at Nablus Directorate, mentioned that 67860 students in Nablus participated in activities of lesson for all in 181 public, private and UNRWA schools. Activities included students’ participation in the morning school broadcast, writing articles about education and childhood and about budgets for education, short stories, musical activities, plays and poems. Students demanded to remove all fees in education and to improve school environments. Students addressed as well, occupation’s violations to the right of educating in Palestine.

**Tulkarem Directorate**

125 schools with more than 50000 students in Tulkarem participated in activities of lesson for all. Adnan Qaadan, Director of Activities Department at Tulkarem Directorate, mentioned that Tulkarem students demanded for more efforts to improve quality of education because it is a basic human right and because illiteracy is the enemy of humanity.

It is worth mentioning that Tulkarem directorate organized two central lessons for all in Adawyia School for girls and Faroon School for girls on 20/4/2010. Activities focused on children right to education and the importance of increasing budgets for education.

**Salfit Directorate**

52 schools with more than 15600 students participated in the event by organizing lessons for all. Majed Mahmoud, director of activities department at the directorate, said that schools invited public figures, mayors, heads of local councils, and parents to their activities. Students demanded more budgets for education in order to apply right to education for all in quality.
Salfit directorate organized as well a central public meeting in Salfit Girls School in presence of Rafeeq Salama, Educational Director, Nawaf Saof, Deputy of Salfeet Mayor, and Dr. Khaled Qarwani, from Al-Quds Open University, in addition to directors of departments in educational directorate, parents and local community representatives.

**Southern Hebron Directorate**

180 schools belonging to this directorate participated in the lesson for all with more than 70000 students. In addition, activities were attended by members of parents’ councils and local community figures. Ezzat Makharza pointed out that all schools in the directorate implemented activities of lesson for all. These activities included: speeches in the morning school broadcast in all schools and 7 central lessons for all. The main issue in these activities was importance of education and its relation to economic growth, and its role as a type of struggle against occupation.

**Jerusalem Suburbs Directorate**

A group of activities were organized in the 61 schools of this directorate, as indicated by Ziad Qassem, Director of Activities at Jerusalem Suburbs Directorate. More than 17270 students participated in the lessons for all which focused on the special condition in Jerusalem, where the Israeli occupation puts a lot of obstacles infront of teachers and students.

**Toubas Directorate**

Amjad Sawafta, Director of Activities Department at Toubas Directorate, reported that 39 schools implemented a lesson for all. Activities included addressing the issue in morning school broadcast with participation of 20000 students.

**Jenin Directorate**

All schools in the directorate (128 schools) with more than 4143 students and 2548 teachers participated in the lesson for all activities organized during (20-26/4/2010). Students focused in their activities on the fact that education is a basic human right and
therefore it should be supported with more budgets. They concluded that budget increase will certainly enhance quality of education.

Other directorates organized similar activities. A central lesson for all activity was organized in each directorate, in addition to addressing the campaign issue in the morning school broadcast in each school.

Elham Abdul-Qader, Director of Activities Department at the Ministry of Education, reported that all schools were informed to organize a lesson for all and to specify 20 minutes in the morning broadcast in each school to speak about the campaign which focuses this year on educational budgeting issues. In addition, schools were asked to invite local community figures to the activities.

**Gaza Directorate**

Schools of Gaza shared with the world a Lesson for All. Ahmad Abu Nada, Director of Activities Department at the Ministry of Education in Gaza, reported that 12 celebrations were organized in 6 directorates in the Southern Districts. Two central lessons were organized in each directorate (one in a girls’ school and another in a boys’ school). Activities included speeches in the morning broadcast, brochure and poster distribution, and other activities by students with participation of more than 10800 students and more than 540 teacher and administrative staff members.

**Sport Activities**

This year activities of the GCE coincide with the organization of the FIFA World Cup in South Africa. This is a chance to reach as many as possible of people, fans of football, through the FIFA event. Therefore, many of the GCE activities were linked to the FIFA activities. The campaign is organized this year with the logo “One Goal: Education for All”. In Palestine, a number of activities for the Global Action Week were linked to sports.
Legislative Council Members, Union of Military Athletes and Palestinian Police participate in the GCE Global Action Week

The Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Education a march in Ramallah with participation of 500 students, on 21/4/2010. All participants wore the Campaign’s t-shirts and carried its posters and logos. Within the same event, more than 80 athletes (including 52 students) participated in a marathon. Participants were from the union of military athletes, police officers and students.

The event took place in presence of a number of public figures, representatives of ministries of education and youth and sports, leaders of nongovernmental organizations and parents. All participants wore t-shirts and hats with campaign logos and raised its posters.

The march was launched at Ramallah First Group simultaneously with the launch of the marathon from the entrance of Rafaat Village. The march and marathon headed to the Legislative Council square which was decorated with the Campaign posters.

The event was organized under auspices of Prime Minister, Salam Fayad. It was ended by a final festival at the Legislative Council Square in Ramallah. Speakers in the festival were: Deab Haddad, director of education in Ramallah District; Amal Qweider, representative of the Coalition; Mustafa Barghouthi, Leader of Palestinian Initiative Party; Bassam Salhi, Leader of People Party; Khaleda Jarrar, member of the political office of Palestinian Public Front; Qays Abdul-Karim, member of the political office of Palestinian Democratic Front; and Alaa Yaghi, member of Legislative Council from Fateh.

All parliament members assured that the Council supports increasing education budgets in order to achieve quality education for all. They expressed appreciation of efforts of the organizers of the event.
A meeting between representatives of Parliament (members from the PLO) and representatives of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment

In the final festival, representatives from the Legislative Council met with representatives of the Coalition within an initiative from the Legislative Council’s secretariat. The meeting discussed needs of the educational sector and how they can be met in a manner that promotes enhanced quality. The parliament members affirmed their support to the Coalition’s demands regarding education budgets, and regarding the approval of Law of a National Fund for Higher Education.

The meeting was attended by Qays Abdul-Karim, Naieema Sheikh, Mustafa Barghouthi, Khaleda Jarrar, Rabeeca Diab, Naser Jomaa, and Ibrahim Khreisha from the Parliament, in addition to the Undersecretary of the ministry of youth and sports, and Director of “Pioneers” in the ministry, and a number of representatives of member organizations in the Coalition.

Abdul-Karim, parliament member, affirmed the role of the Legislative Council in helping unions and the government to increase budget of educational sector and higher education sector from 20 million dollars to 42 million dollars during this year. He mentioned that the real problem is in the Basic education.

Mustafa Barghouthi raised the issue of the National Fund for Higher Education. The bill for this law was put on the agenda of the very first meeting of the current Legislative Council. However, after the council stopped its usual work due to the political conflict, the law was not approved.

Rabeeca Diab, Minister of Women Affairs, expressed appreciation to the Coalition’s efforts in promoting enhanced school environment, and said the Palestinian Coalition is a leading one on the regional level, despite occupation obstacles. Diab affirmed the importance of integrating all efforts among the government and other organizations in order to develop education in Palestine.
Representatives of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment emphasized the urgent need to improve equality of education especially in Area C schools and Jerusalem schools.

They indicated that education quality in the developing countries in general is going down because of the failure of rich countries to meet their commitments in supporting education in Dakar 2000.

**Suburb 10 km Marathon in Gaza**

Within the framework of GCE global action week, a marathon was organized in Gaza on 21/4/2010. More than 200 participants joined the marathon; they represent different sport clubs and centres, universities, schools and local organizations in Gaza. All participants wore the campaign’s t-shirts with the One Goal logo. In addition Gaza streets were decorated with the campaign’s posters.

**Football League for UNRWA Middle School students in Gaza (19/4/2010)**

UNRWA sponsored football games activities for middle schools in Rafah UNRWA Educational Area. 8 schools participated with more than 1000 students. In addition, all supervisors, and teaching and administrative staffs in these schools were present. T-shirts with the GCE logos and the Campaign posters were distributed during the event.

**First Cycling Race in Jenin (26/4/2010)**

The race was organized in presence of Qaddoura Musa, Jenin’s Governor, Marowan Weshahi, General Director of Salah Khalaf Centre, Musa Abu Zaid, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Said Hamdan, Director of Youth and Sports Department in Jenin, Refaat Sabbah, General Director of Teacher Creativity Centre, and Abdullah Jarrar, TCC coordinator in the Northern District and representative of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment, in addition to Alaa Saady, representative of Fateh in Jenin, Somoud Nazzal, Director of Marj Ben Amer Club, Salim Kielany, representative of Activities Department at the Youth and Sports ministry, Salam
Senan, Sport Clubs’ officer in the ministry, Majed Habbash, spokesman and public relations officer at the ministry, and Adnan Abu Qattanna, representative of Sharek Youth Centre.

300 people from 25 sport clubs participated in the race within two age categories (13 years old and less) and (older than 13). The race was launched at 2 pm on 26/4/2010. it started at Jannat park, south of Jenin, and ended in Sabah El-Kheir suburb. The distance was 7 km inside Jenin city.

The race was accompanied with Palestinian police and ambulances of the Palestinian Medical Relief Committees.

In Sabah El-Kheir Suburb public figures were waiting for the contestants in the final celebration where there were a number of speeches in addition to distribution of prizes.

The celebration started by a speech by Jenin Governor who said that the idea of this race is a great event through which the organizers succeeded in conveying their message in service of education. He added that education is facing an organized and systemized destruction attempts by the Israeli occupation. He added that this event is another appeal for all those who are interested in the Palestinians’ needs; education is a right for all.

Abdullah Jarrar, representative of the Coalition and Teacher Creativity Centre, affirmed in his speech the Coalition’s goal in integrating efforts and focusing them in improving quality of education in Palestine. He called for a just financial support for education through increasing education budgets. Jarrar presented as well, the struggle of education throughout occupation years, where there was a deliberate intention to destroy Palestinians’ education system. Jarrar concluded by demanding application of the National Reform and Development Plan and approval of policies and regulations that help in developing education quality.

Said Hamdan mentioned that it was the first time for the Ministry of Youth and Sports to organize cycling race in Jenin. He added that the event which comes within the frame work of the GCE is an indicator that sports can be for all and that through sports social
and human good can be achieved. He promised that the ministry will organize similar activities for all age categories and with women participation.

**Public meetings**

**Jenin**

There were more than 160 participants: representatives of parents’ councils, NGOs, public institutions, local councils and other public figures. The meeting was organized on 22/4/2010 in Jenin Secondary Girls School. It discussed the impact of budget related issues on the quality of education.

The event took place in presence of Mr. Qaddoura Musa, Jenin Governor, Mohammad Zahri, Deputy of Jenin Educational Director, Fakhri Turkman and Burhan Jarrar, former Legislative Council members, and Mohammad Said, Jenin’s Mufti.

The meeting was facilitated by Ahed Abu Rubb, Director of Activities Department at Jenin Educational Directorate, in cooperation with Abdullah Jarrar, TCC’s coordinator in Jenin.

There were a number of speeches including the introductory speech by Mohammad Zahri, who highlighted the active role of the ministry of education in the Campaign. The ministry, said Zahri, participates actively each year in the GCE, and pays special attention to the importance of support to developmental programs. Zahri pointed out that during this year’s campaign activities were organized in all schools of Jenin, where parents, students, teachers and educators participated in the activities that focus on quality of education and responsibilities of all stakeholders toward improving this quality.

Jenin’s Governor emphasized the importance of collaborative work and integrated efforts to make the success of the GCE in Palestine. He mentioned that refugee camps outside Palestine should be included in the campaign as well. The governor appreciated the role of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment and the Teacher Creativity Centre and their efforts to improve quality of education in Palestine. Elana Romahi,
representative of the Coalition, said that the aim is to integrate all efforts exerted by all actors and to focus them in one goal which is a quality education in Palestine. She affirmed that education is responsibility of all. Romahi added that the Campaign for this year is organized under the goal of Education for All… fund it now.

She said that the Coalition organizes this campaign to remind decision makers with their commitment to pay more attention to education, and urge them to increase budgets specified for educational development programs. The budget increase should focus, as Romahi mentioned, on improving quality of education, increasing number of schools and classrooms, increasing attention to education in far reaching villages especially those in Area C and Jerusalem. The budget increase should also be specified for improving teaching methods and techniques in order to achieve an educational system based on analytical and creative thinking styles.

Romahi, called for improvements in teachers’ living conditions through increasing wages in order to enable them of playing their role at its best.

She added that Palestine shares the world this global event as a sign of importance of education to the Palestinian people as a tool for liberation, struggle and state building. It is an indicator also of Palestinians’ interest in education for all deprived children in Latin America, Africa, Asia and other areas.

Fakhri Turkman, former Legislative Council Member, asked for more efforts to increase professional and academic competence of teachers, and to provide job and social security for them.

Burhan Jarrar, said what is important is to apply laws of free compulsory primary education and to develop vocational education as a strategic educational effort by the government.

Jenin’s Mufti demanded a competency-based hiring system in educational careers. He added that is not acceptable that teaching becomes the profession of those who can’t find
another job. He addressed the problem of university education, where majority of students in education faculties are from the lowest achievers in secondary education.

Some students participated as well in the discussions. They focused on the difficulty of curriculum and the existence of too many subject materials, in addition to lack of enough computer laboratories in schools. They discussed also problems of general and standardized tests (ministry tests) where tests are not being written or scored by students’ teachers, especially in mathematics’ subject.

Participants concluded with the following recommendations:

- increase education budgets in Palestine
- development of school curriculum and higher education system
- application of modern teaching methodologies and techniques in schools
- organizing a campaign for approval of the Law of National Fund for Higher Education.
- Improving teachers’ living conditions
- Approving an incentive system to encourage creativity among educational cadre

**Rmallah**

The public meeting in Ramallah was held in Baladna Cultural Centre on 25/4/2010, with participation of more than 80 representatives of parent councils members. The meeting was attended by General Director of “Pioneers” department at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and representatives of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment.

The meeting included presentations of school environment and school health and quality education, given by representatives of the Coalition.

Speakers stated that the aim of this event, which comes within the framework of the GCE for 2010, is to increase parents’ awareness of their role in the improvement of education quality.
The public meeting concluded with some important recommendations including curriculum development, educational budget increase, and working for promoting a better educational environment.

**Hebron**

The public meeting in Hebron was held in the City Hall on 28/4/2010. The Hall was fully decorated with posters and logos of the Campaign. 75 participants attended the event including representatives of different parents’ councils and other civil society organizations. The meeting took place in presence of Mohammad Hussein Abu Rayian, Director of Higher Education Council in Halhoul, Intesar Abu Assba, member of Board of Trustees in the Council, and Feda Halahla, public relations officer in Kharas Directorate.

Fadel Suleiman, Teacher Creativity Centre, spoke on behalf of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment. Khaled Hneihen, Deputy of Halhoul Mayor, presented a speech about the importance of supporting educational development programs in Palestine.

The discussion addressed possibilities of increasing educational budgets and impact of such increase. It addressed also issues of teachers’ rights and living conditions. All participants agreed that improving teachers’ social conditions and conditions will assist in improving education quality.

**Nablus**

**Organized by Mothers School Society in Nablus (Member of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment)**

The workshop was held in the Headquarter of Union of Palestinian Workers on 26/ 4/ 2010. It was attended by the administrative and executive staffs of the Mothers School Society, educational supervisors from Nablus Educational Directorate, representatives of UNRWA Education Office, private school principals, and a number of public schools’
teachers and principals, in addition to representatives of local and civil society organizations.

The workshop focused on causes of low academic achievement among students. Sanaa Shbeit, Head of the administrative staff in the Mothers’ School Society, pointed out the Society’s participation in the GCE for the third year. She mentioned that this is an indicator of the Mothers’ School Society’s belief in the importance of collaborative work and coordination among civil society organizations and between government and UNRWA in order to develop the educational process in Palestine. She affirmed that the Society’s membership in the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment is in line with its goal to play an active role in changing policies affecting education.

Shbeita appreciated efforts of the Educational Directorate in the Ministry and the Education Office in UNRWA in developing quality of education in Palestine.

Nadia Shehada, Director of the Mothers’ School Society, said that the Society has given huge attention to education since its inception in 1999. This is because education is one of the basic needs for Palestinians.

She indicated that low academic achievement among students is the main motive of this workshop. There are many questions about this issue whether from parents, specialists, students or other interested parties.

Alyaa Jeaan, Education Coordinator and representative of the Coalition, said that Palestine’s participation in the GCE is an indicator of our interest in every child’s right to education as a basic human right.

Participants in the workshop discussed this issue and they concluded that teachers’ role is a major role. They affirmed that parents should promote positive attitudes among students toward their teachers. They mentioned the importance of modern styles of homework assignments especially in English language classes.
Some of the main recommendations of the workshop: importance of standardizing tests of Arabic Language and mathematics for the primary stage, and integrating efforts to enhance academic achievement through a true partnership between all stakeholders in the local communities.

**Kufer Aqab Public Centre Activities (24/4/2010)**

The Centre which is a registered organization in Jerusalem that implement extracurricular activities for students, organized an event within the framework of the GCE. This event was attended by students from different schools. A number of art activities and cultural activities were carried out. Students distributed posters of the Camping. The Centre’s coordinator highlighted the campaign’s goals and the importance of increasing education budgets in Palestine, especially in Jerusalem.

**Activities of Early Childhood Resources Centre**

The Centre is a member of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment and in the Campaign in Palestine.

The Centre organized a program with a number of activities for One Goal: Education for All, as follows:


- a workshop for mothers, principals, and teachers of Dalal kindergarten in Shufaat (20/4/2010)

- a workshop in Jerusalem for kindergarten principals in the meeting room of the Childhood Resources Center in Jerusalem (20/4/2010).

- a workshop in Hebron for kindergarten teachers and principals in the meeting room of the Childhood Resources Center in Hebron (22/4/2010).
- a workshop in Ramallah for kindergarten teachers and principals in the meeting room of the Childhood Resources Center in Ramallah (24/4/2010).

- An open day activity for mothers, children, teachers in kindergartens of Saffa and Beitour in Ramallah (27/4/2010)

Campaign logos and publications of the Childhood Resource Center were distributed in all of the activities. These publications address education budgeting for early childhood. The activities concluded with a recommendation that the Ministry of Education should take the responsibility of kindergartens and preschool education. The activities recommended as well, that the government increase budgets for early childhood sector in general.

**Gender in Education Conference**

Within the framework of the Global Action Week for Education, the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment organized on 29/4/2010 a local conference about gender in education. The conference was held under the auspices of Rabiha Diab, Palestinian Minister of Women Affairs and Member of the Legislative Council.

Rabiha Diab emphasized that it is a national duty to qualify human resources, especially among women. According to this is an important part of the process of national liberation and state building. She added that Palestine which suffers Israeli occupation is struggling to build its own home in the world; education is what have been always a distinguished feature of its people, whether females or males, education for Palestinians is a means for occupation resistance.

Diab pointed out that the government will adopt a gender-responsive general budget, which is considered a qualitative leap in the Palestinian government’s trends to more social justice and equity. This decision comes in line with the government’s social development plan.
The Women Affairs Minister urged for the emergence of sectoral councils with participation of pertinent ministries to enhance women situation in education. She called as will for a more involvement and more active role of media in addressing women issues in education. She stated that educational empowerment should target both women and men in order to reach the highest levels of development.

In her speech in front of the conference’s attendees in the hall of Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Ramallah, Diab considered education as a tool and a project for investment in light of scarcity of economic resources. She mentioned that education in Palestine has gone through a number of leaps in terms of enrolment rates since the beginning of the last century. These developments were enhanced after the PNA took power, where enrolment rate to basic education reached 99.6% during the school year 2007/2008 (50% females and 49.6% males). This reflects Palestinians’ interest in education especially for girls.

Diab indicated that women’s education is reflected also in their engagement in labour market. However, this is affected by early marriage for example. She highlighted education conditions in Jerusalem, the most marginalized and damaged district in terms of education according to Diab, because of occupation control over education there. She pointed out the high dropout rates especially in secondary schools, which is justified by the need to work and provide an income for families.

The Minister of Women Affairs presented obstacles and challenges encountering education in the Palestinian Territories, emphasizing that Israeli occupation and its measures on earth are the major type of violations to education. This includes school and university closures, difficulties in accessibility to education institutes due to checkpoints and separation wall especially in Jerusalem, in addition to other restrictions.

Diab presented the phenomenon of school dropout as one of the major problems in schools. She presented statistics that indicate that male dropout rate in the primary stage is higher than female dropout rate (2.23% males, 2.01% females). She said that these
statistics are partial indicators of the lack of gender sensitivity in Palestinian curriculum, where the energies and experiences of genders are not taken into consideration.

Diab talked about problems in the curriculum such as the lack of opportunities for creativity among girls and boys. Primary stage curriculum don’t reflect explicitly, systematically and fairly the woman image. It shows women in specific careers without considering variety in professions as in men examples.

The government’s decision to adopt a general budget that is responsive and sensitive to gender issues is the culmination of efforts exhibited by the Ministry of Women Affairs in the field of impacting the formal public policies.

Diab added that starting with budgets is the best start for any initiative that targets the enhancement of gender sensitivity within society and public life especially in terms of developmental plans to decrease the current gap between women’s and men’s situations. We need to understand and assess gender needs in order to achieve a just allocation of resources.

Refaat Sabbah, General Director of the Teacher Creativity Center and the Regional Coordinator of GCE, launched the conference’s activities by a speech in which he said “we always wonder about the role of education in achieving change, increasing awareness about rights, and promoting for those rights. We ask about the rights not only of women but about the rights of everybody, children, people with special needs, prisoners...”. Sabbah added that education alone cannot ensure this kind of change, it is one tool for change. Education is a basic human right, it is not only a need, it is an essential part of human life and dignity. For woman, Education is a weapon to fight against all challenges and obstacles that want her down. Education can help women in finding a resource for living, education is a power source in itself, it given women the sense of protection and security.

Sabbah emphasized women need to education and supporting laws and empowering policies to make women’s education more effective and more enabling for change in their lives.
Sabbah indicated that this conference is part of the campaign implemented to put pressure on governments and advocate within politicians, educators, journalists, parliament representatives and national figures and all other supporters from all sectors in order to make these laws and polices real.

Afaf Mazaraa, representative of the Palestinian Coalition for Safe School Environment, presented the active role Palestinian women have played in the historical struggle against occupation, in addition to their role in public life and in sustainable development as (statistically) one half of the society. She affirmed that Palestinian women still have a long march to achieve their human equal entity, and there are many obstacles and challenges that women need to encounter before approving just and equal legislations and laws, since the current ones don’t suffice the desired level of legal and social conditions for women.

Intesar Hamdan, Manager of the Protection of Right to Education Program in the Teacher Creativity Centre, arranged for the conference which consisted of three sessions. The first session addressed issues of policies and budgeting, and was managed by Fadel Suleiman.

Salah Soubani presented a paper entitled “Role of PNA Budget in Achieving EFA Goals and Right to Education”. The paper indicates an ongoing increase in education’s portion of the general budget, however, this is still not sufficient enough and needs more efforts. Soubani’s paper criticized the way in which the budget of the ministry of education is prepared, in addition to the lack of coordination between the ministry’s 17 departments in this regard. The paper shed light also on the fact that the ministry’s budgeting process is not linked and doesn’t contribute to the goals of the 5-year strategic plan and the national development and reform plan.

Tahseen Yaqin addressed in his paper the issue of the strategic plan of the ministry of education and developmental programs and gender issues. He considered that the approved budgets are not sufficiently sensitive to gender issues and needs.
The second session which discussed issues of gender and development, was managed by Hanan Abu Ghoush, Representative of the Women Center for Social and Legal Counselling, and discussed three papers.

In a paper entitled “Rural Women’s Contribution” Nadia Harb presented the actual role of women and their contribution to the learning-teaching process and to the social movements, through a presentation of historical evolution of issues of gender and education in Palestine. The paper showed that since the 1920s Palestine recorded the highest enrolment rates for both females and males within the neighbouring countries in general, and especially for female enrolment rates. But unfortunately, the paper concludes, that all this positive indicator was not reflected in sufficient way on the level of Palestinian women’s engagement in labour market.

Suraida Hussein presented a documented analysis of challenges that affect women’s contribution to the development process. She considered that high unemployment rates, illiteracy, in addition to social, economic and legal aspects and occupation are all factors that limit women’s actual contribution to development especially under occupation conditions.

Helmi Araj, Director of Hurriat “Freedoms” Center, addressed in his commentary speech the issue of female prisoners in Israeli prisons, especially about their right to education. He mentioned that 34 female prisoners are still until now in those prisons out of more than 15,000 prisoners, the total number of female prisoners in Israeli prisons since 1967. This is another indicator of the active involvement of Palestinian women in the struggle for liberation and independence. This is also an indicator of the Palestinian women’s involvement in the state building process.

The third session was specified for the issue of women education and labour market. It was facilitated by Huthayfa Jalamna. Activist and former prisoner, Amena Rimawi, presented two papers. The first entitled “needs, strategies, and development frontiers for women’s education and participation in labour market”, and the second is “integration of gender issues in school education”. Intesar Hamdan facilitated the final session and
concluded the whole discussion in order to come up with the conference’s recommendations. The main recommendations are: urging the ministry of education to reassess the curriculum, develop vocational education, apply the free compulsory law, cancel “parallel higher education system”, commit to integrity principles in employment, approve gender-sensitive budgets and increase budgets of educational development programs.

A number of academic figures, leaders of feminist movements, parents councils members, students and representatives of interested organizations working in the field of gender and education.