

## Project Hope June 2005 Update

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The past few months have been busy and eventful for Project Hope. There are new staff, new volunteers and a new international volunteer residence. We have been involved in many different projects during this time, and hope you take a few minutes to read about them.

### **I. Circus**

Project Hope has been working with local youth volunteers in building an acrobatic circus. The Circus is an amalgamation of different groups and individuals working underneath the Project Hope banner.

#### *a. Cabuwazi Circus visit*

On 22 March 2005, ten members of the Cabuwazi Circus ([www.cabuwazi.de](http://www.cabuwazi.de)) and one filmmaker came to Nablus from Berlin to continue the work they had begun the previous year. They were met by 16 Palestinian Project Hope volunteers who took part in the workshops. From Thursday 24 March to Friday 1 April 2005, acrobatic circus workshops were conducted by the Cabuwazi Circus and Project Hope Circus members for local children in Nablus. Several local Project Hope volunteers and International volunteers organized the event.



The training was offered to 85 children at a local school, with help from the mayor's office. The children focused on five different skills:

1. Diabolo and clowning
2. Acrobat and jump rope
3. Stilts and dancing
4. Juggling and unicycle
5. Mask and theatre

At the end of the training sessions, two shows were performed: one for the local trainers at the Red Crescent Society (which had provided accommodation for our German guests), and one for the children and their families. The public show was a success and the audience had a wonderful time.



The Cabuwazi Circus made a generous donation of equipment to Project Hope, with partial financing from the German Consulate in Ramallah. Much of the event was funded through a donation by the Coca Cola Corporation in Ramallah. The Cabuwazi Circus is expected to return in July 2005 for further training sessions, while 10 members of Project Hope are going to be invited to Germany for a further event in early October.

### *b. Other Circus activities*

Since the training sessions in March, the Circus has carried out some other activities, performing shows for Kindergarten children and children suffering from Thalassemia (a blood disease common to Palestinians). The Circus also ran two days of training sessions, followed by a small show, with a group of French jugglers who had come through the French Cultural Center of Nablus. The Project Hope Circus has now decided to adopt a new name as a combined group, "As-Sirk As-Saghir," organized under the umbrella of Project Hope.



## **II. Music 4 Music**



This year 6 musicians again joined us from their Konservatorium in Amsterdam: 2 familiar faces and 4 new faces. The group was made up of 1 British, 1 American, 2 Dutch, 1 French and 1 Australian. They both performed for children and conducted music workshops. Many Project Hope volunteers were involved in the events, both helping organize them and actively participating in their activities. Through the auspices of Project Hope, a number

of different Palestinian organizations hosted Music 4 Music workshops from 12 – 22 April. Our shared efforts resulted in over a dozen performances of varying sizes, reaching over 1000 children throughout Nablus, Sulfit, and Jericho. One event alone saw 250 children in attendance.

By chance, the Music 4 Music workshops began soon after the Circus training. The result was that for some of the shows, the Circus and Music 4 Music combined their acts in Circus performance with Live Music. It was a success, particularly the shows in Jericho at the end of the trip. Now we are planning for a combination of Circus and Music for the summer of 2006.



### III. English Classes

Project Hope is continuing its English classes, our primary program, funded by the Canadian AutoWorkers (CAW) Union’s “Social Justice Fund.” The work has been tough, but it is important. Our program is working in various parts of Nablus. We are holding classes at partner centers in the refugee camps: Old Askar, New Askar, Balata and Al Ain. In addition, we have classes in the Old City of Nablus and Nablus itself. The classes’ target group is children and youth, though on occasion we will teach adult classes. The English classes are an important forum where the students can express themselves while learning a language that is often the requisite of many paid jobs. We include a Penpal program in the English classes, which is currently linked with Australia.

Our classes in Askar and Balata are becoming more and more refined. These are traditional areas of activity for us where the UNRWA performs many of the required social services. The UNRWA schools average 44.3 children per classes (“Palestine and Palestinians,” ATG, Ramallah, 2005, pp. 55), most of whom are afflicted with mental health disorders resulting from the Intifada. It is hard to teach effectively in this environment, where all the students are held back. We provide small class sizes with a positive learning environment. For some classes we have the support of the Head Masters of the local UNRWA schools. They are



sending us talented students from the underprivileged classes who can benefit from the opportunity to learn further. Our classes are taught by a mixture of Palestinian and International volunteers, coordinated by a small staff under the supervision of the Head Teacher. Our monthly goal is to teach 200 children per month, 400 during the summer months, focusing upon the communicative method with task based learning exercises.

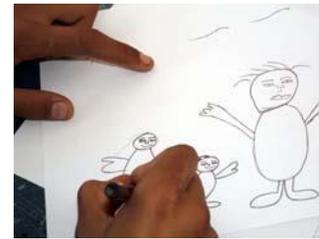
We are always looking for donations to this program, particularly: books for our library, English teacher volunteers and funding.

#### IV. Art

Our art program is currently being coordinated by an international volunteer from Italy who has recently been working on two different projects.

##### *a. Art Therapy Project*

With an international supported program of art therapy. Children are provided with a safe place and good materials, where new skills can be taught in order to enable them to draw, without coaching, concepts such as love, fear, peace, anger, etc... The project was carried out in the New Askar Refugee Camp for around 20 children, and briefly in the Old Askar Refugee Camp for 20 children.



##### *b. Old City Doors Project*



A project was initiated with the Sheikh Amr Arafat Foundation in the Old City of Nablus, in which old doors taken from houses demolished during the conflict in Nablus were painted by children. This was conducted for a UK Art's Alive project.

There were 9 doors for 9 children. The children had several themes to choose from: family and friends, meal and celebration, where I live, and my hopes and fears. First the children drew on paper, and then on the doors, which they subsequently painted. They selected their own colours. In the process, the children were asked for the meaning of the drawings and colours they were using. The children came from the Old City of Nablus, New Askar Refugee Camp and a Girl's Orphanage in Nablus.



## V. Drama

Control over one's body and voice is a vital ingredient in ownership over one's life, confidence in one's self, and understanding of one's actions and interactions with others. For these reasons, drama and the voice and movement aspects of drama training can play an essential role in the well-being of the child. This is all the more important when a conflict situation has shattered a child's confidence in the world around him or her, placed the child's physical and emotional self in harm's way, and disturbed the child's mental peace.



There were two goals in the project: 1) to introduce the students to basic level drama techniques of speech and movement and to exercise the student's imaginative capabilities, and 2) to impart real-life skills and serve a therapeutic process. A third goal is a long-term goal to help the students to be confident, creative and comfortable with themselves. The classes were performed in English, lasting for 8 weeks with a range of 12 to 16 students in Beit Iba (Nablus) and Balata Refugee Camp.

Our drama programs are unfortunately irregular, wanting in both funding and volunteers. Recently it had the fortune where the initiative of a talented volunteer from the United States led to the inception of a new drama project. The volunteer has left, and the project halted, but he left behind a designed program that can be revived simply on our receiving the volunteers with the appropriate skills.

## VI. Jayyous



In Jayyous there has been a continuous English program, which halted for the Spring. The classes had nearly 90 students in March, before the break. The program will begin again in mid-June of 2005, at about half capacity. There will also be a short art program.

*Thank you for your interest in our recent activities. If you have any questions, would like to contact us or are interested in supporting our programs, contact:*

[projecthope@mail.com](mailto:projecthope@mail.com) [NO LONGER VALID] or visit our website [www.projecthope.ps](http://www.projecthope.ps)

