



Newsletter of December 2017

On behalf of Hope Flowers School's teachers, students and local community, we wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New 2018.

We would like to express to you our appreciation and gratitude for your very helpful support to Hope Flowers School (HFS).

New scholastic year

The new scholastic year has started on 21 August 2017. The new scholastic year started with new development at the HFS. Our services are consistent with our declared philosophy of peace and human rights. HFS services are strengthening of HFS's role as leader in serving our community.

Like previous year, the school operates in two shifts per day;

The morning shift; 350 students are enrolled at HFS regular program. Kids benefit of main stream education from kindergarten and K-1 to K6.

Afternoon shift: the afternoon program starts daily from 15:00 – 18:00 o'clock. Majority of children referred to our afternoon program are from less privileged children from other schools that lack for service like HFS. The afternoon is called "Child protection program" and serves 60 children on daily basis. The school serves also 70-100 children with special needs (mainly learning disabilities) per year whom referred to HFS to benefit of existing rehabilitation, education and psychosocial services available at HFS.

Program for Autistic Children: Consistent with its philosophy of peace and human rights, HFS started this year we celebrated opening one class for Autistic Children (ASD). Our program for children with autism spectrum disorder is funded by USAID program. ASD is currently a world-wide epidemic. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates that 1.6% of children in the West Bank are disabled. Children with disabilities in the Palestinian Territories cope with many multifaceted challenges and discrimination and are the most marginalized by society. Further, there is a lack of specialized centers and professionals to provide educational and therapeutic services for ASD's. HFS program is expected to serve 10's of children from Bethlehem area and neighboring towns.

Academic achievement of HFS - Hope Flowers School has celebrated this year the achievement of *Ayman Adassi*, a former student who scored as one of the best 10 students of the west bank in high school standardized testing with score of 98.6 in scientific stream. Parents of *Ayman Adassi* has informed HFS about the success of *Ayman* and decided to visit HFS and teachers to acknowledge HFS's support to *Ayman* and the importance of having good his elementary education.

HFS provides basic education to children from kindergarten and basic education K-1 to K-6. When students leave HFS at the age of 13 they go to other schools. It is a little bit difficult to track all our former students. But, it happened once every while that a former student visit HFS to acknowledge the schools support in their academic as well as individual life.

Renovating Kindergarten at HFS – The kindergarten at HFS was renovated. The new design took into consideration the following issues:

- ✓ To make kindergarten accessible for children with disabilities
- ✓ New design should solve the physical and educational barriers preventing inclusion of children with disabilities in the kindergarten.
- ✓ Developing the kindergarten environment (like child friendly design, improving lightening, and climate control, hygiene, and safety aspects).

The new design provided,

- 1) Two classroom/ educational areas for children
- 2) One room used for sensory box
- 3) Four toilets for able body children (two for female and two for male)
- 4) One toilet and shower for children with special needs
- 5) One kitchenette and dining area.

Below are some pictures of new kindergarten:



Internal Ramp with hand rails (left and right side).
Using marble stone on walls, and lighting corridor and classes.



Improving ventilation and lighting in the kindergarten through enlarging windows and opening new windows.



Air-conditioning and heating have been installed



Sensory box, a room to stimulate sensory of children with special needs



Kitchen & Dining area



Toilette for children with special needs and shower is created.

N.B. Arms for toilet have been ordered from Israel and will be installed soon.



New toilets for able body children

Israeli Settlement expansion near Hope Flowers School

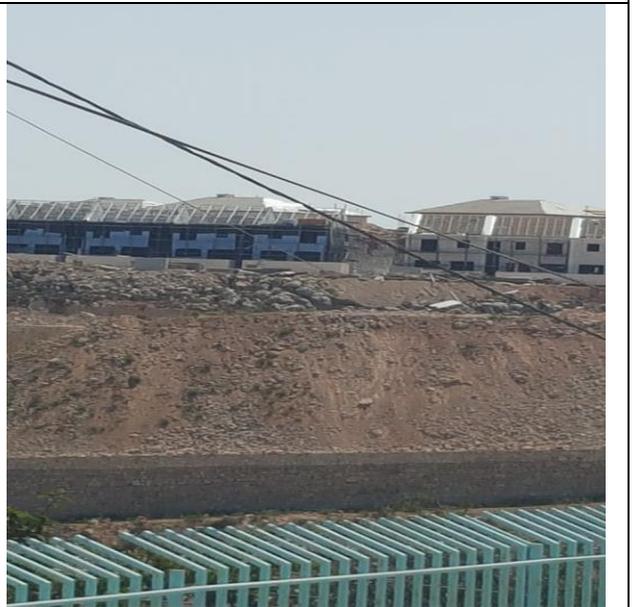
The land confiscation and Israeli settlement expansion near HFS continues. New buildings are emerging every days. Building of new homes in the settlement is moving in fast rhythm. Pictures blow show difference.



Israeli bulldozers crushing stone of Palestinian hills near Hope Flowers School, April 2017



Same place in September 2017



Same place in September 2017

HFS is affected badly by the situation in Palestinian territories....

*The United Nations Committee for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported the acceleration of 'de-development' of the Palestinian Territories in 2015 /2016. As previous UN reports, the 2015/2016 report **underlined the** deterioration of the Palestinian economy, largely rooted in the occupied territories status, has resulted in weak growth, a precarious fiscal position, forced dependence on the Israeli economy, mass unemployment, wider and deeper poverty and greater food insecurity. Palestinian women continued to bear the brunt of occupation, condemning them to one of the lowest labour participation rates and the highest unemployment rate in the world. Economic growth in OPT, measured by gross domestic product (GDP), declined from an annual average of 11 % in 2010 and 2011 to a mere 1.5 % in 2013, much below the rate of population growth, resulting in lower income per capita. Further, unemployment remained extremely high, 27 % in the West Bank, and only one in four households was classified as "food secure" or having reliable access to food while one in three households was classified as food secure in 2011.*

HFS is located in area C and project emphasizes area C which encompasses 62 per cent of the West Bank. The report notes that the Israeli policies in Area C and the ongoing construction and expansion of Israeli settlements have altered the West Bank's landscape into an archipelago of disconnected islands.

Furthermore, settler violence against Palestinian civilians and property exacts high socioeconomic tolls on the Palestinian people. For instance,

House demolition continued in 2016 and accelerated in early 2017, with 587 Palestinian structures demolished between September 2015 and April 2016, while construction of 1,800 housing units in Israeli settlements was initiated and greater expansion planned for 2016. The long-term trend of annexation of Palestinian land also continued. At present, there are approximately 142 settlements in the West Bank, which brings the number of Israeli settlers to about 21 per cent of the Palestinian population of the West Bank (PCBS, 2016).

In its note to the General Assembly in 2015, UNCTAD indicated that military occupations typically involve the exploitation, impoverishment, marginalization and displacement of the occupied people, as well as the destruction of their assets and appropriation of their resources. Equally damaging are measures and policies by the occupying Power that undermine the capacity of occupied people to access and utilize their resources, move freely within their homelands and conduct normal trade, economic and social transactions with neighbors and trading partners. Thousands of productive trees were reported burnt, uprooted or vandalized.

The level of violence between Palestinians and Israelis has increased in 2016. Several violent clashes have taken place in the area like the killing of Israeli settlers and Israeli soldiers and killing of tens of Palestinian civilians and demolishing their homes. Stabbing attempts of Israeli settlers and soldiers has also continued. Most of these have been done by teenagers / youth in schools. These violent events come as consequence to the unhealed traumas and psychological wounds among these youth. The consequences of this current violence and traumas in the past cause a further escalation of violence nowadays. This new escalation has created new psychological traumas which made HFS consider extending the trauma counselling program to reach out to more affected communities in our area and connecting the program to schools that are mostly affected by this current wave of violence.

The spiral of violence between Palestinian and Israelis continues with no end in sight which left many victims and wounds of war. This ongoing situation has caused collective trauma within the Palestinian people and, since 50% of Palestinian society is under 18 years of age, the majority of victims are children.

380 students are enrolled in HFS in 2016 from kindergarten and K1-K7 (ages 4-14 years old). The number of students in HFS is increasing every year because of two reasons; First, HFS is offering scholarships for student from poor families. Secondly: more children are referred to HFS from other school to receive trauma counseling program "*Listen to my Voice*".

HFS is serving children from Bethlehem area; 80% of the children at the Hope Flowers are coming from refugee camps and neighboring villages.

As in previous years, HFS has kept its tuition fees low enough so that financial ability of families do not prevent children from getting their education. HFS is providing 50 (fifty) full scholarships and another 40 partial scholarships for children from poor families in 2016. The school programs have not focused only on the provision of good education for children, but also focused on the providing psycho-social counseling for traumatized children and traumatized disabled children, emotional and physical development of the children.

In the afternoon, HFS is serving mainly children from the community and children referred to HFS from other schools. The school offers afternoon programs to support children who are not enrolled at HFS. HFS is looking to offer 60 children 6-12 years old, from Bethlehem area that come from difficult socioeconomic background, traumatized, who are deemed to be at risk, potentially suffering from educational, psychological and behavioral problems at home and in their schools.

A large number of the children's parents at HFS are unemployed and cannot meet basic needs in their households. A large number of the children are Malnourished. This situation affects the health, well being and academic performance of children. Since few years, HFS started to provide hot meals for young children three times a week.

Thank you for your generous support and solidarity with Hope Flowers School.