



KARAMA: NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR YOUNG  
PEOPLE AND WOMEN IN PALESTINE.



كرامة: آفاق جديدة لشباب و نساء في فلسطين.

# Narrative Report For The Advancement of At-Risk Students Through Remedial Courses



By  
**Karama organization for Women and Children  
Development  
2010**



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# Narrative Report

## Emergency Program – Norwegian People's Aid

### 1. General Information:

Name of Organization	<b>Karama for the Development of Women and Children</b>
Title of the project:	The Advancement of At-Risk Students Through Remedial Courses
Start Date	January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2010
Ending Date	May 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2010
Project Location	Bethlehem and Hebron Districts
Grant Allocated Budget	98,916 USD
Aim	Improve the academic and social performance of target students in Bethlehem and Hebron districts

### 2. Goal and Objectives of the project:

1. To improve the academic and social performances of target students in the Bethlehem and Hebron districts.
2. To improve the test scores of participating students in the subjects of Arabic, English, Mathematics and Science.
3. To improve the quality of life in the community through directly improving the communicative skills for participating students and their families.
4. To increase the level of conscientious involvement of parents in the educational life of their children and increasing their confidence in their child's capabilities and future.
5. To provide methods for dealing effectively with at-risk students to the permanent teachers of the participating schools, thus insuring sustainability of the project's results.



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### 3. Achievements:

Project Achievements:

Significant achievements and progress in the target population achieved by this project are:

#### 1. The Social Aspect:

Since it was determined that addressing the social problems and health of the targeted students and their families can be the easiest way to improve their performance in the schools, the efforts of our social workers achieved positive and lasting results.

2. There have been several cases which the project has been able to help directly through assistance in coordinating health and social services for the students and their families. Through coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, several families have been provided with health insurance and other services. The Karama Organization has also contributed assistance to several students by purchasing medication directly for these students.

#### 3. The Academic Side:

There has been significant progress in the schools to improve the performance of students, at varying rates. Where there were many of students testing at non-functional levels in reading, writing, letters and numbers, we now find that the proportion of these has become almost



non-existent.

Many students have begun to show marked improvement in their normal school testing scores. These students have been reported to be more active and participatory in their regular classes than they had been prior to participation in the project.

**Note : More statistics will be sent to you by post in the project file.**

1. The academic lessons were implemented in the schools as it was agreed with the schools' administration. In each school, the target students were divided into 3 groups of 15 to 20 students. 3 lessons each week in each subject (Arabic, English, and mathematics) were offered, in total 576 lessons were offered to the students during a period of four months. In some schools where science was also offered, the students received more lessons. The schedule for each school will be sent via post.



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- Guidance groups were formed by the project staff in the target schools to discharge pressure on the target students.
- 96 meetings with the parents of the target students were implemented and they were equipped with skills to aid them in dealing with their children without using physical punishment.
- The recreation day was implemented with the target students by contracting a theater group specialized in providing a positive outlet for the students' frustrations.
- We created of a large network of relations with local NGOs and used these relations to provide services for the target students in the project.
- A recreation trip was implemented to Murad Tourist Resort in the Bethlehem area.
- A closing ceremony for the project has been implemented and included the participation of the education ministry of the Palestinian Authority and the UNRWA education representative. The children were rewarded for their achievements by receiving certificates and gifts.



### 3.2 Beneficiaries:

Num.	Target Groups	Number	
		Males	Females
1	432 students for 8 schools	216	216
2	432 Parents	216 fathers	216 mothers
3	39 Part time teachers	12	27
Total		444	459

Note: By targeting this group, a large slice of the society will benefit.

### 3.3 Changes over the project period

During the project some things were changed, other than planned in the working plan and these changes were out of our control. The first change started in the training course for teachers, it was planned to start on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January but because of the delay from the UNRWA, the course was delayed. The second delay was in the recreation day and the closing ceremony, the reason for that delay was the UNRWA workers strike, even the tests that were supposed to be administered in the end of the project were delayed for the same reason. We were able to do the test in all the schools, except two of them



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and we will try to do it as soon as we got the chance for that. Other changes were not seen in the project.

### 4. Problems Encountered and Solutions:

1. The main problem we faced since the start of the project was that it took a long time for the UNRWA to respond to Karama to give us permission to work in their schools and with their students. This delayed the project by five days and we were unable to offer the teacher's training courses as planned. The problem was solved by contacting the head of the UNRWA in Palestine, Barbara, and we got her permission directly. We made an intensive course for the teachers to prepare them to work with the students and we were able to implement the regularly planned courses for them two weeks later.
2. Another problem faced in the project was the large amount of unexpected psychosocial problems that overwhelmed the social workers. We overcame this problem by allowing Karama's social workers to aid in the project.
3. We faced problems with Dehisha girl's school director, from the beginning of the project, she was unwilling to cooperate (not only with our project but also with other projects). That was one of the main difficulties that we faced in the field. After talking with the director of the UNRWA and with the local community, the director of the school put us in contact with the vice principal of the school and the situation was controlled. Approximately two or three weeks before the end of the project, the director removed her students from Karama's remedial courses to take them into her own remedial program. We were forced to ask for the intervention of the UNRWA director to allow the students to return to our program. For several days, we were forced to offer the students courses in the Karama building rather than in their school.
4. During our project, the UNRWA workers had a strike in the West Bank. Fortunately, during the program the strike was discontinuous (approximately one day per week or less frequently). For the last days of the project, the UNRWA workers union has been in open strike which has resulted in our inability to administer the final testing for the students in some of the schools. In several schools, we talked with the directors and arranged for some of the teachers to come and administer the testing. Also the strike has delayed the closing ceremony for which we had to wait for the end of the program.

### 5. Co-ordination and Networking :

During the project period, many relations were established with local organizations in the community to improve the project and offer services that Karama cannot provide. Many cases required special organizations that could offer specialized treatment. The organizations that we cooperated with are:



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1. The United Nations (UNRWA): We cooperated with the UNRWA by using the schools during the study time and cooperated with the teachers and directors to schedule the academic lessons inside the school buildings.
2. The Social Welfare Ministry in Bethlehem: Karama has transferred some poor cases (families of children in the project) to the ministry that has helped them in different ways such as providing them with health insurance, monthly food supplies, and in some cases, monthly salary.
3. ALAMAL Optometrist Center: Under the project period, we found that many children had eye problems and required eye glasses so Karama made an agreement with Alamal eye center which provides an approximately 50% discount for the cost of eye glasses, Karama paid 30% of the original price and the students only paid 20%. Around 40 children have visited the Alamal center and have had eye checkups and some have required eye glasses.
4. YMCA: Some violent cases have been transferred to the YMCA through Farris al-Atrash, where they were dealt with appropriately.
5. The Palestinian Education Ministry: The Palestinian Education Ministry allowed us to use the schools during the study time and cooperated with the teachers and directors to schedule the academic lessons inside the school buildings.
6. The Palestinian Parliament Office in Bethlehem: Through the Parliament Office we were able to arrange for medical transfers for some students requiring medical attention. They were sent to hospitals in the region and some cases even outside of the country. One example is Razan Qunis; we were able to help her to be transferred to a Jordanian hospital for a sensitive operation.
7. The Arabic Association Hospital in Beit Jalla: We had some cooperation in counseling and social worker's affairs. We had some visits from the psychologist and in some cases, students were sent to the hospital for further treatment.
8. The Parents Council in the target areas
9. The Rehabilitation Center in Deheishe: Some cases in the project were found to require additional help that their schools could not offer. For example, Mohamad Shaiban required additional help in speaking and learning due to undiagnosed disabilities. Karama arranged for his transfer to the Rehabilitation Center in Deheishe where he was able to receive the appropriate services. They offered a 50% discount and Karama paid for the remaining 50% of the price.
10. We had some cooperation with additional local organizations in the refugee camp.

### 6. Process of the Implementation:

Stages of the Implementation in Phase I, January 2010:  
1 – Began coordinating with the relevant authorities, principally, officials from both UNRWA's Department of Education and the Ministry of Education of the Palestine



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Authority. Project objectives and details were presented, and request for student information, access to facilities, and general assistance were made.

2 – Selected project staff from pool of applicants, and informed them regarding the projects goals and planning.

3 – Gathered list of potential target students from participating schools, on the basis of the student's most recent exams results.

4 - Designed a questionnaire to be administered to the targeted students for the purpose of establishing their initial psychosocial profiles. From these profiles, project social workers attempted to identify possible issues which would contribute to the student's academic struggles.

5 - Visits to the homes of targeted children began, in order to talk with parents. Information from the questionnaires was further investigated during the visits, and efforts were made to educate parents to the purpose and importance of the project to their children.

6 – Signed the agreements with the Ministry of Education, represented by Mr. Muawia Awad, General Director of the Ministry of Education, and Luay Abdel-Ghaffar, representing the Karama Organization. The meeting was attended by directors and officials from many of the participating schools.

7 – Initiated the interview and hiring process of teachers employed by the project to work in the government schools.

8 – Placed announcement in the local TV station regarding the organization's need to recruit teachers of the subjects: science, mathematics, Arabic and English. Response from applicants was timely and effective.

Stages of the Implementation in Phase 2, January 2010:

1 – Initiated academic classes in predesignated subjects (Arabic, English, math, and science). Curriculum and course offerings were tailored to each participating school, in line with available empty classrooms and around their already scheduled core classes.

2 - Administered diagnostic testing to determine the level of the students, in order to build targeted action plans for each teacher, commensurate with the general weaknesses of the students.

3 – Each teacher developed their own detailed lesson plan for the students, based on results from aforementioned testing.

4 – Project social workers implemented a schedule of recreational activities for the designated times on Saturdays. Specific activities for individual cases were also created to address certain needs for individual therapeutic intervention. Meetings between project manager and student families were included in some of these individualized activities.

5 - Coordinated with local community organizations in order to address the specialized needs of participating students, as they are identified. Coordination efforts included working with the relevant bodies to help them, such as the Departments of Social Affairs, the Department of Health, and an organization devoted to dealing with childhood illiteracy.



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6 – Established the methodology for observations of classes and lessons in order to evaluate the performance of teachers and verify attendance. The project management and teaching staff in schools has cooperated fully with the Karama Organization and supervisors in both the schools, the Ministry of Education and UNRWA. Observers from both visited the schools more than once to make observations and provide guidance on the educational process.

7 – Initiated training for project teachers. Training lasted for 5 hours on the subjects:

1 - Treating students with psychological consideration. It was explained that many of the participating students suffer from psychological and social problems.

2 - Students must be dealt with careful selection of words, so as not to cause them any harm.

This session utilized mental health specialists from the UNRWA in Bethlehem.

8 – Conducted weekly meetings with teachers in each school separately to discuss the situation, the difficulties and the functioning of the project.

9 – Ongoing communication with schools during this period to discuss with the management of the schools all the details and work to overcome the reported difficulties.

10 - Provided school stationery for the students and course materials that are used by teachers to facilitate remedial lessons.

11 - Provided students with meals and hospitality on Saturdays, which encouraged students to participate fully in the project. Some gifts were also distributed to most improved students.

### 7. Consequences / Effects of the Implemented Activities :

1. There have been improvements in the academic level of the target students in the projects and we can infer this through the tests that were performed at the beginning and the end of the project.
2. During the project, the guidance group activities which were given by the social workers developed and improved the psychological situation of the students. The children learned to express their feelings and discharge their pressure in a positive way.
3. We gave the parents the skills to deal with their children in a nonviolent manner and also allowed for improved relations between the parents, the students, and the schools.

### 8. Challenges:

1. To obtain the approval from the UNRWA to work in the schools was one of the challenges encountered by the project. We overcame this by speaking with a highly positioned person in the UNRWA in Jerusalem.
2. To foster trust between the parents and the schools was one of the challenges faced by the project. It was overcome by visiting the parents in their homes



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and explaining the project to them. Once the parents were able to see how the project was more serious than others in helping their children, they were encouraged to attend the school meetings and be more involved in the project by visiting the schools and attending the lessons and the recreation activities.



Parental involvement in recreational activities in the schools.

3. One of the challenges was to motivate the children to come to the lessons. This was overcome by speaking with the parents, helping the children in aspects other than just education and with positive reinforcement. All of these efforts encouraged the students to come and participate fully in the project.
4. Another challenge was to identify the individual difficulties and obstacles that each child faced academically and psychosocially. Consequently visits to individual houses, social situation forms and working on an individual and small group basis allowed for the establishment of a detailed curriculum of study for each student.
5. Cooperating with the schools was a challenge because some already had unsuccessful remedial classes and if this project succeeded, it would expose the weaknesses in their programs. This was overcome by including the directors of the schools in the project and giving them each a role. Thus they were able to feel responsible in part for the success of the project. This insured their cooperation except for one school where cooperation was more difficult, the UNRWA Deheishe school for girls.



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### 9. Success Stories:

#### 1. The Social Aspect:

Addressing the social problems and health of the targeted students and their families would be the easiest way to improve their performance in the schools, the efforts of our social workers focused on this. We have achieved the following results:

1.1 – In the case of student Khalil Yasian Jaber, it was determined that a critical issue affecting his psychosocial situation was his family's housing crisis. His family of 5 persons presently resides in one room with no bathroom or kitchen. The family's poverty prevents them from constructing additional rooms, and on the recommendation of the project social worker the project manager raised charitable funds from the local community to initiate construction of a new bathroom, kitchen, and extra room. This has demonstrably impacted the psychosocial demeanor of the children and family in a positive way. (Accomplished through collecting donations from the community and the Karama Organization).

2.1 – After meeting with the families of one participating female student, named Arian Mouhammed Bshier, the project staff was informed that she suffers from fecal incontinence. Based on her provided medical reports, it had been decided that the student needed medical surgery in Jordan to correct the problem. The cost of such travel and treatment was beyond the financial limits of her family. The director of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Tariq Rashmawi, was formally contacted by the project manager to request a medical transfer of the student to Jordan for the surgery. The request was met with approval, and the student is presently scheduled for surgery in June 2010.

3.1 – Assistance was provided to the family of student, Razan Majid Qunais, to secure her prescribed medication. The student's family suffers from poverty and extensive debt, and is unable to pay for their water and electrical bills, or for Razan's medication. This resulting situation was determined to be debilitating for Razan's education, and her file was transferred to Hala al Khmour, at the Ministry of Social Affairs, in order to provide government assistance to this family. The result has been that a negotiated repayment schedule is being worked out with the family to clear their debt.

4.1 – After meeting with the student Karmel Majid Ataer in her home, it was observed the she suffered from allergies and respiratory issues. This effect of her condition is an inability to concentrate in her studies, because of her difficulty breathing. The student was transferred Alyamama hospital, with the help of Fares al Atrash, for medical care and examination.

5.1 – Saeed Abuabda, he is a student in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and was targeted in the remedial classes project. Saeed had psychological and academic problems. Through the visits to his house we saw that it was small and not well built. Saeed's room was almost in terrible condition and this reflected in his academic work and behavior. Karama sponsored to repaint and fix it. Saeed's behavior and marks in school improved dramatically. His parents sent a thank you letter to Karama and the social workers for helping their son.



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6.1 – There have been several cases of students which the project has been able to help directly through assistance in coordinating health and social services for the students and their families. Through coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, several families have been provided with health insurance and other services. The Karama Organization has also contributed assistance to several students by purchasing medication directly for these students.

### 4. The Academic Side:

There has been significant progress in the schools to improve the performance of students. Where many students were non-functional in reading, writing, letters and numbers, we now find that the proportion of these has become almost non-existent.

Many students have shown marked improvement in their normal school testing scores. These students have been reported to participate more in their regular classes than they had been prior.

Ibrahim Yousef al Khmour is a student that was targeted in our project. For some years, Ibrahim did not pass his exams, his father was always angry with him. After Ibrahim attended the project his marks totally changed and he now easily manages; his father is totally happy with him. Sundus al Ghrouz is the same story, she was at risk and her marks were very low but after the project she became much better, many other cases will be shown in our documentary film.

### 3. Lessons for students:

The program has developed lessons in the all schools, so that there are 4 subject courses for each student group, with the exception of science in cases where there was objection from some schools whose directors disagreed with the need for science. In these cases, focus was placed upon the other subjects (Arabic, English, and mathematics).

## 10. Best Practices and lessons learnt:

1. During the project period, we could see the deep frustration in the Palestinian society and one of the reasons for this frustration is the type of projects and programs implemented by the local organizations which are unnecessary in the society which creates mistrust between the organizations and the target groups in society. For this reason it is important to concentrate in purposeful projects which help improve society such as the educational projects which is one of the most important needs in the Palestinian society due to the bad academic environment due to the lack of responsibility in the UNRWA and Palestinian Authority education ministry.
2. During the project implementation period, we could see that positive reinforcement (such as gifts, recreation days and trips) was important in encouraging the students to follow the academic program and to study in order to improve their academic level.



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its impact, short and long term, on the students' academic and psychological performances.

3. Through our engagement with the target students during the guidance meetings, we could feel the improvement in the psychological and behavioral level of the students which reflects on the improvement of the students' academic level. This can show the importance of such work and

### 11. General Comments and Special Concerns:

The project was complete as it stimulated psychosocial growth and learning, not only through educational means, but also through recreation and social work. The project's aims and its success have given it a good reputation within the local community. The student success rates in particular have testified to the effectiveness and quality of our work. In the future however, this type of project could benefit from more social workers. Because of social problems and violence, social workers are a necessary force to help the children cope, and thereby improve their education.

**Note:** When we started the project, the students we targeted had deep weaknesses in letters and numbers both in English and Arabic. After the end of the project, we found that these students are now good in reading and writing. Consequently, a more difficult final test was given and included information from their regular school books.

### 12. Project Impact on local community

The impact of this project in the local community can be obviously seen through the interaction between the local community and the project. Visible examples for this are:

1. According to the school directors, there have never been such a large number of parents who came to meetings in the school and who were so involved in the education of their children.
2. The Education Ministry office in the Bethlehem area chose Karama to be in a partnership with them in the Educational Conference and they took the project as a good example for improving the education in government schools.



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3. Many local organizations have begun to contact Karama in order to cooperate in similar projects in the future. They believed that this project was effective and made a significant difference in the educational level of the children.
4. Many parents have come to Karama and to the target schools sending thank you letters to Karama and the project because they believe that their children's lives were changed in a positive way.
5. The project manager has been contacted by at least ten different schools in the area asking for him include their schools in the target area for the next term, if there is one.

All of these things will be clearly shown in the documentary film that Karama is producing about the project.

### 13.Attachments:

All of the attachments, including photos, documents, and a documentary, will be send by email and the rest will be send by post.

### Karama's report 2010

