



WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE ECOSOC HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT 2011

Working in the education sector in Occupied Palestinian territories (OPt): challenges regarding the implementation of UN MDG 2 in 2015

The FPSC (Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture) is an NGO working in the education sector in different regions of the world since 1995. Its wider and deeper experience in the sector has been developed in the Arab countries of the Middle East Region. FPSC has sought to contribute to the achievement of MDG 2 in all countries where it has worked.

The commitment of both the PNA (Palestinian National Authority) and international stakeholders for the achievement of MDG 2 is undeniable. In this sense, since the PNA was created in 1994 there was an increase of 19% in the GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) in primary education. In 1994 the GER was 81% versus 98% in 2009. Although these figures show that MDG 2 by 2015 could be achieved, it is yet to be seen.

In general, the OPt have made great progress in ensuring universal access to primary education of Palestinian children, but much remains to be done and dependence on international funding is too high.

The FPSC has been working since 1995 to achieve universal primary education through the construction and rehabilitation of schools in the area of Jerusalem where two schools have been fully rehabilitated in the East part and 11 schools have undergone minor reconstruction, the West Bank where 13 schools have been rehabilitated and Gaza where 1 school with two sites has undergone mayor construction work. Furthermore, FPSC has equipped classrooms, labs, and other school spaces in 35 schools in the West Bank and Gaza. 2 sports facilities have been built in Ramalah and Beit Sahour, respectively. Finally, FPSC has rehabilitated 4 rehab centres for disabled children in Gaza where 5,000 disabled and non disabled children are receiving psychosocial assistance. FPSC is currently developing a field study on the reality of children with special needs in collaboration with the University of Bethlehem.

The FPSC has been working on improving the quality of education for the past 15 years, primarily, through training programs for teachers -6,000 teachers from primary, secondary and preschool have benefited- and in the implementation of projects on psychosocial support for children affected by conflict -over 25,000 children benefit (currently two programs are in place in the Gaza Strip)-.

In the current state of the sector, FPSC has designed a new program of Education funded by the AECID (Spanish Agency for Cooperation and Development). It will be implemented between 2010 and 2014 and it seeks to



collaborate to establish uniform quality standards in primary and secondary education in the Palestinian Territories. It is a pioneering project, "Training of primary teachers in the diagnosis of Special Educational Needs and adapting curriculum to meet those needs". The four-year program involves 50 schools in the West Bank -20,000 students (primary and secondary school), 750 teachers and 250 teachers-in-training.

The Program aims to improve technical and human capacities of key stakeholders in the educational process through the collaboration of all groups and organizations involved in the sector: schools, universities, Ministry of Education (MoEHE), UNRWA, local NGOs, parent and student associations.

A special emphasis is to be placed on training of teachers and school managers, as well as the creation of physical and virtual spaces to encourage research, discussion and exchange of knowledge and experience in the educational field.

To achieve its objectives, the Program is structured around the following components:

- Training of teachers and school administrators
- Creating spaces for research and development:
- Strengthening educational institutions
- Creation of networks of exchange between the different groups involved in the education of Palestinian children
- Development of activities outside the academic curriculum to promote values of gender equity, respect for human rights, integration of minorities and cultural diversity.

Our recommendations regarding the accomplishment of MDG 2 in OPt in the coming years are the following:

- Ensure the access of all children to school by promoting protection policies, and inclusive education initiatives. 60% of Palestinian Children feel unsecure on their way to school (UNESCO 2011).
- Provide sufficient resources to ensure quality education for all Palestinian children, including groups of children with special needs and those who are directly affected by armed conflict. Special emphasis should be placed on training teachers to adapt their skills to the real needs of students and to the official curriculum, and to make parents and communities aware of their key role in the education process. Investment and promotion of research is crucial to establish minimum standards to achieve quality education for all.
- Deepen the value system that is promoted in schools by ensuring the presence of democratic principles and promoting an equitable education



that enhances equality between men and women and mutual understanding among children from different communities.

- Promote the establishment of a Preschool system in Palestine by supporting public and private initiatives in this sector.
- Expand programs of psychosocial support to children in school, combining the educational and medical aspects. Teachers and social workers' emotional support to children should be promoted through specific training of teachers in this field so that Palestinian childhood does not fall behind. The fact is that academic performance and motivation of children is much lower in areas affected by armed conflicts (UNESCO, 2011).
- Build bridges between training and employment to facilitate job placement for young Palestinians in order to promote both specialized vocational training and efficient public education policies by getting all public and private actors to participate.
- Strengthen youth leadership programs by addressing the real needs and challenges of young Palestinians from the 21st century, with special emphasis in the advocacy component.

These recommendations are the outcome of a seminary organized in Madrid where the main stakeholders of education in the OPT as well as representatives of ECOSOC and the Spanish and Palestinian Government tried to define future goals and to coordinate efforts in the Palestinian education sector. This meeting has been part of FPSC's contribution to the High Level Segment of ECOSOC 2011.