

Together for Better Communication Environment in Naour Public Schools

1. PROJECT SUMMARY

1.1 Overview/background

Partners-Jordan is proposing a 12-month project to introduce an alternative to violence, through teaching mediation skills to school students in Naour, in order to encourage creating a culture that despises violence, and use mediation as an effective non violent tool to deal with conflicts in the school environment.

Using the mediation tactic to deal with troubles will have a positive impact on several stakeholders: students, teachers, school administration and parents, which will encourage these students to practice the acquired skills more often, and use them within their neighborhood, and at later stages on university level.

With a view to expand program reach to additional schools that will build champions within the broader community, the project also include PJ's cooperation with *Ithra* – a specialized center in the psychological needs youth and adults go through in their daily lives and which affects their attitudes, choices, and behaviors, and the establishment of 'mediation zones' in schools to ensure sustainability and longevity of program results.

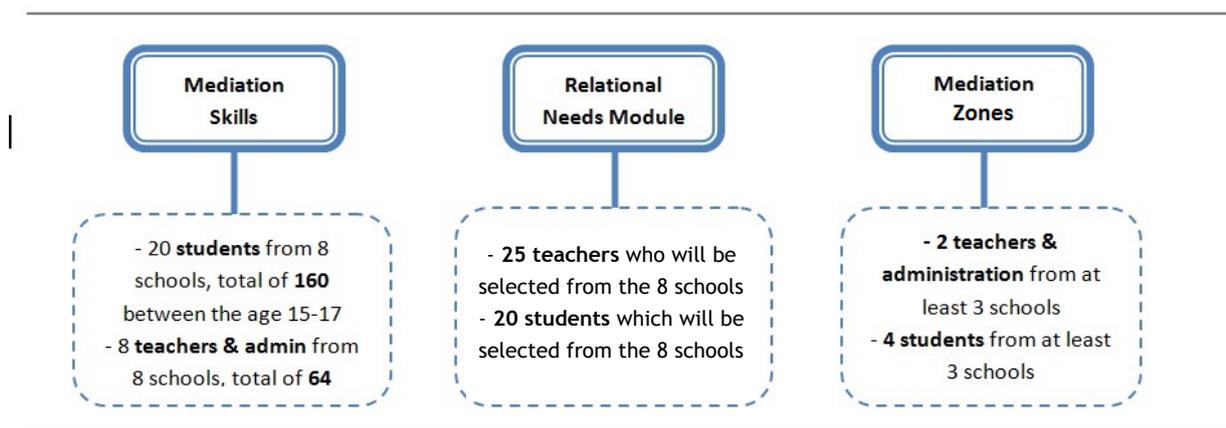
1.2 The problem

Generally, the problem Partners-Jordan is tackling in this project is the manner used by people to deal with any conflict that occurs in schools.

Looking more in depth at that, Partners-Jordan noticed five issues that are relevant to conflict management at school level: first, teachers lack the awareness of the tools available to potentially avoid, or at least manage, violence among students; second, the lack of dialogue practice among parents, teachers, and students; third, "violence is the first quick reaction to deal with conflict" – as argued by a student; fourth, the absence of a mentality despising violence; fifth, the gap in discussing conflict management in both curriculum and extra curriculum activities.

1.3 Target groups

The project will address the administration, teachers and students of 8 public schools in Naour city. The majority of the stakeholders are youth ages 15-17, and by taking into consideration gender equality ratio 50/50, and the inclusion of People with Disability if they are within the target age. In specific, they will be addressed as follows:



Additional relevant players include: the Mayor, the Education Directorate, parents, CSOs, activists, other school teachers and principals, who will be invited to visit the creative methods the schools created within their premises to promote for non violent environment, avoiding duplication and strengthening parallel initiatives.

1.4 Geographic Location

Jordan, Central Region, Greater Amman, Naour Municipality

The reason underling this choice relates to the high variety in this area's social fabric - in terms of tribal origins, ethnicity, and religious beliefs - which is matched by a higher level of (potential) conflicts within said area.

2. MAIN GOAL OF THE INITIATIVE

To create a better school environment by opening dialogue spaces and new communication channels between students, as well as between the students and the administration, in 8 public schools in Naour city.

3. MAIN OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE INITIATIVE

- I. Present communication and dialogue “mediation” skills as an alternative to violence in 8 public schools in Naour
- II. Introduce psychological theories through the “Relational Needs module”, to understand conflict, to a selected numbers of trainees (teachers and students)
- III. Build on the mediation skills which will be taught to establish at least 3 “Mediation Zones” in the schools in Naour
- IV. Improve the outlook of the schools administration when dealing with conflicts, by counting the successfully managed conflicts

4. METHODOLOGY

The project relies on a specifically designed *participatory learning process*. The learner-centered training will open the floor in front of the trainees to think, question, critically analyse, and to encourage them to share inputs about dealing with conflicts on school level. This will result in improving the attitude, in addition to increasing their knowledge and skills, of the target groups when dealing with conflicts.

In particular, PJ will stress on interactive role plays functional to raising the awareness of non violence resolution in a creative way; capacity building through interactive and non lecturing methods; reaching for a behavioral change in conflict management; developing long lasting institutional mechanisms for continuing project activities including Teacher and Admin champions, Mediation Zones, and Action Plans.

- The role youth will play is: learning new skills in managing conflicts at schools through participation in a series of interactive trainings and working groups, then reflecting on this learning through creating creative methods to promote for non violence at their own schools that ensures a vested interest in the success of the program objectives following the conclusion of activities.
- The role admin and teachers will play, is to insure the mediation zones are active as to guarantee the sustainability of these zones, also to keep promoting for non violence environment by being role models when dealing with conflicts.
- Meaningful engagement will be encouraged through setting up action plans, close follow up and mentoring, dividing roles and responsibilities amongst them, and other options will be open for their suggestions too.
- The Mediation Zones will be a space for students to build and prove their leadership skills, and be acknowledged as youth mediators. The Zones are intended to remain a permanent fixture within the schools that establish them, run by Students and led by active Teachers and Admin who participated in the program.

Importantly, the following resources: will be leveraged and capitalized on:

- The good relations among the schools involved, and potential spreading out effect
- The locations: schools’ venues are the best resource which can be used throughout the implementation phase. It is convenient for the school admin, teachers, and parents and additionally it is a cost benefit
- Willingness to learn, passionate to bring in extracurricular activities: such resource will facilitate the engagement of the beneficiaries at the project and is a motivational factor to make them create creative tools and methodologies to spread this knowledge
- Iterative learning process: by combining theoretical notions with in-the-field action - the Mediation Zones -, the program provide hands-on, practical experience in creating, and spreading, a solid Mediation culture. Not to be underestimated is also the fact that students as well as teachers will then be able to return to their home and put their learning into practice within their family environment – which serves in this sense a crucial resource as well, in that it will allow the beneficiaries of the project to practice and exercise - thereby

refining - the acquired skills on a constant basis. The students' parents involvement in Phase II - sensitizing them to the Mediation and Relational needs principles, bringing them closer to their respective schools realities, as outlined in the previous section -, is therefore key to the sustainability of the project in the long-term as well, and needs to be understood as a way to 'ensure' the longevity of the benefits of the initiative itself. As the x factor to make this possible, the joint learning process shared between students, teachers, and parents shall thus be regarded as an extremely important resource to leverage on. While the project will start with focused ambitions, potential scaling exists and is envisaged. Precisely insofar as they are focused on training and mentorship supplemented by students engagement and teachers support, both phases of the project are designed to leave a lasting impact and help Mediation Zones transition into more established 'hubs' benefitting also the next generations of students, whose involvement is seen by PJ as a way to ensure that new blood and new ideas are entering the 'sector'.

5. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

5.1 Project Preparations (*Months 1-2*)

The sub-activities envisaged in this phase include: (1) contact establishment with the Ministry of Education to get their approval on the project implementation; (2) signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with "Ithra Center", a Non-for-Profit company which will be hired as a consultant and, as such, be responsible for delivering the Relational Needs Module (please refer to point 3 for further details); (3) contact establishment with, and visit of, public schools which will be briefed on the project goals and design – with final agreement with 8 schools in Naour. (4) Selection of the project beneficiaries: administration, teachers and students.

5.2 Communication and Dialogue (Mediation) workshops (*Months 3-5*)

Conduction of 11 training courses in total -two-day each- on conflict management, in the 8 schools. 3 of them will be delivered to 64 teachers (8 from each selected school), while the rest of the 8 will address 160 students (20 per school). The teachers' selection methodology will involve PJ's attendance of classes delivered to students of 9, 10 and 11 grades; after observing and assessing the way teachers interact with them and their responsiveness to students' academic and non academic needs, for example, the kind of treatment and interaction, the student behavior management, the learning formats used, and so on. PJ will agree with the Schools' principal on which teachers to select as final participants to the project. As to the students; the Applicant will agree with both the teachers and the school administration on the ones to be selected, considering a broad pool inclusive of different backgrounds – especially in terms of: academic levels and results, tribes of origin, personality (e.g. potential leaders vs. reluctant ones; extroverted vs. introverted), behavior (loud and noisy vs. calm and quiet). The training sessions -administered over two days for each school- will be centered on Communication, negotiation and facilitations concepts/skills on day 1, and will then focus thoroughly on Mediation skills and a plan to promote non-violence inside the school environment on day 2. With respect to the training materials, the choice is to leverage the one used in the pilot phase of the project, due to its effectiveness and -on a more practical note - in light of the Head of Research Department's note that "*this will make it easier to get the Ministry of Education approval*".

Pre and post tests will be distributed in all trainings to measure the increase in knowledge; the results will be captured in one report, along with one progress report about all the administered trainings. An action plan will also be developed after each of the training, as to draft thoughts about a strategy design to promote a non-violence approach at the school level.

5.3 Relational Needs training (*Months 4-7*)

As mentioned in point 1 above, this Module will be delivered by "Ithra Center" via sessions for the teachers and the students (to be conducted separately) over a period of 4 months (in total), and will only address 25 teachers and 25 students who will be selected by both PJ and Ithra Center on the basis of a specifically identified criteria.

As a Coaching Center providing individuals, families, and institutions with proactive relational training and coaching, with a view to empower and help them experience enriching and fulfilling personal relationships, PJ found that Ithra's contribution, hired as a consultant, could be extremely valuable to the ends of the project, thereby further potentiating its beneficial

outcomes. The Relational Needs training will focus on the importance of acknowledging both one's own and others' personal needs, together with personal hindrances, and on how to identify as well as effectively communicate them, in order to be able to address them, and ultimately understand how to fulfill them. All of this will then be brought back to its importance within the Mediation field, leveraging on the concept of 'listening'. Ithra and PJ's synergy does indeed build on the shared emphasis placed, in their respective fields, on the 'listening skill' as a way to go beyond the stated problem itself to the roots causing it. Key to personal growth and development, 'listening' becomes even more important - and necessary - when in a collective, inter-personal reality, and serves as a way to promote higher-order thinking skills.

5.4 Ga'det wasata (Mediation zone) (Months 7-12): at least 3 'mediation zones' will be identified within the schools premises, whereby students will be acknowledged as youth mediators among their peers, thereby being empowered in terms of personal development, intra- and inter-personal growth, and leadership skills. 4 students for each 'Ga'det wasata' will be selected by PJ, after an interview will be conducted to evaluate and identify the most committed and receptive of the Mediation and Relational needs principles. The same criteria will inform the selection of 2 teachers, which will flank the implementers in monitoring and cooperating with the students.

- The Mediation Zone will be a space to encourage the sustainability of the project beyond its mere duration. The name "Ga'det wasat" only serve as an initial suggestion, since PJ will endorse each school in coming up with their own context-specific, customized names as part of the learning process, and as a way to internalize the knowledge acquired at the same time.
- It is a 'safe zone' meant to facilitate having a non violent environment in the public schools
- It encourages the practice of the learnt skills among peers. The Ga'det wasata idea is indeed inherently participatory, as its continuation depends on the thought, ingenuity, and active participation of the selected participants. One tactic to ensure its continuity after conclusion of the project is the identification of some students and teachers, involved in the running of the Zone, who will serve a facilitating role for the next cohort, as "tutors" providing peer-to-peer guidance and support in the Wasata's activities for a given period of time necessary to the 'transition'. In this way, transferable skills in targeted schools are effectively built and disseminated, and a snowball effect is assured
- It is a way to encourage forward-thinking: youth from different schools will indeed also be encored to network together and leverage on synergies in planning for the future. Specifically, students will be prompted to draft a sort of "vision plan" containing core points regarding the operating principles of the Mediation Zones, so that these can be reproduced - as well as adjusted/improved according to the needs - in the next years. These plans will also incorporate a provision to make sure that recourse to the Mediation Zone is, by definition, based on mutual agreement: should there not be such agreement, or should the Mediator 'fail' in meeting both parties' requests or finding a solution accepted by them, then students have the right to turn to the teachers and/or the school administration to solve their problem/dispute.

PJ will monitor how the Mediation Zones will be administered (both in terms of organizational structure, and in terms of failure/success), the kind of problems they usually have to deal with, the kind of solutions they came up with, and the difficulties encountered by the 'Mediators' – helping them, supporting them, or adjusting their work whenever necessary. The constant follow-up will therefore serve as a sort of additional on-the-job training, matching the learning by doing spirit of the overall project. Schools themselves will also report on how many students actually resort to, and benefit from, the Mediation Zones, when a problem is to be solved within the school environment.

5.5 Promoting for non violent school environment (months 9-10)

After the trainings, and as per the actions plans, students will be requested to design creative tools to promote for what they have learned. Students will be spurred to do graffiti on the walls, flashmob during break times, talk about no-violence in the morning speech – and will of course be able to come up with their own original ideas. The promotion of the Mediation Zone is also to be included in this section.

PJ also envisages a gathering of the Students-Mediators - 4 male representatives, and 4 female representatives, from the 8 participating schools. Separately, each gender-based

group will engage in a sort of competition – to be intended as a ‘knowledge sharing/ exchange platform’ which allow for different ways of dealing with conflicts, difficulties arisen, ‘best practices’ etc to emerge and be discussed. Parents involvement will represent a major component of the various initiatives, in light of the crucial role they play in the students’ personal growth, in order to make them more responsive and sensitive to their children’s social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs. By the same token, they will become more aware of, and more active regarding, policies affecting their children’s education, and will ultimately somehow be enabled to ‘parallel’ the trainers and teachers’ work, albeit within a private dimension.

5.6 Donor Visibility (throughout the implementation phase)

PJ and *Ithra* will make sure to mention the donor name in a proper way in verbal and written communication about the project, and according to the guidelines. PJ will produce a movie to document the project activities especially the Mediation Zones, and the creative tools.

5.7 Reporting (quarterly basis)

PJ will be responsible to deliver four reports, additionally PJ will send by email the updates of the project implementation, the activities times and dates as for the donor to be able to advice on the feedback. Meetings with the donor will be conducted upon need.

Activity	Obj	Implementation Period (12 months)											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Project Preparations	-	X	X										
2. Communication & Dialogue workshops	#1			X	X	X							
3. Relational Needs Training	#2				X	X	X	X					
4. Mediation Zones	#3							X	X	X	X	X	X
5. Promoting for non violent school environment	#4									X	X		
6. Donor Visibility	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7. Reporting	-			X			X			X			X

6. TOTAL BUDGET
50.000 USD