Al Fakhoora Quarterly Report
DECEMBER 2012 – JANUARY 2013
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The core mission of Al Fakhoora is to advocate and measurably improve the quality of education and the lives of Palestinian students living in Gaza and the West Bank. Al Fakhoora realizes that its mission cannot be fully materialized given the Israeli blockade around Gaza and the occupation of Palestine which denies students from travelling freely to pursue education.

Al Fakhoora focuses on four specific areas of intervention to support higher education in Gaza. These areas include; our flagship scholarship and empowerment program ‘Dynamic Futures’, our reconstruction and rehabilitation of educational institutes program, ‘Reconstruction Program’, psychosocial and disability program ‘Health and Wellness Services’, and our student-initiated global advocacy campaign, ‘Fakhoora.org’.

Al Fakhoora provides a solid communication platform to students in Gaza, Qatar and English-speaking audiences, to utilize online social media tools and effectively advocate for their cause and their right to education on a larger scale.
Recent Accomplishments

Al Fakhoora continues to provide education and economic opportunities for people living in Gaza; from the ongoing physical reconstruction and rehabilitation of buildings to the further expansion of our Dynamic Futures and Master’s Degree scholarship programs.

The last quarter of 2012 has been very busy; with new intakes of students and the preparation of an historic visit by His Highness the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. The landmark visit was extremely uplifting for our students, and provided an opportunity to sit with Her Highness and share their experiences, hopes, dreams and vision of a brighter future in Gaza. The students hailed the efforts provided through Al Fakhoora programmes on the ground.

Sadly, the visit was followed by an seven-day Israeli offensive on Gaza. Beyond the heavy human casualties, 20 schools were heavily damaged. However the training in advocacy and connections made through More Than Words (MTW) and the Virtual Majlis’ (VM), amplified their voices and created a support base for those living through the daily and nightly attacks. The war, as such, became a practical exercise in the theory and power of advocacy.

During the visit to Gaza in October, we were able to work directly with our eight student leaders, or Technical Assistants (TAs), on the creation of a video that addresses stereotypes of people in Gaza. The eight TAs were selected following an application process that was open to all 300 Al Fakhoora scholarship students. The best applications were chosen to represent and expand the reach of Fakhoora programmes to the remaining scholarship students. Working with World in Conversation (WinC) at Penn State University, Al Fakhoora ensures each of the eight students has a well-defined role from individual Al Fakhoora programs to local activities and getting the local community involved.

Little did we know the video originally designed to introduce the world to our eight TAs, would have such a large impact in the days ahead. Students (from across Gaza, the US and UK) collaborated on a campaign entitled #ImFromGaza, which contributed a student voice to the global conversation about life on the ground. The campaign reached over 10,000 through its videos and generated hundreds of conversations on Facebook and Twitter. The campaign was built to go beyond the duration of the war and dovetail into an international social media platform for student voices and conversations across Gaza.

We take this issue of our quarterly report as an opportunity to provide you with more about the ongoing work Al Fakhoora is doing, the challenges being faced working in a volatile situation and the success stories that drive us all. We’d also like you to stay in touch with us, visit our website, www.fakhoora.org and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and take part in all of our conversations.
#ImFromGaza

While visiting Gaza in October 2012, the opportunity was taken to work with the students and our videographer on a video talking about the stereotypes facing the people of Gaza and Palestine. Aside from creating an important piece of content, the exercise’s objective was to have the eight Al Fakhoora TAs experientially learn about the process of creating and promoting a video on a relevant subject.

As the video was being edited and re-edited, another attack on Gaza began and we looked for a way to consolidate the conversations going on across our closed and open social networks while adding the value of the voices of students in Gaza to the global conversation. To that end, we developed and launched the #ImFromGaza platform, with the coordination of our partners, friends and students across Palestine, Qatar, the UK and US.

The need to humanize the people behind the news stories and provide a platform for our students to tell the world what they were seeing first hand, while working closely with our advocacy team to ensure conversations were properly facilitated and monitored and students were able to take what they had learned participating in the Virtual Majlis’ out to the world.

A Facebook page, #ImFromGaza was to be the center of conversations, as well as organizing the conversations on twitter using the hashtag #ImFromGaza. The stereotypes video was named #ImFromGaza” and received thousands of views in the first few days. Conversations on the Facebook page became full of messages of support and solidarity, sometimes from the most unlikely of people and places. Hundreds of people became actively involved in the conversations and on the page. The eight Al Fakhoora TAs found their feet and began to share photos and talk directly with people around the world including Israel, with an Israeli woman contacting one of our students about showing her photography in an exhibition she was organizing in Tel Aviv.
Schools and Colleges heavily damaged across Gaza

The Ministry of Higher Education in Gaza released a statement during the Israeli aggression denouncing the obliterating attack on Gaza and its crippling effect on educational institutions and youth’s access to education. The ministry confirmed that the military attack which began on November 14th, had resulted in the death of five ministry employees and ten students. Two hundred students were wounded and the ministry estimated that 22 school had been heavily damaged. Universities were not spare doing the attack. University College of Applied Sciences in Khan Younes has suffered damages to its wall and a large portion of its furniture had been destroyed.

Schools in areas close to the Israeli border had been affected the most where at least five schools had been heavily damaged and classroom windows had shattered and walls collapsed.
Support for #ImFromGaza

Arava Hi guys, Hopefully if all goes well in an hour there will be a cease fire … I am an Israeli and I shared your video and hope to stay in touch … I support an end to all bloodshed and for us to live in peace. Just wanted to let you know you have friends on our side too. All the best, Arava.

Marwan I salute you and all the people of Gaza. Its people like you: young, positive, full of life, hope and determination; who will make a difference. God be with you.

André Hello. I’m a filmmaker from Brazil and I loved your video. I’m jewish, by the way. Your smiles are beautiful. Being from Brazil, a democratic country with a very large mixture of cultures, religions, colours, I see how everyone should have a right to come and go. Religion and politics shouldn’t mix. It’s about time Israelis and Palestinians stop the fighting and live in peace, in the same land, as brother and sisters.

This is why I love the Internet. You’re showing your faces to the world, showing the world the real people that have to live in the midst of the conflict. And I’m being able to communicate to you from another continent, and this is how the web breaks the frontiers and bring people that want peace together, whether they’re in Gaza, in Tel Aviv, in Beirut, in Europe or America. We are citizens of the world. Peace and Love!

Pamela Well i am glad there is peace now and i have been following up and you kids stay strong and i am so proud of what you guys are doing. we are one family and under god’s family and everyone should listen to the people.

David Im from Malaysia. I stand with you in your goal to end this conflict that has caused so much pain and suffering and fed so much blind hatred and bitterness all around the world (even in Malaysia). We have all been part of the problem. God willing, we can be part of the solution.

David I Burnett Hello everyone. I just keep coming back to your page. You have all, Gazan and supporters alike, stirred something in my soul. It is so easy to shake your head and say it is an ugly world, and that there is nothing anyone can do to make it better. But you inspire me to dream. You make me believe that we CAN change the world. A few years ago I was reading a book written by one of my heroes about his own life. A man who gave his life to free his people and to make peace. When I reached the end of the book I read these words and I cried. “Any life lost in war is a human life, irrespective of its being that of an Israeli or an Arab. A wife who becomes a widow is a human being entitled to a happy family life, whether she be an Arab or an Israeli. Innocent children who are deprived of the care and compassion of their parents are ours, be they living on Arab or Israeli land.” – Anwar Sadat.
Leaflets dropped into Gaza telling people to evacuate homes. Three Palestinian journalists killed. Agence France Presse offices attacked. Oxfam supported kindergarten destroyed. In Egypt, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon talks with Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and warns of further ground invasion as Israel threatens to escalate its offensive. Hilary Clinton arrives in Israel.

50 civilians killed and 720 wounded. 1,350 targets in the Gaza strip have been struck by Israeli operation. Council for the European Union called for immediate ceasefire. Shorouk Media Building hit (which housed Al Arabiya, Al Aqsa TV, Dubai TV) – second media building to be hit.

FIG 01 //
FACEBOOK STATISTICS FOR #IMFROMGAZA CAMPAIGN

TOTAL LIKES 816
PEAK DAILY ENGAGEMENT 713
28 DAY ENGAGEMENT 3,083
PEAK DAILY REACH 10,666
Ongoing vision for #ImFromGaza

In the future, #ImFromGaza aims to continue to be a platform for student generated content that will come from their participation in our advocacy program and relevant social and multi-media training. Some of the outputs from the upcoming student led campaigns, will be to identify ways and create materials for social media, and specifically engaging, high quality material that will be presented on #ImFromGaza. We will also be working with the students to hand over management of the page, content and conversations themselves, with guidance and oversight from PSU and Al Fakhoora to help them with the difficult conversations or issues that may appear. This will give them a chance to express themselves using the advocacy and communications skills they have developed being part of the Al Fakhoora program.
Advocacy on video

After the cease fire had been agreed to and things calmed down in Gaza, the Al Fakhoora TAs were able to put together a series of three videos describing where they were as the war began and their experience during the attacks. The video served a double purpose of providing a different perspective against the existing stereotypes of people in Gaza and also as a chance for our students to speak out and reflect after the traumatic experience they had lived through. The videos continued to add to the success of #ImFromGaza and have received over 2000 views since being posted in December 2012.
Creating leaders of the future

Through our flagship advocacy and leadership programme, we aim to create inspirational community and global leaders of the future, who can guide their communities towards cohesion and prosperity.

In the summer of 2012, a recruitment process was conducted to choose eight students to be part of a new unique leadership programme under our advocacy program. The students were chosen based on outstanding performance in previous Al Fakhoora activities, such as the Virtual Majlis (VM) and More Than Words (MTW) during the last two years.

All Al Fakhoora students were invited to apply. In total, 131 applications were received and 20 students were shortlisted to be interviewed. After interviews were conducted, the selection committee evaluated the students and selected the top eight to be Technical Assistants (TAs).

Each of the eight students has been given specific roles to fulfill ranging from organizing and leading the VMs in various countries, to spearheading local activities and designing campaigns. The roles and responsibilities were developed to provide each TA with a unique opportunity to develop their skills in leadership and advocacy.

Additionally, the TAs are taking part in a leadership training course designed by World in Conversation (WinC) at Penn State University (PSU). Taught by trained facilitators using an experiential learning approach called dialogue-based learning. Dialogue-based learning is based on inductive rather than deductive thinking. In other words, the student learns to recognize patterns and build hypotheses about the phenomenon or ideas they are discussing. In the Gaza context, students learn to examine the history, culture, values, and belief systems that are prevalent in Gaza. They then explore and practice ways to communicate their ideas and stories more effectively to a western audience.
Event

On September 25, Al Fakhoora invited Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish to talk about his inspiring memoir, ‘I Shall Not Hate’. A London University and Harvard-trained Palestinian doctor who was born and raised in the Jabalia refugee camp, Abuelaish is an infertility specialist who lived in Gaza but worked in Israel.

On 16th January 2009, during the Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip, he witnessed the death of his three daughters and niece by shell fire. His response to this tragedy, broadcast live on Israeli TV moments after the attack, won him humanitarian awards around the world including a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. Instead of seeking revenge or sinking into hatred, Izzeldin Abuelaish called for the people in the region to start talking to each other. Abuelaish is an inspirational speaker, a tireless peace campaigner and an advocate of women’s rights in the Middle East.

Dr. Abuelaish’s impassioned speech called for advocating for the right to education especially amongst women and urged people to rise above hate categorizing it as a deterrent to self growth and sequentially the prosperity of a nation.

The event which attracted more than 200 attendants, was held at the Atrium of Georgetown University Qatar. It was followed by a reception and book signing ceremony. The event was co-sponsored by Al Fakhoora, Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing and Georgetown University Qatar.
Introducing the Student Leaders
Abed El-Rhman M. Ja’rour

My name is Abed El-Rhman M. Ja’rour, I was born in 1991 and I live in Gaza city – Gaza Strip – Palestine. I am originally from Gaza, and my ancestors are from the Al-Daraj neighborhood and that means a lot of things, but the important thing is that I am related and connected to that area because I feel it is part of me, the area where my dad grew up.

I believe in a quote that said, “Love what you do to do what you love” so I study at Al-Azhar University in Gaza, Faculty of Engineering & Information Technology Major of Computer & Communication Engineering.

I love every kind of sport such as football, basketball, volleyball, etc. I am interested in Technology and every thing related to it.

When I sit in front of Gaza beach, I feel so happy, especially at sunset, watching the waves and hearing the sound of the water.

My goal is to graduate from my University and complete a higher degree, in order to use it to achieve a better life in and for Gaza, which can be expressed in freedom to travel and freedom to have our own economic system without dependency of other countries, to have free access to all of Palestine from sea to sea and from Rosh Hanikra to the Gulf of Aqaba. To pass my knowledge to students here in Gaza, open their minds and make them think positively of having a happy future in Palestine in general but specifically in Gaza.

Nowadays beside my studies, I am a Technical Assistant in the Al Fakhoora scholarship Program, and I am one of three who manage the Virtual Majlis program which is a big one in Al Fakhoora and my role is to ensure the connection is established with the students from Penn State University and make sure the actual sessions are smooth sailing. I also ensure that what I like to call “the Twitter operation” is running alongside the main LIVE conversation. The Virtual Majlis is very important to me because it opens many doors, and it gives me the chance to talk with and know more about the western world and views. It helps me to establish good relationships based on the notion that we are all equal as human beings and that there is solidarity beyond just compassion and kindness. Another important thing is that it gives me the chance to talk and express my opinion about the situation in Palestine generally and Gaza especially.
Haneen A’aed Muhanna

My name is Haneen A’aed Muhanna, I’m 21 years old, and live in Gaza, but I’m originally from Al Masmih, which is located North-East of the Gaza Strip, I wish to see it and return to live there with all my family one day.

I’m currently studying Environmental Engineering at the Islamic University of Gaza, and I’m in my fourth year. I love my specialization, and enjoy learning about topics related to the environment, specifically the situation of water in Gaza. It is an important topic for Gaza, because we suffer from a lack of water and a severe contamination of drinking water because of the occupation, to the point where it constitutes a danger to life in Gaza. I’m interested in learning about this topic and finding a solution. I also love photography, music and using the Internet for social media websites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and also talking with my friends outside Gaza on Skype.

Every Thursday, my family meets with my uncles and aunts at my grandfather’s house and we have a lot of fun. I love family meetings that bring together love and harmony. Family and friends are very important to me.

Although I have many interests, I have one dream, to be a great engineer and successful leader through an important position such as minister of environment.

I want to be useful to my country and society by being a good leader that can lead people the right way and change the negative thinking. I want to learn more and more and train to be a good representative and respect other people, their opinions and listen to them.

This is what prompted me to be a part of the Al Fakhoora team and through this experience; I’m learning the basics of leadership as a Technical Assistant. Through my work in the Virtual Majlis, which is one of the most important elements of our advocacy program, students can directly communicate with students abroad and discuss a variety of topics. This has a significant effect on the process of changing stereotypes and negative images about Gaza.

This experience has given me a new and optimistic look for the future of Palestine; a future with freedom and a retraction of the siege on Gaza due to the efforts of the youth.

Finally, I hope to be good leader and representative, as I want to achieve the best for my country and for myself.
Calendar events

In order to provide students with an opportunity to practically explore the dimensions of activism and campaigning, and to engage a wider range of Al Fakhoora students, a variety of historically and internationally important dates have been proposed. The student TAs chose six different dates to design campaigns around throughout the coming year. These dates are to be the key points for engaging all Al Fakhoora students and enabling them to get involved in the design, development and implementation of on the ground community service activities, extending the opportunity to gain new skills in leadership and advocacy to all Al Fakhoora students.

In addition, it’s an opportunity for them to further research and raise awareness about their own histories and other global issues to wider audiences both in and outside Gaza through social media and other platforms.

For example, one of the identified campaigns is ‘The Nakba’, 15th May 1948, when over 700,000 Palestinians escaped from their villages and became refugees in their own country. Students will receive training on starting a campaign and integrating social media, to help them expand their reach and develop a more global voice: using their creativity to raise awareness about ‘The Nakba’ and create a greater and deeper understanding of the repercussions resulting from the displacement of their people.

Another significant date chosen was the assassination of Naji Al Ali, father of the iconic ‘Handala’ character and an internationally renowned caricature artist. Handala became the symbol of the Palestinian struggle and the hardship of the Palestinian Diaspora. Students will need to work together in creating a campaign that celebrates Naji Al Ali’s creativity and salutes his undying efforts to represent the struggle of his people. The campaigns allow students to implement existing skills while gaining new ones through a variety of learning processes; it also allows them to think of unique and creative ways to expand reach, raise awareness and speak to a global audience.
Penn State University – Virtual Majlis in the US

For three years now, Al Fakhoora has partnered with World in Conversation (WinC) to deliver the Virtual Majlis programme at Penn State University (PSU). WinC’s mission is to facilitate radically open dialogues that expand perspectives and invite greater understanding between people locally and globally. Two Penn State sociology professors started the organization, originally called U.S Race Relations, following a few racially charged incidents at a time when racial tension amongst the student body was very high.

The model that WinC operates, offers a chance to participate in a dialogue about issues that are considered controversial and often taboo. The dialogues are run by two trained facilitators on each side. The facilitators are a key part of achieving the WinC vision in which facilitated dialogue will revolutionize cross-cultural relationships by transforming conflict into collaboration.

At the heart of The Virtual Majlis (VM) programme, is a facilitated video dialogue that fosters critical thinking, cultural exchange, and greater understanding between students at PSU and Al Fakhoora students in Gaza. The objectives of the VM include: increasing cultural understanding on both sides, building bridges between American and Palestinian students, creating empathy and a greater understanding about the situation in Palestine and broadening students’ views on their role in the conflict and the world.

The 2012 fall semester was a huge test and success for the VM. Partnering one on one outside of the group dialogues, students formed a strong connection with one another, and felt more comfortable when engaging in the weekly dialogues. The topics ranged from the role of family and accounts of daily life, to the effects of the bombings and how Palestinian youth coped with the seven day Israeli aggression on Gaza that coincided with the middle of the semester.

Throughout the seven-day aggression, the Palestinian students kept in regular contact with their partners at PSU, texting, calling and messaging each other. PSU students heard firsthand from their partners about what was happening on the ground and were worried for them and their families’ safety. The Palestinian students were extremely thankful for the support and messages of appreciation were posted on social media pages and through text messages. PSU students who participated in this VM module said they were changed by experiencing the war through the eyes of their friends in Gaza.
“If I were to list the amount of knowledge I have gained in this course thus far, I would need a long scroll that stretches from one end of my bedroom to the next. It was striking to me how uneducated I was about the conflict between Israel and Gaza in the Middle East, and by taking this course, I have come to learn that the many reasons why I had little to no knowledge about it.”

PSU Virtual Majlis student

“This class really made me think of how much I had just accepted the status quo in my life. It also made me question for what else am I just accepting the status quo? This semester also made me think about my own opinions and how I formed them.”

PSU Virtual Majlis student

During the Israeli aggression on Gaza, students on both sides gained a greater understanding of each other, created lasting relationships that continued beyond the semester and encouraged further dialogue.

More than Words (MTW) is another programme run in partnership with PSU. In it, each participating student in Gaza, is teamed up with a partner in the US, and time is spent each week conversing in English. The Palestinian student is also required to maintain a blog. The blogs are edited and then published on the Edublogs section of the Al Fakhoora website. Participants are also provided with social media training through scheduled workshops.

It provides students in Gaza with an opportunity to improve their proficiency in English, fosters cultural exchange, and broadens the influence of conversations, their views on their role in the world and their understanding of social responsibility. In the US, students reflect on their own lives compared to the lives and struggles in Palestine, and ask themselves how they can relate, what their roles and responsibilities are in allowing this to continue and how they should live their lives with this newfound awareness. The answers to these questions are different for every person, but students begin to ask what their social responsibility is in making their world a better place.

The partnerships took a more personal and sensitive turn when the most recent armed conflict between Israel and Gaza took place. Students from both VM and MTW kept in close, daily contact with their partners during those difficult times, some through their personal Facebook and Twitter accounts.
“This class will continue to test me and test my ability to handle truths that are unfamiliar and sometimes very shocking to me.”

PSU MTW student

“As we have delved deeper into our conversations, I have left feeling for the first time in my life as though I have woken up to the world around me.”

PSU Virtual Majlis student

Karim Bataineh, Programme Manager describes the improvement and development that he has seen in the Gaza students after only six months; from their English language skills to their confidence speaking to a western audience and expressing themselves in an articulate manner.

“The first and most obvious change I have seen in the TAs, is their level of English proficiency which has increased drastically. Another change is, the increased comfort when talking to strangers, especially Americans. For example, we started a new VM and while the first session is always awkward because everyone is new and unfamiliar with each other, the leaders in Gaza did a great job of stepping in to encourage others to enter the conversation. The impact it had, as subtle as it may have seemed, was very important. The rest of the participants in Gaza immediately felt comfortable enough to share and participate. And that’s leading by example. To me, you can’t put a value to that, it manifests in various aspects in your life, when you feel comfortable taking control of a situation.

Our leaders in Gaza are growing in impressive ways. A few of them participated in an experimental dialogue this past semester with a few ROTC students at Penn State (students training to be military officers). They were all extremely excited afterwards—in a way I’ve rarely witnessed. They were smiling and joking and calling it the “Advanced” Virtual Majlis. Most importantly, their language skills are clearly improving and their ability to express themselves on very complex and emotional issues is notable. The Penn State students were very touched by the dialogue. And on top of that—so were the leaders in Gaza. They said that, finally, they saw the human face of the military—something they had never before seen. They literally said, “We no longer see them as monsters.”
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| Laurie Mulvey   | Our conversation today sparked many more conversations. We’re all looking forward to more. :-|}
| Hazem Bitar     | Normalcy and terror coexist in Gaza. Thanks to British filmmaker, Harry Fear, for sharing this videotape of a recent talk he gave in the UK about his trip to Gaza. An important part of his solidarity work is educating audiences back home about the realities on the ground in Gaza. Nothing tells a story better than pictures, I think. I like Harry Fear’s passion, his voice, and his dedication to telling the truth. |
| Hazem           | Just in Gaza...That moment when you are in between death and life, you close your eyes and wait for your soul to leave your body. Another moment follows when you open your eyes and realize you are still alive and it is like you were born again! Thanks God for the new life! |
| Abdullan Riyad  | Our American friends, we are praying for your safety, stay safe please away from any danger.                                                                                                               |
| Elkhoudary      | Israel just killed Hamas military chief in Gaza; this may be a start to something even worse than the situation right now.                                                                                     |
| Eman Sourani    | 12:40pm Fifth Day of the offensive attack on Gaza: 560 Palestinians have been wounded – 52 killed including 14 children #GazaUnderFire                                                                             |
| Ahmed K Alattar | For the sake of our children: Stop the War and Build Peace. Please ... We no longer see our children in this landscape.                                                                                       |
| Ahmed Wadi      | Gaza breathe safely again after a cease-fire
Gaza rejoice Amid the mourning
Gaza triumph from the center of the siege
Gaza this night will sleep safely
I Ahmed Wadi will sleep safely for the first night since 8 days |
| Dani Lichliter  | Hi friends! I just wanted to say a huge thank you for everything that you all have shared throughout the semester. I truly appreciate the willingness of each of you to speak your mind and express your feelings. In this time of crisis in Gaza, I hope that I can support and help you all in anyway possible. Please let me know if you would like to Skype or send me a Facebook message if you just want to chat. Please know that we here in the US are thinking about you constantly and sending warm and peaceful thoughts your way. |
| Abed El-Rhman M Ja’rour | Palestinians have no army, no navy, no air force. There is no war, this is just genocide.” #virtualmajlis. You can burn up our mosques and our homes and our schools, but our spirit will never die. We will not go down in Gaza tonight. #PrayForGaza |
Ahmed Wadi

History was made at the United Nations on Thursday when the General Assembly voted to grant Palestine non-member observer State status at the United Nations, while expressing the urgent need for the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians leading to a permanent two-State solution.

Jacob Wozniak

I can’t promise that America is with you, but I can promise that those who know about your conflict and actually understand what is going on do support you. We are all wishing for your well-being and the prosperity of your families, stay strong. VIVA GAZA

Dani Lichliter

I am walking around today feeling as if there is a raincloud above my head. I cannot even imagine what you are all going through. Please remember that we are here for you, that we care for you, and that we love you all. I want nothing more than for this to stop and for peace to resume. Reading through all your posts is truly heartbreaking. But thank you, each of you, for keeping us informed.

Francisco Makumabuya

Guys please stay as safe as possible. You all are in my thoughts and prayers in this moment of need.

Renae Christine

Thank you for your updates. I am thinking and praying for all of you and your friends and families. Please stay safe, much love.

Ihab Saleh

Above the ground breathing and on the network tweeting follow these hashtags #Gaza #GazaUnderAttack #PrayForGaza

Takkeem Morgan

My thoughts and prayers are with the people of Gaza. I hope for an end to this senseless violence. I realize that people’s lives are being destroyed at this time. I hope that it ends soon. Even through the destruction, and chaos I pray that you find moments of peace.

Rayah Al Gheithy

We are thinking of you all and praying for you constantly. You guys have such inspiring strength, you amaze me. I pray for you all to enjoy a quite, peaceful night in Gaza very soon inshAllah! Thank you for all the posts you spread here you keep us informed, aware and connected to you in this tough time. We hear you & we are here for you. Pray for Gaza

Ryan Hartzfeld

I think of and pray for everyone in Gaza all day. Thank you all for so bravely documenting your struggle so that we can understand what you are going through. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to help...

Aya Tork

Aya Tork

*These figures refer to the Fakhoora Facebook page and are not specific to Penn State students. % increase based on last period figures.
**FIG 03 //**

**COMPARATIVE LOOK AT STUDENT EMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING PRE AND POST VIRTUAL MAJLIS**

**I want to travel to an Arab-Muslim country**

- **PRE SEMESTER**
  - 1 DISAGREE 0
  - 4 NEUTRAL 2
  - 10 AGREE 11

- **POST SEMESTER**
  - 5 DISAGREE 0
  - 8 NEUTRAL 3
  - 2 AGREE 10

**It is safe for Americans to visit Arab-Muslim countries**

- **PRE SEMESTER**
  - 10 DISAGREE 0
  - 5 NEUTRAL 5
  - 0 AGREE 8

- **POST SEMESTER**
  - 7 AGREE 2
  - 4 NEUTRAL 2
  - 10 AGREE 11

**I have a good understanding of the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis**

- **PRE SEMESTER**
  - 10 DISAGREE 0
  - 5 NEUTRAL 5
  - 0 AGREE 8

- **POST SEMESTER**
  - 7 AGREE 2
  - 3 NEUTRAL 4
  - 11 AGREE 11

**When I think about the Arab-Muslim nations in the Middle East, I think about violence**

- **PRE SEMESTER**
  - 5 DISAGREE 7
  - 3 NEUTRAL 4
  - 2 AGREE 11

- **POST SEMESTER**
  - 7 AGREE 2
  - 5 DISAGREE 7
  - 11 AGREE 11
Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) - Virtual Majlis in the UK

After a successful pilot programme, conducted halfway through the 2012 academic year, Al Fakhoora extended a partnership agreement to the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) in London to further spread the reach of the Virtual Majlis programme. Following VM success in the US with students from Penn State University, we were eager to expand the scope of the conversation and provide the students in Gaza with the opportunity to engage more students from various backgrounds. Exposure to a varied audience not only enhances listening skills and capabilities to hold an effective dialogue, but also allows the Palestinian students to develop a coherent narrative.

The London based VM attracts students from different universities across the city such as the London School of Economics, University of East London and Middlesex and Westminster University. The weekly student dialogues take place over Skype and a wide variety of topics are discussed such as the culture of students on both sides, studying in Palestine, hopes for the future and how the siege and occupation impacts this, what the students in Gaza experienced during the Israeli aggression in November, what UK students did during the seven days to show their support, how the media in the UK reported on the assault, how media bias in the West makes the students in Gaza feel restricted in what they can do by the siege, and what freedom means to both sides.

Students further engage with one another and continue the conversation through the Al Fakhoora & PSC Facebook page and on Twitter, allowing benefit beyond the video dialogues by the continued exchanging and sharing of knowledge.

As the London VMs’ were also running during the November aggression, the students developed a stronger bond with one another and communicated daily.

The students in Gaza provided first hand updates on the explosions and bombings, describing how it affected their daily lives, how they could not leave their homes and their fears during the heavy shelling. Kareem Alsalqawy, a medical student from Gaza explained during the first VM after the attacks that the Israeli attacks had been “really frightening”. Adding: “Imagine that you can’t go out from your home after seven at night because the sky is crowded with planes waiting to strike. Imagine you can’t sleep at night because of the sound of explosions and bombs everywhere. You expect any of those missiles to hit your house at any time, so you can’t sleep.”

The UK students demonstrated solidarity with their peers in Gaza by posting photographs of demonstrations they had taken part in throughout London and protests that had taken place throughout the UK. Such a show of support boosted the moral of
the students in Gaza and lifted their moral saying “We felt we had people who were helping us through the extremely difficult days.”

Kareem expressed, “It meant a lot to know there are people who care about you. We are very grateful for your support and we thank you for your support during this time. It kept us strong knowing you support us and you give our voice to your government.”

The students in London were shocked listening to accounts of shelling and bombing. “I can’t imagine how it would feel to not know if you or your family would survive the coming hours,” said Mahmuda Ahmed, a student at Westminster University. “You guys are amazing.” He later posted on the Facebook page:

It was so heartbreaking speaking with the students of Gaza today and hearing about their experiences of the horrible, horrible incidents of the last few days. Made me realize more than ever that we are their voice, they can’t be heard and their stories are twisted in the media so it’s down to us to bring justice to the lands of Falisteen. To the students of Gaza, it was so amazing seeing your beautiful smiles today and meeting you all, continue to keep those smiles ;) and just know we will never be at peace until Falisteen is at peace, looking forward to the next session.”

The students also assessed the UK’s media coverage of the seven-day assault and students confirmed that they had relied on alternative sources, including social media, rather than the BBC and mainstream newspapers for accurate information.

Kareem told the UK students: “We know that we are the victims but, when we hear the opposite, that we are terrorists, we get sad. The media has a big affect and we must work hard to explain the facts to people.”

The London students who took part in the VMs have gained a deep insight into life under siege in Gaza, the difficulties of everyday living and studying. They have become strong advocates on their campuses for the Palestinian right to education and for an end to occupation; bringing friends who are not knowledgeable about Palestine to the VM sessions. Two of the students, have been motivated to become more politically involved and are standing for joint positions of Student Officer on the PSC executive board.
Rania Al-Najjar is an Al Fakhoora scholar in London studying for an MA in International Communication and Development, spoke at the National Union of Students (NUS) Black Student’s Conference held at Southbank University London. Many of those students are current or future student leaders, and many have aspirations to go into politics after graduating. They are a vital audience for pro-Palestinian activism, and Rania’s talk was a very important part of the afternoon session. Rania spoke about life under siege and how during the seven-day assault schools and educational facilities were targeted, the effect of it on her family and friends in Gaza, and on herself waiting for news in London. “Every moment, I was expecting bad news,” she said as she spoke of the trauma of being in London while her family and friends were under attack in Gaza. “I spoke to my friends on the phone and they said ‘Forgive us Rania, we might not be alive when you come back.’”

At the end of the conference, Rania was presented with the NUS Black Students Achievers’ Award 2012 for ‘Outstanding Achievement during the Year’.

In January 2013, Rania spoke at a meeting organized by PSC in Parliament. She spoke about the siege on Gaza and Israel’s latest assault on a panel which included the Palestinian ambassador to the UK, Professor Manuel Hassassian, and British MPs Jeremy Corbyn (Labour), Andy Slaughter (Labour) and Sarah Teather (Liberal Democrat).

Rania’s talks have been an inspiration for those listening, empowering some to become more active advocates for the Palestinian cause and their right to education. Furthermore Rania’s experience in the UK has been invaluable, Rania herself says she has been moved and bolstered by the strong reception she has received at every talk. They are also an inspiring example for other Al Fakhoora students of the powerful influence they can have abroad as advocates for the Palestinian cause.

Posting on the Al Fakhoora International Masters Students Facebook page after the event in Parliament, Rania wrote:

My last talk in London yesterday, a great event organized by PSC. The participants expressed their solidarity with Gaza four years on from Israel’s Operation Cast Lead. I’m very -pleased to attend such a great event and feel the unique support for Gaza. I realized that Gaza is not forgotten, especially that there were speakers who visited Gaza and they still remember its camps and kind people. The event ended with great words from the Palestinian ambassador “Victory is not made by leaders, it is made by people.

One guest, posting on Facebook after the event, which was widely shared on social media, wrote:

Powerful and moving address by special guest Rania Al-Najjar, an eloquent student from Gaza in London.

Students in other parts of the country, who have not been able to participate in the VMs, have followed the conversations on social media. In two universities – Liverpool and Cardiff – students have asked to hold their own VMs as a result. This was facilitated for students in Liverpool in November 2012. Students in Cardiff, Wales, are due to hold a VM in February 2013.

Samuel Farmery, the student convenor of the VM at Liverpool University, said after the VM:

“I think that the ability to talk with students from Gaza, people in the same stages of life as us, and see the profound differences in our situations, and some unexpected similarities, helps to make the students wanting to be involved in the human rights struggle for people in Gaza acutely aware of the human side of the conflict, so their basis for information on it isn’t simply numbers in a report or footage on TV but through conversation and connection with people very much like themselves.”
**Virtual Majlis: Social Media update (PSC)**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yousof Khan</td>
<td>It was great to have met the new student faces of last Thursdays Gaza meeting... It really is a surreal experience every time talking over Skype, especially after reading about the injustice Israel inflicts on such a small area of land. All I can think at each meeting is; Blimey, how much mental strength do these students have.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yael Kahn</td>
<td>We cannot be silence while Israeli continues and intensify this slaughter - we should protest here in London against the Israeli terrorism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amena Saleem</td>
<td>I’ve heard that Israel is threatening to cut Gaza’s communications. If we lose contact with you, our friends, our brothers, our sisters, please know that we haven’t stopped thinking about you. We will never stop thinking about you and supporting you until you have justice and freedom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amena Saleem</td>
<td>From all of us in London - thank you Gaza for such a great semester. It was funny, moving, interesting and hugely informative. We hope you enjoyed it too! Have a safe and peaceful holiday, and we can’t wait to see you again in 2013 :-)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuhdi Elifranji</td>
<td>Your support what makes us strong, thanks guys we really appreciate that great effort, keep going</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam Khan</td>
<td>We are all so, so proud of you, your courage and bravery is incredible. Your suffering WILL come to an end one day...PALESTINE WILL RISE!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmuda Ahmed</td>
<td>You may not have the weapons to fight back, you may not have the army to fight with, but you have us, your brothers and sisters constantly making prayers for you, for one day to peace to come upon your lands. I dread to come onto to this page to read another update, it hurts so hard knowing that these animals are doing all this and we can’t physically help :-( You guys are all in my prayers, constantly praying for things to get better and for you all to have the strength to deal with this :-) I know its hard but please stay strong. Thinking of you all always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amna Munir</td>
<td>Alhamdulillah for the ceasefire. Long live Palestine, long live Gaza! So proud of our amazing friends in Gaza you’re the strongest people ever, got to learn so much from you. Our fight for a free Palestine will not stop here we’ll continue to fight inshAllah till Palestine is free and yours as it was! Much respect!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azeem Sayani</td>
<td>Knowing about the situation in Gaza and putting it into context with the importance the people of Gaza give to their education, I have no doubt in my mind that the exemplary leaders of the future, in their fields of study, will be from Palestine.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdel Rahman Mikkawi</td>
<td>We’re humbly grateful for your support guys. Thank you so much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masseeh Walehdy</td>
<td>I do not support a country or culture I support all mankind and all struggle are the same but the degree to which a struggle extends to that differs and I can say the Palestinians have suffered too many horrors for us to prioritize their struggle to others or even to compare*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**FIG 04 // SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS: TWITTER SEP – DEC 2012***

- **TWEETS** +187%
- **FOLLOWERS** +117%
- **FOLLOWING** +9%

*These figures refer to @FakhooraOrg and are not specific to PSC students

% increase based on last period figures
Dynamic Futures Scholarship Programme

The Dynamic Futures programme currently provides a full academic grant for a student’s period of degree-level study. We continue to develop our empowerment programme to ensure that our students are characterized by a unique set of skills in advocacy, leadership, communications and social media proficiency.

Al Fakhoora seeks to identify unique partnerships with innovators in these fields, which are unfolding on the ground to great effect!

Using online resources or face-to-face sessions; the Dynamic Futures international team pool their talents, skills and knowledge to create a varied and colourful programme of lectures, activities and experiences for our students.

The advocacy element of the programme incorporates classes in leadership skills, media, film, writing, online discussions with international friends, human rights and English language classes.

Once they possess knowledge of their human rights, good understanding of others and the skills of clear communication and expression, these activities instill a sense of power for the students.

FIG 05 //

DISTRIBUTION OF PHASE 2 STUDENTS ACROSS SPECIALIZATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialization</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health Studies</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/Commerce</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Studies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Shariaa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Students</strong></td>
<td><strong>88</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students hoping to enroll in graduate studies; Call for submission of applications

Al Fakhoora has begun to accept applications from Gaza based students hoping to continue their higher education in Britain.

The graduate scholarship programme was launched in 2011-2012. Five Palestinian students from Gaza were awarded full scholarships to specialize in areas that would directly impact the development of Gaza. These specialties included Water Management, Poverty and Development, International Communication and Development, ICT in Education and Development and Cooperation Studies.

Delivering on our pledge to contribute to the welfare and prosperity of the strip, we announced the call for submission of applications in January 2013. We are not only looking for applicants with strong academic backgrounds, but individuals with distinguished leadership and communication skills, who will lead the way in developing Gaza.

For more information on the requirements and application process, please visit: fakhoora.org/int-mastersdegree

To provide students with a clearer picture of what studying abroad was like and to encourage students to apply, Al Fakhoora produced two short films featuring students from the first batch who had gone to pursue their studies in the UK. Rania Al Najjar from City University and Mohammed Sari Sisalem, from University of East Anglia, Norwich, shared their experience on studying abroad and compared it with their previous experience of studying in the besieged strip. The films allowed the students to reflect on the opportunity to access education unhindered by the blockade, and uninterrupted by conflict. To view the short films, please go to: vimeo.com/user10559402
International Masters video project

A video project was launched last year to record the experiences of the students from Gaza, while they were living and studying in the UK.

The video diaries were filmed in London, Brighton, York and Norwich by acclaimed filmmakers Remigiusz and Anna Sowa. The final product took in the day-to-day experiences of life and study in a western culture, using footage of the surrounding community and interviews with the students on their experiences. The film also included archival and current footage from the region.

The film is scheduled to be screened in Gaza in the spring and shall be featured in various events that Al Fakhoora takes part in in 2013. We hope that it reflects accurately the students’ UK experiences of the trials of hard study and the tribulations of living with access to all the resources to make study possible. The film also intends to celebrate the students’ determination and dedication to achieve and return to serve their country in areas where it most needs fresh expertise.

The film will also be featured on our website in March as we hope to inspire other students in their academic aspirations.
Vocational training success story: Huda Abu Owda: grant recipient / business owner

In adherence to our vision to provide access to education to all, we collaborated with Islamic Relief Palestine to start a vocational training programme. This step was taken in light of the understanding of the social and financial situation of the people in Gaza that necessitates self reliance to cope financially. The programme provided specific vocational training in areas such as food processing, mobile phone and computer maintenance etc. The first phase of the programme was successfully completed and the students are currently in the second phase, where 47 students have been placed in temporary employment and 53 are in income generation projects. These students were awarded grants to help them set up small businesses in the areas of their newly acquired expertise. The grant covers setting up expenses such as rent, lighting, sectioning and wall building etc.

Huda Abu Owda’s shop

The 32 year old, who suffers from a disability that causes a speech impediment and hinders her movement, is set to open her embroidery business.

“I dream of reaching an international market through E-marketing”

Huda

IN NUMBERS //

47 students are being hosted in 15 organizations for temporary employment

Our implementing partner, Islamic Relief Palestine, have designed the programme to teach principles of self reliance, commitment to time and responsibility.

The next phase of the programme will work with the students to train them on project management, accounting and marketing skills.
Vocational training success story: Phase 2 of the vocational programme provides 47 students with short term employment opportunities

Abdullah Zeydia, who obtained a 2 year diploma in graphic design, has joined the vocational training programme after being nominated by his college.

Upon completion of the 120 hours in vocational & managerial training, Abdullah decided to chose the short term work experience option in the second phase of the programme. He was chosen by advertising company, Mashareq.

“Here, I feel my dreams come true”, Abdullah said describing his 6 month employment. Abdullah’s tasks have included printing billboards, banners and other printouts. He has also been involved in the design process of such materials.

“This has been such an enriching experience, I have learnt so much more about the advertising business and the local market’s requirements”

Abdullah

Palestinian families are typical large and Abdullah's family is no exception. The family of nine was supported by the father until he lost his job a few years ago. Abdullah and his brother, (who is married and has two children) live with their extended family and provide financial support.

Abdullah said he felt indebted to IRPAL and Al Fakhoora for investing in a programme that went the extra mile and not only improved the skill set of its beneficiaries but also ushered them to a stepping stone towards employment and sustainability.
Health and Wellness

An update on infrastructure and expertise development in our projects which tackle learning difficulties

Her Highness’s visit to Atfaluna Society for the Deaf in Gaza

On October 23, His Highness the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser arrived in Gaza for a one-day visit. Her Highness visited the Atfaluna Society which supports children with hearing impairment. Her Highness heard from parents on how they benefited from the services provided by Atfaluna; these included providing and maintain hearing aids, speech therapy and sign language classes. In association with Qatar Red Crescent and Atfaluna, Al Fakhoora launched a hearing screening campaign that reached over 15,000 children throughout Gaza.

The programme ensures that children suffering from impaired hearing will be retested in 6 months from the 1st test to determine whether the intervention was sufficient to the children need hearing aids.

The early intervention concept provided evaluation of cognitive and physical abilities, educational sessions, home visits and speech therapy.

The early intervention programme deals with issues facing children with hearing problems and introduces sign language to the child, their parents and sometimes family members. They also provide emotional and social support to parents of hearing impaired children, to learn to adjust and address any needs that their child may have.

IN NUMBERS //

WHAT THE SCREENING UNCOVERED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2351</td>
<td>Children were found to suffer from varying hearing problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Identified through the advanced hearing testing (ABR) to suffer from advanced hearing problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Identified with hearing loss and required hearing aids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>747</td>
<td>Education sessions were held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290</td>
<td>Speech therapy sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232</td>
<td>Counseling sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lein Omar Zu’orob is a 2 year old girl who received the screening test and was identified with profound hearing loss. Lein’s mother was distraught to learn that her daughter needed a hearing aid. However she received immense support from the head of the early intervention programme at Atfaluna, Philistine Al Omari, who walked the mother through the intervention process and how it could improve Lein’s quality of life. After getting used to the hearing aid and progressing through sign language she feels her confidence in using sign language increased her confidence in using it with her child and seeing the positive possibilities ahead.

The mother says the sessions also provided key methods on integration as none of Leins’ four siblings suffer from hearing loss. The Khan Younis resident says she will go anywhere to provide her daughter with the right support.

“I see Lein full of life playing and communicating with her friends during these sessions and then she is able to communicate effectively with her friends and take that home and communicate with her siblings. It is wonderful to see her develop and I would do anything for her to flourish.”

Lein’s mother

What the therapists say
Therapists have noted that it is very difficult for parents to accept a disability such as profound hearing loss. In one case, two year old Mohammed Wuhaidi, who was tested through the screening campaign at the Tal Za’atar kindergarten, had been brought in by his uncle and not his parents. Once diagnosed with severe hearing impairment, his parents opposed enrolling him in sign language saying “but our child can speak.” Home visits are an essential component of the intervention programme. Especially when parents are under the misconception that once installed, the hearing aid will provide normal hearing ability. Following many such visits to provide insight, support and guidance, Mohammed’s parents agreed to the sign language classes. His extended family has also enrolled in the classes to support Mohammed.

The screening which has reached over 12,000 children in Gaza, has noticeably raised general awareness of hearing problems among families, schools and community organizations. This generated awareness and the consequential debate of introducing a national hearing screening program for all newborns in Gaza; this environment is conducive to the sustainability and longevity of the programme.
Capacity building of Physiotherapists in specialized areas of Physiotherapy

In partnership with the Qatar Red Crescent, the third phase of Al Fakhoora’s project began in September 2012. Seven training courses out of a planned nine have been conducted. Each course had been attended by 10 new physiotherapy trainees in the following fields: Spine manipulation, burn rehabilitation, cardiopulmonary and ICU, peripheral joint mobilization, proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF), electrotherapy and iontophoresis and electromyography (EMG).

In the first quarter, a further two trainings are scheduled to be completed along with the project evaluation and preparation of the final technical and financial reports.

Establishing a Specialized Center for Complicated Diabetic Cases in Al Wafa Hospital

In collaboration with the Qatar Red Crescent and part of Al Fakhoora’s Disability and Rehabilitation programs: Establishing a Specialized Center for Complicated Diabetic Diseases aims to establish a high quality diabetic foot center, including inpatient department and two daily clinic units. While preparation continues for the official opening of the department, all ordered equipment has been received by Al Wafa Hospital. Diabetes in the Gaza strip remains a large problem, with more than 100,000 diabetic foot cases reported to date, and patients have had to travel abroad in order to seek appropriate treatment. Further to the delivery of equipment, specialized staff has been recruited and awareness workshops about the diabetic foot are being conducted and are ongoing. The new department is scheduled to officially open and begin offering care to diabetic patients in the first quarter of 2013.
Preparing for the Psychosocial Support Project, PSP contingency plan for the Gaza strip

There was previously no ‘national contingency team’ in the Gaza strip to intervene during and after a crisis. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has developed a much needed PSP contingency plan for the Gaza strip to improve the response towards emergencies in the Gaza strip, particularly during attacks. This involves training PSP worker on how to respond to emergencies and coordinate their efforts and activities making clear the roles and responsibilities of various sectors. This ensures that efforts are not duplicated and more people in need of the support can receive the correct help. The project also included providing PSP kits for children and training staff on how to use these kits.

PRCS has successfully completed training for a team of 78 psycho-social support workers. The trainees have been strategically divided into five teams to cover the five local councils in Gaza ensuring that the whole of the strip is covered in case of an emergency. This is extremely important due to restricted movement during emergencies.

In November, when Gaza came under attack, those trained had to unexpectedly implement what they had learnt. Immediately after the war ended, PRCS-PSP unit held an urgent meeting with all team members and began to implement an emergency response plan which included: providing psychosocial debriefing to all team members first to ensure they also received the support they needed, they then began targeting the most affected areas of the Gaza strip, visiting households and providing psychosocial support services and gathering information from the field. Sever cases were being referred to the specialists in PRCS. Immediately after the seven day Israeli aggression in Gaza, over 4,500 individuals benefited from this project.

AL Fakhoora supports MOH ophthalmology hospital

In Association with Qatar Red Crescent, the Ministry of Health’s ophthalmic department has received advance surgical equipment and disposables through the AL Fakhoora programme dedicated to supporting health and disability. The equipment will improve the quality of intervention and will decrease the incidence of visual impairment. The ophthalmic hospital receives 9,500 patients monthly, and performs 250 operations.
Upgrading the capacity of two CBOs working with children with cochlear implants

Al Amal Society and Imaar Society are the only two CBOs (community based organizations) in Gaza who provide services for children with cochlear implants. Their services range from recruiting cochlear implant surgeons to providing support services to children with these implants. The rehabilitation services ensure that children are able to adapt to the devices and can recognize sounds and words so that they are able to eventually speak. The centers also provide maintenance services for the cochlear devices that can cost up to 22,000 USD.

In our efforts to upgrade the services provided to children with these implants, Al Fakhoora sent three staff members from Al Amal Society to attend a three week workshop in Jordan on rehabilitation of children with cochlear implants. The training covered topics on hearing, pronunciation, techniques of integration with other children and linguistics.

Additionally, advanced training will be offered to two experts in the field of audiology and speech rehabilitation in a specialized center outside Gaza. The trained personnel will then pass on their expertise to local staff through consultations, training and supervision. The project will also provide on-site maintenance and reprogramming of the implants.

The Imaar Society on the other hand, will be provided with practical training for mothers on how to help children develop their hearing and pronunciation abilities. Home visits will also provide the necessary support required and create a healthy relationship between the specialist and the care givers.

Amal society is located in Gaza City and offer services to residents of Gaza and northern Gaza, while Imaar is located in Khan Younis and offer services to the southern part of the strip.
Data in the pipeline: Establishment of a database on the types of disability and the number of disabled in Gaza

Al Fahkhoora and QRC have commissioned the first survey that will provide facts and figures on the number of disabled in Gaza. The household survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) will provide data on various classifications of disability that will be instrumental in guiding the work of organizations supporting the disabled. A steering committee was established to determine the role of the committee and the PCBS, as well as review the technical details of the plan to conduct and deliver the survey. The steering committee includes governmental and non-governmental bodies and other entities working in the field of disability, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Handicap International (HI).

PCBS oversaw the training of the data collectors in order to ensure their understanding of the range of definitions and classifications of different types of disability and the appropriate method of data collection. In its final format the database will provide numbers, distribution, services received, gaps and needs on an individual and regional basis. Presently, data auditing and cleaning has been completed and entry has begun.

Moving forward

The data will be presented to the steering committee after which an institution will be identified to maintain, update and manage the database. The selection criteria will require that the institution can ensure the technical capacity to provide universal access to the data and functional management system. We hope to be able to announce the results of the survey in Q2 of 2013.
Reconstruction

An update on infrastructure and expertise development in our projects which tackle learning difficulties

Qatar Red Crescent Update
Play center for children opens its doors

In collaboration with Qatar Red Crescent and Palestinian Red Crescent Society, a play center for children ages 4–18, has been completed and will offer various activities such as painting, drama, reading and sports. The main structure for the facility had previously existed, however the new design provides access for children with disabilities.

Members of staff have distributed posters and flyers in the surrounding neighborhoods and residents have been keen to enroll their children in the activities. Some activities have been parent-child orientated, for example “My Father Reads to Me” campaign was well received by the community and fathers were eager to read to their children.

Due to border closures and the Israeli aggression of November 2012, some equipment has not yet arrived and the official opening has not taken place. The center however reopened after the seven day aggression and held a number of activities to provide the children with some form of stress relief.

Work in progress

In association with Qatar Red Crescent, Al Fakhoora has committed support for numerous initiatives that provide psychosocial support and disability services to Palestinian youth living in Gaza.

Al Ahli Hospital

Construction work is well underway at the physiotherapy department of Al Ahli Hospital to provide much needed space and enhance the privacy for patients. The improved structure will benefit from a new burn rehabilitation unit. Although the unit was not fully operational during the attacks in November, it did serve as a survival unit for a large number of burn cases. The Ministry of Health estimates the number of injured at 1500, of which more than 40 per cent were children.

Al Amal Hospital

As construction continues on the existing floor at Al Amal Hospital, 18 female and 21 male staff members have received advanced training in a range of rehabilitation topics ranging from stroke rehabilitation and cardiovascular system disorders to wound care and administration of medication.

Electricity, water and waste water networks, removal of old tiles and false ceilings and maintenance of brick ceilings, upon completion, will make space for 12 outpatient service, occupational therapy, speech therapy, physiotherapy and psychological support rooms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF THE PROJECT</th>
<th>START DATE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>END DATE</th>
<th>AMOUNT COMPLETE %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Establishing new department comprising of 2 floors for Al Quds University- Khan Younis Branch</td>
<td>Jan 2012</td>
<td>14 MONTHS</td>
<td>15 April 2013</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reconstruction &amp; maintenance for the agriculture college building and facilities at Al Azhar University</td>
<td>Jan 2012</td>
<td>15 MONTHS</td>
<td>15 Nov 2013</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Establishing new Engineering &amp; Information Technology labs at Al Azhar University</td>
<td>Oct 2011</td>
<td>9 MONTHS</td>
<td>31 Jan 2013</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Upgrading and maintenance of the College of the Ability Development- Khan Younis (Work includes establishing 3 new classrooms, 4 rooms for supportive facilities, upgrading of library, equipping the computer lab, building wall, restoration of windows and toilets)</td>
<td>Jan 2012</td>
<td>9.5 MONTHS</td>
<td>15 Mar 2013</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Construction and furnishing the technical workshop building at the University of Applied Science (UCAS)</td>
<td>Nov 2011</td>
<td>9 MONTHS</td>
<td>31 Jul 2012</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Equipping and furnishing of the conference hall at the College of Science and Technology</td>
<td>Dec 2011</td>
<td>9 MONTHS</td>
<td>15 Jan 2013</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Procurement of IT equipment (Computers, printers, networks, office equipment &amp; furniture) Al Quds Open University</td>
<td>Oct 2011</td>
<td>7 MONTHS</td>
<td>15 April 2012</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Establishing 4 new innovative labs at Islamic University Gaza, IUG (1 GIS, Geographic Information System, 1 educational computer lab in Gaza &amp; 1 in Khan Younis &amp; 1 stock market lab)</td>
<td>Nov 2011</td>
<td>7 MONTHS</td>
<td>Oct 2012</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Partnerships

Al Fakhoora operates with vital and generous support from a number of partnerships, which continue to evolve and grow. Take a look at our existing projects, as well as new developments, with our dedicated partners.

We would like to thank Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for their generosity and support. IDB continues to show steadfast commitment to the betterment of the lives of Palestinian youth and continues to explore methods for their economic empowerment.

As of 2012, we have 300 students enrolled in BA and BSc programs specializing in over 16 degrees, from education to medicine, and our students are enrolled in eight different academically acclaimed universities in Gaza.

Our strategic partnerships with key organizations such as the Islamic Development Bank, UNDP, Qatar Red Crescent, and most recently, Islamic Relief and UCAS, allow us to contribute, with a wider scope, to the education sector through reconstruction and rehabilitation of education institutions, youth empowerment and psychosocial services.

Over the next ten years, Al Fakhoora will focus on providing an additional 1,000 scholarships (100 annually) to students in Gaza in order to pursue higher education both in Gaza and abroad.
Who we work with

Educational Institutions

Thanks to partnerships with educational institutions in the region, we are able to offer grants for study, use of facilities for the empowerment strand of our Dynamic Futures programme and the opportunity to build valuable relationships with like-minded organizations.

Our connections encompass a variety of colleges and universities so that we can offer a thorough range of facilities, experiences and support to the young people of Gaza and the West Bank.

Al Aqsa University

Al-Aqsa University consists of seven faculties including the Faculty of Arts, Sciences, Education, Media, Fine Arts, Physical Education, Administration and Financial Studies and is the sole academic institution in the vicinity that is able to offer bachelor degrees in the fields of media studies, fine arts and physical education.

An-Najah University

An-Najah specializes in scientific subject teaching, preparing young people with the skills and attitudes to tackle an international job market and realize their potential in a scientific industry, as well as support the Palestinian community.

Al Azhar University

Al Azhar aims to offer human resources in scientific research and sustainable development, with a constant focus on the use of modern technologies and techniques, combined with the originality of Palestinian, Arabic and Muslim heritage.

Al Quds Open University

With a focus on the philosophy, principles and methods of open education, Al Quds maintains freedom of thought and expression while avoiding ideological or political conflicts. The university offers MA and BA qualifications, delivering teaching using a mixture of printed, visual, audio, computerized and electronic resources.

University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS):

This college focuses on applied sciences with a dream of equipping Palestine and the rest of the region, with highly qualified and skilful professionals to build a modernized state.

Islamic University of Gaza

This university offers a wealth of qualifications in all kinds of subjects and disciplines; drawing researchers and teachers from all areas and always offering well-planned programs.
Empowerment Programme Partners

We have a number of international friends that offer their time, expertise and support to our Empowerment programme, within ‘Dynamic Futures’, in various ways.

**CISCO**
Generously work with us to provide the technology that we need to communicate with groups in Gaza, and also to facilitate the Virtual Majlis sessions.

**World in Conversation**
This online communication organization aims to create a dialogue about social and cultural issues that expand perspectives and invite greater understanding between groups.

**Penn State University**
This multi-campus university provides teaching, research and service to a diverse western collegiate. We continue to foster good relationships with members of the student body, particularly within our Virtual Majlis program.

Financial Support

We are endlessly grateful to a number of kind donors and benefactors, some of whom prefer to remain anonymous, that support the work of Al Fakhoora.

**Islamic Development Bank**
We work with the IBD and continue to appreciate their dedication to the economic development and social progress of member countries and Muslim communities.

**Practical Support**
Partners with a more practical function ‘on the ground’ in Gaza are crucial in providing that all-important ‘hands-on’ support, service or research during the occupation and within the blockade.

**YMCA Gaza**
As the oldest and largest youth charity in the world, YMCA is an established and trustworthy organization that we rely on for safety, shelter and support for the young people of Gaza.

**Qatar Red Crescent and Palestinian Red Crescent**
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world’s largest humanitarian organization; providing assistance without discrimination at all times. We are working closely with this organization both in Qatar and Palestine, to monitor the development of Palestinian universities in our Reconstruction Programme.
Healthcare Providers
We have links with a number of hospitals in Gaza, and with the majority of citizens in Gaza living in refugee camps; hospital care is absolutely crucial, as well as sought after. These institutions also cooperate with Al Fakhoora in our Disability and Psychosocial Programme ‘Health and Wellness Services’.

Al Ahli Hospital Gaza
Established for well over 100 years, this hospital became an Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem in 1982 and continues to provide medical and surgical care to the Gaza Strip.

Al Amal Hospital Gaza
This similarly busy establishment aims to serve the area with high-quality healthcare despite the difficulties surrounding the occupation and the pressure of a crisis on resources and staff.

Atfaluna Society Palestine
Atfaluna is an organization that provides support, treatment and practical aid for victims of hearing loss and impairment in the region. The bombings in Palestine have affected huge swaths of residents and Atfaluna is a crucial component of the healthcare provided in Gaza.

The Palestinian Physiotherapy Association (PPTA)
The Palestinian Physical Therapy Association (PPTA) is a national non-profit organization representing all Physical Therapists working in the Palestinian territories.

Gaza Community Mental Health
The GCMH is a knowledge-based institution that strives to empower vulnerable children, women and torture survivors by developing local resources and health services. The GCMH also aims to combat the stigma attached to mental illness.

Medical And Wellbeing Organisations
Aside from healthcare providers operating in the region, we rely on the work, advice, guidance and partnership that advisory organizations lend to our work.

Palestinian Medical Relief Society
This is a grassroots community-based Palestinian health organization that seeks to aid the fractured and damaged health service in Gaza and the West Bank by educating and empowering Palestinian people using national health programmes. This non-profit and voluntary organization is one of the largest health Non-Governmental Organisations in Palestine.

Islamic Relief Worldwide
Founded and based in the UK, IRW is an NGO of consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council and is a member of the Islamic Council for Relief. Islamic Relief works to help and empower the poor, regardless of religion, ethnicity or gender, with programmes focused on extending emergency relief, contributing to sustainable development and investing in child welfare.

Islamic Relief Palestine
IRPAL is an affiliate of Islamic Relief Worldwide and has responded to emergencies, supported the poor, and invested in sustainable development since 1998. They are dedicated to eradicating poverty, alleviating suffering in Palestine and respecting the humanity and dignity of Palestinians. They provide relief, development and child welfare services.