

Summary Report

The Welfare and the Well-being of the Palestinian Children Scientific Conference

Jerusalem, Palestine
November 21-22, 2007

A two day international scientific conference entitled “The Welfare and the Well-being of the Palestinian Children” was held at Al-Quds University-Abu Deis, Jerusalem, on the 21 and 22 of November, 2007. The conference was organized in collaboration with a number of national and international organizations. Universal Education Foundation (UEF) partners included the Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) and the Palestinian Forum for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect, a consortium of forty related organizations. The conference was sponsored by the Norwegian Program for Development, Research and Education (NUFU) and Child Watch International (CWI).



Mr. Daniel Kropf delivering his opening speech.



Conference's honored guests and participants.

National and international researchers presented on topics covering a wide range of children's issues, including the educational environment, mental health, political violence, abuse and neglect of children, health and nutrition, law and children's rights, and the well-being of Palestinian children in relationship to the well-being of children in general. The two conference days were divided into six sessions and included twenty-three presentations.

UEF was involved in many aspects of the conference. Ms. Amal Daoud represented UEF logistical and scientific committees, and UEF organized one of the sessions. Dr. Marwan Awartani was a panelist on the final session and Mr. Salah Soubani participated in the documentation committee.

At the opening ceremony, Dr. Hassan Dweek, Deputy Executive Chairman of al-Quds University, delivered the university president's welcoming speech. He was followed by Dr. Anan Masri, representing the Ministry of Health; Mr. Daniel Kropf on behalf of UEF; Dr. Amal al-Hadwa, representative of the Child Organizations Forum; two students representing the voices and needs of Palestinian children; and Professor Mohammad Shaheen, Conference Chairman. In his opening speech, Mr. Kropf spoke about the UEF vision “Education by All for the Well-Being of Children,” the well-being concept, and the need for building partnerships to support the holistic development of every child.



Well-being and education session from left to right: Hajar Amarneh, Dr. Marwan Awartani, Reema Kilani, Dr. Sumaya Sayej, Mai Tahboob, Fahed Samhan, and Huda Abu el-Halaweh.

UEF led the well-being of children session, which included four presentations and was moderated by Ms. Reema Kilani, Director General of Counseling & Special Education at the Palestinian Ministry of Education & Higher Education, and also a UEF member. Dr. Awartani presented on the Voice of Children (VOC) program, speaking of how “we seek to inspire people to listen more to children and young people and to take more initiatives for their well-being.” The presentation focused on VOC pilot research carried out in the Middle East in which surveys were conducted in 2006 to capture the perceptions of 14-16 years olds on how the school environment impacted their personal development and well-being, highlighting a selected number of correlations between well-being indicators. Further, Dr. Awartani’s presentation included an account of how survey findings had been used as an effective instrument toward educational reform and multi-stakeholder participation.

Also in the well-being of children session, university students Fahed Samhan, Mai Tahboub, and Hajar Amarneh – who had participated in a UEF peer-to-peer pilot program – presented on the impact of ICT and media on the well-being of Palestinian youth. The presentation focused on the experience of implementing this pilot qualitative study by nine students (ages 15-22) targeting peers aged 15-17 years in the West Bank, using focus group discussions and individual interview methodologies. Main objectives, work stages, results, challenges, and lessons learned were presented. Overall, the results demonstrated that ICT and media are highly desired among youth, considered to be integral aspects of their lives, and that they have a significant impact on their learning and well-being. Young people believe that the adoption of technology is the only proof that people are participating in global development and are advancing both mentally and socially. Youth also expressed the notion that technology is imposed on their lives; it is not optional. They expressed no real fears of any potential ICT and media dangers.



*UEF participating team
from left to right:
Mai Tahboob,
Amal Daoud,
Dr. Marwan Awartan,
Hajar Amarneh,
Daniel Kropf,
Fahed Samhan, and
Salah Soubani*

This conference was a useful opportunity to share and learn about research conducted on child issues. It was also a chance to highlight the connection between research and policy and regulations, as well as major gaps that require cross-sector collaboration and the consideration of children's rights and unique circumstances. A comprehensive booklet containing all presentations and recommendations will be published by the university.

Prepared by: Amal Daoud.
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