

Evaluation of the Norwegian Refugee Council's Palestine Education Programme 2010-2014

July 2014

Dr. Ritesh Shah, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland

ABSTRACT

This evaluation report provides a summary of the key activities of the Norwegian Refugee Council's Palestine country office education programme, as well as the outcomes noted to date in terms of their impact, relevance and durability. As a formative evaluation, key findings and conclusions are drawn, and several key recommendations made on potential ways forward for NRC's education programme in Palestine. The viewpoints presented in this evaluation are that of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the views of NRC as an organisation.

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	I
1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	II
2 BACKGROUND AND EVALUATION RATIONALE	1
2.1 THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION IN PALESTINE	1
2.2 NRC'S SUPPORT TO THE PALESTINIAN EDUCATION SECTOR.....	2
2.3 RATIONALE FOR THE EVALUATION	4
3 EVALUATION DESIGN AND APPROACH	6
3.1 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	6
3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION METHOD AND APPROACH.....	7
4 FINDINGS	8
4.1 IMPACTS OF ACTIVITY	8
4.1.1 A CHANGE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE, CHILD-CENTRED TEACHING METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACHES.....	8
4.1.2 IMPROVED TEACHER MOTIVATION	11
4.1.3 IMPROVED PARENTAL PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLING.....	13
4.1.4 SUPPORTING CHILDREN DURING/AFTER CONFLICT, EMERGENCIES AND CRISES	15
4.1.5 PROVIDING A RESEARCH-INFORMED EVIDENCE BASE THROUGH RESEARCH/ADVOCACY WORK	17
4.1.6 EFFECTS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND DROP OUT	19
4.1.7 ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS.....	24
4.2 RELEVANCE	26
4.2.1 TARGETING THE MOST VULNERABLE.....	26
4.2.2 BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION	28
4.2.3 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP	30
4.2.4 ADDRESSING UNMET NEEDS WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM	33
4.2.5 ALIGNMENT WITH NRC POLICY AND INEE MINIMUM STANDARDS	35
5 CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS	37
5.1 KEY CONCLUSIONS	37
5.2 LESSONS LEARNT:	38
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS:	39
ANNEX 1: MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES	43
ANNEX 2: MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE BROCHURE FROM NRC PALESTINE'S EDUCATION'S PROGRAMMES 2010-2014	63
ANNEX 3: DETAILED METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	66
ANNEX 4: FURTHER BACKGROUND TO NRC PALESTINE EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS 2010-2014	78
ANNEX 5: EVALUATION LEARNING CASE STUDY	83
ANNEX 6: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE UTILISED AS PART OF <i>OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR SCHOOLS</i>	93
ANNEX 7: TEACHER OBSERVATION FORM USED AS PART OF <i>OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR SCHOOLS</i> ..	98

ANNEX 8: INTERVIEW GUIDES UTILISED 102

ANNEX 9: TERMS OF REFERENCE..... 106

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Awqaf	Awqaf Education Directorate in Jerusalem
BLP	Better Learning Programme
EDC	Educational Development Centre
ICLA	Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoEHE	Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MSC	Most Significant Change
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Refugee and Works Agency

1 Executive Summary

In April 2014, NRC Palestine commissioned an independent evaluation of its education programming since 2010. Three key issues were to be explored by the evaluator: (1) the impact of its interventions in preventing push out¹ from education and providing protection to conflict-affected children; (2) the relevance of its activities for the most vulnerable conflict-affected children and youth in Palestine; and (3) recommendations for future lines of work, specifically ones that might be coordinate with the country's office's other core competencies in Shelter and ICLA.

Through the collection of primary evidence, and review of secondary evidence provided by the education team and UNRWA, several key conclusions about **impact** were made:

1. NRC's education activities were found to have meaningful impacts to key factors that push children out of school in Palestine. Specifically, strong evidence exists of the impact of NRC's activities on improved psychosocial wellbeing of children, a shift to teaching methodologies that are more inclusive and engaging to all students, greater parental engagement and involvement in their children's education, and improved teacher motivation and professionalism.
2. Evidence is inconclusive on whether its activities have directly improved student achievement, or reduced drop out rates.
3. Many aspects of NRC's interventions were noted to either contribute and/or introduce something innovative into the education system in Palestine, and by doing so improve access to a protective, inclusive educational experience for the children in the schools and settings its activities have reached.
4. Depth of project engagement is what distinguishes NRC's programming from other forms of support offered to Palestinian schools at present, and has helped to ensure that the inclusive education messages which are the heart of many of its interventions are durable and sustained beyond the life of NRC's involvement.

Related to **relevance** of these initiatives, a number of key conclusions were also drawn:

1. NRC has remained flexible enough that as the fluid and chronic humanitarian crisis moves into different phases, appropriate and timely responses have ensued to ensure continued relevance to the most acute needs within the education sector at the time.
2. NRC's research work within the Palestinian education sector has responded to critical knowledge gaps with credible and useful information to key service providers and the international community. Some of this work has been usefully taken up in subsequent advocacy and policy reform work which tangibly improves children's access to a protective, inclusive educational experience.
3. NRC is seen as a strong and trusted partner by UNRWA and has a unique relationship in its unfettered access into UNRWA schools, and with key stakeholders and decision-makers within both UNRWA Gaza and West Bank. This partnership has been a key enabler to ensuring that programme responses are relevant to not only the programme's direct beneficiaries but also the education system as a whole.

¹ Push out as defined by NRC Palestine are the myriad of factors that put children at risk of drop out including poor quality, education experiences that are not protective, or ones that are non-inclusive/equitable.

4. A challenge NRC has continuously faced in implementing its activities in schools has been initial resistance to its approach. Over time, however, NRC is successful in overcoming such resistance, and its primary beneficiaries come to see the value and relevance of an approach that is largely novel within the education sector in Palestine.
5. NRC's targeting of beneficiaries has been variable and inconsistent, particularly when identifying the most vulnerable children in Palestine.

The evaluation identifies a number of **key lessons** to be considered by NRC as it strategically assesses the future role of its education programming in Palestine. The key lessons to be considered are:

1. The education programme has grown somewhat organically and taken advantage of opportunities as they have come to hand. It remains somewhat unclear what NRC's niche is within the education sector, and more importantly, what it seeks to achieve through its package of activity. While attempts have been made to place all of its activities under a Macro Log Frame with a unifying objective, there remain questions about whether the focus on "push out" is the right one, or whether as a humanitarian actor, NRC Palestine should focus more of its efforts on building resilience or supporting education's protective functions.
2. The nature of the Palestinian conflict means that at any one time NRC may be providing a combination of emergency, early recovery and chronic emergency response measures within the education sector. This is unlikely to change in the short to medium term. Moving forward, enough flexibility within the programme design needs to be afforded to ensure that the organisation can respond to situations as they arise.
3. The recent work undertaken by ICLA to train school principals, teachers and the community-at-large on their rights regarding educational access, is a good example of how coordination between ICLA and Education programming might grow in the future. There is ample scope for ICLA's strong record in advocacy to help strengthen the education teams' own advocacy efforts, and to publicise and address some of the impediments which stand in the way of children's rights to a quality education.
4. The evidence would suggest that NRC's strength and added value in the education sector has been its depth of engagement with a small number of schools and individuals. This brings into question the types of current and future educational partnerships NRC Palestine enters into, particularly where the focus may be more on breadth over depth.
5. The secondment of UNRWA and Ministry of Education staff through NRC has proven to be a successful mechanism for engendering ownership and durability of the key messages which NRC education programmes have been promoting.

From a strategic standpoint a number of key **recommendations** are made for NRC Global, Regional and Palestine offices to consider moving forward. Some of these include:

1. A significant challenge for NRC Palestine's Education programming at present is uncertainty around funding. The Education Cluster in Palestine is struggling to raise funding as attention is being diverted to more acute crises in the region (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and now Iraq). These emergencies should not diminish the seriousness of the crises facing the Palestinian education sector, and NRC global and regional office may need to advocate more for support to Palestine. It may also need to work closely with senior management in NRC Palestine to identify and

actively seek funds outside traditional donors it has relied on (SIDA, NORAD, OCHA, etc.). Such funds should be flexible enough to ensure that the education team can remain adaptable to the situation as it evolves.

2. Issues raised from NRC's recent research on education in East Jerusalem are important to bring to a wider audience. NRC should work through international networks and advocacy groups such as *Protecting Education from Attack*, the Global Campaign for Education, UNICEF's Education and Peacebuilding Project and INEE to bring the report to international audiences and highlight the ongoing impacts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on Palestinian children's right to education.
3. The *Our Communities, Our Schools* programme model, and the sub-components within them are a model for how NRC may want to see other country offices facing a protracted humanitarian crises, or transitioning to early recovery responses address issues of educational quality. Support should be given to documenting the successes of *Our Communities, Our Schools* and advocating for such an approach to be considered in other country programmes.
4. At the same time, NRC may want to consider engaging more closely with UNRWA HQ on ways that components of *Our Communities, Our Schools* might be brought to scale in support of its education sector reform package. For example, UNRWA's School-Based Teacher Development Package² includes in it several of the same components as *Our Communities, Our Schools* such as developing active learning pedagogies, supporting inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, and engaging parents in their children's learning. Where NRC 'adds value' to this package is by supporting UNRWA's online modules with face-to-face facilitation and reinforcement of key messages within the classroom with the teachers themselves.
5. NRC Palestine should maintain and build its relationships with MoEHE in Gaza and Ramallah, particularly given that they serve significant portions of the Palestinian population who face similar issues to that of students in UNWRA schools.
6. Work needs to continue within NRC Palestine on the refinement of the education programme's overall theory of change and Macro Log Frame. This work is critical to ensuring that future activities are well aligned with the programme's strategic and long-term objectives. As part of this, time should also be spent reconsidering existing M&E tools to ensure that project outcomes and objectives are aligned with specified indicators and the means to verify progress against these indicators.
7. In future programming activity, more explicit selection criterion for the participation of schools and project beneficiaries within it should be developed, specified and utilised. Selection criterion should utilise objective data (such as drop out rates, student achievement, vulnerability indexes) to ensure that programming is in fact targeting the most vulnerable children of Palestine.

² See <http://www.unrwa.org/sbtd>

2 Background and evaluation rationale

2.1 The context of education in Palestine

For over 60 years, the people of Palestine have been witness to a protracted conflict with Israel and faced displacement, ongoing insecurity and violence, restrictions on movement and goods, poor service provision and internal fragmentation of the population as a product of this chronic humanitarian crisis. Education services struggle to deliver meaningful, protective and enabling education in such an environment. Conflict related ‘shocks’ and attacks against education³ such as the November 2012 escalation in hostilities in Gaza, ongoing settler violence and harassment in West Bank, house and school demolitions in East Jerusalem and West Bank, and restrictions on movement and access for students and teachers within East Jerusalem, impact the ability of children and youth to access a protective education.

Coordination between the main educational actors remains a significant challenge in Palestine due to internal political divisions and the Israeli blockade of Gaza. The result is that two separate Ministries of Education operate in West Bank and Gaza, and similarly, UNRWA operates two separate field offices for each locale. The most extreme example of this fragmentation remains in East Jerusalem where Palestinian schools are managed by five separate and uncoordinated service providers—Israeli operated Municipality schools, Palestinian Authority administered Awqaf schools, UNRWA schools for the refugee population, private schools, and privately operated, but publically subsidised (by Israeli government) Sakhneen schools.

Educational quality has also been significantly impacted by this ongoing crisis. Israel’s prohibition on the entrance of most construction materials prevents the construction/rehabilitation of hundreds of educational facilities in Gaza Strip. As a result, most schools operate on double shifts, with high student to teacher ratios, and reduced class hours. Additionally, following the Hamas-Fatah Split in 2006/7 experienced teachers (employed by the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority) were replaced by untrained or newly qualified graduates by the Hamas government in Gaza. In East Jerusalem, teaching is under-remunerated, and teacher motivation and quality remain low. Such working conditions have increased stress on the part of teachers, particularly when their performance is increasingly judged on examination results, and has greatly reduced their morale. Additionally, opportunities for continuous teacher professional development remain limited within the education system.⁴ In combination this situation has traditionally resulted in high levels of teacher apathy and a lack of motivation for professional improvement.

In such a context, large numbers of students are underachieving, suffer poor motivation and end up being ‘pushed out’ of the education system earlier than they should. For example, in East Jerusalem, 50% of children do not finish their education⁵ and endemic violence is evident in many schools and classrooms. In Gaza, a joint NRC-UNRWA study identified

³ NRC is a member of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (<http://www.protectingeducation.org>). NRC also is a member of the UNICEF-led working groups in several countries that report into the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children and armed conflict under Security Council Resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011).

⁴ These issues are discussed in more detail in the *UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-15*, pp. 19-22

⁵ Ibid

student underachievement as the most significant factor impacting on decisions to leave formal schooling early.⁶

2.2 NRC's support to the Palestinian education sector

Within the scope of NRC's mandate of a chronic/protracted crisis such as the one facing the Palestinians, is the task of improving both access to and quality of the education for children who are most vulnerable, with a specific focus on those facing displacement.⁷ Operating in Palestine⁸ since 2010, the overall programme objective has been that *"Palestinian children benefit from programmes that prevent push out, respond to push out and provide Education in Emergencies interventions.* Within this, several specific initiatives have been developed since 2010, and are briefly outlined in the table below.

Date	Location	Activity and description	Primary beneficiaries/stakeholders
2010-Present	Gaza (2010-Present), West Bank (2012-Present)	<i>Our Communities, Our Schools:</i> A two-year programme of support providing: (1) school-based in-service to teachers on inclusive, child-centred teaching and learning approaches, (2) capacitation grants to allow schools to plug gaps in provision of materials, especially teaching and learning aids; (3) facilitation of Parent Skills Clubs to improve parental engagement in children's education in collaboration with local civil society actors; (4) collaboration with school administration to develop communication plan activities for improved connectivity between caregivers, the school and the local community.	Parents, teachers, school principals in 15 UNRWA and 3 Awqaf schools (East Jerusalem only)
2010-2011	Gaza	Research with UNRWA into the factors behind push out from education in Gaza. The study tracked and interviewed over 130 children and their families who had dropped out from education.	UNRWA Gaza field office and UNRWA HQ
2011-Present	Gaza (2011-2013), West Bank (2014-Present)	<i>Better Learning Intervention:</i> A school-based psycho-educational intervention ⁹ for children who experience severe distress as a result of conflict. ¹⁰ One component of the programme (BLP II) works with teachers and counsellors, in a clear and structured approach (manualised) to address the needs of children experiencing symptoms of trauma such as nightmares; while another component of the programme (BLP I) provides a set of techniques and approaches for teachers to use in the classroom in support of all their	School psychologists (counsellors), classroom teachers, parents within UNRWA and MoEHE schools

⁶ UNRWA and NRC (2011). UNRWA-NRC Research into Children Pushed Out from Education 2010-11.

⁷ See NRC Programme Policy, pp. 12-13

⁸ As a humanitarian and emergency relief organization, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has been operational in Palestine since 2009 providing assistance to IDPs, refugees, those at risk of displacement and host communities. Programmatically, NRC currently operates a programme focused on Education, Shelter, and Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA).

⁹ The intervention was developed through NRC Oslo in partnership with experts in educational psychology from the University of Tromsø.

¹⁰ The term 'severe distress' is used here in place of the term 'trauma' as trauma is deemed to be a clinical diagnosis. The intervention does not clinically diagnose children within the intervention and as such the children are deemed to be 'suffering from distress'. This is in line with the Mental Health and Psychosocial Working Group's best practice and ways of working.

Date	Location	Activity and description	Primary beneficiaries/stakeholders
		students' psychosocial well-being.	
2012	Gaza	Research on the UNRWA Summer Learning Programme. Tracked the efficiency and effect of the Summer Learning programme for children who had failed the previous school year.	UNRWA Gaza field office
2012	East Jerusalem	Research on educational quality and equity in the East Jerusalem education sector. In collaboration with a local partner, data was collected through school-based surveys across 36 schools that are part of the Awqaf, Sakneen, UNRWA and private systems in East Jerusalem.	UNESCO, UNICEF, MoEHE, UNRWA
2013-Present	Gaza	Production of short TV episodes (<i>Abaa' wa Abnaa</i> or Parents and Children) for UNRWA Satellite TV Channel. The episodes, produced jointly by NRC and UNRWA, use a talk show format to present acted-out scenarios, followed by scripted discussions amongst a panel comprised of parents, educators, and experts. Topics relate to content of the Parent Skills Clubs which are part of the <i>Our Communities, Our Schools</i> initiative. Each episode is 30-40 minutes in duration and is broadcast several times on UNRWA television, and also placed onto UNRWA's YouTube page.	Parents and children in Palestine
2013	Gaza	Supported UNESCO-funded Inclusive Education project by training student teachers and other stakeholders to conduct needs assessment of children's psychosocial needs in 14 pilot schools.	UNESCO, MoEHE, four universities with teacher training programmes in Gaza
2013-Present	Gaza and West Bank	Training of education and school officials, community advocacy, and facilitation of classroom-based action research activities to reinforce and support Inclusive Education principles within UNRWA and MoEHE schools.	UNESCO, Inclusive Education counsellors, subject supervisors, school principals and teachers within 70 MoEHE and UNRWA schools
2013	Gaza	Delivered over 1000 school bags with school supplies and stationery to households affected by severe flooding in December 2013.	Students
2014	West Bank	Supported children affected by UNRWA strike with art, theatre and recreational activities in collaboration with civil society partners	Students
2014	West Bank	Training on rights and protections available to schools, school officials and students under attack in Area C, along with legal representation for schools and	School principals, teachers,

Date	Location	Activity and description	Primary beneficiaries/stakeholders
		communities where educational access/provision are under attack from settlements and/or Israeli military operations (in coordination with ICLA)	parents, students
2014	Gaza	NRC-UNRWA facilitated conference entitled <i>My Home, My School: Together for My Future</i> (Parents as Partners conference) to exchange ways in which schools can/already are communicating with parents and to empower school principals to better mobilise their community support for education	School principals, Area education Officers, EDC officers, subject supervisors, representatives of parent councils from across Gaza, subject specialists, and representatives from the Education Cluster

Table 1: Summary of NRC Palestine Education programming activities

To date, these activities have contributed to two key objectives within NRC Palestine’s Macro Log Frame¹¹:

- (1) Education service providers change policy and practice based on the experience of parents, teachers and schools demonstrating protective, inclusive and enabling education; and
- (2) Support education in emergency interventions.

2.3 Rationale for the evaluation

The main purpose of this final evaluation is to support learning and provide guidance for future programme direction. The evaluation’s ToR makes clear that this exercise should be: (1) *retrospective* on what NRC has been able to accomplish to date in preventing/addressing ‘push out’ out of children from the education system, and ensure that in times of emergency children’s education is supported; and (2) *prospective* to help NRC strategise on how it might better leverage on its work to date. The evaluation also aims to support the transference of learning; specifically how lessons learned and best practices can be highlighted and continued or disseminated either within the programme or more widely within NRC.

¹¹ NRC’s third key objective—to ensure that out of school youth gain skills (foundational, transferable and vocational) by participating in non-formal education services—had not been operationalised due to a lack of funding for youth-focussed activities at the time of writing.

The ToR specified three broad areas of questions¹² that were to be explored as part of the evaluation. They were:

- **Achievement/Impact:** Was the programme effective in achieving results in terms of preventing push out¹³ from education and providing protection to conflict-affected children?
- **Relevance:** How relevant was the program design in ensuring access¹⁴ to education for the most vulnerable conflict-affected children and youth in Palestine?
- **Future Activity:** What future possible lines of focus, especially with regard to vulnerable children and youth in communities facing displacement in Area C, and crossover with the programme areas of Shelter and ICLA could be developed/ coordinated?

¹² These questions were further developed during the inception period, and the final list of questions that were to be explored during the course of the consultancy are included in the appended Methodology annex.

¹³ Push out as defined by NRC Palestine are the myriad of factors that put children at risk of drop out including poor quality, education experiences that are not protective, or ones that are non-inclusive/equitable.

¹⁴ Initial discussions with the NRC Education team in Palestine revealed that access is understood in a broader sense—namely ensuring that students not only enter into school but remain in school and complete a full course of schooling—in line with its current concerns for “push out”.

3 Evaluation design and approach

The evaluation plan and approach were designed in close consultation with the NRC Education team in Palestine, as well as members of the evaluation's steering committee. An inception report was developed at the outset of the project to specify the approach that would be undertaken and agreed upon prior to commencement of work. Throughout the fieldwork and in the period of report development, open lines of communication were kept with the NRC Palestine education team, as well as relevant individuals from the Evaluation Steering Committee. The key principle underpinning the entire evaluation process was ensuring collaborative and participatory learning. These principles are reflected in the choice of methods and general approach of the evaluation as a whole.

3.1 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation adopted the following approaches to answering the evaluation questions noted above:

(1) **Key stakeholder interviews with key individuals within NRC and externally:** In total, 23 stakeholders internal to NRC, and 18 stakeholders external to the organisation were interviewed during the course of this evaluation. A full list of organisations and individuals consulted, as well as the semi-structured interview guides utilised is provided in the methodology annex.

(2) **Desk review of project documentation and internal evaluation reports to date**

(3) **Secondary analysis and review of quantitative monitoring data collected:** Particular to the *Our Communities, Our Schools* quantitative data in the form of observation schedules completed by Teacher Support Officers that quantified teacher practice in terms of child-centred practices at several points in time; and questionnaires administered to teachers using a Likert-like scale and which measured a number of constructs related to the school environment, teaching methodology, levels of student participation/engagement, and student achievement were reviewed and in some cases re-analysed. Additionally, quantitative data on children's nightmare weekly incidences was reviewed as part of assessment of impact of the *Better Learning Programme*. Finally, longitudinal drop out and student achievement data provided by UNRWA was analysed.

(4) **Most Significant Change (MSC) stories:** MSC stories were collected¹⁵ from teachers, parents or other caregivers, students, counsellors¹⁶ and school principals who have participated in *Our Schools, Our Communities* and the *Better Learning* programmes. To collect stories in an expeditious manner as possible, the consultant trained the entire M&E and Education team in both Gaza and West Bank on the approach. Several members of the team were then involved in interviewing beneficiaries and collecting stories of change. All stories were reviewed and further edited by the external evaluator. In total 62 stories of change were collected— 8 from school principals, 15 from teachers, 5 from counsellors, 21 from caregivers, 1 from a student¹⁷ and 12 from NRC Education and Teacher Support

¹⁵ A detailed description of the process of story collection is provided in the annex, along with the template on which stories were recorded by NRC staff.

¹⁶ MSC stories from counsellors and students were only collected from school sites that were part of the Better Learning Intervention.

¹⁷ The inception report specified that students would not be interviewed as part of the MSC process, given that they were not the direct beneficiaries of any of NRC's education activities. Nonetheless, the program team felt it important, where possible, to speak to children about the impact of the *Better Learning Initiative* in particular, given that there was a strong association between the intervention and the traumatised children that children and counselors worked with in BLP II. Owing to the fact that visits to schools occurred during examination periods (especially in Gaza), this proved difficult to do in many cases and only one student was able to be interviewed.

Officers. From the stories collected, a selection panel was organised. Members of the NRC education team jointly deliberated on the merit and worth of each story, and chose two narratives that best reflected the successes of NRC's activities to date. As part of process members of the selection panel articulated why they have chosen the stories they have, and reflected on the lesson learnt from a review of all stories. This is documented and presented alongside the two selected stories as a separate MSC brochure in the Annexes. The full compilation of stories collected is included in the annexes to this evaluation and specific stories are often referenced and/or included in the report.

(5) Workshops with NRC Education team/Senior Management at conclusion of field visit

More details on these approaches are included in a methodology section within the Annexes.

3.2 Limitations of the evaluation method and approach

There are several limitations that should be noted with the evaluation's approach, methodology and timing. These include:

(1) **Timing of the evaluation:** Classroom observations and observations of coached teacher training could not be conducted due to it being the end of the academic year. For this reason, reported changes in practices, identified through both the teacher questionnaire and teacher observation data collected during active programme implementation by NRC, and through MSC stories collected during the course of the evaluation, could not be verified independently through observations of practice.

(2) **Selection of schools and individuals:** Due to time and scheduling constraints, selection of schools was purposive. That stated, attempts were made to ensure that individuals interviewed at site were randomly selected within a sampling framework provided to NRC by the evaluator.

(3) **Potential bias of story collectors:** There is an inherent bias in having those involved in programme implementation also involved in the collection of stories of change from beneficiaries. That stated, all NRC staff were trained prior, and told that the purpose of such stories is not to highlight success, but rather changes as a result of activity.

(4) **Stories highlighting extreme cases:** MSC as a process can tend to select out "extreme" rather than typical cases. For that reason, MSC is never utilised as a singular evaluation approach, but needs to be used in combination with others. In this evaluation, singular MSC stories, while presented as case studies, should not be generalised to typical impacts unless otherwise noted or discussed in the report.

(5) **Focus of analysis on Gaza:** Given that programmes in West Bank have only been actively implemented for approximately 1.5 years, the majority of data reviewed from secondary sources comes from Gaza alone. Additionally a greater number of MSC stories were collected from Gaza, despite the stories not being identified that way.

(6) **Inability to assess impact of Inclusive Education initiative:** Implementation of the project in Gaza and West Bank commenced in late 2013, and has largely focussed on training higher-level Ministry of Education officials to date making it difficult to assess impacts at the school-level. Additionally, indicators and monitoring tools related to this initiative (developed by UNESCO) focus largely on output activities rather than outcomes.

(7) **Issues of reliability/bias in secondary data reviewed:** Several limitations became apparent as these data were further reviewed in the analysis, namely issues of reliability and bias, which are discussed in more depth in the annexed full methodology section. For that reason, quantitative data on its own was not used to make any conclusion on the impact of the programme activities, and was used in combination with qualitative data.

4 Findings

This chapter reports on key findings against the evaluation questions related to impact/achievement of activities to date against NRC’s broader programmatic objectives, and the relevance of such work to beneficiaries and the education system as a whole. As background to this discussion, the below table provides an overview of how many individuals have benefited from its work to date (as direct and indirect beneficiaries).¹⁸

Project	Direct Beneficiaries		Indirect beneficiaries	TOTAL	
	Teachers, counsellors, principals, supervisors	schools area	Parents Children ¹⁹		
<i>Our Communities, Our Schools</i> (Gaza)	348		7,644 ²⁰	10,504	18,496
<i>Our Communities, Our Schools</i> (West Bank)	84		407	1,659	2,150
<i>Better Learning Programme</i> (Gaza and West Bank)	611		4,698	1,935	7,244
<i>Inclusive Education Project</i> (Gaza and West Bank)	2,934		13,700	14,971	31,425
<i>Parents as Partners Conference</i> (Gaza)	351		0	0	351
TOTAL	4,328		26,449	29,069	59,666

Table 2: Summary of direct and indirect beneficiaries reached through NRC Palestine Education programme activities to date

4.1 Impacts of activity

4.1.1 A change towards inclusive, child-centred teaching methodologies and approaches

Based on a variety of data collected and/or reviewed it would appear that NRC’s support through *Our Communities, Our Schools* has had great effect in the schools it has worked in with regards to both changes in teacher methodology and shifts towards more learner-centred environments in the classrooms. For example, responses from a teacher questionnaire administered to participating West Gaza teachers at three points in the life cycle of the project—beginning (2012), middle (2013), and end (2013)—note statistically significant improvements²¹ in their methodologies towards more inclusive practices.²² On the survey teachers, were asked to respond to a number of statements, some of which are noted in Table 4 below, on which they responded on a Likert-like scale from 1 (very small) to 4 (very big) for each one. Individual items were grouped into a series of constructs, whose internal reliability was assessed and found to be sound as part of the evaluation.²³

¹⁸ This is based on data received from NRC Palestine and cannot be independently verified.

¹⁹ This figure is based on the total school enrollment during the time of intervention.

²⁰ This figure appears to be abnormally high and is largely due to a high number of parents participating in school-based activities in Rafah. It is recommended that this figure be independently verified.

²¹ A paired sample t-test, with p=.05, was used to determine statistical significance.

²² Unless noted otherwise, trends in data reported from West Gaza are also noted in previous evaluation reports from East and Middle Gaza, conducted internally by either the education and/or M&E team. Unfortunately, endline data from the West Bank *Our Communities, Our Schools* sites had not been collected at the time of the writing of the evaluation.

²³ See methodology annex for a summary of the reliability of the constructs on the teacher questionnaire

Construct ²⁴	Statistic	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Teacher methodology	Total respondents (N)	72	60	57
	Mean (M)	2.60	3.28	3.34
	Standard deviation (SD)	.78	.45	.44
Child participation	Total respondents (N)	71	60	57
	Mean (M)	2.44	2.74	2.88
	Standard deviation (SD)	.43	.35	.48

Table 3: Average scores (mean) and standard deviations for two constructs on teacher questionnaire for West Gaza *Our Community, Our Schools* sites

At the outset of the project, teachers were ambivalent and responses varied significantly²⁵ on actions and perceived capacity related to teaching in an inclusive, child-focused manner which engenders the active participation of students in the classroom. By the end of the project, however, significantly higher average/mean scores on both of the above constructs, as well as reduced standard deviations (or variance amongst the respondents) suggests that teachers perceived themselves to be teaching in more child-centred, inclusive and participatory ways.

Further exploration of specific items within each of the two above constructs suggests that teachers reported using games and other creative teaching methods, carrying out formative and summative assessment, and asking and encouraging students to ask appropriate questions to a much greater extent at the end of the two year intervention than at the beginning. Teachers were also reported to be differentiating their instruction, and preparing special activities for both high and low achievers to a much greater extent by the end of the two years. Also of interest is that variation in responses from individual teachers, as reflected in the standard deviations of each item, showed marked reductions, suggesting higher levels of reported consistency amongst all respondents to the below statements.

²⁴ The full questionnaire, specifying all items within each of these constructs is appended to the report.

²⁵ This is reflected in the mean or average scores of 2.6 and 2.44 for teaching methodology and child participation respectively. Variance is reflected in the relatively high standard deviation of 0.72 for the teaching methodology construct at Time 1 of the survey.

Statement	Baseline		End Phase 1		End Phase 2	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
I have the ability to ask appropriate classroom questions that suit lesson objectives	2.72	1.15	3.52	0.50	3.53	0.50
I carry out formative and summative evaluation appropriately	2.65	1.05	3.52	0.60	3.46	0.57
I use many educational activities, suiting the nature of the students	2.68	1.02	3.40	0.62	3.49	0.50
I use the method of story narration	2.58	0.92	3.15	0.63	3.32	0.63
I use educational games	2.44	0.86	3.08	0.67	3.19	0.69
I am trying continuously to develop myself professionally	2.63	1.05	3.38	0.58	3.44	0.71
I use the proper educational methods and sources	2.68	0.98	3.32	0.62	3.35	0.58
I adapt creative teaching methods	2.51	0.80	3.05	0.74	3.25	0.63
I encourage students to ask questions	2.65	0.92	3.25	0.57	3.32	0.51
I prepare special activities for the high achievers	2.47	0.65	3.17	0.64	3.12	0.63
I prepare special activities for low-achievers	2.63	0.70	3.28	0.56	3.23	0.60

Table 4: Average item scores and standard deviations for items within teaching methodology construct from teacher questionnaire administered to participating teachers in West Gaza *Our Communities, Our Schools* sites

As a result, teachers also noted that child participation was occurring to a greater extent within the classroom. Specifically, children were noted to be more actively participating in classroom activity, asking questions related to the lesson, and collaborating with each other to accomplish cooperative tasks.

Similar changes were also noted from the teacher observation data from these same schools. Across all the constructs captured in the observation schedule²⁶, statistically significant improvements²⁷ were noted between the initial observation at the beginning of Year One, and the final observation at the end the year. By the end of the intervention, teachers were observed preparing and implementing lessons in ways that incorporated a number of different modalities of delivery, and that were clearly structured to engage student motivation and engagement to a much higher level. Additionally, student engagement was observed to have greatly improved, and methods of assessment were differentiated, formative, and were thoughtfully planned to follow on the material that was taught. All of these factors are critical to improving student success in the classroom.

²⁶ The teacher observation form, completed by a single NRC Teacher Support Officer, has a series of 52 statements grouped into the constructs noted in Table 5. Reliability of the constructs was assessed as part of the evaluation and is included in the annexed methodology section. Each item was scored on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest. No descriptors were provided for the scale utilised, but conversations with Teacher Support Officers, suggested that 1 was deemed to be low, and 5 high.

²⁷ A paired sample t-test, with $p=.05$, was used to determine statistical significance. Note that only those teachers with observations conducted at both Time 1 and 3 were included in the analysis.

Construct ²⁸	n	Time 1		Time 3	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Lesson preparation	56	3.10	.72	3.66	.65
Lesson implementation	56	3.12	.73	3.71	.61
Student assessment	56	3.15	.75	3.76	.60
Student engagement	56	2.96	.64	3.73	.63
Learning environment	56	3.32	.57	3.75	.51

Table 5: Mean scores and standard deviations on constructs within teacher observation schedule conducted at outset and conclusion of *Our Communities, Our Schools* sites in West Gaza 2012-2014

Several of the stories of changes collected from parents, teachers and principals in both West Bank and Gaza echoed the changes noted from this survey data. One principal²⁹ commented how prior, “*the teachers in our school used to lecture at the students all the time...students...had very little voice in the classroom or school,*” but that after two years of participation in *Our Communities, Our Schools*, “*...the students have become more engaged in the learning process, and teachers have a wider diversity of approaches to engage students. Students now feel empowered to have a voice in the classroom and are more vocal in expressing their needs.*” At an individual level, parents noted how this had changes in their own children’s experience of schooling. A parent in her story of change³⁰ noted that, “*[My child’s] teacher used to ignore him and did not vary her technique to motivate his participation. After NRC started its activities, I noticed a big change in my child’s attitude. The teacher changed her way of teaching and started using educational games and narrating stories to kids. These changes helped my child to participate effectively on the classroom activities.*” A number of teacher stories of change³¹ also reflected on changed in their methodology and the ensuing differences in terms of student engagement and participation.

4.1.2 Improved teacher motivation

On the teacher questionnaire administered as part of *Our Communities, Our Schools* teacher motivation was also noted to have significantly over the life of the project in the West Gaza schools worked in, particularly from the start to the end of first year of intervention, when NRC’s training and in-classroom support was most intensive.³²

²⁸ An example of the teacher observation form utilized is provided in the annexes

²⁹ MSC Story 49

³⁰ MSC Story 5

³¹ See MSC Stories 13, 18, 20, 33, 41, 42, 44, 45, 54, 55, 58

³² Similar trends were also noted in previous years’ reported data from Middle and East Gaza.

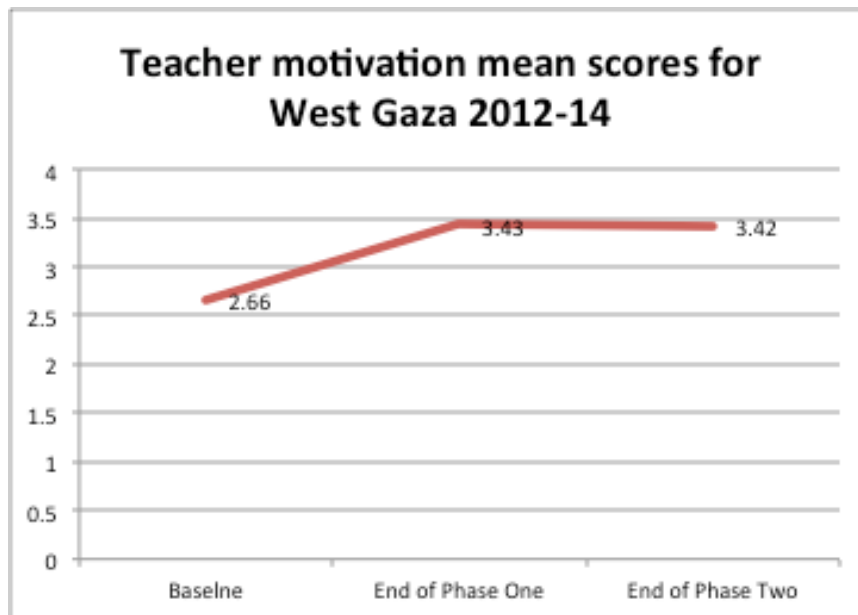


Figure 1: Mean teacher motivation scores from teacher questionnaire in West Gaza *Our Communities, Our Schools* sites 2012-14

At the outset of the project, the mean score for the teacher motivation construct on the teacher questionnaire was 2.66, suggesting low to average levels of motivation amongst the participating teachers. By the end of the first year of the project, motivation levels had significantly improved to positive to extremely positive levels of motivation (3.43), according to the 4-point scale on which teachers scored themselves, and remained high until the end of Phase Two when the questionnaire was completed again.³³ These improvements in motivation were also noted in several MSC stories collected, including the story *I am Changed*.

³³ Similar trends of significant increases in the first phase, with a flattening in the mean scores on teacher motivation are also noted in East and Middle Gaza schools. The marked increase in the first year of the project may be attributable to the fact that teachers receive their most intensive training inputs in that period, and come to see value in the training during that period (as reflected in a number of stories of change). The flattening out (or slight decreases) are not statistically significant given the standard deviations in responses. Rather than seeing this 'plateau effect' as a failure to change things in the second year, the maintenance of high levels of motivation, despite NRC's less intensive support in that period, signals that such improvements may be sustained.

I am changed (Teacher, UNRWA school)

Two years ago, I used to come to school unmotivated. I was coming to school to spend the six hours to get paid, and go home again. I would read and instruct the students, but not pay attention to their needs, problems and enquiries. On top of that, I was very negative toward students with special learning difficulties and over-aged students. I did not know what to do with them, and my primary objective was to control these students, not to consider how to do anything creative with them. When NRC's project was introduced to me, I was against the idea of being part of it because I thought it would overburden me, as I needed to leave my house very early in the morning to attend the trainings. However, after the first training session, I started to realise the importance of the project. The training topics and the trainer's performance were really engaging. Eventually, I reached a stage that my favourite day of the week was the training day. The training equipped me with a variety of teaching skills and methodologies that I began to replicate in the classroom. These approaches were especially useful in working with students with special learning difficulties. Over the course of the training, I regained my enthusiasm for teaching, as the teaching process became joyful and participatory. This motivation even led me to searching on the Internet for other ways to develop my skills, and I began preparing for the next days' lessons at home. Nowadays the only thing that gets me up from bed in the morning is the desire to go to school and work with my students.

4.1.3 Improved parental participation and engagement in schooling

Another significant component of *Our Communities, Our School* and to a lesser extent, *the Better Learning Intervention* was to better connect parents, children and the school to each other in the shared endeavour of supporting the well-being of the child. This was introduced into the projects to explicitly deal with a general perception within schools that parents do not adequately engage in their children's education, an issue which NRC's 2011 research in Gaza and 2013 in East Jerusalem also highlighted.

Amongst parents from whom MSC stories were collected, the Parent Skills Clubs were found to be an important component of strengthening the relationship that a caregiver had with their child, and more specifically opening up lines of communication and new emotional bonds which may have not existed prior. For example, one parent³⁴ discusses how, "*When the project started, the school invited me to participate in the parental clubs. In the beginning, I was not so interested in the activities, however over time I realized the importance of the clubs and how it could help my child and I. The trainer's instructions were very positive and helpful, and opened my eyes towards several bad practices and behaviours I was doing. NRC taught me how to support my child's learning and how to deal with his behavioural problems. Specifically, I liked the knowledge and skills I gained from the drama, first aid and child nutrition topics. Through me working with him on some of these activities, my child became closer and more open with me.*" The fact that the skills clubs helped parents to grow closer to their children was also noted to be one of extreme relevance in the case of Gaza and West Bank, where large family sizes, ongoing instability/conflict, and the daily struggles for survival often leave children neglected. Almost universally across the MSC stories collected, parents noted that they struggled to communicate and engage with their children effectively, or to support them academically, and the Parent Skills Clubs were an important input in assisting them moving forward. As one parent³⁵ commented in her story, "*As I used the skills and knowledge I gained from the club, I grew more attached to my son, and was able to treat him with greater kindness.*"

³⁴ MSC Story 8

³⁵ MSC Story 47

An additional benefit of the Parent Skills Clubs is that they have provided a forum and venue for caregivers to come together and discuss the challenges they face as parent collectively. A recently completed midterm internal evaluation³⁶ conducted for the six East Jerusalem *Our Communities, Our Schools* sites suggests that participating mothers, in particular, appreciated the opportunity to 'vent' and exchange experience.

Communication plan activities were noted to have impact in strengthening the connection between the school and home. One NRC Education Officer³⁷ noted that when he started his work at one school, *"I particularly had doubts about [engaging parents] because it is in an unfortunate area which is filled with many social and domestic problems."* However, working closely with the principal, *"We decided to enhance what seemed to be poorly functioning channels of communication by inviting all the parents to a main event at the school. Special attention was given to the invitations as well as the way the parents were contacted in order to convey a sense of value and importance to their presence. We were surprised at the turnout of parents at this first event. Since then, a number of parents have become regularly involved with the school and NRC activities."* The increased connection between home and school is one that seen as a positive and important impact of *Our Communities, Our Schools* by all of the school principals interviewed as part of the evaluation.

Outside of the *Our Communities, Our Schools* project, NRC's *Better Learning Intervention* supported and engaged caregivers on techniques to counsel their children at home. The BLP I Manual stresses that parents and teachers should work together to support children living in crisis. It recommends that schools address and explain the intervention, the exercises and why they are occurring within the confines of the classroom.³⁸ Project reporting data from NRC suggests that over the course of its activities in Gaza, approximately 1700 parents were briefed along these lines. In several of the schools visited during the course of the evaluation, the principal or school counsellor discussed how they had involved parents in BLP training, and in some circumstances incorporated the introduction of the stress-release exercises into their Parental Skills Clubs (when they were part of *Our Communities, Our Schools* as well). One principal³⁹ described how, *"the impressive changes of this program made me more curious about what was successful as not only the principal, but as an educator, parent and leader within the community. I discovered that it was well designed, and engaged the students through a set of simple techniques. Based on these encouraging results, we were even more motivated to continue on and strengthen the activities. We began to include the parents in the therapy process so that they could continue to work with their child at home."* After involving the parents in sessions and teaching them the simple relaxation techniques that are at the core of the *Better Learning* intervention, the principal noted that, *"The parents were appreciative that they had new techniques to address their children's nightmares at home. They thanked the school by giving us a certificate."*

There is less conclusive data on the reach and impact of the Parents and Children episodes produced by NRC for UNRWA TV. According to a survey recently undertaken by UNRWA, 29% of respondents (children) noted that the Parents and Children segments had a good influence on them, but this item on its own does not provide a clear sense of the impact or types of specific influence these segments have. Missing from the UNRWA survey was an

³⁶ Midterm Evaluation Report: Education Program Our Schools, Our Community (April 2014), p. 11

³⁷ MSC Story 9

³⁸ Better Learning Program I: Increasing Learning Capacity among Pupils in Ongoing Crises, p. 46

³⁹ MSC Story 11

item asking children specifically whether/if they watched the segments on a regular basis. According to data provided from UNRWA, each episode, except the most recently publicised ones, had between 1,000 and 6,000 hits on YouTube. NRC's own Communication Plan survey did not ask parents specifically about whether they had (1) watched the segments, or (2) the types of influence or impact such segments had had on them. Amongst parents and school officials spoken to, no mention was made about the Parents and Children segments on UNRWA, nor was there discussion about the added value of this intervention amongst UNRWA Gaza and West Bank officials interviewed. For these reasons, judging the efficacy and reach of this effort remains elusive based on data at hand.

More recently, NRC hosted in partnership with UNRWA Gaza a conference entitled *My Home, My School: Together for My Future*.⁴⁰ Over two days in March 2014, the conference brought together school principals, Area education Officers, EDC officers, subject supervisors, representatives of parent councils from across Gaza, subject specialists, and representatives from the Education Cluster to NRC and UNRWA showcased how through *Our Communities, Our Schools*, and specifically the Parent Skills Clubs and development of communication plans, schools could work to achieve this goal. Feedback from the conference was extremely positive according to a final report, with participants noting that they left with new ideas on how to engage the parent community, and also what some potential benefits of increased engagement might be.

4.1.4 Supporting children during/after conflict, emergencies and crises

NRC's research into push out factors in Gaza revealed that a significant number of children struggle in school due to stress and trauma-induced stressors. A key aim of the *Better Learning Programme* was to reduce the symptoms of trauma, specifically nightmares, amongst the most trauma-affected children in Gaza. Quantitative data collected by NRC through its nightmare incidences data, as well as qualitative data collected during the course of the evaluation affirms to success of the intervention in addressing the nightmare incidences of children. For example, at the completion of the first tranche of the programme within 10 MoEHE and 10 UNRWA schools affected by the 2012 conflict escalation in Gaza, 97% of children displayed reductions in nightmare incidences as a result of participating in the group and individual therapy sessions that were part of the programme. Often, incidences were significantly reduced to zero.

For the families and children most acutely affected by such symptoms, the reductions in nightmares often provided a form of needed and necessary support in a time where other alternatives remained limited. Several stories of change narrated by parents, and two narrated by children⁴¹, noted the benefits that the programme had on their overall psychosocial wellbeing and subsequently the flow on effects it had on their academic achievement. The story below, narrated by one counsellor, is reflective of the range of impacts the initiative was perceived to have.

⁴⁰ In other parts of the report it is referenced as the *Parents as Partners* conference

⁴¹ See MSC Stories 7, 14, 30, 32

A suffering girl (Counsellor, UNRWA School)

In our school there was a 10 year-old girl who was suffering from nightmares every day for nearly two years. During the November 2012 escalation, she witnessed a scene on television of two journalists burnt after a shelling. The scene terrified her because her father was a reporter himself and she was worried that he might be the victim of such an attack. Other members of her family had also been the victims of prior attacks, so she lived in constant fear and could not sleep well at night. At school she would suffer from stomach aches, would cry all the time, lacked concentration, and was very withdrawn. At home she has little appetite. In the first week, I introduced her to techniques such as yoga, relaxation and deep breathing through the group sessions. In the first two sessions, I did not notice any changes in the girl. She would attend, but cry throughout the session. This made it difficult to engage her in what we were doing. By the third session, things began to change. I noticed her nightmare episodes reduced to three per week, and by the fourth, two. Then I began to start individual sessions with the girl. We would discuss her nightmare in each session and practice the techniques I had taught her to cope with the stress the images in her mind caused her. I also encouraged her to list out all the negative events that had happened in her life. This helped her to reveal and discuss these things in the open, rather than keeping them bottled up inside. At first this was difficult, but eventually she began to reveal these issues and was able to communicate more effectively about her fears. By the end of the individual sessions she was not having nightmares anymore. At home, her appetite increased and she was more social with everyone living there. Her teachers commented that she was more focussed and attentive. All of this had an impact on her achievement in the class. It has been so effective that the girl is now teaching this technique to other family members, like her cousin, who do not attend this school but suffer nightmares as well.

An additional impact of the *Better Learning Intervention* is that a large number of counsellors and teachers now have a set of techniques to use when addressing the psychosocial needs of children in their schools. From the 20 initial schools that NRC worked with in Gaza as part of the programme, 540 teachers and counsellors received training on addressing the needs of children affected by conflict. In Gaza, counsellors generally have high levels of knowledge about the symptoms and effects of psychosocial issues, but do not have sufficient knowledge and capacity on ways to treat such issues. According to one MoEHE official, a key difference of the *Better Learning Programme*, to other psychosocial interventions, was its explicit focus on one symptom (nightmares) for a prolonged period of time.

Many counsellors interviewed felt that the training and support they/their staff had received on addressing children's nightmares through the *Better Learning Programme* increased confidence and motivation to address children's psychosocial issues in general. For example, one counsellor in her story of change⁴² noted at the end that, "*I came to see the effectiveness of what I was doing, and feel like I was actually able to help these children through a new approach.*" The benefit of the *Better Learning Programme*, was that it offered teachers and counsellors a concrete approach to helping students identify reactions of stress, practice calming exercises, connect memories to words, empower them to take an active role in their own recovery, and develop personal routines of relaxation exercises. The multiple training sessions⁴³, support of an NRC education officer, and manuals (BLP I and BLP

⁴² MSC Story 36

⁴³ The 50 counsellors and focal point teachers who were involved in BLP II in Gaza (the group and individual sessions aimed at addressing children's nightmare and sleeping problems), participated in three sets of three-day training that were facilitated by individuals from the University of Tromsø. The trainings introduced the participants to the process and the manualised approach, provided opportunity for them to practice the exercises, and also allowed the group to reflect on challenges and cases they were facing and problem-solve

II) provided a foundation on which they could continue to employ such techniques after NRC's involvement ended. As a result, schools visited in Gaza whom were part of the programme in 2012-13, are continuing these approaches with other children who were unable to be reached in the initial intake group of nightmare students.

4.1.5 Providing a research-informed evidence base through research/advocacy work

The education team has also been engaged in several significant pieces of research work aimed at changing educational policy and practice of educational service providers towards a more protective, accessible and enabling educational experience. Much of this is driven by an evolving view within the programme that key project objectives and strategies from NRC activities to date should be integrated into the thinking and wider activities of service providers.⁴⁴ In NRC's current Macro Log Frame, two key indicators and targets related to this advocacy work have been identified including:

- Number of instances where NRC specific recommendations for inclusive and child friendly education are cited in government/donor/stakeholder communications;
- Number of instances where NRC specific recommendations for parental skills are cited in government/ donor/ stakeholder communications.

Availability of corresponding data against these indicators has been difficult for NRC to obtain and there is some concern within the M&E unit in the Palestine office that the indicators as currently written may be difficult to obtain data—specifically, that it is difficult to track and trace all key stakeholder documentation and attribute that which is written to NRC's research in particular. A number of stakeholders acknowledged that it would be very difficult for NRC to measure its tangible impacts on educational policy through its research and advocacy work, given that often there are a myriad of factors in play at the decision-making level. This is compounded by the fact that in some cases, research evidence is not made public, and thus less able to visibly impact on policy. This has been the case for NRC's research in East Jerusalem, which has not yet been publically released by UNICEF.

That stated, interviews with key stakeholders and partners as part of the evaluation provided evidence of how NRC's project activities and research work are impacting on the thinking and wider activities of service providers and the international community. Several individuals within UNRWA expressed the view that NRC's research enabled the agency to identify and address unmet needs within the education sector, and understand issues that were not openly visible before. While some of these officials acknowledged they had 'hunches' on the questions raised through the studies, they felt that the research provided a strong evidence base on which they could then make informed decisions. Findings from the Summer Learning Programme research, for example, provided a rationale for changing how the programme is staffed. Based on the report's recommendations, subject specialist teachers were recruited for remedial classes rather than any available teacher (i.e. Arabic teachers to teach Arabic, Mathematics teacher to teach Mathematics, etc.).

Additionally, for some decision makers, NRC's research into push out factors helped them to understand that economic conditions were not the key driving factor, but rather the quality and nature of educational experience which students encountered in their schools. As stated by the Deputy Education Chief for UNRWA Gaza, *"the research proved that low achievement in school is a significant contributor to drop out, and a matter we can address."*

issues together. An additional 450 classroom teachers across the 20 schools were also briefed and introduced to the classroom sessions that are part of BLP II in Gaza.

⁴⁴ See for example ILFE 1205 2013 SIDA Progress Report, p. 2

Many decision makers saw this piece of research as vitally important and informative to the development of UNRWA's current education reform strategy which focuses on improving the quality of education. UNRWA Gaza has internally disseminated the research and used it in trainings with area supervisors and principals according to the Education Chief. This is largely because the report is seen to support UNRWA's current focus on improving teaching methodologies and ensuring that inclusive education messages are being stressed at the school level. Additionally, the fact that this research has since been replicated by UNRWA in its other field offices is also a sign of the value and importance given to the questions and issues that this piece of research raised.

In the context of East Jerusalem, NRC's recent research conducted on issues of educational quality and equity has been highly valued by many of its key partners and some of the important educational service providers working in that location. NRC was praised for its resourcefulness in obtaining data at the school-level, and its ability and courage to raise important points that touch on sensitive issues (such as school demolitions and residency permits) using strong and credible evidence base. The report itself has raised several important issues for the international community and educational service providers to consider. For UNICEF, the report identified where gaps exist in regards to educational provision, and specifically pockets and issues of extreme vulnerability within the East Jerusalem context. UNRWA believes that this piece of work provide a clear descriptive analysis of the current situation and will be vital to building a common understanding and knowledge of what is occurring in East Jerusalem at present. According to the education chief, *"it keeps the narrative going when staff, particularly international staff, changes."* At the same time, according to both UNICEF and UNRWA it provides compelling evidence why a coordinating mechanism for the fragmented nature of educational provision in East Jerusalem must be established with haste. While challenges remain in engaging Israeli authorities in the study—despite the fact that they fund or operate more than half of the system in East Jerusalem—there is firm belief from UNICEF that once municipality schools are included in the study, and there is confidence that this is a technical rather than political exercise, that findings will be considered by them as well.

Important about the research activity to date is the impact it has had also had on the refinement and evolution of NRC's own activities. For example, the research on factors behind push out in Gaza were vital in helping the team to refine and focus its approach to *Our Communities, Our Schools* and to provide a rationale for the Better Learning Intervention. Likewise its research within East Jerusalem has helped to inform the team's work there, and identify the schools and locations where educational underachievement and inequality are most pronounced.

At the same time, there are limits and challenges to the influence and impact that such research and advocacy work can have in Palestine. According to one key stakeholder, advocacy is always a "cost-benefit" exercise in the Palestinian context. A challenge for all actors, including NRC, is being an advocate for the rights of children and refugee in a context where there is also immense pressure to keep a low profile due to the operational risks⁴⁵ it poses. For MoEHE in Ramallah, this then raised concerns that NRC's report on education and quality in East Jerusalem had not taken a strong enough stance on how Israeli authorities hinder children's access to education, and how the ongoing conflict impacts on

⁴⁵ Taking too strong a stance on an issue may cause problems for an NGO's existence or activities with Palestine. This may include increased difficulties in obtaining work visas for international staff and permits for entry into East Jerusalem for Palestinian staff from Israeli authorities.

matters of educational quality within the system.⁴⁶ They were disappointed that no recommendations or positions were taken on addressing what they perceived to be Israeli violations of children’s rights to education in East Jerusalem.

According to several key stakeholders interviewed, NRC’s research and advocacy work has been effective because of the organisation’s deep contextual understanding of what is occurring within schools and communities. In essence, the belief is that because of NRC’s practical experiences on the ground, it is able to effectively feed information up within the system. According to one UNRWA official, “NRC is able to be an effective advocate because they have direct experience at the lower levels...this gives them credibility.” A good example given of this was the Parents as Partners conference, where NRC was able to leverage and use the voices and experiences of parents, teachers, and school principals to advocate for such activity occurring in all UNRWA schools across Gaza.

4.1.6 Effects on student achievement and drop out

Across the schools NRC worked in, the data is inconclusive on whether there is any association between changes in Unified Exam scores and NRC’s programme. Additionally, there was insufficient data to understand if the changes identified in mean scores were significantly different to the overall trends within the UNRWA system in Gaza due to a lack of information on how many students participated in the exam in each school and overall.

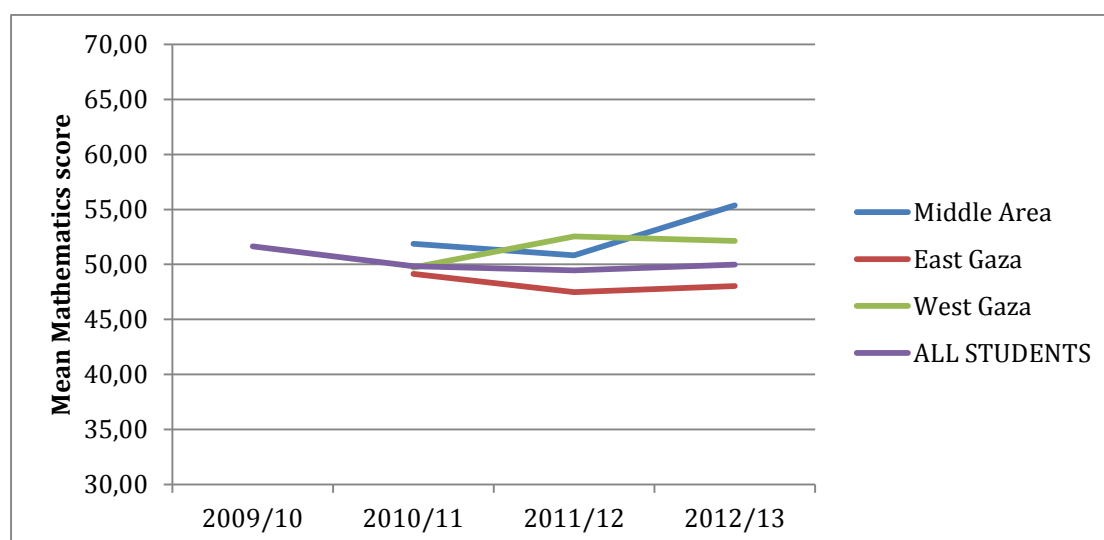


Figure 2: Mean Mathematics score for all schools that took part in the NRC programme. Note that due to the lack of school roll size in 2009/10, achievement scores could not be aggregated in this year.

⁴⁶ This is despite the fact that in the report, the majority of recommendations are directed at Israeli authorities and make quite explicit demands on them in terms of ensuring that more school facilities are constructed, stop work and demolition orders ceased, and the Palestinian curriculum reinstated.

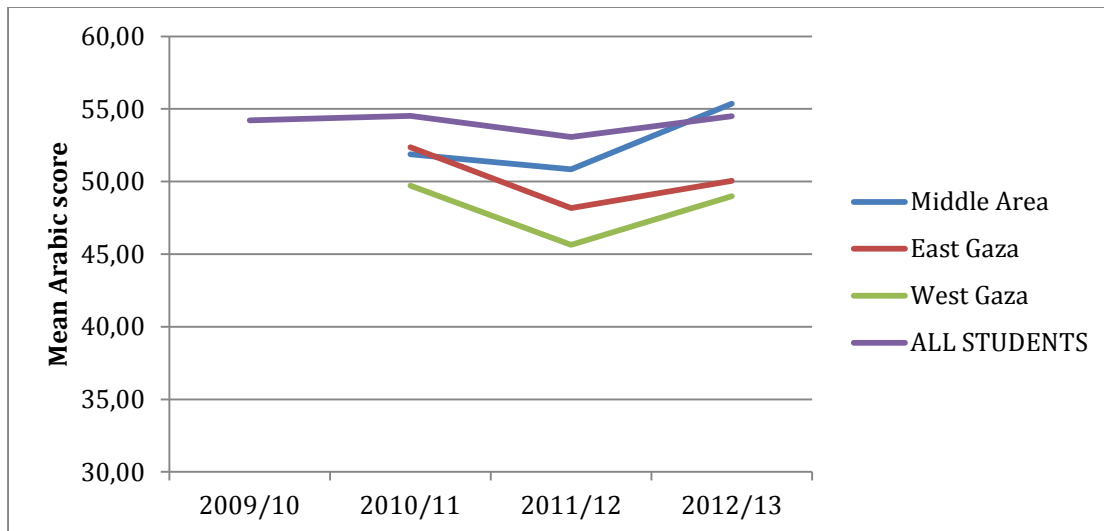


Figure 3: Mean Arabic score for all schools that took part in the NRC programme. Note that due to the lack of school roll size in 2009/10, achievement scores could not be aggregated in this year.

For example, in the Middle Gaza schools in which NRC worked between 2010-2012, achievement scores in Arabic and Mathematics appeared to generally follow the general trend line for all UNRWA schools. However, there were marked improvements in the schools' Mathematics and Arabic scores in the year following the end of NRC's programme (2012-13)—gains that would appear to significantly exceed the overall UNRWA trend during that time. In the East Gaza schools in which NRC worked between 2011-2013, there were gains in Arabic and Mathematics scores, but this would appear to mirror the overall trend line of small mean gains in all UNRWA schools during this same period.

Nonetheless there was a perception amongst several of the narratives, that the programme could be positively attributed to changes in student achievement in the school. For example, the story *Escape to School* begins to link changes in teacher practice to underlying factors behind push out—such as student underachievement and misbehaviour. The NRC selection panel chose this story because they felt it provides an example of how working on improving teaching methodology and professionalism has impacts that ultimately extend to improving student achievement and engagement.

Escape to school (Parent, UNRWA School)

My child, a 3rd grade student, used to hate his school and always kept trying to escape. He would fabricate arguments so as not to attend his school. Sometimes he claimed illness and other times, he tried to hide under the stairs in the building entrance. I tried to encourage him to go to school by offering him an extra daily allowance or offering to accompany him to his school but I always failed! His elder brother, who went to the same school, tried to accompany him and sometimes tried to force him but also didn't succeed. I still remember one day when his elder brother grabbed his hand and tried dragging him to school. He kept crying loudly until some neighbours thought he was being kidnapped! I visited the school many times. I even met with the counsellor and told him about this problem but he could do nothing! His scores were very low. This became my worry that haunted me all day and night! During the last months, I began to visit the school more frequently and participated in all the activities implemented by NRC for the parents. I noticed that a change started to happen in my son during this time...he started to like his school. He began to anticipate the time for the beginning of the school day. He started to remind me it's school time. Even on weekends and holidays, he asked me if he could go to school. Through NRC's activities, the teachers at the school succeeded in engaging him more. By involving him more in class activities he began more enthusiastic about school. Now, I have no problem at all. His scores are becoming higher especially in Maths and he started to get full marks. He also started to have more and more friends and now he talks and plays with them on a regular basis.

Additionally, improvements in teachers' attitudes and motivation appear to have the most significant impact on students typically ignored or neglected within the classroom. One teacher was candid in admitting that, "I could never manage to involve the weak students, especially those who had difficulty in reading and writing" but after participation in the programme, "I no longer see students left out and not participating." One school principal also noted in his story of change that the biggest impacts have been on those typically most marginalised from the educational process.

Victory Over Marginalisation (Principal, UNRWA School)

When I first arrived, our school was in chaos. A big issue was that for our low achieving and special needs students, the teachers felt that there was no hope or possibility to change the situation for these children. They gave little attention to these children, and as a result they would frequently be absent or misbehave. When NRC came to the school with their training program, they said that they would work with us this situation. At first, the teachers and I did not believe that change was possible. But NRC's team persisted. They showed the teachers new techniques about how to engage the students using active learning approaches. They also helped us to engage parents in the school, through parent clubs, which encouraged them to come into the school on a regular basis and learn how they could support their child's learning at home. As a school manager, I learned about, and followed up on what NRC was training the teachers and parents on. Through this, I began to play a more active role in diagnosing and tracking the progress of our low achieving students. Over time this has changed the situation dramatically for all students in our school, but particularly for the low achievers. In general these students love coming to school now, and this is reflected in their achievement. Last year, after completing NRC's program, our schools' ranking on the unified exam increased by 40 spots. Our school is now successfully participating and winning competitions for the top students in the area. While NRC's program has stopped, we are continuing on with the ways they taught us, specifically ensuring that we follow up and support the students of greatest need. Helping these students is the most important part of our job, and NRC has helped us to see how we can do this.

Approximately 5% of all changes explicitly discussed with the evaluation team identified student achievement as a positive change or impact of NRC's activities. For such

perceptions to be validated independently, however, more robust data collection would need to be occurring on a continuous and longitudinal basis for each of the schools that NRC has and will continue to work in.

Analysis was also conducted on drop out rates in participating *Our Communities, Our Schools* sites over the period NRC has been involved in Gaza. Sufficient information was available in the dataset provided by UNRWA to disaggregate information by school, and to explore whether changes in drop out rates on an annual basis were significantly different (statistically) than overall changes occurring within the UNRWA system in Gaza.

Figure 4 presents the drop out rates of students in the three clusters taking part in the NRC programme, as well as for all students in Gaza during the period 2010-2014. Overall, it would appear that drop out rates are relatively low across the UNRWA system, and have declined over time. It would also appear that some of the clusters of schools which NRC have selected to work with, in Middle Area and West Gaza particularly, may not necessarily be those that are most impacted by drop out. That stated, there would appear to be ways in which *Our Communities, Our Schools* may be serving to counter or change trend lines in each of the clusters, and improve drop out rates from those existent previously. This is further explored for each cluster.

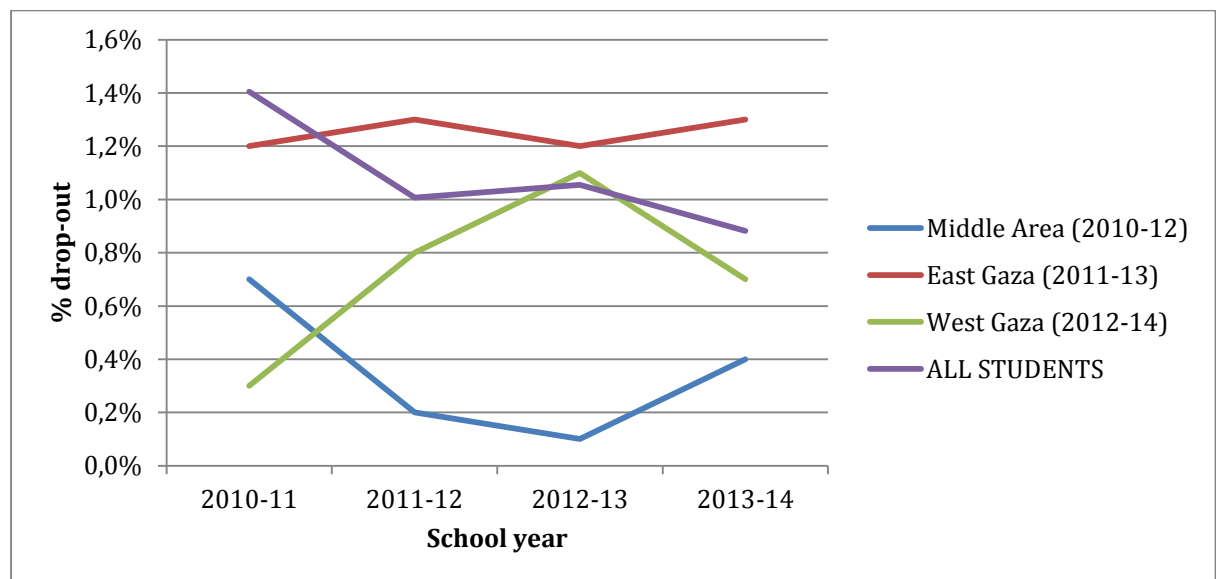


Figure 4: Percentage drop out rates for students attending schools part of the NRC programme

Figure 5 presents the drop out rates over the course of the NRC programme in the Middle Area schools. During the course of NRC’s involvement (2010-2012), drop out rates were reduced substantially in Maghazi Elementary Boys Schools “A”, and such changes are significant when compared to the trends in overall drop out rate during that time. After implementation ended in 2012, it does appear that drop out rates have trended upwards once again, but not to the same levels they existed prior to NRC’s intervention.

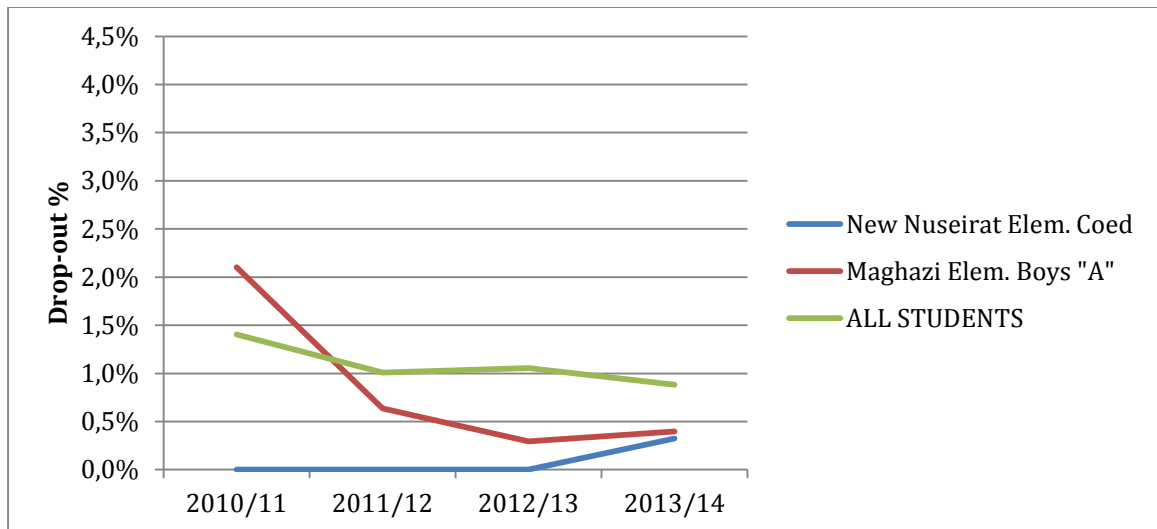


Figure 5: Percentage drop-out rates for students attending Middle Area schools part of the NRC programme

Figure 6 presents the drop out rates over the course of the NRC programme in the East Gaza schools. In these four schools, drop out rates during the period of active programme implementation (2011-2013) were reduced significantly in Hashem Elementary Boys "A", but in other schools the rates either stayed the same or increased, in some cases more significantly than the UNRWA trend line. Reasons for this are unknown, but it does appear as a collection that the East Gaza Schools NRC worked in have much higher rates of drop out than the UNRWA norm, and also greater variability from year to year. After the *Our Communities, Our School* programme ended at the end of the 2012-13 school year, it would appear that drop out rates have remained relatively steady in all schools except for Hashem Elementary Boys "A", where they have increased again.

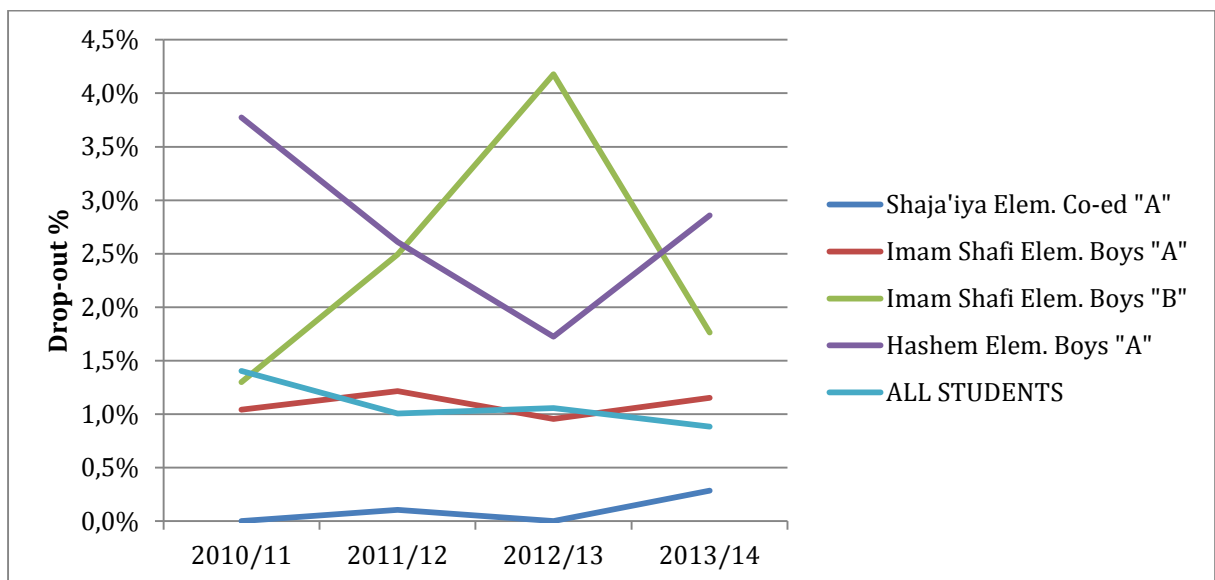


Figure 6: Percentage drop out rates for students attending East Gaza schools part of the NRC programme

Figure 4 presents the drop out rates over the course of the NRC programme in the West Gaza schools. It would appear that since the start of NRC's intervention at the commencement of the 2012-13 school year, drop out rates have reduced in two of the three schools, countering earlier trends, as well as the slight increases in the average during this time. Additionally, the reductions observed in Beach Elementary Co-ed "A" and Boys "D"

between 2012-13 and 2013-14 are significantly reduced (statistically) compared to the UNRWA average.

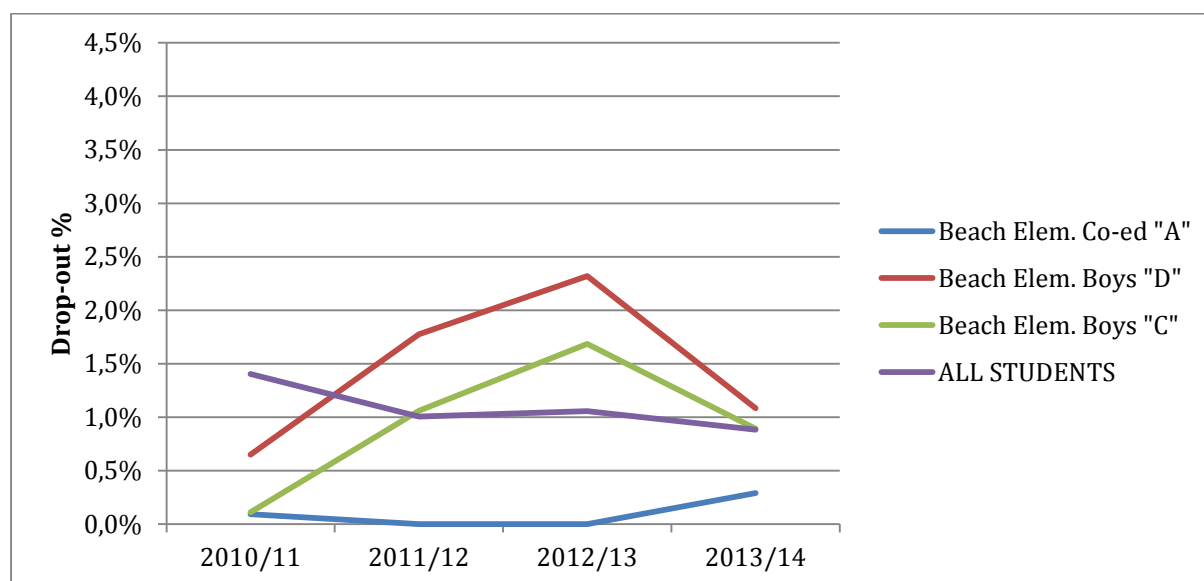


Figure 7: Percentage drop out rates for students attending West Gaza schools part of the NRC programme

Drop out as an issue was not mentioned extensively in the changes noted by parents, teachers, students and counsellors interviewed. Of the 173 changes documented, only one discussed drop out explicitly. None of the actual narrated and documented stories of change touched on drop out directly, but several stories, particularly those narrated by caregivers noted that students who had been previously disengaged and reluctant to attend school, were now more engaged and interested to attend school.⁴⁷

The inconclusiveness of the data suggests it may need to be questioned whether having an overall objective of reducing push out/drop out and/or improving student achievement are right ones for NRC to pursue. For drop out in particular, which NRC's own analysis suggests occurs in the latter stages of primary schooling (Grades 6-8), sufficient time may not have lapsed to measure such effects adequately. More importantly, if the focus of intervention remains on the lower grades where drop out is not pronounced, it may make more sense to consider refocussing the overall objective of the programme on goals of promoting a protective, inclusive and engaging educational experience for children—particularly given that data from this evaluation provides more conclusive evidence on such impacts through NRC's work.

4.1.7 Establishing a framework for durable solutions

The overarching goal of NRC's framework for action is to "support self reliance and durable solutions." In the course of the evaluation it became clearly evident that several component of NRC Palestine's education programming to date have worked towards this goal. *Our Communities, Our Schools* has been designed so that the second phase of the programme ensures that, "Teachers are...a resource for other teachers. Teachers from the first phase can be used as trainers and peer support sources for the new phase one teachers. Teachers will identify their own training and development needs much more and NRC will seek to respond

⁴⁷ See MSC Story 12

with the necessary support.” Teachers and school principals noted that this was occurring, and more than one principal discussed how teachers continued to engage in peer coaching, observation and mentoring with each other after NRC’s intervention ended. As one principal discussed in his story of change⁴⁸, “Our teachers who have been trained are now training new teachers who enter our school. Our teachers continue on with peer coaching with others. I continue to seek out new training approaches, opportunities and information that I can bring to the school.”

Another enduring legacy of *Our Communities, Our Schools* has been ongoing consideration about the needs of all learners in the classrooms. While the programme was not explicit in its inclusive education focus, the concerns it raised regarding student engagement and appropriate classroom discipline had a significant influence on altering teachers’ and school attitudes towards the more marginalised students in their presence. As one principal noted in his story of significant change, “...While NRC’s program has stopped, we are continuing on with the ways they taught us, specifically ensuring that we follow up and support the students of greatest need. Helping these students is the most important part of our job, and NRC has helped us to see how we can do this.” Or, as another principal⁴⁹ described, “Now our teachers have a much more diverse repertoire of practices in their classroom and are better able to tailor instruction to the needs of all students who they work with. This is important because our students of low or average performance are included more in the learning process, and are enjoying being in school more.”

Schools and school principals have also continued on in developing communication plans and operating Parental Skills Clubs. One principal from Middle Gaza discussed how the school continues to meet with the parents on a monthly basis, and runs Parental Skills Clubs based on the needs and interests noted by the parents. In some instances, this has involved the school continuing to engage QCC in facilitating or running some of the activities, and in other instances teachers or parents within the school community offer the classes themselves. Additionally, the Parent Skills Clubs have empowered parents to express their opinions and voice their ideas more than in the past, a critical component of effective participation and real partnership which is required as part of Parent Councils. As noted in one story of significant change⁵⁰, “After two years, the parents began to lead the parent clubs themselves. They became more confident and able to express their ideas and suggestions directly to the school management. As this change occurred, the school management felt encouraged to change their means of communication with parents and to work with them in a more collaborative way.”

Similarly, the *Better Learning Programme* has left schools, specifically counsellors and teachers with an enduring set of skills and techniques that they can continue to use with their students. At the same, it has changed thinking in the schools to ensure that children’s psychosocial and emotional needs are addressed on par with their academic needs. Counsellors interviewed discussed how they have continued to run nightmare groups with other children, and stories of change from both teachers and parents discuss how they/their children continue to use the relaxation and stress release activities.⁵¹ As one principal⁵² commented, “Having such techniques to cope with stress is more than just about

⁴⁸ See MSC Story 51

⁴⁹ See MSC Story 24

⁵⁰ See MSC Story 28

⁵¹ See MSC Stories 3, 10, 23

⁵² See MSC Story 15

achievement or behaviour. It will help these children in their future lives as members of a Palestinian community." Additionally, the interest of UNRWA at present in rolling out one component of BLP in all its schools in Gaza and West Bank⁵³ is a real testament to the success of the project, and to the education teams' purposeful advocacy work to ensure that the programme was well-known and gained traction with UNRWA, according to the Norwegian experts involved in the design and delivery of the initial project.

Principals felt that the model of support within *Our Communities, Our Schools* when Teacher Support Officers encouraged teachers to support, train and observe each other, encouraged the school community to learn from each other and collaborate professionally. For example one principal⁵⁴ noted how prior to NRC's intervention, *"the teachers of our school were fairly unmotivated in terms of supporting the broader school community. They would work individually but would not do anything to support their peers."* After two years of support, however, *"teachers are willing to take initiatives themselves...they come to me with requests for running or participating in workshops with their peers, eager to show off their strengths and to broaden their own knowledge."* The model of supervision support which was embedded into *Our Communities, Our Schools* is one for NRC to consider in other contexts, given acknowledgement in NRC's Education Handbook of the need for follow up to training if changes in teacher behaviour and practice are desired (p. 40).

4.2 Relevance

Several evaluation questions, broadly categorised under the idea of relevance, were identified to: (1) assess how beneficiaries were targeted as part of the education programming and whether this is an effective approach to reaching the most vulnerable; (2) document the ways in which NRC works with beneficiaries to identify needs and develop education programmes of support that are responsive to their needs; (3) determine the nature of the working relationship NRC has with education service providers and other key partners in Palestine; and (4) ascertain whether at a systems-level, NRC's activities are meeting needs that cannot be addressed or responded to by other actors.

4.2.1 Targeting the most vulnerable

Most of NRC's Palestine's education initiatives have specified that they are targeting the most vulnerable and conflict affected children, but how vulnerability has been identified and assessed in terms of targeting of schools has varied from activity to activity.

For example, in Gaza within the *Our Communities, Our Schools* intervention, UNRWA is asked to identify the schools they would like NRC to work. Typically they are schools that are seen to be problematic either based on their location, the socioeconomic/demographics of the population they serve, or reputations of underachievement. When *Our Communities, Our Schools* expanded to West Bank in 2012, a similar process was carried out, with NRC working through MoEHE and UNRWA to identify schools they felt were in need of attention in East Jerusalem. Many of the schools chosen were ones that the agencies felt were 'underserved' by other actors, due to their remoteness or the difficulties of access.

To date, however, NRC has not looked at measures such as dropout rates, achievement scores or the Education Cluster's vulnerability index, to select its schools, instead giving that choice to UNRWA. In some cases, this may not be the best option, as one senior official in

⁵³ In 2014, training of trainers by NRC commenced. This will introduce BLP II to all counsellors working in UNRWA schools in Gaza, and in UNRWA and MoEHE schools in West Bank. The objective is all schools will utilise the BLP II manual and approach with children facing nightmares.

⁵⁴ MSC Story 39

UNRWA acknowledged that he requested that NRC work in Rafah, not based on need, but rather, because he is from there and needed to show “his community” that they were being served as well.

The *Better Learning Programme's* process of selecting schools has been slightly different. Initially it was piloted in one of the areas most affected by Operation Cast Lead, Beit Hanoon, based on research from NRC's Push Out study in Gaza which suggested that this locale was the one facing the most acute issues related to children's nightmare incidences. In the aftermath of the November 2012 escalation by the Israeli forces, NRC worked with MoEHE and UNRWA to scale up the *Better Learning Programme* as an emergency response to the psychosocial needs of children, their families and schools. In selecting additional schools, NRC followed the recommendations of MoEHE and UNRWA to identify schools and communities that had been most affected by the escalation. In West Bank, when *Better Learning Programme* was expanded in March 2014, the Education Cluster's vulnerability index was used to select MoEHE and UNRWA schools, and is part of the reason for NRC's recent expansion of activities into areas like Hebron.

The majority of NRC's work to date has been with the long-standing refugee population of Palestine who are served through the UNRWA system. In some cases, this may be appropriate, however, in Gaza there remains an ongoing need to also engage with MoEHE schools, given that 40% of children attend these schools. MoEHE schools are generally neglected, and unsupported by the international community owing to political reasons. Yet, there remains an acute need within many MoEHE schools for the same types of interventions that are provided by UNRWA schools, according to key informants interviewed within and outside of NRC. Additionally, given the relatively small stature of UNRWA's presence in West Bank, compared to MoEHE, it may be important for NRC to continue to strengthen its engagement with MoEHE into the future, particularly as it expands into Area C within West Bank.

From the evidence at hand, it would appear that bias/exclusion is not a feature of the participation of parents and teachers, even if there are explicit target groups for intervention. While NRC has focused efforts like the Parental Skills Clubs on caregivers of children who are at risk of drop out, it also encourages other caregivers to participate to reduce the stigma that might be involved with participation otherwise. Additionally, in many schools, NRC has expanded support to teachers beyond its stated focus on Grades 1-4, to include the whole school in training sessions in an attempt to non-exclusionary.

Within the *Better Learning Programme*, a core group of (self-identified) children exhibiting nightmares and sleeping problems participated in the counselling sessions. The children involved in the core group were selected through a process led by the school counsellor and teachers. Participation within this group was voluntary regardless of the nomination of parents or teachers, but efforts were made to ensure that (1) all children exhibited similar frequencies of nightmare incidences on a weekly basis; and (2) were confronted with challenges to learning as a result of these nightmares. Due to the limited reach of *Better Learning's* intensive level of intervention (a maximum of eight children/group), NRC developed a separate classroom-based module (BLP I) to support the psychosocial well being of all children in targeted schools. Additional to development of the manual, NRC conducted briefings and training sessions to all the teaching staff in the nominated schools on the 'manual so as to raise their awareness of the psychosocial issues facing children and to equip them with a set of skills to create calm and supportive classrooms. Moreover, NRC has been working to reach the parents around these groups to strengthen family and

community care-giving structures for children. Parents have attended similar (although amended) briefings and trainings to enable them to react positively and give the needed support to their children during and after the frequent immediate shocks of hostilities and to build their capacity and resilience in the face of future possible shocks. This has served to widen the net of indirect beneficiaries of such activity.

4.2.2 Beneficiary participation

NRC involves teachers, parents and school administrators in the design of *Our Community, Our Schools*. This occurs through a comprehensive needs assessment, consultation and feedback on the results of this assessment, and the joint development of a strategy of support within the school based on this process. The result is a tailored programme of support through Parent Skills Clubs, communication plan activities, and in-service training topics developed. The assessment also forms the basis for determining the types of materials NRC procures for schools through their allocated capitation grants. Strong evidence existed of the content of Parent Skills Clubs activities in-service training topics, and items purchased through capitation grants varying from school to school because of this process.

Capacitation grants, in particular, have been an important component of NRC engendering school interest at the outset, and helped to forge a positive relationship with the school principal and the teachers. All school principals who were interviewed valued the material resources provided, and highly appreciated the fact that they had a strong say in how such funds could be used. As part of teachers' professional development programme, they were trained on how to then use these supplies and equipment (such as Smart Boards, or small school libraries) which grants helped them to procure. According to one teacher in his story of change⁵⁵, *"These resources, alongside the training on drama and educational games, have helped me to use these materials effectively, and make the classroom more engaging for the students. For example, I now have leather so that students can make things inside the classroom."*

Throughout the life of the project, regular monitoring and internal evaluation activity serves to identify issues of concern and unmet needs within each school, and provide formative information which Education and Teacher Support Officers then respond to. As an example of this, it was identified through this monitoring activity that particular schools that were part of *Our Communities, Our Schools* in West Bank needed additional coaching support. In response, NRC has extended its involvement by six months in those locales.

One challenge which NRC has consistently faced at the outset of its teacher support component is reluctance on the part of teachers to: (1) be observed and coached in the classroom by others; (2) make an additional time commitment after/before school hours to participate in training sessions; and (3) see value in a two-year programme of professional development support. A number of Teacher Support Officers recalled how at the outset of Phase One, they traditionally encounter resistance to them entering the classroom and observing teachers from the teachers themselves and the school principal. Similarly, area supervisors were sometimes concerned that Teacher Support Officers might convey differing messages or advice to that which they provided in their observations. Such reluctance is noted in a number of stories of change.⁵⁶ A suggestion from Teacher Support Officers and UNRWA was that NRC spend more time at the outset of the project orienting and engaging

⁵⁵ MSC Story 54

⁵⁶ See MSC Stories 6, 19, 20, 29, 51

school principals and area supervisors so that they act as strong champions for NRC's approach, and thwart off the initial resistance that is faced.

Additionally, NRC and the implementing schools and partners have struggled in many instances, to engender effective and regular parental participation. This is despite strong efforts on its part to contact all parents individually and make them aware of gatherings. NRC reporting to donors⁵⁷ as well as conversations with the Education Officers in Gaza and West Bank offices and its implementing partners identified that often target numbers in terms of parental participation are not reached. While this remains an ongoing challenge for NRC, as it does for all education actors, evidence also existed of novel and creative ways NRC's Education Officers were working with schools to overcome such a challenge. The story of change below is evidence of this.

Please teachers talk to parents directly (NRC Staff)

Whenever I ask teachers what is the most difficult challenge you face at school, the majority say "parents don't cooperate...we invite them many times but they don't come." As our projects' main aim is to strengthen the relationship between parents and school, I decided to search for a solution for this issue in the school I am working in. I noticed there were Bedouin families who live far from school and have a considerable number of children enrolled. These children were also the ones, who had the highest record of absence from school, especially in winter. The parents of these children never came to the school although they were invited many times and many letters sent to them. So I decided that along with a group of teachers and students from the school, we would pay a visit to the family and talk to them face to face. It was November and the weather was a bit hot. We walked the same path the children walk daily and it was a an experience for the teachers and the students to feel how hard the Bedouin students' school day is Teachers understood how far the parents would need to walk if they decided to come to school. After an hour's walk, and a number of breaks where we sat on hot stones and exchanged the remaining water we had in our bottles, we arrived exhausted and hot. Four mothers welcomed the teachers. Myself and the other males from the school were led to the men's tent. We were not allowed to go to the women's tent at the beginning because of traditions. After a short rest and clarification of the aim of the visit, we were allowed to meet the mothers. The teachers and the school principal talked to the mothers about the aim of the visit and how were keen to help the Bedouin kids to learn and complete a full course of study, especially their girls. I explained to these mothers that the teachers cared deeply for their kids, so much so that they left their homes and work to meet them, despite the hot weather and long walk. I persuaded one of the mothers to come to school for a meeting the week after. She kept her promise and came. The school welcomed her warmly and she was shown how their kids are looked after at school. From that time she hasn't missed any meeting and her children's absences have been significantly reduced. This has had a positive effect on their academic record. Now the school has someone, within the Bedouin community who they can contact whenever there is a problem with one of their children. This particular mother has become one of the most frequent school visitors and has even been rewarded by the school for her efforts. This change is so important because parents and the school need to work together to seek solutions to issues facing their children. Without this, parents only rely on what their children say about their teachers and school, and likewise the school lacks information about what is going on at home.

⁵⁷ See for example Telethon Final Reports ILFT1103/ ILFT1203/ILFT 1303

Our Communities, Our Schools places strong emphasis on the inclusion of fathers and male carers in all project activities. A strong cultural bias stands against such efforts and male participation in the Parental Skills Clubs remains limited. It was suggested by QCC that some Parent Skills Clubs activities work solely with fathers in the future.

Less beneficiary participation in programme design and implementation occurs as part of *Better Learning Programme*, in part due to the manualised nature of BLP II that requires counsellors to follow a prescribed approach. That stated, as BLP II expands to all UNRWA schools in Palestine, counsellors and lead teachers involved in earlier iterations of the project are now taking a leadership role in introducing the approach to their peers through a cascade model of training.

Finally, through the UNESCO funded Inclusive Education component, NRC has been working with teachers, supervisors and inclusive education counsellors to adopt action research. This has allowed focus on the most vulnerable within the classroom whilst at the same time enabling teachers to develop their own answers to the challenges they face. Ideally, such a model should allow teachers to self-identify barriers to inclusive education practices in their own classroom and to experiment with responses based on their own circumstances and experiences.

4.2.3 Working in partnership

With UNRWA, it quickly became clear that NRC is seen as a trusted and critical partner in the organisation's quest to improve educational quality and access. Across all of UNRWA senior management, a strong sentiment was voiced that NRC has distinguished itself from others, by its depth of engagement, and ability to help UNRWA meet needs it would be unable to meet on its own. One senior UNRWA manager from West Bank described the relationship with NRC as an, *"open partnership, where concerns are brought forward transparently, action done in a collaborative fashion, and where professionalism and high levels of motivation are paramount."* Its flexibility, resources, and willingness and ability to be responsive to needs as they arise, according to this same individual, also distinguished NRC from other organisations. Another senior UNRWA manager from Gaza described its relationship with NRC as, *"the best we have had with any organisation in my 20 years of working within UNRWA."* Across UNRWA the general perception was that NRC was led by a strong, capable and dedicated leadership team and staffed with qualified individuals who were able to build strong relationships within schools, service providers and other international and local organisations. For these reasons, NRC is one of the only organisations that UNRWA allows to work directly with staff inside its schools. Within Gaza, NRC has also directly supported the capacity development of UNRWA by employing UNRWA staff into their programmes as Education or Teacher Support Officers for two years on a secondment basis. Approximately half of these individuals return to UNRWA, and often take up senior positions within the organisation. Such is the case of the current Chief of Education for Gaza.

With MoEHE in Gaza⁵⁸, the sentiment on NRC was more muted. On one hand, NRC was seen as a cooperative and proactive partner. At the same time, NRC was described to be a *"bit of an octopus with many tentacles but no clear focus"*, and there were concerns raised by MoEHE that what NRC was doing in regards to Inclusive Education and through the *Better Learning Programme* was not novel or adding value to anything that wasn't already being

⁵⁸ It should be noted that within MoEHE in Gaza only one individual was directly spoken to, who is head of the Counselling Unit. This individual has been appointed by MoEHE as the key focal point to deal with external donors, and is also who NRC works with most directly in the *Better Learning Programme*.

done by MoEHE. According to representatives from the education team from NRC who were asked about this, the sentiment was that this was the perception of an individual who was fairly disconnected from the realities on the ground. The perspectives of the participating teachers and counsellors presented earlier would appear to support the view of NRC on this matter. Additionally, NRC's relationship with MoEHE is much more recent than with UNRWA, having only been formally established after receipt of OCHA funding to implement the *Better Learning Programme* after the November 2012 Israeli military escalation. Nonetheless, given that this individual is the key contact that NRC needs to liaise with inside MoEHE, attempts must be made to work constructively with this individual, or alternative focal points should be sought, should NRC want to continue to work with MoEHE in Gaza.⁵⁹

In East Jerusalem, NRC's engagement with MoEHE has been with the director of its Jerusalem unit, and with the Directorate of Education in Jerusalem (Awqaf). These individuals were unable to be interviewed during the evaluation, thus it is unclear how the partnership is viewed from their perspective. That stated, NRC has taken a similar approach to capacity building with MoEHE and at Awqaf present In West Bank has one seconded MoEHE employee engaged as an Education Officer within the team.

NRC's relationship with MoEHE in Ramallah is a much more nascent one, having only commenced with any real effect with the roll-out of the *Better Learning Programme* and protection work, supported by the ICLA team, earlier this year. Through the Education Cluster, MoEHE came to hear of and become interested in NRC's activities. MoEHE's interest in partnering with NRC came about because they recognised that the protection needs of children—specifically psychosocial support—was not being adequately addressed in schools. As a start, MoEHE's perception is that the training and support provided by NRC filled an acute need and has been relevant and important to meeting education's protection function in conflict situations, but there is a feeling that NRC should now do more. In the future, MoEHE would like to see NRC working in a small number of schools "from A to Z" to promote safe access, improve the school environment, provide recreational/entertainment support to children, and support teacher professional development.⁶⁰

NRC also maintains an active presence in the Education Cluster. Within the Cluster, NRC is a strong advocate of a rights-based rationale for education support and for maintaining the position of education within humanitarian responses, according to the Cluster Coordinator for West Bank. She noted that as the funding situation within Palestine has become more difficult, NRC was one of the only actors bringing funding into the Cluster. NRC was also noted to be working proactively to advance the Cluster's recently developed advocacy position, which stresses the need to advocate for the protection of children's right to schooling in West Bank, and to articulate the unique issues and challenges of educational provision in East Jerusalem.

With UNICEF and UNESCO, who have and in the case of UNESCO, continue to be direct partners in NRC Palestine Education activities, the nature of the partnership was also viewed positively and of mutual benefit to both parties. UNICEF worked closely with NRC in the

⁵⁹ At the time of the writing of this evaluation, a new unity Palestinian government was under formation and there were likely to be some changes in staffing as a result of this process. Whether NRC continues to work closely with this individual as their main focal point within MoEHE, or someone else, remains to be seen.

⁶⁰ At present discussions are occurring between MoEHE and NRC to roll out *Our Communities, Our Schools* in West Bank to address this interest.

development of the East Jerusalem research study, and believed that NRC was best poised to conduct the research given its extensive networks and knowledge of the educational situation in East Jerusalem. According to the Chief of Education for UNICEF, the reason that the partnership has worked well is because both UNICEF and NRC, “hold a shared idea and vision of improvement”, with UNICEF also supporting messages on child-centred instruction, non-violent behaviour management and parental engagement through its Child Friendly Schools model. Moving forward, UNICEF hopes that NRC will complete the second part of the study in the Israeli-government operated municipality schools.⁶¹

UNESCO’s relationship with NRC dates back to 2012, when it became aware of NRC’s work through the *Better Learning Programme* in the Education Cluster. At that time UNESCO was seeking a partner to help them with the introduction of Inclusive Education principles into the Palestinian education system, in support of both MoEHE and UNRWA strategic objectives. NRC was seen by UNESCO to be a “capable implementing partner” with qualified staff and strong technical expertise to support UNESCO’s package of support. Additionally, NRC was also one of the few actors who had strong teams in both West Bank and Gaza. The perception from UNESCO is that they had the ability to drive the policy level dialogue and ensure that the project could be implemented at scale, while NRC had the ability to provide practical support and run effective trainings with MoEHE/UNRWA staff, area supervisors, school principals and selected teachers. That stated, from the NRC perspective, the UNESCO partnership has been slightly more problematic because of its limited role in the project. There was a perception amongst NRC’s Education Team that NRC did not have sufficient control over the structure of the training, its content, and the way in which it was being monitored and evaluated. The focus of the inclusive education training, is perceived by staff to be on breadth of coverage, rather than depth, and stands quite different to NRC’s other education programmes which offer schools extensive and prolonged support. UNESCO’s representative also acknowledged this difference. According to her, UNESCO takes a systems approach—or a top down approach, while NRC works from the school level up—or a bottom up approach. Nonetheless, UNESCO sees NRC as a long-term partner, given the shared objectives it has on inclusive education in particular.

NRC has also worked collaboratively with its two local implementing partners for the Parent Skills Clubs as part of *Our Communities, Our Schools*—Qattan Centre for the Child in Gaza and Tamer Institute in West Bank. QCC’s primary focus is on supporting family literacy and empowering a parent’s role as first teacher, thus when it first became involved in delivering the Parent Skills Clubs, it was a new experience for the organisation to be working directly inside schools on a long-term basis. Throughout QCC’s involvement, NRC is noted to have worked closely with QCC to identify the needs of the parents, based on a needs assessment, facilitate an establishment meeting to discuss options for activities with the parents themselves, and then to develop an action plan for the first year of the Parent Skills Clubs, which QCC has responsibility for then managing. For these reasons, QCC feels that the relationship with NRC is one of true partnership, rather than one where QCC acts solely as an implementing actor for an NRC vision. QCC did raise several small concerns about the partnership arrangement, however. QCC notes that given that the scope of their involvement is limited to solely the first year, they have little sense of whether the mechanisms they set in place that first year are sustained. Additionally, QCC felt that they were not given a sufficient enough stake in how their effectiveness was being evaluated, and did not have confidence in how NRC was measuring changes in parental skills at present.

⁶¹ According to the Chief of Education, UNICEF, after extensive negotiations with the Israeli authorities has been granted permission to conduct research in the Municipality Schools.

Finally, QCC noted that despite the fact that NRC treated them as true partners, schools sometimes did not view them in the same light and challenged QCC's role and involvement, particularly at the outset. For that reason, the president of QCC felt that NRC could more proactively work to involve them in initial discussions with the school principals and school staff regarding their organisation's involvement in the project.

Tamer Institute's⁶² partnership with NRC is much more recent, and commenced in earnest with the 2013 school year when it began to facilitate the Parent Skills Clubs session in the East Jerusalem *Our Communities, Our Schools* sites. For the Institute which has a well-established presence and reputation in West Bank, its partnership with NRC presented a new model of working—specifically one where the parameters and scope of activities was already pre-determined to some extent—but where Tamer still maintained primary responsibility for developing and delivering a programme of skills support. This has proven to be a challenge for Tamer on several levels. In a midterm evaluation conducted by NRC⁶³ in April 2014, Tamer was noted to be, “uncertain on where NRC's roles end and where its role begins.” Tamer and school officials also expressed concern about the ambiguity between Parent Skills Clubs activities (led by Tamer) and the Communication Plan activities (led by the school with facilitation from NRC's Education Officers). Likewise, Tamer remained unclear about what NRC's logic for intervention was in the schools it worked in, and how they fit into the bigger puzzle. Based on this situation, it would appear that NRC needs to better orient Tamer as its chosen partner into the project's different components, and how each component fits into broader objectives NRC has for *Our Communities, Our Schools*.

4.2.4 Addressing unmet needs within the education system

The complex humanitarian crisis in Palestine requires a flexible and responsive targeting approach, and it is clearly evident that NRC has done this through the establishment of new activities which attend to acute needs (such as the *Better Learning Intervention*), while simultaneously addressing longer-standing issues facing the Palestinian education system (through *Our Communities, Our Schools* and its current work with UNESCO on inclusive education).

Our Communities, Our Schools differentiated itself from other training programmes in terms of the depth and breadth of support offered to teachers, particularly through the in-classroom and individualised support that followed more general training sessions on teaching approaches and methodologies. One NRC Education Officer⁶⁴, commenting on what differentiated their training from others noted that, “so often teachers receive training but then return to their school and classroom and face many difficulties and obstacles in implementing these ideas into practice. In frustration they give up, and nothing changes for the students.” With NRC's model of support in *Our Communities, Our Schools*, Teacher Support Officers spend considerable time within the classroom, supporting teachers after weekly training sessions to enact the ideas they have learned, and reflect on what worked

⁶² TAMER Institute for Community Education is an educational non-governmental nonprofit organization that focuses principally on the rights to education, identity, freedom of expression, and access to information. The institution primarily targets children and young adults to encourage and deepen opportunities of learning among them. Their program aims to contribute to enhancing reading, writing and all forms of expression among children and young adults. It also aims at contributing to a Palestinian environment that is supportive to learning processes, and at supporting the literary and scholar production on child culture in Palestine.

⁶³ Midterm Evaluation Report Education Programme: *Our Communities, Our Schools* (April, 2014), p. 14

⁶⁴ MSC Story 6

and what didn't. For example, one teacher⁶⁵ commented that, *"the TSO was supporting me and showing me the best way to practice those strategies"*, and a principal⁶⁶ noted that, *"NRC's project brought in a new model of support, in which our teachers received information, practiced the techniques they were taught, and then were observed and given feedback in a respectful and non-threatening way by NRC coaches. This in-classroom support, ongoing coaching and regular feedback helped the teachers to take the theories and ideas they received in training and make them concrete and real in their practices."* The intensive coaching provided by NRC complemented and added to the supervision support provided by Awqaf/MoEHE and UNRWA. According to one UNRWA official in Jerusalem, the point of difference of NRC's Teacher Support Officers is that *"they gave teachers instant feedback...they planned lessons with teachers and agreed on the action plan during the lessons....this compensates for the limited role our own supervisors who visit teachers only twice a year, and often do not provide important formative feedback."*

The classroom sessions that were part of the Better Learning Programme also introduced to UNRWA and MoEHE schools a new way of addressing children's overall well being within the walls of the classroom. Specifically, it aimed to change the prevalent paradigm in Palestine that all psychosocial issues require intensive, long-term and specialist support to children. The BLP I manual and training aimed to provide teachers with methods that "integrate the principles of calming in a systemic way into the daily education [programme] and empower teachers to take action to create more relaxed pupils that are ready for learning." At the same time, the focus was on demonstrating how methods from the field of psychology are "fairly easy to be carried out by parents and teachers", rather than exclusively by those who have specialised in psychology, such as counsellors. One principal⁶⁷, commented that, *"Through training, NRC demonstrated how [counsellors and teachers] can work together more cohesively, and to provide the teacher and counsellor with simple techniques to work with children [on their psychosocial health]."*

That stated, officials interviewed within MoEHE's counselling directorate maintained a belief that interventions of the type such as *Better Learning* should remain the purview of counsellors and those with specialist training. They maintained strong resistance to the idea that psychosocial support could and should be offered inside the classroom, despite the participation of 10 MoEHE schools in the 2012-2013 supported intervention. Much of this resistance may be a product of a gulf between the directorate, and its counsellors and teachers, who clearly saw value in such work. Attempts may need to be made in the future to better involve and integrate senior members of the directorate into the activities at the school-level themselves, so that they come to see the value of such work.

In times of crises, NRC's education programming has had the ability to respond in a way that meets the acute needs of children. Recently, NRC responded to the UNRWA strike in January/February 2014 in West Bank when no other activities or support were being provided to children who were out of school and often left with little else to do. NRC made a decision to utilise its network of civil society partners, including Tamer Institute to help facilitate the sessions, and find a location away from the UNRWA schools to avoid any confrontation or issues with the striking staff, and to avoid being seen as strike busters. A decision was also made to not provide academic tutoring or alternative classes, to ensure that NRC was not perceived by any party to be offering substitute schooling. According to

⁶⁵ MSC Story 4

⁶⁶ MSC Story 24

⁶⁷ MSC Story 15

the UNRWA West Bank Education Chief, “NRC understood the issues best, and were in a better position to step in and respond in a way that acknowledged the sensitivities on all sides.”

Similarly, when parts of Gaza encountered significant flooding in December 2013, NRC was positioned well to respond to the crisis. The provision of schoolbags was seen as highly relevant, necessary and timely in their delivery, according to a post-distribution survey undertaken with a sample of benefiting households in early 2014 by NRC Palestine’s M&E Unit.

Recently, with the signing of a MoU with the Ministry of Education in Ramallah NRC’s ICLA team has become involved in educating teachers, principals, students and parents about ways to protect themselves from attack, and also about their rights and legal recourse options in the event of attack. In discussing parent and students’ rights to protection from attack, workshops have begun to be held through *Our Communities, Our Schools’* Parent Skills Clubs/Communication Plan activities and for schools not part of the project in East Jerusalem through the *Better Learning Programme* orientation sessions with parents. The intention is to work with schools, and specifically school principals subject to stop work and demolition orders to protect their existence and challenge these orders through the Israeli court system. ICLA has also been working with households to protect their residency rights within East Jerusalem, ensuring that they are able to continue to access social provisions they are entitled to, including education. The work that NRC is doing in this area is identified as a key asset of the organisation’s work according to UNICEF, who sees this support and advocacy work as central to NRC’s mandate as a humanitarian actor responsible for protecting children’s rights to education. The work NRC is doing in this area is also seen as its most unique and important contribution within MoEHE’s Field Support Directorate, who feels that the training and support the ICLA team has offered to school principals when facing attacks or demolition orders as a vital area of unmet need. According to MoEHE, school principals who have received the training now “*know where to go for help*”, and similarly, “*parents, students, and teachers have a better understanding of how to protect themselves on their ways to/from school, as well as while at school.*”

4.2.5 Alignment with NRC Policy and INEE Minimum Standards

Several of the impacts noted in the previous section—such as students being more engaged in the classroom, teachers being more motivated, teachers having a greater repertoire of inclusive, engaging, child-centred methodologies, and teachers and counsellors addressing children’s psychosocial needs—provide clear evidence of how NRC’s education programmes in Palestine are working to “provide a safe and inspiring learning environment for children and young people,” which is a core function for NRC education programmes in protracted crises situations, according to the Education Handbook (p. 10).

What is important about NRC Palestine’s support to teachers is that it is clearly aligned with the guidance notes related to teaching and learning support that are part of the *INEE’s Minimum Standards*.⁶⁸ Specifically, the design of *Our Communities, Our Schools* is such that “trainers provide in-service training, support, guidance, monitoring and classroom supervision” over an extended period, and clear evidence exists of how “teachers became effective facilitators in the learning environment, using participatory methods and teaching aids.” Additionally, international research suggests that changing teaching practice requires

⁶⁸ INEE Guidance Notes on Teaching and Learning, p.19

sustained, in-school based support which allows teachers opportunity to be introduced to new ideas, practice new skills, reflect on their practice, and identify ways to improve enactment of the skills on a continuous basis.⁶⁹ The design and implementation of the teacher support component reflected best practices in teacher professional development and helped to create a more safe and secure environment for children while they were at school.

A key aim of the *Better Learning Programme* is to support teachers and school counsellors/psychologists to better address children's psychosocial needs in a time and cost efficient manner. It fits well with NRC's broader project of work on improving the learning environment within classrooms, particularly given that the INEE Minimum Standards identify that part of this includes training on psychosocial support and well being.⁷⁰ Stakeholders from MoEHE and UNRWA readily accepted that the *Better Learning Programme* makes important contribution NRC to enhancing the protective capacity of the Palestinian education system to deal with children's psychosocial wellbeing, and ultimately their experience of schooling. Building this protective role for education is critical to building normalcy and longer-term resilience within education systems under constant threat, according to INEE Minimum Standards and UNICEF's Education and Peacebuilding Framework.⁷¹

Finally, a key component of NRC's broader programmatic objectives for education⁷² is to ensure that NRC is, "*work[ing] in partnerships with different stakeholders to enhance implementation and foster sustainability*". Additionally, a key foundational standard of INEE's Minimum Standards is that all actors should be working to, "*work with education authorities to build a better system for the future, strengthening an inclusive education system for all children, such as those with disabilities and from minority groups*", implying a strong need for partnership and effective coordination. As noted in previous sections, strong evidence exists of NRC has done so with UNRWA and other key partners.

⁶⁹ See Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis*. Wellington: New Zealand Ministry of Education.

⁷⁰ See Access and Learning Environment Standard 2 (pp. 61-66)

⁷¹ See <http://learningforpeace.unicef.org>

⁷² See NRC Programme Strategy, p. 14

5 Conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations

This final section of the report draws together the key findings noted from previous sections, and some key lessons learnt. From this, a future focus is taken to explore ways in which NRC Palestine and NRC as a whole can build on key successes and lesson learned, to refine and improve on its educational programming in Palestine and the region.

5.1 Key conclusions

From the evidence reviewed and collected as part of this evaluation, a number of key conclusions can be drawn:

- NRC's school-based interventions (namely *Our Communities*, *Our Schools* and the *Better Learning Programme*) have been timely, relevant and effective in the locales in which they have been implemented. The depth of project engagement is what distinguishes it from other forms of support offered to Palestinian schools at present, and has helped to ensure that the inclusive education messages which are the heart of both interventions are durable and sustained beyond the life of NRC's involvement.
- Strong evidence exist of the impact of NRC's activities on children's psychosocial well-being, a shift to teaching methodologies that are more inclusive and engaging to all students, greater parental engagement and involvement in their children's education, and improved teacher motivation and professionalism. The evidence is less conclusive and robust on whether such initiatives are working to reduce or impact on the factors leading to drop out from schooling, which is one part of NRC's broad objective for its educational activities in Palestine.
- NRC's research work within the Palestinian education sector has responded to critical knowledge gaps with credible and useful information to key service providers and the international community working within the sector. Some of this work has been usefully taken up in subsequent advocacy and policy reform work. The efficacy of this work is grounded in the organisation's strong knowledge and experience of implementing activities at the ground level (i.e. at the school and in the community itself), and the networks it has built through this activity.
- NRC's Palestine's education programming has remained flexible enough that as the fluid and chronic humanitarian moves into different phases, the organisation is able to respond in an appropriate, relevant and timely fashion to areas of acute need. Much of this is based on NRC's ongoing engagement with beneficiaries, its strong networks and connections 'on the ground', and the formative information it collects prior to, and throughout its project activities at each site.
- Given the complex humanitarian environment of the Palestinian territories, NRC has also worked to support children and their families in times of acute conflict/disaster as well as against the backdrop of ongoing low-level conflict in settings such as West Bank. This work has effectively focussed on supporting the protective functions of the Palestinian education system.
- NRC is seen as a strong and trusted partner by UNRWA and has a unique relationship in its unfettered access into UNRWA schools, and with key stakeholders and decision-makers within both UNRWA Gaza and West Bank. There is a strong sense of partnership between UNRWA and NRC that provides ample scope to leverage further in the future.
- A strong foundation has been established on which to continue to build NRC's still nascent relationship with the Palestinian educational Ministries (MoEHE and Awqaf)

who remain important and necessary actors for NRC to engage with in the Palestinian context. At present the relationship is still somewhat tenuous, with expectations and understandings about NRC's approach and focus still unclear within both Ministries.

5.2 Lessons learnt:

As NRC Palestine's education programming has evolved and deepened since its inception in 2010, a number of key lessons are apparent and should be considered moving forward:

- The nature of the Palestinian conflict means that at any one time NRC may be providing a combination of emergency, early recovery and chronic emergency response measures within the education sector. The Palestinian situation is such that this is unlikely to change any time in the near future. Moving forward enough flexibility within the programme design needs to be afforded to ensure that the organisation can respond to situations as they arise. To date, the programme has been successful in doing so, largely due to the flexibility it has within funding it has obtained. When designing new initiatives, and seeking funding, these factors need to be considered moving forward.
- At the same time, the education programme has grown somewhat organically and taken advantage of opportunities as they have come to hand. It remains somewhat unclear what NRC's niche is within the education sector, and more importantly, what it seeks to achieve through its package of activity. While attempts have been made to place all of its activities under a Macro Log Frame with a unifying objective, there remain questions about whether the focus on "push out" is the right one, or whether within this, and as a humanitarian actor, NRC Palestine should focus more of its efforts on building resilience or supporting education's protective functions. This is discussed in more depth in the next section.
- The recent work undertaken by ICLA to support MoEHE in training school principals, teachers and the community-at-large on their rights regarding educational access, is a good example of how coordination between ICLA and Education programming might grow in the future. There is ample scope for ICLA's strong record in advocacy to help strengthen the education teams' own advocacy efforts, and to publicise and address some of the impediments which stand in the way of children's rights to a quality education.
- The engagement of caregivers in many of NRC's activities has been to critical promoting durable solutions to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Palestine. It has helped to strengthen the bond between parents and children, and created a more safe and secure environment for their children at home. Equally important, NRC's mobilisation of community serves as an important foundation to the longer-term engagement and participation of parents in the life of the school, a key standard within the *INEE Minimum Standards* and at present, a key priority within UNRWA's Education Reform Plan.
- A key strength of NRC's Palestine has been the management team responsible for its education portfolio. Having a programme manager in place for an extended period has helped to build the necessary relationships, engender trust and confidence in partners, and fostered the creation of a strong team of deputy managers and education officers around her.
- The evidence would suggest that NRC's strength and added value in the education sector has been its depth of engagement with a small number of schools and individuals. This brings into question the types of current and future educational

partnerships NRC Palestine enters into, particularly where the focus may be more on breadth. A key example of this at present is NRC's involvement in the UNESCO's funded Inclusive Education project. As the implementing partner, NRC is able to support UNESCO in spreading the inclusive education message across the Palestinian education system, but questions remain about whether such training is backed by enough follow up support to ensure successful uptake of the message.

- The secondment of UNRWA staff through NRC's education programme team in Gaza has been successful in engendering ownership and durability of the key messages which NRC education programmes have been promoting. It has also strengthened the longer-term relationship between UNRWA and NRC as returning UNRWA staff often act as advocates for NRC's approach within UNRWA.
- The strength of NRC's advocacy work comes from the credibility and track record it has built through its programmatic activity. The ability to bring messages and ideas to scale has come about as NRC has shown demonstrable successes in areas like parent engagement, and then used that success to identify with partners ways to take such messages to broader audiences (i.e. the Parent as Partners conference and the UNRWA TV episodes). Given that there are other successes NRC has shown in terms of changing teaching methodologies and supporting children's psychosocial well being, other opportunities to bring messages to scale are still untapped for NRC Palestine to consider leveraging on.
- A challenge NRC has continuously faced in implementing its activities in schools has been initial resistance to its approach and programme design. Some of this has been due to a lack of sufficient understanding, orientation and engagement in its activities on the part of key gatekeepers such as area supervisors and school principals who often set the tone within a school.

5.3 Recommendations:

Based on the above, a number of recommendations are provided for NRC HQ/Regional Office and NRC Palestine (including the education team) to consider

NRC Global/Regional Office

- Support needs to be given to the NRC Education and M&E team to revise its Macro Log frame. The revised Macro Log Frame should ensure that outputs, outcomes, and higher level objectives are well aligned to each other by a clear theory of change, and that at each level, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound targets and indicators are established. At present there are significant issues with this Macro Log frame that the in-country team on its own does not have the capacity to address.
- A significant challenge for NRC Palestine's Education programme is ongoing uncertainty around funding. The Education Cluster in Palestine is struggling to raise funding as attention is diverted to more acute crises in the region (Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and now Iraq). These emergencies should not diminish the seriousness of the crises facing the Palestinian education sector, and NRC global and regional offices may need to advocate more for support to Palestine. It may also need to work closely with senior management in NRC Palestine to identify and actively seek funds outside traditional donors it has relied on (SIDA, NORAD, OCHA, etc.). Such funds should be flexible enough to ensure that the education team can remain adaptable to the situation as it evolves.
- NRC's recent research on education in East Jerusalem, undertaken in partnership with UNESCO/UNICEF, identifies some important issues on how the ongoing Israeli

occupation impacts on children's access to and achievement within schooling in East Jerusalem. Such issues are important to bring to a wider audience. NRC should work through international networks and advocacy groups such as *Protecting Education from Attack*, the Global Campaign for Education, UNICEF's Education and Peacebuilding Project and INEE to bring the report to international audiences and highlight the ongoing impacts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on Palestinian children's right to education.

- The *Our Communities, Our Schools* programme model, and the sub-components within them are a model for how NRC may want to see other country offices facing a protracted humanitarian crises, or transitioning to early recovery responses address issues of educational quality. Support should be given to documenting the successes of *Our Communities, Our Schools* and advocating for such an approach to be considered in other country programmes.
- At the same time, NRC may want to consider engaging more closely with UNRWA HQ on ways that components of *Our Communities, Our Schools* might be brought to scale in support of its education sector reform package.

NRC Palestine

- Work commenced on reconsidering and revising the projects' overall objectives and outcomes through a theory of change workshop during the period of the evaluation exercise. This work remains incomplete and should continue.⁷³ It will require close coordination between the M&E and Education team. Below is the draft Theory of Change diagram that was developed. In the initial discussion, it was made clear to the consultant that the focus on push out may be too broad, and a more focussed higher-level objective needed. The terms protection, enabling and resilient were utilised frequently, but more thought needs to be given to what this actually means in the context of Palestine.
- Once the Macro Log Frame is revised, NRC Education and M&E team should work closely to look at the indicators that have been established and the data collection tools being utilised within programmes. At present, there would appear to be a mismatch between indicators and the means of verification against these indicators. In some instances, NRC Education team is collecting data that is not being reported against, and in other instances there is not reliable data to verify if stated targets are being met. Consideration should be given to utilising secondary forms of data, available from UNRWA or MoEHE (such as student achievement, attendance, drop out data), to alleviate some of the pressures created by developing tools and collecting data internally.
- In future programming activity, more explicit selection criterion for the participation of schools and project beneficiaries within it should be developed, specified and utilised. Once the criterion has been established, recommendations suggested by UNRWA/MoEHE or other actors should be independently verified through secondary data (vulnerability index, achievement and drop out data) to ensure that NRC Education Programmes are in fact targeting the right beneficiaries.
- NRC needs to work more closely with its local partners to orient and include them in the project establishment phase. As part of the orientation process, NRC may need to spend time with partners explaining how each component works, who holds responsibility for the activities in the component, and what the expected outcomes

⁷³ The draft theory of change diagram is included in the Methodology Annex

of each activity. Within project establishment, partners could be more involved in conducting components of the needs assessment and participating in the discussions that happen with schools following this to develop the action plans.

- NRC should work to better engage area supervisors and school principals in the activities it is running at schools for parents and teachers as part of *Our Communities, Our Schools*. This would help to ensure a consistency of messaging and stronger ownership of the process from the start from senior management at the school. It would also help to build a network of advocates at the school level at the outset. For example, pairing Teacher Support Officers with area supervisors would help to build the capacity of area supervisors to provide formative feedback to teachers on an ongoing basis, which is critical to UNRWA carrying this work forward. Additionally, involving principals in training and in-classroom sessions would help them to move towards the model of instructional leadership that is stressed in UNRWA's current reform strategy.
- Greater coordination and collaboration between NRC's Education Officers and Teacher Support Officers should occur moving forward. At present, the division of responsibilities reinforces the divide between classroom-focussed and administrative duties in the school, and also creates divisions within the team itself. This works against the message that all components need to work together effectively (Parent Skills Clubs, Communication Plans, teacher training and support, Capitation Grants) for a protective, inclusive learning environment to take hold in schools.
- As UNRWA works towards professionalising its teacher workforce as part of its education reform package, NRC Palestine should consider ways to more closely embed *Our Communities, Our Schools* within this initiative. For example, there are strong links with UNRWA's School-Based Teacher Development Package⁷⁴ which includes in it several of the same components as *Our Communities, Our Schools* such as developing active learning pedagogies, supporting inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, and engaging parents in their children's learning. Where NRC 'adds value' to this package is by supporting UNRWA's online modules with face-to-face facilitation and reinforcement of key messages within the classroom with the teachers themselves. Additionally, a benefit of such a partnership is that teachers participating in these modules will receive a UNRWA certificate that formally recognises their successful completion.
- NRC may want to consider how it can continue to support former schools that have been part of *Better Learning Programme* or *Our Communities, Our Schools* by creating local networks or clusters where principals and selected teachers could gather together on a regular basis. Within each cluster, the Education or Teacher Support Officer could help to facilitate quarterly meetings where these individuals could share examples of best practice and successes encountered, and also discuss and problem solve issues faced.
- Consideration might also be given to developing a specific school leadership component of *Our Communities, Our Schools* to assist school principals to be more effective instructional leaders. This would dovetail nicely with its efforts with teachers and may work to ensure sustainability of support after NRC exits.
- In developing future strands of work and entering future partnerships, NRC Palestine needs to carefully consider its niche within the education sector and whether and how new work and partnerships which come along fit into this. Engaging in activity

⁷⁴ See <http://www.unrwa.org/sbtd>

due to funding constraints alone may not wield the desired end product, and may end up diluting the core strengths of the education team.

- Specific to Area C and East Jerusalem, NRC may need to work more closely with MoEHE to identify schools and students under threat, and to devise strategies to ensure that children maintain access to schooling in adverse circumstances. Creative solutions such as mobile classrooms and temporary or home-based schooling may need to be considered in situations where mobility to school is chronically threatened.
- The education team has yet to successfully engage in youth-focussed activities, in part because funding has not been available to date to start such work, and because traditional strategies such as vocational training, may not link well with the unique constraints facing the labour market in Palestine. A good entry point for such work might be for NRC to seek funding to conduct a discrete piece of research on youth needs and issues in West Bank and Gaza. Working with partners within the Education Cluster, some key questions could be identified (such as life skills which youth need support with). The research could help to shed light on untapped areas for intervention which NRC or other actors could then develop a programme of support around.

Annex 1: Most Significant Change Stories⁷⁵

1. Changing classroom practice (Principal, UNRWA School)

In the past, teachers would attend training would often not know how to transfer this into practice. NRC came into our school with their training, and changed this. For example, they would explain the idea of a concept like cooperative learning or action research to the teachers in a training session, but also follow up the training with observations and support to individual teachers in their classroom. This type of training is helping to support the education reform program of UNRWA that is occurring at present. It also supports my role as a principal, where teacher professional development is a key part of what I should be doing. NRC has relieved some of pressure which I face as we undergo reform and helps me to see how I can continue to support my teachers' growth and development. More importantly, now that teachers understand how to support student-centred learning, student achievement and motivation is improving. This should be the core purpose of any training, and in this regard it has been a very good program.

2. No shyness anymore (Parent, Ministry of Education school)

My son is a bright child, but he has always been shy and reluctant to participate in activities or performances at the school. Several times, I asked the teachers to push him to participate or to read the news as part of the radio programme, but he has always refused. He also would never show how much he knew in class, even though he understood everything and knew the answers. This started to change through his participation alongside me in the parent club. When the sports activity was held, he came over and whispered in my ear that he wanted to play with me. I was very happy that he was willing to participate in a public activity. The next time the activity was held, I encouraged him to participate without me, but instead play with his peers, and surprisingly he agreed. This continued when we did puppet making. He was so excited to be part of the activity that he took the initiative to go up to the trainer and get the materials himself. It was the first time that I had seen my son do this. Through these activities, my son has become a stronger and more confident boy who is learning to express himself and do things on his own.

3. Innocent dreams (Parent, UNRWA School)

After the war in Gaza, my daughter started suffering from frequent, strange nightmares about her grandmother. She would picture someone killing or stealing her grandmother. I didn't know what to do. She grew more irritable, would lose her temper easily and began to beat her sisters. Then she started attending sessions with the school counsellors inside the school to talk about her nightmares. After the 1st session, she came home with a smile on her face and told me that she had been asked to share her nightmare with the group. She said the counsellor listened to her, and then taught her some exercises to make her feel better. Since the start of those sessions, I have noticed a steady decline in the number of nightmares she has. After attending all the sessions, she is much better. She is a more confident girl now. Her relationship with her sisters has improved to the extent that she sometimes practices the exercises with her younger sister before they go to sleep. Both and her sister sleep well now.

⁷⁵ NRC is an organisation committed to the the CPWG Minimum Standards (<http://cpwg.net/minimum-standards>). The standards require careful consideration of whether any information publically disclosed might place children at risk by identifying them, either directly or indirectly. For these reasons, names of the storytellers, as well as their school and location are not provided. In a couple instances, identifying information within the story itself had to be excluded or edited out to ensure that identities were better protected.

4. No limits for learning (Teacher, UNRWA school)

When NRC started its activities at our school, I had been working in UNRWA schools for only three years. I had very limited experience on teaching methodologies and felt like I could not achieve my daily goals. I sought out support from my supervisors in order to give me feedback on my performance, provide suggestions on enabling me to use advanced teaching methodologies easily. Due to their heavy burden, my UNRWA supervisors could not observe me more than twice a year. Additionally they had no time to follow up on the feedback they provided, and no time to train me on my needs and demands. A semester after NRC started its activities we were exposed to an intensive training course for three months. What was unique about the training was that it was designed on serving our exact needs. The training course was very rich. It consisted of lots of useful topics like thinking during lessons, educational games, drama, child protection, learning difficulties and others. After each session, I used to go back to my class enthusiastically and try to use the various techniques that we learnt from different sessions. Luckily, the TSO was supporting me and showing me the best way to practice those strategies. My communication with my students became better and I learned how to become more accepting of the individual differences of students in my classroom, and ways to address these needs through my teaching.

5. Hand by hand to have better generations (Parent, UNRWA School)

My child was a very distinguished student, but he was very shy. He didn't have the ability to raise his hand like his peers and to participate on the classroom activities. His teacher used to ignore him and did not vary her technique to motivate his participation. After NRC started its activities, I noticed a big change in my child's attitude. The teacher changed her way of teaching and started using educational games and narrating stories to kids. These changes helped my child to participate effectively on the classroom activities. In addition I felt that my continuous visits to the school helped him to overcome his problem. It raised his self-esteem and made him self-confident. He was very proud that I keep communicating with his teachers. Through the parental club sessions, I gained new techniques on behaviour modification, which enabled me to communicate with my child in a better way. I am proud to say that my child can express himself easily and in front of all. His character is much stronger now, and all of my family members depend on him to bring different items from the grocery and supermarket.

6. From theory into best practices (NRC Staff)

When I started in one of the schools, there was a teacher who used to lecture to her students all the time, and who had a very negative attitude toward interactive educational strategies. She argued that a big crowded class of 42 young students in the 4th grade would not be capable of cooperating in such strategies. She also felt that teachers could not plan or manage such activities in light of the overloaded weekly schedule they have. At the beginning of the training program, she tried her best to sabotage the training sessions. She would talk over the trainers, and go in and out of the training room to express her disinterest. After a few sessions, and some individual coaching sessions, her attitude started to change. I started to see her reflecting and improving her teaching methods and techniques, and she began to ask the teacher support officers to attend and observe her classes. Moreover, she volunteered to transfer the skills she had gained to other teachers. She conducted workshops in her school and even ended up delivering training sessions to 15 Arabic language teachers from two other schools, and to school supervisors for UNRWA. The supervisor and the teachers were very interested and expressed their satisfaction. What is clear is that over time, she began to trust that our training was different to others. We helped her to see to transfer training ideas into real world practice through the follow up coaching and support we could provide. This is important, because so often teachers receive training but then return to their school and classroom and face many difficulties and

obstacles in implementing these ideas into practice. In frustration they give up, and nothing changes for the students.

7. Nightmares gone (Child, UNRWA School)

After the war in Gaza I started having nightmares and seeing shadows and darkness around me. I started rehabilitation sessions with the school counsellor and she gave us exercises and stress relief techniques. Every night, I would practice these exercises before sleeping. During the group sessions I began to realize that there are others having the same problems like me. I have now finished all the sessions. I feel more confident. I don't suffer from nightmares anymore. Last night, I had a beautiful dream where my sisters and I were sitting under an apple tree with them falling on us in a gentle way.

8. Standing up again for my children (Parent, UNRWA School)

In the past I was following my child's learning and education, without paying attention to other aspects like my relationship with him and his psychological needs. The responsibilities I have at home, and the demands of caring for a big family prevented me from giving him the proper attention. Moreover, my weak parental skills led to me neglecting my child, which impacted him negatively. He became increasingly stubborn and his marks have degraded notably. He seemed to be feeling stressed at home and school, and it pushed him to become a more introverted child to keep himself away from troubles and punishment. When the project started, the school invited me to participate in the parental clubs. In the beginning, I was not so interested in the activities, however over time I realized the importance of the clubs and how it could help my child and I. The trainer's instructions were very positive and helpful, and opened my eyes towards several bad practices and behaviours I was doing. NRC taught me how to support my child's learning and how to deal with his behavioural problems. Specifically, I liked the knowledge and skills I gained from the drama, first aid and child nutrition topics. Through me working with him on some of these activities, my child became closer and more open with me. I started to read more and to search for information that would help me raising my children in a good way. My participation in the project motivated me to complete my studies, which I stopped 23 years ago. I am studying for high school, and aim to go to college after and gain my BA in Education. The project motivated me to begin to develop myself again and help my children more.

9. Hope (NRC Staff)

When we started the project and schools were selected I particularly had doubts about one school, particularly because it is located in an unfortunate area which is filled with many social and domestic problems. This was something that was confirmed and accentuated by the school principal when we first met with him to discuss the project. He highlighted that one of the main problems the school faces is the lack of involvement of parents with school activities and as part of their children's education. I remember during our first meeting, the principal opened his desk drawer and took out a large pile of report cards for students of the previous year highlighting the extent of parents disinterest and continuous lack of involvement. At the meeting, we asked the principal to ask parents to join us for to conduct a needs assessment. He sent out invites to all the parents of the students, which is estimated around 300 and told us not to be optimistic. He said it would be good if 3 or 4 attended. We were surprised that around 18 parents showed up, including fathers. This is usually very rare. It seemed as if they were waiting for the opportunity to discuss their main concerns regarding the school. One of the main concerns they highlighted was the lack of communication the school had with them, and the infrequent contact they had from the principal himself. We decided to enhance what seemed to be poorly functioning channels of communication by inviting all the parents to a main event at the school. Special attention was given to the invitations as well as the way the parents were contacted in order to

convey a sense of value and importance to their presence. We were surprised at the turnout of parents at this first event. Since then, a number of parents have become regularly involved with the school and NRC activities. The main cause of this unexpected increase in parent engagement and involvement is mainly due to opening channels of communication between the school and the parents. We have moved from zero parental interest and engagement within the school to relatively good levels of interest and involvement in this school.

10. A suffering girl (Counsellor, UNRWA School)

In our school there was a 10 year-old girl who was suffering from nightmares every day for nearly two years. During the November 2012 escalation, she witnessed a scene on television of two journalists burnt after a shelling. The scene terrified her because her father was a reporter himself and she was worried that he might be the victim of such an attack. Other members of her family had also been the victims of prior attacks, so she lived in constant fear and could not sleep well at night. At school she would suffer from stomach aches, would cry all the time, lacked concentration, and was very withdrawn. At home she has little appetite. In the first week, I introduced her to techniques such as yoga, relaxation and deep breathing through the group sessions. In the first two sessions, I did not notice any changes in the girl. She would attend, but cry throughout the session. This made it difficult to engage her in what we were doing. By the third session, things began to change. I noticed her nightmare episodes reduced to three per week, and by the fourth, two. Then I began to start individual sessions with the girl. We would discuss her nightmare in each session and practice the techniques I had taught her to cope with the stress the images in her mind caused her. I also encouraged her to list out all the negative events that had happened in her life. This helped her to reveal and discuss these things in the open, rather than keeping them bottled up inside. At first this was difficult, but eventually she began to reveal these issues and was able to communicate more effectively about her fears. By the end of the individual sessions she was not having nightmares anymore. At home, her appetite increased and she was more social with everyone living there. Her teachers commented that she was more focussed and attentive. All of this had an impact on her achievement in the class. It has been so effective that the girl is now teaching this technique to other family members, like her cousin, who do not attend this school but suffer nightmares as well.

11. Farewell nightmares, welcome success (Principal/Deputy Principal, UNRWA School)

In our school we have a number of students who have recurrent nightmares. Because they don't sleep well, they come to school and cannot concentrate. This presents challenges for our teachers. It also challenges the parents of these children. They are the ones who are up for much of the night with their children, and then need to attend up much of the night, and then were tired when they had to go to work and attend to the household or work the next day. To deal with this, the counsellor started a programme where she brought together groups of students who were facing nightmares and worked with them through four group and four individual sessions. The counsellor also called the parents together, to explain how she was working with these children, and what aspects of the activity they could also repeat at home. The counsellor also trained all the other teachers in the school on the simple techniques around relaxation and deep breathing that they could use in the classroom. The counsellor's efforts had a significant impact in many different aspects. For the children, they were able to concentrate at school more, and as a result their achievement has improved. The parents were appreciative that they had new techniques to address their children's nightmares at home. They thanked the school by giving us a certificate. And teachers are now regularly using the relaxation techniques in their classroom. These efforts have helped all the students in our school to improve their behaviour and their achievement.

12. Escape to School (Parent, UNRWA school)

My child, a 3rd grade student, used to hate his school and always kept trying to escape. He would fabricate arguments so as not to attend his school. Sometimes he claimed illness and other times, he tried to hide under the stairs in the building entrance. I tried to encourage him to go to school by offering him an extra daily allowance or offering to accompany him to his school but I always failed! His elder brother, who went to the same school, tried to accompany him and sometimes tried to force him but also didn't succeed. I still remember one day when his elder brother grabbed his hand and tried dragging him to school. He kept crying loudly until some neighbours thought he was being kidnapped! I visited the school many times. I even met with the counsellor and told him about this problem but he could do nothing! His scores were very low. This became my worry that haunted me all day and night! During the last months, I began to visit the school more frequently and participated in all the activities implemented by NRC for the parents. I noticed that a change started to happen in my son during this time...he started to like his school. He began to anticipate the time for the beginning of the school day. He started to remind me it's school time. Even on weekends and holidays, he asked me if he could go to school. Through NRC's activities, the teachers at the school succeeded in engaging him more. By involving him more in class activities he began more enthusiastic about school. Now, I have no problem at all. His scores are becoming higher especially in Maths and he started to get full marks. He also started to have more and more friends and now he talks and plays with them on a regular basis.

13. I found myself (Teacher, UNRWA School)

I regularly teach the 3rd unit of the science curricula for the 2nd grade students on the growth of animals. I always tried to make it interesting to the students by using stories and relating it to the life of humans. The students used to like this but I always felt as if there were some gaps and weaknesses in my approach. Often, I had to reteach the lessons more than once because students couldn't master all the skills and the unit is crowded with new information. After I had attended the cooperative learning training this year, I decided to try out this approach out in teaching this unit. I planned the unit using cooperative teamwork. I divided the students into 6 groups, each group had different worksheets, and each worksheet included 6 tasks, one for each student. The tasks are multilevel to suit the different learners in each group. At the beginning, I had to work hard on getting the students to work cooperatively and effectively, but over time, they easily worked together. They enjoyed working together and helping each other. High achievers helped low ones. Each group presented their work and showed their achievement. I noticed how the students led the interaction and how I took on a minor role. Through this approach, each student started to realize her leadership abilities in the learning process. This impacted on their performance and behaviour in a positive way.

14. Back to life (Parent, UNRWA School)

My daughter is ten years old. She suffered a lot from the last escalation on Gaza, particularly the bombings, murdered people and blood she saw and heard everywhere. She started to have nightmares every night, and would scream and cry out. We didn't know how to deal with her, and were disappointed in her behaviour. She heard about the Better Learning Programme and insisted on participating. Through the sessions, she learned how to talk courageously about her fears and nightmares. Slowly, her behaviour in the home started to change. She stopped being violent, she was no longer afraid of the dark. At home, I could see her practicing the relaxation exercises with her sisters. She was also using the stress and release practices before she studied at home, to help her with her focus. Now her academic achievement is much better as well. Our entire family is really proud of her progress.

15. Better mental health leads to high achievement (Principal, UNRWA School)

Our school is full of problems caused by conflict and the incursions of Israelis into our community. As a result our girls encounter a lot of psychological issues, which impact on both their behaviour and academic performance. Their concentration and focus in the classroom is significantly impacted by the psychological stresses they face. In research we undertook within the school, we discovered that stress from trauma was a big cause behind many of our high achieving students starting to decline in their marks. Teachers and counsellors worked with NRC to address the situation through the Better Learning Program. Through training, NRC demonstrated how they can work together more cohesively, and to provide the teacher and counsellor with simple techniques to work with their children. Following this, the students were involved in group and individual sessions with the trained counsellors and teachers. They learned through relaxation and debriefing sessions how to express their emotions and cope with their stress. After one month, I was amazed at the changes I could see in these students, despite the fact that usually it takes quite a lot of time to see the impacts of psychosocial interventions. Their academic performance and behaviour had significantly improved. These changes were noticed by the children's other teachers and peers as well. The impressive changes of this program made me more curious about what was successful as not only the principal, but as an educator, parent and leader within the community. I discovered that it was well designed, and engaged the students through a set of simple techniques. Based on these encouraging results, we were even more motivated to continue on and strengthen the activities. We began to include the parents in the therapy process so that they could continue to work with their child at home. I hope NRC will continue this project with other students, and other schools because in Gaza such support is critical as we continue to face conflict internally and externally. Having such techniques to cope with stress is more than just about achievement or behaviour. It will help these children in their future lives as members of a Palestinian community.

16. Childhood memory (Parent, UNRWA School)

I have a very brilliant daughter. She is the first in her class. I always loved to come to school to ask about her performance and her grades. Nonetheless I wanted to be more involved in my daughter's education and to work more closely with her teacher. NRC's activities with parents gave me that opportunity. I never knew that learning new activities and on how to deal with my own kids will be this much fun. I participated in many activities. I especially loved the puppet making. Using the puppets helped me to grow closer to my daughter, and it also makes me remember my childhood and how I used to go to my grandmother's house to listen to her stories. I now look forward to come to school every day, not only to ask about my daughter's grades, but to also find new ways to help my daughter at home and become closer to her.

17. Inclusive changed attitudes (NRC Staff)

I started my new job when the inclusive education program started at the schools. I participated in training the trainers for the school's principals and teachers. During my follow up visits, I noticed that more classroom teachers are preparing lessons that meet all the students levels and abilities, and are taking into consideration different kind of activities that actively involve all students. Teachers are using positive reinforcement to help students learn in a better way, Though there has been progress, some of the teachers need more work on changing their attitudes towards inclusion programs. It is encouraging to see students more involved in their learning, with fewer of the being neglected. It is also positive to see teachers who now understand the importance of supporting the learning of all students. I am proud to be part of the NRC team who helps to make the change.

18. Explanations (Teacher, Ministry of Education school)

I used to be one of those teachers who used to assume that all students could understand what I teach the first time if I explain it clearly and quickly in one way. When they couldn't answer questions right after the first time, I would get angry or frustrated. This changed when I attended the NRC training. I remember we did an activity about tying a necktie. The first time the trainer showed us as picture, and then asked me to do it. I couldn't. Then the trainer explained it another time using pictures and numbers, but again I couldn't make the necktie. The trainer then showed a video demonstrating how to do it step-by-step, but again I still couldn't do it. Finally one of the other teachers made it in front of the class while we followed along and finally I managed to make the knot successfully. The experience made me recognize that there are many students who don't understand an idea the first time it is presented, because we all have different intelligences and strengths. This made me rethink how I present my lessons, and now I try to explain the same concept a number of different times and by using different strategies like drama, PowerPoint presentations, worksheets and group work. The result is that now more of my students are receiving better grades, and I am less frustrated when they don't understand the material the first time.

19. Parents are the first teachers (NRC Staff)

When we were designing Our Schools... Our Communities project, I was curious to create an opportunity to increase parents' commitment to their children's education. Generally, schools create many obstacles for parents to participate, and doubt their commitment to their children's education. When we first carried out the clubs with our partner Qattan Centre for the Child, many principals doubted whether this part of the project would be effective and spoke very negatively about the ability of parents to participate in their children's education. I felt strong in this idea, and took it on as a personal challenge. That first year, I participated in all the parent club sessions, and as a father myself, I hope to role model how I could become more engaged in my child's education. In the next year of the project, we expanded to East Gaza and the principals there had the same doubts as their colleagues in the Middle area. I remained, however, a strong defender of the idea, its success, and its sustainability. Throughout the year, in cooperation with the principals, I followed up on the children of the parents' clubs participants. I discovered that there were positive and significant improvements in both children's behaviours and their academic achievement. During that time, I also worked hard to fully involve the NRC Education team, so they could become qualified to take on this component from Qattan Centre for the Child. Nowadays, the team feels' the parents club is their game. Recently, we have worked to take the messages from the parents clubs wider, and signed MOU with UNRWA Satellite Channel to produce a TV program on parental skills. In partnership with UNRWA we also carried out a conference on parent mobilization, an idea which impressed a good number of parents, schools' principals and Education area officers attending. As a sign of our success, NRC receives many requests from principals from different areas to introduce them to the idea of parents' clubs. The increased interaction that we have created between parents, students and the school through the parents' clubs will continue to have positive impacts on the education system of Gaza into the future.

20. I am changed (Teacher, UNRWA school)

Two years ago, I used to come to school unmotivated. I was coming to school to spend the six hours to get paid, and go home again. I would read and instruct the students, but not pay attention to their needs, problems and enquiries. On top of that, I was very negative toward students with special learning difficulties and over-aged students. I did not know what to do with them, and my primary objective was to control these students, not to consider how to do anything creative with them. When NRC's project was introduced to me,

I was against the idea of being part of it because I thought it would overburden me, as I needed to leave my house very early in the morning to attend the trainings. However, after the first training session, I started to realise the importance of the project. The training topics and the trainer's performance were really engaging. Eventually, I reached a stage that my favourite day of the week was the training day. The training equipped me with a variety of teaching skills and methodologies that I began to replicate in the classroom. These approaches were especially useful in working with students with special learning difficulties. Over the course of the training, I regained my enthusiasm for teaching, as the teaching process became joyful and participatory. This motivation even led me to searching on the Internet for other ways to develop my skills, and I began preparing for the next days' lessons at home. Nowadays the only thing that gets me up from bed in the morning is the desire to go to school and work with my students.

21. Success story (Teacher, UNRWA School)

Before NRC came to our school, we used to face many challenges in inviting parents to the school. We would invite a lot of them, but only limited numbers would attend. When the NRC project started in the school they helped us to invite parents and involve them in the activities. They helped set up parental clubs and developed a communication plan for the school. Through these activities parents found outlets for expressing their ideas, and also people within the school who would listen to their needs and problems and even try to help them solve them. The activities also allowed the school and parents to work on identifying gaps in students' behaviours and achievements, and ways to address them at home and school. Through this process, the relationship between students and teachers improved as we grew to understand the home environment of the children, and now parents are active and involved members of our school community.

22. We Turned the Page (NRC Staff)

I worked with one principal who was a disorganized person. He was not interested to invite the community to take part in activities at the school to support their children, and he never included parents in any decision made in the school in relation to children needs, school policy and school activities. When I started working with him, I advised him on how to organise his task better. We worked together on a communication plan, focussed on a set of topics and activities that would bring the schools' relation with the community into a better position. Throughout, I supported and coached him during the implementation of such activities. At the beginning, he was pessimistic about working with the community in this way however, gradually, he started to be convinced about the idea and became cooperative in identifying and considering the community needs. Nowadays, the principal is a planner and leader to the community initiatives in his school. Personally, I feel this is a real success as I can see how I added value to the school.

23. The end of nightmares is the start of a glorious life (Counsellor, UNRWA School)

At our school, there was a girl in the fourth grade. She was an outstanding student, who achieved well. Her family and the school management were very proud of her. Then the last escalation came about and she was impacted quite significantly. The bombing occurred near her home, and her brother was injured. She saw him covered in blood and this started to give her nightmares every day. Her achievement in school declined. This girl began to participate in the NRC intervention at the school, and she persevered through all the project activities, including the timeline, drawing activities, and safe place/relaxation activities. Through this, her symptoms decreased and her nightmares reduced. She began to share her experience with her brother, who also suffers from nightmares, and they are doing the relaxation and safe place exercises with each other now.

24. An innovative idea (Principal, Ministry of Education School)

The teachers at my school have been through a number of trainings over the years on active learning techniques, as well as approaches to address the needs of all students. That said, our teachers still struggled to make these ideas concrete in their practice and change the way they worked with students of low to average ability. NRC's project brought in a new model of support, in which our teachers received information, practiced the techniques they were taught, and then were observed and given feedback in a respectful and non-threatening way by NRC coaches. This in-classroom support, ongoing coaching and regular feedback helped the teachers to take the theories and ideas they received in training and make them concrete and real in their practices. Over time, the teachers at our school began to master new tools, techniques and approaches such as drama, role-play and other child-centred methodologies. This has helped them to engage all students in the learning process and improve their time management in the classroom. Now our teachers have a much more diverse repertoire of practices in their classroom and are better able to tailor instruction to the needs of all students who they work with. This is important because our students of low or average performance are included more in the learning process, and are enjoying being in school more.

25. No Despair (Parent, Ministry of Education School)

My daughter in the fourth grade had average abilities. I used to struggle to help her with her schoolwork. While, she liked participating in activities and competitions in and out of school, she was unsuccessful because I wasn't able to help her.

After participating in the parent club activities implemented by NRC, I felt like I gained the skills to help my daughter better. Recently, there was an intra-school competition to memorize and recite a part of the Holy Quran. I worked hard with her until she was perfect. On the day of the competition, she went to the school excited to participate, but the school management refused to give her the chance because they believed as usual that there are some other better students. My daughter called me upset asked me to go to the school to speak with the administration. I asked the school principal to give my daughter a chance. They went to the neighbouring school, where the competition was held, and my daughter surprised everyone when she received third prize! This would never have happened without the help and support the NRC activities provided to me and to my daughter. These activities helped my daughter build a good level of confidence in herself, and helped me to encourage her to succeed in school.

26. My school...my other home (Parent, UNRWA school)

In the past, mothers would be invited by the school and asked to discuss concerns related to their daughters' academic achievement. Usually, and unfortunately, only a few would come, usually the same mothers. Mostly they were the mothers of the high achievers! This wasn't the way that it should have been because parents should be coming to the school for more than just their child's academic issues, and they shouldn't have to wait to receive an invitation to come visit. NRC's activities with parents helped to change this. The number of mothers visiting the school upon receiving an invitation doubled and tripled. Academic issues were not the focus of the activities, and were instead only discussed on the sidelines of the activities we did together. These activities helped teachers and even the school principal to meet mothers more frequently. They helped to strengthen the relationship between the school and the mothers. This then reflected in the better achievement of all the students, and also helped to improve the psychological status of our daughters.

27. I'm proud of my son's school (Parent, Ministry of Education school)

I came to this community nine months ago after I had lost my husband. My eight-year old son suffered a lot from the loss of his father. He felt as if he lost everything! He became very

depressed and lost all hope. When he first came to the school, he refused to participate in any activities. For example, he wasn't able to stand in front of the students and sing. The school, and the teachers worked hard to try to get my son to overcome this. The teachers gave him a lot of individual attention, and used different interactive methodologies to meet his learning needs. He grew close to his teachers and his peers. Recently, during a school open day, he participated in a folkloric dabka. This would not have been something he would have agreed to do in the past. But at this school, he was supported through the continual encouragement and appreciation of the teachers and the students! After his performance, he felt proud of himself, and so did I!

28. A smile can change (NRC Staff)

In the 1st year of the education project in East Gaza schools, the school management in the school we worked in were incredibly frustrated and disappointed about parents' participation. They would invite 100 parents, but only 20 would come. Generally, the school had only been inviting parents for issues and problems regarding their kids' achievement and behaviours. In response, I altered the schools approach to inviting parents. I wrote invitation letters on behalf of the children and sent it to the families. Surprisingly large number of families came to the school. At the first meeting, I introduced the project to the parents and recorded their needs in terms of knowledge, skills and entertainment. Based on this, I provided them with a schedule of all the activities for the year. Many remained committed throughout, and I was able during that time to provide some parents with advice and support regarding their personal issues based on my experiences. After two years, the parents began to lead the parent clubs themselves. They became more confident and able to express their ideas and suggestions directly to the school management. As this change occurred, the school management felt encouraged to change their means of communication with parents and to work with them in a more collaborative way.

29. Victory over marginalization (Principal, UNRWA School)

When I first arrived, our school was in chaos. A big issue was that for our low achieving and special needs students, the teachers felt that there was no hope or possibility to change the situation for these children. They gave little attention to these children, and as a result they would frequently be absent or misbehave. When NRC came to the school with their training program, they said that they would work with us this situation. At first, the teachers and I did not believe that change was possible. But NRC's team persisted. They showed the teachers new techniques about how to engage the students using active learning approaches. They also helped us to engage parents in the school, through parent clubs, which encouraged them to come into the school on a regular basis and learn how they could support their child's learning at home. As a school manager, I learned about, and followed up on what NRC was training the teachers and parents on. Through this, I began to play a more active role in diagnosing and tracking the progress of our low achieving students. Over time this has changed the situation dramatically for all students in our school, but particularly for the low achievers. In general these students love coming to school now, and this is reflected in their achievement. Last year, after completing NRC's program, our schools' ranking on the unified exam increased by 40 spots. Our school is now successfully participating and winning competitions for the top students in the area. While NRC's program has stopped, we are continuing on with the ways they taught us, specifically ensuring that we follow up and support the students of greatest need. Helping these students is the most important part of our job, and NRC has helped us to see how we can do this.

30. A flower has blossomed (Parent, UNRWA School)

Before the Better Learning Programme, my daughter was lazy, caused a lot of trouble at home and would have nightmares throughout the week. Her achievement in school was poor, and she would refuse to go to bed early. I heard about the nightmare groups from my neighbours, so I went to the school and asked the counsellor to include my daughter in these sessions. She started attending the group sessions and then the individual sessions. I noticed now that she has many less nightmares. Now she is the first one to go to bed, and her academic achievement has improved as well.

31. Changes on students' life (Counsellor, UNRWA School)

Before the start of the Better Learning Program, many of the children who I worked with were suffering from a lack of attention, and would easily lose focus during lessons. During the group and individual sessions, I introduced, and the students practiced using stress release exercises, writing and drawing activities, and the safe place technique. Through these techniques the nightmares reduced. Now those students' behaviours and attitudes are better and their academic achievement has improved.

32. Sad and happy (Parent, UNRWA School)

In the past, my sister used to cry a lot and scream out for attention. She felt less than her peers because she was an orphan. She used to cry on her mother grave and say why did you leave me? Whenever she would see a mother coming to ask about her daughter at school, she would begin to cry. She had a hard time being around other children and would often feel jealous and break other kids' toys. She also suffered frequent nightmares. The counsellor started working with her and practiced a set of exercises alongside her. She started to change and become happier. She is now more motivated to go to school on her own, mainly because of the continuous support she receives from her counsellor.

33. Personal experience (Teacher, UNRWA School)

Year after year, I worked as a teacher in the same class, same school, and same environment. Things were in a very boring routine, and I started to lose my motivation to come to work. NRC came to our school and introduced new ideas and activities. I learnt about introducing educational games into the classroom, and I also enjoyed participating in the activities supported by QCC. This training was so important to me, as I hate routine and desperately needed change. NRC helped to introduce new opportunities and ideas into our school.

34. A Brave Step (NRC Staff)

Before joining NRC I used to visit schools as an educational specialist, focused mainly on child psychology. In those visits, I would witness various types of trauma that children were facing, and thought that it would involve a long and complicated process to affect people facing these issues. Through my involvement in the Better Learning Program, I found that ordinary techniques like games and drawing are not enough to address concerns like nightmares. I discovered that building an environment of trust and tense and release exercises helped a lot. I even discovered with my own child, that such simple approaches would work. One time, when my child broke out crying nervously I practiced the techniques of the workshop on him. Amazingly they worked well and I became even more convinced of them. All the teachers who have been part of the intervention feel the same. As a result I now promote this approach in all schools I visit.

35. My School, My Second Home (Parent, UNRWA School)

Before my joining the parent club, I did not communicate with the school very well. I would only visit the school in emergencies or if my kids had a problem. When I joined for the parent club I started coming to the school two times every week. During these meetings, I noticed that my son was really happy to see me visiting his school and participating in the

program activities. He could see more visibly that he was the focus of attention. In some sessions, we would do things together. He loved participating in the handicraft and science activities with me. He kept everything we made together and put them up in his room. On a personal level, I have also learnt a lot of skills. After participating in the handwriting session, I have improved my writing. Now I feel that I have a good relation with my son's teachers and the school management. I am visiting the school without them inviting me. I also now come to most of the school events and meetings. Through my increased involvement in the school, my son's behaviour has improved. He also became more confident and independent.

36. One Life Better Without Nightmares (Counsellor, UNRWA School)

Before my joining the Better Learning Programme, I did not focus at nightmares and sleeping problems during my working with children. I was only dealing with their school problems only and I was only counselling children on an individual basis. Through the Better Learning Program training, I feel gained new skills and knowledge on how to deal with the psychological, academic and social symptoms that appear with girls. More importantly, I came to see how group approaches to counselling could also be effective. Through the group sessions, the students appeared to be more comfortable and willing to practice doing the relaxation sessions. I would give them the assignment of practicing skills I taught them between sessions, and they started practicing the safe place, breathing exercises and stress and release exercises at home. They enjoyed them so much that they would come up to me beforehand, and remind me to be on time. They started telling other girls who were not part of the group about it, and these girls would come up to me eager to join. I came to see the effectiveness of what I was doing, and feel like I was actually able to help these children through a new approach.

37. Never Ending Astonishment (NRC Staff)

Very clear signs of surprise and puzzlement were seen on the faces of the teachers and some parents in the first visit, when the Education team went to their school in the task of training and an activity for the parents, who are carrying art tools, colours, brushes, clay puppets, tools to play, balls and hoops and musical instruments such as guitar and rhythm equipment and others. Maybe they were expecting or waiting for books, publications, slide shows and stationery only just as it was in their usual courses since long time ago. The biggest surprise was when the trainers themselves introduced themselves as a partners, share experiences and support the teaching and learning process. What triggered our surprise also is their wonderful willingness to cooperate, the tremendous energy, experience, knowledge and faith in their important role that just needed to take the opportunity to set off to the highest and limitless skies. And this window that we opened together served to give inspiration and to give the impression. But signs of surprise did not end and the astonishment seemed to become bigger every time, when any stranger from any other institution visits the school carrying a training bag or an activity and on his face the features of the transcendent expert, who knows the insiders like a saviour coming to teach those who did not know and gives to those who do not possess. It is really a never ending astonishment.

38. A Change for the Better (Parent, UNRWA School)

I used to neglect my daughter, who is ten years old, and would not take care of her needs. She used to suffer from pronunciation difficulties and because of this was shy to participate in class and would do poorly in school because of this. One day, I received a school invitation to participate in the parents' club. I was told it would help me to improve my on how to interact with my child more using different approaches. During the sessions I learned about new techniques, such as puppet theatre, to engage in conversation with her. The sessions also helped me to realise that I needed to give more care and attention to my daughter, and that by spending time with her, I could motivate her more. I also gained the

confidence to go and speak with the school about my daughter's issues with pronunciation. Because of this, I was able to go to the school, speak with her teacher, and agree on a new strategy for how to work with my daughter. Since that time, my daughter has shown good improvement academically, and she has begun to overcome some of her difficulties.

39. Creating leaders for the future (Principal, UNRWA School)

In the past, the teachers of our school were fairly unmotivated in terms of supporting the broader school community. They would work individually but would not do anything to support their peers. I had to instruct them to take on additional tasks and I often had to be the key person who would support our struggling teachers. In other words, the teachers would show up and do their job in the classroom but not anything above that. They would protest when asked to do anything additional by me, such as meet with the community or attend training. The training of NRC of the teachers compelled them to work collaboratively. They began to see the value of learning from each other and realised the strengths and assets that each teacher had. Over time NRC gave teachers more and more opportunity to begin to lead the training themselves, and I was amazed to see our teachers stepping up into such a role. Now teachers are willing to take initiatives themselves, without direction or instruction from me, and in some cases they now compete with each other to lead activities. They come to me with requests for running or participating in workshops with their peers, eager to show off their strengths and to broaden their own knowledge. As a principal, it is so encouraging to see our teachers taking initiative and willing to support their own learning and the learning of our students more.

40. Please I want to learn not to keep listening (NRC Staff)

During my first visit to the school I was responsible for, I noticed that many teachers still used a chalk and talk strategy to teach their students. They acted as if they were the only source of knowledge. I began to plan my training with this challenge in mind. My training sessions were modelled on the things I wanted to see the teachers themselves change. Many of my activities organized the teachers into groups to show the teachers how they could learn by cooperating with each other. I also demonstrated to teachers how we learn differently through activities showing them how some are right and some left side minded. From that, I then let the teachers prepare several activities for one subject taking into consideration this idea. Through observations I conducted later, I noticed that teachers were using these ideas and involving the majority of student in the learning. I'm happy to see our students working in groups and more actively involved in the learning process. They are more motivated to learn now. We have made the schools we worked in ones that are attractive to students, rather than ones that push them out.

41. How to move on with our students (Teacher, UNRWA School)

In my classroom, I had a very difficult student. He was careless about his studies and lacked motivation to complete his homework. He also was aggressive with other students. Using the skills learnt through NRC's training program, I learned how I might develop an individual plan to support this student. Specifically, I began to modify my treatment of this boy from one where I would yell and shout at him all the time. I also began to try out different teaching methods with him, and tried to encourage him to participate more in the classroom through collaborative learning where he could enhance his relations with his peers. I also gave him self-learning cards, and began to reward him positively for his participation in the classroom and for completing his homework. I also met with his mother and gave her some training on Arabic and Math skills so she could support his learning at home. We also had discussions about what some of the emotional and social problems may be behind his behaviours as he had a good level of cognitive ability. We were all surprised when his marks improved from 4/20 to 18/20. As recognition for this great improvement, he was rewarded

in front of all the schools' students and his mother was given an appreciation certificate from the school. I feel that through NRC's training I now have a way to work with some of the more challenging students in my class.

42. I want to make a difference but?!!! (Teacher, UNRWA School)

In the past, my teaching methodologies were traditional and not so attractive to students. As a result, many students in my class were not that attentive to what I was teaching, and I spent a lot of my time controlling their behaviour, rather than teaching them. I was felt bored during the classes I taught, and the daily routine in the school provided me with little motivation. I felt that I need something to refresh my old knowledge and to gain new skills, so I eagerly anticipated the training provided by NRC. I especially liked the topics which provided me with concrete new approaches to immediately use in the classroom—things like drama, educational games, and the making of teaching aides. Other topics I found less valuable, such as higher-order thinking skills. After the training program, I started to implement what I learned with encouragement and support from my teacher support officer. Students became more active during my classes and they liked the games we did at class. Despite the positive changes in my classes' motivation, my students' performance is still low. I believe that I am doing my job perfectly but students do not find the follow up support they need from their parents to complement my work. But at least I will keep going on the new path I have found...

43. A child's ambition (Parent, UNRWA School)

My child, who is in the Fourth Grade, would wet his bed every night. I tried many ways to solve this problem. I would preventing him from drinking water at night and wake him up several times at night to go to toilet. Despite these efforts, I failed to change things. I grew very frustrated and tired from waking up at night several times to tend to him, and to wash his clothes and mattress every day. My child also grew very depressed from these episodes and grew increasingly embarrassed about this problem. He really wanted to get better and overcome his bed wetting problems. When NRC's project started, the school invited me to participate in the Parents Club. During that time, I attended a number of different sessions, including one on bed wetting which was the most important to me. During that session we learned about its causes, its effects and concrete steps to solve this problem. When I started applying what I learned from the session, my child was willing to trust what I suggested, as he liked me attending the clubs and was convinced that together we could overcome his problem. Over time, my child has greatly improved, and his bedwetting decreased to once or twice per month. With NRC's help I was able to help my son address a chronic problem that was affecting the both of us. I am completely thankful to NRC for this change.

44. My teacher takes my hand (Teacher, UNRWA School)

I had a student, in my third grade class who was suffering from many problems. He had difficulties with his vision and his achievement was low, especially in basic skills. His poor achievement and difficulties also affected him emotionally, as he was unsocial and shy with his peers. Before NRC's training I would have not been able to deal with this child. I used to rely on a traditional teaching approach of lecturing, and this failed to engage students like this student emotionally, academically and socially. Using what I learned in NRC's training, however, I was able to make a difference with child. Specifically, I considered how I needed to individualise my support to this child. To begin, I sat with him one and one and discussed what his challenges were. I also changed my approach to working with him, by moving him to a different location in the room and used different modes of delivering the lesson using teaching aides to engage his best learning style. I developed games and role-play activities to encourage him to participate more in classroom activities. I gave him some simple tasks and responsibilities inside the classroom to reward and incentivise his positive participation.

I prepared for him remedial materials, cards and worksheets. I followed up all his activities. I also visited his home and with his parents, and we agreed to work together to help him. After this support, his dictation marks, which had been very low, increased to 19/20. He became more self confident and more sociable with others, and now he has a lot of friends in the school. Through what I learned about supporting students like this student through NRC's training, I feel I now can impact on the most difficult students I face.

45. Significant change (Teacher, Ministry of Education school)

As a teacher who is well known for being creative and well loved by students, I have been using group work for a long time. Typically, I would simply divide them into groups. I felt, however, that something was missing. In this group work, I could never manage to involve the weak students, especially those who had difficulty in reading and writing. After sessions of training and interaction with the team of NRC through their visits to my classes and through the exchanges I participated in, I opened my eyes to more creative ways to engage all of my students and not only a few through group work. I learned that what I thought was group work was actually individual students sitting together in a group! Today my classrooms are very full of energy. When using group work now, I make sure that each group has strong and weak students so they can all engage together. I also make sure that each group receives questions which can be answered by students of all levels and that each group has a set of goals that they need to achieve. Each student in the group has a role, and roles do rotate. I no longer see students left out and not participating. They now act more as a team, each one lifting the other and trying to help when something is not clear. I can already see the change not only the performance of my students, but also in their behaviour inside and outside the classroom.

46. The family and the school (Teacher, Ministry of Education school)

I used to try to call parents to come to the school to talk about their children's grades, but they would never respond. I thought it was because they are busy with all their other children. I also wondered if they didn't come because I was a female teacher in a boys' school, given that this is a conservative community. When NRC activities started, however, I saw the parents starting to come to the school. Sometimes the mothers started to stop by the classroom when they would come. Eventually I got to know many of them. I was surprised when the mothers agreed to start to host birthday parties in the classroom for the students whose birthdays it is that month. Now, at least once a month, all the mothers and I have breakfast together as part of these birthday parties. We have become friends, and can joke together. As a result, it is much easier to discuss with them issues or concerns related to their child, and now I too understand their life at home better.

47. Hope falters but does not die (Parent, UNRWA School)

I am a single mother, recently divorced. After the divorce I felt isolated, under pressure and angry. I didn't feel I was capable of taking care of my son anymore, and treated him quite violently. Such treatment began to have a negative impact on my son's achievement at school, and was also affecting his behaviour and attitude. The school invited me to participate in the parents club. After joining the parents' club and participating in many meetings, I felt much more capable and confident to deal with my son. I learned how to deal with my son in a non-threatening and encouraging way. I also learned about how to care for his health and nutrition. Most importantly, I reconnected to a community I had become alienated from after the divorce, and through this I regained my confidence and strength. As I used the skills and knowledge I gained from the club, I grew more attached to my son, and was able to treat him with greater kindness. This has helped to improve his achievement, so much so that he received the top marks in the midterm exams. I now feel powerful rather than lonesome. I have more friends to support me with the care of my son,

especially the other mothers and the teachers who are part of the parent club. I have gained the confidence to care for my son, as a mother should, once again.

48. From desperation to hope (Parent, UNRWA School)

I am an uneducated mother who used to face a number of problems in supporting my son with his learning. In frustration, I would often follow up on his schoolwork using violence or anger. One day my child's teacher told me about the parents' club, and I decide to participate in the activities. I became very committed to the sessions and the topics covered were all very important to me. I used to go back home after every session and practice new skills with my child. This included using drawing to support his learning at home, preparing cards with new vocabulary on them, reading together, and using puppet theatre as a teaching method. The knowledge I gained through the parent clubs gave me the confidence and knowledge to help my child, and I can see that he is now achieving better in school. I have become inspired by my son's progress.

49. Innovation of a teacher (Principal, Ministry of Education school)

In the past the teachers in our school used to lecture at the students all the time. Students were reluctant to participate in functions and activities, and they had very little voice in the classroom or school. For example, none of the students were willing to participate in our regular school assemblies and they sat there passively. NRC came to our school and approached us in a different way. They asked us at the beginning what we needed to improve what we are doing and based on this they developed a programme of support to fit our needs. The NRC trainers were in constant contact with our school. They visited our teachers on a regular basis and provided them support and coaching. The trainers also gave them an opportunity to share their experiences and expertise, while reflecting and improving their practice. In essence, these trainers became part of our school community for two years. As a result, the students have become more engaged in the learning process, and teachers have a wider diversity of approaches to engage students. Students now feel empowered to have a voice in the classroom and are more vocal in expressing their needs. Now the students beg us to participate in assemblies and are enthusiastic to voice their opinions. For our low achieving students this has helped them to improve their performance. For students who were at risk of dropping out, it has motivated them to stay in school. These successes have also helped to convince the community to enrol their children in our school over others in the area.

50. A mother's dream becomes reality (Parent, UNRWA School)

I used to feel very disconnected from my children and their school. As a mother of four children, I felt I didn't have the time or energy to devote to each of them. This created a distance between my children and I that worried me. The school invited me to attend the parent club and I attended all the sessions. I kept going because each of the sessions discussed important issues related to raising children and communicating with them. Through them, I learned about different tools to strengthen the relation between my children and I like puppets making, and reading with them. Using these approaches at home, the boundaries between my children and I began to disappear. They began to trust me more. The club also helped me to feel comfortable to visit the school regularly and now I see the teachers as my friends. I now feel like I have a way to remain connected to my children as they grow older and continue through school.

51. A Success Story (Principal, UNRWA School)

In the past, many of our teachers did not know how to engage all students. I would notice that during my observations in the classroom, many would stare outside the window in boredom, or cause problems with their peers around them. As a result, they would not gain the knowledge from the lesson and their achievement would drop in school. When NRC first

came to our school, there was some resistance to the training approach they proposed to undertake, mainly because teachers needed to stay after school and be away from their homes longer. However, the teachers began to see the benefits of the training, because it provided practical strategies and suggestions and they could see it having an impact in their classroom. The training was different from other training they had received. For one the training was continuous. It did more than present a new topic, but followed this up with in-classroom coaching and feedback provided by a Teacher Support Officer. At that time, this was the only in-school supervision that teachers were receiving from outsiders. Additionally, the training was interactive and participatory and gave the teachers an active role. The teachers at the school regularly began to use a range of methodologies in their classroom—such as role-play, group work and drama—and they also were using some of the resources such as LCD projectors and laptops to address children’s different learning needs. The training gave teachers the confidence to practice and master new skills. As a result of the training I noticed that there were big changes in student’s behaviours and their achievement. Our schools’ rank went up from 7th to 4th in the area, and the students are now regularly interacting with their peers in a positive, rather than negative way. NRC’s training also helped me as the leader of the school to begin to think how I could continue these achievements. Our teachers who have been trained are now training new teachers who enter our school. Our teachers continue on with peer coaching with others. I continue to seek out new training approaches, opportunities and information that I can bring to the school.

52. Better time management, better life (Parent, UNRWA School)

I am a mother of three children. I used to push my children to study all the time, neglecting their needs to play, communicate with others, pursue their hobbies and behave as children. Their achievement was my main concern. In 2011, I started participating in the parents’ club in the school. Through the sessions, I was introduced to a large amount of information and skills that I had never known before. The sessions helped me to understand my children’s development and the way I was relating to them better. I discovered I was denying my children many of their basic needs, and this helped me to reconsider the way I was dealing with my children, and specifically managing their time. Together with them, we set up a new routine where we became more efficient with our time to allow them sufficient space to play study, practice hobbies, and sit together as a family. Through this change in routine, my children have improved a lot. Their behaviour, attitude and achievement have all become better, but most importantly they are enjoying their childhood more.

53. Step toward a better life (NRC Staff)

When I joined NRC I was very young, only 23 years old. I had no real experience at schools and lacked professional background on education. At first I was nervous and felt quite shy as a trainer. Two years later and after being involved in different activities and getting closer to NRC staff members with various experiences and backgrounds, I was able to lead training sessions alone and even to lead the teachers’ ceremony. My character became stronger. I am very confident now about my abilities and trust that I can do a lot.

54. Educational tools are key in the learning process (Teacher, UNRWA school)

I have worked at my school for eighteen years. During most of that time, we have lacked key resources to help facilitate our work. As a result, our teaching remained boring and unattractive to the students. To control the class, I would scream and threaten them. NRC, through its intervention, provided a small grant for our school to purchase new resources and materials for us to use in the classroom. These resources, alongside the training on drama and educational games, have helped me to use these materials effectively, and make the classroom more engaging for the students. For example, I now have leather so that

students can make things inside the classroom. Through these new materials and techniques, I have become a friend to my students, which is a big difference to what I was like before.

55. Education... thought and creativity (Teacher, Ministry of Education School)

I graduated from university with an MA degree in teaching methodology. Unfortunately my degree did not provide me with the practical experience and skills I need to translate what I have learned into classroom practice. With the daily pressures and needs of the school, I have been able to teach the curriculum largely by lecturing. I didn't feel I had the energy or the time to use different educational aides and methods. NRC's training gave me the confidence and ability to plan and implement different activities inside the classroom. I now understand how I can use various methods without jeopardizing completing the curriculum. I am much more satisfied for how my classroom operates, as my students now take a leading role inside their class – they participate in groups and implement many activities. I now feel more as a facilitator rather than a teacher with my students actively participating in their learning.

56. Appreciation makes miracles (NRC Staff)

Dina was an elementary cycle teacher at one of the schools I worked in. In her previous school, her head master had not treated her well, putting her own and ignoring all the efforts she made to work well with her students. I noticed that when she arrived at the school, she was extremely timid and lacked confidence. She refused to share with others the work she was doing in her classroom. When I first went to observe her, however, I discovered what an outstanding teacher she was, full of brilliant ideas that needed to be shared with others. When I gave her that feedback, it was the first time she had ever received professional praise. These compliments help to motivate her to begin to be a leader in her school. She became motivated to participate in extra activities. Eventually she led four training sessions and ran the schools' entire communication plan project.

57. A mother's dream becomes reality (Parent, UNRWA School)

My son is nine years old and is my only child. He was born after ten years of marriage to my husband. Because he has been such a blessing to us, I am always worried and concerned for him. In the past, this worry would lead me to treating him toughly, without any consideration of his needs. Because of the way I treated him, he became very shy and withdrawn to everyone include me. I heard about the NRC project, and was eager to attend the sessions for parents during the school day. The sessions taught me a lot about behaviour modification, child development, puppet making and theatre. These sessions convinced me that I needed to change how I interacted with my child, so that we could interact in a better way. We started by using the puppets together and Fawaz started using it as a way to express his real feelings. He told me that he wanted a brother to play with, and also that he wanted me to be with him all the time. Hearing him say these things openly made me cry and further motivated me to treat him in a more kind way. I now use behaviour modification techniques rather than violence to deal with him. Fawaz has become a new child, who is socially active, very close to his dad and I, and now plays with his peers and relatives like a normal boy should.

58. Brightness and creativity (Teacher, UNRWA School)

I have been a teacher for a number of years. My colleagues have generally seen me as a 'good teacher' and the school supervisor and principal have always trusted me to get good results for the students of the school. Despite this, I was frustrated because some of my students lacked motivation and I could not figure out how to reach them. I had a limited number of techniques and tools I could use to engage these students. This concerned me because I believe I carry the important responsibility of developing our society as a teacher. During the course of NRC's training, I was exposed to a number of new teaching techniques

and methodologies. I was also able to share my experiences and frustrations with colleagues from my school and other schools and come up with solutions together. I also attended some of the parent club activities, especially the ones on behaviour modification and child development. This made me reconsider the way I was using physical punishment in the classroom. I began to use alternatives instead. I also started to experiment with other teaching styles and methods, and could see that it helped me to reach the students who I had formerly struggled to effectively work with. Today, when I look around my classroom, I can see my students are more motivated and encouraged to succeed, and most of them like coming to school now. They are actively participating in the classroom, and as a result many more of them are succeeding as I hoped they would.

59. My boys (Parent, Ministry of Education school)

My son spent the first two years of his life in hospital and since then has had ongoing health problems. Because he is so frail, I tended to spoil him more than my other children. My other children felt like I was neglecting them, and favouring their brother. Through the parent clubs, I learned more about dealing with my children in the home. I learned how important it was to give all my children the same attention and love, and together with all three of them we would do some of the activities I learned in the club at home. I was so happy to see, for the first time, my kids talking with me without fighting. I have now learned to be a good mother to all of my children, rather than only one of them.

60. Cooperative learning (Teacher, Ministry of Education school)

I used to group work with my students, but found that often it did not work well. I would either put them into pairs or in groups of five, but it was hard to manage and ensure that the students were learning. When NRC provided its training, we learned as part of it the idea of cooperative learning. We watched a teacher from another school use this process in his classroom and even I found the lesson really interesting. After seeing how it could work, I felt eager to try it myself. I decided to plan a cooperative learning lesson about the advantages and disadvantages of wind. One worksheet, which I prepared for the students discussed the advantages, and another the disadvantages. I also prepared a story, which discussed both these issues. I then divided the students into groups, giving each participant a specific role, and some students I assigned the task of moving between the groups and making sure they understood the questions. While the students were working, I could see they were happy and excited to learn. After the lessons was finished, I gave all the students a quiz and I was amazed that not one student failed we finished the lesson I did a quiz and I surprised from the results, not one failed. Through NRC's training, I came to see how group work can support cooperation in the classroom and also students' learning. More importantly, I now understand how to use it well so that I can reach my teaching objectives.

61. Better Learning (Counsellor, Ministry of Education school)

My students go through a lot since they are in daily contact with settlers and soldiers surrounding their school and even their house. They suffer nightmares because of this situation. A few months, I received training on the Better Learning Program, and came to realise how important it was that my students participated in such an intervention. Despite this, I was a bit reluctant to implement the program in my school because I was under a lot of pressure from other projects. Also, I was not sure how many students would be willing to participate, but to my surprise more than 20 students signed up. I gathered them all in one room and asked them to draw their nightmares and what it made them remember. From this session, I chose a smaller group of seven to work with more actively. These were the ones with the most number of nightmares per week and were also those who had witnessed real traumatic events in their lives. As I began working with them, I was surprised by how quickly change began to happen in many of them. Even during the sessions

themselves, I could feel how their tension went down. As a group, they have become friends outside the sessions and I can see them playing together on the playground. Even those students who initially refused to talk about their nightmares have begun to open up, particularly in the individual sessions I have with. These students, who have been struggling and continue to struggle with the situation outside are now getting the help they need.

62. Please teachers talk to parents directly (NRC Staff)

Whenever I ask teachers what is the most difficult challenge you face at school, the majority say “parents don’t cooperate...we invite them many times but they don’t come.” As our projects’ main aim is to strengthen the relationship between parents and school, I decided to search for a solution for this issue in the school I am working in. I noticed there were Bedouin families who live far from school and have a considerable number of children enrolled. These children were also the ones, who had the highest record of absence from school, especially in winter. The parents of these children never came to the school although they were invited many times and many letters sent to them. So I decided that along with a group of teachers and students from the school, we would pay a visit to the family and talk to them face to face. It was November and the weather was a bit hot. We walked the same path the children walk daily and it was an experience for the teachers and the students to feel how hard the Bedouin students’ school day is. Teachers understood how far the parents would need to walk if they decided to come to school. After an hour’s walk, and a number of breaks where we sat on hot stones and exchanged the remaining water we had in our bottles, we arrived exhausted and hot. Four mothers welcomed the teachers. Myself and the other males from the school were led to the men’s tent. We were not allowed to go to the women’s tent at the beginning because of traditions. After a short rest and clarification of the aim of the visit, we were allowed to meet the mothers. The teachers and the school principal talked to the mothers about the aim of the visit and how were keen to help the Bedouin kids to learn and complete a full course of study, especially their girls. I explained to these mothers that the teachers cared deeply for their kids, so much so that they left their homes and work to meet them, despite the hot weather and long walk. I persuaded one of the mothers to come to school for a meeting the week after. She kept her promise and came. The school welcomed her warmly and she was shown how their kids are looked after at school. From that time she hasn’t missed any meeting and her children’s absences have been significantly reduced. This has had a positive effect on their academic record. Now the school has someone, within the Bedouin community who they can contact whenever there is a problem with one of their children. This particular mother has become one of the most frequent school visitors and has even been rewarded by the school for her efforts. This change is so important because parents and the school need to work together to seek solutions to issues facing their children. Without this, parents only rely on what their children say about their teachers and school, and likewise the school lacks information about what is going on at home.

Annex 2: Most Significant Change Brochure from NRC Palestine's Education's Programmes 2010-2014

An evaluation of the Norwegian Refugee Council's education programme was conducted in May 2014. The aim of the evaluation was multifaceted. Retrospectively, it explored the impact and relevance of its activities to date, and prospectively the aim was to identify future areas of program activity and refinements to existing work moving forward. An important aspect of the process was to document the changes that this program had brought about to those who had been the direct beneficiaries of its activities, namely teachers, parents/caregivers, school principals and counsellors. Stories and perceptions of impact were also collected from members of the NRC education team in both Gaza and West Bank. The main evaluation tool used to do this is known as Most Significant Change (MSC). This reports on what we found from this process.

62 stories of change were collected from selected schools in Gaza and the West Bank by the external evaluator (Dr. Ritesh Shah) and members of the education and M&E team over a period of two weeks. To everyone who contributed their honest opinions and time to share their stories, thank you!

These stories were then shared with a selection panel. The selection panel was comprised of all members of NRC's Education Team, including the Project Manager, Deputy Project Managers, Education Officers, and Teacher Support Officers. The panel chose two stories. One of these stories was narrated by a parent, and the other by a principal, both within the UNRWA school system. The panel discussed the reasons why they chose these stories as part of the selection process. The stories and the selection panel's discussion are presented below. The time and effort the panel contributed in reading through and selecting the stories is greatly appreciated.

Escape to school



My child, a 3rd grade student, used to hate his school and always kept trying to escape. He would fabricate arguments so as not to attend his school. Sometimes he claimed illness and other times, he tried to hide under the stairs in the building entrance. I tried to encourage him to go to school by offering him an extra daily allowance or offering to accompany him to his school but I always failed! His elder brother, who went to the same school, tried to accompany him and sometimes tried to force him but also didn't succeed. I still remember one day when his elder brother grabbed his hand and tried dragging him to school. He kept crying loudly until some neighbours thought he was being kidnapped! I visited the school many time. I even met with the counsellor and told him about this problem but he could do nothing! His scores were very low. This became my worry that haunted me all day and night! During the last months, I began to visit the school more frequently and participated in all the activities implemented by NRC for the parents. I noticed that a change started to happen in my son during this time...he started to like his school. He began to anticipate the time for the beginning of the school day. He started to remind me it's school time. Even on weekends and holidays, he asked me if he could go to school. Through NRC's activities, the teachers at the school succeeded in engaging him more. By involving him more in class activities he began more enthusiastic about school. Now, I have no problem at all. His scores are becoming higher especially in Maths and he started to get full marks. He also started to have more and more friends and now he talks and plays with them on a regular basis.

The panel selected this story because:

1. It provides suggestion of the potential contribution of our initiatives to preventing the push out of students from school, an issue of significance and importance to our program objectives.

2. The story touches on the important relationship that exists between engaging teaching methodologies and active parent participation on improving a child's poor motivation for school
3. It suggests that poor motivation in school is just limited to just low achieving students, a matter which we believe is sometimes ignored within our schooling systems.
4. The story of change touches on the impact which our intervention with parents and teachers has on a child's academic performance, but equally how this also has improved his relationship with peers and his perspective on school.

Victory over marginalization

When I first arrived, our school was in chaos. A big issue was that for our low achieving and special needs students, the teachers felt that there was no hope or possibility to change the situation for these children. They gave little attention to these children, and as a result they would frequently be absent or misbehave. When NRC came to the school with their training program, they said that they would work with us this situation. At first, the teachers and I did not believe that change was possible. But NRC's team persisted. They showed the teachers new techniques about how to engage the students using active learning approaches. They also helped us to engage parents in the school, through parent clubs, which encouraged them to come into the school on a regular basis and learn how they could support their child's learning at home. As a school manager, I learned about, and followed up on what NRC was training the teachers and parents on. Through this, I began to play a more active role in diagnosing and tracking the progress of our low achieving students. Over time this has changed the situation dramatically for all students in our school, but particularly for the low achievers. In general these students love coming to school now, and this is reflected in their achievement. Last year, after completing NRC's program, our schools' ranking on the unified exam increased by 40 spots. Our school is now successfully participating and winning competitions for the top students in the area. While NRC's program has stopped, we are continuing on with the ways they taught us, specifically ensuring that we follow up and support the students of greatest need. Helping these students is the most important part of our job, and NRC has helped us to see how we can do this.

The panel selected this story because:

1. It provides a clear overview of how the entire school environment could be changed from a situation of hopelessness, to one of optimism, based on support offered to teachers.
2. It suggests that schools continue on with the approaches we promoted, long after we have stopped our involvement.
3. It provides clear indication of the important role of the school principal in leading and supporting the process of change.
4. It highlights several different types of changes, including improvements in student achievement and improved teacher motivation, which are key concerns of our activity.



Lessons learned from all the stories

1. According to the selection panel a number of lessons can be learned from all the stories they were presented with. They are that:
2. Improved academic achievement has knock-on effects on a child's emotional and social well-being and vice versa.
3. The whole-school, comprehensive and long-term nature of our support is a critical component of the successes noted.
4. The stories as a collection show how different components of the project fit together. However, those involved in narrating the stories often did not recognize this. This suggests we need to work more proactively to articulate to all our beneficiaries and stakeholders our overarching approach and theory of change. It may also require the Education Officer and Teacher Support Officer working more closely and collaboratively with each other to bridge relationships between parents, school leadership and teachers
5. As two separate teams working in two different contexts, we sometimes feel as if we are removed from each other. The stories gave us a clear picture of how in Gaza and West Bank

we face common issues and struggles within the education sector. They also helped us to understand the successes achieved by each team, and the unique approaches that each has undertaken to achieving these outcomes. In essence, we are able now to see how our programme is actually unified by common goals and understandings despite our isolation from each other

6. Success for students requires appropriate levels of engagement from the home, the teachers, and the school principal.

Annex 3: Detailed methodological approach

The ToR specified three broad areas of questions that were to be explored as part of the evaluation. These questions related to the *relevance* of activity thus far, the *achievement/impact* of activity, and *future programming* possibilities. These questions were further developed during the inception period, and the final list of questions that were to be explored during the course of the consultancy were as follows:

Achievement/Impact: Was the programme effective in achieving results in terms of preventing push out⁷⁶ from education and providing protection to conflict-affected children?

- What evidence exists of changes in teachers' methodologies and approaches in the in the classrooms (towards child-friendly ones) and the prevention of push out and/or improved protection to conflict-affected children?
- What evidence of improved parental participation in their children's education, particularly those identified as "at risk" of push out, and the short/medium term prevention of push out from education?
- In what ways is NRCs broader programme of research and advocacy work helping to address push-out and improve protection measures, and address some of the barriers to education which children in Palestine face? Specifically what evidence exists of changes in policy or practice beyond populations in direct contact with NRCs school-based activities?
- In what ways might NRC's long-term engagement with individual schools, organisations and institutions help to promote sustainable solutions to issues faced within the education sector in Palestine?
- Are there particular sub-groups of vulnerable children/youth for which NRC's programs have proven most effective, and why might that be? Likewise, are their sub-groups that have been overlooked?
- To what degree are improvements in teachers and parents' skills to support student learning and prevent push out sustained over time?

Relevance: How relevant was the program design in ensuring access⁷⁷ to education for the most vulnerable conflict-affected children and youth in Palestine?

- How have each of the education projects, to date, ensured that activities meet the educational needs of the most conflict-affected children in Palestine at each stage of the project (design, implementation, refinement, assessment), and reduced barriers that these children face in accessing inclusive, equitable education?
- Is NRC's focus on primary school children and its approach to working primarily with and through duty bearers/service providers appropriate when considering those that are most vulnerable?
- Is NRC working in a coordinated approach with the appropriate parties within government, civil society and the international community to improve access, and reduce barriers to quality education for the children/youth of Palestine?

⁷⁶ Push out as defined by NRC Palestine are the myriad of factors that put children at risk of drop out including poor quality, education experiences that are not protective, or ones that are non-inclusive/equitable.

⁷⁷ Initial discussions with the NRC Education team in Palestine revealed that access is understood in a broader sense—namely ensuring that students not only enter into school but remain in school and complete a full course of schooling—in line with its current concerns for "push out".

- How have each of the programmes aligned with NRC Programme Policy, the INEE Minimum Standards and INEE resources to ensure relevance to best practice in the field at the moment?

Future Activity: What future possible lines of focus, especially with regard to vulnerable children and youth in communities facing displacement in Area C, and crossover with the programme areas of Shelter and ICLA could be developed/ coordinated?

- In what ways might NRC’s comparative advantage, in terms of access to duty bearers and service providers in the education sector at all levels, best be leveraged to promote tangible improvements for children and youth in Palestine in the future?
- How can NRC leverage off past successes to develop new strands of work with shelter and ICLA, and with children/youth facing displacement in Area C?
- How might NRC Palestine work on a regional basis with other country offices facing similar concerns regarding push out and the protection of education from attack in future activity?
- What can other country offices in the region learn from NRC Palestine’s approach to working with UNRWA in Gaza/West Bank, local education authorities and the international community?

The evaluation adopted the following approaches to answering the evaluation questions noted above:

- (1) Key stakeholder interviews with key individuals within NRC and externally;
- (2) Desk review of project documentation to date;
- (3) Analysis and review of primary and secondary quantitative data of relevance to existing programme activity;
- (4) Most Significant Change stories collected from past project beneficiaries; and
- (5) Workshops with NRC Education team/Senior Management at conclusion of field visit

A summary of how each of the specified evaluation questions was explored using the evaluation methods is noted in the table on the next page. As the table notes, each of the evaluation questions was explored through multiple data sources as a way of increasing the credibility and validity of subsequent analysis.

Question	Key Stakeholder Interviews	Most significant change	Documentary review	Quantitative analysis of data	Workshops with NRC Education team
Impact: What evidence exists of changes in teachers’ methodologies and approaches in the in the classrooms (towards child-friendly ones) and the prevention of push out and/or improved protection to conflict-affected children?		X	X	X	
Impact: What evidence of improved parental participation in their children’s education, particularly those identified as “at risk” of push out, and the short/medium term prevention of push out from education?	X	X	X	X	
Impact: In what ways is NRCs broader programme of research and advocacy work helping to address push-out and improve protection measures, and address some of the barriers to education which children in Palestine face? Specifically what evidence exists of changes in policy or practice beyond populations in direct contact with NRCs school-based activities?	X	X	X		

Question	Key Stakeholder Interviews	Most significant change	Documentary review	Quantitative analysis of data	Workshops with NRC Education team
Impact: In what ways might NRC’s long-term engagement with individual schools, organisations and institutions help to promote sustainable solutions to issues faced within the education sector in Palestine?	X	X	X		
Impact: Are there particular sub-groups of vulnerable children/youth for which NRC’s programs have proven most effective, and why might that be? Likewise, are their sub-groups that have been overlooked?	X	X		X	X
Impact: To what degree are improvements in teachers and parents’ skills to support student learning and prevent factors leading to push-out sustained over time?	X	X		X	
Relevance: How have each of the education projects, to date, ensured that activities meet the educational needs of the most conflict-affected children in Palestine at each stage of the project (design, implementation, refinement, assessment), and reduced barriers that these children face in accessing inclusive, equitable education?	X		X	X	X
Relevance: Is NRC’s focus on primary school children and its approach to working primarily with and through their duty bearers/service providers appropriate when considering those that are most vulnerable?	X	X	X	X	
Relevance: Is NRC working in a coordinated approach with the appropriate parties within government, civil society and the international community to improve access, and reduce barriers to quality education for the children/youth of Palestine?	X	X	X		
Relevance: How have each of the programmes aligned with NRC Programme Policy, the INEE Minimum Standards and INEE resources to ensure relevance to best practice in the field at the moment?	X		X		X
Future: In what ways might NRC’s comparative advantage, in terms of access to duty bearers and service providers in the education sector at all levels, best be leveraged to promote tangible improvements for children and youth in Palestine in the future?	X		X		X
Future: How can NRC leverage off past successes to develop new strands of work with shelter and ICLA, and with children/youth facing displacement in Area C?	X	X	X	X	X
Future: How might NRC Palestine work on a regional basis with other country offices facing similar concerns regarding push out and the protection of education from attack in future activity?	X		X		
Future: What can other country offices in the region learn from NRC Palestine’s approach to working with UNRWA in Gaza/West Bank, local education authorities and the international community?	X		X		X

Key stakeholder interviews

Key stakeholder interviews occurred with a number of individuals within NRC and externally. These interviews were critical to understanding the impact and relevance of NRC’s work in the education sector, its comparative advantage to other actors working in Palestine, and to identify future areas of work on which NRC could leverage on its current strengths. A semi-structured interview guide for internal and external stakeholders was developed and utilised, and is appended to this report. Interviews generally occurred in person, but due to scheduling limitations, some occurred via Skype or email. External to NRC, interviews were sought with representatives from UNICEF, UNESCO, UNRWA, Awqaf, MoEHE (West Bank and Gaza), Tamer Institute, Qattan Centre for Children and Norwegian consultants involved in the Better Learning Programme. The NRC Education team identified the most appropriate individuals to be interviewed, and organised the schedule accordingly. The below table provides a summary of those interviewed.

Name(s)	Organisation
Marina Patria	UNESCO
Jon-Hakon Schultz and Helen Norheim	University of Tromso/ NRC
Dave Hutton, Muhannad Beidas, Wahid Jubran	UNRWA West Bank
Mohammad Al-Qubbaj, Kahraman	MoEHE Ramallah
June Kunigi, Mera Thompson	UNICEF
Renad Qubbaj	Tamer
Farid Abu Athara, Scot Anderson, Siobhan Parnell, Kurian James,	UNRWA Gaza
Martin Clutterback (ICLA Manager/Acting Country Director), Ana Povrezic (Gaza Area Manager/Acting Country Director), Laura Marshall (Education PM), Mais Zuhaika (Education DPM-West Bank), Karam Shanti (Education DPM-Gaza), M&E Unit, Education and Teacher Support Officers (West Bank and Gaza)	NRC Palestine
Dean Brooks	NRC HQ (Oslo)
Principal	Sheikh Saad Girls School
Acting Principal	Sheikh Saad Boys School
Principal	Qalandia School
Deputy Principal	Shufat Boys School
Principal	Zaitoun Elem "C"
Principal	Imam Shafei Elem Boys " A "
Principal	New Nussirat Elem
Principal	Shijaia Elem " A "
Principal	Beach Elem. Boys " D "
Dr Ah-Hawarjari and Mr Khaled	MoEHE
Nehaya AlSersawi (AbuNahla), Mamdouh Abu Hasera	Qattan Institute for the child

Most Significant Change (MSC)

MSC is a collaborative, qualitative evaluation method that has gained significant attention within international development circles in the past decade.⁷⁸ It provides information that can be used to identify impacts of an initiative and promote ongoing programme learning (such as improving implementation, and identifying and addressing negative or unexpected outcomes). In MSC, participants of an initiative, as well as those responsible for managing and implementing such activity are asked in an interview to identify at least three positive or negative changes, from their perspective, that are the result of the initiative in question. From this, each individual selects the one change that they believe is most significant to them, and the interviewee documents a narrative story of this change, documenting what things were like prior to the change, the change itself, and what things are like after the change. The interviewee also documents why this change is significant to the narrator, and the narrator also provides a short title for the story. The evaluation utilised MSC to identify the types of impacts which NRC's education activities to date have afforded to beneficiaries, from their own perspective.

⁷⁸ See Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2005). *The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique. A Guide to Its Use.* www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

MSC stories were collected from teachers, parents or other caregivers, students, counsellors⁷⁹ and school principals who have participated in *Our Schools, Our Communities* and the *Better Learning* programmes. To collect stories in an expeditious manner as possible, the consultant trained the entire M&E and Education team in both Gaza and West Bank on the approach. Several members of the team were then involved in interviewing beneficiaries and collecting stories of change. All stories were reviewed and further edited by the external evaluator. In total 62 stories of change were collected— 8 from school principals, 15 from teachers, 5 from counsellors, 21 from caregivers, 1 from a student and 12 from NRC Education and Teacher Support Officers. The full compilation of stories collected is included in the annexes to this evaluation and specific stories are often referenced in the report.

From the stories collected, a selection panel was organised. Members of the NRC education team jointly deliberated on the merit and worth of each story, and chose two narratives that best reflected the successes of NRC's activities to date. As part of process members of the selection panel articulated why they have chosen the stories they have, and reflected on the lesson learnt from a review of all stories. This is documented and presented alongside the two selected stories as a separate MSC brochure in the Annexes.

In addition to the two selected stories of change, others are also included to provide case study examples of impacts noted and discussed in the findings section. A secondary thematic analysis of the stories, by theme or topic was also conducted.

Review of existing documentation, project data and potential secondary analysis of quantitative data collected

As part of this inception stage of the project a number of documents were provided to the consultant by NRC Palestine Education team. Key documentation reviewed included:

- Palestine Education Programme Macro LFA and Narrative
- Research Reports completed by NRC Palestine: UNRWA-NRC Research into Children Pushed Out from Education in Gaza (2010-2011); UNRWA-NRC Research into Perceptions and Practices in 4 UNRWA Schools in West Bank regarding Parental/Community Participation in School Life (2012); Quality and Equity of Education in East Jerusalem (2013)
- *Our Schools Our Communities* Project Documentation including: Project LFAs, donor and annual progress reports; a sample of needs analyses conducted for specific schools as part of establishment of project, baseline/midterm/endline evaluations for specific phases of the project (Gaza and West Bank), scripts and MoU for production of TV episodes as part of UNRWA TV; current and past project work plans for Parent Skills Clubs; MoU and contract agreements between NRC and partners in Gaza/West Bank
- *Better Learning/Trauma Education* Project Documentation including: Concept note, Project LFAs, final report to donor with summary of achievement of activity against stated outcomes, MoU signed between NRC and donor
- *Inclusive Education* project documentation including: Draft Project LFA and current project work plans

⁷⁹ MSC stories from counselors and students were only collected from school sites that were part of the Better Learning Intervention.

This documentation provided a wealth of information on the intent, design and implementation stages of NRC Palestine's Education Programmes to date. Baseline and needs assessment data, as well as NRC's research reports provided strong indication on how some of the projects have been designed in a participatory and relevant manner to the needs of the target populations served. Midline and endline evaluations, as well as final narrative reports to donors provided an overview of quantitative and qualitative measures on impacts of interventions, specifically, in terms of student achievement, parental participation/engagement in their children's education, teachers' perceptions of their school environment and their own practice, observations of teacher practice by members of the NRC education/M&E team, and impacts on children's psychosocial well-being.

Additional quantitative analysis of secondary data

Teacher questionnaires

NRC education team administered teacher questionnaires as part of its regular M&E process within the *Our Communities, Our Schools* programme at several points in the project cycle. Several concerns were raised within the NRC education team about the reliability and validity of responses noted in the questionnaires. In many cases, teachers completed questionnaires independently and without guidance or oversight of education officers or M&E team members from NRC. High confidence did not exist amongst the education team in the results of questionnaire, and for that reason it was agreed that tests for reliability and validity of the constructs of teacher practice against which NRC was reporting would be assessed as part of the evaluation exercise.

The teacher questionnaire consists of 91 questions (items), measuring ten underlying constructs:

- *School environment* (15 items): perceptions of the school environment, such as the maintenance and safety of the classroom environment.
- *Attainment of basic skills at lower grades* (11 items): perceptions regarding students' attainment of basic literacy and mathematics skills.
- *Teacher motivation* (9 items): self-reported motivation and self-efficacy to act as effective educators.
- *Teacher methodology* (11 items): self-reported ability to employ effective teaching methods in the classroom.
- *School leadership* (12 items): perceptions of the effectiveness and practices of the school leadership team.
- *Parental skills* (7 items): perceptions of the support offered by parents for their child's learning.
- *Parental/community involvement* (8 items): perceptions of the supportiveness of the local community for the school.
- *Health* (6 items): self-reported knowledge of understanding of students' health needs, of how to respond to students with special needs, and attitudes towards learning potential of students with special needs.
- *Child participation* (7 items): perceptions of the level of student involvement in learning and school activities.
- *Capacitation grant* (5 items): perceptions regarding the adequacy of school resourcing.

The items were scored on a four-point Likert scale, from "Very small" to "Very big". The *Capacitation Grant* construct was left out of these analyses, due to it only being asked at Time's 2 and 3.

The table below presents the internal reliability (Cronbach, 1951⁸⁰) statistics for the classroom observation scale at Times 1, 2 and 3. Overall, it can be seen that all of the constructs had internal reliability statistics of .7 or greater at all three points in time, with the exception of the *Health* construct. While this construct had adequate internal reliability at Time 1, the reliability at Time 2 and 3 were found to be below the expected level. Further investigation found no questions that could be removed in order to ensure adequate reliability at all three points in time. Subsequent analyses for the *Health* construct will present each of its constituent questions individually.

Internal reliability statistics for the teacher questionnaire at Time 1-3

Construct	Number of items	Internal reliability Time 1	Internal reliability Time 2	Internal reliability Time 3
School environment	15	.734	.857	.895
Attainment of basic skills at lower grades	11	.868	.892	.933
Teacher motivation	9	.966	.822	.860
Teacher methodology	11	.960	.910	.915
School leadership	12	.970	.910	.943
Parental skills	7	.864	.819	.871
Parental/ community involvement	8	.949	.894	.890
<i>Health</i>	6	.840	.532	.679
Child participation	7	.719	.740	.839

Teacher observations

NRC education team also conducted observations using a numeric scale, based on several items related to child-centred learning at three different time points. Scores from these observations were collated and compared to identify if changes in practice were noted. Reliability of the items was again assessed as part of the evaluation.

The classroom observation scale consists of 52 observation items, measuring five underlying constructs:

- *Preparing lessons* (8 items): To what degree lesson planning demonstrate effective teaching practices.
- *Lesson implementation* (20 items): To what degree classroom lessons demonstrate effective practice.
- *Correction* (10 items): Whether teacher demonstrates the use of corrective feedback to develop students understanding of topics.
- *Student* (8 items): Students are demonstrating behaviours and skills of taking part in learning activities.
- *Learning environment* (6 items): The classroom environment supports effective learning.

⁸⁰ Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297–334

The items were scored on an unspecified five-point Likert like scale (from low to high according to Teacher Support Officers interviewed).

The table below presents the internal reliability (Cronbach, 1951⁸¹) statistics for the classroom observation scale. Overall, it can be seen that the constructs have a high-degree of internal reliability, with all statistics between .86 and .97⁸². This suggests that the observation items that constitute each construct are all being responded to in a similar fashion and can therefore be used as part of a coherent scale. However, in future, a reduced number of observation items may wish to be used, as it is clear that little additional information is being provided by the use of inclusion additional items.

Construct	Number of items	Internal reliability Time 1	Internal reliability Time 3
Preparing lessons	8	.96	.94
Lesson implementation	20	.97	.97
Correction	10	.96	.95
Student	8	.94	.96
Learning environment	6	.86	.89

Table 6: Reliability scores for teacher observation constructs as reported in West Gaza Our Communities, Our Schools sites

Given that reliability of both the teacher observation and teacher questionnaire was assessed to be high, these data are included in the findings chapter but does not completely eliminate questions about the reliability/validity of the data within them. Specific to the teacher questionnaires, reliability could be a product of teachers circling the same item uniformly across the entire survey. The way to assess if this is happening in the future would be to include negatively as well as positively scored items, and then to assess if reliability is still as strong. Additionally, observation scores and constructs being consistent and reliable may also not be surprising given that it is the same individual (Teacher Support Coach working with this individual) observing the same teachers each time. This process of judgement raises questions about bias, given that the coach may have interest in seeing improvement over time. For this reason, if observations are to be continued to be used in the future, it is suggested that different teacher coaches are conducting such observations and inter-rater reliability assessed.

Assessing impact on drop out/student achievement

All of NRC's educational activities have been placed under an umbrella objective of preventing and responding to the factors pushing children out from schooling. That stated, little data has been collected to date by NRC to track whether its activities to date are having an impact on the factors behind push out—namely student underachievement and student disengagement. While internal evaluations have at points tracked student achievement scores over the course of one year, these data do not provide a sense on their own of whether trends are different to other non-participating schools, and whether they are the product of the natural learning progression over the year. Additionally, NRC has collected

⁸¹ Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297–334

⁸² Note that internal reliability statistics are generally expected to be between .7-.95.

no data in a systematic fashion on absenteeism and drop out rates in the schools that it has worked in, both of which could provide clues to whether its activities are having an impact. In an attempt to shed light on this question, data was sought from UNRWA on student achievement scores and drop out rates in schools which NRC had worked in as part of *Our Communities, Our Schools* in Gaza. Similar data was sought from UNRWA West Bank but not obtained. Trends in achievement scores and drop out rates were compared to overall trends within UNRWA primary schools in Gaza prior to, during and after the end of period of intervention where possible to explore whether they may be some discernable impacts of NRC's work on student achievement (a stronger marker of future push out) and more directly drop out rates⁸³ itself. Data was only available at the school level. The results of the analysis are presented in the findings chapter. It is important to note that such analysis cannot attribute any discernable patterns to NRC's activities alone, as there may be other factors in play that may have led to the changes noted

Workshop with NRC Education team

At the conclusion of fieldwork, the consultant worked closely with senior management from the NRC Palestine education team to further articulate and develop the theory of change linking observed project outcomes to stated higher level objective in an effort to discern whether/how such current activities and outcomes are linked to the overall programme strategy. As part of this, he worked with these individuals to identify and understand the contributions that each project has/continues to make to overall programme objectives, and to consider whether immediate, intermediate and long-term programme objectives were in need of revision based on the identified impacts noted. It was intended to help the team to commence the process, but given time constraints, was not completely resolved within the confines of half a day. The outcome of the process, a draft theory of change is presented in Figure 2 on the following page.

⁸³ That stated, it is acknowledged that the majority of drop out occurs in the later stages of primary schooling (Grades 6-8) according to NRC's research. NRC worked most directly with teachers in Grade 1-4, thus stronger impacts on drop out trends may not be expected to be visible until 2-3 years after the end of program implementation.

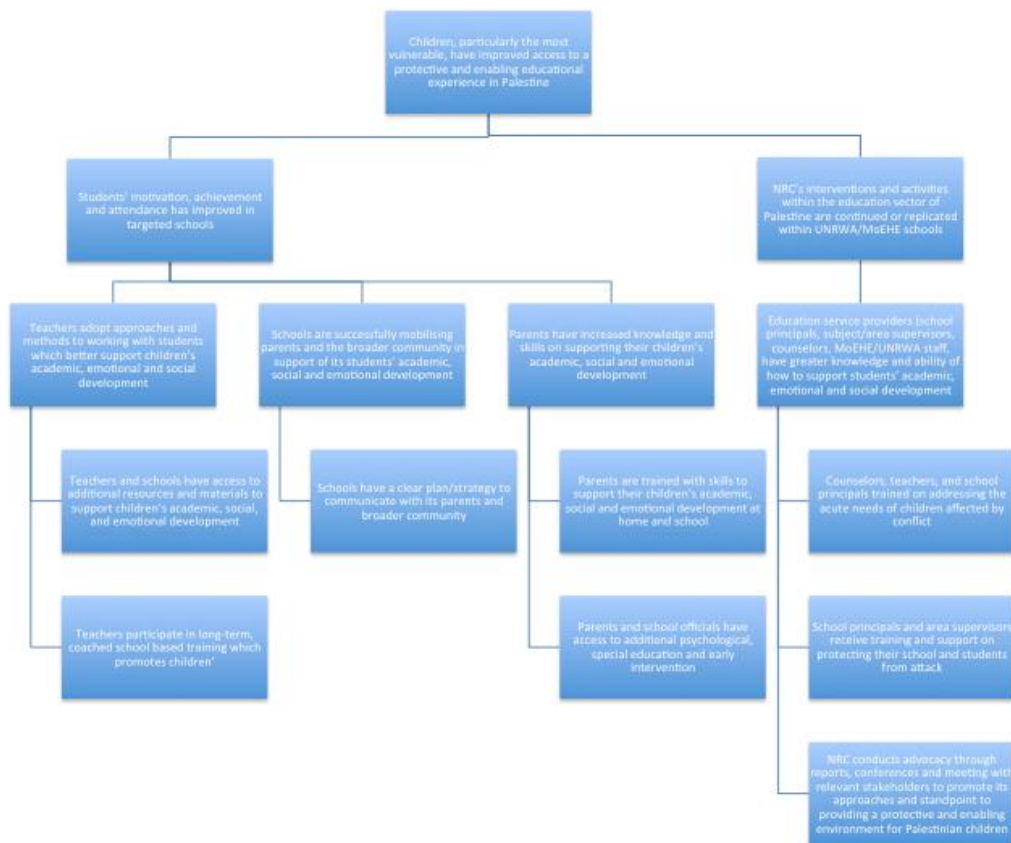


Figure 8: Draft theory of change developed with NRC Education Team

Limitations of the evaluation method and approach

Initially, it was proposed that classroom and training observations also occur as part of exploring some of the questions, particularly those on the relevance and sustainability of NRC's efforts. The timing of the evaluation activity, however, at the end of the academic year, made it difficult to conduct these visits, and it was agreed with the NRC Education team and the Evaluation Steering Committee that it would not be appropriate and/or feasible to conduct these observations as part of the evaluation exercise. A significant limitation of this evaluation, is that reported changes in practices, identified through both the teacher questionnaire and teacher observation data collected during active programme implementation by NRC, and through MSC stories collected during the course of the evaluation, could not be verified or noted independently through observations of practice.

Additionally, sampling of schools and individuals was purposive rather than completely random due to time constraints and the availability of persons on the day. That stated, a sampling framework broken down by programme, years of participation, and beneficiary type was provided in the inception report to NRC Palestine. The education team was asked to select schools, and randomly select parents and teachers to be interviewed in preparation for field visits.

On the whole, NRC staff involved in the collection of the MSC stories proved to be competent and capable of collecting MSC stories from beneficiaries. That stated, there is an inherent bias in having those involved in programme implementation also involved in the collection of stories of change from beneficiaries. All individuals involved in data collection were explicitly told that the purpose of such stories is not to highlight success, but rather changes as a result of activity. Nonetheless, the majority of stories collected appear to be

ones of positive change, and in some cases the stories were written and structured more as success stories than descriptions of change. Where this was clearly evident, the stories were excluded from consideration from the selection panel and are not included in the compendium of stories provided in the Annex.

It is also important to note that MSC as a process can tend to select out “extreme” rather than typical cases. For that reason, MSC is never utilised as a singular evaluation approach, but needs to be used in combination with others. In this evaluation, singular MSC stories, while presented as case studies, should not be generalised to typical impacts unless otherwise noted or discussed in the report.

It is also important to note, that given that programmes in West Bank have only been actively implemented for approximately 1.5 years, the majority of data presented and reviewed from secondary sources comes from Gaza alone. Additionally, fewer sites were visited in West Bank, largely owing to the much smaller window of implementation of activities for *Our Communities*, *Our Schools* and the *Better Learning Intervention*.⁸⁴

NRC’s work on Inclusive Education, done in partnership with UNESCO, was also not evaluated in terms of questions of impact to beneficiaries, given that implementation has only begun in Gaza and West Bank, and has largely focussed on training higher-level Ministry of Education officials to this point. Some discussion is presented on the relevance and importance of this work in the findings chapter.

Finally, all quantitative data analysed as part of this evaluation is from secondary sources. Several limitations became apparent as these data were further reviewed in the analysis, namely issues of reliability and bias. For that reason, quantitative data on its own was not used to make any conclusion on the impact of the programme activities, and was used in combination with qualitative data. Specific to each type of quantitative data provided/analysed:

- **Teacher questionnaires:** Due to changes in staffing within NRC Palestine and the fact that in West Bank, data collection related to the final round was still ongoing, a complete set of data from the various stages of the project was only available for West Gaza schools at the time of the evaluation and is the only location for which findings are presented in the report.⁸⁵
- **Teacher observations:** While reliability of the items was again assessed as part of the evaluation, and found to be highly consistent, this does not diminish questions about whether improvements noted and discussed in the findings section may in part be attributable to bias on the part of the observer, who in many cases was the teacher coach him or herself. Similar to the teacher questionnaires, a complete set of data for the observations was only furnished by NRC for the West Gaza schools (3 schools and 56 teachers)
- **Nightmare incidences:** The sole type of quantitative data collected as part of the *Better Learning Programme* was the weekly incidences of nightmares amongst the children who were part of the intervention. This data was collected and reported by the school counsellors and/or teachers who were treating the children for these traumas, again raising questions about whether there may be some bias in the

⁸⁴ The Better Learning Intervention in West Bank only commenced earlier this year.

⁸⁵ While ideally, a full set of data (baseline, end of Phase One (first year), end of Phase Two (second year)) should have also been available for Middle and East Gaza schools, the raw data appeared to be have been lost or misplaced due to a former M&E officer’s computer being reformatted upon his departure.

report. While these findings are reported, they are triangulated against other forms of primary and secondary data collected and/or reviewed as part of the evaluation.

- **Student drop out and achievement data:** Data was sought from both UNRWA Gaza and West Bank on student drop out and achievement data (Arabic and Maths Grade 4 Unified Exam results) for the period of NRC's interventions related to *Our Communities, Our Schools* in both contexts. UNRWA Gaza provided data for participating schools, as well as regional means for these data, while UNRWA West Bank noted it did not have such information readily accessible. The achievement data provided by UNRWA Gaza, however, was not sufficiently detailed to discern whether changes in unified exam scores noted from participating schools was statistically significant.⁸⁶ Additionally no data was available for the current school year, thus the full picture of impact and the long-term picture of sustainability of the interventions remains difficult to ascertain from these data alone.

⁸⁶ Doing so would have required having student specific data for the participating schools, as well as information on the margins of error (standard deviations) and total number of participating students of exam results reported.

Annex 4: Further background to NRC Palestine Education Interventions 2010-2014

Since the inception of NRC's education programme the programmatic strategy and response has evolved and deepened. Recently as part of NRC's development of a macro-level log frame for its activities, the overall and specific objectives of the programme for past and future activity has been established. The overall programme objective is that "*Palestinian children benefit from programmes that prevent push out, respond to push out and provide Education in Emergencies interventions*

Within this, several specific programmes have been developed since 2010, and are briefly discussed below.

Our Communities, Our Schools

NRC Palestine began work in Gaza through a MoU signed with UNRWA to pilot an intervention in 3 schools in the Middle Area in 2010. In establishing this, NRC undertook an extensive needs assessment process, including input from UNRWA management, school principals, teachers, parents and children. On the basis of this assessment NRC created the *Our Communities, Our Schools* intervention for the schools based on five threads of intervention:

- 1) **Whole school needs assessment:** A focus on tailoring interventions to specific localised need and engage the wider school community.
- 2) **Capacitation grants:** Small grants to schools, with procurement by NRC, to allow schools to plug gaps in provision of materials, especially teaching and learning aids. The capacitation grants also allow school management an opportunity to work with NRC staff to identify and address needs and gaps in provision.
- 3) **Long-term coached teacher training:** General professional development sessions on learner-centred approaches to teaching aimed at improving student engagement and participation in the classroom. General sessions are supported in the classroom by individualised mentoring and feedback provided by Teacher Support Officers. In the second year, teachers become professional leaders and begin to engage in peer-to-peer training and coaching.
- 4) **Parental Skills Clubs:** Regular sessions to support parents to support their children's education, and typically partially developed and implemented through local civil society organisations.⁸⁷
- 5) **Communication plans:** Activities to support the school in engaging parents and the community within the life of the school.

The intervention is designed to run over a period of two years with NRC providing most explicit external inputs across all areas in the first year, while in the second, NRC supports schools to operate such activities internally, using skills and experience gained from the first year.

In the *Our Communities, Our Schools* programme, NRC with support from two different partners supported the establishment of Parent Skills Clubs. These clubs include 20-25

⁸⁷ In Gaza this is in partnership with the Qattan Centre for the Child and in the West Bank through the Tamer Institute.

parents of children who are predominantly but not exclusively underachieving⁸⁸, gather on a weekly basis in sessions hosted at the school.⁸⁹ For the Gaza programme, the content of the sessions in the first year was developed by NRC's partner, Al Qattan Centre for Children and in the second year by the Education Officer; while in West Bank it was the opposite for the six schools which were part of activity from 2012-2014. The aim of the clubs is to improve the skills of parents to attend to their children's learning needs. Activities focus on improving parents' skills to support literacy and numeracy but also to build parent's skills and opportunities to communicate with school staff and address issues like child protection, time management, and communicating with your child. Some sessions involved teachers or other school stakeholders, while others encouraged parents to bring their children along to participate in a joint activity, such as puppet making.

Additional to these clubs, NRC, through the Education Officers it placed in each school, worked to help schools strengthen their engagement and outreach with their parent community through the development of a communication plan/strategy. These plans, which are developed in collaboration with school management, outline a series of activities and functions, which the school will carry out throughout the year, and includes social events, open days, and educational and awareness evenings on topics of interest to parents such as children's health, nutrition, child protection and behaviour modification.

In 2011, UNRWA Gaza requested the scaling up of NRC's education work within the education system to include another three schools within the programme.⁹⁰ In 2012, the *Our Communities, Our Schools* programme was expanded to the West Bank, specifically East Jerusalem, and the UNRWA and the Awqaf⁹¹ education systems within this location. The intervention in West Bank generally mirrors that of Gaza although local differences are accounted for. Six schools participated in the two-year programme between 2012-2014.

UNRWA TV

Leveraging on these successes, NRC began in 2013 a partnership with UNRWA to produce a series of short TV episodes then broadcast on UNRWA Satellite TV. The segments, titled *Abaa' wa Abnaa'* (Parents and Children) targeted children and parents, and used a talk show format to present acted-out scenarios, followed by scripted discussions amongst a panel comprised of parents, educators, and experts. Each episode is 30-40 minutes in duration and is broadcast several times on UNRWA television, and also placed onto UNRWA's YouTube page. Using key messages from the Parent Skills Clubs that are part of *Our Communities, Our Schools*, a joint team from UNRWA and NRC develop each episode's content, and then use UNRWA studios and writers for filming of the scenes and the discussions. Two seasons of episodes have been produced to date.

⁸⁸ The clubs typically comprise 50-70% of underachieving children and parents with the remainder made up of those who are achieving at expected levels or achieving higher. This is done to avoid stigmatization for both the children and parents and encourages participation.

⁸⁹ In some circumstances, more than one parental club was established at the same school. For example, in West Gaza, two clubs were noted to be set up in each school according to the mid cycle evaluation report (p. 8)

⁹⁰ In any given year, since 2011, the Gaza *Our Communities, Our School* project has included six schools at any one time, but at different stages of the project. Schools are typically clustered geographically by region (West/Middle/East/South Gaza) into groups of three. Three schools from Middle Gaza participated between 2010-2012, three schools from East Gaza 2011-2013, three schools from West Gaza 2012-2014 and three schools in Rafah 2013-present.

⁹¹ These are schools administered by the Palestinian Authority in East Jerusalem

Parents as Partners Conference

NRC hosted in partnership with UNRWA Gaza a conference entitled *My Home, My School: Together for My Future*.⁹² Over two days in March 2014, the conference brought together school principals, Area education Officers, EDC officers, subject supervisors, representatives of parent councils from across Gaza, subject specialists, and representatives from the Education Cluster to exchange ways in which schools were communicating with parents and empower school principals in particular to better mobilise their community. NRC and UNRWA showcased how through *Our Communities, Our Schools*, and specifically the Parent Skills Clubs and development of communication plans, schools could work to achieve this goal.

Better Learning Intervention

The *Better Learning Intervention* (BLP) is designed⁹³ to be a school-based psycho-educational intervention for children who experience severe distress as a result of conflict.⁹⁴ It is a partly manualised, multi-level approach which trains and supports teachers, educational psychologists (school counsellors) and parents on ways to empower their students/children with calming and self-regulation strategies. The overall goal of the project is to help children regain their full learning capacity, which has been compromised due to ongoing stress and trauma. One component of the programme (BLP II) works with teachers and counsellors, in a clear and structured approach (manualised) to address the needs of children experiencing symptoms of trauma such as nightmares; while another component of the programme (BLP I) provides a set of techniques and approaches for teachers to use in the classroom in support of all their students' psychosocial well-being.

NRC sought to reach the most vulnerable, conflict-affected children within the UNRWA education system in Gaza and commenced the project as a pilot in 2012 in Beit Hanoon in the north of Gaza Strip, as a response to high levels of sleeping problems amongst children who had been pushed out of education in that locale. NRC scaled up the intervention in the wake of the November 2012 escalation in hostilities to 10 UNRWA and 10 MoEHE schools in Gaza with the support of an OCHA grant. In March 2014, the project was further expanded to conflict-affected schools in the West Bank in cooperation with MoEHE (Ramallah).

Research, Policy and Advocacy Work

In the summer of 2011 NRC worked with UNRWA Gaza, at their request, to examine the issue of drop out from UNRWA schools. NRC and UNRWA staff worked in partnership to track and interview over 130 children and their families who had dropped out from education, from the schools with the highest rates of drop out, in the previous school year. The study concluded that under-achievement at school was the primary cause of push out, rather than economic circumstances, as was commonly perceived amongst school and UNRWA officials at that time.

In 2012, NRC worked with UNRWA Gaza to track the efficiency and effect of the Summer Learning programme for children who had failed the previous school year. The study

⁹² In other parts of the report it is referenced as the *Parents as Partners* conference

⁹³ The intervention was developed through NRC Oslo in partnership with experts in educational psychology from the University of Tromsø.

⁹⁴ The term 'severe distress' is used here in place of the term 'trauma' as trauma is deemed to be a clinical diagnosis. The intervention does not clinically diagnose children within the intervention and as such the children are deemed to be 'suffering from distress'. This is in line with the Mental Health and Psychosocial Working Group's best practice and ways of working.

identified that the programme, as structured, was ineffective in responding to the needs of under-achieving students and was presented to UNRWA Gaza management to inform their strategy and planning for under-achieving children.

That same year, UNICEF and UNESCO contracted NRC to conduct a substantial research project on the quality and equity of educational provision in East Jerusalem. One of the main initial intentions of the research was to feed into the MoEHE's five-year strategy planning process. In collaboration with a local partner, data was collected through school-based surveys across 36 schools that are part of the Awqaf, UNRWA, private and Sakhneen⁹⁵ systems between April 2012 and May 2012.⁹⁶ The final product was delivered to UNICEF and UNESCO, and presented to the MoEHE in Ramallah in late 2012.

Inclusive Education

In October 2013 NRC began work, with support from UNESCO, on a national Inclusive education programme in partnership with the MoEHE and UNRWA in both Gaza and the West Bank. The programme has been rolled out in 70 schools across Palestine and works with Inclusive Education counsellors, subject supervisors, school principals and teachers. The project has three main components; school level training and briefing for all school staff; community advocacy activities and action research to support classroom inclusion and child-activities for inclusive teaching practice.

Protecting Education from Attack

Recently NRC has been working with the MoEHE in Ramallah to address the needs of schools that are subject to violence and attack, particularly those in Area C of the West Bank.

According to a report from MoEHE Ramallah's Directorate General for Field Follow Up in 2013 within West Bank and Jerusalem:

- 175 students and six teachers were detained by Israeli soldiers travelling to/from schools;
- 195 individuals were injured by bullets, rubber bullets and tear gas bombs on their way to/from school;
- Stop work notifications were issued to two schools, and nine schools were disrupted for 10 days due to curfews, barrier closures, and Israeli holidays
- Over 10,000 students and 408 teachers pass daily across barriers to/from school and face harassment and delays in reaching school on a regular basis;
- Areas such as East Jerusalem, Hebron, and Nablus are the ones most impacted by such issues.

Recently, with the signing of a MoU with the Ministry of Education in Ramallah NRC's ICLA team has become involved in educating teachers, principals, students and parents about ways to protect themselves from attack, and also about their rights and legal recourse options in the event of attack. In discussing parent and students' rights to protection from attack, workshops have begun to be held through *Our Communities, Our Schools'* Parent Skills Clubs/Communication Plan activities and for schools not part of the project in East Jerusalem through the *Better Learning Programme* orientation sessions with parents. The intention is to work with schools, and specifically school principals subject to stop work and

⁹⁵ These are privately operated, but publically subsidised (by Israeli government) schools located in East Jerusalem.

⁹⁶ At the time that this research was conducted, NRC was unable to gain access to the Israeli government run and operated municipality schools that cater for approximately 50% of the student population in East Jerusalem.

demolition orders to protect their existence and challenge these orders through the Israeli court system. ICLA has also been working with households to protect their residency rights within East Jerusalem, ensuring that they are able to continue to access social provisions they are entitled to, including education.

Responding to emergency needs

NRC responded to the UNRWA strike in January/February 2014 by supporting art, theatre and recreational activities for children during the six-week strike through its civil society partners. A total of 787 children participated in the range of activities that were offered.

When parts of Gaza encountered significant flooding in December 2013, NRC mobilised over 1000 school bags, filled with school supplies that students might have lost during the inundation. They were delivered to households that were significantly impacted by the flooding in the North of Gaza and within Gaza City.

An overview of programmes against objectives

In reviewing NRC Palestine’s broad programme objective, past and present education projects operated by NRC appear to fit towards achieving one or more of these specified objectives.

Education service providers change policy and practice based on the experience of parents, teachers and schools demonstrating protective, inclusive and enabling education	Our Communities, Our Schools (Gaza and East Jerusalem); UNRWA-NRC Research into Children Pushed Out from Education in Gaza 2010-2011; UNRWA-NRC Research into Impact of Summer Learning Programme (Gaza); Quality and Equity of Education in East Jerusalem (West Bank); Inclusive Education Initiative (Gaza and West Bank)
Out of school youth gain skills (foundational, transferable and vocational) by participating in non-formal education services	No programme activities to date
Programs that provide Education in Emergency Interventions	Better Learning Intervention (Gaza/West Bank), Protecting Education from Attack

Annex 5: Evaluation Learning Case Study

Background

On an annual basis, NRC identifies two priority questions which are included in all evaluations. The evidence is collated from all evaluations on an annual basis on the standard template included below. It is analysed and presented in NRC's Annual Learning Review. The review is widely disseminated to NRC staff. Findings and recommendations from this review feed into NRC's strategic mapping process which is subsequently used to identify priority areas for NRC's annual strategy meeting. The findings also directly feed into NRC country strategy processes, during which country directors are asked to reflect on learning from the review and identify follow up activities for their countries.

Evaluators are asked to address the questions (and sub questions) through a joint exercise with NRC staff. While the objective in this evaluation was to explore the key questions and the evidence as part of the findings workshop, time did not allow for this to occur. Instead, the evaluator worked with the Programme Manager via email to respond to the questions and review evidence in the weeks following the field visit.

Key questions

The two following questions have been identified for 2014 learning case studies.

1. Is NRC reaching the right beneficiaries?
2. How is NRC engaging with people affected by displacement?

Is NRC reaching the right beneficiaries?

According to NRC's policy, NRC targets refugees and IDPs and displacement affected host communities. NRC will target assistance within communities to those who are most vulnerable and at highest risk. Specific focus is given to the protection of vulnerable groups and minorities, especially women and children. Within this group, vulnerability targeting depends on the specific intervention and context. In education programmes the following groups, within the main target groups, are given priority:

- Children and youth who have missed out on their basic education, providing equal access for girls and boys, and removing obstacles to girls' enrolment and completion; and
- Qualified or potential teachers within the target groups

Secondary target groups can include:

- Local or host-community children and youth (to promote cooperation, integration and reintegration), providing the majority of the beneficiaries are from the main target groups;
- Education officials and teachers; and
- Adults of special relevance to the education programmes (such as: parents, members of Parent-Teacher Associations or of School Management Committees)

The majority of NRC's Palestine's Education Programmes to date have not targeted children directly, but rather worked with teachers, parents and other duty bearers (service providers) who engage with them.

Objective: NRC's has undertaken an assessment of the needs of affected populations and vulnerable groups. This assessment was based on robust, relevant, reliable and timely evidence. The needs assessment identified who NRC should target, including vulnerable

groups, and how to address the needs of these groups in the programme design.

Evidence: When NRC commenced its education activities in Gaza in 2010, NRC conducted a comprehensive needs assessment in schools where UNRWA had requested intervention and support. The needs assessment revealed common challenges facing schools such as high levels of disengaged students, unmotivated teachers, and difficulties in engaging parents in the education of their children. These issues formed the basis for the development of the pilot programme for *Our Communities Our Schools*. This programme development was carried out in close consultation and agreement with UNRWA Gaza Field Office.

In 2011, research was carried out in collaboration with UNRWA Gaza into causes of drop out from schooling. This research identified that student underachievement was often the reason behind student drop out and was the product of a lack of appropriate teacher support, punitive disciplinary measures, insufficient parental engagement in children's education, and inattention to children's psychosocial issues. NRC used this research to refine the scale-up of *Our Communities, Our Schools* in Gaza, and to develop new programmes of support such as the *Better Learning Intervention*, which was developed to help the large number of children who were suffering from a lack of concentration caused by nightmares.

Further research conducted in East Jerusalem in 2012-13, helped to provide a strong case for the extension of activities such as *Our Communities, Our Schools* and the *Better Learning Intervention* into this context. Its more recent work to protect education from attack, done in coordination with ICLA in parts of West Bank, such as Hebron, is founded on data from both MoEHE in Ramallah and international actors such as *Save the Children*, and the ongoing collection of vulnerability data from the Education Cluster, that schools in Area C and East Jerusalem are in need of protection of attack from settlers, the IDF, and the ongoing threat of closure/relocation.

Needs within the school themselves, and of *Our Communities, Our Schools* beneficiaries, are determined through an extensive needs assessment process. This occurs through: (1) FGD meetings with parents and teachers; (2) individual interviews with the school principal; (3) observations of the school and classroom environment; (4) quantitative teacher questionnaires assessing beliefs and attitudes about their teaching methodology and school/classroom environment (until 2014); and more recently, (5) surveys of parents vis-à-vis their engagement with their child's education, general parenting skills, and communication with the school have been administered, and an assessment of the school's communication activities with the parent community conducted.

From this process, a needs assessment report is prepared by NRC and presented to the school for discussion and consultation. The result of this process is a tailored programme of support through Parent Skills Clubs, communication plan activities, and in-service training topics developed. This also forms the basis for determining the types of materials which NRC might be able to procure through the capitation grants given on an annual basis to each participating school. Strong evidence exists of the content of Parent Skills Clubs activities and in-service training topics varying from school to school dependent on the specific issues identified through the needs assessment.

Through the UNESCO funded Inclusive Education component, NRC has been working with teachers, supervisors and inclusive education counsellors to adapt action research methodologies to inclusive education. This has allowed focus on the most vulnerable within the classroom whilst at the same time enabling teachers to develop their own answers to

the challenges they face.

Objective: NRC has clearly defined who should be **targeted** through its programmes. This definition includes specific targets for different displacement affected populations, disaggregated targets for men, boys, women and girls, and clear vulnerability criteria.

Evidence: Most of NRC's Education programmes have specified that they are targeting the most vulnerable and conflict affected children, but how vulnerability has been identified and assessed in terms of targeting has varied from activity to activity.

For example, in the *Our Communities, Our Schools* intervention, UNRWA and the MoEHE have identified the schools in which they would like NRC to work. Typically they are schools that are seen to be problematic either based on their location, the socioeconomic/demographics of the population they serve, or reputations of underachievement. When *Our Communities, Our Schools* expanded to West Bank in 2012, a similar process was carried out, with NRC working through MoEHE and UNRWA to identify schools they felt were in need of attention in East Jerusalem. Many of the schools chosen were ones that the agencies felt were 'underserved' by other actors, due to their remoteness or the difficulties of access.

To date, however, NRC has not looked at measures such as drop-out rates, or achievement scores which are available within the UNRWA system, to select its schools, instead giving that choice to UNRWA. In some cases, this may not be the best option, as one senior official in UNRWA made clear that he requested that NRC work in Rafah because he is from there, and needed to show that work was occurring there as well. Additionally, NRC has not used the Education Cluster's vulnerability index to date to select schools for participation in this programme. For the future, it is recommended that NRC Palestine: (1) specify a selection criterion for identification of potential schools to participate in *Our Communities, Our Schools* given the fact that the in-depth support limits NRC reach in any given location; and (2) ensure that the selection criterion includes external data measures that are available from secondary sources such as UNRWA and the Education Cluster.

The *Better Learning Programme* was piloted in one of the areas most affected by *Operation Cast Lead*, Beit Hanoon. Research from NRC's school drop out research suggested that this locale was the one facing the most acute issues related to children's nightmare incidences. In the aftermath of the November 2012 escalation by the Israeli forces, NRC worked with MoEHE and UNRWA to scale up the *Better Learning Programme* as an emergency response to the psychosocial needs of children, their families and schools. In selecting the additional schools, NRC followed the recommendations of MoEHE and UNRWA who identified the schools that had been most affected by the escalation. Again, use of the Education Cluster's vulnerability index for future selection may ensure that NRC is independently verifying that the schools selected by MoEHE and UNRWA are in fact that most vulnerable.

All of NRC's programmes have specified targets by beneficiaries who are broadly broken down by beneficiary group (teachers, parents, children⁹⁷) and gender. These data are regularly reported on within annual grant and donor reports. It should be noted that the majority of NRC's work to date has been with the long-standing refugee population of Palestine who are served through the UNRWA system, but data on whether populations

⁹⁷ It should be noted that most of NRC Palestine's education projects do not work directly with children and should be listed as indirect rather than direct beneficiaries of project activity.

served through its education programmes are of refugee status or not does not appear to be captured systematically in its reporting.⁹⁸

Objective: *NRC has carried out **selection processes** for participation in its programmes in line with the humanitarian principal of impartiality. The selection process avoids bias or exclusion.*

Evidence: Selection processes for beneficiary participation in its programmes has, for the most part, been non-exclusionary. That stated, NRC has focused efforts like the Parental Skills Clubs on caregivers of children who are at risk of drop out, but also encourages other caregivers to participate to reduce the stigma that might be involved with participation otherwise (see discussion in previous chapter). From the evidence at hand, it would not appear that bias/exclusion is a feature of the participation of parents and teachers, even if there are explicit target groups for intervention. In many cases, NRC has expanded activity beyond its stated objective of supporting Grades 1-4, to include the whole school in training sessions, etc. in an attempt to not be exclusionary.

Within the *Better Learning Programme II*, a core group of (self-identified) children exhibiting nightmares and sleeping problems, participate in the counselling sessions. The children involved in the core group were selected through a process led by the school counsellor and teachers. Participation within this group was voluntary regardless of the nomination of parents or teachers, but efforts were made to ensure that (1) all children exhibited similar frequencies of nightmare incidences on a weekly basis; and (2) were confronted with challenges to learning as a result of these nightmares.

Due to the limited reach of *Better Learning's* intensive level of intervention (a maximum of eight children/group), NRC developed a separate classroom manual to support psychosocial well-being of all children in targeted schools. Additional to development of the manual, NRC conducted briefings and training sessions to all the teaching staff in the nominated schools on the 'manual so as to raise their awareness of the psychosocial issues facing children and to equip them with a set of skills to create calm and supportive classrooms. Moreover, NRC has been working to reach the parents around these groups to strengthen family and community care-giving structures for children. Parents have attended similar (although amended) briefings and trainings to enable them to react positively and give the needed support to their children during and after the frequent immediate shocks of hostilities and to build their capacity and resilience in the face of future possible shocks. This has served to widen the net of indirect beneficiaries of such activity.

Objective: *NRC is working in **areas where the highest needs** have been identified. Where this is not possible due to access constraints, there is evidence that NRC is directly working to gain access. There is evidence that NRC is well co-ordinated and providing unique or complimentary services where they work.*

Evidence: In Gaza, NRC has worked most extensively with UNRWA in its activities. In part this is due to difficulties it has faced in terms of access to MoEHE schools (for a number of different reasons), and also the challenges it continuously faces in managing the relationship

⁹⁸ According to NRC this is in part because all students who are attending UNRWA schools are required to have refugee status and thus, it is assumed that any beneficiaries (students, parents) who are within the UNRWA system carry such status. The matter is somewhat complicated by the fact that this might underreport the total number of refugees that NRC Palestine is working with, as UNRWA students have the option to enroll in MoEHE schools. MoEHE, however, does not provide data on which of its students are of refugee status, nor does NRC appear to actively collecting such information.

with MoEHE. NRC continues to work to engage MoEHE more in its activities, given that MoEHE schools, which 40% of the population attends, are not well served by the international community and are generally less well supported. There is an acute need within many MoEHE schools for the same types of interventions that are provided by UNRWA schools, according to key informants interviewed both within and outside of NRC. NRC's persistence in working to engage with this sector is most recently evident in the partnership it has undertaken with UNESCO to support the introduction of Inclusive Education into the schooling system. While MoEHE has welcomed this initiative and allowed NRC into its schools, they do not show the same receptiveness to the need for such activity as UNRWA has.

Strong evidence exist from UNRWA in both Gaza and West Bank that NRC is meeting needs that the organization itself cannot provide to schools such as in-school teacher training support, the introduction of inclusive education concepts, and improving the engagement of parents in the life of the school. Of importance is that NRC is seen as a well regarded and trusted partner to UNRWA in both Gaza and West Bank, and is one of the few organisations with ready access to schools. It maintains a strong relationship with UNRWA through close communication and coordination on all activities, and encourages UNRWA to work with NRC to identify unmet needs that it might be able to assist in. To UNRWA, NRC is seen as an open, transparent, and flexible partner which puts them in continued good stead to build on such a relationship on a more regional basis.

Objective: *NRC's programmes are **designed** in a way that enables access for their target groups, including the most vulnerable.*

Evidence: Within the *Our Communities, Our Schools* programme, NRC worked closely and creatively with the schools to plan in-school activities and plan communication activities that would enable vulnerable households, namely low-achieving students and their parents, to engage to a greater degree in the life of the school. A number of stories of significant change reflect how NRC has done so.⁹⁹

A key strength of *Our Communities, Our Schools* has been the ability of NRC to improve the sense of access and engagement that parents and caregivers have with their children's schools, a matter discussed at length in the previous chapter. Similarly, the Better Learning Programme has improved access to psychosocial support for children affected by trauma, by ensuring that counsellors, teachers and parents have knowledge of ways to better support their children's psychosocial well-being, which has been identified as a significant impediment to children accessing and succeeding in school.

NRC's recent partnership with UNESCO on introducing Inclusive Education principles into the Palestinian education system, offers the potential for marginalized students, who are those most likely to be pushed out from school, to be better supported. The concern with this initiative is that it does not provide extensive enough in-school support to change deeply entrenched beliefs about reasons for student underachievement and the underlying factors for drop out. Many Palestinian school officials continue to believe the situation is linked to external factors (economic issues) rather than factors within the school (teaching approach), despite data from NRC to the contrary.

⁹⁹ See MSC Stories 9, 22, 28, 46, 62

Objective: *There is evidence that NRC has been **effective** in reaching their targeted beneficiaries. This can be confirmed through monitoring data and triangulated with additional data collected during the evaluation. Is NRC tracking/verifying ‘beneficiaries’?*

Evidence: By in large, NRC has been effective in reaching targeted beneficiaries identified in project log frames. Times where NRC has not been effective in reaching targeted beneficiaries have often been the result of factors out of their control, such as the UNRWA West Bank strike in 2014 which halted all activity in school for approximately six week. Despite the strike, NRC worked through its partners and community-based organisations to support children who were out of school by providing non-academic, protective activities through community centres in camps. In addition NRC has undertaken emergency responses to localised disasters such as the Gaza flooding in 2013. Here NRC worked in collaboration with the Education Cluster and UNRWA to identify children affected and responded accordingly.

One area where NRC has struggled consistently is engaging fathers in activities of the Parent Skills Club. Male participation has been noted to be an ongoing challenge and may require particular events/activities which encourage fathers and daughters/sons to work together in some way to break the traditional gendered roles that define caregiving in Palestine.

Objective: *The evaluation concludes that the initial targeting was **appropriate and relevant**, that those most in need were reached through the programme.*

The complex humanitarian crisis in Palestine requires a flexible and responsive targeting approach, and it is clearly evident that NRC has done this through the establishment of new activities which attend to acute needs, while simultaneously addressing longer-standing issues facing the Palestinian education system. That stated, there could be improvements in NRC’s targeting of schools, particularly if it maintains a focus on dealing with the most marginalized and vulnerable to drop out. Measures, independent of recommendations from UNRWA and/or MoEHE may need to be developed that specify a series of criterion for school and community selection. This could be based on data available from secondary sources such as the Education Cluster’s vulnerability index (to identify schools under attack), and MIS information on student achievement and drop out to identify particular schools with rates of underachievement and drop out that are significantly higher than average. With a more explicit and transparent criterion, NRC may be able to more adequately justify that they are indeed working with the most vulnerable school communities inside Palestine.

Good Practice Case Study

The below Most Significant Change story, told by a principal is a reflection of how NRC catered its support to the needs of the school, and the value that schools saw in this process.

Innovation of a teacher (Principal, Ministry of Education school)

In the past the teachers in our school used to lecture at the students all the time. Students were reluctant to participate in functions and activities, and they had very little voice in the classroom or school. For example, none of the students were willing to participate in our regular school assemblies and they sat there passively. NRC came to our school and approached us in a different way. They asked us at the beginning what we needed to improve what we are doing and based on this they developed a programme of support to fit our needs. The NRC trainers were in constant contact with our school. They visited our teachers on a regular basis and provided them support and coaching. The trainers also gave them an opportunity to share their experiences and expertise, while reflecting and

improving their practice. In essence, these trainers became part of our school community for two years. As a result, the students have become more engaged in the learning process, and teachers have a wider diversity of approaches to engage students. Students now feel empowered to have a voice in the classroom and are more vocal in expressing their needs. Now the students beg us to participate in assemblies and are enthusiastic to voice their opinions. For our low achieving students this has helped them to improve their performance. For students who were at risk of dropping out, it has motivated them to stay in school. These successes have also helped to convince the community to enrol their children in our school over others in the area.

How is NRC engaging with people affected by displacement?

NRC is applying an ALNAP definition of ‘engagement’ as follows: this is a catch-all term to cover all instances of people in crisis-affected communities becoming involved in planning and implementing humanitarian response work. This broad definition covers the entire range of intentional interactions between international humanitarian aid providers and affected populations, including activities focused on communication, accountability, and participation. In this case, NRC is concerned with the direct engagement of the population in the response, and also with how they engage with those coming from outside to support their efforts. This section explores the levels of participation that its partners and beneficiaries have had in the design, implementation and assessment of success of its educational activities in Palestine to date.

Question	Supporting evidence
How have people affected by displacement been engaged in the design or planning of the programme?	
NRC involves teachers, parents and school administrators in the design of <i>Our Community, Our Schools</i> . This occurs through a comprehensive needs assessment (described in previous section), consultation and feedback on the results of this assessment, and the joint development of a strategy of support within the school.	Needs assessment documents and reports, project plans suggest differentiation of activity within each school based on identified needs
Who was engaged in this process? (Primarily community leaders, men, women, vulnerable groups?)	
Project beneficiaries of the intervention itself— parents, teachers, school administrators and children	Needs assessment documents, project plans
How are people affected by displacement engaged in the implementation of programmes?	

Question	Supporting evidence
<p>There is evidence that in some of the parent skill clubs, parents, including refugee parents, are leading and facilitating activities within them (see MSC story). More broadly teachers are involved in peer to peer coaching in the second year of <i>Our Communities, Our Schools</i>, and school administrators are supported to take a greater leadership role in the development of a communication plan in the second year.</p> <p>The <i>Better Learning</i> and Inclusive Education programmes are founded on a ToT approach, thus it is the counsellors and teachers themselves who are supporting the children and delivering messages to the school level.</p> <p>At a systems level, UNRWA Gaza staff have been regularly cycled through NRC on a two-year secondment. This serves to build the capacity of the staff and also greater understanding and ownership of NRC’s work and is critical to long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Additionally action research forms part of the component of the Inclusive Education project. This involves teachers self-identifying barriers to inclusive education and experimenting with responses based on their own circumstances and experiences.</p>	<p>Interviews, MSC Stories, Parent Skills Clubs action plans, training action plans.</p>
<p>Does NRC have a beneficiary complaints/feedback mechanism in place? If so, describe how it is being used by people and NRC’s process for following up on this feedback.</p>	
<p>At the beginning of major implementation initiatives a leaflet is distributed to all parents of the school to explain the basic intervention activities with a contact number at NRC to call with any queries or complaints. As NRC implements through and with education service providers all activities are undertaken on school property with the permission and buy-in of the school management. As such any problems and complaints are usually channelled directly from school management to the Education Officer named as responsible for each school. For example, early on in the partnership with the Tamer Institute in the West Bank one of the partner’s activities was considered to be culturally insensitive for the beneficiaries. This was communicated by the school principal to the education officer responsible and meetings were held first with school staff and then community members to apologise, rectify the problem and agree a way forward.</p> <p>On occasion NRC has been made aware of serious</p>	<p>Intervention information leaflets, records of community meetings, child protection reports</p>

Question	Supporting evidence
<p>child protection concerns occurring in implementation schools (tangential to, not resulting from NRC’s intervention.) In these cases the information received has been documented, ensuring confidentiality for children, and taken to the highest decision making levels within the service providers management. This was then followed up on to ensure that necessary actions were taken to improve or redress the situation.</p>	
<p>How are beneficiaries engaged in NRC’s monitoring activities?</p>	
<p>In the <i>Better Learning Intervention</i> counsellors keep track and record nightmare incidences on a weekly basis and provide information to NRC on this. Additionally, regular support sessions during implementation ensure that counsellors have a venue and forum to discuss cases and solve problems collectively, and better address issues in implementing the prescribed approach.</p> <p>Within the <i>Our Communities, Our Schools</i> project regular monitoring activities, and particularly at the end of Phase One, ensure that beneficiaries have an opportunity to provide feedback on activity to date, and for NRC to adjust activity based on this feedback. This takes place through administration of questionnaires and FGDs with students, parents, and teachers, as well as interviews with the school administrator. From the recommendations made, necessary modifications and changes to ongoing delivery are made.</p>	<p>Final HERF report, Better Learning Program II manual, midterm evaluations from <i>Our Communities, Our Schools</i> projects</p>
<p>Is there any evidence of NRC adapting the programme as a direct result of beneficiary feedback? Please describe.</p>	
<p>The <i>Our Communities Our Schools</i> intervention is designed to be extremely flexible but keeping 5 central pillars constant. As such the activities are constantly evolving based on feedback from beneficiaries. For example a central pillar of the intervention is teacher training. At the beginning of the year the exact topics of training, as well as timing and venue will be decided based on a combination of the school assessment and a negotiation with teachers and school management. The same applies to the activities undertaken in communication plan activities and parental skills clubs. At a more macro-level decisions over the anticipated length of programming have been made on the basis of feedback from schools about additional support needed, for example Shufat Boys School in East Jerusalem, where NRC has</p>	<p>Needs assessments and school work plans (available from NRC Palestine)</p>

Question	Supporting evidence
<p>extended its involvement by six months due to ongoing needs in the school.</p>	
<p>Good Practice Case Study</p> <p>The following MSC story is an example of how one Education Officer, in an <i>Our Communities, Our Schools project</i>, responded to the challenges a school was facing in working with its Bedouin population, a traditionally marginalized group within Palestinian society.</p> <p>Please teachers talk to parents directly (NRC Staff)</p> <p>Whenever I ask teachers what is the most difficult challenge you face at school, the majority say “parents don’t cooperate...we invite them many times but they don’t come.” As our projects’ main aim is to strengthen the relationship between parents and school, I decided to search for a solution for this issue in the school I am working in. I noticed there were Bedouin families who live far from school and have a considerable number of children enrolled. These children were also the ones, who had the highest record of absence from school, especially in winter. The parents of these children never came to the school although they were invited many times and many letters sent to them. So I decided that along with a group of teachers and students from the school, we would pay a visit to the family and talk to them face to face. It was November and the weather was a bit hot. We walked the same path the children walk daily and it was a an experience for the teachers and the students to feel how hard the Bedouin students’ school day is Teachers understood how far the parents would need to walk if they decided to come to school. After an hour’s walk, and a number of breaks where we sat on hot stones and exchanged the remaining water we had in our bottles, we arrived exhausted and hot. Four mothers welcomed the teachers. Myself and the other males from the school were led to the men's tent. We were not allowed to go to the women’s tent at the beginning because of traditions. After a short rest and clarification of the aim of the visit, we were allowed to meet the mothers. The teachers and the school principal talked to the mothers about the aim of the visit and how were keen to help the Bedouin kids to learn and complete a full course of study, especially their girls. I explained to these mothers that the teachers cared deeply for their kids, so much so that they left their homes and work to meet them, despite the hot weather and long walk. I persuaded one of the mothers to come to school for a meeting the week after. She kept her promise and came. The school welcomed her warmly and she was shown how their kids are looked after at school. From that time she hasn’t missed any meeting and her children’s absences have been significantly reduced. This has had a positive effect on their academic record. Now the school has someone, within the Bedouin community who they can contact whenever there is a problem with one of their children. This particular mother has become one of the most frequent school visitors and has even been rewarded by the school for her efforts. This change is so important because parents and the school need to work together to seek solutions to issues facing their children. Without this, parents only rely on what their children say about their teachers and school, and likewise the school lacks information about what is going on at home.</p>	

Annex 6: Teacher Questionnaire utilised as part of *Our Communities, Our Schools*

	Area :School environment	Very small	Small	Big	Very big
No	Item	1	2	3	4
A1	The classroom environment is adequate to learning process				
A2	The number of students fits within the classroom size				
A3	Classroom environment fits the nature of classroom activities.				
A4	Classroom environment is characterized by cleanliness				
A5	I use alternatives to corporal punishment in classroom management				
A6	I try resolving the problems resulting from student violence in a suitable manner				
A7	I encourage my students to adopt the style of dialogue to resolve problems				
A8	Classroom environment contains appropriate furniture items.				
A9	Classroom environment is well maintained (walls, doors, etc.)				
A10	Classroom environment is characterized by good ventilation and lighting				
A11	The school environment fits with the extra-curricular activities				
A12	The school has adequate clean drinking water for students				
A13	The school environment is safe for students				
A14	The school facilities are available and appropriate to students age				
A15	Sufficient sun shaded area is available at the school to protect students				
	Area: Attainment of basic skills at lower grades				
No	Item				
A16	Students pronounce alphabets correctly				
A17	Students read sentences loudly with comprehension				
A18	Students write letters or words				

	correctly				
A19	Students express themselves and their ideas orally properly				
A20	Children express their understanding of the content of reading properly				
A21	Students identify the general ideas and partial				
A22	Students have the required dedication skills.				
A23	Students understand the concept of number correctly				
A24	Students make simple calculations properly				
A25	Students analyze the words into letters and syllable				
A26	Students can count in accordance with the requirements of the curriculum				
	Area: Teacher motivation				
No	Item				
A27	I am interested in the performance of my work regardless of incentives				
A28	I have the ability to perform various classroom and school activities				
A29	The relationship between me and the school management is positive				
A30	The relationship between me and my colleagues is positive				
A31	I would like to participate in the decision-making on school relating issues.				
A32	I make sure to raise the level of achievement for children				
A33	I am interested in doing innovative educational ideas				
A34	I look for solutions to the problems I face.				
A35	I am keen to participate in the in-service training courses				
	Area: Teacher methodology				
No	Item				
A36	I have the ability to ask appropriate classroom questions that suit lesson objectives				
A37	I carry out formative and summative evaluation appropriately				

A38	I use many educational activities, suiting the nature of the students				
A39	I use the method of story narration				
A40	I use educational games				
A41	I am trying continuously to develop myself professionally				
A42	I use the proper educational methods and sources				
A43	I adapt creative teaching methods				
A44	I encourage students to ask questions				
A45	I prepare special activities for the high achievers				
A46	I prepare special activities for low-achievers				
	Area: School leadership				
No	Item				
A47	The school principle ensures a collaborative environment working as a team				
A48	School management organizes exchange visits with other schools				
A49	School management promotes mutual visits among teachers				
A50	The school principal evaluates on objective and scientific bases.				
A51	The school principle seeks to develop teachers professionally				
A52	The school principle involves teachers in setting up the school plan				
A53	School management provides learning resources and materials needed				
A54	The school principle cares about solving the problems of staff.				
A55	The school principle is keen to pursue the achievement level of students				
A56	The school principle deals democratically with the staff				
A57	The school principal cares about parents participation in the process of school development				
A58	School management cooperates with the community institutions				
	Area: Parental skills				
No	Item				
A59	Parents follow their children's performance of homework activities.				
A60	Parents pay regular visits to the school				
A61	Parents cooperate in solving the problems facing their children at school				
A62	Parents accept advices and				

	guidance by teachers				
A63	Parents care about their children's personal hygiene				
A64	Parents discuss their children's problems with the school				
A65	Parents enquire on ways to their children educational follow-up				
	Area: Parental/community involvement				
No	Item				
A66	The local community institutions contribute in raising the achievement level of children				
A67	The local community supports the students financially and in-kind.				
A68	The local community institutions organize meetings to raise the teachers' competencies.				
A69	The local community-based institutions resolve problems faced by school				
A70	The local community institutions are enthusiastic to involve the school to participate in their activities and events.				
A71	The local community -based institutions receive school delegations in a friendly way.				
A72	The local community institutions organize events on how to care about school children				
A73	The local community institutions support parents to care about their children				
	Area: Health				
No	Item				
A74	I follow up on the health records of students				
A75	I organize students sit in class according to their health needs				
A76	I need more knowledge of ways of dealing with students with special needs				
A77	Visual impairment affects the capabilities of students at reading skills				
A78	Students with learning difficulties are characterized with low level of achievement				
A79	I use some appropriate lessons to guide students on healthy issues.				
	Area: Child participation				
No	Item				
A80	Students participate actively in classroom activity				
A81	Students do their homework regularly				

A82	Students participate in extra curriculum activities inside or outside the school				
A83	Students participate in classroom decision-making				
A84	Students participate in school activities (School broadcasting - clubs, press, etc.)				
A85	Students ask questions related to the lessons				
A86	Students collaborate with each other to accomplish some cooperative tasks				

Annex 7: Teacher observation form used as part of *Our Communities, Our Schools*

1. Preparing lessons

No.	Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
1-	The goals are clear and specific					
2-	The lesson numbers integrated and comprehensive					
3-	Basic requirements purposeful , exciting and varied					
4-	A variety of teaching strategies.					
5-	Explains the mechanics of achieving goals.					
6-	Includes numbers formative assessment and progress.					
7-	Education is keen on integrative					
8-	Education is keen to buzz					

Notes:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Lesson implementation

No.	Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
1-	Introduction is meaningful and motivating to learn.					
2-	Simplifies the scientific material and displays it in new ways and interesting and exciting.					
3-	Employs various methods in a timely manner .					
4-	Enhances the performance of the students and encourage non-participants to unify classroom performance .					
5-	Simplifies the concepts and significance of impaired verbal to suit collection.					
6-	Diversify teaching methods to suit the scientific content and classroom situations .					
7-	Correct Error tends concepts and replaces it with another valid					
8-	Repeats and reinforces concepts and is keen on meaningful education.					
9-	Students are encouraged to participate more and ask questions					
10-	Employs educational games .					

11-	Regulates the blackboard as an educational tool .					
12-	Keen to develop higher-order thinking skills .					
13-	Has a clear motivation towards the teaching profession .					
14-	Following the implementation of instructions intended for students accurately .					
15-	Keen on using educational and integrative connectivity environment.					
16-	Uses drama activities within the classroom.					
17-	Employs the scientific method to solve problems.					
18-	Provoke students' thinking by using higher-order thinking questions.					
19-	Use physical punishment to control the classroom.					
20-	Use alternative punishment methods to modify students' behaviors					

Notes:

.....

3. Correction

No.	Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
1-	Cares about constructivist correction					
2-	Formulates questions in an appropriate manner					
3-	Diversifies tools and techniques of correction					
4-	Formulates questions for high achievers					
5-	Follow the clerical work in the formative assessment and final.					
6-	Keen on homework and follow-up					
7-	follow-up and evaluate answers' of students who are in need.					
8-	Correction is relevant to the preparedness and implementation of the lesson.					
9-	Keen to feedback based on the correction of the classroom's situations.					
10-	Interested in the process of closing at the end of the lesson.					

Notes:

.....

.....

.....

4. Student

No.	Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
1-	Has clear motivation towards learning					
2-	Participate effectively in classroom activities					
3-	Shows clear understanding for teachers' explanations					
4-	Follows teachers' instructions					
5-	Involve and participate effectively in working groups					
6-	Has previous learning experiences					
7-	Had the new skills and definitions					
8-	Feels comfortable and warm					

Notes:

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. learning environment

No.	Dimension	1	2	3	4	5
1-	The classroom is beautiful and clean					
2-	Enough ventilation is available					
3-	The number of seats proportional to the number of students					
4-	There are teaching aids to enhance the skills required inside the classroom					
5-	Classroom organized and appropriate for education					
6-	Students move easily inside the classroom.					

Notes:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Annex 8: Interview guides utilised

MSC Interview/Recording Guide

Introduction: I am here today to discuss with you the participation you have had in the past in the Norwegian Refugee Council's _____ programme, which operated in your school between _____. As part of this programme a number of activities occurred, some of which you were personally involved in as a parent/teacher/counsellor/leader in this school. I would like you to think back on that experience and some of the changes that you witnessed because of this project—either for yourself personally, your child/the children you work with, or the school community as a whole. These changes can either be good ones or bad ones, but need to be changes that are important to you. I am collecting a number of stories from individuals at your schools and others, and they will then be reviewed by an external evaluator who is working with Norwegian Refugee Council to advise them on how they can best build and improve on their activities to date.

Do you the storyteller:

- Want to have your name on the story (tick one) Yes No
- Consent to us using your story in publications/reports (tick one) Yes No

Contact Details

Name _____ of _____ person _____ recording _____ story _____

Name _____ of _____ storyteller* _____

Project _____ and _____ location _____

Date of recording _____

Your school was involved in the _____ supported by the Norwegian Refugee Council. As part of this, there were a number of activities that occurred in the school. Thinking back on some of the activities that had occurred, what were three significant changes, either positive or negative, that resulted from this?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Of these changes, which would you say has been the most important change to you personally and why?

TURN PAGE OVER

Now I would like you to tell me the complete story about this change. In doing so, describe what things were like before NRC came to your school, how the change was brought about, and what things are like now. Try to tell the story in this sequence and I will write down what you have said and then read it back to you after for you to add/correct any details of what you have stated.

What title or name would you like to give to your story?

Interview Guide for NRC staff

(Note: not all questions will be asked as not all equally relevant)

- 1) How long and how have you been involved in NRC Palestine's (Education) programmes?
- 2) In your opinion, what would you say have been some of the biggest successes to date from the activities that the education team has led in Gaza/West Bank?
- 3) When thinking about these successes, what have been the factors that have been critical to achieving these outcomes?
- 4) What have been some of the biggest challenges that you/and or the team have faced in designing, implementing and/or assessing the success of such activity?
- 5) In what ways does the unique context of Palestine influence the work you/the Education team do/does?
- 6) How well do you think your programmes are currently addressing concerns around push out from the education system? What about the protection of children from conflict? What more do you think you could be done by NRC?
- 7) As education programmes have developed within NRC Palestine over the years, what have been some of the driving factors in designing and implementing them (in other words, what concerns or issues, and on what evidence have new programmes come online)?
- 8) Specific to NRC's advocacy work in education:
 - a) What have been some of the ways in which practices and policies within government, civil society and the international community have changed because of this research?
 - b) What have been the challenges in influencing policy/practice and how has NRC sought to overcome them?
- 9) At present which organisations/agencies have the biggest influence on educational provision to vulnerable children in Gaza/West Bank? Why?
- 10) How have each of the programmes aligned with NRC Programme Policy, the INEE Minimum Standards and INEE resources to ensure relevance to best practice in the field at the moment?
- 11) Do you think NRC's approach of targeting duty bearers and service providers, rather than working more closely with the children themselves has been the right one in Gaza/East Jerusalem? Why/why not?
- 12) How are you ensuring in each of the programmes that you are targeting the most vulnerable children through your activities?
- 13) What would you say has been NRC's comparative advantage in working in the education sector to date? How might the organisation build off that success in the future?

External Stakeholder Interview Guide

- 1) How familiar are you with NRC's activities in the education sector to date? Which programmes are you aware of and what do you think they have sought to do?
- 2) Based on your observations and knowledge of these activities, what would you say have been some of the biggest achievements of these programmes? What are these achievements so important to the children of Palestine? (*ONLY ASKED IF MSC STORY NOT COLLECTED FROM THIS INDIVIDUAL*)
- 3) How have you managed to sustain some of the impacts that you witnessed from NRC's interventions after they have left your/particular schools?
- 4) Are there particular groups of children where NRC has shown particular success in your opinion? Why might that be? Are there particular groups where NRC has not shown success?
- 5) In working with NRC, what would you say is unique or novel about their approach to dealing to educational concerns facing children and youth in Palestine?
- 6) In past programmes and initiatives, how have you/your organisation been involved in the design, implementation and assessment of success of NRC's activities?
- 7) NRC programmes to date have focussed their efforts on working with duty bearers and service providers of education to the most vulnerable children. Do you think this is a more appropriate approach than working with the children directly? Why/why not?
- 8) What are the biggest challenges, in your opinion, to addressing the educational needs and concerns of children and youth in Palestine? Given what you know about NRC, how have they or how could they address some of these issues through what they do?
- 9) To what degree has NRC's research and past work influenced decisions or courses of action you have taken as an organisation/school/institution? Give a specific example if possible.
- 10) One of NRC's current objectives is to address the issue of what they call push out (explain) and target the most vulnerable children in East Jerusalem and Gaza.
 - a. How well do you think their current and past initiatives address this issue?
 - b. What are some external factors that might work against NRC achieving this goal?
- 11) What would you say has been NRC's comparative advantage in working in the education sector to date? How might the organisation build off that success in the future?
- 12) What would say is distinctive about NRC's approach to working with civil society, government and the international community in Gaza and West Bank? Why do you think they can work in this way?

Annex 9: Terms of Reference

Evaluation of Education Programme 2010-2014 NRC Palestine

COUNTRY	:	Palestine
DURATION	:	25-30 Working Days
REPORTING TO	:	Lian Bradley, Evaluation Adviser

1. BACKGROUND

Since 2010 NRC Education has worked in Palestine on interventions supporting the provision of quality inclusive education the UNRWA and Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) in the West Bank and Gaza. These interventions have included teacher training, small grants to schools, parental skills and communication with community activities, psycho-educational response for the children most affected by conflict and research, policy and advocacy work. (Full details of NRC Palestine interventions are outlined in the background document.)

2. PURPOSE OF EVALUATION AND INTENDED USE

The main purpose of the final evaluation is to support learning and provide guidance for future programme direction. In addition the evaluation should be an opportunity for NRC to be accountable to beneficiaries, partners and donors. The primary users of the evaluation will be in the NRC Palestine Management team and Education team. Secondary users will be partners, donors, and NRC Head Office and Regional Office. Its findings and conclusions will be shared with all these actors. The evaluation will support the transference of learning; what specific lessons learned and best practices should be highlighted and continued or disseminated either within the programme or more widely within NRC.

3. SCOPE OF WORK AND LINES OF INQUIRY

Scope

The evaluation will focus according to the following parameters:

Sector(s): Education, all projects listed in background document.

Period: September 2010 – May 2014

Location: Gaza and West Bank including East Jerusalem.

Lines of inquiry

The three following research questions are to be evaluated in relationship to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and connectedness. The lines of inquiry will be finalised and further elaborated by the evaluation team in their inception report.

1. **Programme Achievement:** How relevant was the programme design in ensuring access to education for the most vulnerable conflict affected children and youth?

2. **Programme Achievement:** Was the programme effective in achieving its results in terms of preventing push out from education and providing protection to conflict-affected children? What was the positive and negative, short-term and long-term impact for beneficiaries?

3. **Programme Strategy:** What future possible lines of focus, especially with regard to vulnerable children and youth in communities facing displacement in Area C, and cross-over with the programme areas of Shelter and ICLA could be developed/coordinated?

Evaluation principles

The evaluation will be guided by the following ethical considerations:

- Openness of information given, to the highest possible degree to all parties.
- Public access to the results when there are not special considerations against this
- Broad participation of interested parties
- Reliability and independence
- In line with international best practice in safe-guarding children and youth when conducting research.
- Taking into account CPWG minimum standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and INEE minimum standards.

4. METHODOLOGY

The external evaluator will work with the NRC Global Education Advisor to carry out the assessment but the external evaluator will retain overall responsibility for methodology, write up and delivery of the final product.

The evaluation will take a contribution analysis approach, and the consultant will be required to construct a theory of change with the programme team to clearly establish lines of enquiry for the evaluation. The evaluation will be participatory, engaging NRC staff in the evaluation process, findings and lessons learning.

The evaluation requires the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation findings for the first priority question should be presented using the DAC criteria for the evaluation of humanitarian assistance, in particular focusing on the relevance of the programme design, the effectiveness of the programme and programme impact.

Best practice examples and lessons learnt should be presented in case study format, provided by NRC in Annex 1.

In addition, all NRC evaluations are required to respond to an additional 'Evidence Case Study' which addresses a strategically important question for NRC. Please see the template in Annex 2.

The methods to be used in evaluation include:

Evaluation Question	Evaluation approach	Data Collection Method and Source
---------------------	---------------------	-----------------------------------

<p>How relevant was the programme design in ensuring access to education for the most vulnerable conflict affected children and youth?</p> <p>Was the programme effective in achieving its results in terms of preventing push out from education and providing protection to conflict-affected children? What was the positive and negative, short-term and long-term impact for beneficiaries?</p>	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>Quantitative</p> <p>Qualitative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Desk study and document review:</u> The evaluation team shall review proposals, reports and other documents associated with the programme. - <u>Beneficiary focus groups:</u> The evaluation team will meet with beneficiaries and community representatives of the target population in each area. This can include focus groups, and interviews. - <u>Key stakeholder interviews:</u> The evaluation team will conduct interviews with NRC staff in West Bank (Jerusalem) and Gaza, national and international NGOs, relevant UN agencies, community based organizations, local authorities and inter-agency networks where applicable (e.g. Education, Child Protection, Cluster). - - <u>Analysis of M and E data:</u> Since the inception of the programme substantial data and evaluation has been collected and will be made available to the evaluation team. - <u>Beneficiary focus groups:</u> The evaluation team will meet with beneficiaries and community representatives of the target population in each area. This can include focus groups, and interviews. - <u>Key stakeholder interviews:</u> The evaluation team will conduct interviews with NRC staff in West Bank (Jerusalem) and Gaza, national and international NGOs, relevant UN agencies, community based organizations, local authorities and inter-agency networks where applicable (e.g. Education Security Cluster).
<p>Programme Strategy and Achievement: What future possible lines of focus, especially with regard to vulnerable children and youth in communities facing displacement in Area C, and cross-over with the</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Key stakeholder interviews:</u> The evaluation team will conduct interviews with NRC staff in West Bank (Jerusalem) and Gaza, national and international NGOs, relevant UN agencies, community based organizations, local authorities and inter-agency networks where applicable (e.g. Education Security Cluster).

programme areas of Shelter and ICLA could be developed/coordinated?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Beneficiary focus groups</u>: The evaluation team will meet with beneficiaries and community representatives of the target population in each area. This can include focus groups, and interviews.
Transference of Learning: What specific lessons learned and best practices should be highlighted and continued or disseminated either within the programme or more widely within NRC.	Qualitative	Best practice case studies should be produced – please see annex 1.

The consultant will be expected to design the data collection tools, including questionnaires/ surveys and other tools required to complete the evaluation. The consultant will also be expected to design a sampling framework for the evaluation. NRC welcomes suggestions to improve the TOR and methodological approach outlined for the evaluation.

5. DELIVERABLES AND REPORTING DEADLINES

The evaluation team will submit three reports and offer a presentation to NRC. Team members will also provide a presentation summarising key findings for senior management in the Jerusalem office at the end of the field visit.

- Inception report: Following the desk review and prior to beginning field work, the evaluation team will produce an inception report subject to approval by the NRC Evaluation Steering Committee. This report will detail a draft work plan with a summary of the primary information needs, the methodology to be used, and a work plan/schedule for field visits and major deadlines. With respect to methodology, the evaluation team will provide a description of how data will be collected and a sampling framework, data sources, and drafts of suggested data collection tools such as questionnaires and interview guides.

Once the report is finalised and accepted, the evaluation team must submit a request for any change in strategy or approach to the NRC Evaluation Steering Committee.

- Draft report A draft evaluation report will be submitted to the Evaluation Steering Committee, who will review the draft and provide feedback within two weeks of receipt of the draft report.
- Final report : The Final Evaluation Report report will follow the guidelines in the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports and should cover the areas outlined in NRC's Evaluation Report Outline (Annex 3).

All material collected in the undertaking of the evaluation process should be lodged with the Chair of the NRC Evaluation Steering Committee prior to the termination of the contract.

- Presentation of findings:
 - o At the end of the field research, the evaluation team will present key findings to management in the field.
 - o After the Final Evaluation Report is submitted, the evaluation team will present their findings to NRC.

6. BUDGET and TIME FRAME CONSIDERATIONS

Proposals should present a budget in the number of expected working days over the entire period (e.g. 25 full time days over a period of 3 months).

The evaluation is scheduled to start in April 2014, depending on the availability of the evaluator; however a draft report must be submitted by 15th July 2014 and finalized before August 31st 2014. A final video/ telephonic -presentation of findings is expected at the completion of the report.

The consultant is expected to provide a suggested timeline and work plan for the assessment based on these scheduling parameters and in keeping with the scope of the research questions and assessment criteria.

In the event of serious problems or delays, the team leader should inform the Steering Committee immediately. Any significant changes to review timetable shall be approved by the Steering Committee in advance.

7. EVALUATION MANAGEMENT AT NRC

An Evaluation Steering Committee has been established with the following members: Palestine Country Director, HO Palestine Programme Advisor, Global Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser, and the Global Education Advisor.

The main functions of the Steering Committee include:

- establishing the terms of reference of the evaluation
- selecting external evaluation team
- reviewing and commenting on the inception report and approving the proposed evaluation strategy

- reviewing and commenting on the draft report
- reviewing and approving the final report
- establishing a dissemination and utilization strategy

The Palestine Programme Adviser will act as the Committee Chair and is responsible to facilitate access to information, documentation sources, travel, and field logistics. In case of any changes in positions at Head Office, the Steering Committee will be adjusted accordingly.

8. EVALUATION CONSULTANT TEAM

Required Expertise within the Team

Education Expert: consultant will have a minimum of seven years of experience in education programme management and proven experience with conducting evaluations. Expertise on psychosocial, and community-based interventions is also desirable.

Necessary Skills

- Fluency in written and spoken English is required of all team members.
- Experience with the logical framework approach.
- Prior experience in Palestine/ Middle East is helpful.
- Proven experience of managing evaluations of education programmes in a humanitarian setting
- Experience of designing qualitative data collection methods and of managing participatory and learning focused evaluations.

Bids must include the following:

- Two page outline of evaluation framework, including comments on the TOR.
- One page description of methods for evaluation
- Proposed detailed time frame and work plan, including earliest date of availability
- Proposed evaluation budget
- CVs and evidence of past evaluations for each team member

Submit completed bids to Lian Bradley at lian.bradley@nrc.no