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21st Century Youth Competencies Assessment

Midline Assessment Report
Executive Summary

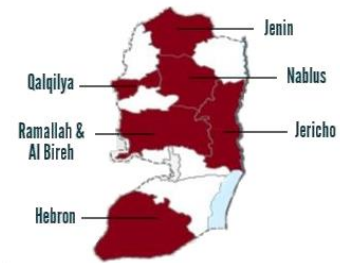
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IREX/West Bank
Partnerships
with Youth
Program (PWY)

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Executive Summary

Today's generation of Palestinian youth is healthier and more educated than prior generations, and has incredible potential to become a strong force for development, accelerating growth and reducing poverty. However, Palestinian youth today still face difficult circumstances as they prepare for and move into adulthood, which may ultimately slow the momentum youth could add to economic and social development. In the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinian youth comprise 29% of the population.¹ The youth unemployment rate sits at 43% for youth aged 15-24 in the West Bank,² while opportunities to participate and engage in public decision-making processes, government institutions and community issues are minimal.³ This leaves Palestinian youth with limited chances to develop skills and knowledge that will bring them into a successful adulthood and allow them to contribute to a stable and prosperous West Bank.








Partnerships with Youth

IREX's Partnerships with Youth (PWY) program is a USAID-funded program that expands educational and leadership opportunities for young people aged 14-29 in the West Bank by creating sustainable hubs for youth innovation and learning, called *Youth Development Resource Centers* (YDRCs). Over the course of the five-year program, PWY supports and expands YDRCs throughout the West Bank to offer otherwise unavailable services for youth to prepare them for entry into an engaged and economically-contributing adulthood.

Midline Youth Competencies Assessment

In spring 2015, PWY conducted a midline 21st Century Youth Competencies Assessment to ascertain how PWY affects participating youth, to develop a clear picture of youth who are served, and to inform and strengthen PWY programming in the years to come. The midline assessment follows up on the baseline youth competencies assessment that PWY conducted across the West Bank, in partnership with Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD), in spring 2014. While the baseline assessment surveyed a representative sample of youth in all 11 West Bank governorates, PWY's midline competencies assessment surveyed youth who have participated in PWY programming at YDRCs in six

Key Midline Assessment Findings: Palestinian Youth at the YDRCs

-  Youth at PWY YDRCs far outstrip their peers in competency levels after participating in activities.
-  PWY reaches disadvantaged youth.
-  PWY YDRCs are unique youth serving organizations in the West Bank.
-  PWY activities help youth develop social skills to build peaceful communities.
-  PWY employability training gives youth confidence in their employment potential and a future of higher earnings.

¹ Abu Fasheh, Waseem. The Status of Youth in Palestine 2013. Sharek Youth Forum.

² Palestine in Figures 2014 Report. PCBS. 2015. (Note: Statistics based on youth participating in the labor market in the WBG.)

³ USAID West Bank/Gaza Youth Development Policy. 2013.

governorates. PWY used the same 21st Century Youth Competencies Index to compare the competencies of youth at the YDRCs with the baseline findings for youth across the West Bank.

Why Assess Youth Competencies?

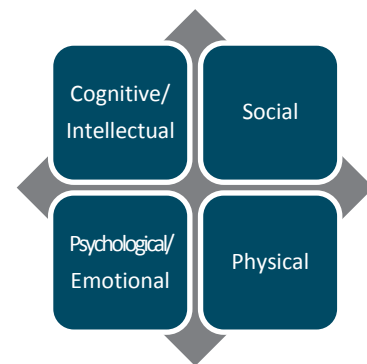
International research suggests that when youth develop greater knowledge and skills, also known as **competencies**, for becoming successful, healthy adults, they will arrive at better adult milestones, such as advanced educational attainment, greater employment, and higher levels of community participation.⁴ By measuring competencies, PWY can better assess its contribution in helping youth realize their potential to contribute effectively to the social and economic development of a stable and prosperous West Bank. Moreover, PWY's work around this issue comes at an essential time to help development practitioners and academics better understand youth development in the Middle East, where research on these issues is scarce and the need is high, as the region faces a youth bulge of unprecedented proportions.

21st Century Youth Competencies

The skills and knowledge necessary for youth to become successful, engaged adults in today's world.

Assessment Methodology

The baseline assessment provided benchmarking information about youth across the West Bank. For the baseline, PWY surveyed a representative sample of youth in all West Bank governorates on their competencies and the ways in which they interacted with their communities, and used the survey data to build a *21st Century Youth Competencies Index* that provided baseline and comparative scores for the youth population as a whole, disaggregated by demographics – age, gender, geographical location, and other factors. The midline assessment gauged how PWY programming contributed to the psychological, emotional, social, and physical competencies of **youth involved in PWY programming through the YDRCs**, looking at key competencies as predictors of successful, contributing adults. The midline assessment provides a comparative look against the baseline and offers the opportunity to measure the competencies of youth before and after their participation in activities at the YDRCs.



21st Century Youth Competency Framework - Domains

Assessment Results

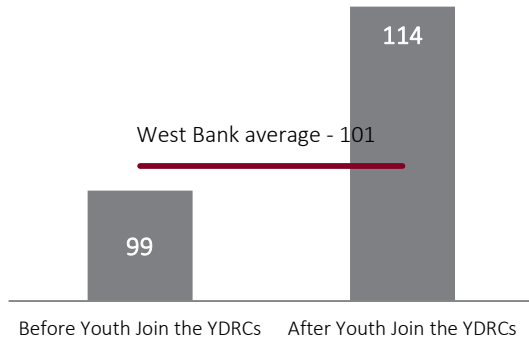
The results of the assessment proved powerful for PWY. Not only did the data offer insight into the effects of YDRC programming, but it offered clear guidance on ways to reach youth more effectively in the future.

KEY FINDING: Youth at PWY YDRCs far outstrip their peers in competency levels after participating in PWY activities.

⁴ USAID. *State of the Field Report: Holistic, Cross-Sectoral Youth Development*. Washington, DC. February 2013, p.15.

Growth in Youth Competency Levels

Youth increase their competency levels after participating in activities at the YDRCs



When PWY measured youth competencies after they participated in activities at the YDRCs, youth reported significant growth in their competency levels. After participating in PWY-supported activities, youth reported competency levels 15% higher than before participating, and 13% higher than average West Bank youth. This increase implies that the educational, leadership, and community outreach opportunities provided at PWY partner YDRCs achieve their goal: to help youth build competencies that lead to a successful adulthood.

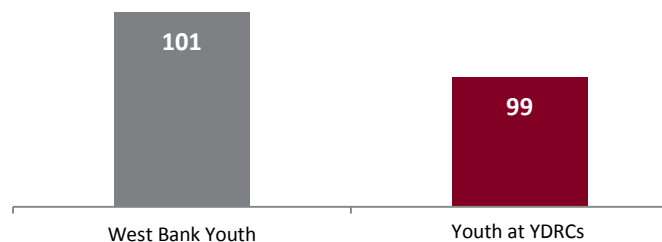
KEY FINDING: PWY reaches disadvantaged youth.

Disadvantaged youth, or youth with “fewer chances to achieve goods”,⁵ such as education, civic and economic participation, and others, are more likely to have negative life outcomes, including health issues, feeling hopeless about their future, and a higher likelihood of becoming involved in risky or destructive activities.⁶

While research on disadvantage and its long-term outcomes in the Middle East is scant, the 21st Century Youth Competency Index is one way to identify advantage versus disadvantage in the West Bank. If all youth had the same opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge they need for adulthood, they should have the same average competency level. However, in the midline assessment, PWY discovered that the majority of the youth arriving to the YDRCs may be disadvantaged in comparison to the average West Bank competency levels. On average, youth participating in PWY activities reported a competency index score of 99 before participating in YDRC activities – lower than the West Bank average of 101. There are data limitations to this comparison, including the lack of a direct control group and thus the inability to analyze and compare this data with statistical certainty. However, this difference may indicate that the youth attending the YDRCs have fewer opportunities to develop their

West Bank Youth and Youth at YDRCs Competencies Compared

Before youth began activities at the YDRCs, their competencies were lower than the average West Bank youth



⁵ Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe (GOETE) Glossary Wiki. <http://www.goete.eu/glossary>

⁶ Gruber, Jonathan. “Introduction: What Have We Learned about the Problems of and Prospects for Disadvantaged Youth?”. *The Problems of Disadvantaged Youth: An Economic Perspective*. University of Chicago Press. 2009. <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c0585.pdf>

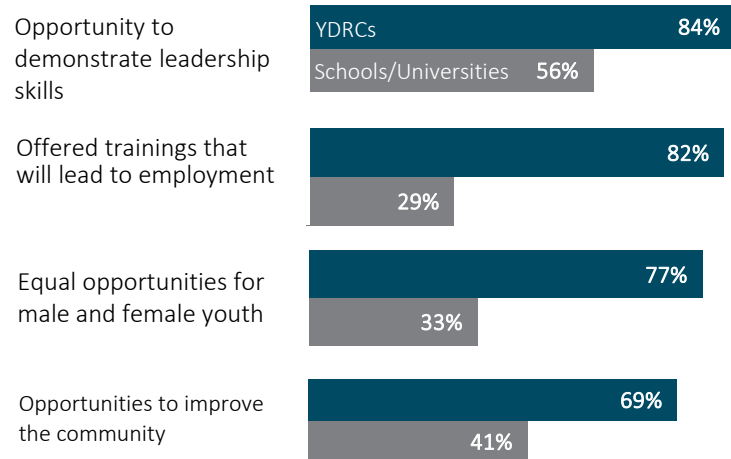
competencies, thus making them disadvantaged and more vulnerable to negative long-term effects.

KEY FINDING: PWY YDRCs are unique youth-serving organizations in the West Bank.

Overwhelmingly, youth asserted that PWY partner YDRCs allowed them to interact with the community (69%) and exercise leadership skills (84%) more than any other institution or organization in the West Bank. Eighty-two percent of young people surveyed identified YDRCs as an institution where they received training that prepared them for the work world, while only 29% of youth said the same of schools. Youth also believe that YDRCs contribute to gender equality, with 77% of youth indicating that males and females are treated equally at the YDRCs. Only 33% believed this was true at schools and universities. For all other youth-serving institutions in the West Bank (youth clubs, religious institutions and other youth organizations), youth felt that they were not offered opportunities to develop capacities there, making the YDRCs distinctive service providers for West Bank youth.

How YDRC Services Compare to the School Offerings

Youth felt YDRCs offered more opportunities to develop competencies than the education system



KEY FINDING: PWY activities help youth develop social skills to build peaceful communities.

Youth with more effective social skills and tighter connections to community are less likely to resort to violence as a means of conflict resolution.⁷ YDRCs directly offer social skills training through their leadership training programs, youth-led initiatives, and employability programming, and indirectly provide youth with these skills through activities such as sports and community outreach activities. This emphasis led to significant increases in youth competencies in these areas after YDRC participation, as noted in the table below. YDRC activities help youth build the skills necessary to create a more peaceful Palestinian future.

Youth with social skills necessary for building peaceful communities

Youth reported an increase in social competencies after participating in YDRC activities

Question	Youth that agree BEFORE YDRC participation	Youth that agree AFTER YDRC participation	% change	West Bank Average
Social Skills				
“I know how to solve personal conflicts.”	62%	92%	+48%	77%

⁷ Guerra, Nancy and Williams, Kirk. “Youth Development and Violence Prevention: Core Competencies.” Southern California Center of Excellence on Youth Violence Prevention, University of California, Riverside. Winter 2002. <http://stopyouthviolence.ucr.edu/factsheets/violenceprevention.pdf>

“I know how to get along with people who are different from me.”	53%	93%	+75%	69%
Community Connection				
“I feel like I belong in my community.”	77%	90%	+17%	80%
“When I evaluate my relationship with my community, I believe I am an asset.”	58%	88%	+51%	61%
“I have the ability to make a difference in my community.”	46%	83%	+80%	44%

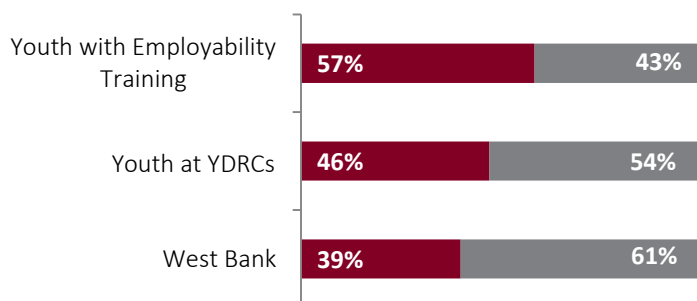
KEY FINDING: PWY employability training gives youth confidence in their employment and a potential future of higher earnings.

Palestinian youth face substantial difficulties on the employment front. Youth unemployment in the West Bank sits at 43% for those aged 15-24, and 30% for those aged 25-34.⁸ Understandably, only 39% of West Bank youth reported they felt confident that they would find a job when entering the workforce during PWY’s baseline assessment. Their discouragement in future labor prospects can have a real economic effect, as studies in the United States have shown that youth with an optimistic outlook earn at higher income levels later in life.⁹

Youth at the YDRCs on average feel more confident about getting a job in the Palestinian workforce compared with West Bank youth overall – 46% of youth surveyed were confident that they would find a position upon entering the job market. However, youth that participated in employability training at the YDRCs have an even greater confidence in their preparation to get a job – 57% said they felt they would get a job upon entering the labor market, an increase of 46% over the West Bank average. This confidence has the potential to translate into greater economic participation for these youth and higher earnings on average throughout their lives.

Youth at YDRCs More Confident in Job Prospects

Youth answered the question “Do you feel confident that you will be able to find a job when you need one?”



Lessons Learned to Inform Ongoing Programming

In addition to findings on the positive effects of YDRC programming, the midline assessment also yielded information that will help YDRCs better target their efforts to improve youth opportunities.

KEY FINDING: YDRCs primarily serve younger youth.

In determining the sample for the midline assessment, PWY found that the majority of youth who participate in YDRC activities are primarily in the 14-17 and 18-25 age ranges. However, the YDRCs are also charged with serving youth aged 26-29. This age group only represents a sliver of the total YDRC

⁸ Palestine in Figures 2014 Report. PCBS. 2015. (Note: Statistics based on youth participating in the labor market in the WBG.)

⁹ De Neve, J. and Oswald, A. “Estimating the influence of life satisfaction and positive affect on later income using sibling fixed effects. PNAS. Vol. 109, No. 49. December 4, 2012. www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1211437109

youth population at 3% of youth at the YDRCs, while PWY estimates that youth aged 26-29 make up no less than 18% of the population in the West Bank.¹⁰ In the future, PWY and its partner YDRCs will work to provide outreach and programming for youth of an older age range.

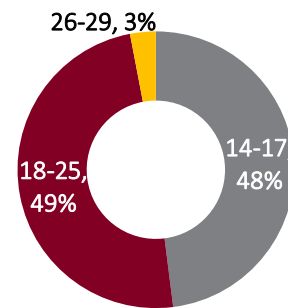
KEY FINDING: Women and refugee youth at the YDRCs do not build skills at the same rate as other youth.

While female youth at the YDRCs build competencies that far outstrip their peers (113 for female youth at the YDRCs compared to 100 for West Bank female youth), they consistently report lower levels of competencies than PWY male youth, who arrive at competency levels of 116.

Youth living in refugee camps are even less likely to arrive at the competency levels of the average youth at the YDRCs. Youth living in refugee camps arrive to the YDRCs with lower competency scores on average (98), and see only a 12% increase in competency index score, as opposed to other youth in the West Bank, who see a 15% increase after participating in PWY programming.

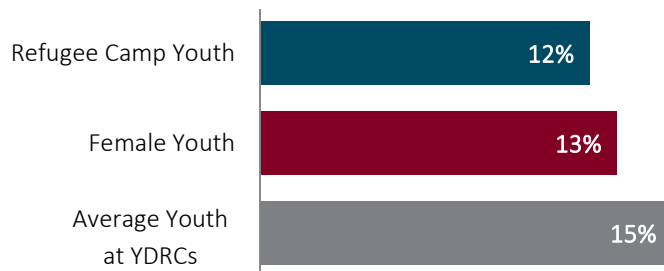
YDRCs Serve Younger Youth

YDRCs serve primarily youth 14-25.



Percent Growth in Competencies After YDRC Participation

Women and youth from refugee camps increase their competencies by a lower percentage than the average youth at a YDRC



These findings are not surprising. While females in general report less confidence in their skills, young women are often subject to a host of societal pressures that may prevent them from developing competencies at the same rate as males. Female leadership and work outside the home is often stigmatized in the West Bank, leading to fewer occasions for them to build these skills. For those living in refugee

camps, displacement is often associated with a host of social issues which limit youth opportunities, including lack of services for youth within the camps themselves.

Given that these groups continue to be at a disadvantage even after participating in YDRC activities, PWY can work to ensure that these groups receive greater encouragement and more targeted opportunities to participate and lead in activities, giving them an increased chance of building the competencies they need for healthy adulthood.

¹⁰ Palestine in Figures 2014 Report. PCBS. 2015. (Note: Statistics based on youth participating in the labor market in the WBG.)

KEY FINDING: In the poorest and most disadvantaged governorates, YDRCs may not attract those that need services the most.

While most youth whom the YDRCs serve tend to be disadvantaged, the opposite proved true in Jericho and Jenin. Each of these governorates had competency levels well below average on the baseline assessment. However, the youth involved at the YDRCs in these governorates started with higher than average competency index scores. This higher competency level may indicate that in places where youth are most disadvantaged, they are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities. Thus, YDRCs have an added responsibility to recruit those youth who truly need their services.

For additional findings from the midline 21st Century Youth Competencies Assessment, please see the full report.