

Section I

Summary of Project Goals

The aim of our project was to establish a soccer program for girls aged 9-14 in the three refugee camps of Azza, Aida, and Dheisheh in Bethlehem, Palestine. Led and coached by young women from the camps and Bethlehem, the girls would be able to play soccer in a safe space, develop their leadership and communication skills, and work with older role models from their communities.

Additional Fundraising Efforts

We raised additional funds for our project through a personal GoFundMe fundraising page. On this page, which is now defunct, we published information about us, our project, and specifically where money generated through donations would go in the execution of the project. After approximately one week of promoting the page, we had raised over \$4,000 USD. When we closed the GoFundMe page, we had raised in total \$4,400 USD.

Project Execution

Before the project began, we faced unanticipated challenges in crossing the Israeli border. One component of the occupation is that Palestinians have no control over their borders. Israel maintains control to prevent refugees from reentering and often rejects people who openly identify as activists or who fit the so-called "activist profile." Mary was rejected upon attempting to enter via the King Hussein Bridge outside of Amman, where she was detained and questioned by Israeli border police for 11 hours. The border police had nearly all of the information about Mary and Baheya's activism and work in Palestine in the past, and about the project for the summer. A week after Mary was rejected, Mary and Baheya crossed through the Sheikh Hussein bridge in northern Jordan.

The project which we envisioned in our proposal differed from the one we carried out on the ground in just a few ways. First, Jackline Jazrawi (former captain of the Palestinian women's national team and current facilitator at Right to Play) and Murad Bannoura (coach of the Palestinian women's national team) led a 20-hour-long coaching clinic over the course of 2 weekends for 12 young women from the refugee camps and from Bethlehem. Though our original vision was to only work with young women from the refugee camps in the coaching clinic, we ran into some logistical challenges because of the timing. The coaching training was scheduled during Ramadan, and thus it was difficult to find young women from the refugee camps who were able to attend a 20-hour-long clinic while they were fasting and helping to prepare the evening iftaar meal for their families. Out of the 12 young women who attended the coaching training, we selected seven as coaches of the three teams. Out of the seven young women, one was from Dheisheh refugee camp; two were from Aida refugee camp; and four were from Bethlehem and the neighboring town of Beit Jala. We assigned two coaches each to the Aida and Azza camp teams, and we assigned two head coaches and one assistant coach to the Dheisheh camp team.

This summer, 45 refugee girls between the ages of 8 and 15 participated in our program, which took place from July 1 to August 20. We provided transportation from each of the refugee camps to the fields at Dar al Kalima University in Bethlehem. As previously stated, due to Ramadan we ran into some challenges in working exclusively with young women from the camps for the coaching clinic. Otherwise, we ran into very few other challenges. Some of the less athletic and engaged players struggled with attendance and commitment to their team; in general, though, attendance for the teams was fairly consistent. On the whole, we faced little cultural resistance to the idea of the girls playing soccer. Some girls were deterred because they traditionally thought of soccer as a man's game, and therefore a space in which they are not welcome. Overall, though, we were able to recruit 45 girls to join the program fairly

easily. We found the field space to be really well-suited for the players and coaches due to the level of privacy it offered.

Towards the end of our program, we hosted a festival for the players and their families to come together, enjoy food, music, and games, and celebrate the girls' achievements. Approximately 150 people attended the festival. The coaches presented certificates of achievement and balls to each individual player.

Both of us are excited about the future of this organization. We have leftover money from our GoFundMe campaign which we will use for programming next summer. Additionally, a community soccer tournament will be hosted on the Colorado College campus to raise money, equipment, and awareness for the project. Baheya, who is a sophomore, is organizing a Senior Board, composed of students who are interested in fundraising and brainstorming ways to advance BINAT. A documentary made about the project will be screened on campus in the spring. Lastly, we will spend the next year applying for various grants and fundraising to guarantee we have the funds to run this program next summer and for the years to come. We recognize that we may face challenges with reentering the country, and therefore it is our goal that within the next two years, we will be able to run the project remotely. That is, the coordination of the program over the summer can be executed by our contacts and collaborators without us being there to support them. Long term, our goal is for the organization to be a Palestinian organization with a Palestinian leadership team.

Section II

Reflection

Defining peace in the context of Palestine differs greatly from defining peace as a general state or concept. Within the context of Palestine, peace is both irrelevant and impossible without justice first. Therefore, in a sense our project does not necessarily target peace first; rather, it seeks to develop women leaders in refugee communities which can serve as key players and leaders in a grassroots, nonviolent struggle against the occupation and Israel's many other violations of Palestinian rights. In the short term, our project contributes to peace by providing girls and young women from refugee camps with a safe, professional space to play soccer, have fun, and bond with each other. In the refugee camps, children as a whole do not have any good or real space to play: camps are crowded, dirty, and full of concrete. Furthermore, while boys are able to play quite freely in the street, girls are often prevented from doing so. Thus, our project creates a healthy, safe space for girls to have fun and simply play. In the long term, we hope that the continuation of our project will create a space which develops girls' potential as soccer players as well as their ability to network with each other, address the needs of their communities, and lead a grassroots nonviolent struggle. This project has really challenged us to ask the question, "What does it mean to be in solidarity?" As foreign activists in Palestine, we are constantly examining our own privilege and asking ourselves what our role can be. But this project in particular forced us to consider in what capacity we can continue this organization, and how we can best support this work.

Personal Statements

"One day I was walking in the camp and a couple young boys called me over and asked if next year we'd have a program for boys too because, as they said, "we want to play like the girls." They'd been impressed watching the girls gather and head for the bus together in uniform as a team. The commitment, the team unity, the air of confidence, the girls did that themselves. I'm happy that our project contributed in a small way to them being able to develop and show off their potential as strong leaders and role models in their communities." — Mary Jones

"To provide a space for these girls to leave the refugee camp, bond with each other, play soccer, and interact with young women from their communities — that in itself is a victory. To create spaces of joy under occupation is a victory. But this space has potential far beyond that. It has the potential to be a platform for rich grassroots activism, for young women and girls to network with each other, take ownership of the struggles faced by their communities, and develop strategies to counter them." — Baheya Malaty

