

Reading for Life

**Evaluation of Swedish Support to Children's Literature
on the West Bank and Gaza for the Period 1995–2003**

Britt Isaksson

**Department for Democracy and
Social Development**

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Sida Evaluation 04/26

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Foreword and Acknowledgement

This report is the result of a study commissioned by the Division for Culture and Media within the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida). The development objective of this particular evaluation of the support to Children's Literature on the West Bank and Gaza 1995–2003, is to assess whether the support is strengthening Palestinian domestic capacity and long-term sustainability in this field.

The project was implemented by the Swedish Free Church development assistance organisation Diakonia and involves The Palestinian Culture and Education Ministries, The Tamer Institute for Community Education, The Al-Iman Childhood Centre, Jerusalem and other NGOs

The evaluation also touches Children's Literature Project supported by Sida through the Consulate General in Jerusalem, as it caused me some confusion concerning libraries and books. That project is evaluated in the Follow up Study of the Swedish Support to the National Plan of Action for Children in the West Bank and Gaza 2000–2002 (January 2002).

I, Britt Isaksson, independent consultant carried out the evaluation, and its field phase took place between February 4th and 14th 2004. My report describes the various projects included in the programme and includes some recommendations for both Sida and Diakonia.

Many thanks to all those who gave of their time to meet me, answer my questions and discuss their projects as well as many other social and cultural issues in the field of children's literature and children's rights.

The evaluation will provide an input to Sidas forthcoming country strategy for 2004–2007.

Executive Summary

The aim of this evaluation is to assess whether the Swedish support to children's literature on the West Bank and Gaza for the period 1995–2003, implemented by Diakonia as Palestinian Children's Literature Programme, has strengthened the Palestinian domestic capacity and the long-term sustainability in the field of children's literature. Emphasis is put on recommending the shape of future support.

Sweden has for many years contributed with humanitarian assistance to improve the living conditions for the Palestinian people, fighting the increasing poverty. Support to culture and media in the Palestinian society is included in Sida's bilateral programme. Since 1995 Children's Culture became one of the priority areas. The Palestinian Children's Secretariat, financed by Sida and acting as co-ordinating body for the Sida-supported projects, is supposed to be instrumental in the planning and monitoring of the projects. As I understand, there has been no formal co-ordination with Diakonia's Palestinian Children's Literature Programme, which could have been beneficial in terms of economy and efficiency.

The support to the cultural sector in Palestine has not been evaluated for the past ten years. Sida planned for evaluations both 1997 and 2000, when plans were hampered by the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. The assignment was also postponed in 2002–2003 because of the rough situation in the Middle East.

The effects of the Israeli occupation

A Children's Literature Programme including cultural activities for children in a crisis area, is both a short term and a long-term task. In order to evaluate the 10 years ongoing Sida project, it has to be viewed in a historic/political context: from the modest start after the first Intifada, the development during the comparative quiet and hopeful Post-Oslo Period, when travelling was possible, the inescapable decentralisation with the enclosure of the second Intifada, starting September 2000, the destruction of ministries and schools and the curfews during Operation Defence Shield and The Road Map to Peace that ended at The Security Wall with the ghettoization.

The problems faced by Palestinian children during the Israeli occupation have become chronic. First of all the poverty and malnutrition. But the Israeli policy of movement restrictions, closure, curfews and the intensification of Israeli military operations, including shelling and house demolition, have led to a deepening of the detrimental impact on the lives of children. Parents and teachers observe traumatic behaviour, from nightmares and bedwetting to increased aggressiveness and hyperactivity, as well as decreasing attention spans and concentration capacity. The feelings of frustration and humiliation expressed by Palestinian parents, especially fathers, when not being able to protect their family are destructive and dangerous for society.

The Convention of the Right of the Child

The development objectives for Sida are to create cultural diversity, creative activities and sustainable development based on human rights. Concerning this project, the basis for human rights has been The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC stresses the importance of efforts targeting and benefiting girls and women. This has been considered in the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme, as girls prefer reading to other activities, most teachers are women and parent education mostly are chosen by mothers.

The programme has succeeded in promoting children's own activities and involving children and youth, especially in the National Reading Campaigns. The programme so far has not managed to achieve children's participation in every day decision making. It is an objective hard to reach in a socie-

ty under siege and with traditional family values and attitudes, favouring obedience at the expense of children's own participation.

Evaluation proceedings

The evaluation will also assess the relevance and cost effectiveness. The total budget for Children's Literature Programme is approximately SEK 20 million for the period 1995–2003.

My evaluation is based on extensive documentation from the archives of Sida and Diakonia. With the move of Diakonia's head office in Stockholm the archives partly went to The Swedish National Archive (Riksarkivet), including the documents from the first five years of the Children's Literature Programme. These were also complicated to find in the Diakonia's present Jerusalem office.

The methodology used has been participatory. My interviews had the character of plain discussions, dealing with positive and negative experiences and the exchange of ideas for the future focus and design of the Swedish support.

During a visit to Palestine February 4th to 14th, I had the opportunity meeting representatives of all the projects on the West Bank, visiting Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jericho, Hebron, and Bethlehem. Because of the complicated situation in Gaza with closed borders/checkpoints I had to meet people from there for a Teacher Training evaluation in a videoconference, arranged for February 10th by The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Culture in Ramallah.

Diakonia implemented the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme, in close co-operation with the recipients. In 1996 it slowly changed from relief to capacity building, from donating translated children's books to supporting a local Palestinian production of children's literature. A broader approach of the programme was initiated in 1998–2000 when the economic support was increased from SEK 2,8 million to 5 million.

There have been delays and obstacles as late signings of contracts both by Sida and Diakonia in Stockholm and Jerusalem, causing Palestinian irritation and postponement of projects in the West Bank and Gaza effected by the Israeli occupation. But an admirable flexibility is displayed on numerous occasions by the Palestinians, in order to implement the activities in Palestinian society, in spite of almost impossible working and living conditions.

Children's Literature Programme

The continuity has given the Children's Literature Programme implemented by Diakonia an "organic" development from relief to capacity building within the Palestinian cultural sector. Diakonia has supplied economic and pedagogic assistance to partners as The Ministry of Culture and The Ministry of Education, The UNRWA, The Tamer Institute for Community Education, The Al-Iman Childhood Centre and others.

Diakonia as such has developed a great deal of competence in the field of children's literature and Palestine will continue to be the focus of their activities, while Diakonia is looking for possibilities to transpose the experiences of the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme into other countries in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA).

In Palestine the ability to read is unusually high for countries in the MENA region and estimated to almost 98% of all children. The Palestinian compulsory school is 10 years, adding 2 years secondary, leading to a final exam. One fifth of the students continue to university. United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are responsible for a quarter of all primary schools, which are the poorest ones. Schools established by the private sector and various NGO's account for around six per cent of all students.

The Ministry of Culture (MoC) and The Ministry of Education (MoE) are active partners in the project, which developed into a full scale Children's Literature Programme and branched off through the whole educational Palestinian society. Now MoE and MoC have made The Children's Literature Programme their own, with MoC as Project proprietor.

The current educational system lacks coherence, with Jordan experiences underlying the West Bank educational system, while education in Gaza is strongly influenced by Egypt. It is authoritarian and traditional family values and attitudes favouring obedience at the expenses of children's own participation. MoE is working on a modernisation of the Palestinian Educational Curriculum, in order to provide extra-curriculum activities: children's literature, art, music, gymnastic, and put a special emphasis on children's own creative activities.

Outside the formal educational system, Palestinian children suffer from a severe shortage of facilities providing opportunities for them to develop their talents. Girls are the ones who read for recreation, often their only possible activity out of school during enclosures and curfew. The direct target group for the Children's Literature Programme are children and youth. Indirect target groups are teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators, publisher and creative persons who can foster the programme.

It is impossible to give a professional statistical assessment whether a programme has achieved its project objectives "raising reading interest among Palestinian children", as no baseline study, nor project impact analysis exists. Sida should have initiated base line statistics on Palestinian children's reading habits and reading preferences before broadening the programme. Questionnaires were included with the distribution of books, but were not compulsory to answer and return to Diakonia's Jerusalem office. Some early testing and evaluations of pilot project in governmental and UNRWA schools included interviews with students, teachers and parents. Most of those documents were despatched with the Israeli destruction of the ministries.

The purposes throughout the Children's Literature Programme have been to provide literature, to train Palestinian authors and illustrators and to endorse reading promotion activities. From 1996 support increased for the development of a pedagogic expertise on children's literature within the Palestinian society

When the Children's Literature Programme started, there was an almost total lack of books of the Palestinian cultural heritage and there existed very few Palestinian authors and illustrators writing for children, a profession with very low status in Palestinian society. More and better quality Palestinian children's books are being produced. From 1900–1996 only 894 Palestinian children's books were published. The past five years Diakonia's Children's Literature Programme has supported 80 titles from 11 different Palestinian publisher.

The asset to the project was the small publishing house Dar Al-Muna's increasing production of Swedish high quality children's books, translated to Arabic. The Swedish books were chosen because they are written from the perspective of the child, they promote self-confidence, not least for the girls, and they promote creativity. They are considered expensive and exclusive, but necessary models until a similar Palestinian Children's book production is developed.

Reading promotion activities

From 1997 Sida's support to The Tamer Institute of Community Education goes via Diakonia, foremost to the annual National Reading Campaign, culminating with a National Reading Week. The campaign involves institutions through out Palestinian society, from the planning process to execution and evaluation. The co-ordinating team of the National Reading Campaign conduct follow up visits to all the regions, to encourage and enforce the idea of reading among children and youth.

During the National Reading Campaign children are asked to submit writings and illustrations for My First Book Competition to be published. From 1998 to 2003 The Tamer Institute published five titles with the support of Diakonia.

Teacher Training

In 1996/1997 Diakonia in co-operation with MoC and MoE started central pilot courses in teaching children's literature, conducted by Dr. Ulla Lundqvist, Linköping University, who has been a consultant for the programme. Since 1995 MoC and MoE have developed Children's Literature courses as in-service training to Palestinian teachers, including principals and supervisors. Diakonia's further agreement with MoC is based on the ambition from MoE to reach all 1–10 teachers within a period of 5–6 years.

A draft manual for Palestinian teachers, based on material initiated by Ulla Lundqvist was adjusted, commented and built out to a Trainers Manual. In addition a Teachers Manual was produced, consisting of analysis and activities for 14 specially selected children's books and some International and Palestinian articles about children's literature. No English translation is available. A Second Teachers Manual is on its way, consisting of more book-related activities, based on nine Swedish children's books and six Palestinian children's books. Each participant in training of trainers had to have a book package.

Sida reallocated Palestinian project funds for buying the six Palestinian books in 10 000 copies each and in addition SKR 4 million was added by Sida to Diakonia's Children's Literature Programme for buying the other nine titles in 10000 copies each.

A pilot project arrangement was made with The Al-Iman Centre for Childhood and 14 pre-schools in the Jerusalem area, for training of teachers and parents in children's literature, including workshops on how to develop children's language.

Recommendations

Regarding books and reading promotion

- Sida should continue its support to The Palestinian Children's Literature Programme implemented by Diakonia for the next planning period. The competence and capacity of MoC and MoE as a sustainable longterm player in the field of children's literature is manifest and MoC is marked as the proprietor of the projects concerning teaching children's literature in the National Plan of Action for Children in the West Bank/Gaza. Appropriate ways of funding should be considered.
- Joining the very similar Children's Literature Project to Palestinian Children's Literature Programme and giving Diakonia the implanting responsibility would be beneficial for economy and efficiency.
- Further support is needed and recommended for the ongoing capacity building in the field of publishing of Palestinian children's literature and increasing the commercial competence on the Palestinian children's book market.
- The web site of Children's Literature Resource Centres at The Tamer Institute should be developed in order to link correspondent international Children's Literature Resource Centres web sites and databases, creating a professional Children's Literature Network.
- There is a reasonably allocation of reasonable purchases between Swedish and Palestinian children's books, according to number of titles, but it will take long before the Swedish children's book import can be phased out.

- Diakonia has a capacity for an increasing storage and distribution of children's books and can handle the distribution for all Children's Literature project in the West Bank and Gaza, as proposed by the Follow Up Study ...January 2002.
- Children's librarians work has to be made a profession, in order to make trained librarians stay and before qualified services can be expected. Improved co-operation with publiclibraries and school libraries is recommended. More school libraries have to be developed
- Support to The Tamer Institute of Community Education, as organiser of Reading Promotion Activities is necessary and highly recommended.

Regarding education and training

- Support to Diakonia's further agreement with MoC within Children's Literature Program based on the ambition from MoE to reach all teachers 1–10 class within a period of 5–6 years is highly recommended.
- Support to the proposed in-service education of all UNRWA teachers and librarians in the region according to the Palestinian model, developed by MoE and MoC is highly recommended.
- Research and analyse the possibilities of developing a computerised "distance courses" in Children's Literature at Birzeit University, built on the Palestinian model, within the context of formal education and open up for teachers education in the whole MENA region.
- Invite a group of Palestinian "teacher trainer pilots" to visit Sweden, in order to exchange ideas about in-class teaching of Children's Literature with the Arab language teachers (hemspråkslärare) in the Stockholm region.

Regarding Regional Children's Literature Resource Centre

An organic and up-to-date MENA regionalisation is recommended in following steps:

- Support the proposed in-service education of all UNRWA teachers and librarians in the region according to the Palestinian model, developed by MoE and MoC as recommended above. This is a way of concrete introducing the program in neighbouring countries as Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arabic Republic.
- Support the proposed capacity building of Tamer Institute Children's Literature Centre and their web site to a virtual Regional Children's Literature Resource Centre, linked to international data bases on children's literature.
- Support research of the possibilities of developing a computerised "distance course" in Children's Literature at Birzeit University for the whole region, built on the Palestinian model, as recommended above.

The development of the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme would have been impossible without the dedicated work of key persons at the ministries, such as Leila Yuomna at MoC and Shahnaz Al-Far at MoE, applicating the Convention of the Rights of the Child to the Palestinian children in education and cultural activities.

From this evaluation it may be concluded that the Swedish support to Children's literature on the West Bank and Gaza for the period 1995–2003, has strengthened the Palestinian domestic capacity and the long-term sustainability in the field of Children's Literature. But The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Culture will need continuing support in order to fulfil the objectives of "develop reading in Palestine through developing children's literature", according to the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (NPA).

The sustainability and the further development of Children's Literature Programme depends on what will be the future of Palestine, as different scenarios will call for different strategies in the short and long run: Will it following the Road Map to Peace become an independent state? Will it continue being under Israeli occupation, or will it be totally incorporated in Israel? The Palestinians hope for the first scenario, fear the third, and have to calculate with the second.

1. Programme Context

Sweden has for many years contributed with humanitarian assistance to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people. In 1992/1993, Swedish support was transformed into a bilateral development co-operation programme in the Palestinian territories, i.e. the West Bank and Gaza. Since 1995, the support to culture and media is part of the general country programme and budget.

The focus of the programme is the cultural development and encouragement of children and youth through the promotion of children's literature, theatre, dance and music. In addition, the programme includes training courses for journalists and support to preservation of Palestinian cultural heritage. The programme is implemented through Swedish NGOs and public cultural institutions.

The programme concerning Children's Literature on the West Bank and Gaza actually began as early as 1991, initiated by the Swedish/Jordanian publisher Mona Henning, at Dar Al-Mona, specialised in translating some of the best Swedish (and later international) children's books into Arabic, and the Palestinian librarian Mary Fasheh at Tamer Institute for Community Education, Ramallah. Children's books from Dar Al-Muna started to spread by Swedish NGOs such as Diakonia in Palestine, where there is a high degree of reading capacity, but a manifested lack of quality children's books.

Since 1992/93 the Sida funded programme on Children's Literature on the West Bank and Gaza is implemented by Diakonia, which has supplied economic and pedagogic assistance to partners such as The Ministry of Culture and The Ministry of Education, The Tamer Institute, The Al-Iman Centre for Childhood among others, in order to strengthen the domestic capacity and the long-term sustainability in the field of children's literature, thus supporting the issue of cultural and intellectual development of children and youth.

The continuity has given the Children's Literature Programme an "organic" development from relief to capacity building within the Palestinian cultural sector of publishing, libraries, in-service training of teachers and librarians and reading promotion.

The Children's Literature Programme has always focussed on "software": training, capacity-building, exposure to new ideas and international experiences, etc. The Children's Literature Programme follows the objectives and strategy provided by Sida for the Sida development co-operation with the West Bank and Gaza, outlined in the Country Strategy for The West Bank and Gaza 2001–2003, Sidas Action Programme for Poverty, Democracy, Justice and Gender and Policy for Sidas international development co-operation in the field of culture.

2. Evaluation

2.1 Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The support to the cultural sector in Palestine has not been evaluated during the last ten years. Sida planned for evaluation both in 1997 and in 2000, as part of the preparation for new agreements, but the evaluations were never carried out. Plans were hampered by the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada (September 5th, 2000) and the assignment was also postponed in 2002–2003 because of the rough situation in the Middle East. The problems were further increased by the Israeli Operation Defensive Shield and The Defence Wall (The “Apartheid Wall”).

The objective of the present evaluation is to assess whether the Swedish support to children’s literature on the West Bank and Gaza for the period 1995–2003, has strengthened the Palestinian domestic capacity and the long-term sustainability in the field of children’s books. The evaluation will also assess the relevance and cost effectiveness of the present projects within the scope of the support to the Children’s Literature Programme on the West Bank and Gaza. The total budget for The Palestinian Children’s Literature Programme is approximately SEK 20 million for the period 1995–2003.

Although assessment of the achievements and results is an important task, Sida wants the emphasis of the evaluation to be laid on recommendations for how possible future Swedish support to Children’s literature in the Palestine region shall be focussed and designed.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology used for the evaluation has been participatory and includes many stakeholders. The fundamental documents have been The Objectives and Strategy for the Sida Development Co-operation with the West Bank and Gaza, outlined in the Country Strategy for the West Bank and Gaza and Sidas Action Programme for Poverty, Democracy, Justice and Gender.

The official definition has changed from project to programme, when including more and more projects. I will use programme throughout this evaluation. My evaluation is based on extensive documentation from all the projects in Palestine, retrieved from the archives of Sida and Diakonia (in Stockholm and Jerusalem). Among the documents are also the applications for funding as well as narrative and financial reports from Diakonia and, furthermore, Sida memoranda and decisions.

During a visit to Palestine from February 4th to 14th, I had the opportunity to meet representatives of all the projects on the West Bank (visiting Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jericho, Hebron, and Bethlehem). Because of the rough situation in Gaza with closed borders/checkpoints I had to meet people from there for a Teacher Training evaluation by videoconference, arranged on February 10th by The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Culture in Ramallah.

Information was obtained through semi-structured interviews with persons representing the projects and institutions such as The Ministry of Culture, The Ministry of Education, The Tamer Institute for Community Education, UNRWA, The Al-Iman Centre for Childhood, The Young Artist Forum, The National Conservatory of Music, including the Consulate General of Sweden and Diakonia Jerusalem office. In Sweden I have met mainly with former and present representatives of Diakonia and Sida as well as specialists engaged in the projects: Mona Henning, Ulla Lundqvist, Anna Birgitta Eriksson.

My interviews had the character of plain discussions, dealing with positive and negative experiences and the exchange of ideas, and provided a good deal of information and concrete suggestions for the future focus and design of Swedish support.

2.3 Methodological Limitations

With the move of Diakonia's head office in Stockholm the archives were partly moved to The Swedish National Archive (Riksarkivet), including the documents from the first five years. Those were also complicated to find in the present Diakonia Jerusalem office.

On February 4th–14th it was totally impossible to enter Gaza, for me as well as for Palestinians from Jerusalem and the West Bank. Most Palestinians from the West Bank are not permitted to enter Jerusalem and vice versa. I was staying in East Jerusalem and lucky enough to be able to attend meetings and activities in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, Jericho and Bethlehem.

3. The Role of Children's Literature in Palestinian Society

In Palestinian society, as in many countries in the Arab world, there is a strong oral tradition, a popular storytelling, which however is thinning, owing to more obtrusive new media. The Arabic language also has a built in obstacle, because of the large difference between spoken and written Arabic.

Palestinians were innovators and precursors in the field of children's literature; the first Arab publishing houses specialising in children's literature, "Dar al fata al Arabi", was Palestinian. Now there is no Palestinian children's literature per se. From 1900 to 1996, only 894 titles of Palestinian children's books/ or books about childhood and 63 translations were published in Palestine and the Palestinian Diaspora.

Most of what is available as children's literature has come into Palestinian hands through the process of translating international texts. Arabic children's literature is mostly from Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon.

Obstacles for Palestinian children's book market are mainly:

- Low literary status of children's literature among authors and illustrators
- Mangling interest in promoting reading for pleasure from parents and teachers
- No money available

In Palestine the ability to read is unusually high for countries in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) and estimated to almost 98% for all children. The Palestinian National Authorities (PNA) are making great efforts to invest in children's education, not permitting the Israeli occupation to destroy the educational structure.

The Israeli government has justified its actions in the Palestinian territory as an attack on the infrastructure of terror. The Israeli army's attack on education and educational institutions, as well as other Palestinian institutions of self-government and non-governmental organisations, strongly indicates that the target is in fact Palestinian infrastructure, organisational capacity and self-government, with lasting consequences on the ability of Palestinian society to survive and develop.

The Palestinian compulsory school is 10 years, adding 2 years secondary, where studies are tough and leading to a final exam, “Tawjihi”. One fifth of the students continue to university.

The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are responsible for over one-fourth of all primary schools, which are the poorest ones. Schools established by the private sector and various NGOs account for around six per cent of all students.

The current educational system lacks coherence, as it is based on different philosophies and traditions, with Jordan experiences underlying the West Bank school system while education in Gaza is strongly influenced by Egypt.

The educational system is authoritarian and traditional family values and attitudes favour obedience at the expense of children’s own participation. Outside the formal educational system, Palestinian children suffer from a severe shortage of facilities providing opportunities for them to develop their talents. While all children learn to read and write, there is little available for them to read. Participation in cultural activities is, according to various surveys, very low. While almost 90 percent of all Palestinian children watch television on a regular basis, very few play musical instruments, or visit libraries. Recent surveys show that girls are the ones reading for recreation, often their only possible activity out of school during enclosures and curfew.

MoE is working on a modernisation of the Palestinian Educational Curriculum, in order to provide extra-curriculum activities: children’s literature, art, music, gymnastics, and to put a special emphasis on children’s own creative activities.

4. Co-operation in the Field of Children’s Literature

4.1 Development Objectives

The support to culture and media in Palestine is included in the bilateral programme laid down in the country strategy for the West Bank and Gaza since 1995. Children’s Culture became one of the priority areas, and this is where Children’s Literature fits in. Before that, Sida had given limited support to Children’s literature directly through Diakonia.

The development objectives for the co-operation with Palestine are to support the peace process and the development of democracy in the West Bank and Gaza. Sida underlines the need to support the movement towards unity in the Palestinian Society, with many religious, political and cultural tendencies. Cultural projects targeting children are supposed to promote both democracy and national unity. Moreover, the effects of the Israeli occupation are profoundly affecting Palestinian children, and in such a situation, any contribution to children’s intellectual and emotional development is relevant and important for the future of the Palestinian society.

In addition to the main target group of children and youth, the programme is supposed to target and benefit young girls and women.

4.2 Cultural Co-operation

The development objectives for Sidas cultural co-operation are to create opportunities for cultural diversity and creative activities and sustainable development based on human rights.

The main target groups are children and young people, women, minority groups, cultural workers and journalists. To reach these groups and fulfil its ambitious goal Sida works in many different fields with support to:

Education and creative activities

- Education in the cultural field, e.g. in music, theatre, art and dance, both inside and outside school
- Promotion of reading, drama, music

Institutional infrastructure for culture

- National and regional co-operation organisations for culture and/or media
- Institution building in the field of culture and media
- Institutional networks, research into culture and debates on culture through exchange of experience and human resource development intend to strengthen the professional base in the partner country/region

Information and social debate in civil society

- National and regional conferences, festivals and fairs which promote creativity, identity, self-esteem, as well as dreams and visions

Cultural heritage

- Documentation of the oral narrative tradition, local languages, minority cultures, musical traditions and traditional forms of dance
- Internationalisation
- Institutional co-operation between cultural institutions in Sweden and the developing countries which extends professional exchanges and increases respect for cultural diversity

In addition to this, contributions to projects shall be in line with one or more of Sidas four action programmes:

- Poverty reduction
- Justice and peace
- Equality between women and men
- Protection of the environment

5. Swedish Support through Institutional Partners and NGOs

Decomposing general cultural programmes to concrete local projects and undertakings requires cultural co-operation. Since the Children's Literature Programme in the West Bank/Gaza has grown unusually organic, it has required co-operation with many institutions and organisations for Diakonia, as Sidas implementing partner.

In 1992 Diakonia began spontaneously distributing children's books in Palestine, with support from Sida. The project expanded 1993–94 from one to five titles in 5000 copies. Hereby Diakonia contacted small institutions and NGOs on the West Bank and Gaza, which often are kept in the background of

the big institutions. The spread of the books increased and a valuable network took shape around the Children's Literature Programme.

1995–1997 the Children's Literature Programme was increased to about 17 titles translated and 22 local children's books distributed and a pilot course/in-service course for teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators and others in the field of children's literature started.

Sida funding for the Children's Literature Programme became 3-year-projects in 1998–2000 and 2001–2003 and the programme was reinforced in 1996 with an administrative official at Diakonia's office in Jerusalem.

5.1 Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education

In 1995 The Palestine National Authority (PNA) established The Ministry of Culture (MoC) and The Ministry of Education (MoE), which became more and more engaged as active partners in the project. A unique co-operation began between the two Ministries. During the following years it developed into a full scale Children's Literature Programme, which branched off through the whole educational Palestinian society from pre-school to universities.

The Ministries have offices all over the West Bank and Gaza. There was a need to empower the staff in MoC and MoE, with capacity building for their change from being an NGO to being a Ministry, from project work to national planning. The MoC has efficient networking with other organisations, as one of their main policies is to co-operate with NGOs.

Like the whole Palestinian society, MoC and MoE are in financial difficulties, almost bankrupt, but still working, thanks to skilful co-operation with dedicated NGOs and obsessed with the objective of giving the Palestinian children an adequate education.

Now MoE and MoC have made The Children's Literature Programme their own, with MoC as Projects proprietor, as noted in the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (draft for 2004–2010).

The MoE is responsible for 15.000 teachers and 504.204 children from classes 1–10. There is an average of 1000 schools including classes from 1–4 and 1000 schools from 5–10.

The MoE is now working with the problem of merging Children's Literature into the Palestinian Educational Curriculum and MoC with the problem of drafting laws on intellectual property and copyrights.

5.2 UNRWA

The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) was established in 1949, and has its Department of Education in Amman with field offices in the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic. They are responsible for 6.411 elementary schools with 486.000 students in 59 refugee camps. The UNRWA schools have full gender equality but are overcrowded and working in double and triple shifts.

Diakonia has provided children's books for UNRWA for the past ten years. The most intense period of distribution was between 1996-97-98, when UNRWA recieved around 5000 copies: 3000 through the educational department at UNRWA Ramallah, who dealt with the West Bank area, 2000 distributed directly to UNRWA schools.

Diakonia has also provided the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon with children's books for the past seven years. Diakonia has projects within Diakonia's Frame programme and Rehabilitation program at Baqaa camp in Amman and also with Naher El-Bared and Bedawi refugee camps in Lebanon.

For the past two years Diakonia has been supporting the Arab Resource Centre for Popular Arts (ARCPA) in Lebanon with the project "Promoting reading and creativity in Palestinian refugee camp libraries", within the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme.

The development objectives for the ARCPA's project have been to create a sound infrastructure of resources to support reading and writing as habits for life among Palestinian youths. Thus, enabling them to deal with current difficulties and successfully meet future challenges.

The project objectives:

- Develop camp libraries, train library staff and NGO facilitators in animating, reading and writing processes.
- Promote reading in the media accessible to the youths, their parents and teachers.
- Publish the children's written expressions and help them express themselves in other ways such as drama.
- Further develop the network of libraries and youth clubs in co-ordination with ARCPA's Al-Jana Centre.

UNRWA has extensive teachers training programmes. According to Fatmeh Badwan, trained expert from the first pilot course in Children's Literature with Ulla Lundqvist, the UNRWA has far reaching plans for duplicating the experiences that MoC & MoE have had with training Palestinian teachers in children's literature, if possible with a start by 2005. One of the first budget problems will be how to get the children's books required for the training of UNRWA trainers.

5.3 Tamer Institute for Community Education

The Tamer Institute for Community Education, established 1989, was an obvious NGO partner both to Diakonia and MoC/ MoE in the task of developing Palestinian children's literature, as well as in the reading promotion directed to the children themselves.

The development objective for The Tamer Institute for Community Education is to emphasise the bond between children and books, which in turn will contribute to developing other skills in the field of language, expressive writing, imagination, perception, thus contributing to their empowerment.

The Tamer Institute was reconstructed in 1996 with a new board and director, due to internal tensions. 1998–1999 Tamer got into financial problems when one of the main donor organisations, The Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA), withdrew from the co-operation. Sida decided to increase the support to Tamer to SEK 1.450 million. As a result of this decision, the British Christian Aid decided to increase its support to The Tamer Institute. Several other NGOs have begun co-operating with the institute.

In early 2000 Mrs Jehan Helou was appointed director. In 2002 Palestine, represented by Tamer Institute, was received as a member of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) against Israeli protests.

After capacity building with the developing of The Tamer Children's Literature Resource Centre, supported both by Diakonia and by Sida via MoC, the reinforced Tamers Institute was a hub for the crea-

tion of a model network of Children's Libraries in 73 Palestinian localities. Tamer has also been responsible for the training of the librarians, mostly volunteers.

The Tamer Institute has a publishing unit, producing fiction for children and youth, books written by children and youth, manuals for teachers and librarians, reading promotion kits as posters, pamphlets, reading passports. Tamer has also prepared three educational kits for children of various ages, hindered from going to school during curfews and sieges. To develop Palestinian children's books The Tamer Institute has organised workshops for illustrators and authors.

5.4 Al-Iman Childhood Centre

The Al-Iman Childhood Centre is run by The Association for the Committee of Sciences and Islamic Culture, and was established in 1994 to serve the community in Jerusalem and its surroundings, where there are 14 pre-schools.

The director Bu'ad El-Khales was a participant in the first pilot course in Children's Literature and one of the real experts. She has started a pilot Children's Literature course for pre-school teachers together with the University of Bethlehem,

The Al-Iman Childhood Centres development objectives are:

- to develop a philosophy of education based on the needs of the child, and to work with her/him to fulfil the philosophy
- to establish educational models for children which fulfil their right and develop their personalities,
- to raise the level of consciousness in the community regarding children's rights.

The Centre works within kindergartens and pre-schools promoting parent's involvement in the Children's Literature Programme and organising educational exhibitions, teacher training and workshops for production of educational material.

5.5 Young Artists Forum (YAF)

With the newly established Young Artists Forum, YAF, (2003) in Ramallah, the education of Palestinian illustrators has been professionalised. There are young Palestinian artists, fresh from art schools who want to strengthen the professional status of art and create opportunities for working as artists.

Diakonia support YAF with the illustrators courses. In addition YAF got UNESCO support to train teachers in fine arts (art teachers) in 35 schools in the Ramallah area and USAID support for working with children in an art project, promoting health. YAF have also started evening classes for talented children/young adults, not yet fully financed, and are implementing workshops in a rehabilitation centre for disabled and people with special needs. Their development objectives are to become an art centre for Palestine.

5.6 Children's Secretariat and programme support

The Children's Secretariat (CS), which is financed by Sida and acts as the co-ordinating body for the Sida-supported projects, is supposed to be instrumental in the planning and monitoring of the projects, which include the Children's Cultural Sector programme: Children's Libraries and Cultural Centres, with the project objectives of raising reading interest among Palestinian children.

As I understand, there has been no formal co-ordination with Sidas Palestinian Children's Literature Programme, implemented by Diakonia, which could have been beneficial for both in terms of economy and efficiency.

January 1999, in The Agenda for Social Renewal, and Children's Secretariat in the West Bank Gaza – A Review, the Study Team recommended “that future support to Palestinian children should continue to be channelled to the NGO sector through existing programmes (e.g. Diakonia). The NGOs working with the literature program – and which are already receiving Swedish support – should become more involved in the actual implementation of the libraries project in the future, not least in areas such as quality assessments and acquisition of children's books.” They also recommended a better integration at the local level between the Children's Libraries Project and the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme.

It is regrettable that this was not done, considering the intensity of the co-operation between Diakonia, MoE and MoC.

In The Follow Up Study of the Swedish Support to the National Plan of Action for Children in the West Bank/Gaza 2000–2002, submitted January 12th 2004, the Study Team concluded: “In case future support to this project (Children's Literature) it is recommended to review whether joining this project with the very similar one supported by Diakonia would be beneficial”. A proposal also I myself sincerely recommend.

6. Cultural Policy in Palestine

Since 1994, with the establishment of The Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture can be found in all the Palestinian Directorates. Their offices are co-ordinating several activities planned by larger NGOs situated in the centre.

Culture is still widely seen in Palestinian society as a service, that has to be offered rather than bought, which makes it difficult to have a sustainable independent cultural sector, even for sectors considered as real industry like books and film productions. This is due to the bad economic situation, but also to the status or identity of the institutions producing such cultural products, and which are mainly NGOs focusing on social work, education or even art, but with no marketing interest. Policies encouraging the cultural product to be distributed as a commercial product should be developed with the possibility of allowing free access to culture to some groups, as children.

Laws on Intellectual property and copyrights are only drafted.

6.1 Children's Literature

“Developing reading through Developing Palestinian Children's Literature” was stated as the priority of the Ministry of Culture in the second National Plan of Action for the Palestinian Child (NPL), which was written after Diakonia's implementation of the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme and the pilot training, and will be reinforced in the third NPL for 2004–2010 (in progress).

In addition The Ministry of Culture created a National programme, Developing Palestinian Children's Literature (DPCL), which would place Children's literature among the educational and cultural priorities. It was developed by a group of 15 experts in the field and was discussed and developed through

regional workshops and a national conference in Ramallah in April 4th 1998. DPCL would constitute the framework and the guideline for identifying and adopting related projects proposed by NGOs.

Children's literature is defined in NPL as "any creative product geared towards children in the areas of story, poetry, creative writing and theatre. Any of this literature can be published in books, journals and/or transmitted through audio-visual media."

The basic tenants/criteria for writing for children was specified as "creativity, freedom of expression and a structure of language that matches the developmental stages of children." Special attention is directed towards the importance of fantasy in this literature, as well as of the procurement of pleasure and interest away from preaching and lecturing. One of the objectives was "to revive the habit of reading among Palestinian children by improving the quality of children's books and making these books available for all Palestinian children. The Palestinian child must have access to Palestinian, Arabic and international literature with high standards in content and form."

Selling 300 copies of a book is considered an achievement on the tiny Palestinian book market. Books distributors located mainly in Ramallah have contributed to a better commercialisation of the Palestinian book, but suffer from the limitation on the circulation of books, due to Israeli regulations and procedures at the borders and at checkpoints and from the decreasing private economy. However, at this stage, and for the children, promoting reading through diverse activities, free access to books and reading will create readers, that will ultimately produce a market for the books.

7. Children's Literature Programme

A Children's Literature Programme including cultural activities for children in a crisis area, are both a short term and a long-term task. In order to evaluate the 10 years ongoing Sida project with "Children's Literature in the West Bank and Gaza", implemented by Diakonia, it has to be viewed in a historic/political context: From the modest start of the programme after the first Intifada, the development during the comparative quiet and hopeful period of the Oslo Accord ("the Post-Oslo Period") when travelling was possible, the inescapable decentralisation with the enclosure of the second Intifada (Al-Aqsa), starting September 2000, the destruction of ministries and schools and the curfews during Operation Defence Shield and The Road Map to Peace that ended at The Security Wall with the ghettoization.

7.1 Development objectives

The development objectives of the Children's Literature Programme implemented by Diakonia have varied more in choices of words, than in changes of content through the years.

The official development objectives in 1992/1993 was "To contribute to give the children possibilities to retrieve their fantasy and arouse their lust for playing, relieve the mental strain many children are living under, give the children positive reading experiences and enjoy a beautiful children's book of quality".

In 1993/1994 it was more consisely pronounced "In order to procure children's books, which will arise fantasy and creativity in order to increase children's mental health and situation."

In 1994/1995 the Palestinian Nation building, with its need to formulate and confirm its nationality and its cultural heritage after decades of occupation, when those activities were forbidden, was annotated by the Children's Literature Programme, and the development objectives were to include promoting Palestinian children's book production. The Children's Literature Programme went through a healthy transgression from "relief" to "capacity building".

The development objectives in 1996–1997 were "To increase the supply and the use of children's literature for leisure, for training in reading and writing and for a cultural exchange". With the addition of "Increasing the demand for and capacity in producing literature for children and youth."

From 1998–2000 and 2001–2003 the more ambitious development objectives were "To enrich the experience of childhood for Palestinian children and cultivate an active, imaginative and critical way of thinking."

The assumption was that good quality books for children could confirm the child's right to be a child, as declared in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. A child, who meets respect for being just a child, more easily can show respect for other human beings. That is a basic assumption for developing ability to participate in democracy building processes. Respect is also a cornerstone in equality between girls and boys/women and men. Creative, respected and confirmed children will consequently contribute to a dynamic and democratic Palestinian society

"The democratic and gender aspects of an ungovernable Pippi Långstrump-character is not to be underestimated in a part of our world, where strong forces work in an authoritarian direction", as was underlined by Robert Gustafson in Diakonia's Final Report for Children's Literature Programme for The West Bank and Gaza 1996/1997.

The direct target group for the Children's Literature Programme are children and youth. Indirect target group are teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators, publisher and creative persons who can foster the programme.

7.2 Project objectives

It is impossible to give a professional statistical assessment whether a programme has achieved even its project objectives "to raising reading interest among Palestinian children", as no baseline study, nor project impact analysis exists. Questionnaires were included with the distribution of books, but not compulsory to answer and return to Diakonia's Jerusalem office. Some early testing and evaluating pilot project in governmental and UNRWA schools included interviews with students, teachers and parents. Most of those documents were despatched with the Israeli destruction of MoC and MoE.

It is comparatively easy to assess the achievements of promoting a strong local competence for developing a modern, creative reading both in schools and during leisure time, as within the capacity building of MoC and MoE.

The purposes throughout the Children's Literature Programme have been:

- Provide with literature
- Train Palestinian authors and illustrators
- Endorse reading promotion activities

From 1996 increased with:

- Support the development of a pedagogic expertise on children's literature within the Palestinian society

An admirable flexibility is displayed at numerous occasions by the Palestinians, in order to implement the activities in the Palestinian society, in spite of next to impossible working and living conditions during the years of the Al-Aqsa Intifada

7.3 Results, planned and achieved

The different projects included in the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme are living in a symbiosis: import and distributions of books, support to local publishing, reading promotion, as to be discussed/evaluated as follows (for Teachers training see 8. Education and Training):

7.3.1 Import of books

The asset to the project was the small publishing house Dar Al-Muna's increasing production of Swedish high quality children's books, translated to Arabic. International children's book classics have also been gradually included in Dar Al-Muna's catalogue, which 2004 comprised 77 titles.

The Palestinian children's book production is for obvious reasons insufficient. There is a relatively weak interest in supporting reading for leisure by parents and teachers and very limited economy to buy books. This leads to a weak market for books. Generally the available books in Arabic are imported from Egypt and Lebanon and of doubtful quality. The import from the MENA region has become more and more obstructed, due to Israeli regulations and procedures at the borders and checkpoints.

When the Children's Literature Programme started, there was an almost total lack of books of the Palestinian cultural heritage and there existed very few Palestinian authors and illustrators with experiences of writing for children, a profession with very low status in Palestinian society.

Swedish and Palestinian children's books

From 1993 to 1995 there were 23 titles in 17.200 copies imported from Sweden to a total cost of SEK 1,1 million.

From 1996–97 there were 9 titles in 10.000 copies imported and 13.000 copies of Palestinian books distributed.

From 1998–2000 there were 17.000 copies distributed, both imported and local Palestinian.

From 2001–2003 the figures should be about the same, final report not yet submitted.

Since 1995 a local reference group to Diakonia chose the imported children's books. A consulting committee to The Tamer Institute has chosen children's books for the libraries. Children's books for the Teacher Training 1999–2004 have been chosen by MoE/ MoC with a reference group from the Children's Literature pilot training project.

All members of the different reference groups have participated in "training of trainers".

The packages of 15 children's books for "pilot teacher training" were bought by separate Sida funding.

Problems

- Almost no Palestinian or Arabic quality children's books were available from the start. The Swedish children's books, elected by the publisher Mona Henning for translation into Arabic, were chosen because the issue is the perspective of the child, they promote selfconfidence, not the least for the girls, and they promote the creativity.
- The fact that they are taking place in Sweden, was considered both enriching and creating distances by an evaluation initiated by MoC (a special linguistic evaluation was made by the Palestinian poet

Ahmed Abur, Gaza). But there was a growing, eager demand for such quality children's books also dealing with the Palestinian reality, tradition and culture.

- There was also an increasing collegial envy from other European publishers, because of the large amount of copies bought from one small Swedish publishing house.

Changes

- The teaching of teachers, authors, illustrators, librarians and others, in order to get them to understand the stimulating and evolutionary forces those Swedish books can transmit, have changed the minds of the Palestinian readers. The Swedish books are no longer considered expensive and exclusive, but necessary models until a similar Palestinian Children's book production is created.
- More and better quality Palestinian children's books are produced. 500 copies of each funded by Diakonia Palestinian produced title (out of around 20000 copies printed) are added to the stock.

Results/conclusions

- When visiting school libraries and/or public libraries in Ramallah, Hebron, Jericho and Jerusalem I found that the most popular Swedish Children's books are more or less battered and will have to be replaced with new copies
- There is a fairly reasonable allocation of purchases between Swedish and Arabic/Palestinian children's books, according to number of titles, but it will take some time before the bulk import of the Arabic/Swedish children's book import can end.
- More quality children's book translated to Arabic, are now available from other European publishing houses in Norway, Netherlands, Ireland, Great Britain.

7.3.1.1 Book storage

Since 1998 Diakonia's book storage has been at Abu Rayya Rehabilitation Centre, Ramallah, managed by part time worker Moussa Rummaneh (also an ambulance driver), who also functions as a forwarding link for book deliveries, arriving at harbours and/or airports.

The amount of books in stock fluctuates, according to the actual political situation in Palestine. In times of shelling, curfews and closures the need for children's books is increasingly high and the distribution to recipients/readers in the West Bank and Gaza is against all odds amazingly fulfilled.

In February 2004 there were 2.325 books in store in Abu Rayya and 8.250 books ordered by Diakonia to be shipped from Dar Al-Muna. Everything was kept in perfect order: keeping of the stock, reports on stock, signing of the deliveries.

Changes/results

There is no reason whatsoever to change place of storage or distributor. In Abu Rayya there is a capacity for an increased storage and distribution of children's books for even more teaching activities, libraries, schools and reading promotion activities.

7.3.2 Distribution of books

Between 1992–1994 Diakonia distributed 6.000 copies of quality children's books, translated from Swedish to Arabic. 1995–2003 the amount was 19.800 copies of Swedish/International books translated to Arabic and 18.650 copies of Palestinian books, locally produced.

For pilot- and teachers in-service training, 94.400 copies of Arabic /Swedish children's books and 14150 copies of Palestinian produced children's books were bought and distributed by Diakonia, thanks to special Sida funding.

The costs were

1992/93–1995 SEK 1,1 million

1996/1997 SEK 2 million

1998/2000 SEK 5 million

2001/2003 SEK 7,4 million

From the outset, the “spontaneous” distribution was followed up with elementary questionnaires for receiving partners such as NGOs, schools, teachers, parents, children in order to get to know how they liked the books, how they were used, what kinds of books were missing. When visiting institutions, libraries, and schools the same questions were asked. As expected, there was an increasing demand for books for older children and for Palestinian books.

Problems

- From April to June 2002 no distribution of children’s books was possible in the West Bank and Gaza because of Israeli incursions and blocked roads. October 19th 2002, 95.000 books for teaching pilot courses arrived from Sweden at the Ashdod port in Israel but were promptly distributed to MoE/MoC and related Palestinian school libraries and teachers training centre all over the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- From the existing year by year documents in Diakonia’s archive, it was complicated to get an overview who received what, but on request Diakonia has completed a comprehensive list of recipients and books 1993–2003.
- There is a straggling day to day distribution on demand, in addition to the more regular packages. Book receivers such as libraries, schools, youth clubs and others also get Palestinian produced children’s books directly from other donors. Every Palestinian children’s book with publishing support from Diakonia is printed in around 20000 copies, from which Diakonia gets 500 copies for distribution. The rest goes straight from the publisher to other NGOs and ministries. A common, commercial book market is almost non-existent. That is why there is a certain unreliability regarding what the libraries in Sida’s other Children’s Literature project have received through Tamer, MoC and MoE and Diakonia, respectively.

Changes

- Except for the regular distribution to MoC and MoE, Diakonia plans to concentrate the distribution of books to groups, which can document their effective and beneficial active use of them. These groups have to answer questionnaires from Diakonia to evaluate the quality of the children’s books, how children have received the books and the role the book plays in the activities the children will take part in.
- Diakonia will always keep a certain amount of books in store, because of the concrete, positive contact the “hand-to-mouth” distribution gives with people and institutions working with children. It means not only handing out books to different partners, but also the exchange of information and knowledge, building relationships, enriching the work.

As the Narrative Report April 2002–March 2003 says: “We learn a lot about projects for children that are implemented or are still at the planning stages in Palestine. Many times our support for such projects with children’s books contributes towards the success of these projects. Furthermore, through book distribution we have been able to link organisations working in the same field.”

Results

- Concentrating the distribution to certain periods will make it less time consuming both for the Diakonia executive official and the distributor.
- Diakonia can take the whole responsibility for the distribution of children's books within the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme, as proposed by the Follow Up Study of the Swedish Support to the National Plan of Action for Children in the West Bank and Gaza 2000–2002 (January 2002).

7.3.2.1 Libraries for children

The best and most democratic way to distribute books is through libraries. Capacity building and networking between libraries are necessary as the base for qualified work in children's libraries.

After the adoption of the first National Plan of Action for Children's Culture, 60 libraries were established/upgraded by MoC through The Tamer Institute, with the support of Sida, in different Palestinian regions. The capacity of Tamer Institute was upgraded to a Children's Literature Resource Centre.

According to the second National Plan of Action for Children's Culture, there are now 73 children's libraries, established by the MoC (with the same funding partners). The libraries have succeeded in laying a foundation for the development of this sector, as well as minimum standards for service delivery, including directions as to the training given to librarians, the quality of books, and necessary equipment and furnishing for libraries.

Problems

- After the establishment of the libraries, it soon became clear that having nice libraries did not mean that children would become good readers and that the means employed had to be part of a larger, more holistic process involving numerous institutions.
- One area where the expectations of the new libraries have fallen short is the organisation of these libraries into networks. The expectation was that children would make visits between different libraries and that the libraries would organise joint activities and festivals. This expectation has been lowered for the time being given the realities of the conflict loaded situation in the West Bank and Gaza.
- Librarians are mostly volunteers or persons without knowledge of the profession, working with the children in the libraries. They live under uncertain employment conditions, most of them depending on local community contributions. They were included in the teachers training but after the training, many of them went to other jobs. Children's librarians work has to be made a profession, before qualified services can be expected.
- The insecure situation in Palestine has contributed to minimising the number of visitors to the libraries: it is too risky to allow children out. Improved co-operation with schools was recommended. School libraries are being established/improved and through Diakonia a "box library" on wheel has been developed, to facilitate the provision of books to classrooms.

7.3.3 Support to the development of Palestinian publishing of children's literature

The objectives of Increasing the demand for and capacity in producing literature for children and youth are well on its way.

The ambition to increase the quality of Palestinian children's books is growing, forced by the comparison of the imported Arabic/Swedish books with the Palestinian books, which are cheap, but with low technical and artistic quality.

From 1900 to 1996, only 894 titles of Palestinian children's books/ or books about childhood and 63 translations were published in Palestine and the Palestinian Diaspora, as listed in Mary Fasheh's bibliography, an assessment study, made for The Tamer Institute in 1998, for the evaluating seminar of "pilot teacher training", in order to get an overview of available publications.

674 Palestinian children's books and 63 translations have been published during the past five years, of which Diakonia's Children's Literature Programme has supported 80 titles from 11 different Palestinian publishers. The support to the Palestinian publisher includes expert contributions from manuscript to printing, and selection and editing.

Diakonia's co-operation and capacity building with publishers of Palestinian children's books have mainly included The Tamer Institute for Community Education, The Al-Iman Centre for Childhood, The Early Childhood Resource Centre, The Palestinian Youth Union and The Palestinian Writers Union.

Tamers has a Planning Committee for their publishing unit, producing fiction for children and youth, books written by children and youth, manuals for teachers/librarians, Reading Promotion Kits such as posters, pamphlets, reading passports. Tamer has also prepared three Educational Kits for children of different ages, who are hindered from going to school during curfews and sieges.

In spite of enclosures and curfews The Tamer Institute has been able to go on publishing, thanks to have their printing office in the same city (Ramallah).

Problems concerning 7.3.3 Support to local production of children's literature

- Low status of children's literature in Palestinian society
- Traditional concept of the child and traditional family values and attitudes favour obedience at the expense of children's own participation
- Children's tastes and interest in books are not respected
- Low interest in promoting reading for pleasure from parents and teachers
- Structure and quality of publishing for children is weak in the whole MENA region
- No market for books, no bookshops
- Books are considered expensive and luxurious when there is a shortage of income

Changes

- Seminars and workshops for teachers, librarians, writers and illustrators were included in the Children's Literature Programme from 1995, as a support to developing a local competence for producing a modern and child-centred Palestinian children's literature, within a firmly national base. To be continued with workshops for authors and illustrators during 1996–2003.
- Highly appreciated workshops for Palestinian authors and illustrators with visiting artists from Sweden, GB and others have been arranged in Gaza and the West Bank by Tamer, funded both by Diakonia and Sida.
- Diakonia supports The Young Artists Forum in developing the art of illustrations. 12 young artists are studying Graphic Design (starting with anatomy, not included in art schools curriculum) in order to promote illustrations of children's books. The course will also include lay out and analysis of children's literature.

Results:

- MoC is working through The Tamer Institute with Mary Fasheh writing a new study, which analyses and evaluates the now existing children's books, in order to promote Palestinian quality children's books.
- According to Leyla Yumna, MoC, promoting children's reading through diverse activities, free access to books and reading will create readers and ultimately produce a market for children's books.
- As the non existing book market in Palestine is due to the bad economic situation, but also to the status or identity of the institutions producing such cultural products, which are mainly NGOs focusing on social work, education or even art, but with no marketing interest. Policies encouraging the cultural product (books) to be distributed as a real product, should be developed.
- According to The National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children 3 (draft): "Children's books produced in Palestine today are much nicer, much richer in content, and although they still tackle national identity and resistance, they also deal with issues of diversity, gender, tolerance, friendship, joy, and fantasy."
- According to the Swedish/Arab publisher Mona Henning, Dar Al-Muna, Palestine has opportunities for becoming a publishing model for quality children's literature in the Arab speaking world.

7.3.4 Reading promotion activities

The project objective for reading promotion activities is "to increase children's interest in reading".

By promoting the habit of reading among children and youth, the general objective for The Tamer Institute for Community Education aims to emphasise the bond between children and books, which in turn will contribute to developing other skills in the field of language, expressive writing, imagination, perception, thus contributing to their empowerment.

The Tamer Institute, the main Palestinian player for organising reading promotion activities since 1989, is reorganised in 1996 with a new board and director and supported with capacity building, both through Diakonia and in direct Sida support via MoC.

From 1997 Sida's total support to Tamer goes via Diakonia, foremost to the National Reading Campaign throughout the year, culminating during a National Reading Week, usually in April to coincide with the International Day of Children's Books and the Palestinian Children's Day.

The campaign involves institutions throughout Palestinian society, from the planning process to execution and evaluation. The co-ordinating team of the National Reading Campaign conduct follow-up-visits to all the regions, to encourage and enforce the idea of reading among children and youth and to make sure that they have been benefiting from the various activities.

The reading promotion activities include book discussions and reviews, creative writing workshops, learning through drama, general knowledge contests, drawing and painting, literary readings, storytelling, poetry recitals, theatre performances, activities related to national heritage, culture and history of the country.

For the National Reading Campaign, The Tamer Institute produces brochures, posters and stickers. "Reading passports" was a popular reading promotion method used by Tamer and also taken up in the Palestinian's UNRWA camps in Lebanon. Getting a real passport is a dream for every Palestinian child and a look-a-like reading passport is a good symbol on the road to freedom, filled with stamps for every book read.

In 1998 the National Reading Campaign focused on commemorating the 50 years of An-Nakbah (“expulsion”), the dispossession of the Palestinian people.

In 1999 extra efforts were made to integrate children with special needs – e.g. the sight impaired – and books and other appropriate material in Braille were provided by The Tamer Institute. In 2000 the National Reading Campaign was hampered by the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, but many local workshops were held, dealing with mothers and children with special needs and with mothers with aggressive children, identifying the needs of children and children’s books for the promotion of reading. Many of the mothers were illiterate.

In 2001–2003 the daily incursions by Israeli military, shelling and tanks rolling through the streets, closures, schools and ministries invaded and/or destroyed worsening the physic and psychological situation for Palestinian children. Emergency Educational Backpacks had to be produced and distributed, especially in Gaza. The needs for children’s books from Diakonia were overwhelming. But a National Reading Week April 2nd–5th 2002 was held all over the West Bank and Gaza. Spontaneous local Fun Days are also organised whenever possible with activities including a lot of books to divert depressed children and parents.

My First Book Competition

During the annual National Reading Campaign children and youth are asked to submit writings and illustrations to be published in a book. From 1998 to 2003 The Tamer Institute published five titles from My First Book Competition with the support of Diakonia.

Result

- Despite financial and logistic hardship Tamer has managed to accomplish the National Reading Campaign with activities involving children and youth.
- The result of The My First Book Competition is interesting stories that reflect the sufferings, dreams, fears, humour, values and imagination of the child, breaking the prejudice that, due to the tight and over-protective paternal system, children only writes their homework and are not encouraged to express themselves.
- Many of the workshops aim to help children and youth to realise their rights of expressing themselves, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

7.3.5 Diakonia’s “Cultural Fund”

Diakonia gets a special account, for 2003 SEK 200.000, for small contributions to be accounted for later, in order to support upcoming activities and projects, mostly in connection with the distribution of children’s books.

One example is the support to The National Conservatory of Music with the first children’s musical Al Fawanness (Lyktan), based on a children’s story adopted by the poet Wassim Al-Kurdi, which will be performed August 2004. Diakonia helps with the costs of two training camps and transports of the cast, consisting of 64 children 8–14 years old from Jerusalem, Ramallah and Bethlehem. The musical is planning its first performance in August 2004 at The Cultural Palace Theatre in Ramallah.

Another example is the support to The Young Artists Forum, as described in 7.3.3 Support to local production of children’s books.

7.3.6 Regional Children’s Literature Resource Centre

Commission by Diakonia, Anna Birgitta Erikssons has made a pre-study for Swedish further support to children’s literature in the MENA region. The purpose was to study if the experiences and results from

the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme could be used in a future development program in the region, as proposed by Diakonia in the applications to Sida for 2001–2003.

Since 2002 Diakonia has worked together with the Arab Resource Centre for Popular Arts (ARCPA) with reading promotion activities in Lebanon UNRWA camps, based on the Palestinian experiences. A first phase in networking for The Children's Literature Programme in the MENA region, a possible long – term project for Diakonia.

The idea of regional conferences, planned within the Children's Literature Programme in 2001–2003 by MoC and MoE in co-operation with Diakonia, has had to be cancelled owing to innumerable travel restrictions and severely harsh circumstances in the West Bank and Gaza. The Ministries main efforts have been struggling to keep up the educational system during repeated incursions and curfews.

Seminars about Swedish Children's Literature were held in Amman April 2002, in connection with the exhibition "Meet the Children" from the Swedish Institute, but with no Palestinian participants.

In connection with the International Literacy Day on September 8th 2003 UNESCO and The Arab Educational Forum invited Palestinian and other Arabic parties to a workshop in Amman concerning Children's Literature. The meeting was supposed to be the start of a network, but the group was too disparate and weak.

After visiting Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan, Anna Birgitta Erikssons saw that a regional resource centre for children's literature was of great interest, especially as a network for researchers and teachers at university level. Its physical location is proposed to Amman, but close co-operation with other national centres and institutions specialising in the field of Children's Literature is taken for granted.

After exhaustive discussions with key persons engaged in the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme I will suggest and recommend a more organic and up-to-date regionalisation in the following steps:

- Support the proposed in-service education of all UNRWA teachers and librarians in the region according to the Palestinian model, developed by MoE and MoC. A way to introduce the program in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.
- Support the capacity building of The Tamer Institute of Children's Literature Centre and their Internet site to a virtual Regional Children's Literature Resource Centre, linked to international data bases on children's literature. Tamer has a starter in their fresh membership in International Board on Books for Young people (IBBY).
- Research and analyse the possibilities of developing a computerised "distance courses" in Children's Literature at Birzeit University for the whole region, built on the Palestinian model.

As everybody in the MENA region emphasize, the importance of communication via Internet can not be over-estimated.

8. Education and Training

One of the current problems discussed at MoE and MoC is how to enhance children's literature within the context of formal education.

The structure of teacher education in Palestine:

Teachers for school or pre-school need four years at University for a BA. Other teachers have two years at college, such as The Al-Tireh college in Ramallah, providing education for teachers, such as (pre-school and others).

Centres for pre-school teachers as The Early Childhood Resource Centre, The Al-Mustaqbal college, The Dar Al-Tifel School in Jerusalem etc. train teachers for one year. Not certified by The Ministry of Education. Some pre-school teachers have only completed their high school exam (Tawjihi).

The on going in-service training in connection with the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme is as follows:

8.1 Teachers Training

With the project objectives to train teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators and others on interactive methods to deal with/ increase children's needs and interest for literature, 1996/1997 Diakonia, in co-operation with MoC and MoE introduced central pilot courses in teaching children's literature.

The course was based on Learning and Teaching Children's Literature, conducted by Dr. Ulla Lundqvist, Linköping University, who has been a consultant for the programme since 1995, with adapting the syllabus Literature for Children and Youth, at the University of Linköping, where the aims are to "provide the student a basic knowledge of literature for children and young adults and develop their ability in analysing and interpreting literary texts".

The Central Pilot Training Course (approx thirty hours of workshops and seminars) included two voluntary, more academic groups in Gaza and Ramallah, consisting of artists, authors, librarians, teachers and MoC/MoE staff and three groups in Ramallah, Nablus and Gaza, involving teachers and supervisors selected by MoE. Seminars and workshops were to be part of their normal in-service training. Examinations were held and certifications issued.

Pilots testing the pedagogic methods, used in the classroom during the pilot training, were also evaluated.

Evaluation meetings of the central pilot project took place during the autumn 1999 and a final evaluation workshop with Ulla Lundqvist invited was held in April 2000 with most of the former participants taking part. The outcome of the evaluations was positive, and the need was stressed to developing and adjusting the programme to the Palestinian schools and their curriculum.

Problems

- Implementing teachers training projects in UNRWA schools was supposed to be easier than in governmental schools, since governmental schools are only curriculum oriented. But for the main project, governmental schools were chosen.
- Refresher training were required for those 1997–2000 pilot trained.

Changes

- 20 persons from the West Bank, 12 from Gaza in February 2003 finally took part in training courses in Ramallah, which they themselves conducted. In spite of the Israeli imposed closure of the West Bank and Gaza there was a good turnout.
- MoC and MoE have developed the project further to spread Children's Literature courses/in-service training to cover all teachers in Palestine, also including principals and supervisors. Within MoC the project has been called The National Plan for Developing Palestinian Children's Literature (NPDPC).

Results

- Diakonia's further involvement with MoC is based on the ambition from MoE to reach all teachers in classes 1–10 within a period of 5–6 years.
- An introductory workshop was given by MoE and MoC to introduce the project "Training Palestinian teachers in Children's Literature" for empowerment and capacity building activating the general directors at both Ministries (36 participants). It also had a positive effect on establishing relations between representatives of both ministries, who would follow up the project.
- Training of 6 groups of trainers from all directorates in the north, middle and south of the West Bank (4) and Gaza (2), in total 166 trainers
- School libraries – a condition for providing the training program – have been established in numerous schools.

Many of the teachers discovered children's literature through this course and all of them agreed that the large scope of activities included in the course would help them improve the quality of the time they spend with their students.

8.2 Trainers and Teachers Manuals

The Trainers Manual, based on a manual initiated by Ulla Lundqvist and developed by Mary Fasheh of The Tamer Institute and Maha Sadiq of The Early Childhood Resource Centre, was used in the pilots. It was adjusted, commented and extended with new examples from the field studies and class-activities to a new, detailed Trainers manual, flexible enough to allow teachers to create new activities.

In addition a Teachers Manual was produced by MoC (15.000 copies), consisting of analysis and activities for 14 specially elected children's books, covering all age groups, and some International and Palestinian articles about children's literature. No English translation is available.

The manual in a testing edition was adapted to the teaching of librarians by The Tamer Institute, in charge of developing libraries for children.

A Second Teachers Manual is on its way, consisting of more book-related activities.

An evaluation meeting with trainers from all districts, around 70 participants arranged by MoE and MoC (the new Minister of Culture taking part) was held in Ramallah on February 10th, 2004. The participants from Gaza had to take part through video, because of the Israeli enclosure. A power failure in Gaza delayed the start by 20 minutes, but a generator was found. The quality of the teachers training is equally good, but the Gaza examples are more Palestinian oriented, the West Bank ideas more international.

After the meeting, all the reading promotion activities chosen by the districts, had to be sent to MoC, where they will be compiled together by MoC consulting MoE and sent back for comments, a time consuming but democratic procedure. After getting feedback the work with the Second Teachers Manual will proceed.

Problems discussed

- More books needed
- More books in schools needed
- Parents resistance to reading for pleasure
- More time for books in schools
- More room in the curriculum for legalisation of reading/working with children's books

Proposals

- Training in dramatising, acting
- Training in reading/analysing pictures in children's picture books
- Training in reviewing/critics of children's books
- Helping publisher of children's books in layout and editing
- More workshops for young illustrators

8.3 Children's Books for Teacher Training and In-class Application

The analysis and activities/in-class applications in the Teachers Manual are based on nine Arabic/Swedish children's books and six Palestinian children's books. Each participant at level two (Training trainers) had to have a book package of his or her own during the training, and as a reference library for the next level: Training of teachers. The needed book supply was estimated to 10.000 copies of each title.

Previous negotiations for financing the training of trainers and the books had involved Netherlands Representative Office in Palestine. But they felt reluctant to the idea that nine books were from one publishing house, the Swedish Dar Al-Muna, and decided that the book part was not their responsibility.

MoC managed to get Sida to reallocate Palestinian project funds for buying the six Palestinian books in 10.000 copies each. In addition SEK 4 million was in 2001 added by Sida to Diakonia's Children's Literature Programme in the West Bank and Gaza for buying 95.000 copies (9 titles) from Dar Al-Muna at a reduced price.

8.4 Parent Training

With the development objectives for increasing community and parents awareness towards importance of children's literature and the project objectives of increasing parents participation in activities within pre-schools and schools, a pilot project arrangement was made with The Al-Iman Centre for Childhood 2002 for the training of parents/mothers in children's literature. The director Bu'ad El-Khales took part in the first expert pilot course in Children's Literature and is one of the real experts. The project started with the Rawdat Al-Iman Kindergarten. It was extended with supporting the library at Al-Iman Girls Basic School and Al-Iman Basic Boys School, which the children attend after kindergarten. Director Bu'ad El-Khales has started Children's Literature courses for pre-school teachers together with the University of Bethlehem,

All Al-Iman Centre for Childhood 14 kindergartens in the Jerusalem area are now working with parent education, including workshops on how to develop children's language. Together with the staff parents produce pedagogic material to be used when reading or story telling: puppets, puzzles, pictures, "giant books"... Two children's books written at The Al-Iman Centre for Childhood have been published with support from Diakonia.

The Al-Iman Centre for Childhood is working together with Tamer, in awareness raising campaigns for buying children's books instead of toys for birthdays and Islamic feasts such as Eed, stressing the importance of also having children's books at home.

One of their main ideas for the future is to get fathers more involved.

9. Effects of the Israeli Occupation

The problems faced by Palestinian children during the Israeli occupation have both intensified in nature and become chronic. First of all the increasing poverty and malnutrition. But the Israeli policy of movement restrictions, closure, curfews and the intensification of Israeli military operations, including shelling and house demolition during Operation Defensive Shield and the building of the Defence Wall, have led to a deepening and broadening of the detrimental impact on the lives of children.

The psychosocial health of the Palestinian children has been subject to several recent studies, reporting a disturbing percentage of children with noticeably altered behaviour patterns. The Palestinian Ministry of Health reported that there have been a 105% increase in new cases at mental health clinics since October 2000, and children under 18 constitute a majority of these.

Palestinian children are under significant psychosocial strain, mainly due to the violence that currently permeates their lives, including pervasive feelings of insecurity. Their precarious situation is aggravated by the widespread feeling that neither parents nor teachers can fully care for or protect them. Parents and teachers observe symptomatic traumatic behaviour, ranging from nightmares and bedwetting to increased aggression and hyperactivity, as well as decreasing attention spans and concentration capacity. They report that a minority of children have become fixated on thoughts of death and revenge.

These findings are hardly surprising, given the severe disruptions of normal childhood activity that characterise the daily lives of Palestinian children. They have limited opportunities for hobbies, sports, and other leisure activities, and are often confined to their homes where parents report that children are watching increasing amounts of TV. But reading a book can raise fantasy and creativity levels and relieve the mental strain, as the increasing demand of children's books from Diakonia would prove.

Further, children along with their parents are isolated from the support systems and joy of grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends whom they can no longer physically reach. One of the recent studies, conducted by Save the Children UK and Save the Children Sweden, revealed from interviews with Palestinian children, that because of the uncertainty, fear, and violence that dominate their lives, many could not envision a future.

The children identify school as a major venue in which their rights are realised. Given the circumstances, under which these children go to school on a daily basis, provide a glimpse into their strong constitutions and their resilience. But children from the same study also recognised that neither schools nor

parents have the power to guarantee their protection from Israeli military forces while at school. That is, school is a place where children feel that many of their most important rights, beyond simply the right to education, are realised. Yet, they feel that nobody in their lives has the power to protect these rights. The feelings of frustration and humiliation expressed by Palestinian parents, especially fathers, when not being able to protect their family are destructive and dangerous for society.

Going to school is the only more or less stable and normal activity in the Palestinian children's shaky existence. MoE, (with demolished offices and destructed or occupied school buildings), teachers, parents and not the least the students themselves are making incredible efforts to continue the formal education to the final tawjihi examination – in spite of over crowded schools, increasing intra-student violence and condensed curriculum with no time for recreation activities such as art, music, and athletics.

The current wave of violence has set back the progress of one of the regions fastest growing and most successful educational systems, and one that is crucial for the eventual success of Palestinian economy and society, and for peace in the region. The violence has harmed educational quality, the most important target of the MoE and many donors who support it. It has harmed the capacity of schools to offer appropriate and engaging service for children. Finally, the violence and political uncertainty have catastrophic effects on children's aspiration.

Ambitions remain for young Palestinians to get an adequate education, but their opportunities for learning and preparing themselves for their future are being harmed.

A tired teacher cynically asked: "What can you expect (of education) when teachers and parents belonging to the generation of the previous Intifada, who lost many days of school, are to educate the students of this Intifada? Therefore students of this Intifada are suffering a multiple loss."

10. Fulfilment of Development Objectives

10.1 National Capacity and Sustainability

From my evaluation it may be concluded that the Swedish support to Children's literature on the West Bank and Gaza for the period 1995–2003, has strengthened the Palestinian domestic capacity and the long-term sustainability in the field of Children's Literature. But The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture will need continuing support in order to fulfil the objectives of "develop reading in Palestine through developing children's literature", according to the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (NPA).

Most sectors of the population, through the Palestinian Authority and NGOs try to protect the achievements of the last period of Palestinian life: the right to joy, entertainment and free expression, especially for their children. They defend the right to break the "ghettoization" due to closure and maintain development relations with the International Community and Culture.

10.2 Relevance and Cost Effectiveness

The Palestinian Children's Literature Programme, implemented by Diakonia, consists of many bottom-up projects, emanating from and developed in close connections with the recipients. In 1996 it

slowly changed from relief to capacity building, from donating translated children's books to supporting a local Palestinian production of children's literature. A broader approach of the programme was initiated 1998–2000 when the economic support was increased from SEK 2,8 million to 5 million. The years also coincide with the new official demand from Sida of more strict and efficient rules for reporting and accounting, making the programme easier to take in and evaluate.

There have been delays and obstacles as of delayed signing of contracts both by Sida and Diakonia in Stockholm and Jerusalem, causing Palestinian irritation and also postponement of projects in the West Bank and Gaza due to the effects of the Israeli occupation. But an admirable flexibility is displayed on numerous occasions by Palestinians, in order to implement the activities in Palestinian society, in spite of next to impossible working and living conditions during the years of the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

The recommendation given in 1999 by The follow up study January 2004 to joining to the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme the very similar Children's Literature Project, also supported by Sida should have been followed. Within the topic of Children's literature more concentration is needed and relevance, efficiency and cost effectiveness would have benefited.

10.3 Corresponding to Sidas Policies and Objectives

It is clear from part 7. *Children's Literature Programme*, and 8. *Education and Training*, the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme has fulfilled the Sida policies by broad margin: "Cultural projects targeting children are supposed to promote both democracy and national unity. Moreover, the effects of the Israeli occupation are profoundly affecting Palestinian children, and in such a situation, any contribution to children's intellectual and emotional development is relevant and important for the future of Palestinian society."

The development objectives for Sida are to create opportunities for cultural diversity, creative activities and sustainable development based on human rights. Concerning this project, the basis for human rights has been The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The CRC stresses the importance of efforts specially targeting and benefiting girls and woman. This has been thoroughly considered in the Palestinian Children's Literature programme, as girls prefer reading to other activities, most teachers are women and parent education is mostly are chosen by mothers.

The programme has succeeded in promoting children's own activities and involving children and youth, especially in the National Reading Campaigns. The programme so far has not managed to achieve their participation in every day decision-making. It is an objective hard to reach in a society under siege and with traditional family values and attitudes favouring obedience at the expenses of children's own participation.

11. Development of the Institutional Partnership

As is clear from 5. Swedish Support Through Institutional Partners, The Ministry of Culture (MoC) and The Ministry of Education (MoE) have developed their capacity parallel to and in close co-operation with The Palestinian Children's Literature Programme 1995–2003. They are now seen as the most empowered and efficient of the Ministries, with a core of very qualified people who knows how to look after the interest of the Palestinian child and are aware of the importance of children's literature.

Through this capacity building they have, in spite of Israeli enclosure, been able to handle the hard task of keeping the educational system functioning, above all through a decentralisation in directorates and a strong local support, mainly in the West Bank.

After 1995 a National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (NPA) was created after a series of workshops in order to lay the formation and the framework for future efforts concerning their children, in accordance with the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). This planning process also had an effect on raising the planning skills of the ministries. A Second National Plan of Action for 2000–2003 followed, where “developing reading in Palestine through developing Children’s literature”, was given priority.

In addition, a National Plan for Developing Palestinian Children’s Literature, (NPDCL) was developed by 15 experts in the field with the participation of others through regional workshops and a main national workshop in Ramallah in 1998. Those who shaped the NPDCL believed in the importance of developing and making available quality children’s literature. It can play an important role in shaping the Palestinian child’s personality, strengthening his or her national identity, developing creativity, and enhancing his or her skills in participation and expression, and in widening the child’s horizons. The NPDCL program also stressed the importance of making children’s literature available to each Palestinian child regardless of his/her locality, gender, social, psychological, or physical situation.

This program was substantially supported by Sida, both direct to MoC as a Children’s Literature Project and implanted by Diakonia as Palestinian Children’s Literature Programme.

Accurate, quantitative data about the impact of the second NPA is poor, due to the variety of funding sources and the destabilisation, caused by the total destruction of The Palestinian Ministries in the spring of 2002 by Israeli forces. Many cultural and educational projects had to be postponed for more emergency actions.

A third National Plan of Action 2004–2010 is proceeding (in draft), requiring international support. It will adopt children’s sector as priority in Palestinian culture and present laws on intellectual properties and rights (copyrights).

The sustainability and the further development of the institutional NPA partnership depends on the future of Palestine, as different scenarios will call for different strategies in the short and long term.

The Tamer Institute for Community Education has been developed and upgraded into a Children’s Literature Resource Centre, with a professional capacity in publishing and reading promotion and an international network within the field of Children’s Literature. It has survived almost everything and will, with some capacity building support, go on surviving in all scenarios.

The Al-Iman Centre for Childhood has developed great expertise, fully aware of children’s need at all ages, including competent parents. They work as an independent institution in Jerusalem and have the power and capability to go on working within all scenarios.

The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) was established in 1949, and has educated three generations of refugees.

An international UNRWA conference will be held in Geneva June 7th–8th 2004 to discuss the future of humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. One important working group will deal with Palestinian refugee children.

The UNRWA has extensive teacher training programmes and far reaching plans for duplicating the experience of MOC and MOE with training Palestinian teachers in children’s literature. If possible it

will start by 2005. One of the first budget problems will be how to get the children's books needed for the training of trainers.

Diakonia itself has developed a great deal of competence in the field of children's literature and how to promote it. According to their plans for 2004–2006 (draft) Palestine will continue to be the focus of their activities, but Diakonia is researching the possibilities to transpose the experiences of the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme into other countries in the MENA region. A starter can be supporting UNRWA, with its refugee camps in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic.

12. Other Donors Supporting

On the whole NPA, MoC and MoE are living on the economic benevolence of others and have nearly all international countries and NOGs as donors. Sweden is the fourth largest donor. The Palestinian Children's Literature Programme and supporting activities, mostly with donations to libraries of books in their respective language, not in Arabic, have also other donors principally from the EC: Norway, Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany and Swiss. UNICEF, USAID, Ford Foundation and other sponsors can be added.

13. Lessons Learnt

It is strenuous and exhausting working in the West Bank and Gaza with the development objectives of domestic capacity building and long-term sustainability in the field of Palestinian Children's Literature, when the proceedings of the programme all the time are obstructed by the critical political situation in the country and the increasing poverty.

The continuity is always threatened and the day-to-day work disrupted while working with institutional partners in an occupied country, including postponed or interrupted meetings, failures of attendance caused by roadblocks and destruction of documentation whether computerised or in print.

The development of Palestinian children's literature would have been impossible without the dedicated work of key persons at the ministries, as Leila Yuomna at MoC and Shahnaz Al-Far at MoE applying the Convention of the Rights of the Child to the Palestinian children in education and cultural activities.

The Sida supported Children's Secretariat, within the Ministry of Planning, is on its way from the NGO – way of working on project to national planning. They have made no co-ordination efforts with Diakonia as implementing partner in The Palestinian Children's Literature Programme. Within the topic of Children's literature more concentration is needed and efficiency and cost effectiveness would benefit everybody. No matter what was the reason in order to separating Sidas Children's book project on MoC and Diakonia, the recommendation given by the Follow up studies in 1999 and in 2001 should have been followed. The Palestinian Children's Literature Programmes different projects are living in a symbiosis with import and distribution of books, library work, support to publishing, formal and in-service education in children's literature and reading promotion activities.

How to assess “changing of attitudes in order to revive the habits for reading among Palestinian children by improving the quality of children’s books and making these books available for all Palestinian children”? Sida should have initiated baseline statistics on Palestinian children’s reading habits and reading preferences before broadening the programme concerning children’s literature. According to DPCL, in order to be able to evaluate the effects, MoC and MoE will now initiate baseline studies, before the full-scale teacher training in Children’s Literature is implemented in the Palestinian educational system.

14. Recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations made in previous chapters are listed as follows:

14.1 General Ideas

Sida should continue its bilateral support to Palestinian children’s literature at least for the next planning period. The expertise and capacity of MoC and MoE as sustainable long term players in the field of children’s literature are manifest and MoC is marked as the proprietor of the projects concerning teaching children’s literature in the National Plan of Action for Children in the West Bank/Gaza 2004–2010. Appropriate ways of funding should be considered.

Joining the very similar Children’s Literature Project to The Palestinian Children’s Literature Programme and giving Diakonia the implanting responsibility would be beneficial for economy and efficiency.

Further support is needed and recommended for ongoing capacity building in the field of publishing of Palestinian children’s literature and to increase the commercial competence on the Palestinian children’s book market.

MoC considers laws on intellectual property and copyrights. Check if Swedish assistance is appropriate.

All players in the field of arts and culture for children, MoC included, supported the establishment of The Tamer Institute Children’s Literature Resource Centre. Their web-site should be developed in order to link equivalent international Children’s Literature Resource Centres web sites and databases, creating a professional Children’s Literature Network. The Tamer Institute has a starter in their fresh membership of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

14.2 Children’s Literature Programme

Books

There is a fairly reasonable allocation of purchases between Swedish and Arabic/Palestinian children’s books, according to number of titles, but it will take at least until 2010 before bulk import of Arabic translated Swedish children’s books can level out.

The most popular Swedish Children’s books are more or less battered and will have to be replaced with new copies both in public libraries and school libraries (on request?).

Diakonia has a capacity for an increasing storage and distribution of children’s books and can handle the distribution for all Children’s Literature project in the West Bank and Gaza, as proposed by the Follow Up Study ... January 2002.

Libraries

Children's librarians work has to be made a profession, before qualified services can be expected and trained librarian want to stay. Palestinian librarians are mostly volunteers or persons without knowledge in the profession, working with the children in the libraries. Improved co-operation with public libraries and school libraries is recommended. Many more school libraries have to be developed.

Reading promotion activities

Despite financial and logistic hardship The Tamer Institute has managed to accomplish the annual National Reading Campaign. Support to The Tamer Institute, as organiser of reading promotion activities is necessary and highly recommended.

Education and training

Support Diakonia's further agreement with MoC based on the ambition from MoE to reach all teachers 1–10 classes within a period of 5–6 years.

Support the proposed in-service training of all UNRWA teachers and librarians in the region according to the Palestinian model, developed by MoE and MoC.

Research and analyse the possibilities of developing a computerised "distance learning" in Children's Literature at Birzeit University, built on the Palestinian model, in order to enhance children's literature within the context of formal education and open up for teacher training in the whole MENA region.

Invite a group of Palestinian "teacher trainer pilots" to visit Sweden, in order to exchange ideas about in-class teaching of Children's Literature with the Arab language teachers (hemspråkslärare) in the Stockholm region.

14.3 Children's Literature Resource Centre

After visiting Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan, Anna Birgitta Erikssons is convinced that a regional resource centre for children's literature is of great interest, especially as a network for researchers and teachers at university level. Its physical location is proposed to Amman, but close co-operation with other national centres and institutions specialising in the field of Children's Literature is taken for granted.

A more up-to-date regionalisation is recommended in the following steps:

- Support the proposed in-service education of all UNRWA teachers and librarians in the region according to the Palestinian model, developed by MoE and MoC. A way of introducing the programme into neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.
- Support the proposed capacity building of The Tamer Institute Children's Literature Centre and their web site to a virtual Regional Children's Literature Resource Centre, linked to international data bases on children's literature.
- Support research into the possibilities of developing a computerised "distance courses" in Children's Literature at the Birzeit University for the whole region, built on the Palestinian model.

14.4 Final Remarks

The development of the Palestinian Children's Literature Programme would have been impossible without the dedicated work of key persons at the ministries, such as Leila Yuomna at MoC and Shahnaz Al-Far at MoE, appplicating the Convention of the Rights of the Child to the Palestinian children in education and cultural activities.

From this evaluation it may be concluded that the Swedish support to Children's literature on the West Bank and Gaza for the period 1995–2003, has strengthened the Palestinian domestic capacity and the long-term sustainability in the field of Children's Literature. But the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture will need continuing support in order to fulfil the objectives of “develop reading in Palestine through developing children's literature”, according to the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (NPA).

The sustainability and the further development of Children's Literature Programme depends on what will be the future of Palestine, as different scenarios will call for different strategies in the short and long run: Will it, following the Road Map to peace, become an independent state? Will it continue being under Israeli occupation, or will it be totally incorporated in Israel? The Palestinians hope for the first scenario, fear the third, and have to calculate with the second.

Appendix 1

Terms of References

1 Background

Sida has since 1993 given financial support to the cultural sector on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Since 1995 the support is included in the bilateral programme which is laid down in the country strategy for the West Bank and Gaza for the period 1995–1997.

In the country strategy for the period 2001–2003 Sida decided to grant SEK 46,5 MSEK to the cultural sector which is a continuation of the ongoing programme since 1997. It was also decided that an evaluation should be carried out at the end of the period covering the whole programme, an evaluation that is also forward looking.

The principal objectives of the Swedish support have been to promote a democratic development on the West Bank and Gaza by popular participation in cultural life, to strengthen a national identity and to promote gender equality.

The objectives of the Swedish support to the sector have been to promote the emotional and intellectual development among children and youth in the fields of music, literature and theatre and to protect the Palestinian cultural heritage and to contribute to the training of independent journalists.

The contribution from Sweden during this period has concentrated on projects in childrens literature, performing arts and training of journalists.

The target groups have been children and youth. A special emphasis has been put on creating possibilities for women to participate in cultural activities.

2 Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The support to the cultural sector has not been evaluated during the last ten years. The evaluation will give an input to the forthcoming country strategy for 2004–2007.

The overall aim of the particular evaluation of childrens literature is to assess whether the support is strengthening the domestic capacity and the long-term sustainability in this field.

The evaluation should also assess the relevance and cost effectiveness of the present project(s) within the scope of the support to childrens literature.

The study in itself will constitute an important input for designing possible future funding to the sector. It is important that the study produce concrete recommendations and is distinct and forward looking.

An emphasis in the evaluation shall be laid on recommendations how a possible future Swedish support to childrens literature shall be designed.

The study should be conducted in close cooperation with Diakonia, the recipient organisations and individuals in Palestine, the Swedish Consulate General in Jerusalem, the Swedish individuals and institutions which in different ways are involved in the cooperation and Sidas Culture and Media division.

The study shall include interviews with teachers, children in different, writers and cultural workers and other groups with a vested interest in childrens literature in the Palestinian society.

The study shall take place during January–April 2003.

Issues to be covered in the evaluation

Assessment of the relevance of the support to childrens literature in relation to the following documents:

- The Objectives and Strategy for the Sida development cooperation with the West Bank and Gaza outlined in the Country Strategy for the West Bank and Gaza 2001–2003;
- Perspectives on Poverty, 2002;
- Policy for Sida's international development cooperation in the field of culture.
- Analysis of whether the supported projects in the field of childrens literature have addressed the issues of cultural and intellectual development of children and youth and if the approach and channels used for stimulating reading have been adequate.
- Assessment on how gender aspects have been included in the projects and how the gender dimension can be further enhanced and elaborated.
- Analysis of how the cooperation and exchange have evolved and progressed between the Swedish institutions and individuals involved and their Palestinian counterparts
- A description and analysis of the role of the Ministries of Culture and Education in the field of childrens literature concerning formal and non-formal education including training of teachers.
- Identification and analysis of positive and negative aspects of the present situation regarding formal and non-formal education at different levels in connection to childrens literature
- A short description of the Swedish contribution and engagement in relation to other donors
- A short analysis of the eventual positive role of childrens literature in a conflict ridden society like the Palestinian and of the overall impact of the conflict situation on the conditions for the childrens literary projects

3 Recommendations for Possible Future Swedish Support

- Summarise a general way the prospects of a more regular regional cooperation in the Mena region in the field of childrens literature
- Analyse in short the significance of a future Swedish support to childrens literature in the light of a continued Israeli occupation

4 Methodology, Evaluation Team and Time Schedule

Methodology

The methodology used for the evaluation shall be participatory and include all identified stakeholders. A participatory evaluation invites different stakeholders to articulate and present their needs, interests and expectations. This process might be particularly significant and valuable in a conflict situation like the Palestinian.

The evaluation shall be carried out through:

- Studies of relevant documents and reports such as Sidas cultural policy, country strategies, project proposals, agreements and financial and narrative reports from Diakonia to Sida.
- Interviews with Diakonia and Sida officials who are responsible for the administration of the support both in Stockholm and in Jerusalem.
- Interviews with responsible officers and ministers of the Ministries of Culture and Education, with teachers, children, cultural workers and other groups with a vested interest in childrens literature and expertise within the sector on the West Bank and Gaza and in Sweden

- Interviews with organisations and individuals on the West Bank and Gaza who have received Swedish support as well as organisations and individuals in Sweden which are regularly involved in the cooperation.

Evaluation Team

The consultant shall be a person with a very good understanding of the cultural field and of cultural institutions and organisations, of capacity building, administration and management in the cultural sector and be very competent in Swedish and English.

Time Schedule

The evaluation will take place in Sweden and on the West Bank and Gaza during January–April 2004. The length of the assignment is estimated to 6 weeks full-time work.

5 Reporting

The findings will be presented in a report and, if possible, at a seminar at Sida not later than 30 April 2004.

The evaluation report shall be written in English and should not exceed 30 pages, excluding annexes. Format and outline of the report shall follow the guidelines in Sida Evaluation Report – a Standardised Format (see Annex 1). 3 copies of the draft report shall be submitted to Sida no later than 15 March 2004.

Within 2 weeks after receiving Sida's comments on the draft report, that is 15 April, a final version in 3 copies and on diskette shall be submitted to Sida.

Subject to decision by Sida, the report will be published and distributed as a publication within the Sida Evaluations series.

The evaluation report shall be written in Word 6.0 for Windows (or in a compatible format) and should be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing.

The evaluation assignment includes the production of a Newsletter summary following the guidelines in Sida Evaluations Newsletter – Guidelines for Evaluation Managers and Consultants and also the completion of Sida Evaluations Data Work Sheet.

The separate summary and a completed Data Work Sheet shall be submitted to Sida along with the draft report.

(Annexes 1, 2 and 3 are retrievable from 'Sida-mallar'/Sida Evaluations).

Appendix 2

Consulted References

General

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- Diakonia Final report for Children's Literature Program 1998–2000
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Sida

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- Bedömningspromemoria 2001-06-15 Stöd till barnlitteraturprojekt på Västbanken/Gaza under 2001–2003
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UNRWA

www.un.org/unrwa

www.ui.se

Appendix 3

Persons Consulted

Al-Iman Centre of Childhood

Jerusalem

Bu'ad El-Khales, director

Teachers, parents, pre-school children

Children's Secretariat (Ministry of Planning)

Ramallah

Cairo Arafat, director of the Secretariat for the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children

Consulate General of Sweden

Jerusalem

Göran Berg, ambassador/consul general

Peter Lundberg, vice consul

Maher Daoudi, program manager

Diakonia

Stockholm

Conny Wingås, Middle East desk officer

Robert Gustavsson, former program manager Jerusalem

Jerusalem

Margoth Sonnebo, program manager 1999–2003

Christian Lagerlöf, regional representative

Safa'Abu Assab, program assistant 1999–2003, program manager 2004

Moussa Rummaneh, distributor of books at Aby Rayya Rehabilitation Centre, Ramallah

National Conservatory of Music (NCM)

Suhail Khoury, principal, composer

Fernando Lopez, conductor

Huda Odeh, development officer

64 children from Ramallah, Betlehem, Jerusalem, acting/rehearsal in “Al Fawaness”

Ministry of Culture (MoC)

Leila Yumna Batran, acting general director of projects and international relations

Mariam Shrouf, assistant

Former members of “The Expert Pilot Group”:

Sameh Abboushi, architect, illustrator

Buad Al-Khales, Al-Iman Childhood Centre

Fatmeh Bedwan, URNWA

Maurice Baqleh

Samira Nairoukh

Rose Shomaly, author, journalist

Abla Toubassi

Ministry of Education (MoE)

Shahnaz al Far, acting general director of the project

Mashour Sbitan, assistant

Hebron

Farid Shauer, principal,

Salah A-Homedat, training supervisor,

Rima Al-Kraki, cultural supervisor

Teachers, trainers, students

Jericho, Ramallah, Jerusalem in fl

Teachers, trainers, students, principals

Sida

Ake Löfgren

Tamaer Institute

Jehan Helou, director

Mary Fasheh, librarian, member of Tamer's Board of Trustees, Member of Tamer's book selection committee, vice president for IBBY-Palestine.

Arham Damen, specialised in childrens literature, Chairwoman of Tamer's board of Trustees,

Children/youth in the Tamer book-group discussing "The Gallant Five"

UNRWA

Fatme Beduon, supervisor

Young Artists Forum (YAF)

Muhammad Saleh, artist, director

Sameh Abbouchi, arcitect, illustrator

Artist in "illustrators group"

Others

Julinda Abul-Nasr, former teacher at The American University, Beirut

Marianne Enquist, artist, illustrator, Stockholm

Anna-Birgitta Eriksson, librarian, Stockholm

Yvonne Fredriksson, Palestina-grupperna

Mona Henning, publisher, head of Dar Al-Muna publishing house, Stockholm

Ulla Lundqvist, doctor in children's literature, author, critics Stockholm

Helen Sigeland, Swedish Institute Stockholm

Sonja Svensson, Svenska barnboksinstitutet, Stockholm

TIPH observers, Hebron

Visitors in Abu Dees Reading Room, Jerusalem

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