

IMPACT REPORT

OUTREACH TRAINING 2022 - 2025



شبكة
الفنون
الأدائية
الفلسطينية
Palestinian
Performing
Arts
Network

IN PALESTINE, WHERE THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OFTEN RESTRICTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SAFE PLAY, SELF-EXPRESSION, AND MENTAL HEALTH DIALOGUE, PERFORMING ARTS BECOME NOT ONLY THERAPEUTIC TOOLS BUT ALSO ACTS OF CULTURAL RESISTANCE AND AFFIRMATION.

In contexts of prolonged conflict and displacement, such as in many areas of Palestine, children face chronic exposure to violence, instability, and the erosion of protective social structures. These experiences often lead to elevated risks of psychological distress, disrupted social development, and long-term emotional and behavioral challenges. Traditional psychosocial support services are frequently limited in reach or constrained by stigma, accessibility, or funding. In response to these limitations, alternative and culturally adaptive approaches, such as the integration of performing arts into mental health and psychosocial interventions, have gained traction as viable, community-based strategies for healing and resilience-building.



Performing arts, including theatre, dance, circus, and music, provide children with safe, expressive, and participatory platforms to process trauma, explore identity, and rebuild social connections. When delivered through structured outreach training, these activities can foster emotional expression, cognitive flexibility, and peer interaction, all of which are critical to psychosocial recovery.

This approach is especially relevant in marginalized and war-affected areas, where children are disproportionately excluded from formal educational and psychosocial services. By embedding performing arts within localized training programmes, facilitators can create mobile, inclusive, and adaptable safe spaces that meet children where they are, physically and emotionally. Such sessions also offer a valuable entry point for broader child protection messaging, caregiver engagement, and the early identification of children in need of more specialized support.





Throughout the project *“From Dependence to Resilience: Towards a Sustainable Palestinian Cultural Sector”*, funded by DROSOS, performing arts were mobilized not merely as recreational tools, but as essential elements of a holistic psychosocial response that prioritizes dignity, agency, and healing for children living in some of the most vulnerable conditions in Palestine.



This report highlights the outcomes of a child-focused outreach training conducted in marginalized areas between 2022 and 2025. The initiative aimed to support children’s psychosocial wellbeing, reinforce child protection practices, and provide safe, inclusive spaces for personal development. The project reached a total of 5,510 children across 29 communities through structured sessions designed to foster resilience, safety, and wellbeing. The activities were particularly mindful of gender balance and inclusion of children with disabilities.

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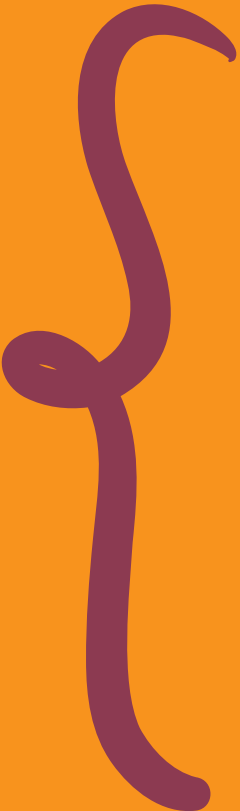
**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
FUTURE PROGRAMMING**



1 OBJECTIVES:

While the initial aim of the outreach training component was primarily to expand access to performing arts for children in marginalized areas, it became increasingly evident during implementation that these sessions offered far more than artistic exposure. The performing arts emerged as a powerful medium for psychosocial support, offering children safe and creative outlets for emotional expression, stress relief, and social connection in environments often marked by insecurity and limited recreational opportunities.

Building on these insights, and responding to a deteriorating political and security context, the project was reoriented to achieve the following interrelated objectives:



To foster emotional resilience and self-expression among children through participatory performing arts activities.

To create inclusive and safe spaces that support children's psychological wellbeing and sense of belonging.

To strengthen children's social and communication skills through collaborative and trust-building exercises.

To contribute to a protective community environment by engaging children in activities that reinforce dignity, agency, and positive identity development.

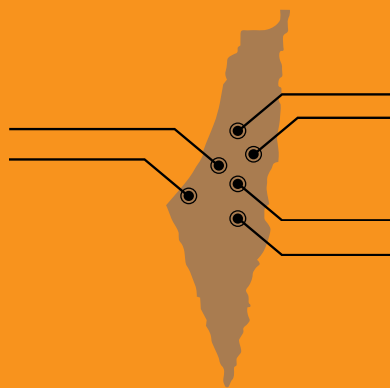
This shift in focus allowed the outreach training to respond not only to cultural and recreational needs but also to critical psychosocial priorities in communities affected by instability.

2

ACTIVITIES BREAKDOWN:

The outreach training aims to extend access to performing arts education for children living in marginalized areas, with a strong emphasis on inclusion, psychosocial wellbeing, and child protection. Through carefully structured sessions led by trained facilitators, the project reached children from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, across multiple locations. The following section presents a breakdown of the activities conducted, highlighting the geographical scope, scale of engagement, and demographic distribution of the participating children.

A total of 1,396 performing arts training sessions have been implemented in 29 different communities across Palestine



Reaching 5,510 children of an average age of 14 years



65% of whom are females and 35% Males and 26 children with various disabilities

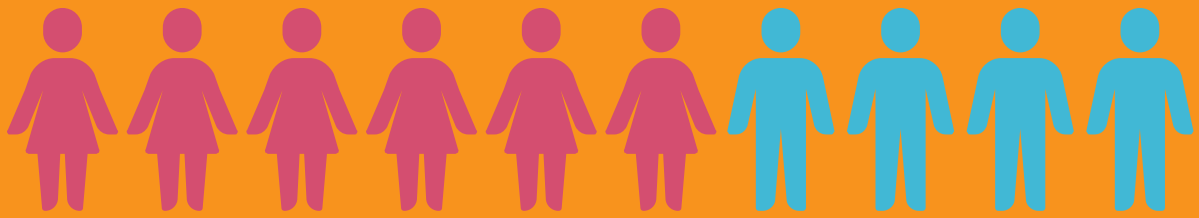


Gaza

- Gaza City
- Deir al-Balah
- Rafah
- Northern Gaza

400 Performing Arts Training Sessions

955 Children Reached



Females 58%

Males 42%



Bethlehem

- Bethlehem City
- Dheisheh Refugee Camp
- Beit Jala

94 Performing Arts Training Sessions

71 Children Reached



Females 74%

Males 26%



Hebron

- Hebron

106 Performing Arts Training Sessions

2,867 Children Reached



Females 73%

Males 27%



Jenin

- Jenin
- Jenin Refugee Camp
- Ya'bad

144 Performing Arts Training Sessions

174 Children Reached



Females 59%

Males 41%



Jericho

- Aqabat Jaber Refugee Camp

13 Performing Arts Training Sessions

5 Children Reached



Females 100%



Jerusalem

- Jerusalem
- al-Eizariya

88 Performing Arts Training Sessions

731 Children Reached



Females 66%

Males 34%

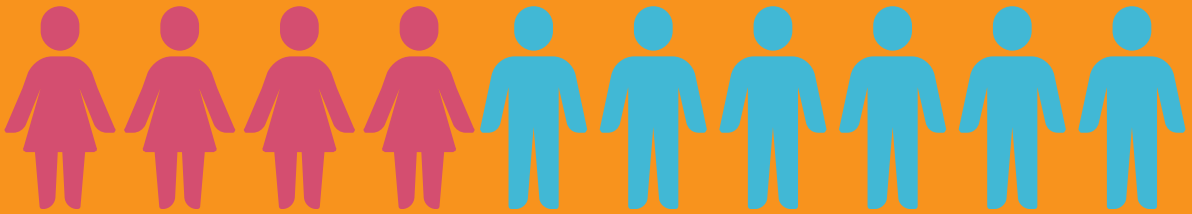


Nablus

- Nablus
- Askar Refugee Camp
- Balata Refugee Camp
- Sebastia

75 Performing Arts Training Sessions

97 Children Reached



Females 44%

Males 56%

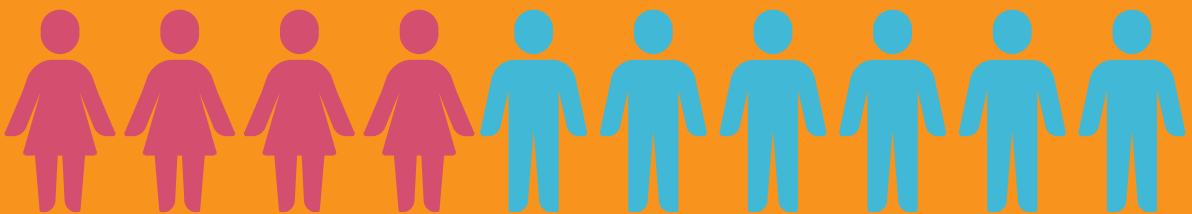


Ramallah

- Ramallah
- al-Janiya
- Beit 'Our
- Birzeit
- Am'ari Refugee Camp
- Jalazon Refugee Camp
- Kafr Ni'ma
- Saffa

327 Performing Arts Training Sessions

553 Children Reached



Females 44%

Males 56%



Tubas

- Tubas
- al-Far'a Refugee Camp

19 Performing Arts Training Sessions

18 Children Reached



Females 66%

Males 34%

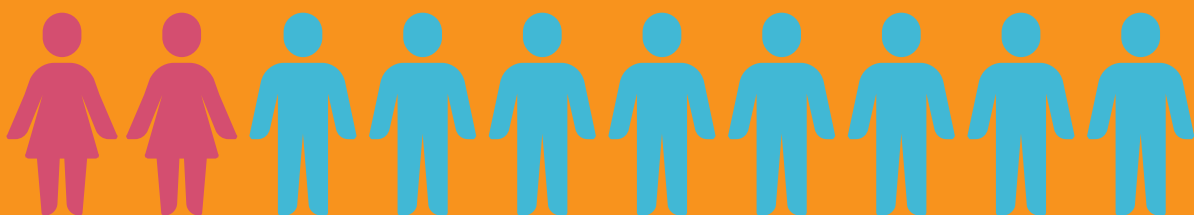


Tulkarem

- Tulkarem

62 Performing Arts Training Sessions

30 Children Reached



Females 17%

Males 83%

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THEMATIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

1. Psychosocial Support

The sessions included storytelling, movement-based games, and group reflection activities that encouraged emotional expression, peer bonding, and stress relief. Facilitators observed increased confidence, willingness to speak, and visible mood improvements among many children over the course of the training. For children who had experienced recent trauma, the sessions offered a non-intrusive entry point into emotional recovery.



2. Child Protection

Core child protection messages were integrated into the sessions, including identifying safe adults, recognizing unsafe situations, and understanding basic rights. Children participated in role-play activities and group discussions that helped them internalize protection concepts in age-appropriate ways. Facilitators noted that children became more assertive in expressing boundaries and asking questions related to safety by the end of the sessions.



3. Safe Spaces

The outreach training was conducted in physically secure, child-friendly locations, often in collaboration with local partners or schools. Great care was taken to create inclusive environments, including the adaptation of activities for children with disabilities. Gender balance was maintained in session composition, and facilitators ensured the active participation of both girls and boys through mixed and gender-specific group work.



4. Mental and Physical Wellbeing

Activities combined physical play (team games, stretching, and dance) with mindfulness elements like breathing exercises and self-reflection prompts. Children were encouraged to recognize their emotions, value their physical health, and support one another. Feedback from caregivers and community members highlighted the children's visible excitement and increased energy levels after sessions.



5. Skill Development

The outreach training equipped children with tangible skills across artistic disciplines. These skills enhanced participants' sense of self-efficacy and creativity and also contributed to their cognitive development, emotional regulation, and peer collaboration.



Music: Children engaged in structured instruction in piano, percussion, and singing. These sessions improved focus, listening skills, and emotional expression through rhythm and melody. Group music-making also supported cooperation and trust-building.

Dance: Participants learned traditional Dabke alongside contemporary movement games designed to build body awareness, rhythm, and physical coordination. Dance activities served as both a cultural anchor and a means of reducing anxiety through structured physical expression.



Circus Arts: Children were introduced to foundational circus skills such as juggling, acrobatics, and balance exercises. These physically engaging sessions enhanced motor skills, discipline, and concentration while fostering a sense of accomplishment and joy through play.

Theatre: Sessions included improvisation, role-playing, and storytelling, allowing children to explore identity, and build verbal and non-verbal communication skills in a safe and imaginative setting.





VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Success Story 1: Lydia's Stage in the Rubble

Despite severe limitations in space and resources, a Dabke training session held in Gaza saw remarkable engagement from participating children. One standout was Lydia Abu Khurayba, a 10-year-old girl who quickly became a leader within the group.

Living in a makeshift tent with her displaced family, Lydia showed extraordinary enthusiasm and commitment to the sessions. After each training, she would ask her trainer to record tutorial videos so she could continue practicing at home. Her flexibility, precision, and determination were noted by facilitators, who described her as "remarkably talented and full of energy."

Lydia's dedication highlights the transformative impact of performing arts in crisis settings, not only as psychosocial relief but also as a platform for self-expression and personal ambition. Her trainer believes she has the potential to play a prominent role in the future of Palestinian arts.

Success Story 2: Ismail's Path to Belonging

Eleven-year-old Ismail al-Attar, displaced to Rafah and living in a small tent with his family of six, was initially withdrawn and hesitant to engage with others. Trainers noted his reluctance to participate in group activities, likely linked to a recent personal loss.

A turning point came when a trainer took time to speak with Ismail privately, affirming the value of friendship, trust, and participation. Encouraged and emotionally supported, Ismail began to open up and gradually joined his peers in practicing circus skills, particularly acrobatics and group games.

Over the following weeks, Ismail not only became an active participant but also emerged as a cheerful, welcoming presence in the group. He was often the first to arrive at training sessions and began forming friendships that extended beyond the activities themselves. His growing confidence, laughter, and strong peer bonds became a symbol of the social healing potential of the arts.

"How can I join your school so I can keep seeing my friends?" he asked a trainer, expressing a deep desire for continued connection and structure in his life.

Success Story 3: From Skepticism to Joy. Reviving Dabke in a War Zone

At the start of the training, 13-year-old Wurood was unconvinced. “Dabke? Really? Why don’t you just let us play and have fun?” she asked with visible disinterest. Her reaction reflected a broader sentiment among the children and their families, many of whom questioned the relevance of a cultural dance workshop amid the devastation of war. “Dabke? In the middle of this crisis?” one parent asked, bewildered.

Rather than dismissing these concerns, the trainer embraced them. With warmth and care, he responded to Wurood: “We will play, have fun, and feel better, through Dabke.”

What followed was a powerful transformation. By the end of the first day, the atmosphere in the camp had shifted. The children, energized by the movement, rhythm, and storytelling of Dabke, began to find joy and purpose in the sessions. Parents, too, quickly recognized the value. “No one ever did anything like this before,” one resident shared. “My kids have been talking about Dabke non-stop. Their behavior has improved. This wasn’t just entertainment, this was education, healing, and something truly new.”

Children began arriving early, waiting at the gates to greet the trainer with smiles and excitement. They proudly shared how they had practiced all night to perfect the moves they had learned. The sense of anticipation and commitment grew with each day.

Relaxation activities like guided breathing and simple yoga were introduced alongside dance, offering children moments of calm and emotional grounding, new experiences that left many feeling amazed at how much better they felt afterward.

Despite limited space, lack of equipment, and the backdrop of war and displacement, the training achieved its core mission: to restore a sense of normalcy, strengthen emotional resilience, and create a space where children could express themselves, learn something new, and feel proud of who they are. As one parent said, “Everyone comes here, plays a song, gives them something to do, and leaves. But you taught them something. You gave them something they’ll carry with them.”

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OUTCOMES & OBSERVED CHANGES

The outreach training initiative yielded a range of positive outcomes for children participating in the programme, as well as for their families and communities. These changes were observed consistently across diverse geographic areas and demographic groups, including children with disabilities and those living in displacement settings.

1. Enhanced Emotional Resilience and Expression

Children showed increased ability to express emotions, manage stress, and engage in emotionally charged conversations. Structured activities in dance, music, theatre, and circus created safe and creative outlets for children to process trauma and anxiety in a supportive environment. Facilitators noted noticeable shifts in children's openness, confidence, and emotional self-regulation over the course of the sessions.

2. Strengthened Peer Relationships and Social Inclusion

Children who initially struggled with social engagement demonstrated improved social interaction, trust-building, and collaborative behavior. Many participants formed friendships that extended beyond the training sessions, helping to reduce feelings of isolation and increase their sense of belonging. Inclusive facilitation techniques ensured that girls and children with disabilities were equally engaged and supported.

3. Positive Behavioural Shifts Observed by Families

Parents in multiple areas reported improvements in their children's behavior, including reduced aggression, greater patience, and a more positive attitude at home. Some caregivers expressed surprise at how the performing arts not only entertained their children but also offered meaningful educational and emotional benefits. In locations like Gaza and Jenin, families became increasingly supportive of regular attendance after observing these changes.

4. Development of Practical and Creative Skills

Participants acquired a wide range of new skills:

- Music: Piano, percussion, vocal techniques, and music theory.
- Dance: Dabke, movement-based coordination and rhythm.
- Circus: Acrobatics, juggling, and balance.
- Theatre: Storytelling, improvisation, role-playing, and expressive communication

These skills improved concentration, motor coordination, self-discipline, and creativity, while also providing children with a sense of mastery and achievement.

5. Increased Participation and Enthusiasm

Facilitators consistently observed high levels of engagement and eagerness among children. In several cases, participants would arrive early to greet trainers or request additional practice material. Children reported feelings of joy, pride, and accomplishment linked to their ability to learn and perform something new.

6. Emergence of Safe and Trustworthy Learning Spaces

Despite often being implemented in makeshift shelters or under-resourced environments, the training sessions established consistent, predictable, and safe spaces where children felt protected, heard, and valued. These spaces became key environments for recovery, routine, and emotional support during a time of social disruption and displacement.

7. Community Acceptance and Support

Initially skeptical community members and parents grew to value the sessions, particularly as the psychosocial and behavioral benefits became evident. Their growing trust translated into higher attendance rates and stronger community engagement, laying a foundation for future collaboration in child-centred programming.



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CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

While the outreach training programme succeeded in reaching hundreds of children across multiple marginalized areas, its implementation also revealed valuable challenges and learning opportunities that will guide future design and delivery.

Challenge 1: Displacement & Lack of Stable Environments

In many of the targeted areas, particularly displacement sites and informal camps, the lack of adequate physical spaces for training posed an immediate obstacle. Sessions were often conducted in crowded tents, outdoors, or in shared community halls with limited privacy or acoustics.

Lesson Learned:

Flexibility and adaptation are key. Trainers creatively modified movement-based activities to suit smaller spaces, and prioritized non-intrusive, low-resource methods like breathing exercises, storytelling circles, and paired games. Future programming should plan for portable safe-space kits and low-footprint setups.

Challenge 2: Food Insecurity and Physical Exhaustion

Several children arrived to sessions hungry or fatigued, a result of severe food shortages, long queues for aid, and general deterioration in living conditions. Some children were visibly distracted, irritable, or physically unwell.

Lesson Learned:

Physical and emotional wellbeing are deeply intertwined. Future programmes will incorporate the provision of small energizing meals or refreshments for the children when possible, to enhance their engagement and address immediate need for sustenance. Activities also need to allow for breaks and pacing sensitive to children's energy levels.



Challenge 3: Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

While the project reached children with physical and learning disabilities, trainers noted challenges in adapting certain activities on the spot, especially in movement-heavy sessions or fast-paced group formats.

Lesson Learned:

Structured accessibility planning is critical. This includes having adaptive materials, disability-aware session plans, and coordination with caregivers or specialists. Future projects will incorporate dedicated inclusion facilitators and create materials with multiple entry points for engagement.



Challenge 4: Community Skepticism Amid Crisis

In several communities, residents questioned the relevance of dance or music in a context where basic survival needs (food, water, safety) were unmet. At first, parents were hesitant to send children to sessions, fearing they were frivolous or even inappropriate during wartime.

Lesson Learned:

Arts-based interventions must be clearly framed as psychosocial, educational, and healing, not only entertainment. Once parents saw the emotional relief and social engagement their children experienced, they became strong advocates. Future programmes should include more orientation meetings, community consultations, and visibility of impact from the start.



7

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

1. Invest in Mobile, Flexible Delivery Models

In displacement contexts where access to stable infrastructure is limited, programming should be designed for mobility. Portable kits, low-resource activities, and context-adapted formats (such as outdoor sessions, tent-based gatherings, or modular lesson plans) can ensure continuity even in unpredictable conditions.

3. Deepen the Psychosocial Component in Training

Expand the ToT curriculum to include more trauma-informed approaches, emotional first aid, and conflict-sensitive facilitation. Equipping trainers with these tools will allow them to more confidently manage emotional outbursts, trauma responses, or grief expressed by children.

5. Expand Monitoring to Include Child-Led Feedback

Incorporate age-appropriate feedback tools that allow children to share what they enjoy, what challenges them, and how they feel after sessions. This ensures programming remains responsive, empowering, and child-centered.

2. Prioritize Proactive Inclusion Measures

Future programmes should allocate specific resources and planning for the participation of children with disabilities, girls in restrictive settings, and children from ultra-poor families. This may include adapted materials, caregiver engagement, or coordination with local disability organizations.

4. Integrate Follow-Up and Continuity Pathways

Many children expressed a desire to continue training, build friendships, or pursue further skill-building. Future designs should include post-programme pathways such as:

- Links to cultural centers or local groups.
- Certification or progress recognition.
- Youth-led follow-up groups or mentorship programmes.



WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN OUR PROGRAMME

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