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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GAZA: IMPLEMENTATION OF 191 EX/DECISION 35

SUMMARY

This document summarizes progress made by UNESCO since the 191st session of the Executive Board in providing assistance to the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip.

Financial or administrative implications fall within the parameters of document 36 C/5.

No decision is proposed in this document.

1. This document presents an update on the UNESCO response to the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip since the 191st session of the Executive Board. It covers the period from January to July 2013.

EDUCATION

2. The programme on “Quality Systems for Quality Teachers”, funded by the European Union, was completed during the period under review. This programme focused on providing technical assistance for developing systems and operational frameworks needed for the implementation of the Teacher Education Strategy. Among the main achievements in Gaza is the capacity development of a core group of educationalists in innovative teaching methodologies, such as ICTs in education, special needs and inclusive education, and school leadership for change – areas jointly determined with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. The first Palestinian Conference “Quality Teachers for Quality Education” in February 2013 was also attended by around 100 participants in Gaza through videoconference. The conference focused on innovation, reflection and leadership in teaching, and highlighted future challenges based on local and international experiences.

3. UNESCO continued coordinating the implementation of the Education for All Package in Gaza, supported by nine United Nations agencies. The EFA Package focuses on inclusive and child-friendly education and early childhood development, and aims at strengthening the capacities of education personnel to promote quality basic education for all children, regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, backgrounds and circumstances. In that respect, 14 pilot schools in

Gaza benefited from school feeding programme and different capacity development programmes focusing on ICT in Education, inclusive and child-friendly education as well as special educational needs. Innovative education programmes on EFA and educational leadership were designed and implemented as part of the development of pre-service teacher courses. Plans have been developed with partner universities in Gaza to improve the relevance of teacher education programmes in order to prepare teachers to better address the diverse needs and abilities of children. In this regard and in cooperation with universities and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), tools and questionnaires have been developed to assess the needs for psychosocial support through the sample of the Gaza pilot schools in view of improving teacher education programme. As a major achievement, pre-fabricated units were installed in the 14 pilot schools of the Gaza strip in order to open a grade 0 classroom (one year of pre-school before grade 1) from September 2013.

4. A new project funded by the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) has been approved to support the implementation of the EFA Package, in particular the components focusing on inclusive and child-friendly education and after-school programmes. This project will be implemented from September 2013 in 24 pilot schools in Gaza, including five UNRWA schools. Furthermore, the education component of the recently finalized UNDAF, coordinated by UNESCO, contributes largely to the implementation of the EFA Package for the next three years.

5. UNESCO supported the Education Cluster in the process of contextualizing the INEE Minimum Standards. UNESCO helped facilitate consultation workshops in Gaza to prioritize and create the National Standards for Education in Emergencies. Such standards will enhance the quality and accountability of education planning, management, implementation and evaluation; support coordination regarding legal rights, common principles and responsibilities; support disaster preparedness and mitigation; and strengthen capacity, as a tool for trainings and knowledge sharing at local and national levels. UNESCO is currently providing technical advice for the finalization of a handbook on the national INEE Minimum Standards.

6. The planning phase of a new project has been initiated to support the right to education of Palestinian university students, particularly those from the most disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and living in marginalized areas. Supported by the Saudi Committee for the Relief of Palestinian People, the project will provide needy university students with access to essential course materials and equipment such as key course texts, reference books, and computer and internet facilities. In partnership with the Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute (HDIP), a Palestinian NGO, the project will establish or support libraries that contain vital course materials for students in two districts in the Gaza Strip. In the framework of this project, an advocacy strategy to promote the right to education will be also developed and disseminated through a communication campaign.

CULTURE

7. UNESCO has been cooperating with l'Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem, the Islamic University in Gaza and the French General Consulate in Jerusalem to safeguard the archeological site of Saint Hilarion Monastery/Tell Umm Amer in Nuseirat, which is inscribed on the Tentative list of Palestine. Due to access issues to Gaza, the experts were unable to carry out emergency works, especially those related to the consolidation of the west wall of the crypt. A work plan is devised to carry out emergency works during the second half of 2013 providing on-the-job training to enhance local capacities on stonemasonry and restoration. The lack of funds necessary to complete the emergency measures to safeguard the site raises concerns for the finalization of the project.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

8. The “Assessment of Palestine’s media landscape using UNESCO’s Media Development Indicators” – a major project implemented with the Birzeit University Media Development Centre – is giving special attention to adequately reflect the situation in Gaza in the assessment report. Researchers from Gaza have been actively involved in the assessment process.

9. UNESCO’s activities regarding safety training for journalists in Palestine have addressed the specific difficulties faced by journalists in Gaza, in light of the challenging environment in which they operate. The two safety training projects cover among others stress management, professional safety procedures, journalists’ rights and legal standards relative to freedom of expression.