

# PALESTINE: TEACHING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP THROUGH SOCIAL AUDITS

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## INTRODUCTION

In much of Palestine's West Bank, particularly in areas such as Awarta and Nablus, there are rampant problems with the funding and delivery of public services and infrastructure projects. These range from a general mismanagement of funds to outright corruption. In response, the Teacher Creativity Centre (TCC) began exploring how conducting social audits of public services in the West Bank could address some of these shortcomings.

Between 2013 and 2014, the TCC mobilized groups of students from 58 secondary schools across the West Bank to conduct social audits of infrastructure projects in their local communities. All of the projects that were audited were carried out, funded, or administered by municipalities or village councils. Along with extensive interviews with government officials, contractors, and members of the community, the students also analyzed financial, administrative, and technical information related to the projects.

Almost all the student groups identified problems with the financing and management of the projects, as well as the quality of service provided. In some cases the student audits led to improvements in the services delivered and the processes of approving, funding, and overseeing the projects.

Fighting corruption is often seen as a vital means to achieving economic and social development. However, in many developing and transitional countries, where the political environment is often unstable and adherence to governance standards is poor, it is a challenge to fulfil this mission. Since its inception, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has strived to combat corruption through anti-corruption laws.<sup>1</sup> But international reports, including the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, show that controlling corruption in Palestine is a long-term challenge.

This case study outlines the TCC's work in coordinating student led social audits in the West Bank. It examines the partnerships TCC forged with both civil society and government, details some of the student projects to illustrate how such social audits can work in practice, and addresses the larger

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.pacc.pna.ps/ar/index.php>

picture of focusing public attention on how funds are allocated and accounted for in public infrastructure projects.

The findings presented in this case study are drawn from extensive interviews with the TCC staff, officials from the Ministry of Education (MoE), a sample of 11 student groups and their teachers, MoE supervisors, and the municipal government.<sup>2</sup> We also reviewed media coverage, reports produced by Integrity Action and the TCC, and profiles of the student projects.

## THE TEACHER CREATIVITY CENTRE'S AUDIT PROJECT

The TCC, a nonprofit organization, was established in 1995 by a group of secondary school teachers. It aims to improve access to quality education for Palestinian students and promote the values of human rights, democracy, and citizenship among students and teachers. The TCC also builds the capacity of school teachers and equips them with skills in civic education. The TCC has initiated programs on human rights, civic education, and counseling for students that are vulnerable to domestic and political violence.

The TCC envisaged the social audit campaign as an educational tool that links classroom learning with real-world experiences. The students were not the only potential learners in the campaign, the TCC also hoped to stoke demand for greater transparency and integrity in the provision of local public services among citizens of the West Bank. The campaign had six main objectives:

1. Promoting a sense of participation and responsibility among Palestinian youth so that they would no longer feel helpless and overlooked.
2. Promoting the values of accountability and integrity in local communities.
3. Encouraging a culture of open access to information in public institutions.
4. Mobilizing societal and public institutions to improve the transparency and integrity of local public services.
5. Embedding civic norms in education curricula via learning-by-doing.
6. Institutionalizing social auditing in the school curriculum.

During the social audit campaign, the TCC was able to draw on its experience with Project Citizen, which started in 2005. Project Citizen engaged students in activities to improve livelihoods in their communities. One of the projects monitored pollution levels at a hospital in Ramallah, where the students uncovered several problems with sanitation and health services in the hospital's maternity ward. By attracting the attention of the local community and government officials through local media, the students contributed to improving the quality of services provided by the hospital.

Project Citizen taught TCC that students are capable of leading a successful campaign to make positive changes in their local communities, and that they can be innovative in overcoming challenges that they encounter in this regard. Its success encouraged the TCC to extend its advocacy efforts to address corruption in public services, in particular locally funded and managed

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education supervisors included 16 staff members, mostly economics and business administration teachers. These supervisors were assigned to follow up and document the auditing activities of the participating students and teachers.

infrastructure projects. This focus on infrastructure was prompted by several reports produced by civil society organizations (CSOs), such as the Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN), that found that services often lack financial transparency and are not delivered as planned. The experience of Project Citizen helped the TCC prepare for some of the challenges that could accompany the planning and implementation of the social audit project, such as negative government reactions and a denial of access to public information.

## PARTNERS IN THE AUDIT PROJECT

### INTEGRITY ACTION

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Integrity Action, a nonprofit organization registered in the United Kingdom, was one of the implementation partners of the project. Integrity Action works closely with NGOs, governments, media organizations, and businesses to "empower citizens to act with and demand integrity, actively taking part in building institutions to promote a state that is open, accountable, and responsive to their needs and expectations."<sup>3</sup>

The partnership between the TCC and Integrity Action grew out of a visit by Integrity Action to the TCC office in Ramallah to discuss the need for integrity and community-driven accountability. The head of the TCC was subsequently invited to participate in one of Integrity Action's integrity leadership courses. Recognizing that the two organizations had many objectives in common, the TCC head approached Integrity Action to explore ways in which the organizations could cooperate.

After frequent visits and ongoing interaction through country exchanges and workshops, the TCC submitted a proposal for the social audit campaign to Integrity Action. Integrity Action accepted the proposal, recognizing the TCC's longstanding commitment to advocacy campaigns and its experience in mobilizing government to enhance integrity and promote civic. TCC became a partner of Integrity Action and a member of its Network for Integrity in Reconstruction.

Integrity Action provided substantial funding for the campaign activities and helped to shape the audit tools used by students by providing monitoring guidance through its Community Integrity Building (CIB) approach. CIB is "a locally driven approach that helps to identify and implement appropriate, viable solutions to improve the integrity of public infrastructure and services. Integrity here is defined as the alignment of Accountability, Competence, [and] Ethics, without corruption."<sup>4</sup> This approach guided the tactics that students used to make their voices heard by government and local community leaders.

### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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Mobilizing 58 schools to monitor public infrastructure projects required considerable administrative and human resources. The TCC also partnered with the MoE, which played a major role in planning and implementing the campaign and was largely responsible for mobilizing students and involving

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.integrityaction.org/who-we-are>

<sup>4</sup> The CIB definition is quoted from the Integrity Action's *Practical Guide to Community Integrity Building*, available at <http://www.integrityaction.org/search/content/practical%20guide%20to>

them in monitoring the infrastructure projects. Both the TCC and the MoE prepared the training materials, and jointly planned and carried out the training sessions for students, teachers, supervisors, and principals.

The MoE followed student monitoring activities by assigning education supervisors to each of the participating schools. The supervisors met with student and teachers and reported audit activities directly to a coordinator from the MoE. The MoE also facilitated communication between the TCC and the participating students. The partnership with the MoE made communication with schools easier and meant that each school did not have to get approval separately to engage in the campaign. In addition, the MoE coordinated with local municipalities and local councils to make it easier for students to gain access to the information that they needed. Furthermore, the MoE and the Ministry of Local Governance (MoLG) partnered to implement the social audit project. This partnership set the stage for student access to municipalities and village councils.<sup>5</sup>

The main goals of the MoE were to mobilize students to demand more transparent public services as a part of their vision to enhance civic education, to equip students with extracurricular research skills, and to improve their ability to work in teams. A long-term objective of the partnership between the MoE and the TCC was also to mainstream social audits in the education curriculum. The MoE further saw the social audit campaign as an opportunity to help enhance student learning and boost values related to democracy, integrity, and human rights. According to Head of Supervision and Training, Tharwat Zeid, this justified the MoE's extensive involvement in the campaign.

The MoE views the social audit project as an effective extracurricular activity for students that deepens their understanding of civic education concepts covered in the classroom. They also see the potential for social audits to make use of innovative approaches such as self-learning and learning-by-doing. The social audit activities, to a great extent, match the concepts taught to 11th-grade economics and business administration students such as financial and administrative auditing and their social effects. This explains why the campaign targeted this cohort of students.

The TCC has a long history of cooperation and partnership with the MoE. It started with co-authoring the civic education curricula and training teachers and MoE supervisors in modern civic teaching. Cooperation continued during their joint implementation of Project Citizen, which both parties considered a good way to upgrade students' knowledge and to involve them in activities related to issues that are important to their local communities. According to Mr. Zeid, being involved with community-based projects that enhance values of integrity and transparency accords with the Palestinian government's intention to fight corruption.

The MoE has also participated in other projects, including "civic education and fighting corruption." Partnering with the anti-corruption commission, the MoE has engaged groups of students from 200 schools across the West Bank to implement projects related to enhancing transparency and fighting corruption. The MoE has also partnered with MoLG to involve students in projects related to the auditing activities of the municipalities and local councils. Mr. Jamal Salem, head of the supervision

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<sup>5</sup> For example, communication with MoLG was essential to get the mayor of Halhool town to cooperate with students and allow them access to information.

department at the MoE, said that these projects were well received and supported by the parents of students.

## PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL AUDIT PROJECT

### TRAINING

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In 2013, TCC and MoE jointly organized training sessions with 58 teachers from 58 schools across the West Bank.<sup>6</sup> Teachers of economics and business administration at the participating schools were chosen as they were determined to be well placed to supervise and support monitoring activities that dealt with financial and administrative analysis. The selection process ensured that half of the participating students were females and most selected schools were located in socially and economically disadvantaged areas. Schools in localities with a high illiteracy rate, a high poverty rate, and close to the Israeli separation wall were favored in the selection.

Teachers were introduced to concepts of auditing, anti-corruption, accountability, transparency, and project implementation. The training material also covered skills related to planning, group work, communication, documentation, advocacy strategies, and the law. Once trained, teachers could then pass on the acquired knowledge and skills to the participating students. This helped to ensure a standard approach was used by all student groups.

Sixteen supervisors from the MoE (those supervising economics and business administration teachers) and 60 principals of participating schools underwent similar training. This aimed to ensure that supervisors and principals were familiar enough with the project to provide assistance to students and teachers during the implementation and follow-up stages. Training MoE supervisors also created a core group who would be capable of training large numbers of teachers for future projects.

### IMPLEMENTATION

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The implementation of the social audit project was carried out in two phases. The first phase encompassed 40 projects that were completed in 2013, the remaining 20 projects were implemented in the following year.

A student group in each of the 58 schools was formed to conduct the social audit. Each group obtained a list of infrastructure projects from their local municipality or village council. Projects could still be in their implementation stage or could have been completed within the previous four years. Projects were selected based on the importance to the local community, student preferences, and the availability of data. The students voted for their favorite project, and the one with the most votes was selected.

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

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<sup>6</sup> Initially, the training sessions accommodated 60 schools, but two schools dropped out.

School principals or participating teachers were often tasked with communicating with local councils to gather relevant information. Unsurprisingly, the social status and credibility of principals significantly helped in gaining cooperation from local councils. In cases where communication proved difficult, however, the MoE would ask the MoLG to facilitate. This partnership was key to the success of the social auditing campaign.

Having selected their projects, the students started collecting relevant information. This was achieved by conducting interviews with project stakeholders, reviewing project descriptions, as well as collecting information on the objectives, financing, administration, and management of the projects. The auditing process also examined whether financial transactions were carried out transparently, in accordance with contract specifications, and in compliance with laws and regulations. The students took photographs of the project sites to compare the actual services provided by the contractors with the plans. Box 1 lists the indicators and the questions used to determine the integrity of the project.

#### BOX 1: DETERMINING THE INTEGRITY OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

##### ACCOUNTABILITY

###### Transparency

- How easy was it to obtain and access information?
- What kind of information is available?
- What types of reports are available?
- How was information disseminated and used?

###### Social Accountability

- Were stakeholders informed about the project?
- Did stakeholders participate in any stage of the project?
- Who benefited from the project implementation?
- Was there discrimination resulting in a group not benefiting from the project?

###### Financial Accountability

- What is the amount of money pledged to the project?
- How much of the money pledged was spent?
- What was the mechanism for allocation and disbursement of funds?
- How were expenses justified?
- What type of financial reports exist? Are they accessible?

##### PROFESSIONALISM

- Was sustainability/maintenance included in the planning of project?
- Were the terms of the contract followed?
- Do office bearers sanction for poor performance or breach of contract and what is the mechanism?

##### CORRUPTION CONTROL

- Is there a mechanism for sanctioning corruption? What type of mechanism?
- Is there a complaint mechanism?

Students used a questionnaire to describe the nature of the project, its stage of implementation, deficiencies, problem resolutions, duration, implementing agency, donor, government responsibility, budget, and beneficiaries.

Few student groups encountered difficulties accessing information. The majority of projects took place in small localities where strong social ties and small bureaucracies facilitated communication with mayors and helped students access the information they required. As most of the projects that were audited had already been completed, in some cases years before, local councils were more inclined to provide information.

The information required was usually obtained from the project contract, financial documents, and correspondence between the local officials and contractors. Extensive interviews with local officials and contractors were also conducted. To monitor the transparency and integrity of the project, the students learned about related policies, laws, and regulations. They also learned about the managerial structure of the project and mapped the agencies involved.

Teachers visited project sites and met with contractors, municipal officials, and other government officials to collect information about the projects. Each student group surveyed a sample of local residents, which were an important source of information. This method provided a rich set of data that enabled students to develop a clearer picture of the impact of the selected projects on local residents and the extent of their satisfaction with the services provided. It also alerted communities to the need to focus on how public infrastructure projects in their area were being carried out.

Once the students had collected and analyzed the information, they identified deviations from the original plans and explored deficiencies in the implementation process and services delivered. This allowed them to make recommendations and offer solutions. This process sometimes entailed consulting with experts in finance, architecture, civil engineering, and law to ensure that their proposed solutions were cost-effective and practical.

Communicating the findings to local communities and public officials was an integral part of the social audit. Building citizen awareness could have a significant impact on future infrastructure development projects and improve the transparency of budgetary oversight at all levels of government. After identifying appropriate alternative solutions, each group of students devised a plan to communicate their findings and make recommendations to the local communities and public officials. Public hearings, local media, and social media were used to communicate with those most affected by the projects. These activities aimed to get the voices of students and residents heard in an effort to improve project development and service delivery, and help to improve transparency and integrity in the future.

## EXAMPLES OF AUDITS

The following section provides details on a number of audited projects. See Annex 1 for a comprehensive list of all audited projects.

### RENOVATION OF BEIT FAJJAR SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

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The audit carried out at the Beit Fajjar Secondary School for Girls, in Beit Fajjar town, is exemplary of the social audit process. The supervising teacher obtained a list of ongoing and recently implemented infrastructure projects from the Beit Fajjar municipality. These projects included constructing additional classes at Al-Wafa Elementary School, paving the town's entrance,

renovating old buildings in downtown, constructing the fourth floor of Beit Fajjar Secondary School for Girls, and constructing the second floor of Haifa Elementary School for girls. Participating students voted for their preferred projects and chose auditing the renovation project at the secondary school, which had been completed in 2010.

Students then identified stakeholders in the project, including Beit Fajjar municipality, Beit Fajjar Agricultural Association (the body that operates the renovated buildings), the Centre for Heritage Preservation,<sup>7</sup> the contractor, the donor (USAID), and the implementing body. They then met with the mayor to introduce him to their auditing process who promised full cooperation and agreed to provide any information that was needed.

Students then began collecting information about the objectives and outcome of the renovation activities, the role of project stakeholders, the planned and actual implementation period, contract terms, details about project budget, the selection process of the contractor, and any consequences of violating contract terms. They also reviewed regulations and laws related to renovating and preserving archeological sites, financial and administrative control, and organizing the work of local councils.

Students audited several aspects of the project. This included financial and administrative monitoring that covered the cycle and mechanism of the project's expenditures, supervisory activity reports, and the maintenance plan. The monitoring process included field visits to examine discrepancies between planned and actual implementation of the project, as well as whether project implementation complied with related laws and regulations. The students also distributed questionnaires to a sample of local residents to explore public satisfaction with the outcome of the renovation project.

After analyzing the information, the students identified a number of project deficiencies. For example, the maintenance activities were not implemented as planned and the municipality deviated from the renovation contract by designating part of the renovated building as a storage room rather than an information center as intended. Students also showed that the archiving system of the municipality was poor, some of the project documents were missing and students had to contact the contractor for copies. To help resolve these issues, the students recommended full compliance with the contract conditions (mainly those related to the function of the renovated buildings), implementation of the planned maintenance activities, and upgrading the archiving system of the municipality.

To follow up on the recommendations and to inform and involve citizens, the students launched an action plan to publicize their findings. After sharing the findings with municipal officials, they collected signatures from local residents to pressure the municipality into resolving the deficiencies in the project that they had identified. The students also arranged for a meeting with officials from the local councils to report and discuss their findings. They were told that these problems should

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<sup>7</sup> The Centre for Heritage Preservation assigned a civil engineer to join the municipality staff in supervising the renovation work.

first be presented to the Agriculture Association of Beit Fajar. However, after the students had done so, the association failed to act on the findings, and the problems remained unresolved.

#### REHABILITATION OF MARADA SPRING.

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Students from Marada Co-ed Secondary School chose to audit the rehabilitation of the Roman Spring in the village of Marada in the district of Salfit. The project was implemented by Salfit's regional council in late 2012. The students discovered that the funds allocated to the project were insufficient to complete it according to the stipulations in the contract. This raised questions about the quality of the initial proposal that was approved.

The spring also needed a system in place to filter water from the nearby Israeli settlement of Ariel, which sometimes contaminates nearby water networks and wells because it has a poorly maintained sewage system. The students' investigation also revealed that, contrary to what was stated in the project contract, the contractor used low quality materials to build the wall around the spring and thereby exposed local residents to a safety risk.

Upon finishing the audit, the students documented their findings and shared them with Salfit's regional council and with the contractor. To publicize their findings, and raise awareness about the importance of the social audit, the students presented their findings at a public hearing attended by the regional council and a group of individuals from the local community. The outcome of the public hearing was positive; the council and the contractor agreed to address the project deficiencies. As a result, the contractor rebuilt the spring wall using proper materials and cleaned the dirty water. The public hearing also resulted in the Palestinian Authority providing additional funds to install a new pump and filtration system and connecting the spring to the water network.

#### CONSTRUCTION OF A STADIUM IN NABLUS.

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Students from Abd al Hamid Al Sayeh Secondary School in Nablus chose to audit the construction of a stadium that was funded by Nablus municipality. They discovered that the implementation phase of the project had been delayed for one year and that the project did not follow the specifications in the contract. Some of the stadium fixtures, such as lighting, were not installed and the outside road was not paved. Students communicated these findings along with suggested solutions to the municipality.

The municipality first reaction was negative. Local leaders ignored the findings, but the students were determined to be heard. Neither the students, the TCC, nor the MoE had any legal authority to compel the municipality to cooperate and complete the project. Following advice from TCC, the students held a public hearing and invited representatives of the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission, the local community, and the municipality.<sup>8</sup> At the end of the public hearing, the Anti-Corruption Commission opened an investigation into the misconduct of the engineering department of the Nablus municipality. As a result, the construction of the stadium was fully completed, with the

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<sup>8</sup> The Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission is a public entity that aims at fighting corruption practices within the PNA's institutions.

remaining fixtures installed and the outside road paved. Currently, the stadium serves over 160,000 people in Nablus and surrounding areas.

#### CONSTRUCTION OF A WATER TANK IN FAQOUA.

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Students from Faqoua Secondary School for Girls audited a council project to construct a water tank in Faqoua village, which was funded by World Vision. The water tank was constructed to store and distribute water to residents to help them deal with water shortages caused by a lack of access to a municipal water network.

The students discovered that the construction of the water tank did not follow the project contract in a number of ways. No fence had been installed around the water tank and the village council had not consulted with the local community regarding its location. The students also found that the tank had been constructed in the middle of the village and was not connected to the water network. This posed a danger to pedestrians as trucks came to the tank when students were walking between home and school. Moreover, because the water tank lacked a pump, houses that were some distance from the tank received little water. The students also discovered problems with the bidding process. The village council had accepted the highest-bidding contractor, although it was not the best bid.

The students reported their findings to the village council and held a public meeting with the mayor and representatives of the parents of students who attended the nearby schools. Students recommended installing a fence around the tank as stipulated in the contract, installing pedestrian signs around the tank area, and posting a schedule of the times when the trucks were to come into the village so as to ensure the safety of local residents. They also recommended that the tank be connected to the regional water network and that a water pump be installed so that houses located farther away from the tank could receive their fair share of water.

At the public meeting the mayor mentioned that the village council had intended to erect the fence, but that this had been delayed. The students' advocacy helped to speed the process up and the fence was completed. The mayor also requested a written pledge from the drivers of the water trucks not to transport water to the tank during school hours.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the mayor and the students went to Ramallah to visit the headquarters of the water authority (which is the national body in charge of developing water infrastructure) to demand that the water tank be linked with the regional water network. Officials from the water authority promised to act on students' recommendation pending the availability of funds.<sup>10</sup>

The work of the students attracted media attention, and their audit activities were reported in a mainstream newspaper, Alquds. Media exposure was crucial in convincing the village council to

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<sup>9</sup> The mayor argued that obtaining a pledge from water truck drivers is more effective than installing pedestrian signs; thus he chose not to install the latter.

<sup>10</sup> The water network project, funded by the USAID, was approved to be built on the eastern side of Jenin in the 2014 budget. However, the funds were not made available.

cooperate with the students as failure to do so would have exposed the local council to social criticism and the possibility of an investigation.<sup>11</sup>

#### REHABILITATION OF THE MAIN STREET AND SIDEWALKS IN QABATIYA.

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A group of students from Izzat Abu Rubb Boys School audited the paving of part of the main street and the construction of sidewalks in Qabatiya. The students discovered several discrepancies between the specifications in the contract and the actual implementation of the project. For example, telephone poles were erected in the wrong locations, storm drains were not installed properly, and pedestrian crossings and traffic lights were put in the wrong places.

The students publicized their findings in three ways. First, they used social media to create a social audit group. Second, they were live guests on a well-known radio talk show during which they talked about the project deficiencies they had identified. The students also highlighted the safety risks facing local residents caused by the failure to properly complete the project. One student spoke of his own experience in saving a young boy from being hit by a car because the street lacked traffic signs. The anchor of the show demanded that the mayor explain the reasons for the deficiencies in the project and asked for his reaction to the safety risks. The mayor promised to act on the students' recommendations. Finally, in addition to their appearance on the talk show, which was posted on YouTube, the students arranged for a public hearing with the mayor and representatives from the local community.<sup>12</sup>

The student advocacy was so effective that the mayor cooperated and eventually remedied the project deficiencies. The telephone poles and wires were moved to the correct location, traffic lights and pedestrian crossings were installed, storm drains were widened and cleared of rubbish, and street lights were installed. The students also highlighted issues regarding the maintenance of the road, such as cracks in the sidewalk paving stones and rainwater trapped in sections of the road, which are still to be resolved.

#### REHABILITATION OF A CENTRE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

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A group of students from Ithna School for Boys monitored the construction of Ithna Community Rehabilitation Centre. The Centre provides assistance to Ithna's disabled residents and is managed by the Ithna municipal council. The students discovered several deficiencies. First, the center had been built without a construction permit. Second, its proximity to neighboring properties violated the minimum distance of three meters (even though this issue had been resolved with the land owner prior to the monitoring activity). Third, the center lacked a parking lot which was in violation of the Palestinian Local Authority's Building and Organization Law.

With the help of the school's teachers, the students organized a public event attended by members of the local community. This event attracted a lot of attention and a large crowd gathered. Although the students managed to report their audit findings to the mayor, they did not have sufficient time

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<sup>11</sup> Based on an interview with the TCC staff.

<sup>12</sup> See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blZTv7\\_Ytc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blZTv7_Ytc)

to extend their advocacy effort and put pressure on the mayor to fix the reported deficiencies. However, the principal and the teachers took the lead in following up with the mayor. Because they feared that the municipality might divert the center's activity away from supporting the disabled due to financial difficulties, the teachers formed a committee with representatives from the local community to ensure the sustainability of services. So far, they have succeeded in maintaining the activities of the center in support of the disabled.<sup>13</sup>

## LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

One of the challenges that students faced was gaining access to information. In a number of cases, officials from local councils or municipalities initially refused to grant students access to the information that they required. Their obstruction might have been related to the fear of disclosing management misconduct or corruption. In most cases, the students found innovative ways to obtain the information that they sought. Often this was done through local networking and social pressure, or by consulting directly with contractors or donor agencies.<sup>14</sup> In other cases, the MoE brought pressure to bear on behalf of the students by communicating with officials from MoLG. Social pressure from community members and officials also often highly effective, particularly in smaller communities.

In other cases students and their teachers faced social pressure to halt their auditing activities or to ignore certain findings. For example, the supervising teacher at one school changed the content of the students' findings for fear that publicizing them might spark social unrest within the community. For the same reason, students from another school chose not to report suspected financial corruption. In another interesting case, the students did not share their findings with the local community or the mayor, a very powerful figure. It turned out that the supervising teacher was a relative of the mayor, and she felt pressured not to criticize him in public.

Another factor that limited the impact of some of the audits was that most of the projects that were audited had been completed before the students began their monitoring. In such cases, there was little chance to close the accountability loop, either because it is harder to fix deficiencies in already completed projects or because no more funds were available to do so. Those groups that succeeded in driving change tended to be auditing projects that were still in progress or only recently completed.

The kind of direct policy change that the TCC sought to achieve in the social audits involved improving the delivery and enhancing the integrity of infrastructure projects that are provided by local authorities. However, the TCC only partially succeeded in meeting this objective for the reasons discussed above. In addition, many student groups were focused on their projects only up to the point where they could qualify for the regional judging to name a winning group. The extent to which a project advocated for a far-reaching policy change was not among the evaluation criteria in the judging process, and this may have made it less important for these groups to ensure that they

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<sup>13</sup> Based on an interview with the school principal.

closed the project loop, or tried to set up any kind of ongoing audits for future projects. For the few student groups that did succeed in closing the project loop, tactics such as holding public hearings and seeking media coverage proved to be very important. It should be also noted that family support for students was also key to their success. Families were proud of students' advocacy for positive change.<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to assess the extent of the campaign's effect on local communities, though that might be the most important outcome of the campaign. Objectives such as promoting values of accountability and integrity in local communities, encouraging a culture of accessing information from public institutions, and mobilizing societal and public institutions to enhance transparency and integrity in local public services, are difficult to measure directly. Such an assessment would require extensive data collection and analysis, for which the resources are simply not available at this time.

The larger question is whether such social audits, and subsequent advocacy efforts, can be institutionalized in some way. The campaign only succeeded in fixing problems that were identified in a few projects, which suggests that its impact on local communities was at best limited. However, it did succeed in promoting participation among Palestinian youth, giving them a sense of responsibility and enhancing their self-esteem. Moreover, the campaign demonstrated that secondary school students are a largely untapped reservoir of activists.

Students brought strong pressure to bear on officials, who, through negligence or corruption, were wasting public funds and failing to meet public needs. In many cases the work of the students succeeded in improving the lives of the people in their communities. Perhaps the cadre of 16 trained supervisors from the MoE will prove to be the key to following up on these efforts, and will make use of students as both learners and auditors in a continuing process of assessing the delivery of public infrastructure projects in their communities. If so, the TCC experience offers important lessons in program design and implementation.

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<sup>15</sup> This discussion is based on interviews with students.

## ANNEX 1: A SELECTION OF AUDIT FINDINGS

### FAQOUA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

#### PROJECT: CONSTRUCTION OF A WATER TANK IN FAQOUA

##### Problems Identified:

- Not having a fence around the tank.
- Not having warning signs around the tank.
- Water trucks that refill the tank don't have a scheduled time of delivery.
- The project's budget was raised after the implementation started; therefore two bids didn't have a fair chance of competing.
- The tank didn't solve the entire issue of water connection to the houses; a better water network is needed in the village.

### BARTAA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

#### PROJECT: FINISHING BARTAA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS PLAYGROUND

##### Problems Identified:

- 41 day delay in implementation, with no delay fees paid.
- The tender was not announced in newspapers.
- The playground's gate is short.
- Lack in paint material.
- No soccer playground.
- Lack of engineer supervision; the engineer was on vacation during the implementation.

### ITHNA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

#### PROJECT: ITHNA COMMUNITY REHABILITATION CENTRE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

##### Problems Identified:

- No building permit.
- The distance between the building and the border of its land is less than the legal distance.
- Lack of a car park for the building.

### BURQA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

#### PROJECT: BUILDING BURQA SERVICE COMPLEX

##### Problems Identified:

- Lack of funding and delay of implementation. Because of funding problems only the second floor of the facility, which acts as the headquarters for the village council, had been completed. This was because only \$245,594 of the \$400,000 budget was released by the donor.
- The contractor failed to put measures in place to support the road adjacent to the project site when digging at the project site. When it rained, part of the road collapsed, and the contractor had to rebuild it.

### TARQUMIA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

#### PROJECT: PAVING TARQUMIA'S PARK STREET

##### Problems Identified:

- 90 days delay in implementation, with no delay fees paid.
- The residents objected to paving part of the street on their land.
- The road was not paved as stipulated in the contract. As a result, rainwater made a hole in one section.
- The contractor was caught not adding oil to the tar when paving the street.

### AL-QADESYEH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

#### PROJECT: PAVING THE SCHOOL STREET IN HALHOUL

##### Problems Identified:

- Difficulties in implementation because the buildings on the side of the road were too close
- The drainage pipes and sidewalk stones were not the same quality as agreed upon.

- Poor quality tarring meant that edges crumbled due to weather, and the paving slopes against the water and rain flow.
- Sewer manholes don't dispose of the water as required.

#### AL-UMEH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

##### PROJECT: COMMUNITY SERVICE COMPLEX BUILDING

###### Problems Identified:

- The tender was not announced in the newspaper, the price offers and the tender laying papers were not found, and the date of approving the first plan was postponed for no official reason.
- 10 working days delay in implementation.
- The amount of material used was twice or three times more than indicated in the agreement.

#### TOBAS SECONDARY FOR SCHOOL BOYS

##### PROJECT: YOUTH ACTIVITY CENTER

###### Problems Identified:

- The center was built but not used as a Youth Center; the building is rented for other purposes.

#### AL-FAWAR SECONDARY FOR GIRLS

##### PROJECT: MULTIPURPOSE HALL (CULTURAL CENTER)

###### Problems Identified:

- The Popular Committee in the Refugee Camp had conflicts between its members, which prevented the team from collecting the data.
- Lack of funding and delay in funding led to delay in finishing the project.
- Difficult circumstance leading to the delay.
- The contractor received more money than the percentage allowed for the implementation. The funder also did not closely monitor the contract and was only concerned with the overall payment.

#### QARAWA BANI HASSAN SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

##### PROJECT: HARAK SEWID STREET

###### Problems Identified:

- Inaccessibility of heavy vehicles to open the street.

#### AL-A'ISHYEH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

##### PROJECT: REPAIR HAIFA'S STREET IN NABLUS

###### Problems Identified:

- 48 days delay with no penalties paid.
- There are cracks in parts of the roads because they were paved with one layer of asphalt instead of the two as recommended by the engineer.
- The sidewalks are small, and some spaces lack sidewalks altogether.
- The traffic roundabout sometimes floods because no manholes were built by the contractor to dispose of rainwater.

#### SHIEKHA FATEMA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

##### PROJECT: PAVING AN INTERIOR STREET IN AL- MAZRA'A AL-SHARQIYAH

###### Problems Identified:

- The actual budget is higher than the budget agreed on.
- 30 day delay in implementation, with no delay fees.
- Problems with the tender announcement and price offers, including time limitation and a lack of meeting minutes.

## QIBYA'S SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS

### PROJECT: QIBYA'S PLAYGROUND

#### Problems Identified:

- 30 days delay.
- The playground certified to be safe for children, but it is used as a cafe and hookah place.
- The playground has not been maintained.
- The owner of the land donated it to the village council for the implementation of this project, but there is no clear contract for this agreement.

## AL-OMARYAH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

### PROJECT: FINISHING BUILDING ROOMS IN HABLA'S SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

#### Problems Identified:

- 30 days delay.
- The actual expenditure was lower than the proposed budget.
- The current mayor was not in charge when the project was implemented.

## AL-RAS MIXED SECONDARY SCHOOL

### PROJECT: FINISHING KOFUR ABOSH SECONDARY SCHOOL BUILDING

#### Problems Identified:

- The location of the school is on a steep mountain, therefore the contractor found it difficult to get to the location.
- Delay in the implementation; the project is not finished yet, although the deadline was September 29th, 2013.

## SIYLET AL-THAHER SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

### PROJECT: ADDING FACILITIES TO THE INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

#### Problems Identified:

- The contractor and donor refused to give the team any information.
- 60 days delay.
- The actual expenditure was lower than the proposed budget.
- Monthly reports, contracts, and financial papers were missing.
- The contractor still had not paid all the workers what they were owed.
- There is no building permit for the project.