International Funding to Palestinian NGOs and Its Impact on Social Capital in the West Bank

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ABSTRACT

The researcher in this study tested the null hypothesis which is as follows: International funding of projects to Palestinian non-government organizations (NGOs) and social causes has strengthened the development of social capital in the West Bank. The study groups are paid and non-paid volunteers, and leaders of NGOs which were selected randomly. The researcher used two methods of data collection. First, a survey of 320 self-administered questionnaires was distributed to paid and non-paid volunteers, and 276 were completed and returned. The second instrument used was a focus group session attended by 21 leaders of NGOs in Palestine. The researcher found that both age and level of education for the participants are statistically significant with respect to volunteering in Palestine. People above thirty years of age are more likely to volunteer than those less than thirty. Also, people with higher levels of education, above high school, are more likely to volunteer.

Keywords: NGO, Palestine, Volunteerism, Social Capital

Introduction

There is a decline in the spirit, effective financial contributions, and engagement in the civil society within the Palestinian community, according to Rahal (2009). Rahal (2009, 50) argues that it is clear that there has been a decline in voluntary works in Palestine after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994. This decline can be observed in (a) the membership of youth in youth organizations where "the percentage of those who do not take part in such organizations reached 82.2% of the total number of the sample," where the sample size is 1260 male and female youths (Al-Malki, Ladadwah, Shalabi, 2007: 83), (b) the lack of existence of voluntary centers, (c) lack of awareness in contributing to volunteer organizations, (d) the absence of rules and regulations in regulating the issues of contribution and engagement, (e) lack of freedom for contributions, and (f) the weakness of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Rahal, 2009: 9). The number of volunteers in Palestine decreased by 21.1% between 2000 and 2006 from 64,936 in 2000 to 53,622 volunteers (Al-Malki, Shalabi, Ladadwah, 2008: 17). In addition, there are other social, political, economic, cultural, and religious obstacles (Rahal, 2009) that will be discussed later in this dissertation.

Social Capital and Its Relation to Volunteerism

While studying volunteerism, it is important to consider the concept of social capital, as well as the impact of volunteerism on the formation of social capital. Putnam (2000: 117) notes that volunteerism is one form of civic engagement. The concept of social capital, introduced to the field of sociology by Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman during the 1970s (see also Edwards and Foley, 2001), involves the dynamics of social life and social action. Bourdieu and Waequant (1992: 119) view social capital as one of the three forms of capital (economic, cultural and social) that "explain the structure and dynamics of different societies." The concept of social capital is relatively new, and many definitions of the concept have been advanced by different scholars. Putnam (2000: 19) defines social capital as "connections among individuals- social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." Also, he defines it as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam, 1993: 169).

Bourdieu (1977: 503) describes social capital as a "capital of social relationships which will provide, if necessary, useful support: a capital of honorability and respectability which is often indispensable if one desires to attract clients in socially important positions, and which may serve as currency." Newton (2001a: 225) defines social capital in terms of "(a) norms and values (b) social networks, or (c) consequences -voluntarily produced collective facilities and resources," where attitudes and values related to trust and the way people treat each other as good citizens, and networks among individuals, groups, and organizations are the crucial components of social capital. Moreover; social capital is understood as the "glue" that holds together social relationships and networks among individuals, communities, regions, or even the whole nation (Huysman, and Wulf, 2004).

Field (2003: 3) considers the "membership of networks" and a set of common values are at the "heart of the concept of social capital," where "networks of relationships" between group members is important in generating social capital (Blanchard 2004: 54). Relationships are a resource and a form of capital, and if people use this resource, they can cooperate with each other to achieve their common goals (Field 2005: 5-6). The value of the relationship is defined by the social focus around the relationship, and not defined within the relationship itself (Burt 2005: 12-13). Organizations play an important role in networking and team building. Organizations provide youth with experience that allows their involvement with teams to produce collective results that are greater than an individual alone could achieve. Also, youth will be "exposed to direct effects of cooperative effort, efforts that enhance one's own actions and benefit other persons" (Youniss, McLellan, and Yates, 2001: 247).

Social capital, as introduced by Halpern (2005: 9-11), has three components: networking includes relationships among individuals in the community and neighborhood; social norms, i.e., values and rules in the community; and sanctions and punishment for good/bad behaviors. Halpern adds that the existence of effective and trustworthy institutions together with government action can create social capital. Krishna (2002: 17) cites Fukuyama on the contention that "societies well supplied with social capital will be able to adopt new organizational forms more readily than those with less, as technology and markets change…. Such a society will be better able to innovate organizationally, since a higher degree of sociability will permit a wide variety of social relationships to merge."

Krishna (2002: 17) also discusses the social capital thesis in which "culture and historical legacy" lead to formation of social capital, and social capital leads to "institutional performance." Voluntary projects or "self-help" schemes tend to be successful in societies with a high level of social capital, and it is important to develop some predictors of success when planning to conduct public good oriented intervention at specific neighborhoods (Pargal, Gilligan, and Huq, 2002: 346-349). Coleman (1988: 109-116) emphasizes the importance of family and school in the development of social capital. Putnam (1995: 73-75) stresses the importance of family as the most important factor in the development of social capital. Putnam (2000: 277) notes that "the family itself, by some accounts, is a key form of social capital." The social connection among family members and the bonds among members of society have an impact on the level of giving within society, where "altruism, volunteering, and philanthropy- our readiness to help others- is by some interpretations a central measure of social capital" (Putnam, 2000: 116).

Methodology

Importance of the Study and Its Contribution to Public Affairs

Very little research has been undertaken in the field of volunteerism in Palestine. The importance of this study is to gain better understanding of the Palestinian nonprofit sector and the effects of international funds on the sector. Even though the nonprofit sector is fairly new in Palestine (as compared with other countries), Kleibo (2003: 4) indicates that "the concept of community volunteer work, *owneh*, has long been part of Palestinian rural culture.

So, when an internationalized version of volunteerism was introduced to the West Bank and Gaza in 1994, through the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Program (UNDP/PAPP), it found fertile ground for international and national volunteers."
The possible audience of this study is Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), represented by its managers, boards of directors and staff, the volunteers, non-volunteers, the Palestinian Authority, the Ministry of Nongovernmental Organizations, Palestinian universities, the leaders in the sector in Palestine, the international nonprofits working in Palestine, and the leaders in the sector in the Arabic world. In addition, the researcher believes that it will be of value to organizations that provide aid throughout developing countries, as well as to the academic community interested in nonprofit organizations functioning in difficult environments, like the one in Palestine at the present time.

Research Significance

The presentation of information about volunteerism will assist the readers of this work to be aware of Palestine's policies, plans, and procedures. The lack of information about volunteerism makes it difficult for outsiders to comprehend the complex environment for volunteerism, which is an essential element in the social and economic life of the Palestinian people.

There are many reasons behind the selection of the topic of this study. First, the researcher has an interest in this subject. Second, volunteerism is a form of democratic participation through social contribution, so it reflects a social value that is shared by many in Palestinian comminutes. Also, the extent of volunteerism serves as a measure for distinguishing advanced and developed nations from others. Therefore, writing about this topic may encourage public discourse on the issue of volunteerism in the community and influence the participatory process in public affairs. As stated above, the researcher also recognizes that there have been a minimal number of studies on volunteerism in Palestine.

This study is important for the following reasons. First, volunteerism has social, economic, political, and developmental dimensions. Second, the researcher expects to inform readers about the existence of voluntary activity in Palestine in earlier times, as well as to develop recommendations that will help the Palestinian society. Finally, the researcher's study will enrich the Palestinian and the Arabic libraries with a scholarly reference about enhancing volunteerism, contributions, and engagement in civil society in Palestine.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this concurrent mixed study is to examine the climate of volunteerism in Palestine and explore possible solutions to the problem, which is a decline in both engagements in civil society and contributions of voluntary works in Palestine. In this study, a survey in the form of a questionnaire is used to measure the relationship among foreign funds, the Palestinian economic status, the current political situation, and the current climate of volunteerism in the Palestinian NGOs. At the same time, the researcher explores volunteerism in the Palestinian NGOs using a focus group discussion with leaders of NGOs in Palestine.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis: International funding of projects to Palestinian NGOs and social causes that were undertaken historically by volunteers has undermined the development of social capital in the West Bank.

Null Hypothesis: International funding of projects to Palestinian NGOs and social causes has strengthened the development of social capital in the West Bank.

The research hypothesis mentioned above is an exploratory hypothesis to gauge the current climate of volunteerism in the Palestinian NGOs.

Study Groups

The researcher selected two groups because they are best situated to describe the current climate of volunteerism in Palestine. The first group consists of a group of non-paid volunteers, paid volunteers, and board members. The second group, leaders of NGOs, was randomly selected. However, the first group was conveniently selected, which means the sample of

volunteers happened to be present at the time the research was conducted (more details will be provided in sampling section). These two groups are directly involved in the details of voluntary work in Palestine; therefore, a survey of these two groups is appropriate because they were able to describe the situation in Palestine very well.

In addition to these two groups presenting a clear view on the current climate, they assisted the researcher in understanding volunteerism in the past, before the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994. Studying the two groups provided information to the researcher about the current climate of volunteerism in Palestine. In addition, the groups explained the roles of the volunteers, NGOs, Palestinian National Authority and its political system, Palestinian political parties, society, culture, habits, customs, religion, and education in the voluntary work process. All these elements were analyzed in order to have a better understanding of the current climate of voluntary work in Palestine. The importance of volunteerism in the past is the insight it provided in discovering the lessons learned to develop ideas for more effective voluntary work and for understanding the level of engagement in the Palestinian civil society for the present and the future.

Operationalization of Key Indicators

In this research, social capital in the West Bank is the dependent variable and the independent variable is the international funding to the Palestinian NGOs.   The researcher tested the null hypothesis by studying the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Each of the two groups provided specific data and measurements. The volunteers' group provided feedback on the reasons for their engagement in voluntary work, volunteers' level of participation in decision making and strategic planning at the NGOs, the rules and regulations at the NGOs that affect their rights and duties, the level of appreciation by the Palestinian society, the impact of foreign funds on volunteerism, and other components that affect their contributions of volunteers in light of the economic and political status in Palestine. The group of leaders of NGOs provided the following information:

1. Data on the strategy of the NGOs, whether or not the NGOs are involved in voluntary work,
2. Number of volunteers at the organizations,
3. The impact of the rules and regulations imposed by the Palestinian National Authority after 1994,
4. The effect of the political system on NGOs on the rules that support volunteerism,
5. The impact of donors' policies and agendas on voluntary work,
6. Leaders' relationships with volunteers,
7. The effect of the increase in the number of NGOs after 1994 in the enhancement or diminution of voluntary work in Palestine, and
8. The impact on voluntary work from the increase of foreign funds to Palestinian NGOs.

Sampling

This research includes two samples, where one of these samples is a non-random, non-probability sample, and the second sample is a randomly selected sample. The sample of the volunteers is conveniently selected, which means that sample members are selected because they are available or convenient. The reason behind selecting the convenience sample, i.e., members of the sample are chosen because they are available at the time of conducting the research, is that there is no database from which to select randomly from among volunteers in Palestine. Therefore, volunteers at the randomly selected NGOs who were available at the time of the administering of the questionnaire were asked to fill out the questionnaires. The sample size was 276 volunteers/employed volunteers and board members.

The second sample, which included the leaders of the NGOs, was randomly selected through a multi-stage cluster sample process. Before the explanation of the details of the cluster sampling, it is important again to note that Palestine is divided into two parts: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. My research took place only in the West Bank area because the Gaza Strip is in Hamas' control. The Israeli government has imposed a strict closure on the borders of the Gaza Strip, so there is no access from and to Gaza; therefore, it is impossible to conduct research in the Gaza Strip, especially for a person like me who is a resident of West Bank.

I clustered the NGOs in the West Bank into three geographical clusters: north, center, and south West Bank. Then, in each cluster, I separated the NGOs by size: large (more than 10 employees), medium (between 5 and 10 employees), and small (below 5) NGOs, a stratified sampling. Next, I selected a simple random sample of the NGOs from each cluster. I conducted a focus group discussion with the leaders of the randomly selected NGOs. The sample size was 21 volunteers/employed volunteers and board members representing   non-profit organizations.

Research Design and Method for Data Collection

The research design is a mixed method design, i.e., it is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative designs. As a result, two different data collection methods were utilized. The first data collection method was a survey used to collect the quantitative data, and the second method was a focus group led by the researcher. The researcher designed a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed to the volunteers in the selected sample. Ten specialized field researchers administered the questionnaire, and waited to collect the forms as the participants completed them. Taking into consideration time, cost, and efficiency, the self-administered questionnaire was the most efficient and effective instrument to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire enabled the researcher to measure key variables and to describe the relationships among the variables, including the dependent variable (social capital in West Bank), and the independent variable (the international funds).

It's noteworthy that international funds are considered the first source of funding to Palestinian NGOs; percentage of funding from international sources increased from 46.8% in 2000 to 61% in year 2007 (Al-Malki, Shalabi, Ladadwah, 2008: 21), and the overall revenue of the Palestinian NGOs in West Bank and Gaza has increased from $112,736,606 in 1999 to $223,607,358 in 2006 (Al-Malki, Shalabi, Ladadwah, 2008: 20). In addition, the ratio of

Palestinian NGOs which rely on external funds has increased from 19.4% in 2000 to 33% in year 2007(Al-Malki, Shalabi, Ladadwah, 2008: 19).

In the questionnaire, fixed alternative items, nominal scales, ordinal scales, a Likert scale, and rating scales were used. These quantitative methods/measurements were the best tools to describe the relationships among the variables listed above (Creswell, 2009: 145). The data collection instruments and questionnaires were pretested before they were distributed to the sample. In order to assure the validity, reliability, and relevance of the questionnaire to the objectives designed to be measured, the researcher consulted experts in the field regarding the contents of the questionnaire and its clarity. Also, the researcher distributed twenty questionnaires to individuals similar to my sample group, and asked them to respond to the questionnaires, so I could determine if the questionnaire was understandable.

The second instrument for measuring the qualitative data was a focus group session of three hours, where the focus group included twenty-one leaders of seventeen non-governmental organizations in Palestine. The researcher led this focus group with two assistants recording the minutes of the focus group session to ensure that all information was accurately recorded. Open-ended questions were raised during the focus group discussion. The participants concurred with my request to record the focus group discussion.

I used a concurrent embedded strategy of mixed methods for the research design where both qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously. This method is a recognized approach to study different groups using different methods (Creswell, 2009: 214). The qualitative data collected from the focus group helped in providing meaning and understanding of the quantitative data. Qualitative and quantitative data are integrated to develop a better context for the study. The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data collected, and used Chi-square to test the hypothesis and find the related correlations among variables.

Research Limitations

The main constraints of this research were time and money. For this reason, I elected to use small samples of the population rather than conducting a wider survey, which would consume more time and money. I would have preferred to select a larger sample than the one I used, because the larger the sample, the more accurate the results and less errors (Creswell, 2009).

Another constraint of my research is the problem of mobility in Palestine. Because of the political situation in Palestine, it is divided into the West Bank and Gaza Strip where the Gaza Strip is under the control of Hamas, and its borders are completely closed by the Israelis. Consequently, residents of the West Bank are not able to access the Gaza Strip. This means that the research took place only in the West Bank. This constraint cannot be resolved unless the political situation in Palestine changes.

Generally, the economic situation is worse and the poverty rate is higher in Gaza than in the West Bank. These issues could be significant in the opinions of participants in both parts of Palestine. Another constraint related to mobility is the ability of the researcher and the assistants

to the researcher to travel within the West Bank area itself, due to the Israeli checkpoints and closures of some cities within the West Bank. The closure and isolation of the Palestinian cities from each other from time to time limited the participation of a number of NGO leaders in the discussion group. Access to Ramallah City, which is at the center of the West Bank, was restricted.

Furthermore, the absence of a database of volunteers requires selection of accidental samples of participants rather than selection of a random sample. If the database of volunteers were to exist, I would have chosen a random sample to lessen the chances of bias in my study, which would make my data more reliable and valid (Creswell, 2009).

A further constraint is the lack of literature and references on my topic, and the difficulty in locating material related to my study. In order to find the articles or books related to my topic, I searched through field visits to the universities and institutions in Palestine where I did find limited written material on volunteerism.

Ethical Implications

My research deals with the NGOs, so I adhered to the Palestinian NGOs Code of Conduct definition, which is "the standard for the ethical and work behavioral patterns within the framework of the functioning of NGOs. It specifies the ground rules needed to be observed by the board, administration and staff while fulfilling their tasks" (The Palestinian NGOs Code of Conduct 2008: 2). The researcher was very careful to take into consideration many ethical issues while conducting the research. For example, respect of human rights involved in the research, as well as the safety of the researcher and assistants. Other issues that were considered were the consent of the participants to be part of the research, their right to withdraw at any stage of the research, and their right not to answer any question or questions. The participants were assured that the personal data will remain anonymous, which means that I will not publish or share with others any data or information that the participants do not wish to have published.

I built a relationship based on trust with the participants that resulted in their cooperation in providing information and input to the study. "False Promises" issues were avoided with the participants, which means we did not make them feel (or promise them) that our research would change or enhance their lives in any way or that their participation would result in changing their life styles or enhance their incomes (Sieber, 1992: 100).

Literature Review

The independent sector, voluntary sector, and nonprofit sector are all terms used to describe the nonprofit and voluntary organization sector in the United States. This sector includes a wide range of organizations, such as religious organizations, hospitals, universities, youth organizations, advocacy groups, and others. This sector earns its revenue and support "from contribution of money and time" from different resources: individuals, corporations, and government contracts either directly or indirectly with government at all levels (Hodgkinson, Weitzman, Toppe, and Noga, 1992). Salamon and Anheier (1997: 313) report that "voluntarism is a highly regarded value in American society, and volunteer activity is widespread." They also

write that "voluntarism and nonprofit action are thus firmly rooted in American tradition" (Salamon and Anheier, 1997: 315).

Formal and informal volunteerism is related to the following three forms of capital: human, social, and cultural capitals, according to Wilson and Musick (1997). Wilson and Musick (1997: 694) develop an "integrated theory" of formal and informal volunteer work based on the constructs that volunteer work is "(1) productive work that requires human capital, (2) collective behavior that requires social capital, and (3) ethically guided work that requires cultural capital." Although Wilson and Musick (1997: 711) indicate that volunteering influences and encourages helping or informal volunteering, but the opposite is not true, which means that helping/informal volunteering does not influence and encourage volunteering, in other words helping might not be transformed to a formal volunteering; therefore the "informal help networks" built around "kin and neighbor relations don't translate into volunteering in more public forms of housekeeping."

Voluntary Sector in Israel

The third sector in Israel, the neighboring country to Palestine, is a relatively young sector. It plays several important roles in the social, political, and economic life in Israeli society, and it is considered the largest nonprofit sector per capita in the world (Gidron, Katz, Anheier, and Salamon, 1999). Salamon (1999: 34-35), in *The Nature of the Nonprofit Sector*, argues that "measured as a share of total employment, the American nonprofit sector is hardly the largest in the world. At least four countries are known to exceed it in relative size—the Netherlands (12.4 percent), Ireland (11.5 percent), Belgium (10.5 percent) and Israel (9.2 percent) compared to the 6.9 percent in the U.S." In Israel in 1982, there were "12,000 registered nonprofit organizations," and, by early 2002, there were "29,000 registered nonprofits organizations" (Jaffe, 2002). The voluntary sector in Israel witnessed a decline in number of volunteers of four percent from 2004 to 2006, according to Tzemach in *New 2006 Survey on Volunteerism in Israel* (accessed September 15, 2008 at: http://www.ivolunteer.org.il/Eng/Index.asp?ArticleID=347&CategoryID=96&Page=1).

Voluntary Sector in the Arab World

A discussion of the third sector in the Arab World requires a brief review of democracy in the Arab World. While some limited steps have been taken toward democracy in some Arab countries, Browers (2006: 1) notes that "the Arab region has long been subject to claims of 'exceptionalism' to international waves of democratization and to characterizations of the few existing Arab democratic experiments as 'poor cousins' to Western democracies." There are several reasons behind these claims.

First, in the Middle East, "personalities rather than ideas determine the line of government… where personalism is the rule, democracy does not correspond to twentieth-century conception(s)" (Tütsch, 1958: 27), and according to Issawi (1958: 34), "Middle Easterners are incapacitated, by their extreme individualism, from achieving the degree of co-operation required for the successful functioning of democracy."

Second, people in the Middle East "look to government for (the) necessary guidance and initiative and many of them seek a short cut by way of military dictatorship" (Issawi, 1956: 41).

Third, the imbalance of status between state and society in the region (Browers 2006, 2), where this could be as a result of two issues: either the Arab society is "accustomed to…autocracy and passive obedience" (Kedourie, 1992: 103), or the strength of Arab-Islamic societies caused the instability of the state, "government in classical Islam tended to be highly unstable" and lessened its ability to engage in necessary political reforms (Hall, 1988: 29-31). Whatever the reason, the sensitive balance between state and society which is important to sustain democracy is said to be in short supply in the Middle East (Browers, 2006: 2).

Social Capital in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)

Although the importance of social capital is well-recognized in Palestine, with mention of social capital in only a few studies, the amount of research conducted on the topic is very limited (Naser and Hilal, 2007). Naser and Hilal (2007) investigated the concept of social capital in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), West Bank and Gaza. The study adopted the definition of social capital introduced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which defines it as "multidimensional concept reflecting social networks and shared norms, values and understanding that facilitate cooperation within or between various groups." Considering the Palestinian context of social capital, the researchers examined the following four dimensions of social capital in Palestine: political, civic, and professional participation; informal networks and social engagement; trust in institutions and other individuals; and shared values and norm. Some of the interesting results of the study are as follows:

- The highest level of confidence in political institutions is found in the West Bank.
- People in rural areas have the most trust in political institutions, but the least when it comes to local and international organizations, and the situation is reversed when it comes to refugee camps. Muslih (1993: 259) mentions that 65 percent of Palestinians live in more than 400 villages, and 35 percent live in small towns; whereas "urban centers are closer to the model of small towns than to that of large cities." The level of political, social, and civic participation declines with age, while involvement in informal social networks does the opposite.
- Those employed by NGOs have the highest level of trust in both political institutions and local and international organizations. Public sector workers are most active in social, civic, and political participation.
- The frequency of social communication through visits, phone, and email contacts with relatives was quite high.
- One quarter of West Bankers invite their friends to visit at least once a week.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Palestine

The NGOs in Palestine, according to Ibrahim (1992), were established for two main reasons. First, NGOs played an important and historical role in developing the social, cultural, and economic needs of hundreds of local communities in Palestine. Second, in the absence of the

state, the NGOs in Palestine helped to fulfill the subsistence needs of the people and continued to fill the gap even after the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994.

The Palestinian literature presents different opinions for the reasons for the existence of the Palestinian NGOs. While Al- Barghouthi (1998: 71) considers the importance of the NGOs' role is due to the increase in the people's needs, mainly the poor and marginalized groups. Samarah (1998), Al-Baz (1997), and Bitras (1998) believe the Palestinian NGOs are tools for perfusion of foreigners in the Third World Countries and breakthrough of the middle-class. Qasis (1999) considers nongovernmental organizations as an expression of civility of the society, and these organizations are in need of review of their roles, priorities, and the way they operate.

The number of NGOs in Palestine was estimated to be 926 NGOs in 2000. The size of the sector increased by 61.4% by 2007 with the number of NGOs then at 1,495 (Al-Malki, Shalabi, Ladadwah, 2008: 13). Hanani (2009) classified the NGOs working in Palestine into five categories: charitable organizations, social and welfare organizations, developmental organizations, advocacy organizations, and youth and sport clubs.
The relationship between the Palestinian NGOs and PNA is described as a suspicious relationship due to competition for funding (Jiryes, 1995), and the PNA has some worries about the NGOs which might form a type of power that cannot be controlled and could serve an external agenda (Darwish, 1998: 42). Jebril (2005) describes the relationship between the Palestinian NGOs and the PNA as competitive rather than being a complementary relationship, while NGOs criticize the accomplishments of PNA; in turn, the PNA criticizes the achievements of the Palestinian NGOs. The disagreement between the PNA and Palestinian NGOs is due to the competition for funding sources, where donors, who used to fund NGOs before the establishment of PNA in 1994, shifted their funds to PNA.

Some of the donors moved their funds back to the NGOs which resulted in a competitive relationship between the two parties (Jebril, 2005). "The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that in 1992 $174 million was given to civic sectors in the West Bank; this figure jumped to $263 million in 1993" (Jamal, 2007: 28). According to Frisch (1997), the tension between the PNA and Palestinian NGOs included three main points: funding, licensing, and participation in policy formulation.

Furthermore, the relationship between the PNA, Palestinian civil society, and Palestinian citizens is considered a tense relationship. As Hassassian (2002: 132) states, "Relations between the Palestinian Authority, civil society, and the Palestinian people are strained. In fact, the Palestinian Authority came into the Occupied Territories attempting to act as the sole representative of the Palestinian People, when all along such representation already existed in the form of a nascent civil society. Thus, there is a struggle for power over who best represents the will of the people."

The Palestinian Political and Economic Situation

The first popular Palestinian uprising, Intifada, started in 1987 and ended in 1993 with the Oslo Accord that "ushered in the Palestinian Authority (PNA), which was to establish Palestinian governmental institutions to facilitate rule over the civilian population" (Abu-

Dayyeh, 2008: 7). The establishment of the PNA increased international funding to the PNA, and resulted in the expansion of the number of Palestinian NGOs, which took part of this foreign aid mainly after Hamas won in the legislative elections in January 2006, and joined the government; many donors directed their funds be implemented by Palestinian NGOs.

Competition began between the PNA and Palestinian NGOs about which would have greater influence over civil society. "The result of this power struggle resulted in the establishment of the Palestinian NGO Network which led to the discussion with the Palestinian Legislative Council and result(ed) in NGO Law No. 1, in the year 2000" (Abu-Dayyeh, 2008: 7). The Palestinian NGOs Law is considered the most liberal NGO regulation in the Middle East. Although it has many weaknesses, it is considered a good model to be applied in other Arab countries (Altakz, 2006). The NGOs law was approved by the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2000, and it classifies the roles, responsibilities, and requirements of charities and non-governmental organizations. Each organization has to obtain a permit from the Ministry of Interior before practicing any of its activities as an NGO, and it must present its bylaws explaining the duties of its board of directors and list its executive officers in charge of the organization. The Palestinian NGOs law allows the NGOs in Palestine to be engaged in political activities (Altakz, 2006).

The unemployment issue arises whenever one is speaking about youth and their problems, where "different circumstances have contributed to creating this problem, starting with occupation, the economic policies in this country, and lack of real economic solutions to deal with this problem" (Riyahi, 2007: 25). As a response to the unemployment problem among youth, international donors started training youth on specific skills and providing individuals with funds to open their own small commercial projects. Also, they supported existing small projects owned by youths (Barghothi, 2007). The complete closure of the Palestinian cities and villages and their isolation from each other also limited the abilities of the Palestinian NGOs to implement their programs and deliver their services to the needy beneficiaries (Abdelhadi, 2004).

The Palestinian people in West Bank and Gaza have "not only lived under harsh military occupation; (they have)… also suffered economic exploitation, blocked development, and discrimination in services" (Hiltermann, 1991: 17). Due to the hard Palestinian economy, Palestinian laborers went to the Israeli market for work; and, according to Jamal (2007: 31), 5,000 workers from the Occupied Palestinian Territories worked in Israel in 1968; 69,000 in 1974, and in 1986, there were 94,700. Hiltermann (1991: 20) estimated 120,000 Palestinians were in the labor force in Israel, and he adds that "this number fluctuates seasonally, reaching possible peaks of 150,000 during the summer and fall harvests when children temporarily join the work force." According to B'TSELE, "On the eve of the Oslo peace process, some 115,000 Palestinians worked in Israel."

Major Findings of the Focus Group Discussion

Participants stressed their own definitions of voluntary work, which was that it is an unpaid effort, while any payment would classify work as paid effort and not a voluntary one. The facilitator used the questionnaire definition of social capital, and he linked volunteerism to social capital during the discussion. The definition used in the questionnaire of social capital was taken from Peter Frumkin (2002: 40), in *On Being Nonprofit:* Features of social organization, such as

networks, norms, and trust, which facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."
This definition was also used in the focus group discussion.

Participants said that volunteerism has deteriorated for different reasons, including the
construction of a physical separation wall and its economic effects, as well as the military
closures in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Under these economic conditions,
residents placed all their efforts in job seeking to secure the necessary income for their daily
existence, which immediately dampened their voluntary spirits. Volunteerism was also
influenced by establishing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that changed voluntary work
into paid work. One of the participants made a comparison of volunteerism before and after the
establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), and concluded that volunteerism
deteriorated after the PNA since many organizations have their own agendas, and, therefore,
have to pay people to work with them to achieve those agendas. Funding to NGOs also affected
the voluntary spirits by making it less likely for people to agree to work under the donors'
conditions, so NGOs had to shift from using volunteers to using paid employees. In sum, the
participants stated that people's values have changed because the original values were more
oriented to volunteerism. For example, this orientation was evident in years past when one built a
house to find all neighbors there to assist in the construction. One participant pointed out that
this occurred when the Kaaba was built, and in the Ottoman time at the beginning of the previous
century.

Other participants pointed out that all religions encourage volunteerism and people's
religious beliefs influence their will to volunteer. Additionally, people's reliance on agriculture
helped in strengthening voluntary attitudes, and this happened from the Ottoman era to Jordanian
times in Palestine. After the Israeli occupation, Israel worked to evacuate the farmers from the
land by turning them into laborers inside Israel. Before the Israeli occupation, 72% of
Palestinian labor was devoted to agriculture, where in 2005, according to Abu Shemalah (2006),
14.6% of the Palestinian laborers worked in agriculture. The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture
indicated that 15.6% worked in agriculture in 2008.

One participant mentioned that after the October War, in 1973, tens of thousands of
Palestinian workers were fired from their jobs in Israel. Another noted that voluntary
committees were formed to help in the olive harvesting season. Ramallah Municipality supported
and encouraged volunteerism, as did Bir Zeit University, which offered 120 study hours to
enable students to volunteer in the community. All of these efforts resulted in establishing the
Youth Movement for Social Work, which worked on improving roads in Palestinian villages and
refugee camps.

The first question raised different issues related to the focus group questions, and,
therefore, resulted in a diverse range of findings that are summarized in the following points:

- The bridge between volunteerism and the community collapsed after the PNA came to
  power because the PNA brought new concepts and terminology to citizens' daily lives,
  such as peace process and negotiations. And, as a result, the concept of voluntary
  services changed from unpaid to paid service.

- In the first Intifada which started in 1987, Israeli soldiers broke the locks of Palestinian shops on general strike days, while Palestinian youth volunteered to guard burgled shops from theft.
- In the first Intifada, the occupying forces closed schools and universities and banned education, while social schooling and education appeared to be the response to this aggression.
- All factors pushed towards the deterioration of volunteerism which forms an important component of social capital.
- Boards and steering committees at NGOs are voluntary memberships, as provided by Palestinian charity law.
- The PNA is asked by its citizens to revise the voluntary situation because volunteerism has deteriorated.
- It is important to gauge public opinion on volunteerism and compare local and external volunteerism. Economic factors, as well as political considerations, must be considered as influences on voluntary work.
- Between 1967 and the emergence of the PNA, voluntary work was not affected, and local leadership of the community was formed from unions and voluntary bodies. However, after the PNA, the official government assumed this role, and, accordingly, much of volunteerism disappeared.
- Many jobs emerged after the PNA was established, and this influenced social work because government employees focused on their paid jobs.
- Many of the NGOs did the same as the PNA in employing people, who were paid for all their initiatives, even conducting workshops and discussion groups. NGOs paid for hotels, per diem expenses, and other costs for participants in workshops, and they allocated large amounts of money for their board members' travel.
- Emergence of the internet in the Palestinian community lessened people's social ties due to time consumed with the new technology. Participants said that internet users spend at least two hours per day for email checks. Some people preferred a computer game to participating in a voluntary effort.
- The whole community is moving to the pure capital direction according to economic factors that affect volunteerism. It is not easy to manage between life needs under difficult economic life and volunteering. The difficult economic situation in Palestine forces people to place high priority on paid work, and think of their own personal interests. This comes at the expense of volunteering since people cannot volunteer while they are consumed with enhancing their incomes under difficult economic situation. Searching for paid work at the expense of volunteering has become a mindset in the whole community.
- Since 1980, volunteering deteriorated as a result of corruption in the non-profits.
- There are economic, political, and social reasons for the deterioration in volunteering. The last 20 years entailed an economic transition, and this influenced people's interest in volunteering.
- One of the major components of civil society is the political movement and political parties. Between 1972 and 1987, the Israeli army arrested volunteers, and pressured volunteers. The voluntary movement in Palestine was completely integrated in the political movements, where leaders of voluntary organizations were also political activists. Voluntary work during that period was implemented in a secret manner.

Therefore, voluntary activities at that time considered as political activities and were forbidden by the Israeli army. Many of the voluntary movement's leaders were arrested and placed in Israeli jails because of their voluntary activities, which were considered political activities by Israeli army.

- The PNA weakened public participation, and shifted all public works to contracts and bids.

One of the focus group questions is *Do you think that foreign financing has an effect on the lessening of volunteerism in Palestine?* This question raised one of the most hotly-debated issues in the focus group, which resulted in an intensive discussion. There were many findings, opinions, and conclusions in response to this question that are presented in the following points:

- It was the unanimous opinion of all participants in the focus group that funding has had a negative effect on volunteerism. The problem is that those non-profits that have to implement funded projects have to expend money in any way possible, and this means that they pay for all services they gain from former volunteers. This shifted the role of participants in NGO initiatives from volunteers to employees with salaries and benefits.
- There has not been enough planning for non-profit initiatives, and this also influenced the voluntary spirit since the results were not strong enough to encourage volunteering. The focus group participants agreed that weak results of non-profit initiatives form clear evidence of the weak planning for these initiatives. The weaker planning is, the weaker results are. The NGOs are controlled from external funders without internal strategies; this makes funding conditional upon donors' priorities and desires. Even if the NGOs have their own strategies, they remain ineffective and unimplemented while donors' visions dominate local priorities and strategies.
- Not all donors are the same; there are donors with transparent missions and others with hidden agendas. The USAID was classified as a donor that breaks the Palestinian law with its funding conditions. For example, Palestinian NGO law, number (1), year 2000, article (32), states that Palestinian NGOs are eligible for unconditional support and assistance to their missions. The USAID Antiterrorism Certificate (ATC) contradicts the cited article of the Palestinian law, according to NGOs understanding, where each NGO has to sign the ATC before obtaining any fund from the USAID.
- External funding has an effect on motivation for volunteering, while the priority afforded voluntary work has become very limited and even absent in the people's minds. In one of the NGOs, a budget surplus was spent on refurnishing of the NGO premises and purchasing high-tech devices. Donor's monitoring of funds given to NGOs is not enough. Spending of funds is also not wise enough inside NGOs and this discouraged voluntary spirits.
- Participants argued that volunteering should be redefined when voluntary work has external funding. There should be a different definition for "funded volunteering" from the definition of "unfunded volunteering." Participants wondered if voluntary work has become limited to basic works like street cleaning. Participants also complained about the exaggerated rates of pay given to volunteers and consultants. The extent of external funding has an effect on the shape and nature of voluntary work; payment to trainers who

would have otherwise volunteered has dampened the voluntary spirit. In spite of huge funding, board members and steering committees do not receive financial benefits in the form of salaries, but they do have budgets for their travel. Participants offered different views on these benefits; some felt they were too small, while others thought they were enough, and others believed they were excessive. Executive employees receive high salaries in NGOs. In effect, first line leaders in NGOs have become executives with large salaries, and this has led to deterioration in the voluntary movement.

Voluntary work is a major pillar of social capital which could be strengthened through awareness-raising and supportive legislation and regulations. In Costa Rica, there is not an army, but rather voluntary work that replaces the role of the army. Logically, voluntary work enriches social capital, but currently there are political objectives behind volunteerism. The role of voluntary work is clearer in rural communities than it is in urban communities. Voluntary work also serves the volunteer himself since it helps in building a useful network of contacts. As far as voluntary work is politicized, this will have its effect on social capital. Volunteering has its influence only on the field in which one volunteers.

According to participants, foreign funding to Palestinian NGOs has an effect on social capital depending on the way funds are expended; if there is effective planning then external funding is positive. If it is unplanned and spontaneous, then the funding has a negative impact on social capital. Work has become conditional on the availability of funds; that is, if there are funds, people volunteer, but if there are not funds, nobody works. Strategically, participants felt that they should not rely on external funding, and they must be self-reliant. External funding has been instrumental in damaging social values.

Most of the NGOs adhere to donors' priorities and their policies while others work as mediators between the donors and beneficiaries. The ministry of planning does not consider the public interest in this regard, and does not play an effective role in dealing with funding organizations. Some NGOs that were established after the PNA take the form of profit centers because their main objective is fundraising. Most of the NGOs weakened social capital for these reasons. An excessive number of licenses were given to NGOs when the PNA was in power, especially in 2009, when hundreds of youth organizations were registered. The main comment by participant was that there is much funding for NGOs, but there is limited control and monitoring of it.

The primary conclusion by participants was that deterioration of voluntary work and the establishment of the PNA was not coincidental, but it was the relationship between the reason and the result. Appearance of the PNA directly affected volunteerism. There are different reasons behind that conclusion, such as the following:

- PNA salaries became a target for most people, and this resulted in limited productivity, ignorance of volunteering, and loading ministries with unneeded employees. The social cadre was employed at the PNA offices.
- The PNA did not involve the public in its procedures and works, while legislation was not used to serve the social needs of the citizens.

- The PNA focused on securing funds from donors to cover salaries, and this was at the expense of voluntary work. A huge percentage of donors' money went to PNA salaries which do not serve voluntary work.
- Corruption in the PNA was centered in the ministry of interior and the ministry of social works, and both of them are directly involved in voluntary work since registration of voluntary bodies happens in these two ministries. Licensing of NGOs was used to create competition between organizations, and, on occasion, to weaken an active working NGO.
- Employees' personal motivations and attitudes towards volunteering were dampened by the influence of salary and benefits.
- Bureaucracy in PNA organizations forced employees to go through a long and de-motivating process, if the employee expressed an interest in volunteering. Any employee in any PNA ministry who wishes to volunteer must obtain the minister's personal approval. To get the approval, the employee must apply through his/her direct supervisor, and the letter moves slowly through bureaucratic channels to the minister's office. In parallel, the request must be sent to the General Employment Bureau at the PNA, and this takes a long time to process. Even after this lengthy process, approval from the minister and the General Employment Bureau is not guaranteed.
- The internal political crisis between the PNA in West Bank - Ramallah and the Hamas government in Gaza made people angry about volunteering, and, accordingly, avoided it by all means. The rift taking place between the West Bank and Gaza is demoralizing to the citizens of both sectors. People feel negatively toward public works, which sometimes made them lose hope about the future. One participant noted that citizens direct all their attention to political issues as the sole priority. People think that volunteering will not be fruitful in such a political situation.
- Accountability and transparency are crucial in voluntary work, but they seem unlikely to be achieved under the current political situation, especially after the rift between West Bank and Gaza.
- PNA leaders returned from different countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Tunisia) with different backgrounds and perspectives on voluntary work. Some of them believed in strict control over voluntary work.

Analysis

The researcher found many statistically significant differences among the variables after he analyzed responses to the questionnaire using SPSS software.

Table 1 indicates that participants of age 30 years and below volunteer because they see volunteering as a social human value (35%), and those of age above 30 years old volunteer because they also see volunteering as a social human value (41%).

Table 1: Main Reason for Volunteering

What is your main reason for volunteering (one choice only)	New Categories	
	30 Yrs or below	Above 30 Yrs
	%	%
Volunteering is a social human value	35	41
Unemployment	11.5	5.1
Gaining experience	26.8	12.8
Having extra time	3.2	.9
Establishing relations with institutions	8.9	13.7
Building new friendships	2.5	3.4

There is a statistically significant difference between the ages of the participants and their main reason for volunteering. Rejecting null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance, I can rule out sampling error as the sole cause of the difference observed between the samples. $\chi^2=18.802$, df=7, p=0.009.

Table 2 indicates that that participants with educational levels of high school or below rated that funded voluntary work has a positive impact (64.2%), while (12.3%) indicated that it has a negative impact. Participants with educational levels above high school indicated that funded voluntary work has a positive impact (52.3%), compared to 23.4% that rated it as a negative impact. However, almost all the focus group participants mentioned that foreign funding has a negative impact on volunteerism.

There is a statistically significant difference between the education levels of the participants and their opinions on the effect that funded voluntary work has on their participation in voluntary works. Rejecting null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance, I can rule out sampling error as the sole cause of the difference observed between the samples. $\chi^2= 6.402$, df= 2, p=0.041.

Table 2: What Effect Does Funded Voluntary Work Have on Your Participation in Voluntary Works? * Education

What effect does funded voluntary work have on your participation in voluntary works?	Education (Cat.)	
	High school or below	Above high school
	%	%
Positive effect	64.2	52.3
Negative effect	12.3	23.4
No effect	23.5	24.3

Table 3 shows that 62.9% of those of age thirty years or below answered that voluntary work contributes to the growth of social capital, while 76.1% above thirty years of age reported that it does contribute to the growth of social capital. The focus group participants emphasized that voluntary work is a major pillar of social capital. Voluntary work enriches social capital, but currently there are political objectives behind volunteerism. The participants also added that as long as voluntary work is politicized, it will have an effect on social capital.

Table 3: Does Voluntary Work Contribute to the Growth of Social Capital? * Age

	New Categories	
Does voluntary work contribute to the growth of social capital?	30 Yrs or below	Above 30 Yrs
	%	%
No	37.1	23.9
Yes	62.9	76.1

There is a statistically significant difference between the ages of the participants and their opinions whether voluntary work contributes to the growth of social capital. Rejecting null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance, I can rule out sampling error as the sole cause of the difference observed between the samples. $\chi^2 = 5.420$, df= 1, p=0.026.

Table 4 indicates that 22% of those aged thirty years or below answered that international funding has a negative impact on social capital, and 35% of those aged above thirty years answered the same. The participants in the focus group argued that the influence of the international funds on social capital depends on the way funds are expended; if there is effective planning, then external funding is positive. If it is unplanned and spontaneous, then the funding has a negative impact on social capital. Participants also added that work has become conditional on the availability of funds; that is, if there are funds, people volunteer, but if there are not funds, nobody works.

Table 4: Does International Funding of NGOs Negatively Influence Social Capital in Palestine? * Age

	New Categories	
Does the international funding of NGOs negatively influence social capital in Palestine?	30 Yrs or below	Above 30 Yrs
	%	%
No	78	65
Yes	22	35

There is a statistically significant difference between the ages of the participants and their opinions of whether the international funding of NGOs negatively influenced social capital in

Palestine. Rejecting null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance, I can rule out sampling error as the sole cause of the difference observed between the samples. χ^2= 5.735, df= 1, p=0.020.

Table 5 shows that among persons thirty years of age or below, 40.9% would volunteer in undefined voluntary works led by their organizations, compared to 54.7% of those above thirty years of age. People are more committed to volunteering in activities led by their organizations regardless of the type of voluntary work. This indicates a high commitment of these people to their NGOs. People are less likely to volunteer in activities led by their political parties, and in activities aimed at gaining support for the Palestinians in Gaza due to the high level of political frustration among citizens over the West Bank (PNA) – Gaza (Hamas) conflict and the Palestinian – Israeli peace process.

The focus group participants mentioned that leaders of political parties are not democratic, and that each leader seeking power has negatively affected voluntary work in Palestine. Also, the participants pointed out that voluntary work was related to political activism, and when left wing parties receded in Palestine, the Hamas movement was there to take over through the endowment committees and polyclinics. Part of the participants of the focus group added that there was a decline in social capital when Hamas used people's needs for faith and religion in order to build its image through the mosques. Some Palestinian families feared sending their sons to mosques, or stopped them from participating in voluntary works organized by the mosques or by the political parties.

There is a statistically significant difference between the ages of the participants and their choice of activity they would volunteer for if they were not being paid. Rejecting null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance, I can rule out sampling error as the sole cause of the difference observed between the samples. χ^2= 12.498, df= 5, p=0.029.

Table 5: Of the Following, in Which Activity Would You Volunteer (One Choice Only) if You Were Not Being Paid? * Age

Of the following, in which activity would you volunteer (one choice only) if you were not being paid?	New Categories	
	30 Yrs or below	Above 30 Yrs
	%	%
Cleaning of the neighborhood where I live	10.7	11.1
Activities that gain support for Palestine in Gaza Strip	14.5	8.5
Undefined voluntary works led by my organization	40.9	54.7
Voluntary works led by the political party I support	19.5	7.7
Voluntary works supporting farmers and peasants affected by	9.4	9.4
Other	5	8.5

Table 6 combines the independent variables: age of the participants, their level of education, gender, and the region in which the participants live. Both age and level of education of the participants are statistically significant with respect to volunteering in Palestine. People above thirty years of age are more likely to volunteer than those of aged less than thirty. Also, people with higher levels of education, above high school, are more likely to volunteer.

Table 6: Logistic Regression Model

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a)	AGE	.114	.019	36.946	1	.000	1.121
	NEDUC	.632	.308	4.208	1	.040	1.882
	GENDER	.411	.309	1.771	1	.183	1.508
	REGION			2.295	2	.317	
	REGION(1)	-.462	.356	1.683	1	.195	.630
	REGION(2)	-.493	.394	1.565	1	.211	.611
	Constant	-5.251	.825	40.472	1	.000	.005

The survey revealed several additional findings:

1. Almost fifty percent of the people involved in the sector are 20-30 years old, which means that youth are an important component in this sector.
2. Females are well represented in the sector—almost 56% of the sector is female. This emphasizes the important role they play the sector.
3. Two major difficulties face volunteers, according to the survey's participants: the absence of organizations that oversee and support volunteering, and the absence of legislation related to volunteers and their rights.
4. Establishing NGOs solely for fundraising purposes has the most negative impact on volunteering, followed by the weakness of political parties.
5. Over seventy percent of the participants responded that foreign financing is important for the continuation of voluntary work in Palestine.
6. Over eighty percent of the participants believed that the social institutions of family, school, and university positively influence volunteering.
7. Fifty-seven percent of the participants named family as having the most powerful impact on volunteering.
8. Almost eighty percent of the participants responded that volunteering in Palestine is a result of societal needs.
9. Almost sixty percent of the participants believed that the reduced importance of political parties resulted in a reduction of volunteering in Palestine.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The focus group participants and participants in the survey differed in their opinions on two different issues. First, almost all the focus group participants mentioned that foreign funding has a negative impact on volunteerism, while 38.0% of the participants in the survey reported that foreign funding has a negative impact on volunteerism; as a result of this conflicting finding, the researcher recommends further research regarding this issue. Second, almost twenty-five percent of the participants in the survey indicated that international funding has a negative impact on social capital in Palestine, while the focus group participants argued that the impact of international funding on social capital depends on effective planning for the expenditure of the funds. If there is effective planning in expending funds, then external funding has a positive impact; otherwise, it has a negative impact on social capital. The participants in the focus group also added that work has become conditional on the availability of funds; that is, if there are funds, people volunteer, but if there are not funds, nobody volunteers. The researcher recommends further study on the impact of international funds on social capital in Palestine.

As presented by the participants in the focus group, the major obstacles and difficulties facing volunteers in Palestinian NGOs are as follows:

- The community, especially in rural areas, is doubtful about the intentions of volunteers as a result of traditions and norms.
- Life expenses and the financial needs of volunteers require them to give priority to paid work.
- The community does not understand the essence of volunteering, and this could be as a result of lack of awareness regarding volunteering, its importance, and the role it plays in the society.
- There are negative alternatives for potential volunteers, such as youth turning to theft and drug dealing.
- Volunteering is centered in major cities, especially Ramallah, and, due to closures among cities in West Bank and its surrounding villages, it is difficult for people to travel to Ramallah for volunteering activities.
- There is not a linkage among major cities and remote rural areas in the various fields of volunteerism.
- The strong linkage between volunteering and financial benefits results in weakening volunteerism.
- The elderly, especially ones with experience, have a different view of volunteering because volunteering in the traditional sense was prevalent when they were young.
- The nature of voluntary work, for example, asking young women to clean the streets, might not be acceptable in some Palestinian communities due to norms and traditions, or the volunteer herself might not accept such an assignment.
- Political difficulties, such as the current PNA-Hamas conflict, might lead people to avoid volunteering in some activities led by either of the two political parties. In addition, the curfews and closures imposed by the Israeli government on West Bank areas likely limit the ability of NGOs to conduct voluntary activities.
- Social difficulties related to the family, where some conservative families might not accept their sons' or daughters' involvement in voluntary groups that combine both genders.

To strengthen volunteering in Palestine, the following points are recommended:

- Establish legislation and regulations that organize the voluntary sector to serve the public interest.
- Reform the political parties, because, according to focus group participants, political parties and voluntary movements are "two faces of the same coin."
- Use summer holidays by school students to implement voluntary activities with the ministry of education taking the lead in this regard.
- Encourage volunteering among younger citizens through awareness campaigns.
- Enhance voluntary culture through integrating voluntary work topics in the curricula of schools and universities.
- Establish a diverse range of voluntary programs at the universities.
- Develop effective planning of the method that international funding is expended. All the sectors should coordinate the efforts in order to achieve the public good though effective and efficient planning for use of the funds.
- Establish strong mechanisms by donors to follow up on their funds, and make sure that funds are used in proper and intended ways.
- Ensure that Palestinian NGOs are not dependent solely on international funding, but should seek to become self-reliant.
- Increase control and monitoring on the funds received by the NGOs by the donor community, in order to make sure that funds are placed and expended through the right channels.
- Reform the ministry of interior and the ministry of social works, because these are the two ministries that have control over NGOs, and they are the ministries that provide NGOs with licenses to begin operations. Ideally, these ministries should focus on the quality and the capacity of the NGOs before giving them permits to start functioning.
- Remove the current bureaucratic procedures imposed on volunteerism in and out of the governmental sector.
- Achieve accountability and transparency in the voluntary sector.

In conclusion, the researcher does not feel optimistic about the current status of volunteerism in Palestine. If things remain as they are, the traditional values of volunteerism in Palestine will erode and will be replaced by values based on money. Ideally, the efforts of the governmental, private, and voluntary sectors should be joined in order to achieve the public good. All three sectors should cooperate and complement each other, and should work to enhance the culture of volunteerism among Palestinians. These efforts to enhance volunteerism should be focused among youth, because "the Palestinian society is a youth society… the percentage of male youth within the age group of (10-24) years in the mid 2004 estimated to be 32.4% of the total number of male population in the Palestinian territories as opposed to 32.1% of females; the percentage of the age group (15-29) years is over one quarter of the population (26.8%)" (Al-Malki, Ladadwah, Shalabi, 2007: 7).

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