



SUCCESS STORY

Youth Group Makes Headway in Resolving Conflicts



Members of Sanabel al Ataa's recently formed youth group paint walls as part of a campaign to beautify the village of Nabha and build goodwill as a foundation for addressing local conflicts.

“When we started classes at the center, we were interested only in computers, but once we started the citizenship workshops, we liked them more. The classes and other activities provided by the center have built our confidence.”

—Ola, 17, a participant in the training courses

April 2009 – A new youth group working with local nongovernmental organization (NGO) Sanabel al Ataa recently opened the first-ever youth center in the marginalized village of Nabha. And with OTI's support, more than 80 youths from Nabha and the neighboring village of Shaat took part in computer and citizenship classes at the new center, sparking a long-term youth activism effort. According to Haitham, a trainer for the NGO, “The center is now the living heart of the village.”

In a spin-off activity, the group initiated dialogues on how its members view conflict, which is especially significant in Nabha, a remote village with no municipal services. Furthermore, to pave the way for establishing a municipality, a step which—according to the group—is vital to efforts to address their community's needs, members initiated discussions on the roots of violence, such as revenge and violation of property, and then suggested solutions, such as tolerance, dialogue, forgiveness, and compensation.

Fahad, a 16-year-old participant, said, “The workshops gave us the steps needed to resolve conflicts. I even used these steps to solve a conflict between two classmates by talking to them separately and looking for interests rather than positions.”

As part of their effort to bring their community together, the youths crafted a campaign to beautify the village. They painted the village square in bright colors and removed political slogans and pictures, replacing them with advertisements promoting local businesses.

The youths are also rehabilitating a common wall separating the local mosque and church, enlisting in the effort the village's Christians—many of whom left Nabha during the civil war and whose disputes with Muslim residents over land have hindered efforts to establish a municipality.

“What is so special about the center is that it joined people of different points of view and different religions, [people] who are participating in activities and expressing their opinions,” said Randa, 20, a youth group member. “Christians showed great appreciation for the project, and dialogue has begun due to the youths' initiative.”

Sanabel al Ataa continues to provide courses and has plans to establish a youth volunteer unit to temporarily address the lack of primary health services in the region.