



Palestine: Sports for Life (PS4L)

By **Tamara Awartani**



When we speak about sports, we realize that it means different things to different people. To some, it could just mean running after or kicking a ball. For others, it could be a hobby. Some might take it more seriously and join a team, or focus on their health and go to the gym or walk. But there is yet another perspective on sports: Sports for Development.

Palestine: Sports for Life (PS4L) is one of the first organizations to apply the sports-for-development concept in Palestine. PS4L has developed the capacity of its youth staff and empowered them to be able to lead classes and activities using sports as a tool to reach out to youth, children, and women in order to teach them life skills.

PS4L staff developed a curriculum and applied sports-for-development principles in the implementation of two week-long youth vocational guidance summer camps that took place in August in Al-Aroub and Fara'a refugee camps, in cooperation with GIZ. The summer camps aimed to empower youth from 14 to 16 years old from Jerusalem and various areas in northern Palestine and to enlighten them about job opportunities, as well as teach them more about vocational schools and what they could offer them in the future. Using sports, PS4L staff provided vocational guidance; they helped the youth to connect to each other, communicate, and reflect on their inner selves. The youth were able to minimize the gap between their ambitions and reality as they discovered their strengths, skills, and capabilities. The youth were also put into situations where they needed to discuss topics of interest and take and defend decisions, as well as overcome barriers. The youth



P4SL empowering youth.

gained confidence in themselves and in their groups. They learned to trust and to work as a team, and to believe in each other regardless of gender. The youth also increased their fitness through fun outdoor games.

Relying on sports-for-development principles, PS4L surely made a difference in this vocational guidance camp. It was an unforgettable experience that will continue to guide them in the future.

As part of its mission, PS4L believes in using sports as a tool to empower youth and women, since they are the future. With this aim, PS4L works with international partners in various deprived villages and conflict areas,

training trainers who are confident to teach their own classes, offering new activities and training methods to the youth, children, and women of their villages, thus increasing the sustainability of the programs and their ability to benefit more and more people.

Through sports for development, PS4L promotes a healthy lifestyle for the community by providing classes and activities for children and youth in its football and basketball academies. PS4L believes that a rhythm of sports is an essential ingredient in the lives of young children. The staff works on teaching important life skills and team-building activities through its academies and so aims to keep participants healthy in body and mind.

P4SL teaching life skills.





PS4L sports summer camp.

This summer, PS4L organized the first sports summer camp in Palestine for kids from 5 to 13 years old. The camp is slated to become an annual event. Specialized coaches provided children with the opportunity to learn the basic skills required for a wide array of sports, and fun telematch games gave flavor to the camp. The sports activities included football, basketball, handball, volleyball, tennis, table tennis, chess, gymnastics, athletics, and free games and competitions. Through sports at a young age, the children learn how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, increase their fitness, and of course, work on important life skills such as team work, team spirit, trust, communication, and gender equality.

PS4L also sends its youth to leadership and sports camps abroad for cultural exchange and life-skill development, as well as to represent Palestine. This year marks the fifth year that PS4L sent 40 youth abroad to three different countries. They came back with new concepts and ideas to exchange with their fellow youth.

Sports for development is a global concept that is growing by the day, and with PS4L's network, it will keep on growing its capabilities to be able to serve a wider base in Palestine and increase activities. Sports for development is not just sports; it has proven to aid in effecting positive change in the community. A lot can be achieved with positive energy and willingness.

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Images from the summer camps organized by PS4L.