Joint Press Release  
Funded by the Government of Japan  
UNDP Launches the First Palestinian Community Based Sports League


The project, which is supported by the Government of Japan for the amount of USD 385,866, builds on the upcoming Palestinian National Youth Strategy, and the efforts made by UNDP and its partners to strengthen youth engagement in sports as a tool to promote positive attitudes, team building, and social cohesion.

The project will focus on increasing the participation of young people of both genders in team sports and improve the psychosocial and physical conditions for disadvantaged children in the Gaza Strip.

H.E. Mr. Takeshi Okubo, Ambassador for Palestinian Affairs and Representative of Japan to Palestine, expressed his gratitude to all partners for making the project successful, including UNDP. He said: “The Palestinian youth, in particular the youth in Gaza, are desperately in need of their positive outlets to express themselves in public due to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions.” And he added “the Government of Japan has funded this project “Tamkeen” as a tool to work with our Palestinian partners to strengthen youth engagement in sports in a more sustainable manner through different means, such as Tokyo League Soccer Tournaments and Palestinian Youth Sport League”.

The Palestinian Youth Sports League will introduce different types of sports not traditionally played at broad levels of the Palestinian society such as cycling, track and field, handball, basketball, and volleyball in almost every district of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The introduction of other sports will provide opportunities for Palestinian youth to expand their involvement; making them in the long term competitive at the regional and international level.

So far, the registration of youth for the first season has commenced in Jericho for five different sports; Soccer, Handball, Basketball, Volleyball, and Track and Field. Over 1000 youth have registered to be part of the inaugural season of the PYSL. 45% of those registered are females. In addition, the PYSL is preparing for kick off in Gaza’s middle area and in smaller communities such as Immatain and Ain El Baida of the West Bank.

Mr Roberto Valent, UNDP Special Representative of the Administrator thanked the Government of Japan for their continuous support and highlighted that this project will lay the foundations of tomorrow sports hero’s and role models, something Palestinian youth dearly need. “This League is about planning and preparing for the future as it will be the breeding ground for the development of individual athletic skills and team sports on a grand scale”.

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Several activities have already been organized under the PYSL, including six bike races, out of the planned 14, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in which 321 youth participated. The top five racers from each competition will be invited to participate in the National Championship planned to be held in December 2017.

The first of five regional PYSL track and field competition was held in the Southern West Bank town of Dura, Al Khalil. The top finalist in each race and age group will compete in a National Championship Track and Field competition. Through the competitions, it is the hope that potential athletes will be identified to participate and represent the State of Palestine at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, Japan.

It is worth noting that there is no sustainable structure for youth sports in the State of Palestine. The only structure in place is the club system that provides a space for young people to participate in only a few sports and has very limited opportunities for young people to compete at an individual or team level. Thus, most young people are left to sit and watch, rather than play and develop their skills to become talented potential athletes.

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