

CHAPTER 3

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ELHAM PALESTINE: AN INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Elham Palestine was the first country-level pilot developed by the Learning for Well-being Foundation (formerly Universal Education Foundation, UEF) and its partners; throughout this article we refer to the Learning for Well-being Foundation by its previous name of UEF since this is the name historically associated with Elham, and by which it continues to be known in Palestine. Elham is an Arabic word that means “inspire”. The genesis, design and structure of Elham and its operational modality were inspired by the Learning for Well-being (L4WB) guiding principles. Elham was created and run in the context of an inclusive national partnership that engaged education, health, ICT, civil society and children in a collective effort to improve the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of Palestinian children, and to make their different learning environments more conducive to their holistic development and well-being. From 2008–2017 5386 initiatives were developed and submitted to Elham by eligible applicants (including teachers, school principals, school supervisors, counselors, health tutors, school teams and students). Over 30% of all schools in Palestine were engaged in the submission of initiatives to Elham. This figure reflects how many people from the school community were influenced and affected by Elham. The number of initiatives that were recognized and appreciated as inspiring exemplary models at national level was 397.

In this chapter, we shed light on the ten-year journey taken by Elham from the perspective of creating an inclusive partnership for systemic change. The first section provides a brief synopsis of Elham’s goals, while the second section describes why and how Elham’s systemic partnership was conceived; the third section outlines the organizational structure of the partnership, including a diagram of the various components, and the impact of this systemic partnership. In the fourth section we share selected insights and lessons learned. You will find further information about Elham here : www.elham.ps/english.php.

Keywords: Elham; Learning for Well-Being; holistic; inclusive partnership; youth engagement; children’s voice

INTRODUCTION

The Learning for Well-being Foundation is a collective initiative, with communities of practitioners, partners and collaborators. It aims to place holistic well-being at the center of all endeavors – in education, health, welfare, justice, the media, and in many other fields – and to create a common language to inspire expressions of wholeness in people, communities and societies (O’Toole, 2016).

Elham Palestine is a country-level pilot for systemic change developed by the Universal Education Foundation and its partners. The genesis, design and structure of Elham and its operational modality were all inspired by the Learning for Well-being (L4WB) principles, which are described briefly below (www.learningforwellbeing.org/our-approach/7-principles/):

- Wholeness:** Cultivate expressions of wholeness in people, communities and societies; creating environments for physical, emotional, mental and spiritual development through the practice of core capacities
- Unique Potential:** Allow the unfolding of unique potential in individuals and communities; nurturing behaviors that provide purpose, meaning and direction in every activity
- Inner Diversity:** Respect individual uniqueness and diversity; encouraging diverse perspectives and multiple expressions
- Relationships:** Emphasize the quality of relationships; focusing on process and seeing the other as a competent partner
- Participation:** Support the engaged participation of those concerned; involving everyone in decisions that have an impact upon them
- Living Systems:** Recognize nested systems as influencing one another; providing opportunities for different sectors and disciplines to work together
- Feedback:** Ensure conditions for feedback and self-organization; measuring what matters for the well-being and sustainability of any system

The principles have played a significant role in the design of Elham. The areas of focus or priority themes for all initiatives solicited for Elham derived, in one form or another, from one or more principles. Moreover, the evaluation criteria used by the evaluation committees were also guided by these principles.

Within its particular context, Elham was created and operated as an inclusive national partnership that engaged education, health, ICT, civil society and children in a collective effort to improve the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of Palestinian children and to make their different learning environments more conducive to their holistic development and well-being.

GOALS OF ELHAM

Elham was launched in 2007 as a nationwide program extending through Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Elham seeks to support the holistic development of Palestinian children thus enabling them to better realize their unique potential and grow up as enlightened healthy human beings and engaged citizens, capable of making sound choices, living and navigating in an increasingly challenging world and contributing to building their homeland.

In particular, Elham Palestine seeks to fulfill the following goals, derived from the Learning for Well-being principles:

- Teachers and other members of the school community across the nation are empowered and motivated to undertake more initiatives that nurture the well-being of their students.
- Students, as engaged young citizens, are encouraged to assume more responsibility and take more initiatives to benefit their school community and society at large.
- A culture of hope, initiative and entrepreneurship, based on a deep trust in the capacity of each individual to make a positive difference in his/her life and the life of the community, is cultivated and promoted.
- The holistic development of children is promoted as a key common

- goal of the education and health systems, while helping to articulate and make explicit the pedagogical responsibility of ICT and media both in transforming the formal education system and as learning environments in their own right.
- The vital role that the media can play in shaping healthy mindsets and behavior patterns is highlighted, and hence its immense responsibility in promoting the well-being of youngsters. The power of the media is harnessed to disseminate and promote Elham culture.
 - Elham Palestine is designed and rooted as an organic, endogenous, credible, sustainable, and responsive change agent in the target learning environments.
 - The business community is inspired to invest in Elham initiatives, and in sustainable, scaling and adaptive replications.
 - Learning becomes more meaningful, more joyful and more respectful of children's diverse learning styles, needs and forms of expression.
 - Mutual learning and exchange between Elham laureates in different countries is promoted.

Elham stimulates, identifies, supports and disseminates innovative initiatives that make a difference in children's life journeys, and leverages various partnerships in order to magnify, mainstream and deepen their impact. In each cycle, a call for applications is launched through a nomination kit, which is widely distributed to the educational and health communities across the country, supported by a multifaceted outreach and media awareness campaign. The call is seeking entrepreneurial initiatives that have had a significant impact on children's well-being or the well-being of their environments. Categories of eligible applicants include teachers, students, principals, counselors and whole schools, while desired areas of focus or themes have included: teaching/learning methods and assessment strategies, safe and stimulating educational environments, holistic health, ICT and media, and student participation and leadership.

Applications undergo a thorough, transparent and multifaceted screening and review process that is characterized by a multi-tier engagement of policy makers, experts and practitioners from multiple disciplines, including the participation of children as significant partners. Selected initiatives are annually documented in the Elham Harvest Book and films, and are showcased in a major high-level ceremony. Subsequently, the initiatives are presented in various television and radio programs, thus gaining wide public attention and visibility. The [Annex](#) presents two initiatives which were selected by Elham as being inspirational and which received nationwide recognition.

Signifying the inspiring nature of Elham and the value of feedback in the learning process, and guarding against the outdated pass/fail approach to evaluation, Elham provided every applicant whose initiative was not nominated for national recognition, with a detailed feedback report highlighting aspects of the initiative that deserved further development and refinement prior to being resubmitted.

BUILDING THE ELHAM INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP

In this section we present briefly how Elham's inclusive partnership was built and run and how its organizational structure was designed in order to optimize effective and meaningful engagement across and within systems.

The case for systemic partnerships

From the beginning, UEF has recognized the fact that children learn from different learning environments including family, school, ICTs and social media, the community and more. Cognizant of the interconnectedness of these learning environments and the systems that surround them, UEF took a strategic decision to work with different systemic stakeholders in the context of an Elham multi-stakeholder multidisciplinary partnership.

UEF's commitment to work within an inclusive partnership is further reinforced by its belief that inducing a qualitative change in children's learning environments is contingent upon securing a critical mass of partners who are committed to and capable of creating the desired change.

Cognizant of the dialectical relationship between learning and well-being, the education and health systems played prominent roles as lead partners of Elham.

As UEF decided to create a pilot in Palestine, the Elham team engaged the education and health systems, civil society, media and ICT as well as children and youth in a broad conversation about the innovative L4WB approach and its unique attributes in the Palestinian context, where the well-being of Palestinian children is seriously compromised by the very harsh political, social and economic conditions.

This inclusive, authentic and engaged participation of all related stakeholders in the conversation around well-being derives from UEF's guiding principles. This conversation took different forms, some of which are detailed below.

Education and health systems

Numerous meetings, focus groups, and general discussions were organized with the public and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) educational and health systems: including ministers, deputy ministers, director generals, heads of divisions, district level education and health officers, students, teachers, parents, principals and civil society education and youth activists. An array of issues related to students' school, family, community and media learning environments were tackled. Perspectives of participants were gathered with particular emphasis on key challenges, priority needs, interventions and actions to be taken, the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders, ways of working together and how best to engage systems and motivate the different partners to work in concert towards improving the well-being of the children of Palestine.

Extensive conversations with top level policy makers from education, health and UNRWA were held in order to present the L4WB integrative approach, and how it articulates and cultivates the natural linkages between different

functions within each system. During these conversations, the dialectical relationship between education and health was presented and ample scientific evidence was shown in order to establish the need for inter-systemic linkages and synergies, especially between the education and health systems.

This authentic vibrant conversation with the two systems culminated in the formulation of formal partnership agreements [MOUs] between the UEF and the Education and Health ministries as well as between the education and health sectors within UNRWA. The MOUs established buy in and commitment to the L4WB holistic approach and articulated different areas and forms of collaboration at national and local levels. They also spelled out the rights, responsibilities and obligations of each party. MOUs were signed by respective ministers in high profile signing ceremonies with extensive media coverage.

The partnership with the education and health systems formed the cornerstone for other partnerships that were subsequently negotiated with the ministries for social welfare, ICT, and youth and sports.

Children and youth

UEF provided the conditions for the inclusive and sustained engagement of children and youth in all aspects of Elham in line with its belief that children are natural and competent partners in their own learning and well-being and should be treated as such. This engagement took a number of forms including:

- **The Voice of Children (VoC)**

A national Voice of Children (VoC) qualitative and quantitative survey was designed and implemented with effective youth participation. This “mapping needs assessment” survey was motivated by the overarching question of “How conducive are our schools to our children’s well-being”. It aimed to capture children’s perspectives, views and attitudes towards different aspects of their learning environment and how those aspects influence their learning and well-being (Universal Education Foundation, 2007). The survey findings constituted a vital input into the design of Elham. In fact, the “areas of focus” included in the Elham nomination kit were inspired by the survey findings.

- **Youth Clusters**

The Ministry of Youth and Sports helped Elham to create an Elham civil society youth cluster consisting of the leading youth organizations in the country. This cluster facilitated Elham’s outreach to children and young people across the country and created a space for a cross-sector conversation between different youth organizations, around the organizing theme of “children’s well-being”. The Ministry also provided Elham with access to valuable resources, related programs and activities.

- **Evaluation**

Teams of children and youth were trained to take a central role in the evaluation process of all initiatives submitted to Elham, alongside experts, director generals and policy makers. Their contribution was outstanding and on a par with the adult experts’ evaluation teams. The youth teams always

brought a fresh and authentic perspective to the evaluation process. The maturity, sophistication and integrity with which they carried out the interviews with applicants was humbling in every sense.

• Civil Society

Most civil society organizations working with children and youth have a particular thematic area of focus [youth empowerment, inclusion, psychosocial health, civic education, environmental education] or a particular target group [girls, refugee camps, special needs, certain age groups]. UEF wanted to introduce a common language and create an integrated platform that allowed all elements of civil society to work together towards their common goals, transcending institutional and sectorial narcissism.

For each cycle, the launch event of Elham was organized as the grand finale of this inclusive national consultative process. At this event, Elham was aptly presented as the collective co-creation of the natural stakeholders supporting our children's learning and well-being.

THE GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE OF ELHAM'S PARTNERSHIP

Signing partnership agreements with multiple stakeholders presented the Elham leadership with the challenge of how to set up the partnerships, operate them, sustain it and keep partners from multiple levels engaged and motivated. In this section we will briefly describe our approach to these challenges.

Main design considerations

In designing an appropriate structure for the Elham partnership we took account of a number of key considerations, and stated them as necessary conditions.

Each partnership needs to provide the conditions for Elham's long term sustainability. Elham should not be seen as a UEF owned "project" or intervention. Rather, UEF will serve as the leading entrepreneur, cultivating Elham as a start-up program within the context of an enabling national partnership that will be capable of taking ownership of Elham and navigating it into the future.

For obvious reasons, the public education system needs to act as the lead partner, and the health sector needs to be positioned in close proximity with the education sector and be supported to remain effectively engaged.

The structure needed to facilitate and stimulate the effective engagement of various vertical tiers within each system and to be horizontally inclusive of all relevant departments, which often function in isolation of one another. While each department has its own mandate, we were intent on making departmental boundaries more permeable and porous, while unveiling natural intersections, commonalities and synergies. The systemic engagement needed to be inclusive of all aspects of Elham and all phases, ranging from designing and planning the program all the way to feedback and evaluation.

While we definitely wanted each civil society organization to engage through its particular perspective and interest, we also needed to guard against giving a particular non-government organization (NGO) a superior leadership position as this might alienate others, making them feel subordinate or marginalized. This was the reason that we did not include any NGOs in the Elham leadership teams. Instead, the NGOs were all engaged in various relevant activities such as meetings to promote Elham, the evaluation of initiatives and running awareness sessions about Learning for Well-Being.

Although partnering with the central system was necessary, it was by no means enough. Engaging the regional and local district level education stakeholders and extending the partnership to embrace localities across the country was necessary in order to cultivate the Elham culture within the fabric of the system in towns, villages, camps and remote areas. The aim of this was not only to widen and deepen the sense of collective ownership, but also to provide the foundations for Elham's long term sustainability.

UEF took the lead role in articulating, sharpening and preserving the Elham L4WB core identity and brand and aligned the Elham plans and activities with the L4WB principles and practices. UEF provided the main content material including kits, manuals, and so on.

The structure needed to be a learning system that was capable of receiving and integrating feedback and of adapting and growing through successive cycles.

Two communities of practice were formed, one for the Elham laureates whose inspiring initiatives received national recognition and the second for children and youth who are either laureates or who have effectively participated in various Elham activities including evaluation, capacity building, peer learning and so forth.

Investing in the capacity building of the systems' leaders was essential for true and sustained buy in and support, especially when we took the strategic decision to fully integrate Elham into the system.

The partnership structure

The design implications of the above considerations on the partnership's structure and its operating system were critical. The final product, which was also created collaboratively in its finest detail, was fascinating in its wholeness and complexity. For the purpose of this article, we will not provide a thorough account of the structure. Rather, we will present it in the form of an organogram, which captures its intricate nested design, highlighting the main building blocks with their mandates and associated linkages (Figure 1). A careful look at the structure will show how different (vertical) tiers within the system and how different (horizontal) divisions were effectively engaged.

Below is a brief description of the mandate and function of each of the main sections of the diagram.

• **The Partners Council**

The Partners Council is the Elham governing body which consists of ministers of partner ministries and CEOs of partner businesses and institutions. The Council is chaired by the Minister of Education, while the Secretary General of UEF serves as the Secretary General of the Council.

The Council's mandate includes the ratification of Elham's strategic and implementation plans, articulating and facilitating the partners' contributions to the Elham process, supporting the systemic integration of Elham within their respective institutions, and endorsing the final annual selection of Elham's harvest of inspiring initiatives.

• **The Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee is made up of the senior executive leadership of Elham and consists of Deputy Ministers and deputy CEOs and director generals of partner organizations. The Committee approves detailed action plans and closely oversees their implementation through the Elham executive management team. The committee also sets up, mandates and oversees various Elham committees and teams from various sectors. It is worth noting that each of the steering committee members enjoyed a senior policy level position in either the education system, the health system or in UNRWA. Hence the collective goodwill and systemic leverage of the steering committee has played a significant role in Elham's positioning and reach.

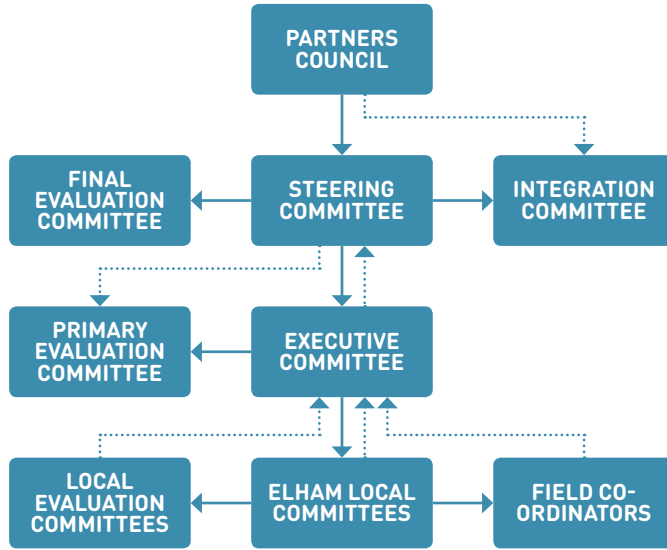
• **The Executive Committee**

This committee consists of the director generals of the main departments within the education and health systems in particular in addition to the Elham executive management team. This committee formulates action plans for all Elham activities and mobilizes the necessary resources to secure the plans' smooth and timely implementation. It also deals with tackling ongoing internal and external challenges and obstacles encountered during implementation.

• **The Mainstreaming and Integration Committee**

This committee consists of the director generals of public education, school supervision, curriculum, counseling, student activities, school health within the Ministry of Education in addition to director generals of health promotion and health protection. The committee is mandated to develop ways and means to support and facilitate the integration of L4WB within the different directorates and departments of the Ministries of Education, UNRWA and Health, on one hand, and scaling up the systemic adoption and mainstreaming of the Elham inspiring initiatives.

This is actually the defining feature of Elham and what makes it different from other "prize schemes". Showcasing the selected inspiring initiatives so that they become resources for learning and inspiration at the national and international level lies at the center of Elham's purpose. Through this mainstreaming approach Elham acts as a L4WB based multiplier.



Students | Teachers | Counselors | Supervisors | Principals | Parents | Health professionals

Figure 1: The partnership structure

Notes:

PARTNERS COUNCIL

Formation: Ministers of Education, Health, Social Welfare, Sport & Youth, UNRWA commissioner general, UEF Secretary General, CEOs of corporate and foundation partners • **Mandate:** Policy & strategy setting; partners support & buy-in

FINAL EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Formation: Comprises senior subject matter experts from ministries, civil society, academia, private sector, ICTs, media, youth and children • **Mandate:** Checking for: Extent of L4WB content, responsiveness, impact, replicability, sustainability, children engagement

STEERING COMMITTEE

Formation: Deputy Ministers of Education, Health, Social Welfare and Youth; Heads of Education and Health sectors in UNRWA, UEF Secretary General • **Mandate:** Ratification and oversight of annual plans; facilitating & harmonizing partners' multi-tier contribution • + Outreach

INTEGRATION COMMITTEE

Formation: Comprises Director Generals of Public Education, School Health, Supervision, Counselling, Training • **Mandate:** ways and means of integrating L4WB within the system, mainstreaming inspiring initiatives

PRIMARY EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Formation: Elham executive team and members of education professional development commission • **Mandate:** Screening applications for eligibility

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Formation: Director Generals in the Ministry of Education, Director General of Health Promotion and Protection, Deputy Head of Education UNRWA • **Mandates:** Implementation of annual plans, horizontal engagement of directorates; set up and mobilization of local structures • + Outreach

LOCAL EVALUATION COMMITTEES

Formation: 20 district level committees each comprising heads of district school health, counseling, supervision and ICT divisions • **Mandate:** Field validation and site visits

ELHAM LOCAL COMMITTEES

Formation: 20 district level committees each comprising district directors of education, health and youth and local NGOs • **Mandate:** Consolidating Elham's local positioning and local community engagement and sustainability • + Outreach

FIELD CO-ORDINATORS

Formation: Qualified representatives of all 20 districts of education • **Mandate:** Full responsibility for co-ordinating Elham's district level activities including outreach, nomination, evaluation and showcasing • + Outreach

Mainstreaming initiatives involves documenting them in Elham's annual Harvest Book, showcasing them through extensive media coverage, presenting the inspiring initiatives to colleagues and raising awareness about their benefits. In addition, the mainstreaming involves training colleagues in how to integrate the initiative in classrooms or other settings.

• **The Central Evaluation Committee**

This committee consisted of a multidisciplinary group of university academics, civil society activists in education, youth work, health , ICTs and more; officials from the education and health systems, in addition to Elham core team members. The committee was in charge of two evaluation exercises. The first was an office review of all applications and the second was face to face interviews with shortlisted applicants who were invited to share key synopses of their initiatives, highlighting dreams, needs and challenges that inspired them from the local context, innovative approaches that were developed, how these related to the L4WB framework and principles, the local resources and partnerships that were mobilized, the impact achieved (supported by feedback), and the depth and scope of children's engagement in the initiative.

• **The Elham District Coordinators**

Each district nominated a representative to serve as a member of a national coordinating body. This body played an extremely important role in creating flow and vibrant interaction between Elham's central leadership and the various districts across the country. It brought to the center grassroots perspectives, suggestions, concerns and feedback on all aspects of Elham. The district co-ordinators also acted as local ambassadors for Elham, leading outreach activities, the nomination process, the local evaluation process and so on.

Impact of systemic partnerships

Partnering with the public education and health systems and with UNRWA had multiple benefits. In particular, the partnership brought top policy level legitimacy to the L4WB approach, provided Elham with open access to the education system's central and local structures and to all schools across the nation. It also motivated various stakeholders within the system to embrace Elham and to be positively predisposed to engaging with it in multiple ways. This manifested in the unprecedented level of engagement in the Elham process, with over a thousand initiatives being received annually from teachers, students, principals and counselors; and in the wide number of people, groups and organizations involved in the planning and technical and organizational management of Elham's various activities.

Through these systemic partnerships, Elham leveraged the system's human, financial, logistical, organizational, technical and media resources towards long term sustainability, and created a sense of ownership within the system, motivating policy decisions that derive from and are guided by the L4WB framework. In fact the system set up a special high level interdepartmental committee with an explicit mandate to plan and support the mainstreaming of the L4WB approach within the school system and scaling up inspiring Elham initiatives. This resulted in the creation of a climate which encouraged entrepreneurship.

Additionally, the partnerships provided Elham and its L4WB language and branding with a unique high-level national visibility. The Elham annual national ceremony was regularly attended by the prime minister and by ministers of partner ministries as well as by leaders from academia, the private sector, civil society and the media.

SELECTED INSIGHTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Positioning Elham within a unique national partnership gave it, and its L4WB approach, unprecedented formal and societal legitimacy, widespread support and strong forward motion in record time. The whole country was embraced by Elham, from the most remote areas to the Palestinian cabinet, which, after Elham's third cycle, decided to introduce within the Elham structure the state of Palestine's Awards for Educational Innovation. Elham with its fresh, challenging, engaging and inspiring approach captured the imagination of the educational community which could be seen in the passion and energy with which teachers and schools followed the Elham season. Over a thousand applications were received annually and daily Elham's office received hundreds of web and phone communications from prospective applicants and their parents.

The enthusiasm, openness and good will with which the public education system in Palestine embraced Elham is truly humbling. Staff from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy approached Elham with curiosity and with the desire to make Elham an inspiring Palestinian success story.

Some concrete progress was achieved towards integrating L4WB within the public education system. This is evidenced by certain changes introduced in the assessment protocols used by the school principals, in the Department of School Health and the National Institute of Training, amongst others. Yet, the integration process faced some challenges some of which relate to the absence of specific well-articulated integration modules by Elham.

The L4WB approach and language proved to be quite subtle and took people out of their comfort zones, especially when it came to concepts such as wholeness, inner diversity and living systems. Making these concepts accessible to the educational community and finding appropriate cultural language with which to explain the concepts was somewhat challenging. It was noteworthy that L4WB content / approach within most of the submitted initiatives were not adequately articulated. The reviewers had to reformulate the descriptions of these initiatives to make explicit their connections with the guiding principles.

The L4WB capacity building program in Palestine was not on a par with the strong momentum that Elham created. The Elham family, consisting of the leadership bodies, management and technical staff from state departments, civil society and youth organizations as well as the Elham laureates, numbered over a thousand. These individuals were fascinated by the L4WB approach and its fresh innovative concepts, language and spirit but needed more knowledge of how it all works together and how to transform it into a way of thinking, doing and being. So there was a visible gap between theory and practice.

Working organically on various levels with the system was quite challenging. The state system had its own policies and strategies that carry long term commitments to various stakeholders, coupled with very rigid budget allocations. Hence, bringing about significant shifts in the system's strategic direction was very difficult and complex. In addition, senior and middle management were under great pressure to implement their own plans in a timely fashion.

The feedback that Elham received during the periodic meetings with the communities working in the field provided very rich and insightful suggestions regarding certain modifications. *Yet the pace of Elham's responsiveness to these suggestions was sometimes seen as slower than expected.*

State departments have been working as separate structures within their perceived domains, each focusing on the plans for their sector with associated deliverables and specific performance metrics. *Getting these public sector departments to open up and explore commonalities with other departments and to adopt a new cross-sectorial language and approach has also proven to be challenging.* We have worked hard to create a common language in the partners' council and, more effectively, within the steering, executive and central evaluation committees. We made significant progress in this regard especially between the education and health systems through a systematic and resilient process that lasted for almost ten years.

Elham's concerted efforts to engage major media stakeholders in the Elham national conversation, which culminated in the signing of a partnership agreement with the syndicate of Palestinian Journalists, contributed significantly to Elham's outreach campaign across the country. *The responsiveness, attention and appreciation offered by the media to Elham exceeded our expectations, especially in the context of a politically turbulent environment.*

Elham reached out to a number of leading corporations as part of our strategy to engage with the private sector. The rationale for doing so derived from the simple fact that business is one of the largest beneficiaries of the outcomes of the education system. Hence, the quality of the graduates employed by business: their personal traits, competencies and overall well-being all have a direct bearing on the performance and success of businesses in all sectors. Although we managed to obtain sizable financial support and had the CEOs of two corporations on our partners' council, this initiative proved to be unsustainable. We found that corporations preferred to have the freedom to invest their corporate social responsibility budgets in different social domains depending on their evolving priorities. In addition, companies tended to sponsor short-term activities which have immediate and high visibility rather than making long-term social investments.

The recent establishment of a national consortium focusing on the social determinants of health, coordinated by the Ministry of Health and supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) offers unprecedented opportunities to engage new sectors in the L4WB initiative. These include the ministries of labor, economy, justice, religion and social welfare. The Ministry of Health in

partnership with UEF took the initiative to set up an Elham Health program involving all members of the consortium. The first cycle of the program will be completed by mid-2018.

CONCLUSION

Elham Palestine has been an ambitious undertaking conceived under particularly difficult circumstances. The well-being of Palestinian children has been significantly compromised by a number of contextual influences and their learning environment has experienced major challenges and impediments. Hence, Elham represented a timely and highly responsive intervention towards enhancing the learning environment, making it more conducive to children's well-being.

The story of Elham's unfolding within the national public systems and within regions and communities is extremely rich and surely warrants a lengthier chapter. This article serves as an appetizer! We are happy to share more of what worked and how and what did not work and why either in relation to translating the L4WB holistic approach into practice or in terms of our signature partnership undertaking.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Marwan Awartani is Professor of Mathematics and President of Palestine Technical University; President of the Palestine Academy of Science and Technology and Secretary General of the Learning for Well-being Foundation, formerly known as the Universal Education Foundation; and Secretary General of Elham Palestine. Prof. Awartani served as chairman of the selection committee of the World Innovation Prize for Education and was a member of the Jury of the World Innovation Awards. He also served as interim President of Al-Quds University and chairman of the Arab Foundations Forum and President of the Palestinian Society of Mathematical Sciences. Contact: Marwan.awartani@gmail.com

Wahid Jubran currently works for UNRWA in the West Bank as Deputy Chief Field Education Programmes and previously worked as Head of the Education Development Centre where he was mainly responsible for the professional development programs and in-service teacher education. He was engaged in developing policies, strategies and programs related to the education reform for UNRWA schools operating in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. He is a member of the National Committee for Education Reform in Palestine 2015–2018. He also participated in developing the National Strategy for

Teacher Education 2008 in Palestine and participated in setting the broad lines and framework for the Palestinian curricula in 2000. Wahid is currently the cofounder and head of the Palestinian Trainers' Association board. He was also head of the Middle East Network for Innovation in Teaching (MENIT) 2012–2014. During 2009–2010, he worked for the Universal Education Foundation as Director of Elham Palestine Programme. He is currently a member of the Learning for Well-being community that was initiated by the Universal Education Foundation (UEF). Contact: w.jhubran@unrwa.org

ANNEX

The following are two examples of inspiring initiatives selected by Elham and which were celebrated at the national level in Palestine.

Example (1):

Greenhouse School: promoting self-organization and participation in decision making

The principal of a girl's school in a village called Bait Sureek believes that an environment for learning for well-being encourages self-organization, participation in decision making and collaboration. Accordingly, she facilitated and supported the work of a team of students to establish a greenhouse in the school grounds. Girls were engaged in the preparation of the soil, planting and growing various vegetables. The experience has been transformative for the young women through connecting them with the land; growing their own food; being productive and being responsible at an early age, and through mutual learning about plants, the seasons, organic food, the dangers of chemicals and pesticides etc. The students also developed relationships with their schoolmates, teachers and the principal based on mutual respect and collaboration. The girls organized themselves and took charge of the schools' canteen and started preparing healthy sandwiches using the vegetables they had grown for the other students. They also shared what they learned through this initiative with their families.

Example (2):

Radio Young Broadcasters: promoting diverse perspectives and opportunities for multiple forms of expressions

The teacher who developed this initiative believes that as people learn, grow and develop in different ways that diverse perspectives and multiple forms of expression should be encouraged. Through this initiative, students were taken out of the classroom and introduced to social and civic issues and affairs. It extended their learning beyond the boundaries of the school and they were given the responsibility to broadcast a bi-weekly radio talk show that addressed selected topics of interest to the public. They decided to select topics that were connected to their civic education curriculum and then presented these from their local radio station. The objectives of the initiative were twofold: firstly, to improve their research, dialogue, communication and presentation skills, and secondly, to encourage civic engagement and promote civil society values at a young age, especially tolerance and acceptance of others. In this initiative, students presented talk shows that revolved around accountability, transparency, elections, pluralism, the constitution, reproductive health, violence, and many other topics. They also invited officials and specialists to discuss these issues on the show from their different and diverse perspectives and were provided with opportunities to express these perspectives in different ways.