

# **Gaza is Alive 2019**

## **Psycho-social intervention of CB Crew at the Nusseirat refugee camp**

### **1. Introduction**

#### ***1.1 Socio-political context***

The recent conflicts in the Gaza Strip (2009 - 2014) and the latest political events (the “Great march of return”) have pushed the population towards a strongly critical social condition, worsened also by different structural factors. The area’s economic condition (high unemployment, lack of drinkable water, malnutrition, etc.) and inefficient welfare services complete an alarming picture. In addition, the total embargo imposed by Israel for 11 years has determined an unprecedented socio-economic crisis. Youth unemployment is at 60% and poverty levels have increased from 30 to 50% during the past few years. These facts have had a negative influence on the people, and in particular on the children, who are the most vulnerable.

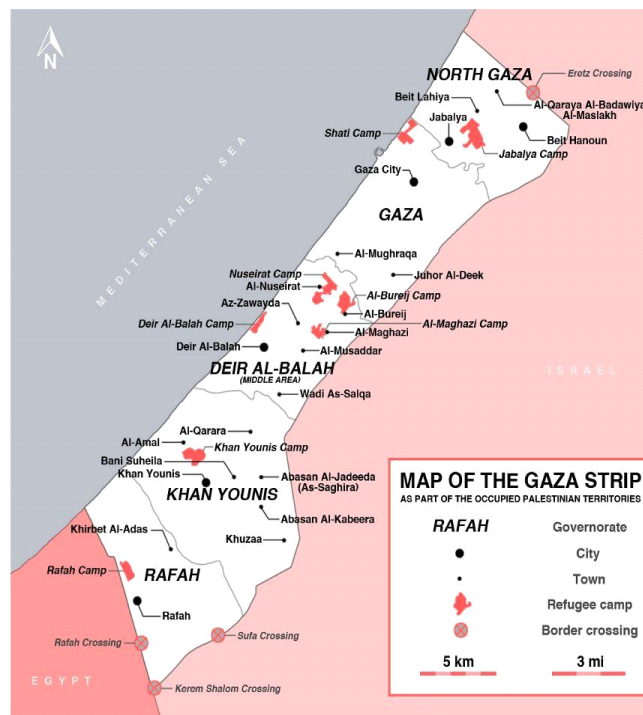
#### ***1.2 The psychosocial condition of the population***

The psycho-social health of the people today is one of the most urgent problems to face. Psychological trauma caused by conflicts, divorce, domestic abuse, suicide in families has reached worrying levels. Another big problem is dependence on Tramadol, an opioid often used by the people to face psychological illness.

Following the conflicts, many children lost their parents and developed different forms of sufferance. According to a survey by

“Save The Children” (2018), 95% of the children interviewed showed signs of depression, hyperactivity, isolation and aggression. Many of them, in fact, were born and grew during the last wars that devastated the area. At least 68% confirm that they have problems sleeping, and 78% consider their main fear to be the sound of war planes which often fly, together with drones, in the sky above the Gaza Strip. On the basis of recent PCRF reports (2014-2018), it was shown that the local children and families require treatment for their mental health, above all in the marginal areas of the Gaza Strip (close to the Israeli border and in the various refugee camps) where the level of stress is higher and where it is more difficult to send help.

*Map of the Gaza Strip*



### 1.3 *The project recipient in the Gaza Strip: “CB Crew”*

The breakdance crew called “CB Crew” (Camp Breakers crew, breakdancers of Palestine) was created and has been present in the Gaza Strip since 2003. It has been helping the young people at the Nusseirat refugee camp since 2004. Its founders are young dancers from Palestine. In addition to developing educational activities that are strictly tied to dancing, Hip Hop and art, the crew and the academy created bonds with the local society through different types of initiative, even in collaboration with the United Nations UNRWA agency. More detailed information is available on [www.campsbreakers.com](http://www.campsbreakers.com).

The school currently needs funds to pay for the rooms it rents, the instruments, and the dance, writing, music and rap courses. Until recently it was financed by the monthly rates paid by the families, who today are suffering even more from the effects of the economic crisis. The result of this dramatic picture is that children stopped attending the courses. The teachers, in addition, are only paid partially, so they are forced to spend part of their day doing other work, and putting their training and teaching planning to the side.

On the basis of what has been indicated, there are **three specific objectives**:

- 1) To plan **economic coverage** that can make the courses for children free; suitable compensation for the teachers and their continual training, both in artistic and pedagogic terms.

2) A series of workshops with professional Hip Hop artists for the teachers of the school, in order to **develop new** and more interesting **skills** and techniques.

3) To implement training on the **theory and practice of psycho-social support** aimed at school teachers and local psychologists, so as to connect artistic-musical activities with the overall wellbeing of children and adolescents. The idea is also to create a “mixed” training group, made up of teachers and psychologists, who will follow the children along the whole road.

The direct beneficiaries of the social consequences are the CB Crew School teachers, the indirect beneficiaries are the young people who live in the Nusseirat refugee camp.

### ***1.4 Partners***

A collaboration with organisations committed to promoting social justice, in particular Associazione Ya Basta! Êdî Bese! and Associazione Musicon e.V, is programmed. Through these partners it will be possible to increase the network of support for the initiatives, which will be put into effect at the Nusseirat camp. The mentioned associations will be involved in the collateral events – promotion and fund-raising – and they will actively take part in the project, before and after their permanence in Gaza, by helping to produce informative material.

## **2. Objective**

The main objective of the project is to supply artistic and psychosocial tools to the CB Crew teachers so as to structure a training proposal that uses Hip Hop as a method for facing the psychological pain of all those young people who are suffering from the devastating effects of war. Paying particular attention to P.T.S.D., a whole set of activities that refer to the artistic disciplines connected with Hip Hop will be implemented.

On the basis of recent research, these procedures become an important growth tool for many young people around the world when used in educational and scholastic contexts.

## **3. Hip Hop and war trauma: the methodology**

Using the artistic subjects of Hip Hop to follow an education road can be unprecedented for many educators or teachers, in particular because of the level of training and knowledge of the Hip Hop culture that they must have.

Project methodology is based on a conviction: if you can “tell” your discomfort, if it can be narrated by a physical and symbolic space, suffering can be managed and notably reduced.

RAP – stimulating and teaching individuals to write narratives can be an effective mediation instrument between themselves and the surrounding world, allowing the educator to understand their feelings and their personal view of the context. The alias (stage name) that youngsters usually create in these contexts helps them develop a guard and stimulates them to pour out their frustrations, troubles and desires. Writing would therefore encourage them to

relive their own experiences, give those experiences a new shape and, accordingly, understand the context, both internal and external, in a better way.

MUSIC – recent research has widely shown how much music contributes to overcoming PTSD and other traumas tied to distress and/or war situations.

The proposal is to teach the possibility of creating music using simple musical programmes and technological devices. In the Hip Hop culture, this is done by exploring (listening to) all types of music, no exceptions, to search for drums, melodies, sounds and anything else, so as to cut out and tailor one's own unique piece of music. Using technology is fundamental for keeping the individual in constant contact with the contemporaneity of society, which has become unstable at an incredible speed.

DANCE – the potential of dancing does not need to be stated: it has always been an educational form of art. What makes breakdancing different is that it replaces aggressive actions with dance steps, pushing individuals to direct their anger towards the study of positions and figures that are suitable for a dance challenge, based on self-control and control of their own body.

WRITING – the work consists of constant writing, initially working on the person's own alias (stage name) to develop self-confidence and the desire to exist and succeed, then continues with the re-elaboration of letters in new forms and colours.

Both Latin and Arab writing (although cursive) are perfect for being characterised by the writer through modifications, without losing their meaning.

This makes it possible to enrich texts with elements that, for the educator, become indexes of expression and communication. The

harmony between forms and colours will be taught, to help train the young people on the concept of balance, whereupon they can develop stability.

## **4.Actions**

To obtain financing for the activities needed to reach the objectives, and therefore total support for the project, various fund-raising strategies will be started, such as crowdfunding, participation in microfinance tenders and the organisation of self-financing events (charity concerts, social dinners, etc.).

It is a good idea to highlight that this project is not for welfare, but its purpose is to make those who receive on-site training independent and fully responsible, and to create the requirements for an opportunity of economic and professional emancipation. This is why compensation for the local teachers who teach the children and guarantee free courses must be added to the cost budget.

The project will last 3 months. During the first three weeks, a team of European professionals will hold a series of activities directly on the field.

### **The project will be divided into 3 operative phases**

- **Phase 1: Workshop and Jam with international artists and professionals**

A team made up of: 1 b-boy; 1 b-girl; 1 writer; 1 music producer; 1 Hip Hop culture expert; 1 music teacher; 1 psychologist who is an expert on PTSD; 1 video-maker and 1 project coordinator, will go to the Gaza Strip for one week to meet teachers, psychologists and local young people and hold workshops on the relationship

between the psycho-social intervention and Hip Hop (graffiti-writing, breakdancing, music production and rap (mc'ing)). At the end of the week there will be a demonstration Jam.

During this phase the Palestinian teachers will receive two types of training: one will be very technical-artistic, the other will be social-psychic-pedagogic, mainly on the use of Hip Hop as an intervention device for the main psychopathologies of the children in Gaza (among which PTSD). The teachers will work alongside two psychologists: one Italian, the other Palestinian.

The aim of all the activities is to promote positive behaviour (self-esteem, humour, creativity).

When the team returns to Europe, a video-documentary will be made, and it will be shown in order to tell the financiers, interested associations and the public in general about what was done.

- **Phase 2: On-site training and strategy planning**

Permanence of a part of the team for another 2 weeks, to create a collaborative and multidisciplinary team made up of HIP HOP teachers, psychologists and local social workers, supply them with the necessary working tools and plan together long-term strategies for the children and families at Nusseirat. Supervisors will be identified and suitably trained.

- **Phase 3: Monitoring and long-distance support**

Every week, for 9 weeks, all those involved will meet in video-conference online for a debriefing that will assess the situation, analyse and overcome any criticisms, and report on the successes and objectives reached. All the activities will be monitored through the supervisors to define the specific therapy intervention methodologies, according to the diagnosis made during the



activities. There will be a constant assessment process and a final follow up.

Research, assessment and monitoring will be promoted during all the project phases. A final report will be drafted by all those involved at the end of the project.