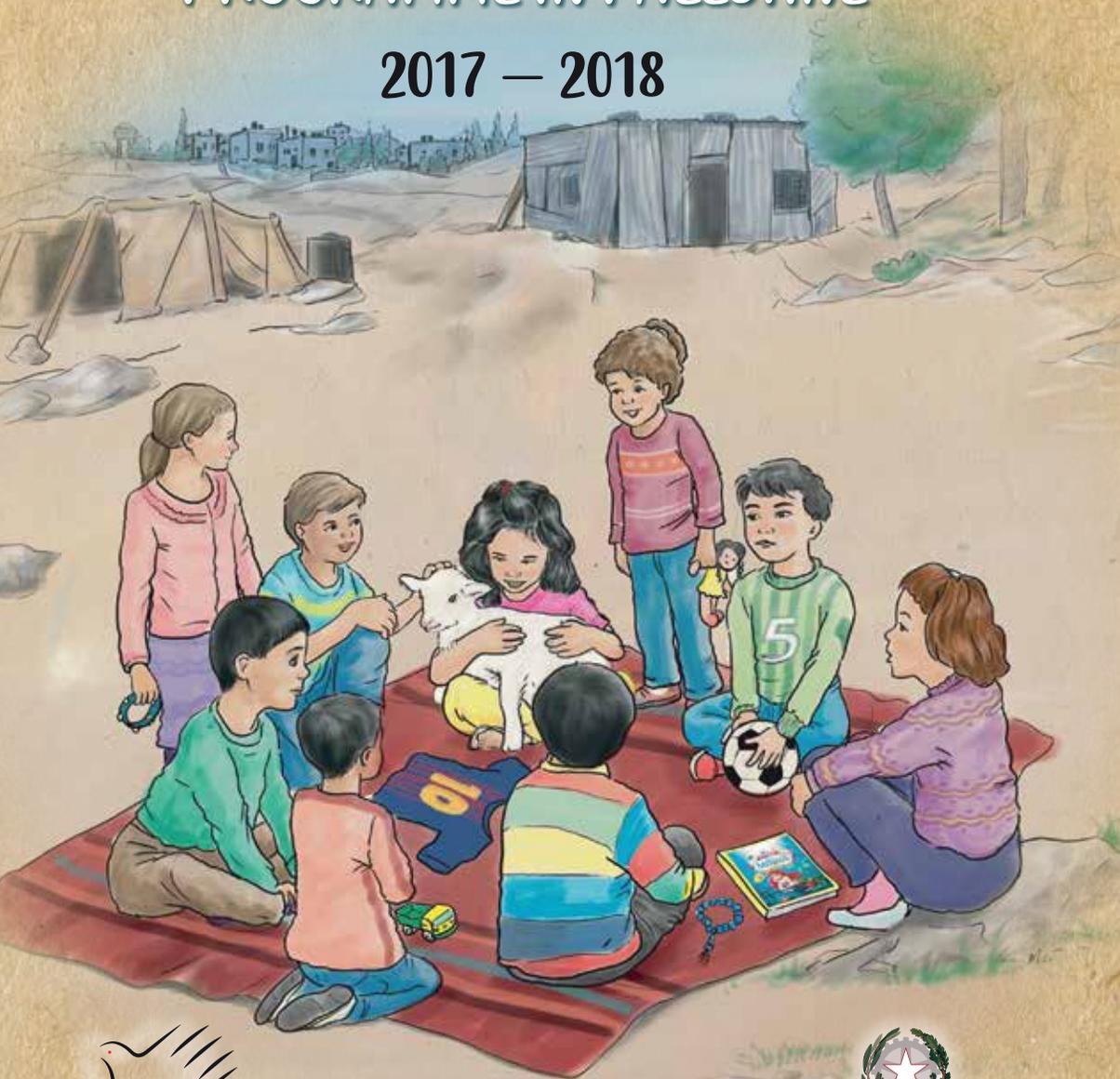


A JOURNEY THROUGH THE ITALIAN HUMANITARIAN AID PROGRAMME IN PALESTINE

2017 – 2018



ITALIAN AGENCY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

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Gaza*

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THE ITALIAN HUMANITARIAN AID
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Since its establishment, over 20 years ago, the Humanitarian Programme of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) reflects Italy's significant role in the humanitarian support to the Palestinian people.

With a focus on the Protection of refugees and IDPs (Internal Displaced Persons), Italy's humanitarian response targets the needs of the most vulnerable communities living in Area C of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, with an integrated approach, combining the provision of essential services with community empowerment and risk mitigation measures.

Through the delivery of essential services such as water, healthcare and education, Italy assists vulnerable households to better cope with the prolonged nature of recurrent crisis and shocks.

To this aim, every year, AICS supports several NGO-implemented projects as well as International Organizations such as UN|OCHA, FAO, WHO, UNMAS and UNRWA, that carry out their humanitarian programmes for Palestinians.

Italy will continue to engage with all relevant humanitarian actors in Palestine to develop inclusive programmes and, most important, in creating even better links between humanitarian AID and development.

Fabio Sokolowicz

Consul General of Italy in Jerusalem

The purpose of this publication is to show, both with images and fictional short stories, where and how AICS humanitarian operations take place. The drawings aim at bringing the observer inside project locations, carefully discovering every component and community of the interventions.

Storytelling is fictional, based on stories that have been told and listened to, flown from mouth to mouth, from one ear to the other, and transformed into a realistic narrative. Fiction short stories allow the readers to sympathize with the characters and represent an alternative and powerful way to have a look into their houses and hearts.

Access to safe water, medical services, education and psychosocial support, is part of a set of fundamental rights that every person in the world should be able to enjoy. This is the reason of AICS commitment in catering for the basic needs of the Palestinians, with an integrated protection approach, towards the achievement of those rights, in compliance with International Humanitarian law.

Cristina Natoli

Representative of AICS Jerusalem

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

A wolf and a lamb went to drink from the same river.

The wolf was upstream, while the lamb drank downstream.

The wolf, driven by hunger, looked for something to argue about and said:

*“Why have you muddied the
water that I’m drinking?”*

*The lamb, trembling, answered: “How can you say that, if the water is flowing
from you down to me?”*

*The wolf then added: “That’s true, but six months ago you said bad things
about me!”*

The lamb explained: “Actually, six months ago I wasn’t even born yet!”

But the wolf shouted: “Then it was your father who said bad things about me!”

So he leaped onto the lamb and killed it, putting it to death unjustly.

AESOP

The holy month of Ramadan is coming to an end. The Eid, the last day, represents for the villagers a tremendous joy: money and toys given as presents, parties held until late and the family's best-fed lamb cooked for the occasion.

Nour is not five years old yet. Her dark, sunburnt complexion resembles the soil of the desert hills just outside Jerusalem, where she was born and is growing up amidst modular housing and animal pens. A settled position, yet at the same time unstable; permanently temporary.

Nour runs about with the other little ones of the village. These are days of great enthusiasm: Ramadan is a holiday without sacrifices if you are a child and you don't have to fast, everything looks exciting and extraordinary. Nour, her brothers and little friends go to the animal shelter, but she is always the only one to get inside and to caress goats, lambs and dogs like a little Bedouin Saint Francis. There is one lamb, six months old, soft and defenseless, intended to become the main dish of the holiday party. When Nour holds the lamb in her arms, she feels sad and tries to drive away the thoughts of the animal's killing; she squeezes it tightly just like a doll in flesh, with bones and cartilage, able to move but at the same time meek and docile, exactly like the toys that arrived yesterday thanks to the Italian project. And as it often happens to children of this age, the thought of the moment becomes a priority: the lamb to be sacrificed is suddenly forgotten and off she runs to find dolls and toys in the new multipurpose room.

Khader, Nour's father, extremely tall, heavily bearded, always unsmiling, looks at her with the attention and the severity of a tutor. He has been with animals his whole life, and dozens of times he had to attend at the slaughter of these fellow-travelers, violent acts but necessary to the

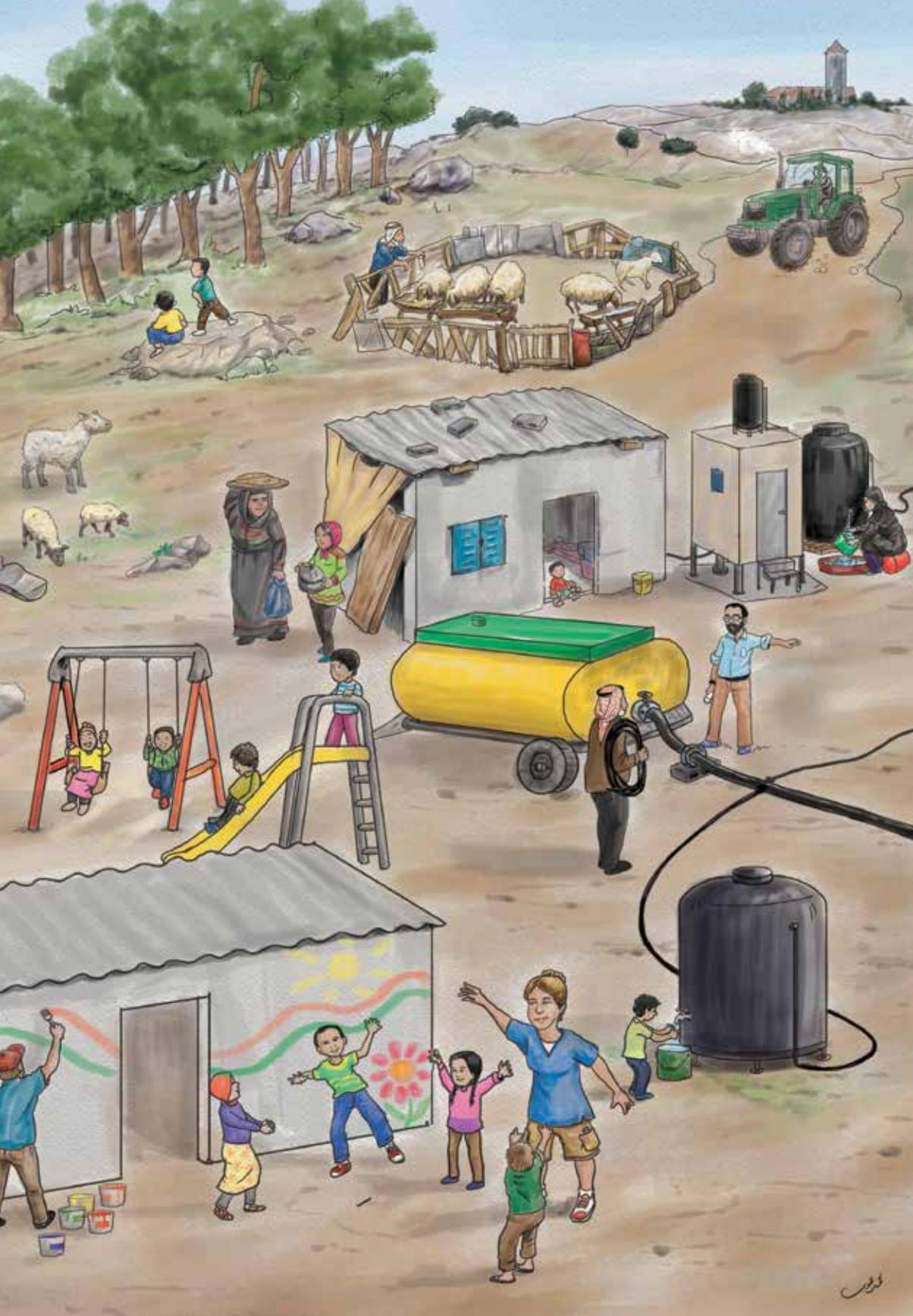
outliving, and this built him up – being shocked, according to Khader, is very useful for the members of this community, men or women, child or adult. The tender skin of a child shouldn't be hardened just by sun and sand, but also from experiencing a tough life, he thinks as he watches his little daughter.

Like puppies, Nour and her brothers rub against Giacomo, a man with working pants and handfuls of papers, with a wooden earring bigger than his earlobe. He smiles and plays with them, this oddball coming from Italy with a fresh breeze of novelty. He speaks with Nour's mother in Arabic; one might say, if not for his foreign aspect, that he is one of them. The children run inside and chase each other around amidst the brightly colored teaching materials and recently unwrapped toys. In the next days the Italians, along with the fathers of the village, will put together a swing set outside. Nour really feels that Ramadan is the most beautiful month of the year.

She also hears her mother's voice – warm, reassuring. The voice of goodnight, of fairy tales, also of reproofs, able to catch her attention when she speaks to the village children and to the other mothers– during some of the project's activities. This voice will explain them how to support their little ones in confronting fears, nightmares that make them sweat during the night and unable to fall back asleep for hours, the sense of isolation they feel, the fragility they can't shake off even during the holiday.

Nour daydreams a lot: she is the little lamb, small and defenseless, liable to be torn to pieces from one minute to the next, and sometimes she also dreams to be the wolf, just to feel, only once, what it means to be able to





decide on life or death for the weakest, deny the evidence, be finally free. Is that because of the fable she's been told during the afternoon meeting? The next morning, Nour knows it is the day when her dear little friend the lamb will become the main course.

Khader is happy, he embraces Nour and her mother - both parents have a job now. Serious and prepared for the fatigue he is about to endure, he puts on his work suit and with the other family fathers of the camp welcomes the two mobile cisterns that will assure a reliable water supply to the whole village. Nour and the other children watch the work and exult when they drink their first glass of water. Nour collects the water in a little bowl and goes into the shelter, takes the lamb in her arms and helps it sip, like a little brother or a doll. The scene is so moving, and the sacrifice so imminent, that Nour's three brothers can't help watching her, smiling, starting to tell each other - pretending she wasn't there - what will happen to the little lamb in a few hours. Nour doesn't cry, she throws a rock at the brothers but she's too young and her aim isn't good yet: the rock ends up hitting her father in the back while he is installing the pipeline for the second cistern. Nour puts the lamb down, gets up and instinctively walks back. Khader comes up to her without saying a word, no explanation is necessary: a slap on the head of each brother, a reproof to the little girl that leaves no room for reply.

The psychological support session today involves the smallest ones. Nour sits down diligently in the circle, following the instructions of her mother, who every now and then throws her an attentive look. The children are asked to go home and choose, among their own toys, the one dearest to them, and then put it at the center of the circle. Some frown and some

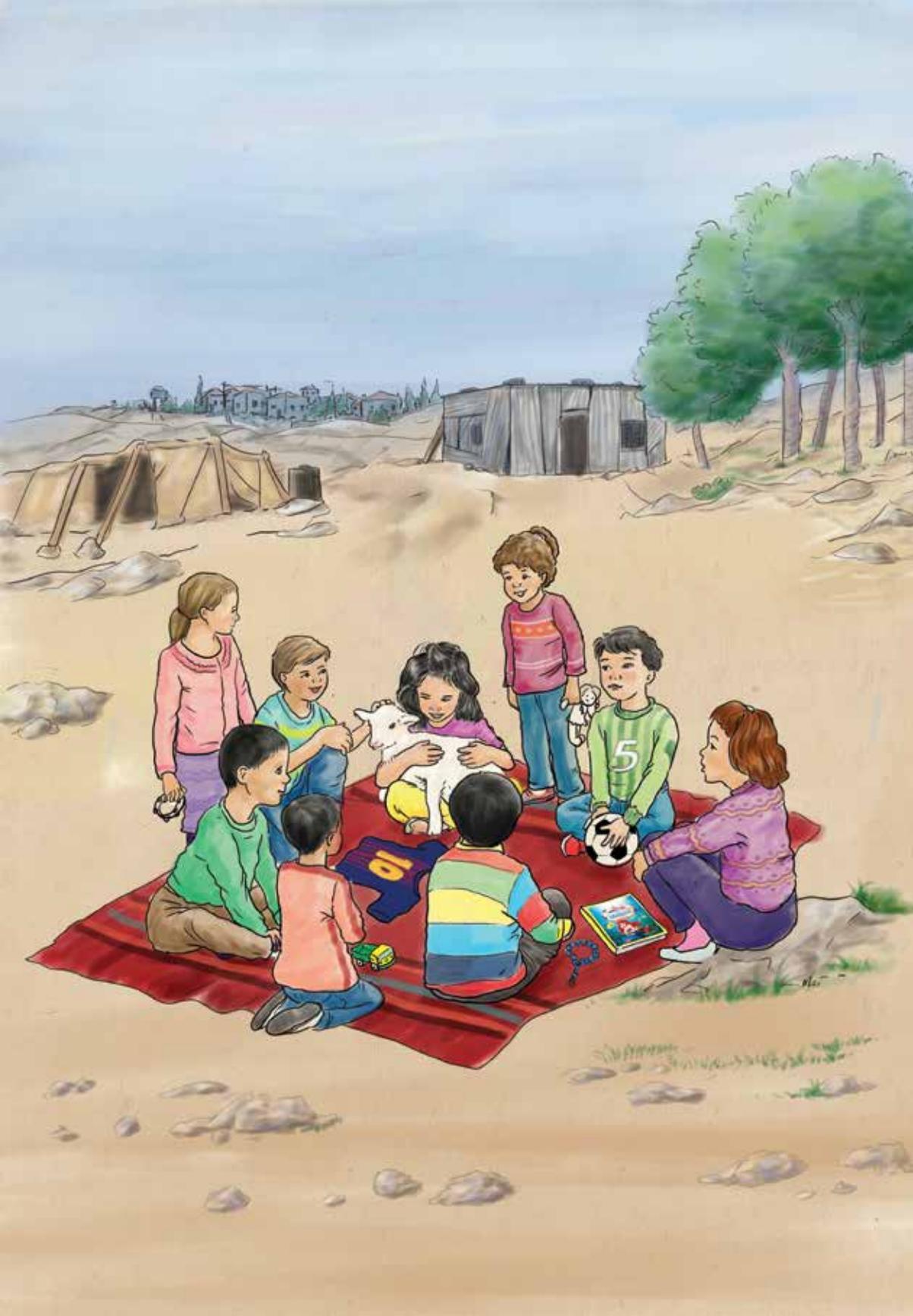
share sneaky looks, the looks of those who think they can do this by choosing what doesn't matter to them. But a lightbulb goes off in Nour's head when she hears the second part of the game and she understands what will happen to her most cherished belonging: it will remain in the multipurpose room for a month and she will be able to see it every day, but only if she is willing to share it with the other kids. This is how she will learn to deal with separation and sharing, understanding and respecting the feelings of others.

Nour runs across the rocky terrain at breakneck speed. She has a very clear idea in her head of what she must do, but immediately thousands of terrifying fears cross her mind: who will feed it? Is it going to be afraid of staying in that room all alone? In the cold, at night?

The lamb bleats softly when it sees Nour coming into the shelter. It accepts her hug that today means something more: Nour tries to get up, but the lamb is too heavy, so she's forced to pull it out of the shelter. Meanwhile, in the game circle, the other kids are gathering their objects: a soccer t-shirt, a ball, a book, a little ceremonial suit, their little world synthesized in one object that they will be separated from for an endless period of time. A lamb's bleat makes the children turn around and break into a delighted smile. Nour, with her head down, pushes her way through and puts her little lamb next to the cloth and the ball; and she stays there in the middle, determined to save the poor beast's life.

Among the shocked faces watching her, there is also the dark and serious face of her father – had he understood that beforehand or had he followed her moves? He never misses a thing. What does he have in his hand? A

knife, ready for the sacrifice? Nour held the lamb tighter and turns to her mother, she can look into here like Khaled, she must take her side. The wolf is coming and they need to stop him, they have to save this little lamb, that doesn't deserve to be killed but to be shared, and loved. Nour looks back at her father Khader, like a puppy waiting for instructions. It only takes a smile from both parents to give the little lamb a new safe space among the other objects cherished by the village children.



NGOs:

Oxfam Italia and Terre des Hommes Italia

Project's title:

Improve the resilience and the psychophysical wellbeing of marginalized Palestinian communities in Area C and Seam Zone

Project Locations:

Zanba (Az Za'ayyem), Nabi Samwil, Ma'azi Jaba, Jabal al Baba (Al Azariyyeh), Beit Iksa (East Jerusalem)

Implementation Period:

June 2017 – April 2018

Main activities & results:

- The water availability for human and animal consumption in the 5 target communities has increased through the installation of efficient pipelines and the provision of water tanks and water cisterns.
- 7 child friendly spaces have been established in the targeted communities .
- 139 girls and 130 boys participated in psycho social support activities, while 1101 parents took part in awareness activities on educational and health-related subjects.
- Community mobilization sessions were organized to strengthen the community response towards human rights violations.



THE FUTURE DOWNSTREAM

Faseyel, Jordan Valley

October 5, 2017

Dear Diary,

Suhad went too far this time, I can't stand her anymore. As soon as she sat down behind me, she started yacking nonstop and kicking my chair to annoy me. Today, after her millionth idiotic burst of laughter, I turned around and threw her books on the floor, she got red in the face and pulled my hijab down behind me, almost making me fall out of my chair, I got up and hit her in the face. It took 5 people to separate us. We ended up in the principal's office, he knows me and he understands I don't look for fights, but I will defend myself if I have to, for sure. I think Suhad will no longer be coming; last year 6 students dropped out – because they work, because their parents forget to send them to school, because they no longer feel like going. I definitely won't miss her.

At sunset Mohammed and his parents came to visit us. I hadn't seen him for a long time, not in this way, in the same room, with Mama and Baba staring at us, checking if we dare raise our eyes from the ground, telling us when we had to talk, if we had to hold our hands, and then the price, date

and details of our wedding. Mohammed is cute, has a nice smile, gentle eyes, but he's 15 years older than me and is too short. I don't want to marry someone shorter than me!

A little while ago Mama came over to hug me, to caress my hair and tell me that at the beginning she didn't love Baba either, but after getting to know him, being together and having children, he became her great love. Shouldn't it be the opposite? Shouldn't you have children with the one you love and with the one you want to be with your whole life?

I don't understand any of it. Good night.

October 15

Dear Diary,

Again, no water in the bathroom! They say in the next months they will repair it, and we'll have brand new bathrooms thanks to the Italian project. Will they restore our school toilets? That makes me laugh. So, after the work we did in class (I think it went well, we'll see), Nader came to visit me. He wanted me to go with him to the medical examination. Down in the courtyard there was a little hospital inside a car with the motor running – seriously, a mobile clinic they call it. Inside that, the doctor explained while she prepared the instruments for the hearing and vision exam that the Italian project donated medical equipment and even gloves, alcohol, medicines, all that stuff.

I hugged Nader who had the jitters and I went in with him. The doctor had him sit down, inserted a silver cone into his ear and looked inside

it with a lens. She shook her head, tried to speak to him in that ear even though she already knew that Nader couldn't hear from it. At the end, she told us that my little brother will have to use a device to make him hear again, not completely but almost. "But we don't have the money to pay for it", I tried to explain. The doctor smiled at me and she gave us an appointment for another visit.

November 8

What is gender? Nobody raised their hand, nobody knew or even tried to explain what it meant. The ladies at the YWCA, who organized the Safety Audit Group for us, did it. I have never heard that word. I know I'm a girl, my body reminds me of it every month. I know what it means having to accept whatever my father and grandfather, and then my husband, tell me to do, how to behave. What I didn't know, and now I do, is that there are specific things for a woman: laws, lessons, behaviors. What is slowly getting into my head, and I feel that like the disgusting insect that has gotten into Nader's ear and doesn't let him hear my words, is that my right to be what I want to be is worth the same as a man's right, they are different but legitimate in the same way. Rights, it's a question of rights.

(I'm carefully copying the notes, I know that's clear, but this way I'm sure that I won't forget it)

December 10

Dear Diary,

I don't think I will ever forget this day! Mama also came to the meeting of



the Safety Group; at first she was a bit scared, but then she surrendered to my enthusiasm, when I explained to her what gender is, women and men, equal but different. During the meeting they spoke in particular about violence, and Mama and I never looked at each other, we knew exactly what it means to be a woman and have to accept the power of men. Men have no right to do it, but they do it anyway. When they asked if there was anyone who wanted to share a personal experience, I saw, from the corner of my eye, Mama raising her hand. What? I can't believe it even now: I'm not talking about what she said, the violence of her first husband, the blows she got when she told the village what he did to her, or even the things I see every day, the duty without which there is no right, how she has to clean the house and cook for everyone in order to be able to come to the Safety Audit Group – no, I can't believe she had the courage to talk about such things in front of everyone, to the whole class, to people from other villages she doesn't even know.

At dinner we ate in silence, Mama and I, without exchanging a word or a glance. Was she feeling the same shame that I was feeling for her? Then she came up to me, kissed me on the forehead and whispered in my ear: "I hope Mohammed will be the right one."

February 6

Dear Diary,

today in the schoolyard there was a big party. At 10.30 we interrupted the class and ran outside. The village chief came too, Mama and Baba as well, everyone was happy because finally, starting today, we can use the new bathrooms: clean, efficient, no bad smell or water on the floor to

make you slip and break your neck. The Italians promised they will also install a ramp for the kids in wheelchairs, and it seems a beautiful thing to me, the rights of the weakest no? Let them do things on their own - it'll surely make them feel better.

Then we ate, and the mobile clinic came back; now there are two. One comes from Beit Jala, near Bethlehem. Nader came out really happy and ran to hug me, he showed me the device in his ear, he reassured me, telling me to speak normally, he can't believe it but now he can hear very good. He had a surgery at the hospital and he didn't feel any pain. Then he ran off to play with his friends, to hear them shout from his healed ear.

I really, really love Nader.

March 21

Dear Diary,

I rarely write to you, you're right, but exams at school and chores at home, helping Mama, made me forget this little friend that I keep under the mattress, and every night I check if you're still there even if I don't touch you, so scared I am that someone finds you and read about my secrets.

This afternoon I went with Mohammed to a cafe, the first time by ourselves. Mohammed is nice, he cares about me and he's so attentive. I was fine, but I still wonder: why marry him? I feel something, but what does it mean to feel something? Like a confused sound in an indistinct hubbub, it seems you understood but instead you can easily be wrong,

you are only imagining - that sentence, that feeling.

When I came back home, Grandpa, Baba and Mama were waiting for me like a firing squad stationed on the couch. They wanted to talk to me. Are they going to ask me how I was with Mohammed, if I have feelings for him? I confess that I really thought that for a second. "Everything is arranged" said Grandpa and I turned to Mama and Baba, who couldn't say a word, it's not up to them to decide. "You're getting married on the first Friday of Ramadan". That was everything he said, then he stood up and, with his uncertain walk, left us alone and silent.

I ran to catch Mama's phone to see which day the first Friday of Ramadan will be.

Fasayel, May 18, 2035

Dear Diary,

I've found you and I am re-reading you only today, after twenty years, and the first thing that comes to me instinctively to do is to look for a pen and try to tell you everything. Stupid, huh? You're right, dear diary, maybe I should have cried on your shoulder more, in these long years, and pour it all out to you.

Mohammed is my husband and we have five children. We work together in the fields, for starvation wages, but how else can we feed our children? How can we buy water to drink? We still don't have it, in twenty years nothing has changed. He is a worker, I collect and wrap fruit and vegetables, the same work Mama and Baba did until a few years ago. We are happy. Are we happy?

Mays is our oldest daughter and she's 15 now. Few days ago, she received a marriage proposal. Is she writing a diary too? I tried to explain to her what it means being a woman, how many times during my wedding I tried to honor my duties and at the same time claim my rights. Each time you see a hand, or a fist raised in front of you, your voice must go up in the same way, you must raise it and demand justice. There is still so much to do but someth...

What was it, the front door? Mays obviously, running to her room. I am going to talk to her, she still needs me so much.

So long, dear diary.

NGOs:

AVSI

Project's title:

Schools of resilience: supporting protection mechanisms for children in the Jordan Valley (Area C)

Project Locations:

Zanba (Az Za'ayyem), Nabi Samwil, Ma'azi Jaba, Jabal al Baba (Al Azariyyeh), Beit Iksa (East Jerusalem)

Implementation Period:

July 2017 – April 2018

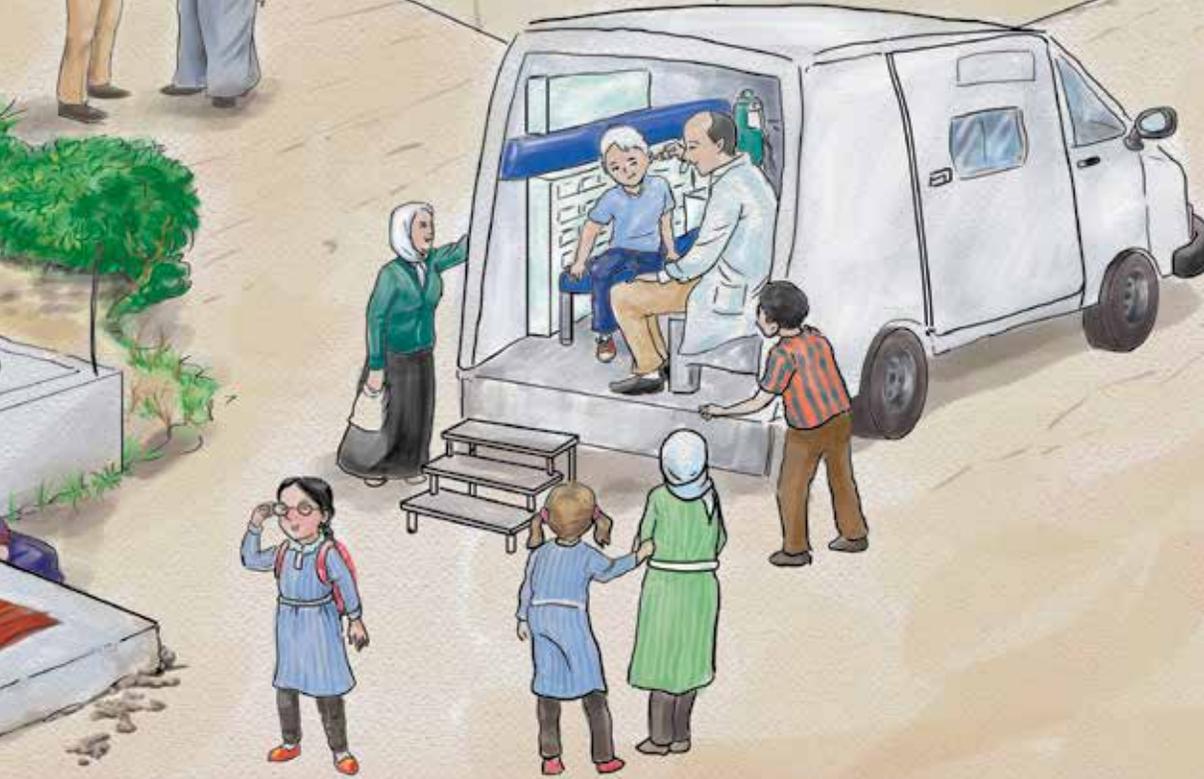
Main activities & results:

- A mobile clinic has been equipped to conduct general and specialized visits to children attending schools in the 6 villages involved in the project.
- The medical staff of the clinic conducted hearing tests for 402 students (162 girls and 240 boys) and eye tests for 474 students (173 girls and 301 boys). Among those kids, 72 were referred to specialized hospitals in East Jerusalem where they received surgery or additional support.
- 103 students (87 girls and 16 boys) and 86 parents (74 mothers and 12 fathers) took part in Gender Based Violence safety audit group sessions.
- 29 school toilets and 10 water filling points have been rehabilitated. 4 school toilets have been made accessible for students with physical disabilities.



People for development





THUMBLESS

RAFAH BORDER, SOUTH OF THE GAZA STRIP

You promised you wouldn't cry... Jamal, look at me...

Eh...

Crying is for sissies. We are men... boys, almost men... for sure not sissies... and then... you cry when someone dies and I'm not going to die... on the contrary...

When will we see you again?

Soon, I'm coming back soon... but now I have to go, you understand that, right? I can't miss this chance... God knows when something like this would happen again. Six months in Cairo, without spending a penny...

Then another six... then two years, three... you're not coming back again, definitely not....

Murad, I promised you I am coming back, you know I always keep my promises... what's that look on your faces? I want smiles, I want you to

hug me...

I know you are not coming back ... I know you won't answer our calls or messages...

Oh now, come on... don't talk shit Tareq... Ayman, Jamal, even myself... we would do the same, off you go and don't look back... out of this prison, would you think twice about it?

Tareq, your mother is calling you... that one, down there... is it your dad? I have to tell you something, come closer... listen to me... last night I had a dream: I was there, all of you were there, as usual... like the first day of school, when we became friends... and in my dream we were fingers, not people... five fingers on a hand... Khader was the index finger: he's always telling others what to do, scolding them when they make mistakes... he never lets anyone get away with it, right?

Ha ha, that's right!

Murad is the middle finger, as he never hesitates telling people to go to hell and never gives a second thought to it... it's not easy being around you Murad, but people know they can always count on you.

Thanks, brother.

And then Jamal... the ring finger... Delicate and sometimes weak, and we have to back him up... you put a ring on this finger to get engaged, like Jamal, who falls in love at first sight...

How stupid... true, though...

And you, Ayman? The smallest, at the end of the line, carrying everyone else's weight. You seem useless but have you ever thought how a hand without a little finger would look like? Like a car without a trunk, or a spare tire.

And you Tareq? Would you be the thumb? I know what you say, that a hand without a thumb can function anyway.

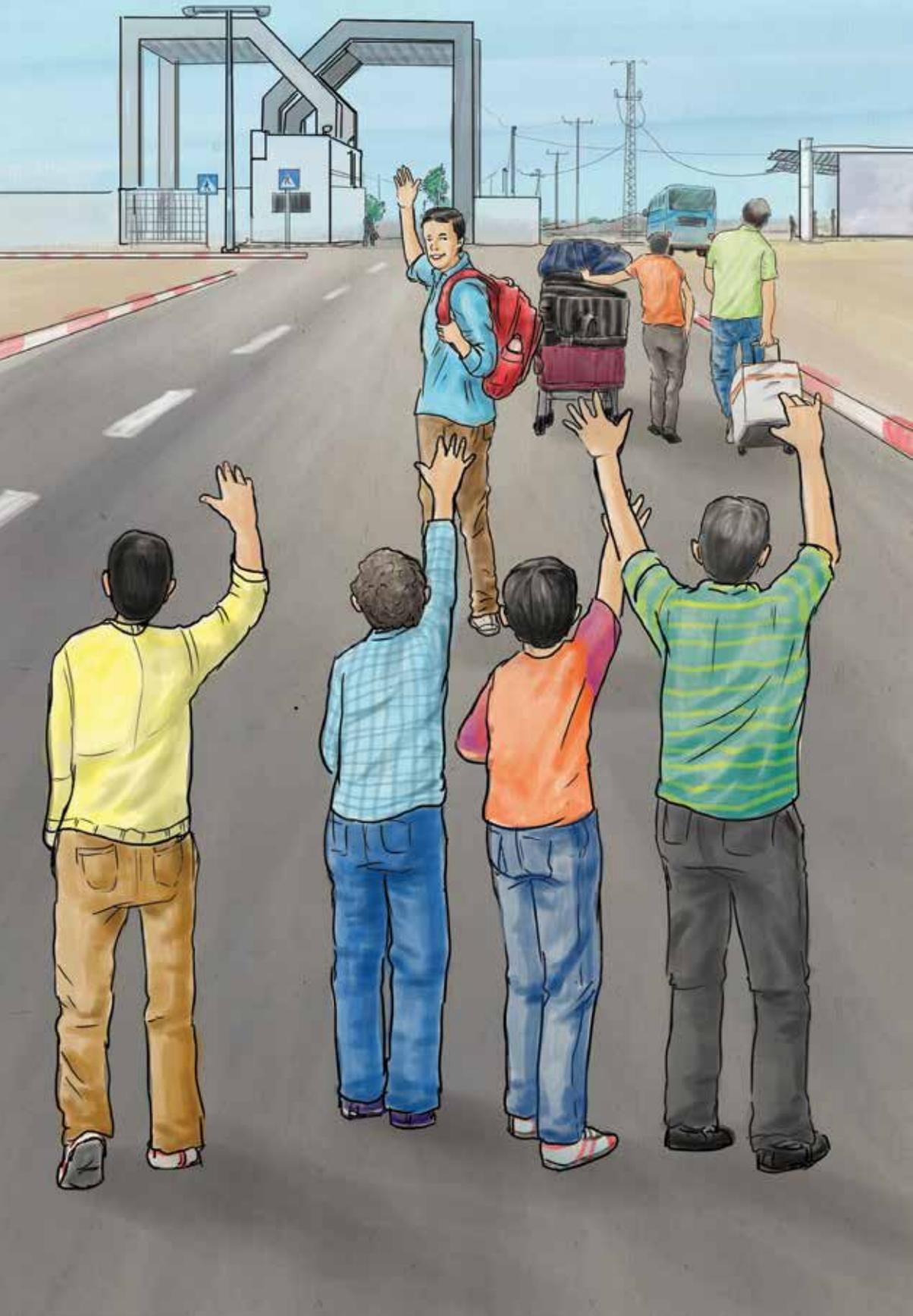
What I mean is that nothing can separate us... even if the thumb breaks, or for a moment disappears... we can never be separated, ever.

Tareeeeee!

Come on, guys, give me a hug. Now I really have to go.

Khader is the first to pick up the camera. It's beautiful, new. Murad, Ayman and Jamal stand around waiting to handle this new tool during the workshop. From the PC screen, on a Skype call, the Italian expert follows the group's work and explains how they can put into practice what they've learned in the previous meetings: go and look, with your own eyes and your heart, without being ashamed of showing your feelings, fears and desires. Other participants have also recently faced the loss of a loved one and this activity is meant to help them, to overcome the separation.

For days, Khader has thought about nothing but his brother Tareq, who is now outside of the Strip. More than a brother: his best friend, the good half he fears he may have lost forever. Thumb and index finger – Khader is not so sure about this thing of the fingers, he doesn't fully understand it. Index finger is now ready to click: a half-broken chair, a page torn out



of a notebook, a door left ajar, the fleeting outline of someone passing by. The expert will give a significant nod to Khader's work, for the depth of his view and the originality of the subject he chose. She will thank him for that, after having printed his shots, using the dark room provided by the project.

Ayman selects the zoom instead, lingering on the details stolen from his friends figures, as they pose in front of him. Ayman laughs when he refuses to show the shots he just took, the faces they will make when they'll be barely able to recognize themselves from a detail: Murad's half-closed eyelid and the way he looks straight into the camera like an actor, Khader's strong hand on his shoulder like a coach with his favorite player, the crusted gel on Jamal's motionless head. The expert will have words of praise also for Ayman's detailed shots, she'll encourage him to examine more closely how to choose the best lens to work with the focus. He'll feel touched and proud of himself.

Jamal snatches the camera out of Ayman's hands and runs out onto the terrace followed by a furious Murad who, as usual, forgives him after all. Jamal is interested in the plants growing in the plastic bottles, the hydroponic garden and the drops of water that fall into the bucket. A different detail that includes movement, that is alive inside. He would like to put the camera there on the terrace for three consecutive days, in time-lapse mode, to learn how fast the plants grow. Jamal wants to catch the moment, nail it down and contemplate it, understand it up to its most intimate point – these are the deductions the expert will share with the class during the last session of the workshop.

Murad takes the camera back and looks out from the terrace. Down in the courtyard some workers are building a system for collecting and treating rain water. Murad wants to study the job of these people – until a few days ago they were unemployed and now they are working in the framework of the project – as they combine dedication, sweat and efficiency. In his shots the workers look like statues, with arms ready to strike, hardened hands that pour cement. Murad's photographs will also be praised for their immediacy and strength.

And it is indeed possible to see, looking at the picture where they hold snapshots in their hands, smiling and confident, the birth of the most successful photographic studio in the Gaza Strip.

It's so hot, when is this damn rain coming? Hey you! What are we going to do with all this equipment if it doesn't rain?

I don't understand, what did you say?

I said... it works only if it rains inside, right? It cleans the rain water and we use it, right?

Exactly.

And what if it doesn't rain?

Of course it will rain!

How can you be so sure? This is crazy, we are here like idiots looking up at the sky, waiting for the rain... we really are a bunch of imbeciles!

How old are you, little boy? 15, 16? I'm telling you it will rain, we'll collect that water and the system will drain it all down into the bathroom, irrigating the plants on the terrace... this will allow you to eat wonderful vegetables.

Yeah, right.

You want to come here and do it, instead of standing up there and talk?

Ha ha ha ha.

Eh eh

What are you laughing at? We are here waiting for other people to do things for us while we should do them on our own.... we really are a bunch of morons!

Murad, calm down.

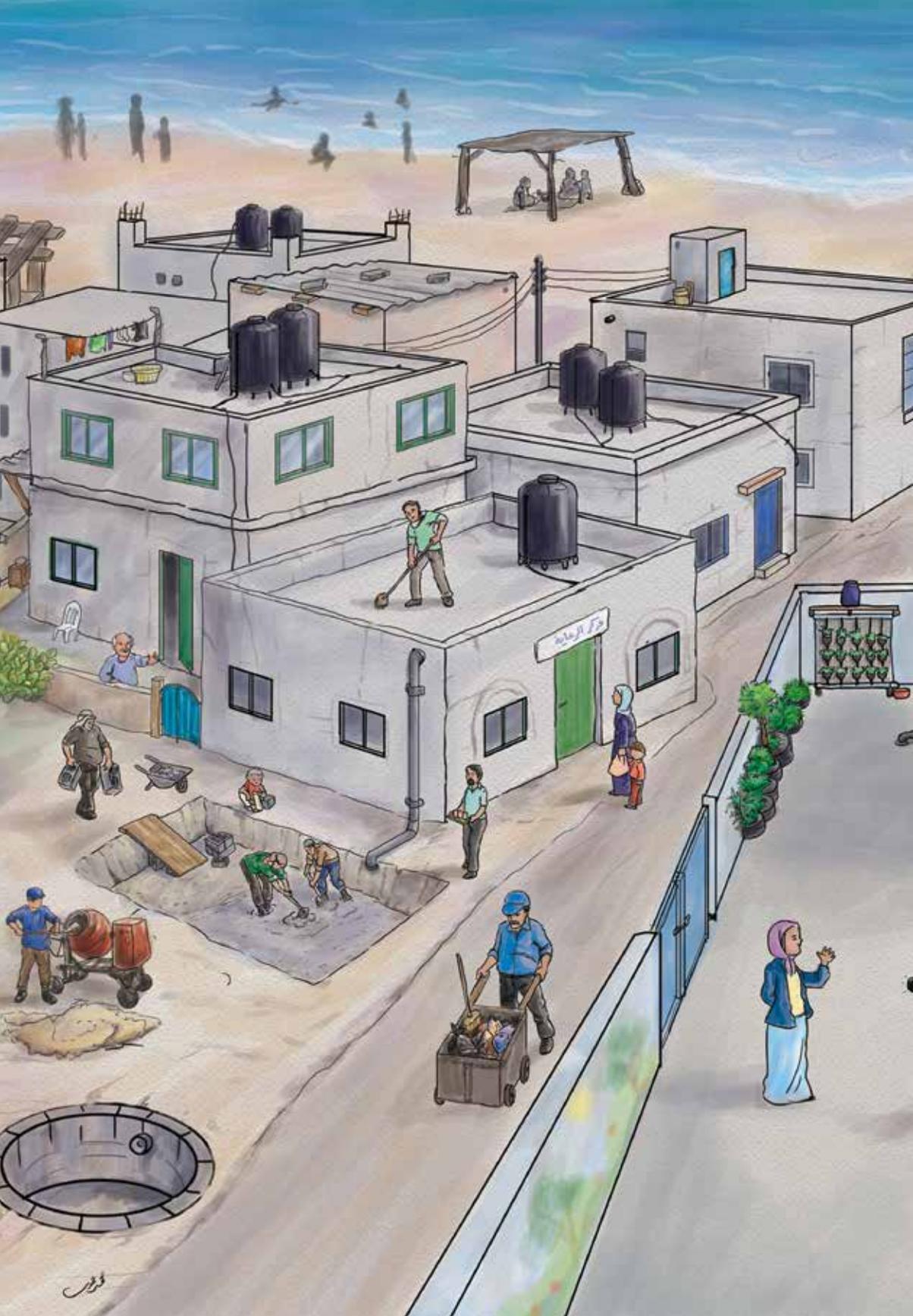
No, Khader, I'm not going to calm down ... I'm going mad, I'd better leave.

What's wrong with your friend?

Nothing, nothing.

Can I ask you how this works? How does the water get onto the terrace and then down to the bathrooms?

It's very simple, Khader. The rain water ends up here, it's collected and filtered to remove salt, sand, everything it brings along with it. Then it is pumped upwards, a pump, you know how that works?





Of course!

Then it ends up where you just said, and not as salty as the one you get from faucets around here... it's also useful for making your plants grow.

I get it, great!

A year later, in a cloudy afternoon, the index finger, the middle finger, the ring finger and the little finger will go back to the Egyptian border. During the year, Tareq will make the effort to reply to every email or text message coming from his four friends still in Gaza, but with the new friends he's made, the classes, the fascinating places and a tremendous enthusiasm – Tareq will not be able to keep his promises, and his replies – late, hasty, phony – will end up irritating the thumbless four fingers, now able to understand and think about the meaning of an absence.

On the road back, with clouds overhead, Tareq will realize that he made a mistake. He will regret it, he will assume a remorseful, grave expression, between victim and guilty. And when on the horizon the 4-party silhouettes of the index, the middle, the ring and the little fingers will be standing out, lined up like soldiers, Tareq will not immediately understand – they have an unnatural posture, they have something in the hands. Suddenly Tareq will be overwhelmed by camera flashes, he will play the celebrity role walking on the red carpet, while the first drops of rain will start to fall on the ground, soaking the moving embrace of the thumb with the four missing fingers.

NGOs:

Overseas and Vento di Terra

Project's title:

SOCIALWATER: improving access to water and psychosocial services for children and vulnerable families of Rafah Refugee Camp

Project Locations:

Rafah Refugee Camp (Gaza Strip Southern Area)

Implementation Period:

July 2017 – May 2018

Main activities & results:

- 5 rainwater collection systems were installed in 4 schools and 1 women center in Rafah.
- 57 urban gardens with the hydroponic technique were created by students and members of the women center. Each urban garden produces approx. 10 kg of fresh vegetables per month.
- 1140 girls and 1706 boys participated in psychosocial support activities within the 4 targeted schools. 937 parents (630 women and 307 men) participated in caregiving awareness sessions.
- 60 students were involved in trainings for “peer to peer counsellors”. 36 students participated in a photography workshop to better express their feelings and emotions through images.



CREATURES OF RESILIENCE

Summer, very hot weather

The little ones are finally asleep, I no longer hear murmurings from the other side of the tent. Fatima is certainly still awake, trying to slip her arm out of the hold to get up. There isn't a breath of air, I feel like I'm suffocating. I don't even know what time it is. I would like to go out, but I don't like the idea of running into Fatima and bearing her silence. It suits her to think I'm guilty, but I have nothing to do with it. I just married Mohammed after she did.

I feel so weak, I can't move. What's going on? This bread has a bad color but I'm hungry. No, it's still good. And now a stomach ache! I'm going behind the tent, where is the basin? Here it is, as usual Fatima didn't empty it and I have to do it myself. That is the fate of the second wife, especially when she is ten years younger than the first.

Now I feel better, much better. I'm sitting on the terrace. I never get tired of this view! The moon shines down on the many oases in the valley, the lights of Jericho deepen the colors, the outline of Jordan in the background seems painted. Up, down, up, down. Even if now Fatima would come here, it wouldn't matter. This is my house too and this evening it's too hot. Where is Mohammed?

I think I've fallen asleep. My whole body hurts and I feel woozy. But I like so much pretending to be asleep to soften him up, so that he raises me up like a child. Mohammed's hands are like iron, I'm light as a feather in his grasp, right up to the mattress. Maybe tonight he'll stay and sleep with me - I think with a smile - while I caress my belly which already seems bigger.

Saturday morning, the heat is going down

They call it the mobile clinic, but it's simply a big car, a van, with lots of medical instruments inside. In the end, yes, it's true, it is exactly like an ambulance from the hospital. Every Saturday morning we will be able to get a medical visit, without paying. They come up here. They're good people, they come from Italy, the flag on the side of the van is red, white and green.

My sister Yasmine and her wide, bright smile are with me today. She holds my hand and reassures me. I don't know what means being pregnant, what one experiences or what one is supposed to do. The doctor is younger than me and asks me questions while preparing for the exams. I've never seen an echograph, I don't know what it is. And nor does Yasmine: when she had Majdi, she simply watched her stomach grow bigger, day after day, until they took her to the hospital in Jericho and she delivered.

The gel that the doctor spreads under my bellybutton is cold but it doesn't hurt. She puts a wide pen over it and she tells me to watch the screen, my baby will appear there. I can see muddled shadows, streaks of white light inside a black cloak. But the doctor says to pay attention to this little egg with two dots, then I can glimpse a neck, a head, a nice little monster in miniature that still doesn't have a name, a voice, a sex. Last night however

he was strong and handsome, with big eyes and a shining smile. I still have the feeling of taking him in my arms, but not being able to hold him, a sense of weakness. And he told me with a voice like a car engine, but melodious, "I'll take care of it Mum" and he raises me up as his father does, with the same energetic grasp.

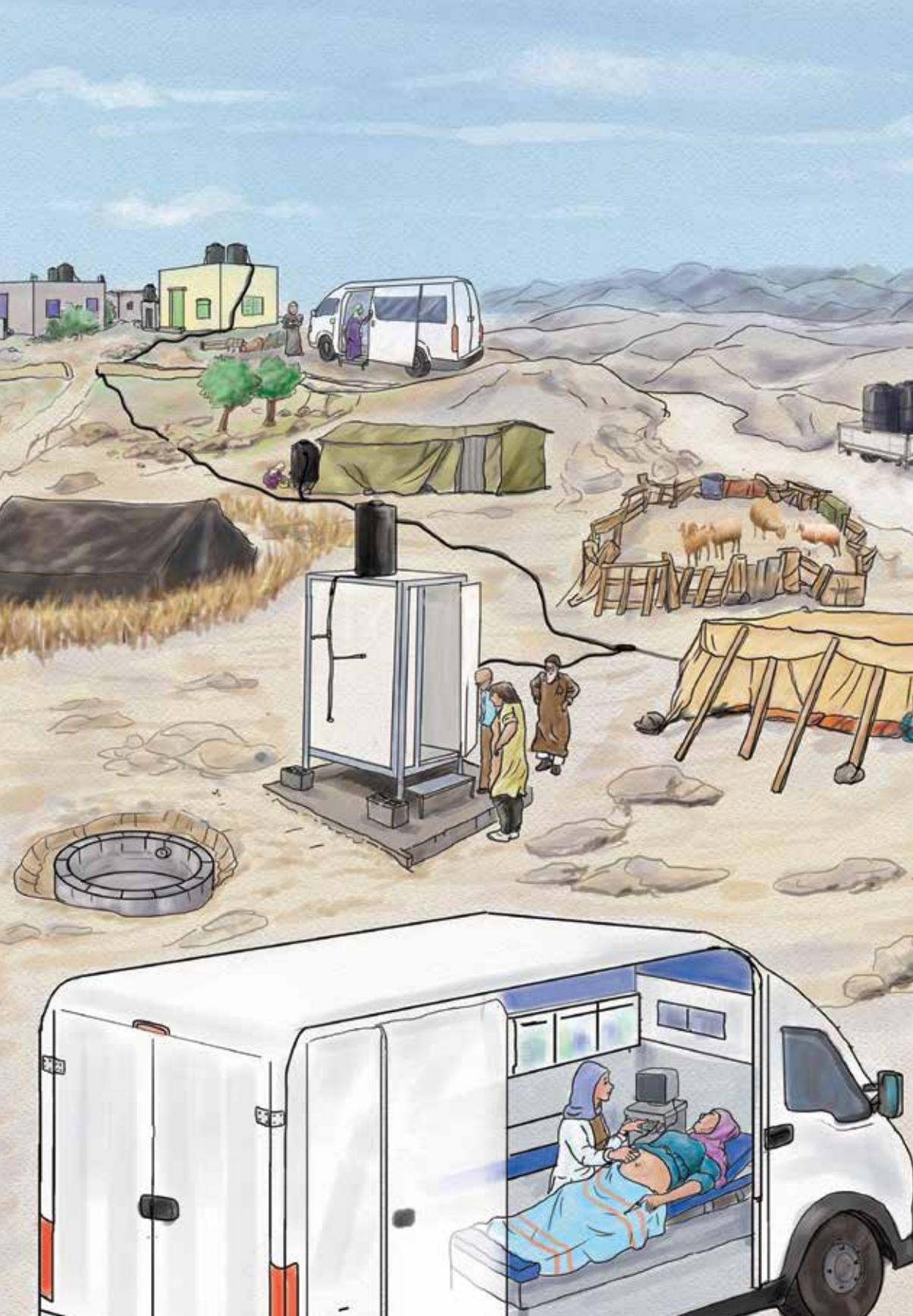
Yasmine hugs me. I was drifting off for a moment, lost in my strange dream. The doctor asks me if I have decided what to name him, this beautiful baby boy that I hold in my lap.

Thursday evening, it's raining and we are all happy

Mohammed slammed the door, he's always tired or angry. Despite the increasing weight, I went out after him and I squatted down outside the tent to listen to the men's talk.

Our family will have a bathroom with shower, thanks again to the Italians who have decided to help us. But all that glitter is not gold, and the money isn't enough to give bathrooms to all the families in the village. They would like to build them only for the pregnant women or little children, and that seems a good idea to me. But some men complain, someone says that we won't want our husbands anymore if they can't wash themselves while we can.

At the end, it is decided that only 13 bathrooms will be built, the kind that lasts, in brick, and particularly the ones that don't let wastewater run off, as it pollutes the ground. This is something I didn't know, I learned it crouching down here in the dark and I still struggle to understand why it is so, even now that they've explained it to me.





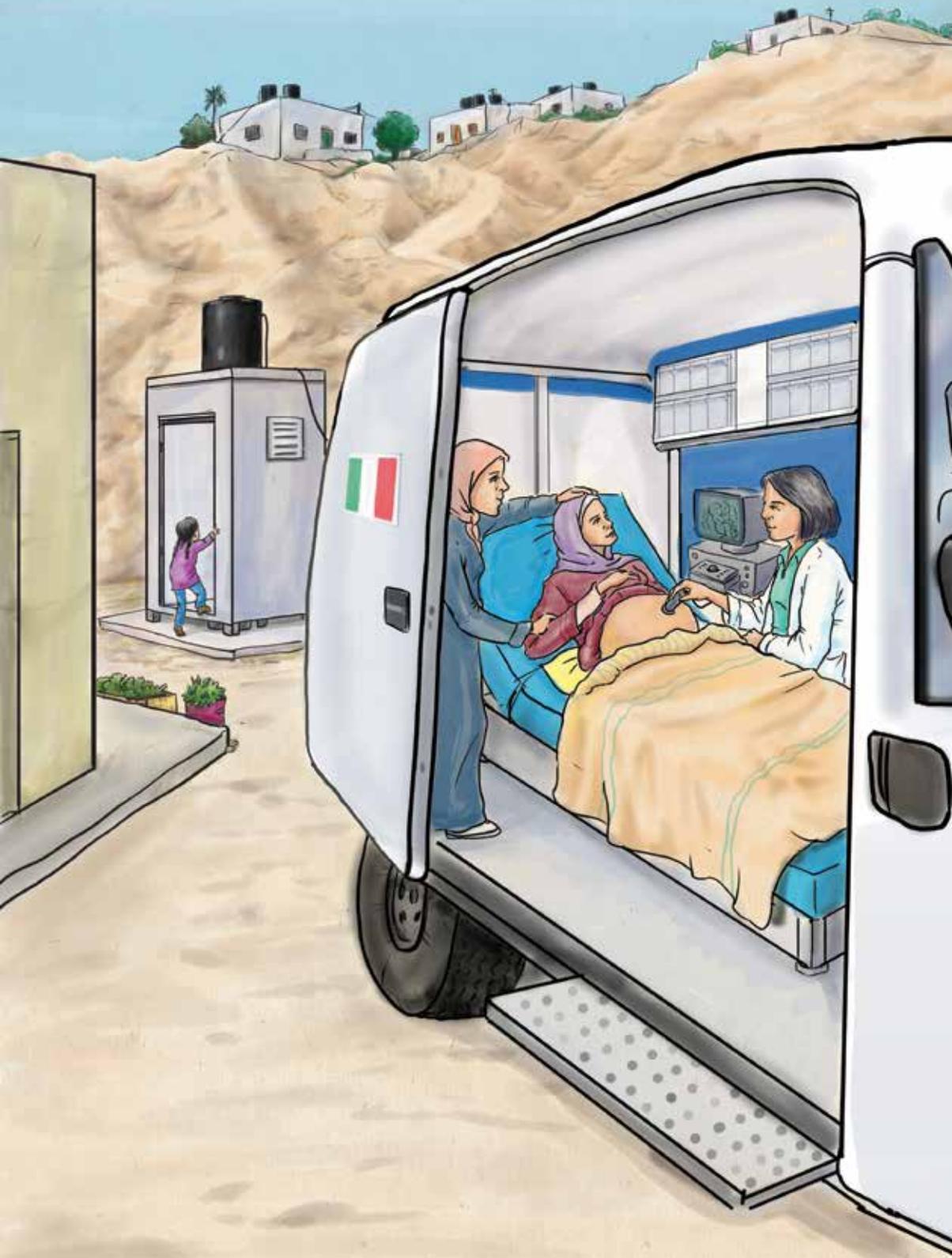
I will be able to take a shower with you, my little one. What is this, a kick of happiness? So, you're clever if you understand what we are saying out here.

Saturday morning, freezing night

I don't want to go and visit Miral, the road makes me carsick and I don't like it. In two hours, the clinic will be here and I want to see my child, who knows what he has become. I feel like he's big and will come out in a little while. I can't wait. And instead, with this huge ball that I have in my womb, I have to get up into Fatima's cousin's car and together we go down to the village, what a pain!

Today Fatima is angry with me. She asks me stupid questions and she's surprised with my pained looks when the car runs over a hole. At Miral's house, she interrupts me when I speak, she is clearly bothered that I am going to have a boy and even Miral doesn't spare me little barbs about Fatima and her two girls. But what do I have to do with it? They want me to take the blame, me and the child.

Finally we leave, but Fatima continues to mistreat me, she wants to tell me about the time she was pregnant, how Mohammed and his family were so attentive with her. She felt she was at the center of the world. And they were always with her, thoughtful; until the moment of childbirth she had never seen an echograph and didn't know the newborn's sex. Mohammed was so certain it was a boy that he didn't want to know it in advance. And it was a daughter, but not just one: the second one, also a girl. Now Fatima shows me her teeth and stares at me with anger; she nearly throws me out of the car when we get back home. I slipped to the ground and got a hard blow, what manners!



I run to see my child before the mobile clinic leaves. Nothing else interests me.

Cold during the day, and clean air, it's beautiful

I'm enormous and I can barely get up from bed. The doctor says it won't be long now, just a few weeks and finally we'll have this little Mohammed. In the evening we still argue about the name, and I don't know anymore what it will be, but surely it will be the father to decide!

The racket from the bulldozers behind the house agitates me. They have been digging for days. Today, finally, they are starting to install the bathroom. My shower, for me and my little boy. I still can't believe it, what a fantastic present! I pray to Allah that it works and holds up, that it lets us live down here, even if we are far from the city and there aren't either schools or hospitals. But this is our land, this sand and rock, they are brothers, fathers and mothers, breathing with us, even if it seems ridiculous, I know you understand what I'm talking about, that the love for your homeland can be a matter of life.

Fatima and Mohammed's girls smile at me, maybe I expressed these thoughts aloud. They come to me, now that their mother is outside: they want to touch my huge stomach and feel if the little one knows them. These are your two sisters, say hello. Come on, just a little kick...

Almost spring, the most beautiful season

It could only be spring, the season of the desert bloom.

My due date has come, the contractions have begun, the doctor told me that with the first child it happens to give birth before they're due – the impatience of the little, but also of the mother. Yasmine and her husband are on time, they are expecting me outside with the engine on. Yasmine helps me get into the car. Even the two little sisters come outside and give me a hug. Fatima limits herself to a smile and a nod, leaning on the side of the house. I appreciate it, and to me it seems a lot from her.

The bumpy road hurts me, I ask them to go slowly. Jericho approaches, the valley that I look at every evening. How many months it's been since I haven't gone down to the city! Jericho, I love you, today I love everything and everyone. Even if the spasms, ouch ouch, are strong, very strong. I get settled into a room and find one last gift of the Italian project: a kit for me and the baby, diapers, a linen towel, a little mattress to change my little one, creams. I put them safely into my backpack, the devil takes whoever tries to touch it...

The doctor reassures me, she knows my story since the beginning of the pregnancy. She knows it will all go well, and so do I. Mohammed is at home waiting for me, even Fatima and the two little angels, the sisters of my little son. And then Yasmine is there right next to me, I am sure she won't fail me.

Hello little one, welcome. I'm your Mum.

NGOs:

CISP & DISVI

Project's title:

Protection and resilience for vulnerable Palestinian communities in West Bank (Area C): WASH, reproductive and neonatal health response

Project Locations:

Muarrajat, Ras Al Awja, Al Awja, An Nweima, Ein Duyuk Afoka, Deir Hajla, Al Mashru, An Nabi Musa, Wadi Qelt, Fasail al Fauqa and Fasail al Wusta (Bedouin communities scattered in Jericho Governorate)

Implementation Period:

July 2017 – July 2018

Main activities & results:

- The targeted communities have increased the quantity of available water thanks to the rehabilitation of a 24 km water network, the provision of water tanks and the distribution of chlorination kits.
- 13 latrines and showers, with an innovative and sustainable technique, have been constructed in the targeted communities.
- Maternal health services have improved through the equipment and activation of 2 mobile clinics reaching the villages which are in remote areas.
- 3 portable echographs have been provided to 3 public clinics and 22 neonatal kits have been distributed to the targeted communities.



THE KITE AND THE WALL

A pondering silence reigns on the bus, everyone's tired. As Franca looks out the window, I try to read her mind: what are our kids doing, thousands of kilometers away, while we are visiting Palestine? We paid a visit to the historic center of Hebron; it was truly upsetting to see with our own eyes the absurdity of this impossible cohabitation. My devoted and beloved companion for life, Franca, turns towards me with a smile and puts her hand on my shoulder.

A bump makes the bus go off the road. The wild screaming of 42 people aboard, all over sixty years old, fills the bus with panic. The driver hits the brakes and we end up on the gravel alongside the road. Giorgio and I check on our travel mates, and it looks like no one got hurt. A tyre blew out - we were lucky, it could have been much worse. Now it has to be changed and it's not so easy. Franca comes up to me. All the ladies in the group seem afraid of the Palestinian people coming towards us. Our local guide speaks with them; they don't seem aggressive at all: as soon as they learn we are Italian they smile enthusiastically and they insist on dragging us over their two houses, to give us something to eat and drink, while waiting for some other relatives that have already started to fix the tyre.

Majed –the man who saved us - explains to me why his family is so grateful

to the Italian people: two big black water cisterns have been donated by Italy, providing them with a daily supply that would be otherwise very difficult. Franca and I sit down on a mattress on the ground, sipping tea. Majed is a joyful man, with bright but tired eyes because of his hard life. He has a large family that, with love and determination, lives a humble yet dignified existence. We embrace like brothers who have rejoined again after many years and maybe we really are, brothers, linked by the Italian project which I have learnt only today.

I watch him smiling at me and waving, surrounded by his loved ones. It is almost like I did something good and earned such great hospitality.

Like a rock wall, hundreds of stones packed one on top of the other – if you remove one then the whole thing will fall down – there’s no glue holding us together... only resilience, the perseverance needed not to fall...

We are like an enormous rock, that now moves to the edge?... we are threatened, if we open a breach we’ll die, nothing will remain... and that cliff, what if we fall? What will we find at the end of it? A muffled scream, a slippery ravine to fall in?

I wake up sweating and scared. The feeling of the abyss is still vivid, and of the others staring at me waiting to see where I will crash. I put on my overalls and join the Project Technical Committee. We are almost finished, my friends and I, excited like little kids. Soon the pipes for the camp’s main pipeline will be working, and it was us who installed it. Mohammed, Abed, his cousins, my brother and I. Us. Instead of smoking a shisha or watching Real-Barcelona, we repaired the camp’s plumbing, we repainted the bathrooms in the girls’ school and we fixed the leaks in the boys’ school bathrooms. We

are talking about our world, like it is household maintenance for everyone in the village. So funny to think that Abed didn't even know how to use a drill before, that Mohammed and I once repainted the rooms of his apartment and at the end they had all different colors. And yet when we are together, bound to each other like rocks, we learn how to do things: no mistakes, like real pros. If they told me just six months ago that I would work and earn money for fixing my village infrastructure, improving the lives of my loved ones, who would have believed it?

Giovanni is the Italian aid worker who made this possible. Thanks to the project, we attended training courses, we discovered tools and techniques; we learned the language of engineers and found within ourselves the strength of professional workers. We learned we can do it ourselves. We will no longer need a gift out of the blue like the Italian project; we can do it ourselves by the sweat of our brow. We are happy also because just in a week everything will finally function.

This evening we are all having dinner together, it's great to finally celebrate.

A country road, mostly used by farmers, but also serving as a path for kids going to school. A pipe one kilometer-long supplying water for a refugee camp. Rebuilding and constructing bathrooms in four boys and girls schools. Working with a vulnerable community, satisfying its basic needs and involving it in each step, even in the real work – it means giving them responsibilities, putting them at the center of the action. It works especially with marginalized people, when help comes in parallel with creation of a new identity.

We are all technicians if needed: when we repair something in our home or our cars, when we help a friend or a relative in a difficult situation. That's





why we invited the inhabitants of Al Fawwar to establish committees within the framework of the project. Today I hugged some of these people, after making sure that the work is going forward as expected and that the camp's plumbing will be operating in a few days. Majed is moved, he's a nice man, one of those people I will carry in my heart even after this experience will be over. Sometimes I think about all the Majeds I met over the years around the world and all the ones I will meet in the future. These people are pieces of a unique human mosaic, they are lives I've contributed to improve with my work.

When I visit the schools involved the project, I check on the works for bathrooms' refurbishment and I make sure that boys and girls are able to use them. At the same time, I think about the logic of a project like this, the sadness that assaults me every time the work of the NGOs is defamed without even knowing it. And I also think about communities' needs, such as functioning bathrooms, adequate infrastructure and quality education, different sides of the same coin, they go together and they complement each other – we can't have good education without water running in the bathrooms, just as we can't think of making a rehabilitation work in schools without improving the teaching methods and the dialogue between teachers and students. This two-way connection is clear in the new and colorful multi-purpose room, one of the results of the project. Education and sanitary facilities ... right, Wafa?

Giovanni has a big heart, he cares about the goals of the project as much as me, and I will teach in this school for the rest of my life. Inshallah. I am an educator, and I must confess one thing, I can hardly say it because I am a practical woman, I don't get carried away with sentimentalism, but... this project has changed my life! You may say I am exaggerating. Perhaps I do,



but why not exaggerate? If I think back to these last six months, I get the goose bumps.

We must not leave anyone behind: the little boy with disabilities, the one who can't concentrate for very long. You must understand the reasons behind unusual behaviors and act accordingly, just as if you are changing clothes. If I could have a changing room here, behind the multi-purpose room, I would change my clothes every time I have to talk to each of you. I will never forget the day you tried your hand at writing your signature for the very first time. It seems like no big deal, even for a 12-year-old child, but as you write down your name and surname, in your own unique way, you draw a revealing portrait of yourself. And when Sofia convinced me that we needed Mervat to be involved in the project too, we went together to her house, to speak with her husband. Sofia speaks Arabic and she did a great job when she explained to him that including all the children, through the kite technique, is a goal we can't miss and the most important part of our mission. Mervat's husband accepted her involvement, they signed a piece of paper and soon enough Mervat will be here, to be trained as a teacher and an educator. Nothing is easy, and nothing brings satisfaction if you don't sweat for it.

Every corner of this room has a precise function and is dedicated to a specific activity. Like the corners of a kite, which has also a diamond shape: I AM, I CAN, I SHARE, I CARE. These are the pillars of an Italian method which turned our teaching approach upside down. You enter here and you know what to do, what these colors mean, what to do over there by the poufs, our soft corner to fight stress, fear and ugly thoughts. These tables are also used by us teachers, not only by the kids: here we gather, we share our experiences and we still do it regularly. Even today.

Hi, Mervat. Come, come on in. You know that little chubby boy? The one who always sits by the window, with attention problems? We tried a role-play game with him, he played a snake sliding away. Isn't that incredible? The same boy who has broken two chairs. Now you'll meet him, you'll see with your own eyes what it means to build self-esteem, so you can do the same with your kids.

A little at a time, all together.

NGOs:

GVC and Educaid

Project's title:

CORE: Communities Resilience. Strengthening the resilience of Palestinian communities in the West bank (Area C, H2 and UNRWA Camps) at risk of forcible transfer

Project Locations:

Ein el Beida, Aqaba, Atuf (Jordan Valley, Tubas Governorate); Zahra (H2), Zian Jabar (H2), Area H2, Al Fawwar Refugee Camp (Hebron Governorate)

Implementation Period:

July 2017 – June 2018

Main activities & results:

- The coping mechanisms of the targeted population have been enhanced through the development of a Community Protection Approach within each community (including Al Fawwar UNRWA refugee Camp).
- The Diamond Kite Project, an innovative and inclusive educational methodology, has been introduced in the 7 schools of the targeted communities.
- 1230 girls and 1730 boys participated in psychosocial support activities.
- The targeted communities have improved access to water and sanitation services, as well as basic hygiene practices thanks to the installation of a new distribution pipeline (with house connections), the provision of domestic water tanks, the rehabilitation of schools' sanitation facilities and specific awareness-raising sessions on WASH related topics.



GARBAGE AND REFUGEES

The refugee camp is an actual city where more than ten thousand people live. You imagine makeshift shelters, flies on the bloated stomachs of starving children, a sun so hot that it splits the skin on your face, but Nurshams, Tulkarem, is made by a gray labyrinth of buildings and streets, few spots of color from the backpacks worn by kids on their way to and from school, the faraway profile of Netanya's skyscrapers facing an unreachable sea.

The family consists of the father and the mother, the older son who is getting older, the beautiful and intelligent daughter, the stubborn and hotheaded son, the nice and high-spirited daughter and the last arrival, not even two years old, a baby in arms.

The muezzin prays singing, filling the kitchen with warmth and litany, while the crackling sounds of meat cooking in the pot weaves with a background of barking dogs chasing after each other, while the dull thud of a ball against the wall behind the house and the roaring of cars always accelerating faster than necessary also contribute to the camp's orchestra of sounds. The oldest son, the one responsible for his brothers and sisters, shouts to his stubborn and agitated younger brother. Another blow, perhaps the thousandth slap on the nape, to remind him that he must respect who's older with no ifs and no buts. Then silence falls.



The beautiful and intelligent sister approaches the stove to check the pot and with a ladle brings up a piece of meat, she touches it with her tongue and she risks to burn it but it's fine, she smiles, taste is just right. A smell of something burning invades the kitchen, spoiling the atmosphere. The beautiful and intelligent girl goes out into the courtyard onto the square of cement behind the house. The baby is in her mother's arms, with the nice and high-spirited daughter. The fire which has consumed the bags of garbage seems to escape mother's control, who with one hand holds tightly to the body of the youngest and with the other tries to contain the flames and not let the fire flare up. The restless daughter laughs, slapping her hand against her thigh, a gesture she did even when small, recalls the beautiful and intelligent daughter – the color of the flames and their smell brought her to euphoria, often uncontrollable, according to her nature. Once she asked – shocking her sister – “I would like to discover the taste of fire, whether it burns like pepper.”

After school, the beautiful and intelligent daughter learned something and now she wants to share it with her mother and the handsome sister. She learned that with small actions you can change things, simple instructions easy to keep in mind: 1) don't throw garbage on the ground, 2) pick up and put into the trash bin the garbage you see while walking around, even though you didn't throw it yourself, 3) don't burn garbage – there are things in the black smoke that can harm your lungs and can kill you.. “Mommy, mommy, stop!!” The mother turns with the eyebrow arched, her hand makes a clear gesture – what do you want? The beautiful and intelligent sister is famous for knowing how to best behave and especially how to transmit what she learnt – not only she improves her own life but also the lives of those around her.

The older son is pulled into it, he doesn't like this thing about the environmental clubs. When it's about football, cell phones and cigarettes, that's when you can count on him, during school hours or at night, whenever you like. But gardening - are you joking? He does engage that because from that terrace you have a good view of the girls' school, to the other side of the street. "Educational gardens", that's how they call them, and those two words together make him snicker. The older son wants to become an engineer, any mechanical device created by man fascinates him more than human beings themselves can, and then the world disappears, even the mirage of girls growing things on the terrace fades into the background in favor of bolts and connecting tubes. The older son asks information regarding the hydroponic system, the plastic bottles used as containers (such a great idea!), the system to connect them with a specific inclination to collect water so it can flow downwards and be used for irrigation. He thinks of his father, his attempts, sometimes laughable, to make seedlings grow, to give life to that little spot of dirt disguised in the trash. He runs home to discuss it with him, will he laugh hearing the word "hydroponic"?

A bottle becomes a tower, a plastic plate is transformed into the Dome of the Rock, a detergent container cut in half lets you eavesdrop into the inside of a house. The beautiful and intelligent daughter smiles as her mother is helping her coloring pieces of recycled plastic and spreading glue to attach them on a large mural outside the school. "Mommy, please take those two bottles and toss them into the yellow bin, yellow, the plastic one". The mother obeys, uncertain between love and admiration for this daughter coming from another planet. Maybe new generations will be able to go back home, not just to remain here as we have done all these years - isn't that the point of having children, being able to improve the life we have already lived? The mother thinks about this as she separates the garbage and takes the lid

off the other colored bins: you can improve yourself just by concentrating on little things, starting from garbage and scraps. The week before, at the Environmental Club, the beautiful and intelligent daughter learnt how to separate wet garbage, the family's leftovers, to turn it into compost. It took days for her to be able to communicate it to her mother and father: we don't throw away the leftovers with the other garbage, we keep it separate and we wait for the garbage collection to come by - now we are able to do it and we'll use that compost for fertilizing, the same way a piece of plastic becomes a new thing and a cardboard can be used again, thanks to the recycling containers available for a few weeks now in the Camp. "Here's the recycling center" says the mother, now informed about that and moved, her beautiful and intelligent daughter knows that, she can feel that, she has done a good job.

The father points to the carcass of their washing machine amidst the pile of the bulky garbage, the older and the stubborn sons nod at the same time, looking at the van provided by the project to collect these technological dinosaurs that populated the sides of the streets, or worse, infested the peaceful flowing of the stream that marks the boundary of Nurshams refugee camp. The music and the smell of compost, the perfume of plants growing thanks to the drip irrigation system, the lights set up in preparation for the inauguration of the Recycling center provide the setting for the family gathering.

Mother, father and five children greet their friends and family that took part with them in the project, aware of their new responsibility: pass down this knowledge, learning by doing is the most powerful tool.





NGOs:

CESVI and OVERSEAS

Project's title:

Support to the development of an innovative and integrated system of solid waste management and community awareness for the refugee population of Nurshams Camp

Project Locations:

Nurshams refugee camp (Tulkarem Governorate)

Implementation Period:

July 2017 – May 2018

Main activities & results:

- An improved system of waste collection has been introduced in Tulkarem refugee Camp, with source separation for 7 different typologies of waste (Paper, High-Density Poly Ethylene, PET, Nylon, Metal, Pruning waste and Organic waste).
- An “ecologic island” and an environmental education center were established. The ecological island is used for the collection of special waste, while the environmental education center serves as gathering point for students and teachers to conduct awareness-raising and educational activities.
- 8 hydroponic urban gardens have been constructed and installed on the schools’ rooftops. This activity involved over 1.000 people among students, teachers and parents.
- 835 girls and 420 boys participated in awareness-raising and educational activities on the correct management of waste and the safeguard of the environment.



IN THE VULNERABLE STRIP

Everything is silent in the refugee camps of Nuseirat and Bureij - the cement roofs, the dusty streets, cars and overhead wires stretching like spider webs among the buildings. What in daylight resounds as deafening uproar and hurting smell is silenced by the night, which cloaks places, lights and colors. When the camps are asleep, they forget the siege that encircles them. To the west, there is the Mediterranean sea, where people attempt to fish every morning, where the flow of sewage reverses, destroying the biodiversity; to the east, the border with Israel, where the smoke of burnt tires and flags waving under the sun cover the horizon; to the north, in the area of Wadi Gaza, a place that in the Seventies flourished and today looks like a dump poisoning the soil and bringing forth new diseases; and finally to the south, the far-away border with Egypt – there is another fence, the Rafah crossing.

In the project office, pages of questionnaires filled out the day before sit quietly on the desk, the white boards placed against the meeting room walls, the chairs that haven't been tucked under the long oval table induce to think that the meeting's participants have just gotten up a moment before, the computers, tired from daily work snore softly, beating time with a dim green light.

In the house of the family, the dripping faucet is loud and becomes the main sound of the sleeping night, covered in rust, surrounded by chipped tiles

and dangling sockets. A new sink, a toilet bowl, a shower, a repainting and a general clean-up are needed, they would give it a semblance of dignity and also a relief for little Saga's stomach aches, those stabbing spasms that torment her all day and night, a bad dysentery she is facing with deep breaths and immense courage.

Silence reigns in the family centers too, in the rooms now deserted that until few hours before were filled with people, voices, emotions and enthusiasm. A collective drawing lies in the middle of a colored piece of cloth, made by the hands of children, anxious to share their fears, the violence they have been forced to witness, the desperate need for normality that they feel; a line of orange bowling pins has been forgotten in the second room after being crossed through by blindfolded children, guided by the hands of a friend you need to trust in; lots of little colored balloons, moving in a gentle breeze coming through the windows, were only recently tied to kids' feet, tools of a revealing game; and up on the main wall a collage of safe spaces, a room a box or a garden, shelters where they can go to flee violence, bombs, terror.

A sleep of long breaths, that expands and contracts the street, raising it like a bedsheet, expecting for the sunrise and the beginning of a new day.

Hands – of Ahmad, Giovanni, Maria, Fadi and Reem - that scroll through, analyze, comment on and reorder the data in the documents. An interview has expressions too, sensitivities, states of mind. A report reveals family and social tensions springing from the lack of basic services. A photo can tell a human crisis and the desperation of a community or a single person better than a speech or a set of monitoring tools.

The Strip's vulnerabilities come to life on the white board, with their colored magnets pinning up a series of different indicators. What emerges is the need

for education, health, WASH infrastructure, social protection of the targeted families and communities. The project immediately translates such missing rights into tangible solutions: a workshop, a sink, a game, a cistern, a drawing made by many hands.

The seats are pulled away from the table, the meeting room is soon empty, laptops and computer keys are no longer pecked, the cell phones stop issuing messages.

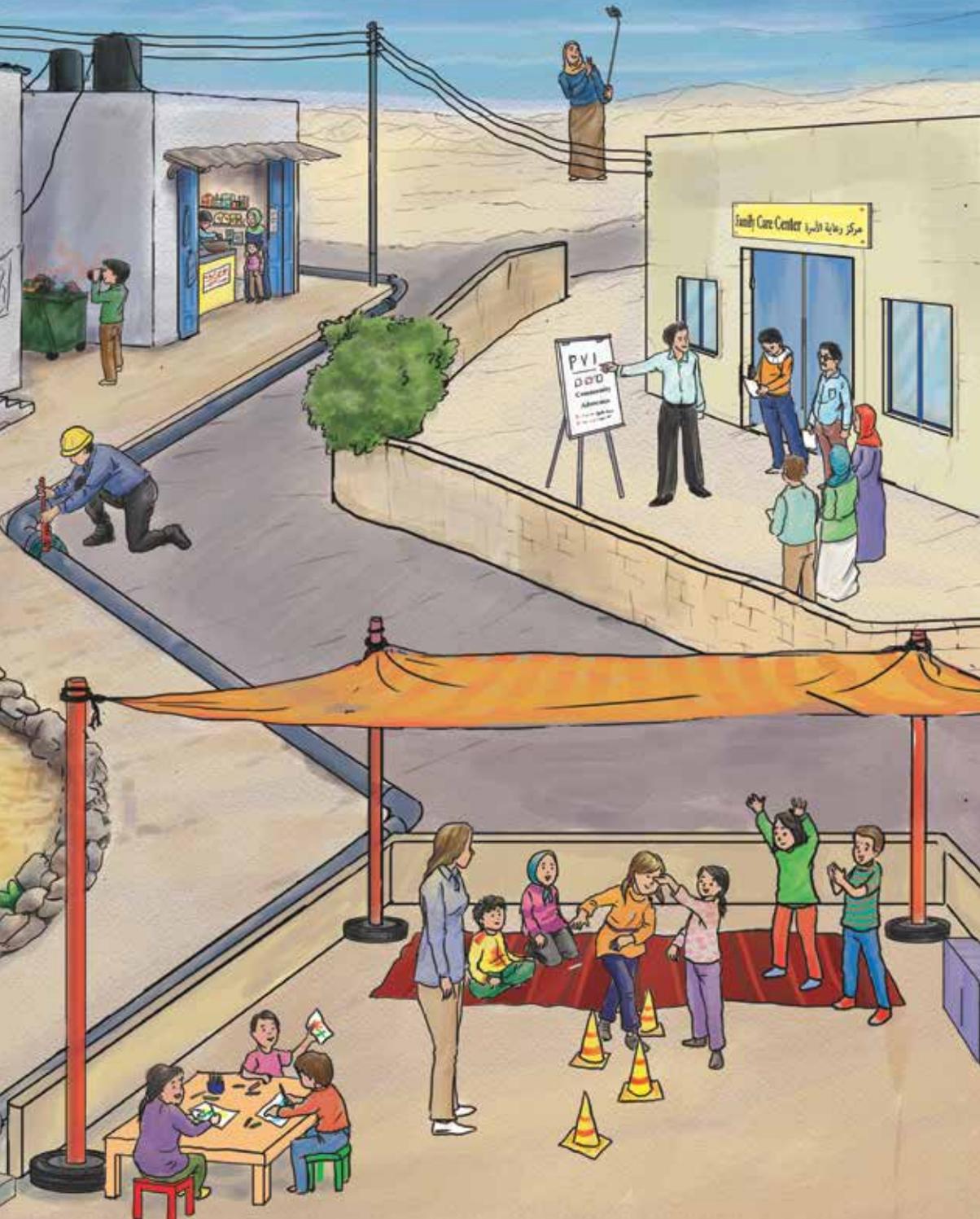
The camp is out there, filled with people to be supported.

She opens the door cautiously, timidly, with curiosity. She's wearing a dark cloth covering everything except for her hands, her narrow eyes enclosed by a black mesh on her face, her bare toes sticking out from the bottom of the dress. Her name is Amani and she has 5 children. Her words, pronounced slowly with shyness and simplicity, fully show the condition she's living with. She continues to caress Saga's head, her painful face telling the discomfort that besets her, her stomach, her bones. The water and air pollution compromised the health status of this little girl.

Reem takes snapshots, Maria talks to Amani and gathers information, Ahmad fills in the form to calculate the vulnerability index of the family. Saga's little brothers watch these strange guests and their weird clothes, their interest in something that could change their lives. They whisper among themselves and accept Reem's invitation to go over to the Family Center, not too far off – there they can play in a different way, share what they have experienced and seen, have fun and be together.

When the group leaves, Amani begins to hope – talking to someone always feels good, perhaps the Italian project will improve the family's sanitary conditions. This brings a smile to her face, she feels more serene. In the rusty,





infested kitchen, she boils water and prepares rice and vegetables. She looks at her five smiling angels asking to spend a few hours at the Family Center after lunch.

The children at the Family Center are Saga's age, they turn around as soon as she comes in with her older brothers, then go back to their work. Saga sits down and watches them; she has never seen girls so concentrated in drawing. It seems that the pencils are their language, the hands are their silent mouths. After finishing their drawing, they stand and hold it up, listening to Reem's interpretation. It's pointless, Saga thinks, as she listens to this collection of stories about liberation and violence - stories that she sees every day with her own eyes, stories she has lived through.

She would like to join the other children for the next game, but she feels embarrassed. Reem understands her desire, even her shyness. She approaches her with a little pink balloon in hand. Saga cannot resist, she lets Reem tie the balloon to her foot then she takes her place in the circle. The other kids smile at her, she looks down at the ground – at the little balloons tied to the other girls' feet, at their frustrating attempts to move the others' balloon without moving their own. In the faces of the girls she can glimpse the effort to control themselves, in one girl the irritation comes out, in others the commitment to succeed prevails. And when it's her turn, Saga takes a deep breath, guided by Reem's instructions, and like petals bursting out of a capricious bud, the balloons of the other children lift from the ground – yellow, violet, red, all together, amidst an oooh of collective astonishment.

The balloons go out of the windows on a gentle wind and as she watches them fly with only one eye open, almost holding her breath, Saga imagines them floating over the houses, over Wadi Gaza, finally ending up above the Mediterranean, far out at sea.



NGOs:

MA'AN and GVC

Project's title:

Integrated protection approach to increase the resilience of vulnerable groups in Al-Buraj e Al-Nussirat

Project Locations:

Al Burej and Al Nusseirat Refugee Camp (Gaza Strip Middle Area)

Implementation Period:

August 2017 – June 2018

Main activities & results:

- The Protection Vulnerability Index, a tool elaborated to identify the level of vulnerability of the communities in the West Bank, has been adapted to the Gaza Strip context, through the involvement of women CBOs, Family Centers, Local Authorities and Protection cluster members.
- 211 families in Al Burej and Al Nusseirat improved access to water and sanitation services, as well as basic hygiene practices, thanks to the distribution of water tanks, the rehabilitation of domestic WASH facilities, and the installation of home connections to the main distribution pipeline. Moreover, some 320 families were involved in awareness-raising sessions on hygiene practices and social inclusion.
- Through the Family Centers established by MA'AN, 300 pupils participated in child resilience sessions and 498 parents were involved in workshops on child protection.
- 14 young boys and girls elaborated 2 factsheets regarding the situation of water resources in the Gaza Strip, as the result of a training for becoming "social advocates".



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