



FINAL REPORT

American Scholarship Fund Program

264-A-00-06-00209-00



Student awardees at Al-Noor Elementary with their award letters

AMIDEAST
August 26, 2008

Acronyms

AMIDEAST	America-Mideast Education & Training Services, Inc.
ASFP	American Scholarship Fund Program
CD	Country Director (AMIDEAST)
COP	Chief of Party (AMIDEAST)
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer (USAID)
GIS	Geographical Information System
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government

Executive Summary

Increasing economic and political pressures in recent years have severely affected incomes in the West Bank and Gaza. Education has suffered, as the deteriorating economic conditions of students and their families impacted both private schools - which were faced with inadequate operating funds as families, lacking money for tuition fees, simply did not pay - and the students themselves, who, unable to afford the fees, were driven to withdraw. In the late summer of 2006, USAID invited AMIDEAST to submit an application to implement an activity designed to 1) alleviate the economic burden of education for Palestinian families and 2) provide stability for private schools in the West Bank and Gaza. As then-current U.S. policy prohibited assistance to the Palestinian Authority, the project aimed to support basic education in private schools. The project was designed to sustain the operations of eligible schools that were facing financial difficulties in the districts of Bethlehem, Gaza, Jericho, Jerusalem, and Ramallah, with tuition payments on behalf of needy students attending these targeted schools. The goals of the program were twofold:

- To provide, through tuition fees, a source of funding to private schools to sustain operations during academic year 2006-2007 (AY06-07).
- To provide support to economically-disadvantaged families who could not pay their children's tuition fees.

An additional focus on and critical element of the American Scholarship Fund Program, or ASFP,^{*} was gender; ASFP was to maintain a gender balance in number of scholarship awardees in order to ensure proportionate representation of female students in the private educational system; that is, ASFP sought to maintain continuing female enrollment in private schools equal to female enrollment in previous, less-economically-desperate years. In addition, an indirect goal of the program was to benefit teachers, as many schools could use ASFP fees to pay salaries. As a disproportionate number of teachers in the West Bank and Gaza are women, the project indirectly supported women through payment of salaries as well.

Though the project essentially met a short-term need, ASFP also had a long-term vision. While the project aimed to decrease the percentage of student withdrawals from private schools due to the inability of families to pay tuition fees, it was also intended to help sustain a high level of quality in Palestinian private education and to progress toward meeting USAID Strategic Objective 13: Building a new generation of leaders.

The initial goal of the project was to award 4,000-5,000 scholarships totaling \$4,000,000 to children in grades K – 12, whose parents could not afford to pay their tuition fees and whose studies were therefore threatened with disruption. Targeted initially were approximately 125 private schools that were experiencing difficulties due to 1) non-existent governmental support; 2) dwindling revenues from tuition fees as

**Originally the Palestinian-American Scholarship Fund (PASF)*

parents were increasingly incapable of paying; 3) difficulties in transferring funds from abroad; and 4) decline in private investments emanating from political uncertainty and high risk of conducting business. USAID awarded AMIDEAST the one-year project on September 29, 2006, and ASFP was originally scheduled to end on September 28, 2007. It was later extended and finally concluded on May 28, 2008.

AMIDEAST undertook three primary activities to implement the project were, in a nutshell, 1) school selection; 2) student selection; and 3) payments. By the end of this project on May 28, 2008, ASFP had awarded \$3,903,004 in scholarships to 8179 students in 123 schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

The single most significant challenge that hampered the timely distribution of funds was the USAID requirement that schools and students over 16 years of age be vetted before participation could be finalized. Because of vetting delays, the payment schedule was pushed later into the project than originally intended, and many of the schools with less well-established management and financial systems required ASFP staff to spend additional time providing training and building school capacity in this area, further delaying payments.

In addition, the sheer volume of data, school visits and the complexity of family interviews was not anticipated in the initial timeline (staff visited over 150 schools and interviewed the parents of more than 11,700 children), and what would be an immense task under normal circumstances was further complicated by limitations on staff mobility which was hampered by Israeli checkpoints, closures, denials of permits, and other restrictions on movement.

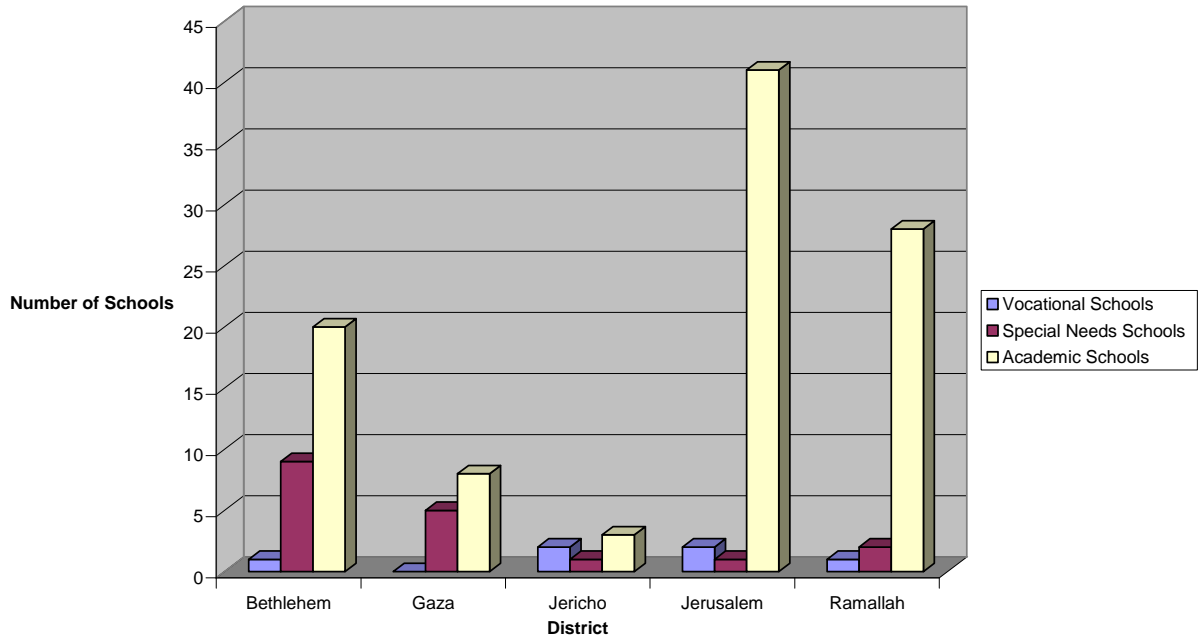
The extremely challenging but ultimately successful execution of this activity was a result of close collaboration between USAID and AMIDEAST throughout the project, the tremendous effort of ASFP staff, and the participation and cooperation of schools and families throughout the West Bank and Gaza.



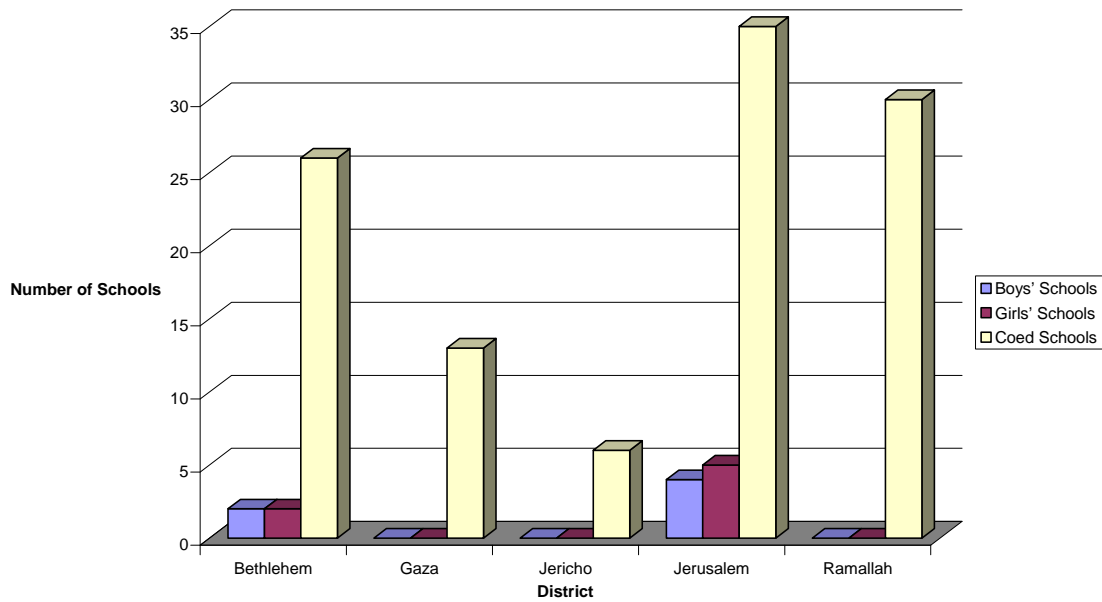
Students at Al-Noor Elementary with Program Assistant Ayman Helo (L) and Country Director Steven Keller

Ultimately, 123 schools participated in the project, distributed as follows:

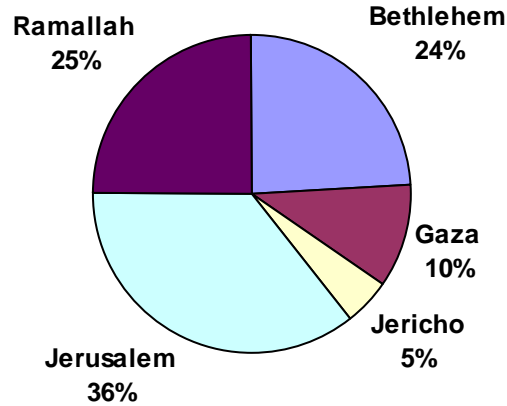
Types of Schools



Type of Schools: Gender



Geographical Distribution



Program Strategies, Implementation, and Results:

AMIDEAST's initial and ultimate goal for this activity was to award \$4,000,000 in scholarships to 4,000-5,000 *appropriately-selected* students in *qualifying* schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza. This report discusses the efforts and activities undertaken to achieve this two-part goal. The report is organized as follows:

- I. Start-Up
- II. School Selection and Scholarship Allocation
- III. Student and Family Selection
- IV. Payment of Scholarships
- V. Events
- VI. Monitoring and Evaluation
- VII. Challenges and Successes
- VIII. Lessons Learned
- IX. Important Findings
- X. Future Assistance Needed
- XI. Summary and Conclusion

I. Start-Up:

In addition to the logistical start-up tasks of establishing and furnishing the ASFP office and recruiting, hiring, and training project staff, the start-up phase was characterized by the establishment of the cooperative and interactive relationship between AMIDEAST and USAID, which continued throughout the duration of the project. During initial meetings with USAID, AMIDEAST laid the groundwork for project implementation, expectations, and development of tactical methods such as focus groups, which would

continue throughout the project. This relationship was key to project success, because several obstacles to rapid project implementation arose during the period that required agreement modifications in order to accommodate the necessary solutions.

During the rapid start-up of this brief and urgent-response project, ASFP staff collected and verified initial school data; prepared and submitted implementation and monitoring and evaluation plans, which USAID then approved; conducted extensive school visits over 130 schools; and developed, completed and submitted school profile forms required for the vetting process to USAID for approval. AMIDEAST held four regional focus group meetings to share program information and explore partnership with schools, to define what a “needy” family is, and to share information regarding criteria for determining need. The systems put in place during this period, though further refined during subsequent period, formed a strong foundation, upon which the rest of program implementation was based.

There were two main challenges during the start-up period. First, as the project was basically a short-term and emergency response to an acute but temporary economic need, there was not a long preparatory or participatory period prior to program implementation during which AMIDEAST could meet with schools and families to inform them of the program or the opportunity. This was also a considered action: there was concern that due to the sensitivities involved in providing scholarship opportunities for students enrolled only in approved/selected private schools that met the requirements of current U.S. law and policy, both USAID and AMIDEAST felt that it would be unwise and counterproductive to announce and publicly promote the program prior to the award of the scholarships. Therefore, there was a certain level of misunderstanding, and even sometimes mistrust, from some schools and families during the early days of the program.

Second, the ASFP staff brought enthusiasm, energy and commitment to the project, which went a long way toward making the project as successful as it was. However, it was a young and relatively inexperienced staff, due to the reluctance of seasoned professionals with relevant experience in the field to either leave existing jobs or to commit to such a short-term project. Staff training and support, particularly for field researchers, therefore occupied a larger-than-expected amount of senior staff time, not only during start-up, but throughout the project. Also, as the magnitude of the school and family selection interview numbers became evident, the project required additional, temporary interviewing staff (and training for them). Finally, as the project continued, ASFP faced a reduced staff, as two factors affected the employees on the staff. Due to multiple no-cost extensions, the project also scaled its staff down in the final months of the project. In addition, as the program approached its end date, a number of staffers left the project for other employment, requiring a shift in staff arrangements and responsibilities, and thus a bit more training, even at the end of the project.



Field Coordinator Salpi Giacaman leads a session during orientation

II. School Selection and Scholarship Allocation:

Only private schools were eligible to participate in this project. In the US, the term “private school” often implies a student body represented by wealth and privilege. However, in the West Bank and Gaza private schools serve a large and varied segment of the population. In addition to special-education schools serving the deaf, blind, or otherwise challenged students, many private schools are concentrated in poverty-stricken neighborhoods, remote villages, refugee camps, and other politically-volatile or marginalized areas. These schools exist, in many cases, to provide parents with a closer-to-home, and thus safer, option for schooling their children. Many of these schools operate with very little or no financial margin and are even more vulnerable to economic pressures upon students and their families than government or internationally-funded schools. When government salaries aren’t paid, or when restraints on mobility prevent parents from getting to work, the resulting difficulty in paying the tuition fees schools require to keep operating causes those schools to struggle to survive during economic and political crises. The ASFP project, therefore, was aimed particularly at helping to sustain, over a relatively short term, eligible private schools.

School identification and selection was a delicate and challenging activity. AMIDEAST’s first task was identification of private schools in the five districts targeted, indicating number of students, their supervising authority (such as charity, private business, religious order or group). No schools known to be sponsored by organizations that are considered by the USG to be Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) were to be included in the lists. Over 150 schools were approached, but the project had to obtain buy-in from them - not always a given, despite the financial benefit that would accrue. (Among other reasons, some schools did not participate because of perceived complexities that come with American government funding. Others feared internal feuds within the school or between the schools and the families. Still others refused to participate because of the family interview requirement.) It was necessary to be aware of sensitivities involved in providing scholarship opportunities for students enrolled only at the

selected schools which, because of the requirements of current U.S. law and policy that precluded dealing with the government, were the only schools eligible for support.

ASFP took the first steps in school selection during the first quarter of the project. The staff prepared initial lists to update contact information and enrollment figures for all known, potentially-eligible schools in each of the five districts. Four focus group meetings were held in Ramallah (to which the Jericho schools were also invited), Gaza City, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem. AMIDEAST conducted these meetings, in Arabic, to help administrators from participating schools arrive at a common understanding of the project and to explore possible partnerships; to define a “needy” family; and to share information on the criteria for determining need.

Information gained from the focus groups contributed to the development and refinement of the school selection forms to be used for school selection and vetting. After an extensive peer-review process, the School Profile documents (Forms A and B, attached in Appendix A) were submitted to USAID and approved by the CTO. Form A provided information needed for the school vetting process, while Form B provided a more complete description of the school, including its willingness and need to be involved in the project.



Chief of Party Elaine Strite meets with the director of St. Dimiana’s Coptic College in Jerusalem

During the course of the project, the ASFP team made over 1,000 school visits through the region, initially to introduce the project and its objectives to school directors and to assess their interest in taking part, and later, to learn more about interested schools and their facilities, and to rate their level of need according to the project’s Need Ranking Form (see Appendix B). These visits included new schools not included in the original list of schools initially identified in the school research phase; new schools continued to surface as late as mid-2007 and, with the approval of USAID, were included in the program for the sake of the needy families in those schools. (Because AMIDEAST was

not permitted to work with the Ministry of Education, it was not possible to obtain an updated list of private schools in the selected districts from the MOE.) By the end of March 2007, over 120 schools were participating in the project. In January 2007, ASFP also provided USAID with a list of schools considered for the project yet *not* participating, along with the reasons for each school's exclusion from or refusal to participate in the project.

Once schools were selected and vetted, they signed a letter of commitment confirming their agreement with the terms. Due primarily to vetting delays (discussed below, in Challenges), the required commitment letters from approved and vetted schools were still being signed as late as three weeks prior to the final program end date.

Scholarship Allocation: ASFP determined scholarship allocations---both numbers of scholarships as well as amounts of money---for each school, using a scoring sheet designed to evaluate school need. Need was determined on the basis of enrollment size, amount of school fees, deficit from the previous year, unpaid tuition, facilities, population served, forms of financial support, and the general political and economic situation.

As new schools not previously included in the schools lists surfaced, allocations were revised in order to include those schools in the program.

A sample allocation chart is attached. See Appendix C.

III. Student and Family Selection:

Overall, student selection consisted of

- obtaining recommendations of needy students and families from school leaders;
- convening meetings of school/ASFP committees to review applicants;
- interviewing families;
- narrowing lists of awardees to number of scholarships allocated to each school; and
- complying with eligibility and vetting requirements for all students over 16 years of age.

The process for selecting students to receive scholarships was a multi-step procedure, which began once the selections of the schools themselves had been finalized. Due to delays in vetting of schools, the selection process proceeded even without school vetting, although no awards could be made until vetting was complete.

School staff themselves made initial identification of potential scholarship recipients. Schools provided AMIDEAST with lists of families who, in the school officials' opinions, were the neediest. These included those who did not pay school tuition fees (presumably because they could not, although it was noted that in some cases, non-payment was also used by some families to pressure schools to reduce the tuition fees). Families thus nominated by the schools then completed the Family Application Form, and included required supporting documents. ASFP formed selection committees at each

school, consisting of at least one ASFP representative and at least one school representative. The project staff then interviewed eligible families, and classified students as “awardees,” alternates,” or “ineligibles.” A fourth category, “not nominated,” developed at a later stage to differentiate those students who had been designated by the interviewer as “alternates” from students who had not even been nominated by school officials for scholarships, but appeared on family application forms as the siblings of nominated students. These latter applicants, classed as “NNs,” came to form a second tier of alternates over time, with some eventually being awarded scholarships.

While the committees were essential, the effectiveness of the participation of the school representatives varied from school to school, and there was a perception among some members that ASFP made selections unilaterally. However, the gap between the original school-provided lists and the resulting final selections was only 5%, indicating that the process was as participatory and aboveboard as possible.

The volume of families interviewed was immense, and additional interviewers were hired in order to be able to conduct all the required interviews. To illustrate the magnitude of the selection task, during the second reporting period alone ASFP staff distributed 6,524 applications and conducted 5,268 face-to-face, in-person family interviews.



Field Resarcher Anan Morrarr interviews a parent at An-Najah School

In addition to vetting all schools, the U.S. Government required that all students 16 years of age or over be vetted as well in order to receive scholarships. Also, as the process of student selection began, many questions arose concerning other eligibility issues, for example: eligibility of relatives of school officials and teachers; students with American, Israeli, or Jordanian citizenship; children of political prisoners and criminals, and students ages 16 and over without IDs. AMIDEAST and USAID decided that for the sake of transparency, relatives---defined as children, siblings, grandchildren, nieces and nephews of school officials, teachers, and AMIDEAST staff ---were not eligible. Neither were holders of American citizenship or the children of American citizens. Students with

Israeli citizenship were not eligible, nor were those with Jordanian citizenship, although children with one parent of either of these nationalities were eligible, provided one parent was a legal resident of the West Bank or Gaza. For the sake of fairness, knowing that children of political prisoners detained for the taking of life would be ineligible under USAID criteria, AMIDEAST ASFP staff set an equivalent rule for children of criminal prisoners; if the taking of life was involved in any case, criminal or political, the child of such a prisoner would be ruled ineligible. Students over 16 who did not have IDs but were eligible for West Bank, Gaza, or East Jerusalem IDs, were eligible.

IV. Payment of Scholarships

In preparation for the payment phase of the project, ASFP staff held meetings with schools in each of the five districts participating in the program. Staff outlined the payment process, from finalizing lists and generating invoices to distributing checks and collecting receipts. School directors and accountants attended the five meetings, which were also intended to reassure the schools that, after numerous delays, they were soon to receive payment.

The payment process began with the collection of essential documentation from the participating schools, such as letters stating: the official tuition fees for each grade; the school's discount policy; proof of a bank account; and later, once the project received its first vetting-related extension and the issue of "rollover" (discussed below) arose, a letter stating the intent to open a new grade for AY07-08.

During the course of the process it became clear that many schools gave discounts on tuition to needy students. After consultation with USAID and many participating schools, ASFP staff began collecting information on discounts from schools and reducing payments on behalf of students who received discounts, to the amount those students actually paid for tuition. The savings realized were applied to other scholarships.



Field Research Wail Obeidi presents a check to the director of Bridge Academy in Jerusalem

After document collection, the field researchers began the two-phased school confirmation and USAID approval process for awardees. During this process, ASFP staff submitted names of potential awardees to USAID for approval. After receiving approval from the CTO field researchers presented the Phase I list of awardees to school directors for confirmation of tuition fees, amounts paid, and discounts per student. With this information collected and confirmed, project staff sent the Phase II list – with all students’ names and ASFP scholarship amounts –to USAID for final approval.

Upon receiving final approval for a school from USAID, field researchers began the payment process. Field researchers sent sample invoices for school directors to use as templates and began collecting the completed invoices during the reporting period. The AMIDEAST accountant wrote checks upon receipt of the invoices, and once each school had prepared both individual receipts in students’ names and a general receipt listing all students covered by one check from AMIDEAST, ASFP staff delivered the checks and handed out award letters to students



Program Officer Ahmed Tannira with an awardee from the American School in Gaza

V. Events

Once payment was made and all documentation received from the schools, the field researchers went to the schools to distribute letters of award and to speak about the goals and objectives of the ASFP program. In Gaza the events---attended by USAID/Gaza and ASFP staff---were formal but small, as no publicity events could be held because of the security situation. In the West Bank the ceremonies were usually short, informal gatherings of awardees and school officials. In addition to the smaller ceremonies, in the West Bank two major events were held to publicize ASFP and highlight the award process. The first was held at the Franciscan Sisters School in Jericho and was attended by USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka, AMIDEAST president Ambassador Theodore Kattouf, head of the PLO negotiating team Dr. Saeb Erekat, and Governor of Jericho Dr. Sami Musallem, in addition to program staff from USAID and AMIDEAST.

A second event was held at the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Schools and in addition to officials for 30 schools, the USAID Mission Director attended along with Consular officials and AMIDEAST staff. Children from the schools demonstrated their musical, dancing and acting talents. (Sample press coverage is attached in Appendix D.)



Students from the Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahour sing at the Bethlehem event



Dabka performance at the Jerusalem event at Ibrahimieh College

VI. Monitoring and Evaluation

During the first project quarter ASFP submitted its implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan, which included specific indicators with baselines and targets for measuring and reporting outputs and impacts. Key components of the plans included

staff meetings/meetings with USAID, GIS reporting, a document management plan, a gender tracking chart, and databases that recorded school and student information. AMIDEAST submitted a revised implementation plan, including the M&E plan, on January 26, 2007, to capture changes resulting from the increased staff hiring and training time senior staff undertook.

ASFP kept an extensive system of school files, documenting every official interaction with each participating school. Each field researcher kept a master file and a set of individual schools, which together contained lists of awardees at both Phases I and II, signed and stamped by school officials; copies of checks to schools; receipts for awardees; and other relevant information about the school, such as Forms A and B and any other forms or letters the schools signed and returned to AMIDEAST.

Electronically, ASFP managed its ever-changing data using a series of databases and lists. Beginning with allocation charts, which used an elaborate mathematical formula plus field researcher recommendations, to distribute scholarships among the schools, the ASFP staff documented each step of the award process. Each school had a list of awardees, with multiple tabs for multiple payments, as well as tabs for alternates, NNs, and ineligible. In addition, the staff maintained two databases: one for schools, and one for individual students. With these databases, ASFP tracked over 11,000 students and 150 schools, noting ineligibility and need. The school database contained information on the school's demographic, leadership, allocation, and progress in the award process, while the student database contained information on each student's school, family income and history, and grades. In addition, the project maintained a separate gender tracking chart, to track gender balance (proportionate to enrollment) in its award process. Project staff used these databases and charts to update the USAID GIS.

As a part of the ASFP M&E plan, the ASFP staff provided monthly updates to the ASFP numbers in the USAID Geographic Information System (GIS) as required of all USAID projects. Using GIS, both USAID and AMIDEAST were able to check progress, view statistics about the project, and create maps showing the geographical distribution of participating schools. ASFP staff also uploaded photos to the GIS system for USAID use in publications.

Dr. Nader Said was selected to conduct the project's final evaluation. Dr. Said met with each ASFP staff member individually and conducted interview with ten schools (two per district) chosen to represent the diversity in geographic location, gender, religious identity, and structure of the 123 schools in the program. At these schools Dr. Said interviewed staff as well as parents of awardees, alternates, and ineligible students, and documented their impressions of the project.

VII. Challenges

Vetting: Among the many challenges faced in this project, vetting delays ranked #1. In order to be allowed to participate in the ASFP program, all schools had to have a vetting clearance from USAID. The procedure to request school vetting, developed in

cooperation between the COP and USAID CTO, ensured an efficient process for submitting forms. The process, however, turned out to be quite protracted, and as no scholarship funds could be given to students in un-vetted schools, the project was slowed considerably by the vetting delays. By the end of March 2007 (over halfway into the project), only 63 of the 121 participating schools had been vetted although the project was scheduled to end in September 2007, and no funds could be distributed to students in uncleared schools.

In addition to holding up payments, the vetting delays had other repercussions as well. Some selected families, unable to wait for payments and unwilling to risk their children's expulsion from school, found funds elsewhere to pay the required tuition. As the initial cooperative agreement limited ASFP tuition payments to the 2006-2007 school year, ASFP scholarships could not be rolled over to the next term. This effectively cut those selected students out of the program. This issue was unresolved for some months, until a modification was made to the agreement in September 2007 which allowed payments for the 2007-2008 school year for students who had ended up paying themselves for the 2006-2007 school year. This did not solve the program for all students, however; some were in their final year so rolled-over scholarships would not apply. When possible these scholarships were applied to 2007-2008 tuition of to younger siblings, but when there were no younger siblings, the scholarship was simply lost to that family. In some cases, families who had not yet received the anticipated tuition payments were forced to withdraw their children from private schools and place them in public schools. ASFP estimates that one to three families from each school withdrew their children due---at least in part---to the delay in payment. These events somewhat negatively colored the overall impression of the project---which should have been universally positive---for the recipients.

In addition, near the end of the project, on February 25, 2008, AMIDEAST was notified that additional vetting procedures were required, and schools with a governing board must be re-vetted in order to receive further payments. An internal USAID audit determined that schools with governing boards must submit vetting information for the chair, deputy chair, and treasurer of the governing board, in addition to others who had been submitted for vetting in the initial submission. Because none of this information had been submitted with the original vetting request, any schools fitting this criteria and which had payments remaining had to be submitted again. As a direct result of the re-vetting request, the Latin School System withdrew from the program, preventing AMIDEAST from making any further payments to the school. In practice, this meant that no students 16 or over from any of the Latin Schools in the West Bank received scholarships (though the ones in Gaza had already been cleared and paid by the time of the re-vetting decision).

Staff mobility: For a program that relied a great deal on school visits and personal interviews with families scattered around five districts of the West Bank and Gaza, another serious obstacle to smooth project implementation was overcoming the challenges of staff travel throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli checkpoints, closures, restrictions on movement, and denials of permits limited the ability of the ASFP

staff to conduct site visits, hold regional meetings, and implement the program efficiently. For example, the Gaza Field Researcher was not permitted to leave Gaza to attend staff training, either at the beginning or at mid-project. A Program Assistant was detained at both Qalandia and Rachel's Tomb checkpoints when trying to cross into Jerusalem with a valid permit, and was subsequently called in four separate times for questioning. Even submitting applications for a magnetic card (let alone receiving one) has been problematic for some staff and required long waits, only to be told that the request must (constantly) resubmitted. One member of the staff was never able to receive a magnetic card, despite having a USAID card.

School management and financial capacities: As mentioned earlier, there were wide disparities among schools vis-à-vis their administrative, management, and financial systems. Although capacity-building was not a target activity of the ASFP, field researchers found themselves providing training and support in various areas including writing letters and other communication tools, helping create administrative and financial systems, or improving existing ones. Schools with weak financial procedures needed assistance in the preparation of accurate invoices and receipts---a time-consuming process in an already time-pressed project.

Staff: As mentioned earlier, staffing the ASFP project was somewhat difficult because of its short-term duration; more senior candidates were either unavailable or unwilling to sign on for so brief an activity. Despite this, an extremely dedicated and energetic staff was assembled that was able to be sufficiently flexible to identify problems and help solve them. However, the required staff training (of both the regular staff and the temporary staff hired to help with the family interviews) of the more inexperienced staff, and the ongoing replacements of staff who left during the final several months of the project, put an added and substantial burden on the ASFP management. A longer project timeframe, and the addition of at least one more senior management staff member, would have been of great help in this regard.

Capacity to respond: The needs of the Palestinian community outstripped the project's capacity to respond. The economic needs of the community are so great that it was often frustrating to explain to the target community the limited nature of the project.

VIII. Successes

The primary success, of course, is that ASFP succeeded, despite many challenges, in identifying 123 participating schools and distributing \$3,903,004 in tuition scholarships for 8179 needy students, thereby relieving both the schools and the families (albeit temporarily) of the daily economic pressure of life in the West Bank and Gaza.

This project had a particularly great impact in Gaza, as well as in Jericho. This project continued in Gaza when almost all other ongoing projects had to stop. In addition, almost all of the eligible applicants in Gaza have received awards (68% of the total number of applicants), and many schools in Gaza have been able to pay their teachers primarily because of the ASFP project.

ASFP staff rated Jericho as very needy, and recommended high allocations to the schools working there. As a result, the project was able to give 87% of Jericho students who applied scholarships, as compared to 59% in the wealthiest district of Ramallah.

Overall, though, ASFP did actually award 70% of all applicants by the end of the project. Most students who did not receive scholarships were those determined to be ineligible by project staff.



Field Researcher Noha Nijim with an awardee at Ibad ur-Rahman in Gaza

Another success of the ASFP project is that it paved the way for USAID's Model Schools Network (MSN), which is also implemented by AMIDEAST. ASFP marked the first major USAID programmatic (as opposed to infrastructure-related) undertaking with private schools in the West Bank and Gaza. The relationships both USAID and AMIDEAST built with schools through the ASFP project have greatly eased the legwork and start-up for the MSN project.

IX. Lessons Learned

USAID/AMIDEAST Relationship: Throughout this project, ASFP and USAID worked closely and collaboratively together to address issues and resolve problems as they arose. This positive working relationship is critical in a financially exacting project constrained by a very short timeline. Issues unanticipated by either USAID or AMIDEAST arose throughout the project which required rapid USAID decisions in order to move the project ahead. In some cases the decisions were of such magnitude (such as permission to pay partial scholarships, and to rollover tuition from one year to the next) that they required modifications to the agreement. In addition, as vetting holdups delayed the school approvals (and therefore the payment of scholarships), modifications to the end

date of the grant were required as well. Without a high degree of cooperation between the parties, none of this would have been possible.

Extremely short project timeframe: Mobilization and execution of a project like this requires more time than was allotted (initially one year). The unrealistic time frame and rush to provide tangible results, without the normal preliminary background research impacted the program throughout its implementation. Preparatory work such as information gathering on the reality of private schools, their capabilities, needs and priorities, management and financial systems, and community relationships, would have avoided problems and allowed the project to be implemented more smoothly. Armed with this information, for example, and with more time allotted to the school selection process, a capacity-building component could have been anticipated, planned for, and incorporated so that, if schools were targeted that didn't have developed financial and management systems, they could be brought up to the required standards in a planned component of the project.

Also, additional preparatory time would have allowed for more participation of the school community at the planning phase. The importance of community involvement in the early stages should not be underestimated, because it is necessary to understand where schools fit in the community fabric and how they fit as potential project partners. For example, when a field researcher went for a visit to one school targeted for the program, parents were gathered outside demonstrating against the dishonesty of the school's administration. It was later discovered that many parents were planning to withdraw their children from that school. In another case, a school declined participation in the program because of the family interview requirement; the director felt that the interviews would increase parental pressure on the school and she was unwilling or unable to handle such pressure. While widespread publicity about this kind of program is not recommended, a closer look should be taken at how the school community might be involved in the early, as well as later, stages of project planning and implementation.

Family Applications: Family applications from different schools should be cross-checked; some families have children in different schools which resulted in them receiving multiple awards rather than distributing the awards among more families. Also, the family application should be more user-friendly, perhaps with fewer questions and more multiple-choice options. Also, parents should receive written notification that having an interview does not guarantee a scholarship and that the scholarship is for one-year only; doing this would have saved much field researcher and other staff time spent resolving misunderstandings from parents.

Staff: As mentioned earlier, the ASFP field research staff, although relatively young and experienced, was one of the greatest assets of this project, and the energy and commitment of a team like them would be a necessity for any similar project. The volume of data, visits, and interviews required the stamina of the young and while the challenges of training and fielding such a staff are not insignificant, it was worth planning for and training them in order to harness the energy for such successful project implementation.

In addition, the team-building exercises that the staff did during field researcher orientation, as well as shared office space, created a unique relationship among the staff that solidified teamwork on the job. The project benefited greatly from a team with clearly defined individual roles but willingness to cover for someone who was sick or having a very busy day. From the ASFP experience, AMIDEAST has remembered that team-building should not be underestimated or dismissed as too “feel good” and or a waste of time.

X. Important Findings of this project

The body of knowledge about the large numbers of private schools in the West Bank and Gaza, and about the communities in which they operate, that was gathered during the course of this project is immense, and of great potential use for USAID and others in planning and implementation of other assistance programs, such as recruitment for scholarship and training programs. Among the data collected, is information on family demographics and income levels, student grades and enrollment, and school needs. AMIDEAST recommends that USAID leverage the data available on both schools and students in these databases to both recruit students for other USAID programs and to meet existing school needs in future program designs.

XI. Future assistance needed

Life for Palestinians continues to be economically challenging, and while this project contributed to the stability of the participating schools and to the ongoing education of the students, it should be built on to go further. Future assistance – even in the form of a program like this - should be developmental, not emergency response, and could include activities to improve school capacity or facilities, teacher training and resources, after school activities and art support. ASFP received many complaints from both schools and parents that the money from the scholarship program and how it could be better used. Though they were nearly universally grateful for the tuition payment, many parents and schools pointed out that such a large sum of money as \$5 million could make many types of long-term improvements in selected schools, such as the installation of a computer lab.

XII. Summary/conclusion

The ASFP has made a difference in the lives of students threatened with dismissal from schools because of inability to pay tuition. It has had a positive impact on the families of those students who can use their meager resources to sustain the basic needs of family members: food, shelter, health care, and utilities. It has also spared families the burden of transferring their children to other lower cost schools. While the project could not help everyone who needed it, and a great deal of need remains, the ASFP enjoyed enormous success in providing schools and families with some stability in their institutions and their educations.



Chief of Party Elaine Strite and Field Researcher Nivin Ramadan present a check to the director of the Jerusalem School in Bethlehem



Chief of Party Sarah Capper presents a letter of award to a student at the Latin School in Ain Arik



American Scholarship Fund Program (ASFP)
School Profile: Part A

School: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone number: _____
 Fax number: _____
 Email address: _____

Headmaster/ General Director:
 First name: _____
 Father's name _____
 Grandfather's name: _____
 Last name _____
 ID number _____

Deputy Headmaster/Deputy Director:
 First name: _____
 Father's name _____
 Grandfather's name: _____
 Last name _____
 ID number _____

Director of Finances/ Accounting:
 First name: _____
 Father's name _____
 Grandfather's name: _____
 Last name _____
 ID number _____

Number of students enrolled: _____
 Female _____ Male _____

Number of teachers: _____
 Female _____ Male _____

The school is affiliated with:

Tuition fees per student:
 Preschool _____
 Elementary _____
 Secondary _____

Do you have a boarding school?
 Yes ___ No ___
 If yes, how many boarding students
 do you have? _____.

Do you have disabled or handicapped
 students?
 Yes ___ No ___
 How many? _____

Is your school experiencing difficulty in
 collecting tuition fees? Yes ___ No ___
 If yes, what percentage of tuition
 remains unpaid so far this year? _____

Fax completed forms to AMIDEAST, at:

02-240-8017.



American Scholarship Fund Program (ASFP)

School Profile: Part B

I. Experience with NGO's

1. Are you willing to work with AMIDEAST on a USAID-funded project? Do you understand that working with donors and their partners requires a close working relationship and additional reporting?

2. Can your school administration facilitate ASFP work during the implementation period and can you nominate a contact person from your school staff to coordinate with this project?

II. School Information

3. Describe your school's physical facilities in detail (i.e. number of classrooms, science labs, computer labs, recreational facilities, etc.)? What is the condition of the premises?

4. Is your school accredited? By who? Please provide a copy of the license or letter of accreditation.

5. How is your school directly affected by the current political and economic situation (e.g., the separation wall, invasions, injured students, arrested teachers, unemployment)? Please specify.

6. What is the percentage of students who have dropped out or transferred due to non-payment of fees?

7. Do you have a financial monitoring system? Do you have an administrative monitoring system?

8. Are your students required to do community service? Does your school offer extra curricular activities?

9. Do you have a parents' steering committee? If yes, is it an elected committee? When was the last election?

10. Do you have school board? If yes, how many members? Were they elected?

11. Please provide us with any publicity materials (i.e. brochures, CDs).

12. Please add any information about your school that you think is important.

13. Tentative Recommendation:

14. Final Recommendation:

Name of Field Researcher_____

Date_____



Selection Criteria for Allocation of Scholarships to Schools

Ranking Total 24 Points

1. What percentage of tuition is unpaid for this year?
 - a. 70% to 100% (3)
 - b. 35% to 69% (2)
 - c. 34% and below (1)

2. Rate the condition of the school's facilities:
 - a. Excellent (1)
 - b. Adequate (2)
 - c. Poor (3)

3. How is the school affected by the political situation?
 - a. Directly affected (3)
 - b. Indirectly affected (2)
 - c. Less affected (1)

4. Does the school exclusively serve disabled students?
Yes _____ No _____
(3) (0)

5. Is the school a boarding school?
Yes _____ No _____
(3) (0)

6. Does the school have other steady sources of funding?
 - a. Steady (1)
 - b. Sporadic (2)
 - c. None (3)

7. Is the school a vocational school?
Yes _____ No _____
(3) (0)




8. What is the school's average yearly tuition?
 - a. Above \$1000 _____ (0)
 - b. \$700 – 999 _____ (1)
 - c. \$500 – 699 _____ (2)
 - d. Less than \$500 _____ (3)

By: [media for freedom](#)

Posted on: 10/25/2007

Source: [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#)

Date: 25 Oct 2007

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OPT: USAID awards \$700,000 in academic scholarships to Bethlehem students

Bethlehem, West Bank - The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has awarded \$700,000 to cover the school fees of 1700 Bethlehem-area students through the USAID American Scholarship Fund Program.

The Evangelical Lutheran School in Beit Sahur hosted a ceremony celebrating the scholarship awards, attended by many of the 1700 student recipients and their families. USAID Deputy Mission Director R. David Harden, Bethlehem area officials, school principals from the receiving schools, and AMIDEAST staff also attended

The American Scholarship Fund Program, implemented by AMIDEAST, benefits female and male students in private schools who come from needy families living in five districts in the West Bank and Gaza. The student recipients come from diverse backgrounds, including towns, villages, and refugee camps. Schools with varied curricula are included in the scholarship program, including both special education and vocational education.

Through USAID's American Scholarship Fund, close to \$3 million has been awarded to nearly 6,000 students in 100 schools located in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jericho, and Gaza City. A total of 8000 academic scholarships will be provided by the end of the program in 2007.

Since 1993, the U.S. Government has spent over \$1.7 billion in the West Bank and the Gaza through USAID projects designed to reduce poverty, improve health and education standards, build infrastructure, and improve governance and the rule of law.

Source: Reliefweb

في حفل بالكلية الابراهيمية في القدس الوكالة الاميركية للتنمية الدولية تقدم ٨٠٠ الف دولار لتغطية الرسوم المدرسية لطلاب بالقدس



جانب من حفل توزيع المنح الدراسية في الكلية الابراهيمية في القدس

القدس - من احمد جلاجل - قامت الوكالة الاميركية للتنمية الدولية (USAID) بتقديم مبلغ بقيمة ٨٠٠,٠٠٠ دولار لتغطية الرسوم المدرسية لـ ١,٣٣٩ طالبا من منطقتي القدس ومزعين على ٢٨ مدرسة وذلك من خلال برنامج صندوق المنح الاميركية الذي تموله الوكالة. وتخلت الوكالة الاميركية للتنمية الدولية احتفالا امس في مبنى الكلية الابراهيمية في القدس اعلمت فيه عن المنح الدراسية.

وحضر الحفل العديد من الجهات المانحة الدولية والمنظمات غير الحكومية المحلية بالإضافة الى ديبديد هاردين نائب مدير بعثة الوكالة الاميركية والوظفون المسؤولون عن البرنامج، وعضو القنصلية الاميركية، والشخصيات الرسمية في القدس ومدراء المدارس المستفيدة من البرنامج وعضو القنصل الاميركية.

وبدا الحفل بكلمة ترحيبية القاها عبد الغفار بدر عميد كلية مجتمع الابراهيمية رحب فيها بالحضور وقدم شرحا مفصلا عن اقسام الكلية المختلفة.

ودعا بدر الدول المانحة الى الاهتمام اكثر بالمؤسسات القسسية اسوة بالمؤسسات الفلسطينية بال الضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة، وشكر بدر القائمين على برنامج المساعدات.

والقى ديبديد هاردين نائب مدير بعثة الوكالة الاميركية كلمة تحدث فيها عن دور الحكومة الاميركية في مساعدة الشعب الفلسطيني وعمل الوكالة الاميركية للتنمية الدولية في الضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة.

وايدى ستيف كبير مدير الامديت في المنطقة اعجابها بالمؤسسات الفلسطينية في القدس، وقال انه سيتم افتتاح مكتب للامديت في القدس لتعليم اللغة الانجليزية والاهتمام بالمؤسسات المقدسية.

وشكر سليمان راضي مدير مدرسة القرير في كلمته الدول فائحة على اهتمامها في المدارس الخاصة الفلسطينية في القدس ودفع الرسوم المدرسية عن الطلبة المحتاجين.

وتخل الحفل تقديم فقرات فنية لطالبات راهبات الوردية وعزف وغناء لطلاب الكلية الابراهيمية نالت اعجاب الحضور.

ويقدم برنامج صندوق المنح الاميركية الذي تتفذه مؤسسة الامديت المساعدة للطلاب والطالبات في المدارس الخاصة الذي تعاني اسره من ضائقة اقتصادية ويشمل البرنامج لمدارس الخاصة في خمس مدن في الضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة. والطلبة المستفيدين من البرنامج من سكان المدن والقرى والحيات الفلسطينية، بالإضافة الى المدارس ذات الناهج المختلفة، بما في ذلك التعليم الخاص والتعليم المنهي.

وقدمت الوكالة الاميركية للتنمية الدولية من خلال برنامج صندوق المنح الدولية حتى الان حوالي ٣٠٠ مليون دولار الى ٦٠٢٠ طالبا في ١٠٠ مدرسة في القدس ورام الله وبيت لحم واوربها وغزة ومع نهاية البرنامج في آذار ٢٠٠٨ سوف يتم تقديم ٨٢٠٠ منحة دراسية بقيمة ٣٩٥ مليون دولار لتغطية نفقات الرسوم الدراسية.

ومنذ عام ١٩٩٣ اتفقت حكومة الولايات المتحدة ما يزيد عن مبلغ ١.٧ مليار دولار في الضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة من خلال مشاريع الوكالة الاميركية للتنمية الدولية الرامية الى الحد من الفقر وتحسين مستويات الصحة والتعليم وبناء البنية التحتية وتحسين الحكم وسيادة القانون.

السفر معنا متعة وأمان اسألوا من كان معنا



(١٤)١١٢٠٣

مي أبو لافي و4 أم للسياحة

بمناسبة قرب عيد الأضحى المبارك وأعياد الميلاد المجيد وراس السنة الميلادية

(القاهرة / الإسكندرية) (9 أيام 8 ليال)

تاريخ الرحلات: 2007/12/21 ، 2007/12/27

(القاهرة / الإسكندرية/ شرم الشيخ) (10 أيام 9 ليال)