Inspire, Educate, and Train: These aren’t just goals; they’re realities at the four Youth Development Resource Centers (YDRCs) recently launched by USAID’s Ruwwad project and the Palestinian Ministry of Youth and Sport. A cornerstone of the U.S.-Palestinian Partnership, these community hubs in Nablus, Beita, Hebron, and Ramallah put the partnership’s focus on youth leadership development and civil society empowerment into action every day: Through youth-led civic engagement projects, leadership training courses, and preparations for a range of IT and counseling services, the YDRCs are helping West Bank communities realize their full potential. Broad social change is happening on a daily basis, at the heart of Palestinian towns and cities.

Empowering Youth and Families.

From January through May 2008, youth and staff at each YDRC have worked to improve the quality of lives for young people and their families in surrounding communities. Local youth-led projects have included:

- **“For You, Nablus”** – A school upgrade campaign that saw 235 youth leaders from the Nablus (Jabal an-Nar) and Beita YDRCs improve the learning conditions of 2,100 local students in 7 schools: YDRC volunteers repainted school walls, created student gardens, and removed waste and debris from school grounds.

- **“Palestine through the Eyes of Youth”** – A ‘by youth, for youth’ traveling photo exhibit. Young photographers from the Beita and Hebron YDRCs took a two-week photography training course, and then displayed their finished products on site at the YDRCs. The exhibit had an unprecedented 1,600 local visitors; this incredible local success led to a U.S. tour where selected photos were displayed at USAID headquarters in Washington, DC.

- **“One Million Shekels for Cancer”** - Conceived by youth leaders at the Hebron YDRC, this first-ever fundraising campaign will have youth take the lead in soliciting small donations from ‘average citizens’ across the West Bank, to support the country’s two under-funded pediatric cancer care facilities.

Building a New Generation of Leaders.

In support of the UPP’s pledge to provide education and leadership opportunities for youth, the YDRCs offer a range of skill-building programs for young people, including:

- **Basic Leadership Training**: In Summer 2008, 120 youth will take part in Ruwwad-led basic leadership training courses at the YDRCs. 30 youth at each Center will master decision-making skills, teamwork essentials, public speaking, and other core concepts.

- **National “Emerging Leaders Program”**: A high level, focused training program that aims to create a new cadre of positive national leaders. Starting in June 2008, the pilot phase of this program will give a select group of 20 youth the chance to explore leadership issues in depth, and get hands-on training in local management placements.
Strengthening Capacity.

Building on the U.S.-Palestinian Partnership’s mandate to create a stronger Palestinian civil society, Ruwwad and the YDRCs are working together to train teams of professional, engaged YDRC staff who can become community facilitators. Recent capacity building activities have included:

- 10 workshops held in Winter 2008 with YDRC representatives to plan new programs and activities for youth Center members.
- A 3-day organizational development retreat, to be held in Jericho in late May, for 40 YDRC youth leaders, staff, and board members. This working session will aim to help the Centers develop a shared mission, vision, and goals—and help them define common standards of excellence for programming.
- Two weeks of on-site consulting by representatives of the US Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs (BGC) network in Spring 2008. Visiting BGC specialists advised YDRC staff on spatial design, youth programming, and long-term strategies for community integration.
- New mentoring partnerships that bring Ruwwad youth leaders on site to YDRCs as programming and outreach advisors. Close to 10 youth leader-mentors have been selected for the four centers and will start placements in Summer 2008.
- Hiring of four new YDRC Executive Directors to expand the breadth and depth of Center programming. These senior staff will inject new energy and dynamism into the regional centers, and provide visionary leadership to a strong supporting team.

Expanding Access to Technology.

Given the pivotal role that technology can play in local development, the YDRCs are also working to expand access and quality of IT services for the communities they serve. Since Winter 2008, Ruwwad has helped the Centers and the Ministry of Youth take crucial first steps toward a new enhanced approach to programming that has IT at its core. Preparatory activities have included:

- An ongoing rapid IT field assessment to determine technology gaps and potential solutions at the four YDRCs. Over 20 youth leaders from the four Centers are leading the assessment.
- Nomination of YDRC IT labs for inclusion in Intel’s region-wide connectivity program.
- Hiring of a dedicated IT consultant to advise the Centers and the Ministry on building an intranet system that links the Ministry, the four centers, and 65+ affiliated youth clubs.

Upgraded computer labs are one of many features planned for the four regional YDRCs.