Needs Assessment of Early Childhood Development Centers

In the Governorates of Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem

2025

الرؤيا الفلسطينية
PALESTINIAN VISION

Needs Assessment of Early Childhood Development Centers

In the Governorates of Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem

Prepared by: Zaid Shreih

Disclaimer

The content of this study report is solely the responsibility of the researcher and does not necessarily reflect the views or official positions of the Palestinian Vision Organization. The structure and details of the report were developed at the request of the contracting party and in accordance with the study's requirements.

Acknowledgments

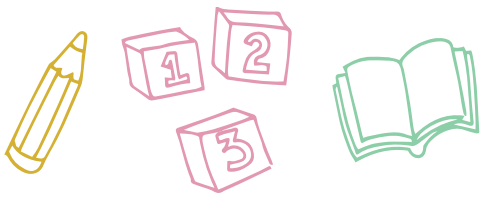
The researcher wishes to express sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this study. Special thanks go to the Palestinian Vision Organization for their invaluable support in facilitating the study process, providing essential documents and information, and sharing participants' contact details, as well as for their ongoing cooperation in responding to inquiries throughout the duration of the study.

The researcher is also deeply grateful to the Ministry of Social Development for their generous allocation of time and effort in supporting this work. Our heartfelt appreciation extends to the 28 participating centers, which supplied the required information within a limited timeframe, and to all individuals who generously shared their experiences, insights, and expertise, whether through individual interviews, focus group discussions, or during field visits, including center directors, caregivers, and parents.

Their continuous support and enthusiasm were instrumental in the success of this study. Without their meaningful contributions, this research would not have been possible.

الرؤيا الفلسطينية
PALESTINIAN VISION

All copyrights reserved 2025 ©



Content

Executive Summary 5
Introduction 7
Importance of this study 10
Methodology 11
General Context and Current Situation Analysis 13
Results and Analysis 15
- 1- Legal status 15
- 2- Infrastructure and facilities 18
- 3. Human Resources 20
- 4. Educational Resources and Learning Environment 24
- 5. Family and Local Community Engagement 26

Gap Analysis 29
Recommendations 30
Specific Recommendations for the Afaaq Project 33
Appendices 37
- Annex (1): Quantitative Tools – Nursery Status Questionnaire 37
- Annex (2): Qualitative Tools 40
- Annex (3): Needs in Various Areas 43
- Annex (4): List of Main Information Sources Including Interviews and Focus Group Discussions 53
- Annex (5): Current Academic Programs, Proposals for Developing Educational Models, Learning Games, and Sterilization Devices 55
- Annex (6): Responses from 28 Early Childhood Development Centers to the Survey –Analytical Summary 58

References 60

Executive Summary

This study represents a strategic step within the framework of "***Afaq" project***, implemented by the Palestinian Vision Foundation and funded by Save the Children. It aims to conduct a rapid and comprehensive assessment of the status **of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers** in the governorates of Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem. A mixed methodology was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative tools. These included standardized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with center directors, educators, parents, and representatives from the Ministry of Social Development, in addition to focus group discussions and field visits to eight selected early childhood centers. These eight centers were chosen from among the 28 participating centers to reflect a range of geographical and institutional diversity (private, charitable, urban, rural).

The study team encountered several field related challenges, including limited initial responsiveness from some early childhood centers, as well as confusion among certain participants due to the overlapping perceptions stemming from the organization's previous engagement in the ***"Nomo" project***. Coordinating interviews during the centers' end of year activities also proved difficult. Furthermore, geographical and political constraints, particularly in Jerusalem, impacted the ease of conducting field visits. These challenges were compounded by ongoing regional security tensions, which demanded a high level of flexibility and adaptability from this study team.

Despite these obstacles, this study successfully produced rich and reliable data that contributed to a realistic understanding of the sector's needs and supports the development of practical and actionable recommendations. The study also confirmed that all early childhood centers participating in the project are officially registered with the Ministry of Social Development, reflecting a growing commitment to the legal and framework governing this sector.

Infrastructure and Facilities: Field data show that infrastructure represents a core challenge, as the majority of early childhood centers operate within modified residential apartments. This significantly limits the availability of safe and appropriate spaces for play and learning. Although most centers meet minimum licensing requirements, notable disparities remain in ventilation quality, implementation of safety measures, and the overall condition and functionality of facilities.

Outdoor spaces are largely absent, and where they do exist, they are often unsafe for children. The most prominent needs include the maintenance and renovation of facilities, the provision of safe and accessible outdoor play equipment, and modernization of furniture and learning materials to ensure a healthy and inclusive environment for children, especially children with disabilities.

Human Resources: Early childhood centers face significant disparities in staff qualifications, a lack of specialized support personnel, and persistently low wage levels. On average, each center employs 3 On average, each center employs 3.5 educators, with some responsible for as many as 13.4 children each. Many staff members lack professional qualifications with only 28% of childcare staff holding relevant qualifications).

Data and interviews reveal limited access to professional development opportunities. Low salaries and inadequate incentive structures contribute to high staff turnover and hinder the attraction and retention of qualified personnel in this sector. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive and targeted interventions, including sustainable recruitment strategies, capacity-building programs for caregivers, and the establishment of systematic training opportunities, particularly in underserved and marginalized communities.

Educational Resources and Learning Environment: The assessment reveals significant disparities in the availability of age-appropriate books, stories, and educational toys, alongside a notable lack of technological tools. Many early childhood centers lack stimulating learning environments, educational corners, and sensory and interactive materials. Key needs identified include the renovation and provision of educational toys, the integration of digital tools,

enhanced support for art materials, and equipping centers with musical instruments and interactive learning aids.

Family and Community Engagement: Despite the variety of communication tools used with parents, interaction remains largely one-way, with no structured mechanisms for feedback or for involving parents in shaping the learning environment. . The level of parental participation in activities varies across early childhood centers, and partnerships with the local community are generally limited. Key needs include strengthening regular communication with families, organizing awareness-raising workshops for parents, involving them in educational activities, and establishing effective partnerships with community and health institutions.

The assessment of early childhood centers revealed structural and operational gaps that affect the quality of early childhood services. These include the absence of updated, comprehensive, and detailed national policies regulating the work of early childhood centers, including home-based childcare, as well as a lack of clear standards for infrastructure, staff qualifications, and the learning environment, and the absence of clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and educational supervision. In addition, there is limited institutional partnership and ineffective coordination among the relevant ministries, which negatively impacts the integration of services provided to children.

However, at the operational level, childcare centers face tangible challenges related to inadequate infrastructure particularly in rural and marginalized areas, in terms of space and facilities designated for activities. There is also a shortage of qualified personnel, the absence of regular professional training programs, and a weak incentive system, all of which limit the sector's ability to attract and retain skilled staff. In terms of the learning environment, the assessment revealed a lack of educational materials and tools, as well as limited use of technology. Furthermore, the assessment highlighted weak family engagement, with the absence of institutionalized feedback mechanisms, which restricts opportunities for participatory development and weakens the connection between the center and the local community.

The study concluded with a set of recommendations, foremost among them:

- **Policies and Programs**: Update the national policies governing the early childhood sector, including home-based childcare, with clear definitions of age groups to prevent overlap with kindergartens. Ensure the inclusion of children with special needs and disabilities by providing incentives to promote comprehensive inclusive education. Establish clear mechanisms for managing special cases, including a referral system to specialized rehabilitation centers when necessary. Additionally, it is recommended to improve coordination among the relevant ministries, activate educational supervision through specialized supervisors, and allocate sustainable funding to support childcare centers, particularly in underserved areas. Furthermore, fostering networking, collaboration, and implementing various campaigns with local and international organizations is essential to provide technical and financial support, including diverse training programs.
- **Infrastructure**: Develop detailed infrastructure standards covering safe spaces, ventilation, lighting, and safety requirements, alongside improving childcare facilities through grants or financial incentives, especially in rural and marginalized areas. It is also recommended to establish model childcare centers for practical training and to train center directors in preparing and implementing annual maintenance plans in coordination with relevant authorities.
- **Human Resources**: Establish clear policies for the qualification and recruitment of personnel, improve salaries and incentive systems, and create specialized career paths in early childhood education. This includes implementing ongoing training programs covering educational and psychological aspects, development of teaching aids, first aid, and child protection in emergency situations. Additionally, strengthen collaboration with universities and colleges to attract trainees.

- **Educational Resources and Learning Environment**: Provide high-quality educational materials for all age groups, with particular emphasis on children aged 0–2 years and children with disabilities, while regularly updating technical resources. The study also recommends integrating simple technological tools into educational programs and training staff in their effective use. Additionally, develop educational guides for caregivers on creating an interactive and safe learning environment.
- **Family and Community Relations**: Implement a national plan to strengthen family engagement by incorporating effective communication tools such as satisfaction surveys and suggestion boxes, alongside organizing regular joint activities. The study further recommends expanding partnerships with local community institutions, including maternal and child health centers, municipalities, associations, libraries, and academic institutions, to deliver supportive and integrated services for children and their families.

Introduction

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is a crucial stage in establishing the comprehensive developmental foundations for children, as it directly influences their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical growth. It also contributes to preparing them for formal education and community life. Global literature confirms that investing in the early years of a child's life, particularly from birth to age six, is among the most cost-effective and impactful interventions. Such investment yields long-term benefits at both individual and societal levels, especially in environments facing complex economic or social challenges.

In the Palestinian context, early childhood development gains heightened importance amid the overlapping political, economic, and social challenges, including occupation, movement restrictions, poverty, unemployment, and weak infrastructure. These combined factors pose a direct threat to children's growth and their physical and mental health, limiting their access to comprehensive quality services during their critical early stages. This challenge is even more acute in marginalized areas such as Jerusalem, Hebron, and parts of Nablus and Bethlehem.

The results of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in 2014 and 2019–2020 indicate that parental behaviors during the first 1,000 days of a child's life often do not align with best practices known to promote healthy and cognitive development. Parents generally lack awareness of the importance of providing an engaging home environment for their children. Therefore, caregiving practices play a critical role in early developmental outcomes. For example, approximately one-quarter of children under five years old did not have any adult family member engage them in at least four learning activities during the three days preceding the survey. Additionally, only 20% of children had access to at least three children's books, and one in every three children had only two types of toys available at home.

Selected data from MICS (2014 and 2019–2020)[1]:

	2014	2019 - 2020			
	West Bank	West Bank	Urban	Rural	Camp
Percentage of children (2–4 years) who participated in four or more home learning activities	82.7%	80.4%	75.6%	77.4%	74.9%
Percentage of children aged 36–59 months enrolled in nursery/kindergarten	27.2%	33.3%	34.0%	34.9%	34.8%

Regarding developmental domains, the results showed that approximately one-third of children are on track in literacy and numeracy skills, while higher proportions were observed in physical development, social-emotional growth, and learning, as illustrated in the following table:

	Literacy and Numeracy	Physical Development	Social-Emotional Development	Learning
2014	23.0%	96.0%	76.1%	92.5%
2020 2019-	38.4%	98.8%	81.9%	92.8%

Despite nearly doubling the number of early childcare centers in the West Bank, from 171 centers in 2020 to 302 centers in 2024, significant gaps persist in both service accessibility and quality. The overwhelming majority of these centers are concentrated in urban areas, with about 90% situated in cities, as illustrated in the figure on the left.

Data indicate that one-third of licensed centers are located in the Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorate, which accounts for only 11.3% of the West Bank's population. Conversely, the Hebron Governorate, home to 25.3% of the population, hosts less than 8% of the licensed centers. Rural and marginalized areas, including those designated as Area C and the outskirts of Jerusalem, face a marked shortage of such services. Enrollment rates in early childhood centers vary between 26% and 30% across governorates, substantially below regional and global averages.

Distribution of Early Childhood Centers by Governorate:

Distribution Table of Licensed Early Childhood Centers in the West Bank by Governorate and Population Share (2020 & 2024):[2]

	2020		2024		2024	
Governorate	Centers	%	Centers	%	Population	%
Jerusalem	7	4.10%	18	5.96%	502,625	15.1%
Ramallah	93	54.40%	102	33.77%	377,465	11.3%
Salfit	2	1.20%	5	1.66%	87,861	2.6%

1. https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2175.pdf, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2552.pdf
2. https://www.mosd.gov.ps/uploads/1653306170635320869.pdf

	2020		2024		2024	
Nablus	16	9.40%	53	17.55%	439,631	13.2%
Tulkarm			22	7.28%	209,505	6.3%
Qalqilya	2	1.20%	5	1.66%	129,745	3.9%
Jenin	18	10.50%	28	9.27%	359,934	10.8%
Tubas	5	2.90%	6	1.99%	70,225	2.1%
Jericho	10	5.80%	10	3.31%	56,256	1.7%
Bethlehem	11	6.40%	29	9.60%	249,689	7.5%
Hebron	7	4.10%	22	7.28%	842,969	25.3%
Yatta			2	0.66%		
Total	**171**	**100%**	**302**	100%	3,325,905	100%

Based on this reality, the Palestinian government launched the National Strategy for Growth and Early Childhood Development Intervention 2017–2022, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, primarily the Ministries of Education, Social Development, and Health alongside civil society organizations and international partners. The strategy defines early childhood as the period encompassing the first six full years, or 72 months, of a child's life, that is, from conception until the age of six. The first six years represent a critical phase of significant development and achievements that form the foundation for the rest of a person's life. Early childhood includes the very early stage, covering from conception to three years of age. Supporting healthy early childcare development requires a multisectoral approach that integrates education, health, nutrition, child protection, social care, and social protection for children.

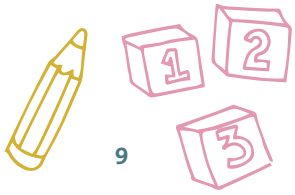
Childcare centers are defined as any appropriate setting designated to receive, shelter, and care for children. In contrast, kindergartens are educational institutions serving children aged four to six years before they enter formal schooling, providing education and care in a systematic and organized manner grounded in early childhood philosophies and principles. Kindergartens are generally categorized into two types based on affiliation: classrooms that offer a one-year program, as implemented in some public schools (often referred to as kindergarten grade), and private kindergartens that provide a two-year educational program prior to first-grade entry.

The National Strategy Aims to:

- Ensure access to comprehensive services for children in early childhood.
- Improve the quality of care and education in childcare centers and kindergartens.
- Empower families to provide the necessary care and support for their children's development.
- Enhance coordination among stakeholders involved in delivering early childhood services

The strategy places particular emphasis on improving the status of childcare centers, considered the primary foundational component of the early childhood service system. In this context, Council of Ministers Resolution No. (11) of 2011, concerning the regulatory framework for childcare centers, serves as the legal reference governing the establishment, licensing, and supervision of these centers. This resolution defines licensing conditions and specifications related to infrastructure, staffing, child capacity, activity types, safety, and health standards.

Despite the existence of a regulatory framework for the early childhood sector, significant gaps remain in coverage and quality. According to data from the Ministry of Social Develop-



ment, a large portion of childcare centers are concentrated in urban areas, while rural and marginalized regions, particularly those classified as Area C, face severe shortages in service availability. Many childcare centers also struggle with inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of qualified personnel, and the absence of educational programs based on scientific principles.

Moreover, enrollment rates in licensed childcare centers remain low compared to actual needs, with estimates indicating that less than 30% of children under the age of four are registered in licensed centers—significantly below regional and international averages.

Importance of this study

The Palestinian Vision Organization has recently implemented a series of educational and community interventions within the framework of the "***Nomo" project***, which targeted a number of childcare centers in the West Bank. This project contributed to raising community awareness about the importance of early childhood development and improving certain aspects of the educational and caregiving environment within these centers. The project also served as an initial platform for building relationships with stakeholders active in this field and for identifying preliminary indicators regarding the reality of childcare centers and the challenges they face.

Building on the results and lessons learned from the ***"Nomo" project***, the Palestinian Vision Organization launched a new project titled "***Afaq***," funded by Save the Children. This project represents a significant continuation of the strategic direction toward developing early childhood services by conducting a rapid needs assessment of early childhood development centers in four main governorates: Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem.

This study aims to shed light on the current status of childcare centers in terms of infrastructure, staffing, educational resources, and mechanisms for communication with families and the local community. Its objective is to monitor and analyze actual needs and lay the groundwork for more responsive and effective interventions. This study represents a pivotal step within the "Afaq" project, serving as a knowledge base that contributes to designing programs and implementing policies that enhance the provision of a safe, inclusive, and stimulating environment for children during the most critical and formative phase of their cognitive, emotional, and social development.

The significance of this study goes beyond merely diagnosing the current situation; it offers a deeper understanding of the gaps and challenges faced by caregivers and early childhood institutions, including those related to access, quality, and equity in service delivery. Although the selection of the twenty-eight childcare centers was neither random nor systematic to ensure full representativeness in terms of size, location, service type, and other factors, the added value of this study lies in its ability to impact two interconnected levels:

At the target group level, the study helps guide interventions to address the actual needs of children and caregivers in childcare centers, thereby enhancing the quality of services provided and improving early childhood experiences—especially in marginalized or resource-scarce areas.

At the policy and program level, despite the study sample not being scientifically selected, it provides practical data and evidence that can serve as a reference for decision-makers and official institutions in developing national policies and plans related to the early childhood sector. This includes licensing standards for childcare centers, workforce training, and expanding access to integrated services.

Accordingly, the findings of this study not only support immediate interventions within the ***"Afaq" project*** but also contribute to building a broader knowledge base to inform future strategic planning at the national level.

The study aims to:

- Assess the current status of childcare centers in terms of infrastructure, human resources, equipment, and mechanisms for communication with families and the local community.
- Identify existing gaps and challenges that hinder the delivery of high-quality and comprehensive early childhood services.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations to guide future interventions that enhance accessibility, equity, and quality in early childhood services.

Methodology

This study was designed to provide a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the status of early childhood development services in several governorates of the West Bank (Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem). Its purpose is to identify gaps and priority needs, and to offer evidence-based recommendations to enhance the quality and equity of services provided to children in early childhood.

Study type:

The study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative tools to strengthen the validity of the findings by integrating statistical data with in-depth contextual analysis. This approach enables the systematic measurement of quantitative indicators alongside an interpretive understanding of the experiences, contexts, and challenges faced by sector professionals and parents.

Study Sample:

Basic data were collected from all 28 childcare centers participating in the project. A purposeful sampling method was used, as much as possible, to select a subset of centers for field visits, ensuring geographic representation and social diversity within the targeted governorates. Data collection included the following:

Number of participating centers:

A total of 28 centers across the four governorates were targeted, most located in city centers and some in rural areas. The majority (86%) belong to the private sector, with some operated by charitable organizations. (See the list in Annex 4.)

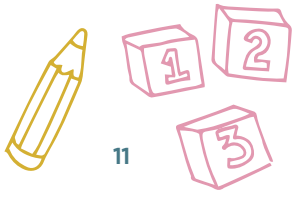
Target groups:

- **Center directors:** serving as primary sources of administrative and operational information.
- **Caregivers:** to understand the work environment and educational challenges.
- **Parents:** to assess their satisfaction and feedback regarding services.
- **Children:** were not directly involved due to privacy and age considerations; however, their educational environment was non-intrusively observed during field visits.
- M**inistry of Social Development:** including the officials responsible for childcare centers within the ministry and those in the four governorates.

Tools collection Data

1- **Structured Questionnaires**

A standardized questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data from the participating childcare centers regarding infrastructure, equipment and educational materials, human resources, number of enrolled children, and the centers' relationship with children's families. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected sample of 28 centers proposed by the Palestinian Vision Organization and completed by the center directors or responsible staff



2- **Semi -Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse group of stakeholders, including 9 center directors, 12 caregivers, 14 parents (13 mothers and 1 father), as well as the childcare official at the Ministry of Social Development and 3 representatives from the ministry's directorates in Hebron, Bethlehem, and Nablus. These interviews aimed to explore challenges related to the learning environment, professional qualification, family relations, networking with the local community and relevant institutions. They also sought to assess participant satisfaction with service quality and to gather their feedback and future expectations.

3- **Focus Group Discussions**

Three focus groups were organized with childcare center directors to deepen the understanding of challenges related to the learning environment, professional qualification, and family relationships, in addition to discussing ways to enhance partnerships and identify needs based on field experience. Two additional focus groups were held with groups of mothers to gather their perspectives on service quality and the challenges they face.

4- **Site Visits & Observational Checklists**

Field visits were conducted to eight selected childcare centers from diverse geographical locations (urban and rural) within the four targeted governorates. During these visits, the physical conditions of the buildings were observed, as well as the learning environment, availability of equipment and educational materials, and the interaction methods between staff and children. (See detailed list in Annex 4.)

Challenges and Limitations

The study faced several field challenges and contextual constraints that affected the data collection process, including:

1- **Initial low response from some childcare centers:** Some centers attributed their reluctance to participate to repeated data requests from various entities or the belief that PalVision already possessed the needed information. This required intensive follow-up efforts to secure their cooperation.
2- **Confusion between different tasks:** Some centers showed confusion distinguishing between previous activities conducted by the organization under the "Nomo" project and the current study's mission, which impacted communication clarity.
3- **Limited time and overlapping activities:** The data collection period coincided with several events, including children's graduation ceremonies and other activities under ***the Nomo project,*** delaying scheduling of interviews and focus group discussions.
4- **Difficulty organizing focus groups with caregivers and parents:** Scheduling in-depth interviews or group discussions with caregivers was challenging due to their constant childcare responsibilities; hence, short interviews were conducted during working hours instead. For parents, except for two cases in rural centers, group discussions were not feasible due to their work commitments. As a result, mostly short interviews were conducted, primarily with mothers and in one case with a child's father.
5- **Movement restrictions in the West Bank and sensitivity of the situation around Jerusalem:** The political and legal sensitivities in Jerusalem, along with the dispersed locations of centers in different areas, posed additional obstacles to conducting the study. Moreover, Israeli-imposed restrictions on movement in the West Bank presented a major challenge, with the research team facing difficulties reaching certain areas due to heightened security measures limiting researcher mobility and direct contact with target entities.
6- **Regional conditions:** The recent regional escalation, particularly the rising tensions between Israel and Iran, affected overall security in the occupied Palestinian

territories. This required the research team to maintain a high degree of flexibility in planning and conducting field visits. In some instances, schedules were modified or interviews and focus groups were held remotely via electronic means to ensure participant safety and maintain data collection continuity.

General Context and Current Situation Analysis

General Context and Current Situation Analysis of Early Childhood in Palestine, with a Focus on Childcare Centers

1- Overview of the Early Childhood Reality in the Targeted Governorates

The early childhood stage (from birth to six years old) represents the foundation for comprehensive human development and lifelong learning. It forms a critical window for educational and social interventions that shape children's developmental trajectories. However, this stage in Palestine faces increasing challenges that vary in intensity across governorates due to geographic, social, and political disparities, particularly regarding access to early care and learning services and their quality.

Jerusalem Governorate

Jerusalem is one of the most politically complex governorates, divided into Palestinian communities inside and outside the Annexation and Expansion Wall. The governorate faces unique challenges arising from its special legal and political status, most notably Israeli restrictions on institutional licensing, demolitions, and discriminatory municipal service provision, especially in areas outside the Palestinian Authority's control. Childcare centers suffer from poor infrastructure and a shortage of qualified staff, which negatively impacts enrollment rates.

This study focused on childcare centers located outside the Annexation and Expansion Wall, where licensing and oversight fall under the responsibility of the Palestinian Ministry of Social Development. Most of these areas are classified as Area C according to the Oslo Accords, while the occupation municipality manages licensing and supervision within the areas inside the wall. The number of officially registered childcare centers increased from only 7 centers in 2020 to 18 centers in 2024, reflecting a 157% increase. Nonetheless, this growth remains insufficient to meet the rising population needs, and access to early childhood care services continues to be limited amid ongoing challenges.

Hebron Governorate

Hebron is the most densely populated governorate in the West Bank, accounting for approximately 25.3% of the total population. The governorate hosts a mix of private and community-run childcare centers. However, the early childhood sector in Hebron suffers from a clear geographic imbalance, with most services concentrated in urban centers, while rural and border areas face limited service availability and challenges in oversight and quality assurance. Despite its population density, licensed childcare centers in Hebron represent only 7.9% of the total centers in the West Bank, indicating a significant gap between demand and supply.

Nablus Governorate

Following Hebron in population size, Nablus accounts for 13.2% of the West Bank population and demonstrates relatively active engagement in the early childhood sector, hosting about 17.5% of the childcare centers in the West Bank. This activity is attributed to the presence of active civil society organizations and growing community interest in early childhood services. Nevertheless, this activity does not cover all areas; many villages and surrounding regions still suffer from coverage gaps and a lack of specialized programs for comprehensive care,

especially for children with special needs.

Bethlehem Governorate

Bethlehem's population constitutes roughly 7.5% of the West Bank population. The governorate has experienced gradual growth in the number of childcare centers, which now account for 9.6% of all centers in the West Bank. The majority of these centers are concentrated in urban areas and main population centers, whereas rural areas and small towns continue to experience limited-service availability, particularly regarding facility safety standards, infrastructure, and the quality of educational programs offered to children.

2- Policies and Legislation Governing Early Childhood Development

Palestine recognizes the importance of early childhood development within its strategic and official frameworks. Among the key documents and policies is the:

National Framework for Early Childhood Development in Palestine (2017–2022)

This framework was developed by the Palestinian government in partnership with several donor agencies. It focuses on providing comprehensive and integrated services for children from birth to six years old. Its main objectives are to:

- Improve the quality of services provided to children
- Enhance sectoral integration (health, education, protection, social development)
- Support parents and caregivers
- Develop supportive policies and regulatory systems

Although the framework's specified period has ended, it remains a primary reference point, and efforts are underway to update it or adopt a new strategy.

Resolution Council Ministers No. (11) of 2011 - Regulatory Bylaw for Childcare Centers

This decision serves as the primary legal framework regulating the licensing and operation of childcare centers. It includes standards for infrastructure, staffing, child-to-caregiver ratios, safety requirements, and curricula. Although the decision was issued over a decade ago, gaps remain in compliance and enforcement, particularly in areas outside full control of the Palestinian Authority. No regulatory bylaws have been issued to oversee home-based childcare centers, which are estimated to number in the hundreds, lack oversight, and have insufficient data available. Discussions with the Ministry of Social Development revealed that a draft of a new regulatory bylaw has been prepared but has not yet been officially approved.

Palestinian Child Law No. (7) of 2004

This law guarantees the child's right to early care and education and obligates the state to provide a suitable environment for the child's growth and development. However, implementation remains limited on the ground due to political challenges and resource constraints.

3- Key Stakeholders in Early Childhood Development

Governmental Entities

- **Ministry of Social Development:** Responsible for licensing and regulating childcare centers and monitoring their compliance with standards.
- **Ministry of Education:** Focuses on kindergartens serving children aged 4–6 years, providing preparatory classes in some public schools, and participates in developing comprehensive early childhood policies.
- **Ministry of Health:** Oversees the health and psychological aspects related to early child development.

For licensing purposes, an inter-ministerial committee, including representatives from these three ministries and the Civil Defense, conducts annual inspections of safety procedures and

ensures childcare centers meet official standards

Civil Society and Local Organizations

Numerous community associations and centers play an active role in providing early childhood services, particularly in rural and marginalized areas. These organizations often demonstrate greater flexibility in responding to local needs despite limited funding and technical capacity.

International Organizations

Organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children play a significant role in providing technical and financial support, developing pilot models for early childhood services, training personnel, and supporting national policies.

Recently, only one project specifically targeting childcare centers was implemented, funded by the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and supervised by UNICEF. The project included professional training for caregivers and distribution of educational toys—such as LEGO sets—to selected centers. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Social Development also provided a one-time financial grant to kindergarten caregivers as compensation for salary interruptions caused by lockdowns.

Results and Analysis

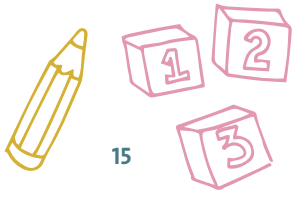
1- Legal status

The survey results indicated that all childcare centers participating in the study are officially registered with the Ministry of Social Development, reflecting a growing commitment to the legal framework regulating this sector. The majority reported holding valid licenses and having no recorded legal violations, although the duration of license validity varied. Some stated that they had completed all licensing procedures and were awaiting the issuance of the official document, while others reported delays of over six months in receiving their license, requiring new insurance coverage once it is issued. In two cases, the Civil Defense requested specific modifications, which are currently being implemented to finalize the license renewal process.

Childcare Center Manager: *"I submitted my documents back in January, and now we're in June. They keep telling me the license has been issued in Ramallah, but there is no mail service to deliver it."*

It was observed that a small number of childcare centers submitted incomplete information or provided registration numbers in an inconsistent format. This may indicate a limited understanding among some childcare centers administrations regarding the registration certificate, including its issuance and expiry dates. Such findings point to the need for strengthening documentation and administrative practices in these centers.

Ownership of the centers also varies, with the majority (24 centers, representing 86% of the total sample) owned by individuals, while the remainder are operated by community-based organizations or charitable associations. Three centers are directly managed by charitable associations, whereas a fourth association has transferred the management of its center to a private-sector individual. This diversity reflects the plurality of stakeholders in the sector; however, it also underscores the need for clearer and more standardized frameworks for legal oversight and supervision to ensure consistent compliance with unified standards.



Enrollment and Attendance

The data indicate that the maximum capacity for children aged 0–12 months across the 28 targeted childcare centers is 251 children, averaging 9.6 children per center. This capacity increases to 330 children (12.2 per center) for the 12–24 months age group, and further to 385 children (13.8 per center) for ages 2–3 years, before slightly declining to 357 children (13.2 per center) in the 3–4 years category.
However, the actual average number of children enrolled over the past four months was below the maximum capacity, with averages of 6.7 for the 0–12 months group, 7.5 for 12–24 months, 10.6 for 2–3 years, and 9 for 3–4 years.

Childcare Center Manager: *"No one checks on home-based nurseries. The legal and compliant provider always bears all the responsibility and pressure, while those who violate the rules simply turn their backs and avoid accountability."*

During discussions, childcare center managers expressed concern over the proliferation of "home-based childcare," which offers services at lower fees but fails to comply with the established basic standards. Some managers attributed the hesitation to enroll children under one year old to a tragic incident involving the death of a four-month-old infant in a Ramallah childcare center during the study period. Regarding the decline in the number of children aged 3–4 years, managers linked this to parents' preference to transfer their children to preschool "Buds/Butterflies" classes, with further decreases anticipated due to kindergartens beginning to accept children as young as two and a half years—a practice some managers consider contrary to official guidelines.

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

Data indicated that only one-quarter of the childcare centers reported being equipped to accommodate children with disabilities. Moreover, the average number of children with disabilities enrolled across all age groups over the past four months was very low. Only one center reported having children with disabilities in the 0–12 months age group, and three centers in the 12–24 months group. During discussions, it became clear that many centers either do not accept children with disabilities or only admit those with mild conditions due to an inability to provide the necessary continuous support, as these children often require a dedicated caregiver.

The Ministry of Social Development stated that the guidelines mandate the integration of children with mild to moderate disabilities, though no clear definitions for these terms are provided. Since 2019, the instructions have emphasized excluding children with health-related issues. Some centers reported accepting children with special needs, such as those with learning difficulties, children on the autism spectrum, and cases requiring specialist follow-up, including hearing impairments or other conditions. In such cases, additional support is typically provided by the childcare center manager, an assistant caregiver, or a trainee, if available

Services Provided

Childcare center managers explained that the services offered are diverse and include: providing a safe and comfortable environment for children; delivering health, psychological, and social care; early childhood education and social skills development; recreational and physical activities both inside and outside the center; provision of healthy meals; organizing various events such as games, dancing, and field trips; speech support and behavior modification; attention to personal hygiene; and offering additional services as needed. Continuous communication with parents is emphasized to monitor the child's growth and development. However, most centers lack a clear educational vision and mission that reflect an integrated educational model, such as Montessori or Reggio Emilia approaches, which limits the potential to develop a distinct educational identity for the institution (see Appendix 5.2).

Administrative Challenges and Communication with Institutions

During the data collection process, a clear weakness was observed in the administrative capacities of some nursery management teams, particularly in areas such as data collection and electronic submission, effective use of official communication channels, message reception and professional communication skills, as well as limited networking and cooperation with local and international institutions to meet certain needs. The Palestinian Vision Foundation can play a significant role in bridging these informational and professional gaps.

Additionally, there was noted ambiguity or lack of understanding of the Ministry of Social Development's instructions. For example, in the Nablus Directorate, some directors believed that contracting buses for transporting children to and from their homes was not permitted, and they were unaware that university or college students could be accepted as trainees. In Hebron, a previous ban was reported by the Directorate of Development on accepting trainees in one nursery, leading directors to believe this ban was absolute rather than conditional upon specific requirements.

Recommendations

Based on the above, the overall legal status of childcare centers can be described as acceptable, while emphasizing the need for substantial improvements in several areas to ensure the quality of services provided. The key recommendations are as follows:

Adopt a clear educational vision grounded in an accredited learning model that ensures the holistic development of children and responds to their diverse needs.

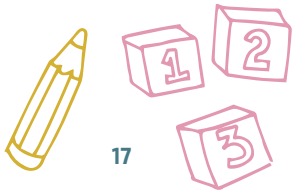
Strengthen the administrative capacities of daycare directors, including leadership, planning, and resource management skills, in addition to enhancing communication and interpersonal skills with parents and relevant stakeholders.

Promote the inclusion of children with disabilities through:

- Dedicated support programs and improved absorption capacities, particularly in rural areas and for younger age groups (0–12 months).
- Utilizing final-year trainees in early childhood education as assistants under the supervision of the lead educator.
- Encouraging mothers' participation, following short training, as volunteer companions for their children for a limited number of hours per week.

Facilitate Ministry of Social Development procedures related to engaging volunteers and trainees (e.g., reducing the required documents such as a criminal record clearance and medical fitness certificates), to encourage the adoption of innovative and supportive solutions for children and their families.

Raise awareness and provide training in case management, with a focus on handling children with disabilities and those at risk of violence, in order to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all.



2- Infrastructure and facilities

Field evidence indicates that infrastructure remains one of the most pressing challenges facing daycare centers in the targeted governorates (Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, and Bethlehem). While most centers comply with the minimum standards set forth by the Ministry of Social Development, particularly Council of Ministers' Decision No. (11) of 2011, findings from surveys and interviews with daycare directors and parents revealed considerable variation in the quality of facilities and essential elements such as ventilation, availability of play areas, and adherence to public health and safety requirements.

Location and Space

In most urban areas, daycare centers operate from ground-floor apartments within residential buildings, adapted to accommodate childcare activities. A limited number are situated in standalone houses. This urban architectural pattern often restricts access to safe, dedicated spaces for play and learning, especially in densely populated settings such as Nablus, Hebron, and the outskirts of Jerusalem. Furthermore, as most centers function in rented premises, their capacity to undertake structural modifications aimed at improving infrastructure remains limited.

The majority of childcare centers are located on the ground floor, facilitating children's access, reducing safety risks, and offering greater accessibility for children with disabilities or special needs. Only two centers are situated on the first floor, and one is located in a basement level. In rural areas, outdoor spaces tend to be relatively larger; however, they often lack the necessary technical adjustments, such as safe flooring, shade structures, or protective fencing. Additionally, the cost of upgrades is heightened by Civil Defense requirements, which may include the installation of protective walls, railings, and security cameras.

Childcare Center Manager: *"I rented this house, opened the nursery, and installed artificial grass in the outdoor yard. The license from the civil defense was conditional on having a wall around the grass-covered area, and everything costs money."*

Safety and Infrastructure

The safety assessment includes evaluating the structural soundness of the building, its preparedness for emergencies (such as the presence of emergency exits, fire extinguishers, and alarm systems connected to Civil Defense), the availability of an adequate number of child-friendly toilets, and the center's readiness to accommodate children with disabilities.

Field visits revealed a continuing need for regular safety inspections and sanitation checks. Safety inspections are typically coordinated annually between the Directorates of Social Development, the Civil Defense, and the Ministry of Health. Only seven childcare centers reported being fully equipped to accommodate children with disabilities, and just four of them had actually enrolled children from this group. Some centers also accept children with special needs, such as those with learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorders, or developmental delays where the child's mental age is lower than their chronological age. This highlights the need to enhance technical and educational readiness to address the diverse needs of children.

Childcare Center Manager: *"I have an employee who comes once a week to disinfect the tools, toys, kitchen, classrooms, and playgrounds"*

Some daycare centers employ a staff member one day per week for sanitation purposes. There is potential to strengthen these efforts by providing centers with dedicated sanitation devices designed for early childhood settings, as detailed in Annex

(5.4). In larger cities such as Nablus, Hebron, and Al-Eizariya, the absence of designated drop-off and pick-up areas poses a safety risk for children. It is recommended to coordinate with municipalities to allocate temporary parking spaces in front of daycare centers for this purpose.

Facilities and Indoor/Outdoor Spaces

The twenty-eight targeted daycare centers collectively have 118 classrooms, averaging 4.2 rooms per center. Classroom sizes range from 4 to 30 square meters, with an average area of 16.4 square meters per room. Most centers reported having playgrounds ranging in size from 16 to 500 square meters, with an average of 102.7 square meters per center. The majority indicated the availability of child-appropriate restrooms as well as access to clean drinking water, with many centers using chilled bottled water. However, some centers face issues with outdated sanitary facilities; one center reported that its restrooms were not suitable for children's sizes.

This situation underscores the urgent need for rehabilitation interventions in a limited number of centers, especially given the constrained resources available for regular maintenance.

Equipment

Data showed variability in the availability of appropriate furniture across centers:

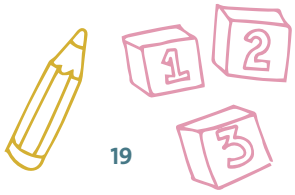
- 266 small beds (an average of 10.2 beds per center)
- 282 sleeping mats (11.3 mats on average)
- 185 tables (7.4 tables on average)
- 761 chairs (30.4 chairs on average)

All centers have kitchens and food preparation areas; several also possess toy cabinets and child-specific storage units. Nonetheless, the need to update equipment remains pressing, particularly as some centers rely on donated furniture from community organizations without verifying compliance with quality standards.

Additionally, some centers lack designated learning areas, such as reading corners or building blocks stations, which negatively impacts the quality of the educational environment and its ability to support active learning. Most centers would benefit from providing portable plastic furniture (suitable cabinets or beds) that can be rearranged to expand activity spaces as needed.

Quantitative Data – Summary of Infrastructure and Equipment

Indicator	Total in 28 Center	Average	Highest Value	Lowest Value
Number of Classrooms	118	4.21	9	2
(Classrooms size (m^2	459.5	16.41	30	4
(Outdoor yard size (m^2	2875	102.68	500	16
(Average play area per child (m^2	—	3.89	30	1
Number of beds	266	10.23	35	4
Number of mattresses	282	11.28	35	2
Number of tables	185	7.40	45	2
Number of chairs	761	30.44	60	8



Geographical and Municipal Challenges

Geographical characteristics and municipal planning pose additional challenges to the development of daycare infrastructure, especially in densely populated urban areas lacking public open spaces and expandable areas. Local regulations in some municipalities also affect the ability of centers to expand or undertake necessary structural modifications.

Current Infrastructure Needs

Based on qualitative data analysis and discussions during field visits, the current needs of childcare centers can be summarized as follows:

1. **Interior painting and refurbishment**: including murals or aesthetic improvements. Partnerships could be established with fine arts colleges where students create murals in daycare centers where feasible.
2. **Efficient energy and cooling systems**: to ensure a comfortable and healthy environment.
3. **Creating a safe, age-appropriate environment**: including the installation of retractable shades, improved entrances, and paving of outdoor areas.
4. **Enhancing reception areas:** to create a welcoming atmosphere for children and parents.
5. **Rehabilitation of outdoor playgrounds:** with safe flooring, shades, and age-appropriate equipment.
6. **Providing outdoor play equipment:** such as swings, seesaws, and balance games suitable for children aged 1.5 to 4 years.
7. **Improving restroom conditions**: including structural upgrades, hygiene, and replacement of unsuitable facilities.
8. **Installing new doors**: for emergency exits and main gates to enhance security.
9. Upgrading sanitation and service facilities: to ensure a healthy and sustainable environment.
10. **Framing glass balconies:** in infant rooms to increase the play area within classrooms.

The Palestinian Vision Organization could:

- Conduct detailed technical assessments of the infrastructure in each daycare center.
- Provide small grants, following consultations with the centers, to rehabilitate educational spaces and water and sanitation facilities, within a defined financial ceiling and agreed timelines, adhering to specific quality standards. Each center would determine its priorities.

The Ministry of Social Development could:

Develop a comprehensive national guideline for appropriate daycare infrastructure, including building specifications, safety standards, and ventilation and heating requirements.

3. Human Resources

Employment Status

The study results reveal a significant disparity in the qualifications and experience of educational staff working in daycare centers, reflecting structural challenges related to the training and retention of the workforce in this vital sector.

First: Number of Staff and Job Distribution

The number of caregivers in daycare centers ranges from 1 to 7, with an average of 3.5 caregivers per center. In some cases, the daycare director also performs caregiver duties, indicating that most centers are medium-sized. However, this number often does not correspond adequately to the number of children served, as the current average ratio is 9.4 children per caregiver, rising to 13.4 during peak periods, which may negatively impact the quality of care and educational services provided.

Job Category	Total	Average	Highest Value	Lowest Value
Caregiver	99	3.54	7	1
Assistant Caregiver	33	1.27	4	0
Administrative Staff	29	1.04	2	0
Support Staff	16	0.59	2	0

Most daycare centers lack specialized support personnel, such as assistant caregivers, educational counselors, or psychological specialists. The average number of assistant caregivers is 1.27 per center, and they often lack adequate training and experience. Some centers reported relying temporarily on external specialists for diagnosing specific cases.

Employment Status

A significant issue is the low wage levels, as several directors indicated that salaries fall below the minimum wage. This is attributed to the limited monthly income from parents (ranging between 300 and 500 shekels per child) and the irregularity of payments during periods such as summer vacations, Ramadan, strikes, or the COVID-19 pandemicThis situation negatively affects workforce stability and diminishes employee motivation, contributing to high staff turnover rates. It also limits the sector's ability to attract qualified educational professionals, especially given the low societal regard for the profession of daycare caregiver.

Childcare Center Manager: *From time to time, a speech and hearing specialist visits us to examine the children, and a vision specialist also comes. For certain cases, we ask parents to take their child to a specialist."*

Academic Qualifications

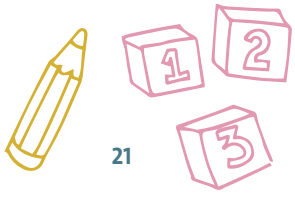
The educational qualifications of the staff varied; some hold only a high school diploma or irregular training certificates, while others possess a bachelor's degree in educational or non-educational fields. A limited number hold a diploma in early childhood education. The data indicate that about 28% of the nursery teachers have specialized qualifications (a bachelor's degree or diploma in education/early childhood), whereas the remaining majority do not have sufficient academic qualifications.

Although many universities and intermediate colleges (see Appendix 5.1) offer relevant academic programs, this disparity highlights the urgent need to develop systematic and sustainable vocational training and qualification programs aimed at improving the quality of education and care provided during this critical stage of a child's life.

Years of Experience

The data showed significant variation in years of experience among the staff:

- The average experience of caregivers is 5.5 years.
- Experience ranges from a few weeks to over 30 years.



- Daycare directors tend to have relatively longer experience, averaging 7.9 years.
- Assistants and support staff have noticeably less experience, averaging 1.35 years per assistant.

This variation reflects the need for ongoing qualification programs that take into account the diversity of backgrounds and levels of experience among the staff.

Training and Professional Development

Data show that the majority of caregivers have participated in no more than two training courses over the past two years, while daycare directors averaged three training sessions during the same period. Participation rates were significantly lower among assistant caregivers and support staff, with some centers reporting no training participation at all. This indicates a lack of investment in capacity building, despite ongoing changes in modern childcare concepts and practices.

Discussions highlighted the urgent need to train caregivers in areas such as:

- First aid and child protection in emergency situations
- Managing children with autism or learning difficulties
- Interactive teaching methods (e.g., storytelling, role-playing, simulations, "expert cloak")
- Training in international curricula such as Montessori (see Annex 5.2) or alternative approaches like the Reggio Emilia method.

Practical Challenges and On-the-Job Training

Daycare centers face difficulties in sending caregivers for training during working hours due to the absence of substitutes, especially when training involves multiple consecutive sessions rather than a single event. Saturday was noted as the least busy day, making it suitable for organizing 2–3 hour morning training sessions, with the director or a substitute caregiver providing temporary coverage.

While some suggested holding training sessions after working hours (post 4 PM), others rejected this due to family commitments. It is therefore recommended to adopt blended learning approaches (short in-person sessions followed by flexible online training).

Social Perception

Discussions revealed limited community understanding of the daycare center's role in early childhood development. Some parents view daycare merely as a place for feeding and diaper changing, which sometimes leads them to prefer unlicensed home-based daycare options. Several directors noted that university students tend to avoid selecting daycare centers as sites for practical training, favoring kindergartens or primary schools instead. This preference is attributed to low salaries and the low social status of the "daycare caregiver" profession, which is often stigmatized. In addition to poor wages, these social perceptions hinder the recruitment of qualified caregivers.

Childcare Center Manager: ***"One of the nursery teachers identifies herself as a kindergarten teacher, not a nursery caregiver."***

Current Human Resource Needs

Based on qualitative analysis of survey and interview data, the main needs can be summarized as follows:

Recruitment and Qualification

- The need for qualified and specialized staff in early childhood care.
- Ensuring retention after training by improving working conditions.
- Flexible hiring based on the number of children, especially at the start of the school year.
- Increasing the number of caregivers and organizing regular qualification courses and workshops.

Training and Professional Development

- Continuous development in care, education, and handling special cases.
- Courses on mental health and active learning methods.
- Expanding training opportunities in collaboration with universities and partner institutions.

Improving Salaries and Work Environment

- Raising wages to match living costs.
- Enhancing the work environment by organizing recreational and recognition events for staff.

Planning and Organization

- Developing an annual training plan at the governorate level (Directorate of Social Development).
- Ensuring sufficient staff numbers to guarantee individualized care.
- Adopting flexible training mechanisms during and outside working hours.

The Palestinian Vision Organization, through ***the Afaaq project***, can support these training initiatives, raise awareness among daycare centers about available training opportunities at universities and colleges (see Annex 5.1), and network with institutions working in early childhood, such as the Palestinian Counseling Center or organizations active in rural and Area C regions, to provide targeted support.

Coordination can also be established with national bodies such as:

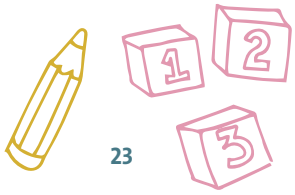
- The Palestinian Red Crescent / Civil Defense to provide free first aid training courses.

The Ministry of Education (National Institute for Educational Training) to offer simplified courses during the summer[3].

Additionally, the Afaaq project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development and local media organizations, can work to raise community awareness through media campaigns that highlight the role of daycare centers as specialized and essential hubs for early childhood development, facilitating a smooth transition to kindergarten and formal schooling.

> *A mother said, "I took a free course for Palestinian women where they discussed the Montessori approach to caring for children. After that, I decided not to leave my daughter with my mother or mother-in-law anymore. I want to promote a program that emphasizes nurseries as important centers for early childhood development—not just places to watch over children until their parents come back."*

3. The Ministry of Education could consider including childcare educators in the specialized professional diploma programs offered by the National Institute for Educational Training, in collaboration with local universities.



4. Educational Resources and Learning Environment

A rich and diverse learning environment is fundamental to early childhood development, as it directly contributes to enhancing children's cognitive, social, and linguistic growth. The study results revealed a clear disparity in the availability and quality of educational resources in the surveyed daycare centers, including books, art supplies, educational toys, and technological tools.

Books and Stories

During interviews and field visits, daycare directors, caregivers, and parents emphasized the importance of providing a rich educational environment that supports children's growth. Most centers reported generally good availability of books and illustrated children's stories. However, the quantity varied significantly: some centers had more than 50 books or stories, while others had fewer than five, with a few centers unable to specify their inventory. Regarding quality, while some centers described their books as being in good condition, others noted the need for renewal due to wear and age.

> *Director: "The stories we have are colorful but outdated. Some children are no longer interested in these stories. We need new stories that spark their curiosity, especially for the gifted children."*

Art Supplies (Colors, Paper, Clay, etc.)

Most respondents agreed that there is an acceptable availability of art supplies such as colors, paper, and clay. Although most centers maintain a minimum stock of these materials, both quantity and quality vary considerably. There is a need for regular replenishment of consumables, yet there is difficulty in restocking during the academic year, which affect the continuity of creative and expressive activities.

> Caregiver: *"Sometimes we have to reuse paper and clay multiple times because we can't afford to buy new supplies during the school year."*

Educational Toys

There is significant variation in the availability of educational toys. Some centers have a good number of toys, while others lack them entirely. Many caregivers reported that the quality of available toys is poor, often outdated, and sometimes unsuitable for the target age group. Additionally, there is a notable shortage of toys appropriate for children aged 0–2 years. Data and discussions revealed a substantial gap in the provision of safe, developmentally appropriate educational toys for infants and toddlers.

Technological and Digital Resources

Regarding technological and digital tools, the situation appeared more challenging. The majority of daycare directors reported the absence of educational digital tools such as projectors or interactive screens. Even in centers where such devices are available, they are mostly used for administrative purposes rather than educational ones. A significant training gap was identified among daycare staff; field visits revealed an urgent need to train directors and staff in the effective educational use of technology.

> *Caregiver: "There is a television in the room, which I sometimes use to show animal pictures and sometimes to play songs for the children."*

Learning Environment Readiness

The quality of the learning environment varied significantly across centers. While some centers have designated learning corners (such as reading areas, building blocks, and nature corners), many lack this type of internal organization, which is a fundamental standard in early childhood programs. Some directors pointed out the high cost of ready-made educational kits. Several caregivers noted cramped classroom spaces, poor ventilation, and inadequate lighting, which negatively affect children's comfort and their ability to interact and explore.

> Director: *"The space is not sufficient to allocate cabinets as a learning corner. We are looking for cabinets and educational materials that allow us to reuse the space for educational activities."*

Age-Appropriateness of Educational Materials

Many responses highlighted a gap in the suitability of educational materials for children aged 0–4 years, both in terms of material type (e.g., small plastic parts or sharp edges) and the skills required to use them. Nevertheless, a limited number of centers reported using locally made educational materials that reflect Palestinian culture and context—an encouraging practice that requires support and expansion.

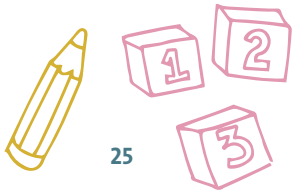
Summary of Priority Needs in Educational Resources

Based on the qualitative data analysis and discussions with directors, some caregivers, and children's parents, the following needs emerge as priorities to develop the learning environment in nurseries:

1. **Age-appropriate educational toys:** Provide toys that develop cognitive and physical skills, such as construction toys (puzzles, blocks, LEGO), and safe interactive toys for children aged 0–2 years.
2. **Interactive educational materials:** Enhance the learning environment with varied sensory and visual materials (interactive stories, educational posters, magnetic or stick-on wall games).
3. **Art supplies:** Supply high-quality, safe art materials, including watercolours, play-dough, regular and coloured sand, waterproof aprons, cardboard, and paintbrushes.
4. **New books and stories:** Equip childcare centers with colourful, diverse, and interactive books and stories that respect the cultural context and support proper Arabic language development.
5. **Natural learning tools:** Incorporate natural elements (stones, leaves, seeds, sand, water) into educational activities to promote sensory learning and exploration skills.
6. **Technological tools:** Provide interactive screens, projectors, laptops, and printers to support educational and administrative activities, along with operational supplies (paper, printer ink).
7. **Planned integration of technology:** Develop a phased plan to integrate technology into educational activities interactively, considering the children's age and cultural context.
8. **Playground renewal:** Update large outdoor play equipment (such as slides, trampolines, balance games) and design new games that stimulate the senses and physical movement.
9. **Musical instruments:** Support classrooms with simple musical instruments (small drums, hand percussion, shakers) to energize children and support movement activities.
10. **Internal sound system:** Equip nurseries with an internal sound system to support group sessions and interactive activities.

PalVision Organization, through the project, can:

1. Provide technical and financial support packages for nurseries to update and equip educational materials according to approved educational standards, allowing each nursery to set its priorities.
2. Design and distribute a locally made "Comprehensive Learning Corner" containing materials suitable for all age groups, with consideration for children with special needs.
3. Train caregivers to design play- and experimentation-based learning activities using available local resources.
4. Encourage community initiatives to support the preparation of learning environments in marginalized areas through volunteer campaigns or partnerships with municipalities.



5. Family and Local Community Engagement

The relationship between daycare centers, families, and the local community is a critical element in ensuring the quality of early childhood services. Educational literature indicates that active family involvement contributes to improving children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, enhances parents' trust in the institution, and creates a more integrated environment for the child. When parents feel they are genuine partners in the learning and caregiving process, this fosters a more holistic environment that increases the child's chances of receiving a balanced and comprehensive educational experience.

The study results revealed a clear variation in communication patterns between daycare centers and families, as well as the level of interaction with the local community, highlighting the need for systematic interventions to strengthen this aspect.

Methods of Communication with Parents

The participating daycare centers used a mix of traditional and modern methods to communicate with parents. The most prominent means were instant messaging applications (such as WhatsApp and Messenger), which are used almost daily to send updates, photos, and notes related to the children and their daily life at the center. This digital communication method facilitates rapid access to parents and enhances their sense of continuous awareness of their child's daily activities. Face-to-face meetings, whether individual or group, also form part of the communication strategy in some centers, with periodic meetings organized to discuss children's behavioral and cognitive development or to address specific issues. However, the regularity of these meetings varies widely—from as few as one annual meeting to regular monthly sessions.

Additionally, phone calls and messages remain common, especially for handling emergencies or urgent notifications. Some centers have also created social media pages on platforms like Facebook and TikTok to promote activities or engage parents in following their children's achievements. In contrast, paper correspondence and emails were less frequently used, generally limited to general announcements or invitations to events.

> *Mother of a child: "I feel that when they send me pictures of my son on WhatsApp, it's like I'm living his day with him even while I'm at work."*

Despite this variety, interactions mostly remained one-way—from the center to the parents—with no systematic mechanisms for feedback or genuine engagement, limiting families' ability to participate positively and offer suggestions or comments to improve services.

Meetings with Parents

Regular meetings represent one of the most significant forms of institutional communication between daycare centers and families. However, the study revealed marked disparities in the frequency and number of these meetings. While some centers hold monthly meetings, others limit themselves to one annual gathering, often with low parental attendance. The study team also noted the absence of unified policies or institutional guidelines specifying the frequency, content, or expected outcomes of these meetings, which impacts their quality and the degree of parental commitment.

Parental Involvement in Activities

Many daycare centers organized seasonal activities aimed at engaging families and the local community, such as end-of-term parties, celebrations of national and religious occasions, open days, heritage days, and recreational events in parks or playgrounds—similar to those arranged in June 2025 with support from ***the Nomo project*** implemented by PalVision. However, several centers reported that parental participation in these activities remained relatively limited. Directors attributed this low involvement to various factors, most notably work pressures and living conditions that make it difficult for many parents to allocate sufficient time

for participation.

Some caregivers also noted a lack of organized invitations or effective encouragement from the daycare centers to motivate parental engagement, alongside limited awareness among parents and community sectors regarding the daycare's role as a comprehensive educational and developmental environment in early childhood. Many still perceive daycare primarily as a place for basic care, without recognizing its significant impact on building children's cognitive, social, and emotional capacities during their formative years, which form the foundation for their later development.

Mother of a child: *"I wish I could participate more, but there isn't a clear invitation or a set schedule. Sometimes we only find out about the activity two days in advance."*

A range of possible activities was proposed to enhance interaction between parents and daycare centers, including:

- Mother and Child bazaars, as community events that bring families together and allow participation in educational and recreational activities.
- Outdoor recreational days, such as organizing an open day for all daycare centers at the municipal playground to strengthen bonds among children, parents, and the local community.
- Heritage activities and community murals.
- Awareness workshops on parenting challenges, such as managing stubbornness, screen time use, coping with autism spectrum disorders, and more.
- Media programs highlighting the importance of daycare centers in supporting comprehensive child development across cognitive, social, and emotional domains.

Receiving Feedback and Complaints

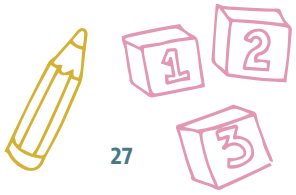
The study revealed weaknesses in the presence of formal mechanisms for receiving and systematically documenting complaints and feedback from parents. In most daycare centers, there are no evaluation tools or feedback channels that would enhance effective communication with families. For example, dedicated suggestion boxes are absent, and periodic surveys to assess parents' satisfaction with the services provided are not distributed. Many centers also lack electronic evaluation forms or dedicated feedback meetings. This deficiency limits opportunities for participatory development and reduces the centers' ability to respond flexibly and effectively to the needs of children and their families.

Relationship with the Local Community

At the community level, some individual initiatives were observed, launched by certain daycare centers, including cooperation with municipalities, libraries, or local health centers, as well as benefiting from women's associations or community institutions to provide supportive services for children. However, these efforts remain limited and unstructured, lacking a sustainable institutional framework to ensure their continuity and long-term impact.

Director: *"I am a volunteer with the Red Crescent. It is possible to arrange a training course on first aid and handling children in emergency situations."*

To activate this area, strategic partnerships can be built with existing local institutions, such as maternal and child health centers, the Palestinian Red Crescent and Civil Defense to implement trainings or awareness campaigns, in addition to cooperating with municipal libraries or community centers in neighborhoods to conduct various educational and recreational activities for children and their families. On the other hand, community or specialized institutions like the Palestinian Vision Foundation can play an important role in facilitating access to resources and services, alongside providing technical capacity-building support to daycare centers, thus enhancing their role as effective institutions in early childhood development.



Key Needs in Family and Community Relations

Based on qualitative analysis of responses and interviews with parents, directors, and some caregivers, the following needs emerge:

Enhancing Systematic Communication with Parents

- Sending weekly messages and updates including the child's progress, behavior, and activities.
- Developing more organized digital communication tools (educational apps, weekly newsletters).
- Organizing regular, planned meetings with parents.

Parental Training and Awareness

- Organizing workshops on positive parenting skills, behavior management, and screen time impact.
- Producing written and visual awareness materials.[4]
- Engaging parents in short courses in cooperation with community or academic institutions.

Shared Interactive Activities

- Organizing recreational and educational events involving families with their children.
- Designing programs such as "Mother and Child Day" or "Best Shared Home Activity."
- Involving parents in simple classroom activities (reading stories, planting, drawing).

Activating Feedback from Parents

- Establishing effective suggestion boxes.
- Distributing short, periodic satisfaction surveys.
- Organizing individual meetings or focused discussion groups to follow up on parents' impressions.

Building Effective Community Partnerships

- Signing cooperation agreements with health, cultural centers, and civil society institutions.
- Networking with existing initiatives in childhood and family care fields.
- Inviting volunteers and organizations to support daycare activities.

The Afaaq Project, **implemented by PalVision, can:**

1. Design an integrated communication plan with parents that includes regular meetings, newsletters, and online communication groups.
2. Conduct awareness workshops for families on the importance of their participation in their children's holistic development, raising their awareness of their rights and responsibilities.
3. Launch simple tools to assess parental satisfaction and utilize the results to improve service quality.
4. Build partnerships with local community institutions (health centers, municipalities, libraries, community organizations) to enhance daycare resources and increase community engagement.
5. Establish effective collaborations with universities and colleges to help change the stereotypical perception of daycare centers as essential institutions in early child-

4. "There are many organizations that have produced educational and written materials, such as UNICEF, which produced 'Early Childhood Development – My Abilities: What We Need to Know About Early Childhood Development.' You can access it here: https://www.unicef.org/sop/media/1416/file/UNICEF%20-%20Parent%20booklet%20online.pdf

hood. This can be achieved by encouraging practical training for early childhood education students within daycare centers, motivating them to volunteer and complete community service hours, as well as promoting awareness of the sector's importance through academic programs and student activities.

Gap Analysis

Based on the analysis of the four main pillars assessed in the evaluation of daycare centers in the governorates of Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, and Bethlehem (infrastructure, human resources, educational resources, and family and community relations), as well as the policies and programs axis, a set of structural and operational gaps can be identified as follows:

First: Structural Gaps

These gaps relate to the institutional framework, organizational structure, and public policies governing the operation of daycare centers:

1. Absence of Unified and Updated National Standards

- Current policies require updating to include home-based daycare centers, the age groups served in daycare and kindergartens, and aspects related to managing special cases such as children with disabilities and those at risk, with clear mechanisms to support their integration.
- Lack of a detailed national guideline specifying infrastructure requirements, staff qualifications, and appropriate learning environments, including building specifications, safety standards, and ventilation and heating conditions.

2. Legislative and Oversight Deficiencies

- Many daycare centers lack a clear educational vision based on an accredited teaching model and an effective community engagement strategy, alongside an absence of systematic mechanisms for institutional performance evaluation.
- Weak educational supervision by relevant authorities, with monitoring efforts focusing mainly on administrative and logistical aspects, without adequate follow-up on educational and pedagogical quality.

3. Limited Institutional Partnerships

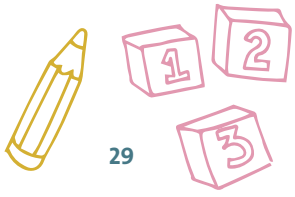
- Partnerships with local community institutions are limited and unstructured, with an absence of clear networking strategies despite significant potential for benefit.
- Poor coordination between governmental sectors, such as the Ministries of Social Development and Education, creating gaps in delivering integrated services to children and their families.

Second: Operational Gaps

These gaps focus on the daily challenges faced by daycare centers in service delivery:

Infrastructure

- Inadequate suitability of buildings regarding space and scarcity of safe outdoor areas designated for physical activities.
- Deficiency in basic facilities such as playgrounds, child-sized restrooms, activity rooms, and isolation rooms.
- Significant disparities in infrastructure quality between urban centers and rural or marginalized areas.
- Weakness in regular maintenance due to the absence of dedicated budgets.



Human Resources

- Insufficient number of caregivers relative to children and lack of proper qualifications, especially in dealing with children with special needs and varying degrees of disabilities.
- Limited opportunities for regular professional training and development for caregivers and administrators.
- Weak incentive and salary systems reduce daycare centers' ability to attract qualified staff, leading to high turnover of skilled personnel and reliance on less specialized or inexperienced caregivers.
- Lack of clear professional pathways for promotion and specialization in early childhood education.

Educational Resources and Learning Environment

- Shortage of quality educational materials suitable for different age groups, including books, educational toys, and technological tools, with a pronounced gap in resources for infants (0–2 years) and children with disabilities or special needs.
- Weak interactive learning environments based on play and exploration.
- Lack of integration of simple technological media in educational programs.
- Unsustainability in renewing art supplies and educational materials due to limited financial resources.

Family Relations

- Weak regular interaction with parents, both in terms of awareness and participation in programs, with limited involvement attributed to time constraints, low awareness, and lack of motivational plans from the daycare centers.
- Communication with parents tends to be one-way, with the absence of systematic tools to assess parental satisfaction and organized mechanisms to receive their feedback.

Recommendations

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the gaps identified in the evaluation of daycare centers across the governorates of Jerusalem, Hebron, Nablus, and Bethlehem, and according to the five main axes (policies and programs, infrastructure, human resources, educational resources and learning environment, family and community relations), the study proposes the following recommendations for the development of the early childhood sector:

Policies and Programs

The study highlights the urgent need for a thorough review of the regulatory policies governing the early childhood sector, including home-based daycare centers and targeted age groups, alongside the development of related legislation. The current reality also necessitates enhanced coordination between ministries and relevant institutions, activating specialized educational supervision mechanisms, and providing sustainable funding to ensure quality and continuity of services for children and their families. Accordingly, the study recommends:

- Developing comprehensive national policies for early childhood that include updating regulations governing daycare centers, including home-based ones, and establishing detailed infrastructure standards covering key aspects such as safe spaces, ventilation, lighting, safety standards, and accessibility for children with disabilities. These policies should also update guidelines related to the inclusion of children with disabilities and special needs, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment. It is essential to clearly define the age groups served by daycare centers and kindergartens to avoid overlap and conflict between care and early education levels.
- Improving coordination mechanisms between ministries and relevant entities, particu-

larly the Ministries of Social Development, Education, Health, Local Government (local councils), and Civil Defense, to ensure role integration and the provision of comprehensive services to children in protection, care, and early education.

- Strengthening educational supervision by training specialized early childhood supervisors responsible for monitoring the quality of educational and pedagogical programs, not just administrative and logistical aspects.
- Allocating budgets to support daycare centers in marginalized and underserved areas, ensuring service continuity and providing financial or technical incentives for centers that commit to integrating children with disabilities and special needs according to clear national standards.

Infrastructure

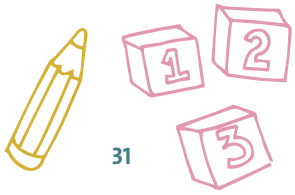
Official bodies are recommended to update national infrastructure standards for daycare centers, including detailed specifications for basic requirements such as adequate space, good ventilation, natural lighting, safety standards, and safe accessibility for children with disabilities. Additionally, grants or financial support should be allocated to improve facilities, especially in rural and marginalized areas. Training daycare management and monitoring their implementation of annual maintenance plans with clear budgets is essential to guarantee minimum safety and security conditions for children. In this context, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Allocating budgets to establish model daycare centers at the governorate level, or at least one center in the north, center, and south regions, to be used as practical training hubs to familiarize daycare staff with detailed infrastructure standards, including safe spaces, appropriate ventilation, safety measures, and accessibility for children with disabilities.
- Enhancing and intensifying inspections of daycare centers to ensure their compliance with minimum infrastructure standards regarding safety, comfort, and general wellbeing.
- Allocating grants or financial incentives to improve daycare facilities such as playgrounds, child-specific restrooms, activity rooms, and isolation rooms, with special priority given to facilities in rural and marginalized areas to ensure a healthy and safe environment supporting children's growth and development.
- Training daycare managers to prepare annual maintenance plans and follow up on their implementation in cooperation with relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Local Government, and Ministry of Health, to ensure the sustainability and quality of infrastructure.

Human Resources

There is an urgent need to develop policies that regulate the qualification and employment of personnel working in nurseries. These policies should include defining the minimum required qualifications and implementing ongoing professional training programs covering educational, psychological aspects, and the care of children with special needs. It is also recommended to improve salaries and incentives to make the profession more attractive to qualified personnel and to establish clear career paths for professional advancement. Furthermore, cooperation with universities and colleges should be encouraged to activate practical training opportunities within childcare centers.

- Develop a regulatory framework for qualifying staff, including defining the minimum academic qualifications and experience required to work as a caregiver.
- Implement continuous training programs for caregiver staff, focusing on developing educational skills, methods of dealing with children with special needs, designing and implementing purposeful educational games appropriate for different age groups, as well as training on first aid and handling emergencies involving children.
- Improve the incentive and salary system to attract qualified professionals, and establish career development and specialization pathways in early childhood



education.
- Strengthen collaboration with universities and colleges to attract students specializing in early childhood education for practical training placements in nurseries.

Educational Resources and Learning Environment

The Ministry of Social Development, in cooperation with its partners, is recommended to provide a variety of educational materials suitable for different age groups, with particular attention to the (0–2 years) age group and children with disabilities. Additionally, childcare centers should be supported in regularly renewing their educational and artistic supplies, enhancing the integration of simple technological tools within educational programs, and preparing instructional guides to assist caregivers in creating an interactive learning environment based on play and exploration.

- Equip nurseries with quality educational materials suitable for all age groups, including books, educational toys, and educational technological tools.
- Design regular support programs for sustainable renewal of artistic supplies and educational materials.
- Integrate simple technological tools into educational programs and provide training for caregivers and managers on their use to foster an interactive learning environment based on play and discovery.
- Develop instructional guides that assist caregivers in designing a stimulating and safe learning environment.
- Train caregivers to produce diverse educational resources using simple and low-cost tools.

Family and Community Engagement

It is recommended to launch a national plan to enhance parental involvement in nursery life, organize joint activities and community initiatives, and activate partnerships with local institutions.

- Develop a national strategy to enhance family participation, including awareness-raising efforts about the role of parents in supporting children's learning during early childhood.
- Establish regular mechanisms for effective communication with families, such as periodic satisfaction surveys, suggestion boxes, and organized meetings to discuss developments and challenges.
- Organize joint activities between nurseries and the local community, such as open days, bazaars, and awareness campaigns.
- Strengthen networking with community institutions, including maternal and child health centers, municipalities, women's associations, cultural centers, and academic institutions, with the aim of providing integrated and supportive services for children and their families.

Specific Recommendations for the Afaaq Project

The Palestinian Vision Organization, through ***the Afaaq project,*** can undertake the following actions:

Policies and Programs

- Conduct awareness and advocacy campaigns targeting decision-makers to:
  - Adopt comprehensive, written national policies for the early childhood sector, including updating regulations governing daycare centers, encompassing home-based nurseries, and clarifying the age groups covered by nurseries and kindergartens.
  - Improve coordination mechanisms among relevant ministries (Social Development, Education, Health, Local Governance) to ensure integrated service provision for children and their families.
  - Enhance qualitative educational supervision by training specialized supervisors to monitor the quality of care and educational processes, rather than focusing solely on administrative and organizational aspects.
  - Allocate clear and sustainable budgets to support nurseries, particularly in underserved areas, ensuring service continuity and quality improvement.

Implement multi-faceted campaigns in cooperation with national, local, and international institutions to:

- Strengthen networking and cooperation with civil society and international organizations to address urgent needs and expand technical and financial support.
- Develop pilot models for early childhood services, including staff training, provision of grants and age-appropriate educational toys, and support for national policies aimed at sector development.
- Raise community awareness through media campaigns highlighting nurseries as specialized developmental centers essential for building children's capacities, and facilitating smooth transitions to kindergarten and school education, while clarifying distinctions between different childhood stages.
- Emphasize the importance of inclusive education for children with special needs and disabilities in nurseries, kindergartens, and subsequent educational stages by providing suitable infrastructure, qualified educational staff, and state incentives, alongside an effective system for case management and referrals to specialized centers when needed, ensuring inclusion is genuine, safe, and beneficial rather than merely formal.

Infrastructure

- Conduct detailed technical assessments of the infrastructure at each daycare center.
- Provide small grants, following consultations with the childcare centers, to rehabilitate educational spaces, water, and sanitation facilities within a predefined financial ceiling and agreed timeline, adhering to specified quality standards. Each nursery will determine its priorities. Grants may include:
  - Painting and interior renovation, including murals or aesthetic improvements. Partnerships with art colleges can be formed whereby students create murals in nurseries where possible.
  - Efficient energy and cooling systems to ensure a comfortable and healthy environment.
  - Creating safe, age-appropriate environments, including installing re-

tractable shades, improving entrances, and paving external areas.
  - Enhancing reception areas to create a welcoming atmosphere for children and families.
  - Upgrading outdoor play areas with safe flooring, shades, and suitable playground equipment.
  - Improving bathroom facilities in terms of structure, cleanliness, and updating outdated elements.
  - Installing new doors for exits and main gates to enhance security.
  - Updating hygiene and service facilities to maintain a healthy and sustainable environment.
  - Framing glass balconies in infant rooms to increase indoor play space.

- Network with national, international, and local institutions that serve marginalized communities (Area C, H2, Bedouin gatherings, etc.) to support infrastructure improvements in nursery outdoor spaces, in coordination with local councils, under agreed mechanisms that allow children in these communities to access the spaces at designated times.

Human Resources

- Design regular annual training packages for caregivers and managers covering care, mental health, handling special cases, and educational aspects, including opportunities for experience and knowledge exchange among nursery staff. Centers can select the appropriate training for their teams.
- Enhance managerial capacities of childcare directors, including leadership, planning, resource management, and improved communication skills with parents and relevant stakeholders.
- Assist participating daycare centers in adopting a clear educational approach along with a written vision and mission for each nursery.
- Drawing on lessons learned from the Nomo project, organize diverse activities with nurseries, including psychological relief sessions for teachers, children, and their families.
- Collaborate with national, international, and local institutions to provide various training programs, such as:
  - Palestinian Red Crescent / Civil Defense to offer first aid and emergency child care training.
  - Ministry of Education (National Institute for Educational Training) to deliver simplified summer courses derived from kindergarten training clusters.
  - Palestinian Counseling Center for psychological support and relief for teachers, children, and their families.
  - Institutions active in rural and marginalized areas (such as Area C, H2, Bedouin communities, etc.): To provide targeted training sessions.
- Conduct awareness campaigns aimed at recruiting volunteers and trainees to assist caregivers, with clear conditions and agreed-upon mechanisms. Expand practical training and supervision opportunities for university and college students specializing in early childhood education.
- Organize advocacy campaigns to enforce the minimum wage in nurseries and ensure strict compliance with regulations regarding the child-to-caregiver ratio, emphasizing the need for an assistant caregiver when children with disabilities or special needs are present.

It is essential that training arrangements are flexible and accommodate caregivers' working hours without disrupting the workflow and daily routines inside the nursery. For example, Saturdays, which are generally the least busy day, can be allocated for short morning training sessions lasting between two to three hours. During these sessions, the director or a substitute caregiver can temporarily cover responsibilities. Training sessions can also be organized

after official working hours (after 4 PM), provided that the caregivers agree. Additionally, a blended learning approach can be adopted, combining brief in-person meetings with flexible online training. In all cases, prior approval from nursery management is required before implementing any training model.

Educational Materials and Learning Environment

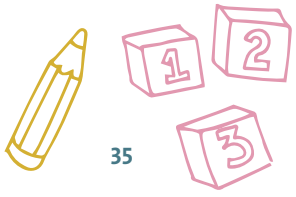
- Provide technical and financial support packages to childcare centers to update and equip educational materials in line with pedagogical standards for different age groups, particularly infants (0–2 years) and children with disabilities or special needs. These materials include books, educational toys, and educational technology tools, allowing each nursery to prioritize according to its specific needs.
- To contribute to the development of an interactive learning environment based on play and exploration, it is proposed to design and distribute a locally made "Comprehensive Learning Corner" that contains age-appropriate educational materials, accommodates children with disabilities, and integrates simple technological media within educational activities.
- Train caregivers on designing educational activities that rely on play and experimentation using available local resources, thereby fostering creativity and flexibility in program implementation.
- Encourage community initiatives to support equipping learning environments, especially in marginalized areas, through volunteer campaigns or partnerships with municipalities and local stakeholders.

Some possible educational toys, technological resources, and artistic supplies include:

- Suitable educational toys: Toys that develop cognitive and physical skills, such as construction toys (puzzles, blocks, LEGO) and safe interactive toys for children aged 0–2 years.
- Interactive educational materials: Sensory and visual materials, including interactive stories, educational posters, and magnetic or stick-on wall games.
- Artistic supplies: High-quality, safe materials such as watercolors, playdough, regular and colored sand, waterproof aprons, cardboard, and paintbrushes.
- New books and stories: Colorful, diverse, interactive books and stories that consider the cultural context and support proper Arabic language development.
- Natural learning tools: Incorporation of natural elements (stones, leaves, seeds, sand, water) in activities to enhance sensory learning and exploration skills.
- Technological tools: Interactive screens, projectors, laptops, printers, and operational supplies such as paper and ink.
- Planned technology integration: A gradual plan to incorporate technology into educational activities in an interactive way, considering age and cultural context.
- Renewal of play spaces: Updating large outdoor play equipment (such as slides, trampolines, balance games) and designing new games that stimulate the senses and movement.
- Musical instruments: Simple instruments (small drums, hand percussion, shakers) to energize children and support movement activities.
- Internal sound system: Equipping nurseries with sound systems to support group sessions and interactive activities.

Family and Community Relations

- Design an integrated communication plan with parents that includes organizing regular meetings, issuing periodic newsletters, and activating electronic communication groups to share updates and enhance interaction.
- Hold targeted awareness workshops for families to strengthen their understanding of



their pivotal role in supporting their children's holistic development, as well as informing them of their rights and responsibilities toward the educational institution.

- Develop simple and effective tools to measure parental satisfaction and use the results to improve the quality of educational and care services provided.
- Build strategic partnerships with community institutions such as health centers, municipalities, libraries, and community organizations to enhance nursery resources and expand community engagement.

Investing in early childhood is not merely a moral obligation toward future generations but serves as the foundation for any sustainable development path. Global research shows that the first years of a child's life are critical for forming essential cognitive, social, and emotional skills, and that the quality of care and learning during this period largely determines later academic and economic success.

In the Palestinian context, where social, political, and economic challenges intersect, investing in early childhood development holds even greater importance. It not only protects children's fundamental rights but also enhances community resilience, reduces social gaps, and builds human capital capable of coping with crises and fluctuations. Enhancing the quality of early childhood services—through inclusive policies, safe infrastructure, qualified professionals, and stimulating learning environments—constitutes a long-term investment in Palestine's future and a real opportunity for equitable structural change starting from the earliest years.

Appendices

Annex (1): Quantitative Tools – Nursery Status Questionnaire

Project Title	Rapid Needs Assessment for Early Childhood Development Centers
Implementing Organization	Palestinian Vision Organization
Geographic Location	Governorates of Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem

Please fill in the green-highlighted cells using the drop-down menus, and the grey-highlighted cells by entering the appropriate numbers or text according to the nature of each question.

1. Legal Status

Question	Response
Name of the Nursery	
Name of the Nursery Owner	
Is the nursery registered with the Ministry of Social Development?	
Registration Number	
License Expiry Date	
Is the license valid? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
Are there any recorded legal violations? ☐ Yes ☐ No	

:If yes, please specify	

Capacity by age group	From birth to 12 months	From 12 to 24 months	to 3 From 2 years	From 3 to 4 years
Maximum licensed capacity of the daycare				
Average number of children over the past four months				
Date of the most recent health and safety inspections				
Services provided by the nursery				

2. Infrastructure:

Questions	Response
Is the daycare building structurally safe?	
Location of the nursery building	
Number of rooms	
Average room size (m^2)	
Is there an outdoor yard or playground?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, specify the area	
Average play space per child	
Number of faucets providing clean drinking water	
Type and condition of toilets (Arab/Western – Good/Fair/Poor)	
Is there a kitchen/food preparation area?	
Number of beds	
Number of mattresses	
Number of tables	
Number of seats/chairs	
Is the nursery equipped to accommodate children with disabilities?	
Number of toilets for persons with disabilities	
Is the building equipped for emergencies (exits, extinguishers, etc.)? Yes / No	

What are the top three current infrastructure needs?

1-
2-
3-

3. **Human Resources**

Position	Number of Staff	Employment Status	Educational Qualification	Years of Experience	Number of Training Courses Attended in the Last Two Years	Training Courses Staff Wish to Attend
Childcare Providers						
Assistant Caregivers						
Administration Staff						
Support Staff						

If the answer is "Other," please specify what it is.	

What are the top three current needs in human resources (recruitment, training, work environment, etc.)?

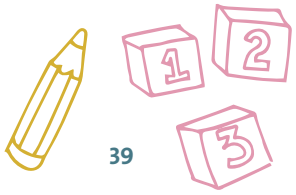
1-
2-
3-

4. **Educational Resources**

Category of Materials	Available (Yes (/ No	Quantity	Condition (Good / (Fair / Poor
Books and Stories	☐ Yes ☐ No		
Art Supplies (paints, paper, safe tools, etc.)	☐ Yes ☐ No		
Age-appropriate Educational Toys (promoting holistic development)	☐ Yes ☐ No		
Digital Devices and Technology (tablets, screens, etc.)	☐ Yes ☐ No		

What are the top three current needs in educational resources (materials, tools, toys, technology, etc.)?

1-
2-
3-



5. **Relationship with Parents**

Questions	Response
Number of annual meetings with parents	
What methods are used to communicate with parents?	**Phone / WhatsApp / In-person meetings /) (Mobile app / Other**

What are the top three current needs to help improve the relationship with parents (e.g., training, awareness, communication tools, regular meetings, etc.)?

1-

2-

3-

Annex (2): Qualitative Tools

1- Interviews with Daycare Directors

Infrastructure and Learning Environment

1. Are there any safety or security challenges related to the building or outdoor playground?
2. What modifications or improvements do you need to enhance the learning environment?

Teaching and Learning Materials

3. What types of essential educational materials are currently lacking? Please specify quantities.

4. How available are materials specifically designed for children with special needs?

5. Do you have a dedicated budget for regularly updating or replacing educational materials?

Human Resources

6. How is training provided to caregivers? Do you consider it sufficient?

7. What training topics do you currently need?

8. What are the main challenges in recruiting or retaining qualified staff?

Family and Community Relations

9. Are there regular programs for parental involvement? What is their nature?

10. How do you assess the level of parental engagement in supporting children's learning?

11. What kind of support do you expect from the Palestinian Vision Foundation, local community, municipalities, or ministries to improve relationships with families?

Gaps, Needs, and Recommendations

12. From your perspective, what are the most significant gaps facing nurseries in your area?

13. What urgent or future interventions do you see as necessary to improve the quality of services provided?

2- Interviews with Caregivers

Daily Learning Environment

1. How do you evaluate the classroom environment in terms of space, lighting, ventilation, and cleanliness?
2. Do you find the available educational materials sufficient and appropriate for daily activities?

Training and Professional Support

3. Have you received specialized training in early childhood development? On which topics?

4. What subjects would you like to explore further through additional training?

5. Do you receive pedagogical supervision or professional support from management or external bodies?

Interaction with Children

6. How would you describe your relationship with the children? Do you feel capable of meeting their individual needs?

7. Do you face challenges with children with special needs or in classroom management?

Relationship with Parents

8. What are the methods of communication with parents? Is there sufficient responsiveness from them?

9. Do you feel that parents appreciate your role and contribute to supporting their children at home?

3- Interview with the Ministry of Social Development

Data and Institutional Organization

1. Does the ministry maintain an updated national database containing detailed information about nurseries (type, location, capacity, licensing, staff, etc.)?
2. Is this database electronic and integrated with other ministries (e.g., Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)?
3. Which department within the ministry is responsible for collecting and updating this data? Is this done regularly?
4. Is it possible to access data on unlicensed or home-based nurseries through this database?

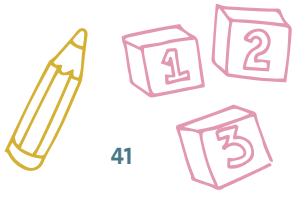
Support and Incentives

5. What material or non-material incentives does the ministry currently offer to encourage NGOs, community initiatives, and private sector investors to establish and operate nurseries that provide high-quality services?

6. What is the ministry's stance on the common challenge that operating costs exceed revenue collection, especially in rural and marginalized areas?

7. Are there any support funds or small grant programs dedicated to nurseries in villages and remote areas?

8. What coordination exists with municipalities and local councils to provide suitable infra-



structure or buildings for community nurseries?

Licensing and Oversight

9. What are the current licensing requirements for children's nurseries? Do they differ between formal and home-based nurseries?

10. How is the monitoring and oversight of licensed nurseries conducted? How many field visits are made per year?

11. Does the ministry have a specific regulatory framework for home-based nurseries? How are they monitored, especially in rural areas?

12. Are there standardized quality assessment tools used by the ministry to evaluate nursery performance? Can these tools be shared?

Coordination with Other Entities

13. What is the nature of cooperation with the Ministry of Education regarding educational content and curricula in nurseries?

14. Is there coordination with the Ministry of Health on issues such as medical check-ups for children, food safety, or healthy nursery environments?

15. To what extent is the ministry engaged with international initiatives (e.g., partnerships with UNICEF, Save the Children, or other international organizations supporting nurseries)?

5. Challenges and Future Vision

16. What are the main challenges currently facing the ministry in ensuring quality and sustainability of nurseries, especially in marginalized areas?

17. What is the ministry's vision for expanding nursery services over the next five years?

18. Does the ministry plan to launch an electronic platform or application for parents or nursery staff to support communication and learning?

19. What are the ministry's plans in the areas of:

- Building childcare center staff capacities (administrative and financial management for directors, technical skills for caregivers in dealing with children with disabilities, speech difficulties, etc.)
- Childcare centers management's response to children and families in emergency or evacuation situations such as fires or conflicts
- Awareness raising about the importance of early childhood development, including plans to implement interventions aimed at educating caregivers and parents about their complementary roles and responding to children's needs.

4. Focus Groups with Parents (4–6 Participants)

Evaluation of Nursery Environment

1. Why did you specifically choose this nursery for your child?

2. How do you evaluate the infrastructure and available facilities?

3. Do you have any comments regarding the learning environment inside the nursery?

Communication and Participation

4. Do you receive sufficient information about your child's performance? How is this communicated?

5. Are you invited to participate in nursery activities? What is your opinion about the level of your involvement?

Service Quality and Staff

6. How do you assess the performance of the caregivers? Are they qualified?

7. Do you feel that your child receives appropriate care and education?

Gaps and Expectations

8. What are the most important areas that need improvement in the nursery?

9. What support do you expect from institutions or official bodies to improve nursery services**?**

Annex (3): Needs in Various Areas

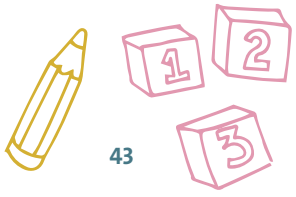
3.1 Infrastructure and Facilities

First: Buildings and Basic Equipment

Category	Specific Needs
Painting and Finishes	Interior and exterior painting, wall renovation through mural art, improvement of the reception area.
Flooring	Replacement of existing flooring with slip-resistant rubber flooring that is safe for children.
Furniture	Child-sized tables and chairs, secure cabinets and shelves.
Doors and Exits	Installation of internal doors; an outward-opening emergency exit door in accordance with Civil Defense requirements; a secure main entrance facing the street.
Lighting and Ventilation	Installation of exhaust fans in indoor halls, bathrooms, and the kitchen; improvement of ventilation.

Second: Outdoor Spaces and Play Areas

Category	Specific Needs
Playgrounds	Equipping safe outdoor play areas with suitable flooring; resurfacing (asphalt) where needed; installation of artificial grass (turf).
Outdoor Play Equipment	Swings, slides, climbing and balance equipment designed for children aged 1.5–4 years, made from safe materials.
Shading and Weather Protection	Installation of fixed or retractable canopies (awnings) to protect from sun and rain, particularly in waiting areas and playgrounds.
Entrance Enhancement	Repair of the access road leading to the facility; canopy over the entrance; landscaping with flowers and trees; safe drop-off and pick-up area.



Third: Sanitary Facilities

Category	Specific Needs
Restrooms	.Child-sized toilets and sinks installed at children's height
Hygiene Improvement	Upgrading hygiene and service facilities; maintenance of .restrooms

Fourth: Learning Environment and Classrooms

Category	Specific Needs
Playrooms	Interactive equipment for play and learning rooms (visual .(aids, safe layout, educational corners
Decoration and Visual Aids	Colorful educational and recreational wall murals (animals, .(.nature, letters, etc
Space Expansion	Enclosing and framing balconies with glass to increase .indoor play space

Fifth: Safety and Protection

Category	Specific Needs
General Safety	Construction of an external fence, installation of a secure .main gate, improvement of entry and exit procedures
Child Safety	Safe indoor and outdoor environment suitable for the .child's age in terms of materials, spaces, and equipment

Reclassification of Nursery Infrastructure Needs by Type of Required Intervention

Type of Intervention	Specific Needs
Maintenance and Rehabilitation	• Painting walls and undertaking interior renovations • Improving the reception area and main entrance • Maintaining facilities and restrooms • paving the street in front of the facility with asphalt • Enclosing balconies with glass framing • Upgrading service and hygiene facilities
Shading and Weather Protection	• Installation of outdoor canopies and barriers to block sun and rain • Heavy-duty, securely installed • Canopy over the main gate to protect parents and children from rain
General Safety	• Installation of a main entrance to enhance security Installation of internal doors in line with Civil Defense standards
Outdoor Spaces	• Construction of a safe perimeter fence
Flooring and Fixtures	• Safe and age-appropriate environment for children

Type of Intervention	Specific Needs
Play Equipment and Activities	• Provision of safe outdoor play equipment for children aged 1.5–4 years (slides, swings, climbing and balance equipment) Addition of interactive educational toys inside classrooms
Sanitary Facilities	• Child-sized toilets and sinks at suitable height • Improvement and maintenance of restrooms in line with children's needs
Indoor Equipment	• Interactive furnishing of play and learning rooms • Child-sized tables and chairs, including feeding chairs and strollers • Safe cabinets and shelves for material storage • Installation of ventilation fans in bathrooms and kitchens
Aesthetic and Decorations	• Colorful educational and recreational murals (animals, nature, etc.) • Planting trees and flowers at the entrance

3.2 Human Resources

Professional Qualification and Training

Area	Specific Needs
Continuous Training Programs	There is a clear need to provide specialized and ongoing training courses for caregivers, covering modern teaching and caregiving methods, as well as skills for working with children, particularly those with diverse needs.
Academic and Educational Qualification	Some nursery staff hold low qualifications, highlighting the necessity to develop professional and academic qualification programs that enhance their competencies and prepare them to care for and educate children effectively.
Organization of Workshops	Several participants recommended organizing regular workshops addressing educational, behavioral, and health-related topics.
Early Childhood Specialization	There is a need to recruit qualified and specialized personnel in early childhood development, rather than relying solely on general educational backgrounds

Psychological and Professional Support

Area	Specific Needs
Psychological Support	Several daycare centers expressed the need to provide psychological support for caregivers to alleviate the pressures arising from the work environment and the tense political and economic conditions, ensuring their emotional stability, which positively impacts the care of children.
Healthy Work Environment	There is a need to create a supportive, stable work environment that fosters creativity and reduces stress, necessitating the training of centers management and the development of employee well-being programs.

Employment and Job Stability

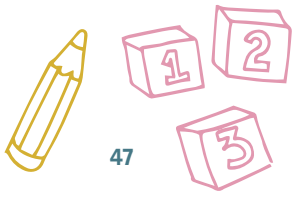
Area	Specific Needs
Full Employment	Some centers suffer from staff shortages or employ staff on a part-time/irregular basis, which affects the quality of care. Recommendations include hiring permanent and adequate personnel.
Staffing Levels	There is a need to increase the number of caregivers to provide individualized and safe care, especially in nurseries with high child-to-caregiver ratios.
Salaries	Improving working conditions and salaries to meet minimum wage standards, which influences the attraction and retention of qualified staff, particularly given the high operational costs and low enrollment numbers.

Performance Development and Evaluation

Area	Specific Needs
Annual Development Plans	Some participants recommended establishing a clear annual plan for team development, including training, evaluation, and motivation.
Skills Updating	Ongoing need to update the educational and psychological skills of staff to align with the latest practices in teaching and caregiving.
Enhancing Responsibility and Discipline	Emphasis was placed on reinforcing values of commitment, a sense of responsibility, and educational awareness among the staff.

Reclassification of Daycare Center Human Resources Needs by Type of Intervention

Type of Intervention	Specific Needs
Training and Qualification	• Continuous and specialized training programs in early childhood development • Qualification courses for caregivers on modern teaching and caregiving methods • Organization of periodic workshops (educational, psychological, health-related) • Enhancing the educational competencies of staff with low qualifications
Psychological and Professional Support	• Provision of regular psychological support for caregivers and staff • Creating a supportive and stable work environment that reduces burnout and psychological stress
Employment and Job Stability	• Hiring a sufficient number of full-time caregivers • Improving employment conditions (job stabilization, reducing reliance on part-time or temporary contracts) • Enhancing salaries to reduce turnover of qualified personnel
Performance Planning and Development	• Preparing annual development plans for staff (training, evaluation, motivation) • Strengthening professional responsibility and discipline • Periodic updating of educational and psychological skills



3.3 Educational Resources and Learning Environment

Type of Intervention	Specific Needs
Educational and Recreational Toys	• Indoor and outdoor toys • Construction and brain-stimulating toys • Age-appropriate toys for all age groups (from infants to two years) • Safe building blocks • Renewal of toys such as slides, trampolines, etc.
Interactive and Sensory Materials	• Stimulating educational materials (visual, sensory, auditory) • Tools and activities for learning through play • Equipment for sensory and motor activities • Natural materials (sand, dough, models)
Books and Stories	• Illustrated books and interactive stories designed for children
Artistic and Musical Supplies	• Art supplies (watercolors, waterproof aprons, paper) • Simple musical instruments
Digital and Technological Tools	• Portable or fixed projector • Interactive screens • Digital educational tools • Sound system • Laptop and printer for material management
Curriculum and Educational Content	• Comprehensive and diverse curriculum suited to early childhood age groups • Materials for teaching letters, numbers, and shapes
Integration of Technology	• Thoughtful integration of technology in daily teaching and interaction (including digital devices, projectors, and smart activities)
Learning-Supportive Furniture	• Child-sized tables and chairs • Some furniture adaptations to support activities
Family Engagement	• Encouraging parents to support children's learning at home by providing educational tools that enhance this interaction

3.4 Family and Local Community Engagement

Type of Intervention	Specific Needs
Regular and Transparent Communication	• Sending periodic messages via social media platforms • Weekly child progress reports • Active listening to parents' feedback and responding accordingly
Meetings and Gatherings	• Organizing regular meetings for parents • Scheduled individual or group sessions
Workshops and Training	• Conducting awareness and educational workshops for parents (once or twice annually) • Parenting training sessions for mothers
Joint and Interactive Activities	• Organizing community events such as "Mother's Day" or "Mother and Child" days • Encouraging parental participation in educational activities within the nursery
Communication and Interaction Tools	• Providing effective communication tools such as surveys, suggestion boxes, and child monitoring applications
Building Trust and Emotional Support	• Strengthening trust between parents and nursery management • Offering emotional and educational support to parents
Enhancing Community Responsibility	• Raising parental awareness of their role in their children's holistic development • Involving the local community in supporting the nursery

Recommendations by Responsible Entity

The following final recommendations are categorized by type of intervention: infrastructure, training and capacity building, family and community engagement, policies and programs, and governance and funding.

Recommendations Related to Infrastructure

Area	Recommendation	Responsible Entities
Buildings and Spaces	Improve physical facilities (playgrounds, ventilation, lighting, restrooms) in accordance with health and safety standards	Ministry of Development, Municipalities, Nurseries
Maintenance and Equipment	Allocate periodic budgets for maintenance and infrastructure updates	Nurseries, Ministry of Development
Supporting Facilities	Provide activity rooms, health isolation rooms, and safe play areas	Municipalities, Local Partners

Recommendations Related to Training and Capacity Building

Area	Recommendation	Responsible Entities
Caregiver Training	Develop regular specialized training programs covering early childhood, mental health, and integrated care	Ministry of Development, Ministry of Education, Civil Society
Supervision and Support	Strengthen educational supervision and technical support for caregivers	Ministry of Development, Training Institutions
Career Pathways	Develop professional career pathways linking qualification, experience, and promotion for caregivers	Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Development, Higher Education

Recommendations Related to Educational Resources and Learning Environment

Area	Specific Needs	Responsible Entities
Development of Reading Materials	Provide modern and updated interactive books and stories appropriate to developmental stages	Ministry of Education, Public Libraries, Civil Society Organizations
Support for Art Materials	Supply art materials regularly (paints, (papers, safe tools	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Local Community, NGOs
Updating Educational Toys	Provide new age-appropriate educational toys, especially for children under 3 years old	Ministry of Development, International Partners, Donor Funding
Enhancing Technological Environment	Equip nurseries with projectors, interactive screens, and tablets	Ministry of Education, Educational Technology Companies, UNICEF
Staff Capacity Building	Train staff on integrating technological tools in interactive teaching	Ministry of Education, Local and International Training Institutions
Designing Local Materials	Produce locally made, low-cost, high-quality educational toys and materials	Colleges of Arts and Design, Development Institutions

Recommendations to Strengthen Family and Community Relations

Area	Recommendation	Responsible Entities
Communication with Families	Develop a communication plan utilizing digital platforms and regular meetings	Daycare center Management
Parental Involvement	Activate parent councils and encourage their participation in activities	Daycares, Ministry of Development
Parent Satisfaction Assessment	Develop tools to measure parent satisfaction and regularly follow up on feedback	Daycare center Management, Regulatory Bodies

Community Partnerships	Enhance cooperation with municipalities, health centers, and civil society organizations to support daycare centers	Ministry of Development, Municipalities

Policy and Program-Level Recommendations

Area	Recommendation	Responsible Entities
Legislative Framework	Update nursery regulatory bylaws to include comprehensive quality standards	Cabinet, Ministry of Development
National Strategy	Develop a national early childhood development plan (2025–2030) based on assessments and identified gaps	Cabinet, Relevant Ministries
Policy Integration	Strengthen coordination among ministries of Development, Education, and Health for joint services	Relevant Ministries

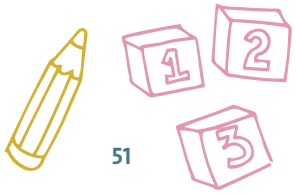
Governance and Funding Recommendations

Area	Recommendation	Responsible Entities
Sustainable Funding	Allocate government budgets and secure external funding for establishing/upgrading nurseries in marginalized areas	Ministry of Finance, Donors, Municipalities
Oversight and Monitoring	Strengthen financial and educational oversight mechanisms to ensure compliance with standards	Ministry of Development, Oversight Bodies
National Database	Establish a unified, updated database for nurseries and educational indicators	Ministry of Development, Central Bureau of Statistics

Recommendations Classified by Type of Intervention, Implementing Entity, and Proposed Timeline

Infrastructure

Type of Intervention	Specific Need	Proposed Implementers	Timeline
Space Improvement	Provide safe outdoor playgrounds, rubber flooring, installation of shading and shaded areas	Municipalities, Ministry of Development, NGOs	Short to Medium Term
Maintenance and Rehabilitation	General maintenance, painting, entrance repairs, installation of secure doors	Ministry of Development, Local Community, Municipalities	Short Term



Type of Intervention	Specific Need	Proposed Implementers	Timeline
Sanitary Facilities	Provide child-appropriate restrooms and low-height sinks	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Development, NGOs	Medium Term
Ventilation and Energy	Install fans and exhausts, effective ventilation and cooling solutions	Ministry of Development, NGOs, Donors	Short Term
Safety and Security	Install emergency doors, fencing, raise overall safety standards in buildings	Civil Defense, Ministry of Development, Local Community	Short to Medium Term
Educational Environment	Interactive room refurbishments, wall beautification, child-safe furniture	Ministry of Education, NGOs, Local Community	Medium Term

Educational Resources and Learning Environment

Type of Intervention	Specific Need	Proposed Implementers	Timeline
Educational Materials	Educational toys, sensory and visual tools, art supplies, illustrated books	Ministries of Social Development and Education, NGOs, Donors	Short Term
Technology Integration	Projectors, interactive screens, tablets, sound systems	Ministries of Social Development and Education, Technology Partners, International Agencies	Medium to Long Term
Curriculum Development	Provide comprehensive curriculum, assessment tools, integrate interactive learning	Ministry of Education	Medium Term
Furniture and Equipment	Child-appropriate tables, chairs, cabinets, organizational tools	Ministry of Development, NGOs	Short Term

Family and Community Relations

Type of Intervention	Specific Need	Proposed Implementers	Timeline
Organized Institutional Communication	Periodic messages, follow-up reports, communication apps	Nursery Management, NGOs, Ministry of Development	Short Term
Regular Meetings	Monthly gatherings, individual sessions	Nursery Management	Short Term

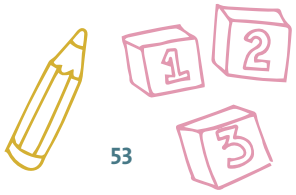
Type of Intervention	Specific Need	Proposed Implementers	Timeline
Parental Awareness Workshops	Semi-annual workshops on nutrition and parenting	NGOs, Ministry of Development, Health Centers	Medium Term
Interactive Community Activities	Mother's Day events, child-parent activities, group events	Nursery Management, Local Community, Municipalities	Short to Medium Term
Evaluation and Feedback Tools	Surveys, suggestion boxes, assessment interviews	Nursery Management, Ministry of Social Development	Short Term
Building Community Trust	Awareness campaigns on family roles, relationship-building meetings with nurseries	NGOs, Parent Committees, Local Media	Medium Term
Systematic Community Involvement	Community support committees including parents, institutions, and municipalities	NGOs, Ministry of Development, Municipalities	Long Term

Annex (4): List of Main Information Sources Including Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

Number of Participating Childcare Centers:

A total of 28 nurseries were targeted across the four governorates, mostly located in city centers and some in rural areas. Most belong to the private sector, while others are affiliated with charitable associations. The details are as follows:

Governorate	Nursery Name	Private / Association	Location
Jerusalem	Small Step Nursery	Private	Town
	Prince and Queen Nursery	Private	Town
	Shatha Al Ward Nursery	Private	Town
	Second Home Nursery	Private	Town
	First Step Nursery	Private	Town
	Sham Nursery	Private	Town
	Montessori Nursery	Private	Rural
	Little Fingers Nursery	Private	Town



Governorate	Nursery Name	Private / Association	Location
Bethlehem	Antonine Association	Charitable Association	City
	Al-Obeidiyah Model Nursery	Private	Rural
	Vida Home Nursery	Private	City
	Elyah Nursery	Private	City
	Women's Care Association	Charitable Association	City
	Salma Model Nursery	Private	City
	Dominican Nursery	Charitable Association	City
Hebron	Child's World Nursery	Private	City
	Zee Al Asal Nursery	Private	City
	Sugar Crumbs Nursery	Private	City
	Al Worod Nursery	Private	City
	Early Childhood Nursery	Private	City
	Modern Dana Nursery	Private	City
Nablus	Let's Go Nursery	Private	City
	Child Care Association	Charitable Association	City
	Morning Sun Nursery	Private	Rural
	Little Horse Nursery	Private	Rural
	Al Arz Nursery	Private	City
	Stella Baby Nursery	Private	City
	Al Baraem Nursery	Private	Rural

Visits, including meetings with nursery directors, some caregivers, and small groups of children's parents:

- Sugar Crumbs Nursery
- Elyah Nursery
- Antonine Association Nursery
- Al-Obeidiyah Model Nursery
- Small Step Nursery
- Second Home Nursery
- Morning Sun Nursery
- Al Baraem Nursery

Focus Group Discussions with Childcare Centers Directors:

- Bethlehem Nursery Directors Group, including: Antonine Association, Al-Obeidiyah Model, Vida Home, Elyah, Women's Care Association, Salma Model, Dominican
- Hebron Nursery Directors Group, including Child's World, Zee Al Asal, Sugar Crumbs, Roses, Modern Dana
- Nablus Nursery Directors Group, including Let's Go, Child Care Association, Morning Sun, Little Horse, Al Arz, Stella Baby, Buds

Annex (5): Current Academic Programs, Proposals for Developing Educational Models, Learning Games, and Sterilization Devices

5.1 Academic Programs

This section outlines various academic programs tailored for staff working in Early Childhood Development Centers, offered by different colleges across the West Bank.

Al-Quds Open University provides two specialized diplomas: the first is a professional diploma in childcare centers, and the second is a professional diploma in kindergarten teacher preparation. The latter was developed in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development and implemented in Bethlehem and Tubas. Despite the affordable tuition fee (100 Jordanian dinars), participation was limited due to transportation costs and difficulties navigating the roads[5].

Al-Quds University offers a Diploma in Early Childhood Education[6], while Hind Al-Husseini College, affiliated with Al-Quds University, offers a professional diploma in nursery management.[7]

Modern University College in Ramallah offers an Intermediate Diploma in Early Childhood Education[8].

An-Najah National University provides a Diploma in Early Childhood Education.[9]

Al-Rawda College in Nablus offers a professional diploma specializing in the preparation of pre-service child caregivers.[10]

Al-Ummah College in Al-Ram offers two diplomas: Early Childhood Education[11] and Nursery Care.[12]

5. https://cec.qou.edu/?page_id=2698#programs
6. https://www.alquds.edu/ar/faculties-ar/al-quds-vocational-college-ar/diploma-programs-ar/42998/%d8%a8%d8%b1%d9%86%d8%a7%d9%85%d8%ac-%d8%aa%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b7%d9%81%d9%84/
7. https://www.alquds.edu/ar/news-ar/announcnments-ar/40608/%D9%87%D9%86%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B-3-%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%82-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7/#:~:text=%D8%A3%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AA%20%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B3%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D9%83%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D9%87%D9%86%D8%AF%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%20%D9%84%D-9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AA,%D8%B0%D8%A7%D8%AA%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A1%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B7%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%84%20%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85%20%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%87%D9%85.
8. https://www.muc.edu.ps/Program/Major/child%20care
9. https://www.najah.edu/ar/2022/anc/trby-ltfl/
10. https://www.rawda.edu.ps/news/details/20043
11. https://www.alummah.ps/Specialty/%d8%aa%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b7%d9%81%d9%84/
12. https://www.alummah.ps/%D8%AF%D8%A8%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%AD%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A3%D8%B7%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%84/

Anwar Al-Quds College, located on Al-Zahraa Street in Jerusalem, offers programs focused on nursery caregivers and childcare.[13]

As part of the Early Childhood Enhancement Project in Palestine (CARE), the Bethlehem and Tubas branches of Al-Quds University, through their Continuing Education Department, organized a three-day training[14] course for supervisors of nurseries and kindergartens affiliated with the Ministries of Social Development and Education. The course covered a range of early childhood topics.

5.2 Different Educational Models for Early Childhood

There are several influential educational models in early childhood education, each with its own philosophy and approach to nurturing young minds. Below are the most prominent nursery and kindergarten models:

1. Montessori Model

- Developed by Dr. Maria Montessori
- Emphasizes self-directed learning, independence, and hands-on exploration
- Encourages mixed-age classrooms for peer learning
- Uses sensory materials and practical life exercises that progress from concrete to abstract; materials are designed to be self-correcting and tangible
- Children progress at their own pace
- Several schools, nurseries, and kindergartens in Palestine adopt the Montessori approach, such as the Montessori Kindergarten affiliated with the Palestinian Childhood Institute at An-Najah National University in Nablus.

2. Reggio Emilia Approach

- Originated in Reggio Emilia, Italy
- Focuses on child-led inquiry and creativity
- Considers the environment the “third teacher”
- Learning is documented through art, photography, and storytelling
- Curriculum emerges from children’s interests
- Some kindergartens and nurseries are individually attempting to incorporate elements of Reggio Emilia philosophy, such as project-based learning, visual documentation, and interactive classroom environments. Some teachers have been introduced to this model through training workshops provided by the(P.A.C.E) project, implemented by the Italian (RTM) Foundation in partnership with the Palestinian Ministry of Education.

3. HighScope Curriculum

- Based on active participatory learning
- Children plan, carry out, and review activities daily
- Strong focus on decision-making and problem-solving
- Employs a structured daily routine and key developmental indicators

4. Waldorf (Steiner) Education

- Founded by Rudolf Steiner
- Prioritizes imagination, rhythm, and holistic development

13. https://www.anwarcollege.org/ar/courses/education/babysitter1.html
14. https://care.edu.ps/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%B9%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%85-%D9%88%D8%B7-%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85-%D8%AF/

- Delays formal academic instruction in favor of storytelling, arts, and movement
- Teachers often stay with the same group of children for several years

5. Bank Street Approach

- Developed at Bank Street College of Education
- Emphasizes experiential learning and emotional development
- Integrates social studies, science, and the arts
- Encourages children to explore their community and environment

Each model offers unique advantages depending on program goals and children's needs.

5.3 Educational Games

Educational games that can be attached to walls using magnets or double-sided tape are an excellent way to enhance visual and physical learning for children in nursery settings.

Examples of educational games suitable for wall mounting:

- **Letter or Word Boards**
  - Arabic or English letter cards that children can arrange to form words
  - Attached using tape or magnetic strips on a metal board

- **Number and Counting Cards**
  - Number cards from 1 to 10 or higher, accompanied by pictures of animals or fruits for counting
  - Children match the number with the corresponding image

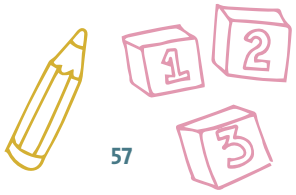
- **Colours and Shapes Game**
  - Circles, triangles, squares in various colours
  - Children match shapes with their colours or use them to create patterns

- **Interactive Map of Palestine**
  - Regions are divided and children are asked to place flags or symbols
  - A great idea to foster a sense of belonging and geographical awareness in a simple way

- **Weather-Appropriate Dressing Game**
  - Pictures of a boy/girl with removable clothing items (jacket, umbrella, sunglasses, etc.)
  - Children select clothes appropriate for the current weather conditions

- **Matching Game**
  - For example, an animal picture + its shadow or silhouette + its name
  - Cards can be moved and temporarily fixed to the board

- **Daily Calendar**
  - Days of the week, weather, and month
  - Helps children develop an interactive daily understanding of time



Attachment tools:

Tool	Description	Suitable for
Double-sided Tape	Easy-to-remove adhesive tape	Regular walls
Magnets	Used on metal boards	Metal surfaces
Adhesive Hooks	For hanging heavier 3D items	3D toys/games

5.4 Sterilization Devices

During interviews, nursery directors were asked about the availability of sterilization devices suitable for nurseries and kindergartens to maintain a healthy and safe environment for children. They confirmed various types exist, but stressed the importance of verifying their availability in the local market and their suitability for nurseries in terms of size, function, and cost:

- Steam Sterilizers
  - Use hot steam to eliminate 99.9% of germs
  - Ideal for sterilizing bottles, plastic toys, and daily utensils
- Ultraviolet (UV) Sterilizers
  - Use light to sterilize surfaces without heat or chemicals
  - Suitable for sterilizing metal tools, towels, and even toys
  - Dual-layer UV cabinets designed specifically for kindergartens exist
- Multi-function Sterilization Cabinets
  - Combine steam, UV light, and drying
  - Used for sterilizing food utensils, clothing, and art supplies
  - Some equipped with touchscreens and remote controls
- Benefits of These Devices for Nurseries:
  - Reducing the transmission of infections among children
  - Ease of use and rapid sterilization
  - Maintaining the cleanliness of shared items such as toys and books
  - Some devices maintain sterility for up to 24 hours if the cover remains closed

Annex (6): Responses from 28 Early Childhood Development Centers to the Survey –Analytical Summary

Please refer to the separate folder containing data from 28 Excel files, each representing the survey responses of an individual Early Childhood Development Center.

Additionally, the folder includes a consolidated file titled **“ECCD Survey Results,”** which provides a comprehensive compilation of all responses.

The file names corresponding to each center are listed in the table below for ease of reference and organization.

The data were analyzed quantitatively using tables and relative frequency distributions to identify overall trends, complemented by qualitative insights drawn from open-ended questions where applicable

Governorate	File Name	Nursery Name
Jerusalem	J1	Small Step Nursery
	J2	Prince and Queen Nursery
	J3	Shatha Al-Ward Nursery
	J4	The Second Home Nursery
	J5	The First Step Nursery
	J6	Sham Nursery
	J7	Montessori Nursery
	J8	Little Fingers Nursery
Bethlehem	B1	Antonine Association
	B2	Model Obeidieh Nursery
	B3	Vida Home
	B4	Eliya Nursery
	B5	Women's Care Association
	B6	Salma Model Nursery
	B7	Dominican Nursery
Hebron	H1	Child's World Nursery
	H2	Like Honey Nursery
	H3	Sugar Crumbs Nursery
	H4	Roses Nursery
	H5	Early Childhood Nursery
	H6	Modern Dana Nursery
Nablus	N1	Let's Go Nursery
	N2	Child Care Association
	N3	Morning Sun Nursery
	N4	Little Horse Nursery
	N5	Cedar Nursery
	N6	Stella Baby Nursery
	N7	Buds Nursery
	ECCD Survey :Results	A comprehensive overview of all responses, sup-.plemented with key quantitative indicators

References

The following key official and international sources were relied upon to provide crucial data and information regarding the reality of nurseries and early childhood services in Palestine, including:

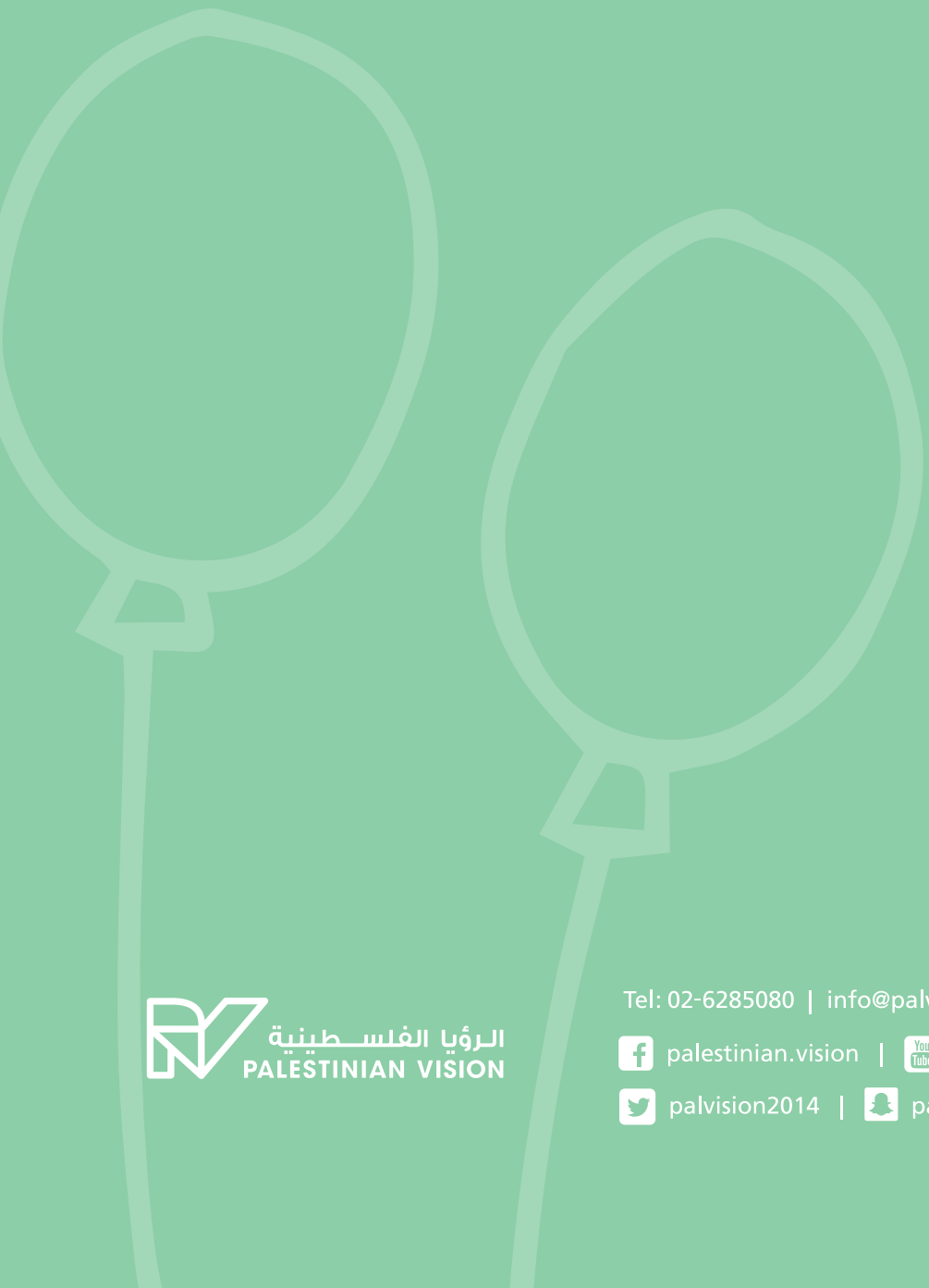
1. **Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)** www.pcbs.gov.ps
   - The official authority responsible for collecting and publishing statistical data in Palestine.
   - Provides periodic reports on child population numbers, enrollment rates, and the number of educational and care institutions.
   - Relevant reports:
     - *Annual Survey of Non-School Educational Institutions*:

       https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2175.pdf
       https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2552.pdf
     - Annual Educational Statistics
2. **Palestinian Ministry of Social Development** www.mosa.pna.ps
   - The official body responsible for licensing and supervising nurseries in the West Bank.
   - Publishes annual reports documenting the distribution and number of nurseries, challenges, and sectoral plans.
   - Annual Statistical Report 2020: https://www.mosd.gov.ps/uploads/1653306170635320869.pdf
3. **Palestinian Ministry of Education – General Directorate of Early Childhood**
   - Provides specialized insights into kindergartens and their integration within the early childhood services system.
4. **National Strategy for Growth and Intervention in Early Childhood (2017–2022)**
   - A national reference document outlining general policies, priorities, and intervention directions in the early childhood sector. https://www.unicef.org/sop/media/206/file/ECD%20National%20Strategy.pdf
5. **Specialized Studies and Reports Issued by International and Local Organizations**
   - These contribute to deepening the understanding of the sector's reality and identifying gaps. Notable examples include:
     - Papers presented at the scientific conference "Early Childhood Care and Education in Palestine: Hopes, Aspirations, and Reality", organized by Al-Quds Open University as part of the Early Childhood Education and Care Enhancement Project in Palestine, held on 25.11.2024
     - https://care.edu.ps/conference/presentations/
     - The State of Early Childhood Development in West Bank and Gaza, World Bank
     - https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/mna/en/WestBankAndGaza_ecd_ch14.pdf

- *Early Childhood Development in the West Bank and Gaza*, Anera, 2014 https://www.anera.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ECD_Report_West_Bank_and_Gaza_WEBPRINT.pdf
- *COVID-19 and Early Childhood Development in the State of Palestine*, Juzoor https://www.juzoor.org/cached_uploads/download/2021/02/25/covid19-ecd-policy-paper-1614242027.pdf
- *The Palestinian Network for Early Childhood Development (PNECD) Report* – March 2024 https://www.anecd.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PNECD-Gaza-Response-Report-1-1.pdf

6. Awareness Bulletins and Guides:

- UNICEF: *My Abilities – What We Need to Know About Early Childhood Development* https://www.unicef.org/sop/media/1416/file/UNICEF%20-%20Parent%20booklet%20online.pdf



الرؤيا الفلسطينية
PALESTINIAN VISION

Tel: 02-6285080 | info@palvision.ps | www.palvision.ps

palestinian.vision | PalestinianVision | pal_vision

palvision2014 | pal-vision