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Effective Mechanisms for Inclusive Educational and Health Services for Palestinians in East Jerusalem

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Effective Mechanisms for Inclusive Educational and Health Services for Palestinians in East Jerusalem

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1. Background

The education and healthcare systems in East Jerusalem, particularly within the Palestinian communities reaching around 370 thousand Palestinians, face significant challenges, as a result of ongoing Israeli policies aimed at controlling the city, explored in the background paper discussing this topic. Palestinian schools face chronic underfunding and the risk of erasing Palestinian identity due to the Israeli government's educational policies, which seek to integrate East Jerusalem schools into the framework of the Israeli occupation state through the promotion of Israeli curricula, unequal allocation of resources, and increased school dropout rates among Palestinian students.

Additionally, hospitals and health facilities in East Jerusalem, face growing challenges related to the provision of health services to Jerusalemites and Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Health facilities and professionals are under extreme strain due to underfunding, violence, and restricted access to essential services. All these challenges were exacerbated by the war, which sheds the light on the urgent need for a comprehensive approach for both sectors, that takes into consideration the cultural identity of the Palestinians and addresses systemic discrimination and inequality.

2. Key Challenges

2.1 Educational Services

Dual Curriculum Dilemma: The Israeli government forces Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem to teach its curricula, which obliterates Palestinian cultural identity and creating confusion and identity crises among the students' and weakens their academic achievement. These policies focus on promoting the Hebrew language and excluding subjects related to Palestinian identity.

Underfunding and Inadequate Infrastructure: Palestinian schools suffer from a shortage of classrooms, educational facilities, and trained teachers, leading to increased dropout rates and lower-quality education.

Digital gab: Many students struggle with access to technology, widening educational gaps, especially with the increasing reliance on distance learning.

2.2 Health Services

Deteriorating Infrastructure: Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem suffer from a lack of resources, medical supplies and basic equipment. The increasing pressure on these hospitals due to war and violence incidents increases the difficulties they face in providing the necessary healthcare.

Lack of human resources: The shortage of medical staff and the emigration of many specialist doctors have exacerbated the healthcare crisis in the city.

Mental Health: The residents of East Jerusalem live under great psychological strain due to the ongoing conflict, requiring additional mental health support, especially for children and adolescents exposed to violence and trauma.

3. Sectoral Policies and Strategies

- **Education**

Comprehensive Curriculum Design: Design curricula that combine the cultural and Palestinian historical contents, especially of East Jerusalem, with the Palestinian curriculum issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education to ensure balanced educational attainment to preserve national identity.

Strengthening infrastructure: Investing resources in building new schools and expanding existing educational facilities, in addition to providing professional training for teachers to improve the level of education.

Bridging the digital divide: Launching digital initiatives to provide internet and technological devices to students in marginalized areas to ensure equal opportunities in learning.

Preserving teachers' salaries: Salaries of teachers in Jerusalem should not be affected by deductions and should be paid on time, in addition to securing incentives and financial dues, as this is important in preventing teachers from moving to other schools and preserving the schools and the students.

- **Health**

Improving access to healthcare services: Expanding mobile clinics and establishing telemedicine networks to provide healthcare services to isolated areas or areas that face difficulties accessing hospitals.

Promoting mental health: Providing psychological support programmes to communities affected by the war and the ongoing conflict, with a special focus on supporting children and youth suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Training the medical teams: Providing specialized training programmes for health sector workers to compensate for the acute shortage of specialist doctors and develop the capacity of local medical teams.

3. Recommendations for Strengthening Governance and Engagement

In light of the increasing challenges facing East Jerusalem, adopting sustainable strategies in education and health is vital to support the stability of Palestinian communities. Achieving this requires close cooperation between the Palestinian institutions and the international community to ensure the provision of quality services that enhance the resilience of the population and achieve sustainable development.

- **Strengthening Local Governance**

Community Engagement: Strengthen local community engagement in the planning and implementation of development projects and basic services to ensure a genuine response to local needs. Regular consultations with local communities should be organized to ensure that projects are implemented in line with their needs.

Transparency and Accountability: Implement strict oversight mechanisms on the use of aid funds to ensure that they are channeled effectively. These mechanisms should also include periodic audits and transparent reporting to the public.

- **International and local partnerships**

Strengthening partnerships: Building stronger partnerships between Palestinian and international organizations to coordinate efforts in providing aid and services. These partnerships should focus on enhancing cooperation between different stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of efforts.

The international community's support: The international community should provide greater support to the Palestinian government in managing and implementing aid programs. This should be done in alignment with national priorities and Palestinian development strategies.

- **Long-term Strategies**

Transition from Relief to Development: Once basic living conditions are stabilized, the focus should shift from immediate relief assistance to longer-term development programmes aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment.

Promoting sustainable solutions: Projects should be designed to strengthen local capacities and ensure long-term sustainability. This includes institutional capacity building and supporting local innovation in education and health.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Periodic evaluation: Conduct periodic evaluations of efforts made to determine their success and effectiveness in achieving the set objectives. These evaluations should include measuring the impact of programmes and projects on improving the quality of education and health services in East Jerusalem.