

The National Forum of Youth Local Councils 2026



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Community Initiatives**

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From the West Bank to the Gaza Strip: Building Youth Partnerships and National Initiatives That Respond to Local Community Needs

The 2026 National Forum of Youth Local Councils brought together representatives of 25 youth local councils from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, providing a national platform for dialogue, learning, and the exchange of experiences. The forum aimed to strengthen communication among councils, examine the realities of local youth engagement, and develop joint approaches that expand young people's participation in community work, advocacy, and local decision-making.

The forum was organised by Sharek Youth Forum in partnership with the Higher Council for Youth and Sports and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on 13–14 October 2026. Its programme focused on showcasing the experiences and challenges of youth local councils, building partnerships, developing youth-led initiatives, and strengthening coordination between councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with the aim of defining practical steps towards collective action.



The forum marked an important milestone in uniting youth efforts around shared community issues, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience, and building a common vision that moves beyond isolated local initiatives towards national cooperation grounded in citizens' needs and young people's capacities.

The forum concluded with the launch of a national campaign to address learning loss among students in the basic education grades. The campaign aims to organise educational lessons and classes at 25 sites across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as part of its field implementation plan, strengthening the role of youth local councils in responding to educational and community needs.





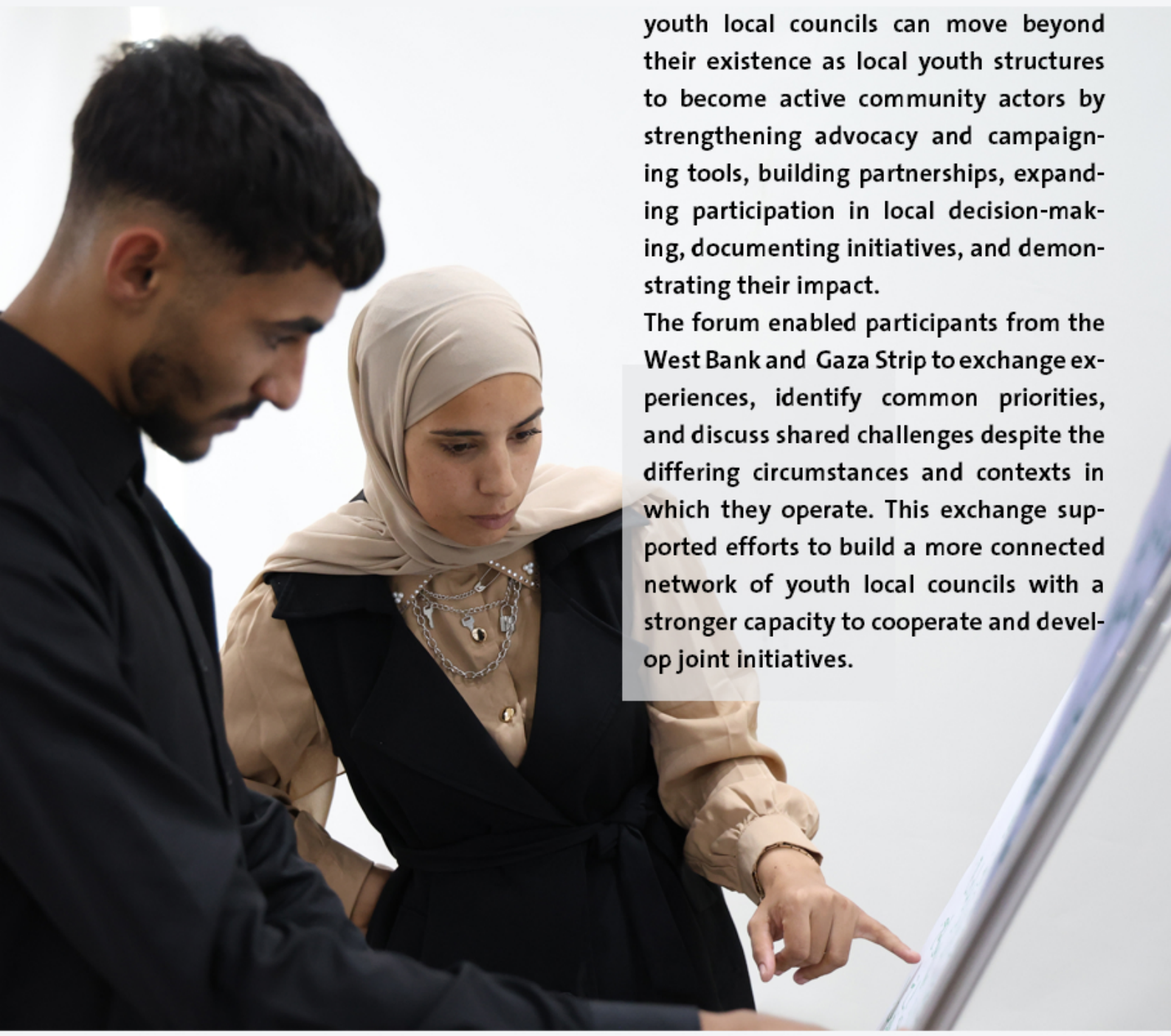
The National Forum: Bringing Youth Local Councils Together and Connecting Experiences

The forum was convened in recognition of the importance of strengthening the role of youth local councils as platforms for community participation and youth leadership. It provided a space for councils to share their experiences, exchange knowledge and expertise, discuss the challenges they face, and explore opportunities for cooperation and coordination.

Over two days, participants examined the realities of youth local councils, the pathways through which they were established and developed, their relationships with municipalities and local communities, and the challenges affecting the sustainability of their work. Discussions also explored their role in identifying local priorities and developing initiatives that respond to the needs of young people and the wider community.

The discussions further focused on how youth local councils can move beyond their existence as local youth structures to become active community actors by strengthening advocacy and campaigning tools, building partnerships, expanding participation in local decision-making, documenting initiatives, and demonstrating their impact.

The forum enabled participants from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to exchange experiences, identify common priorities, and discuss shared challenges despite the differing circumstances and contexts in which they operate. This exchange supported efforts to build a more connected network of youth local councils with a stronger capacity to cooperate and develop joint initiatives.



Day One: From Assessing Local Realities to Building Partnerships

The forum opened in the presence of Ms. Ratibeh Abu Ghosh, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Sharek Youth Forum; Dr. Hussein Hamayel, Governor of Jericho and the Jordan Valley Governorate; Ms. Sima Alami, UNFPA representative; Ms. Suzan Awatleh, Director of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports in Jericho; and Mr. Yahya Al-Khatib, Director of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports in Gaza.

The first day focused on the realities of youth local councils under the theme “Where Are We Now?”, setting the stage for discussions on the councils’ roles, the challenges they face, and the opportunities available to strengthen their impact within their communities.

During an open dialogue session, participants discussed how youth local councils were established, the challenges affecting their work, the initiatives they implement, their relationships with local communities, and ways to strengthen their role as active platforms for youth participation and community engagement. The session also facilitated the exchange of experiences between youth local councils in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The programme continued with a session on advocacy and campaigning for youth local councils, followed by a discussion on the outcomes of the national gathering within Sharek Partners Alliance and a session on building partnerships and strengthening cooperation among youth local councils.

The first day concluded with a field visit that included a tour of Nabi Musa Shrine and a visit to Al-Qamar Association, providing participants with an additional opportunity to connect and learn about local initiatives and institutions.



Participating Youth Local Councils, Groups, and Initiatives

The forum reflected the diversity of youth-led experiences represented at the gathering, bringing together local and municipal youth councils, initiatives, and youth groups from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This diversity created opportunities to exchange experiences across different areas and strengthen connections and coordination around shared priorities.

The participating entities included:

1. Deir al-Balah Youth Local Council.
2. Jordan Valley Youth Local Council.
3. Youth for Fair Society (YFFS).
4. Yatta Youth Local Council.
5. Masar Wahid Youth Initiative.
6. Burqin Youth Local Council.
7. Gaza Media Council.
8. Kafr Dan Youth Local Council.
9. Al-Bureij Youth Local Council.
10. Deir Sammit Youth Local Council.
11. Abasan al-Kabira Youth Local Council.
12. Aida Youth Local Council.
13. Rafah Municipal Youth Local Council.
14. Wifaq Local Youth Committees for Protection and Response.
15. Ain Shams Youth Local Council – Yatta.
16. Khan Younis Municipal Youth Local Council.
17. Beit Fajjar Youth Local Council.
18. Gaza Municipal Youth Local Council.
19. Halhul Youth Local Council.
20. Al-Maghazi Municipal Youth Local Council.
21. Dura Youth Local Council.
22. Youth Councils within the Youth Future Rescue Association.
23. Al-Arroub Youth Local Council.
24. Al-Ubeidiya Youth Local Council.
25. Kafr Ra'i Youth Local Council.

These diverse experiences created space to examine the realities of local youth engagement, exchange practices and ideas, and explore opportunities to develop initiatives and strengthen partnerships among youth local councils and other youth groups. In doing so, the forum helped connect local experience with a broader national framework for collective action.



Day Two: Advancing the National Initiative and Strengthening Collective Action

The second day focused on moving from the exchange of experiences and discussion of challenges towards practical planning for the National Initiative of Youth Local Councils in Palestine. Participants worked to define the initiative's objectives, components, and activities, and to develop an outline for its implementation and follow-up mechanisms, increasing the likelihood that the ideas discussed would translate into practical steps responding to local community needs.

The programme also addressed the importance of documenting youth initiatives, telling their stories, highlighting their community impact, and sharing successful experiences among youth local councils. Discussions further explored the development of communication and media coordination mechanisms to convey the initiatives' messages to the public and strengthen the visibility of youth local councils in addressing community issues.

Participants also emphasised the importance of clearly defining roles and responsibilities, organising joint work between youth local councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and establishing a clear pathway for following up on initiatives and documenting their results. These measures are intended to strengthen the continuity of cooperation and enable initiatives to evolve in response to field experience and local community needs.

The forum concluded with the launch of the National Youth Local Councils Campaign to Address Learning Loss among Students in the Basic Education Grades. The campaign represented one of the gathering's key outcomes and a practical step towards mobilising the capacities of youth local councils to implement joint community initiatives that support students and respond to educational needs.





The National Campaign to Address Learning Loss: A Youth-Led Initiative Responding to Students' Needs

The National Campaign Addressing Learning Loss was one of the forum's key outcomes. It aims to deliver educational lessons and classes for students in the basic education grades at 25 sites across the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of the campaign's field implementation plan. The campaign is designed to activate the role of youth local councils in organising educational initiatives within their communities. It seeks to build on their community presence and organisational capacities to reach students, provide supportive learning opportunities, and contribute to addressing learning loss.

The campaign gives youth local councils a direct role in responding to educational needs by organising activities at the local level and connecting youth efforts with an issue that directly affects students, families, and local communities.

It also demonstrates the importance of organised youth action in developing initiatives that can be implemented in practice, based on identifying needs, coordinating efforts, assigning responsibilities, and fostering cooperation among youth local councils within a shared national framework.

The campaign's significance extends beyond delivering educational lessons and classes. It also seeks to promote volunteerism and social responsibility, expand young people's role in initiatives that serve the public, and provide a model for cooperation among youth local councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The launch marks the beginning of a field implementation process that is now being planned. This process will provide opportunities to monitor activities, refine implementation, document results, and build on the experience to develop further youth-led initiatives that respond to local community needs.



Forum Outcomes: From Dialogue to Actionable Next Steps

At the conclusion of the forum, participants agreed on a set of practical priorities to sustain collective action among youth local councils. These included:

- Finalising the National Initiative of Youth Local Councils, including its objectives, activities, implementation responsibilities, and timelines.
- Establishing a regular communication channel among youth local councils to exchange experiences, opportunities, and challenges between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- Supporting youth local councils in developing local initiatives that respond to their communities' needs and strengthening their participation in local decision-making.
- Developing simple documentation tools to capture the stories and outcomes of initiatives and share them with the consent of those involved.
- Coordinating messages and media materials for the national campaign and highlighting the diversity of local youth experiences.

These outcomes reflect a commitment to developing youth engagement through an ongoing process of communication, coordination, and mutual learning. The aim is to ensure that cooperation among youth local councils extends beyond participation in events to the implementation of initiatives, documentation of results, and continuous improvement.



A National Partnership to Strengthen Local Youth Leadership

The forum was organised by Sharek Youth Forum in partnership with the Higher Council for Youth and Sports and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as part of a collaborative effort to support youth local councils, strengthen their capacity to develop community initiatives, and expand young people's participation in issues affecting their communities.

This collaboration highlights the importance of complementary roles between partner institutions and youth local councils by creating spaces for dialogue and planning, supporting initiative development, strengthening communication between young people and local institutions, and expanding opportunities for participation in public life.

The forum reaffirmed the importance of continued investment in youth local councils as platforms for participation, leadership, and community action. It also underscored the need to strengthen their capacity to turn ideas into practical initiatives, build sustainable partnerships, and respond to local needs within a shared national vision.



Towards a New Phase of Collective Youth Action

The forum represents a step towards strengthening the role of youth local councils in leading community initiatives and developing new forms of cooperation. It seeks to translate shared ideas and exchanged experiences into practical activities that respond to citizens' needs, while reinforcing communication and coordination between youth local councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It also opens the way for a sustained framework for collective action based on exchanging expertise, documenting initiatives and their outcomes, and developing advocacy and media engagement tools. These efforts can strengthen young people's presence in their communities and expand their participation in local and national issues.

Through its outcomes, the forum highlights the importance of moving beyond dialogue towards field initiatives that can be implemented, monitored, and followed up, reinforcing the role of youth local councils as active platforms for participation, leadership, and community engagement.





