



HOPE  
&  
PLAY

Hope and  
healing for  
Gaza's  
children

*Our impact  
2023-2024*

# Thank you for your support

***“With your support, I can bring a smile to the faces of Gaza’s children. I hope we can help them continue to live.”***

*- Basel El Maqosui, co-founder, Shababeek Centre for Contemporary Art, one of Hope and Play’s local partners in Gaza*

## **The war and genocide is taking a catastrophic toll on children in Gaza**

Every day, Gaza’s children wake up to a world of destruction, violence, and hunger. Constant fear and anxiety leaves many wishing they weren’t alive.

They have witnessed destruction and death on a mass scale, They have lost their homes, parents, loved ones, teachers, friends. They have suffered - and continue to suffer - abduction by the Israeli military, serious injury from bombings, and amputation. The Israeli restrictions on all food and aid coming into Gaza means many of these amputations were done without anaesthetic.

The intensity and duration of the violence is creating severe psychological trauma. This shows up in anxiety, nightmares, insomnia and a pervasive sense of hopelessness. In addition, these children have lost critical years of education. Schools are either completely destroyed or have been repurposed as shelters for displaced families.

## **The impact will last a lifetime**

Your support is a critical lifeline for these children, and their families, who are on the frontline of this daily horror.

We have been overwhelmed by the amazing ways in which people from all around the world are standing up in support of Gaza’s children. Over the past year, people have organised community events, sponsored running challenges, given generous online donations, and made creative messages of solidarity.

Every single contribution not only helps us continue our work; it also helps Gaza’s children to know they are remembered and supported. It helps them to hope.

***None of this happens without your support. Thank you for your continuing kindness to Palestine’s children.*** - Iyas AlQasem, Saskia Marsh, and Tony Rahman – Hope and Play trustees

Since the start of the onslaught of violence in October 2023, we have provided emergency support to Gaza. Our tireless team reached 67,062 children and their families with this vital help between March and October 2024.

## **Providing essentials to survive**

Our main focus is ensuring children and their families have the essentials to survive.

The Israeli blockade and bombardment means little to no food or basic supplies are getting into Gaza. Maysa Yousef, one of the artist-workshop leaders in Deir El Balah, says: “There’s nothing in the market; we manage with what we have.”

Our teams have provided food - bread, pastries, soup, rice and other staples - through soup kitchens feeding 100 families a day.

When Israeli authorities shut off the water supply to Gaza, our teams stepped up to truck in clean water to people sheltering in schools and tents. They set up a roving team of plumbers to fix and maintain toilets and pipes to keep shelters sanitary and stop the spread of disease. They also distributed basic medicines and provided essential dentistry to displaced people.

## **Creating moments of hope**

Our amazing teams run play, games, art, sport and therapeutic workshops for children all across Gaza. Their resourcefulness knows no bounds. They created a puppet show which toured Gaza city, ran a skate school for displaced teenagers, and have started regular Arabic, English and Maths tuition for children.

In the face of starvation, destruction and horror, their indomitable spirit shines though. With no end in sight to this war, your support is helping our teams to continue creating hope and healing for Gaza’s children.

# Focus on Gaza

Hope and Play works with partner organisations in Gaza to implement activities. Our trusted partner of more than 15 years, the **Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy**, leads on the implementation of most of our activities in Gaza. The Canaan Institute is a lynchpin in Gaza's civil society network; most youth workers in Gaza have received training there. In the face of bombing, death and destruction, director of the Institute Issa Saaba, has managed to re-establish community networks to deliver this vital lifeline of support to desperate children and families.

In early 2024, we partnered with a collective of superstar artists from the **Shababek Centre for Contemporary Art** to deliver some of our art workshops for displaced children. Co-founded by

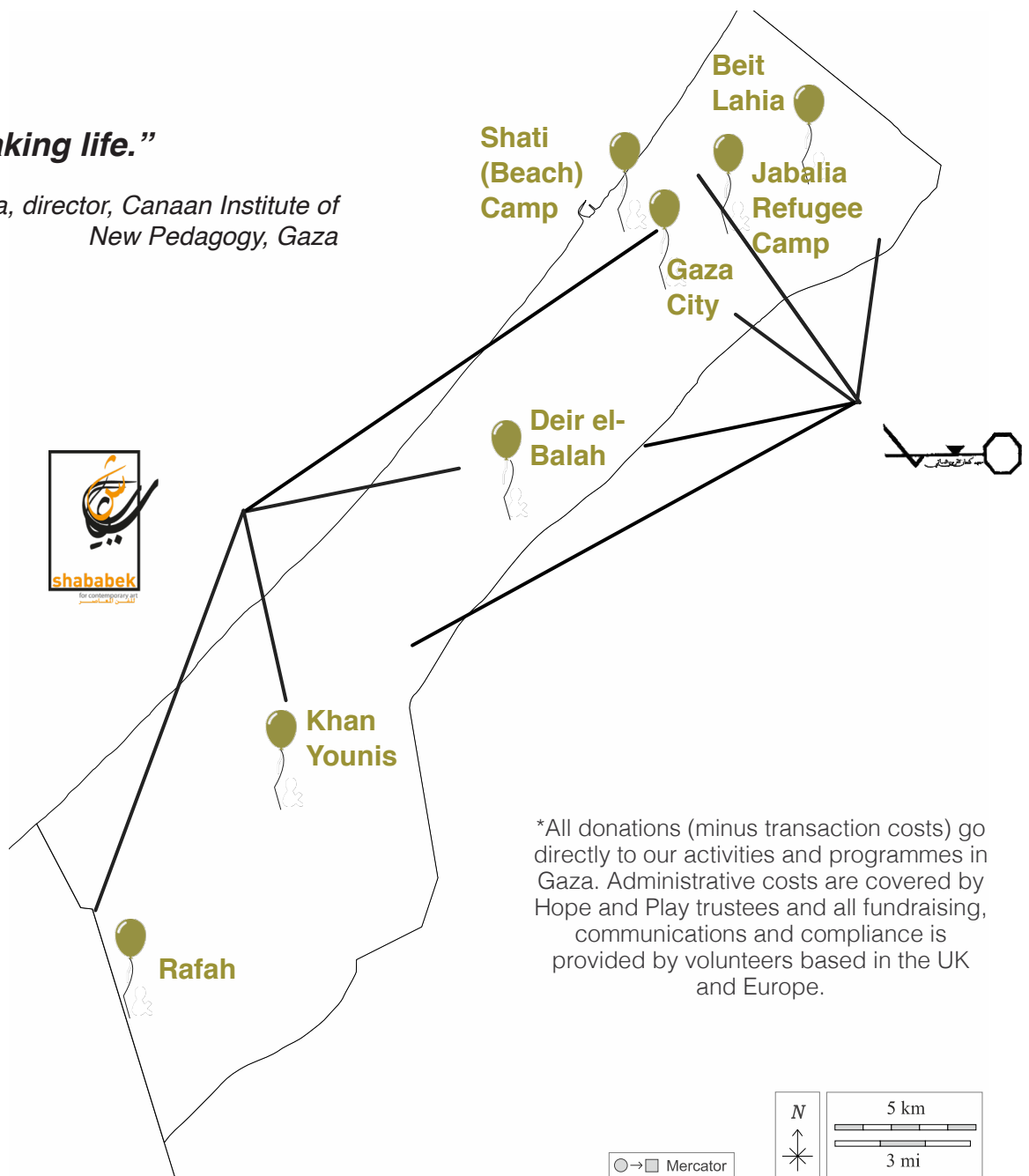
the acclaimed artists Basel El Maqosui, Shareef Sarhan and Majed Shala, the Centre has been at the heart of Palestinian cultural life since 2003. In March 2024, the Israeli military totally destroyed the centre, including its 20,000 works of art.

The map here shows broadly where our indefatigable teams are based and running emergency activities - thanks to your support\* - in many locations across these seven identified 'centres'.

Hope and Play would be nothing without the courage, drive and determination of these teams. And, in particular, **Issa Saaba's** leadership, bravery and love for his community, which drives the majority of the work we are doing in Gaza.

**“We are making life.”**

- Issa Saaba, director, Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy, Gaza



\*All donations (minus transaction costs) go directly to our activities and programmes in Gaza. Administrative costs are covered by Hope and Play trustees and all fundraising, communications and compliance is provided by volunteers based in the UK and Europe.



“[The children] talk about the fear they live in. They talk about their longing for their life before the war, and they dream of returning to their lives away from deprivation, fear and displacement.”

- Mona M. Jouda, artist-workshop leader



“The workshop made me forget the pain of war and the oppression, death, hunger and genocide that we are living through.”

- A child participant in art workshops





**“With the sounds of bombs, still I draw”**

The team delivering the work in Gaza are staff and volunteers of Hope and Play’s partner of over 15 years, the Canaan Institute of New Pedagogy, and artists belonging to the Shababeek Centre for Contemporary Art.

Most have themselves been displaced many times over. They are sheltering in others’ homes, tents, churches and schools, and are struggling to get the basics in markets that are empty.

Their incredible resourcefulness and resilience means that, month in and month out of this horrifying violence, they have led activities to distract, engage, educate and support the children in their communities and across Gaza.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to this inspiring team. Their love for their community, their commitment to Gaza’s children and their brighter futures, is nothing short of awe-inspiring.

Thank you Issa, Zaher, Rola, Mahmoud, Basel, Shareef, Majed, Mustafa, Mona, Jihad, Dergham, Diana, Mohamed, Maysa and all the other Canaan Institute and Shababeek Centre volunteers, for shining a light for Gaza’s children.







*A group of boys exhibiting their works of art after a workshop run by Mohamed El Kurd in Deir El Balah, September 2024 (c) Mohamed El Kurd*

# Creating moments of joy

*Throughout 2024, we have reached 31,703 displaced, traumatised children with therapeutic art, games and sports activities.*

The deeply traumatised children of Gaza have very few opportunities to play. Playgrounds are replaced with rubble. Beloved toys are lost, abandoned or destroyed in bombed homes.

Moments of play help these children to experience joy and remember the hope of the future. The workshops lovingly created by our teams from Canaan Institute and Shababeek Centre are spaces where, for a short while, children can try to forget the daily horrors of war.

Workshops are held in many places across Gaza, in very different locations and circumstances, but usually for groups of between 20 and 50 children of all ages. Some workshops focus on the children's response to a question or thought. Some are free sessions where children are given drawing and painting materials and they can express what they feel through art. Other workshops aim to paint or decorate a specific space with murals.

As Dergham Quraiqi says of the workshop pictured here, when an entire displacement camp came together to create a collage, *"this is an opportunity for participants to express their soul, their love for Palestine, to mourn the loss of their homes and to reflect on what remains of their dreams."*

The workshop leaders, themselves displaced and experiencing profound personal loss, constantly create new ways to engage the children living around them. Through 2024 they have produced kite-making workshops, art sessions, mural painting, and paper quilling.

Your ongoing support has provided these workshop leaders with the funds they need not only to purchase pens, paints, paper and other materials they need. It also gave them a monthly stipend to cover their own basic needs for food and hygiene - an absolutely critical income that has kept our team going, and in turn, has kept the children going. Thank you.





Children take part in an art workshop led by Shababeek's Dergham Quraiqi (c) Dergham Quraiqi / Shababeek Centre for Contemporary Art



**5,836** children participated in therapeutic art and craft workshops

**4,380** children reached with recreational games, sports and fun activities

**7,000** children sheltering in UNRWA schools provided with stationery and play materials





Participants of the Skate School organised by Canaan Institute for displaced teenagers sheltering at Gaza City stadium (c) Canaan Institute



***“My daughter didn’t want to come as she didn’t want to socialise with anyone. But now she is much better after just two sessions. I am so happy with your work. You have helped with their emotional and physical development. ”***

*- A displaced mother in Shujaia, Gaza*

In addition to the arts and crafts workshops, our teams run a huge variety of drama, creative writing, sports and games workshops for children of all ages. These are activities that would be normal moments in a day for children, but which are denied to Gaza’s children for no reason other than where they come from.

In Gaza City, 65 teenagers took part in a skate school. They lovingly repaired and restored old stock rollerblades and rollerskates to be able to take part in a few days’ training and a competition. (pictured left)

Also in northern Gaza, the team created and scripted a new puppet show - Simsim

(‘sesame’ in Arabic) - and put on a tour of 12 different locations around the city, reaching an incredible 2,000 children.

The show focussed on public health messages important in these extreme circumstances: hygiene practices; how to deal with unexploded ordinance; the values of kindness, solidarity, respect, tolerance and cooperation. In short, messages and values that will help them to survive amid the daily horrors of the Israeli destruction of Gaza. Thanks to your ongoing support, the team is now launching a second tour to cover more locations around northern Gaza.

And that is far from all. The teams also organised football tournaments in six school-shelters, creative writing workshops, and therapeutic listening circles for older children to express feelings and work through trauma. New workshop leaders are being trained ‘on-the-job’ to ensure we can scale up.

It is hard to imagine when this war will end. But the work that the teams are doing is not only emergency support for these horrific times. It is also setting a strong foundation for when the war does end, to ensure we can do our part to meet those acute needs. Your support has made this all possible.



**2,000**

children reached with the Simsim puppet show’s public health and social messages



*The Canaan Institute team of staff and volunteers running the 'Simsim' puppet show tour in northern Gaza, pictured in October 2024 (c) Canaan Institute for New Pedagogy*



# Providing essentials

*Since early 2024, our teams have distributed emergency cash and food, clean water, medicine and hygiene kits to children and families in desperate need.*

Families who were displaced from their homes, living in tents, or temporary shelters in schools, often have fled bombings with nothing but one set of clothes. Over the past year we have provided around 1,000 vulnerable families across Gaza with cash for their urgent needs - reaching 6,247 people.

With the emergency funds made possible by generous donors' support, they can buy the limited food and water supplies available, or other necessities such as hygiene supplies or medicines. During periods when the Israeli authorities have restricted aid and medicine deliveries into Gaza, the emergency cash grants were a literal lifeline for these families.

Through soup kitchens and clean water stations, our team has provided communities of displaced people with vital supplies to survive. In Jabalia refugee camp, a bread kitchen was serving 100 families every day with local bread and vegetable pastries. When the Israeli military besieged the camp in October 2024, our teams set up food stations in the tented displacement camps where Jabalia residents were fleeing, serving local bread and a treat - milk pudding - to 250 children daily.

In face of huge challenges, our teams are continuing to do their utmost to respond to unique circumstances and requirements of their communities in need. This includes sourcing and distributing hygiene kits for families living in tented displacement camps and arranging a roving team of plumbers to repair and maintain toilet and other sanitation facilities. In other locations, our teams have arranged for emergency dental and medical treatment.

People's needs are rapidly changing. But what is steadfast is our teams' commitment to meet their community's needs - whatever they are - with love, care and generosity.



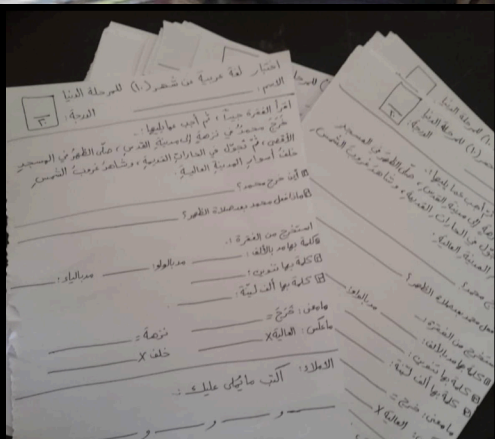
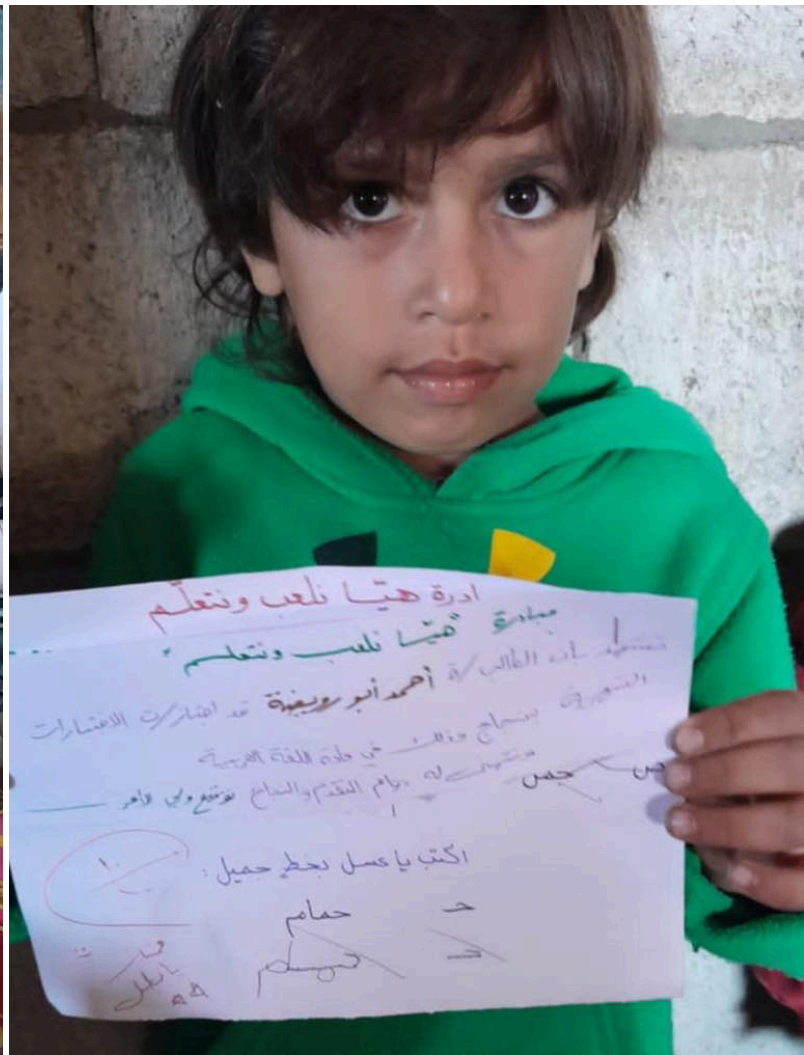
**657** sick and injured people treated and supported with essentials



**24,050** people supported with fixed toilets, pipes, clean water, hygiene supplies



**15,000** people supported with emergency food packages and bread



140

children of school age participated in the pilot in Zuweida, Gaza City. With funding, we could rapidly scale up this programme to ensure more children can access these learning opportunities

## Bridging the learning gap

No child in Gaza has attended school since early October 2023. The last year of education will have a lasting impact on a whole generation of children and young adults.

In the Zuweida area of Gaza, our team from Canaan Institute created a new programme to try to bridge the learning gap. This month-long pilot 'Play and Learn' programme ran through October 2024 and provided play and education for 140 children.

Working with six displaced teachers of Arabic, English and Maths, the programme provided the children with play sessions and age-appropriate tuition in each subject, culminating in an 'exam' at the end.

The children were delighted to receive new school books and to have a semblance of the structure of a classroom for the first time in more than a year.

Mona, one of the teachers leading the programme, says that education has incredible

power: "I feel we have the strength to enable us to win the war of hunger we are being subjected to. We don't need rockets, and we don't need weapons. Our kids just need to be fed and educated. A pen and a notebook are enough to expel ignorance."

There is pressing need for more programmes such as 'Play and Learn' to bridge the educational gaps forced by war. Our teams plan to scale up these programmes to reach more children, as funding allows.







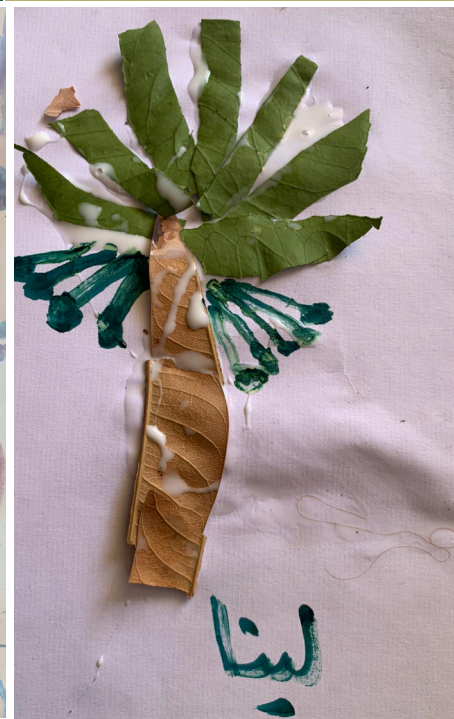
*A participant in Canaan Institute's Skate School for displaced teenagers sheltering at Gaza City's stadium performs a jump stunt (c) Canaan Institute for New Pedagogy*



“Art is important in times of war as it is in times of peace, especially for children, as they have been exposed to significant and very painful events. Some of them have lost family members, some of them have lost their homes, all their dreams, toys, schoolbooks, school, and even their childhood. Daily life has changed, as they now live in places that are not suitable for living. They say we love drawing and we love colours. Colours make us happy.”

*Majed Shala, co-founder, Shababeek Centre for Contemporary Art*

Artwork created by the children of Gaza. They draw their dreams, fears and loves. Like any child, anywhere in the world, every one of them deserves to live in peace. (c) Gaza's children



“Children are explorers who love experiences. In the workshops, art helps them to express their feelings of loss, love, sadness and hope through simple tools. They start to speak about their experience of displacement and how they lived before the war.”

*Jihad Ali Jarbou, artist-activity leader*



# A special message from Issa Saaba in northern Gaza

In the face of violent attacks and the genocidal war that is destroying trees, stones, and lives, we confront extremely difficult circumstances affecting people across all fields.

The shock and trauma they have endured, the severe siege we are under, the ongoing displacement, and the famine represent a grave violation of humanity. It is crucial for us, as activists and social fighters, to support those in need, particularly children and mothers, with whatever basic needs and rights we can provide.

Donations have become a vital avenue for saving lives and alleviating the suffering of those in desperate situations.

Our efforts are especially significant for the displaced families who have moved to overcrowded locations lacking essential resources such as food, water, clothing, hygiene, and medication.

Providing encouragement and a sense of solidarity to these individuals—showing them that others outside their country empathize with their pain and are trying to help—has a positive impact on their emotional well-being and resilience. This support fosters hope for an end to the war, the promise of peace, and the possibility of rebuilding their lives, homes and communities.

As this aggression and war continue into a second year, the accumulation

of trauma is particularly severe for children, who represent over 60% of those affected.

The rising number of orphans, coupled with increasing casualties and injuries, along with widespread destruction, means we find ourselves in greater need of support.

It is imperative that we broaden our efforts to ensure we do not leave these individuals in pain and suffering, allowing their problems to accumulate for future generations.

As the poet Tawfiq Ziad from Al Nassera once said, "I'd give half my life to the one who can make a weeping child laugh."



*Issa Saaba, pictured in June 2024. Here he stands amid the rubble of homes and businesses. His team have been steadfast support to those fleeing this devastation.*

I'd give half my life to the one who can  
make a weeping child laugh,  
and I'd give the other half  
to protect a young blossom  
from perishing.  
I'd walk a thousand years behind a song,  
and I'd cross a thousand valleys,  
no matter how thorny of path.  
I'd ride every raging sea,  
to collect the scent on lilac shores.  
I am all humanity in one man,  
So how can I rest  
while sacred blood is spilled?  
I sing to life,  
to life I give all my poems,  
and my poems.  
are all that I possess.

Tawfiq Ziad - Palestinian politician, poet, and activist



## Your support means the world to our teams

“We create safe spaces where children can heal, express themselves, and regain a sense of normalcy amidst the chaos. This support has been helping them cope with trauma and build resilience. As the situation continues, the ongoing generosity of our donors is crucial to ensure we can sustain and expand these vital services, reaching even more children in need.”

*Zaher Hania, Canaan Institute for  
New Pedagogy*

“We are extremely grateful for your support in helping us with the children. They need this outlet for their anger, frustration, and trauma. I feel that the children feel better when they come to me; we strive to support them so they can keep smiling, despite the situation we’ve been forced into.”

*Maysa Yousef, artist-workshop  
leader, Shababeek*

“Art is important for children and everyone, because through art, a smile is drawn on miserable and shattered faces. The workshops make the children happy and positive. Thank you to everyone who supports these workshops, to everyone who supports humanity.”

*Mohammed El Kurd, artist-  
workshop leader, Shababeek*



*Girls displaced from their homes by Israeli bombs, sheltering at an UNRWA school, dressed in traditional Palestinian thobes © Cnaan Institute*

## And to Gaza's children

*"We're in a war, there's no education - schools have been destroyed. We are staying on our land; those who left are not coming back."*

*"[Through the activities] we release pent-up energy, and pass time, and we give people energy too. We have fun with them. To those who come to make us happy we say: thank you and God bless you." - Girl participant in art and games workshops*

*"This is the first time in a year that I have felt like playing." - Boy participant in sports and games workshop, Deir El Balah*

*"In the workshop we learned how to draw - where to start and how to finish - and where to colour. Inshallah, when the war ends, we'll see you here again. Thank you very much for supporting us." - Sundus, aged 15, participant in therapeutic workshop*

*"These activities support the emotional and mental well-being of our children and women at a time when we have been forced to leave our homes and are surrounded by destruction. These activities give us hope." - Mother and participant in therapeutic workshops*

*"The sports games with you have brought us back to life." - Boy participant in sports workshop, Deir El Balah*





*A clown performance for children and their families sheltering at an UNRWA school, an Eid celebration (c) Canaan Institute for New Pedagogy*



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can continue, please  
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