



# Ramallah

## Forum of Expertise - Active Aging

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- **DURATION**

Ongoing Since 2018

- **POPULATION 2024**

43.880 (growth rate 3,4%)

- **URA SCOPE**

SOCIETY. Staying Human

- **TOPICS**

SOCIAL CONNECTION

ACTIVITY, WELLBEING

LEARNING AND SKILLS

- **MAIN ACTORS**

Ramallah Municipality

Youth Organization - SHIAM

Charitable organization - Al Nahda

Ramallah, a bustling city in the central West Bank, stands out as a hub of resilience and cultural vibrancy despite the region's political challenges. Known for its rich history and diversity, the city hosts a range of educational institutions, hospitals, and social and cultural organizations, supported by the proactive efforts of the Ramallah Municipality. Alongside essential services like sanitation, waste management, and infrastructure maintenance, the municipality prioritizes cultural and wellness programs to foster resilience among residents living under occupation.

However, as people age, they often face significant challenges that threaten their independence, health, and quality of life. Many older adults may struggle with physical and mental health issues, reduced mobility, and social isolation. Financial constraints also become more pronounced as incomes typically decrease with age. These challenges are especially severe for older residents of Palestine, where the absence of a robust social security system and comprehensive health insurance leaves many without the necessary support to navigate aging with dignity.

Access to capital remains crucial. Addressing contractor shortages and streamlining processes.

In Ramallah, these issues are compounded by the broader pressures of living in an occupied territory, where access to resources and consistent care is often limited. Older residents are particularly vulnerable, facing difficulties maintaining connections within their communities or accessing affordable healthcare and social services.

Recognizing these challenges, the Ramallah Municipality seeks to address the specific needs of older citizens through wellness initiatives, cultural programs, and community engagement efforts. By fostering connections and offering financial support, the city aims to empower its aging population to live with resilience and dignity, even in the face of systemic barriers. Yet, the broader lack of structural support highlights an urgent need for policies and systems that prioritize the well-being of older adults, ensuring they remain active, connected, and cared for within their communities.





## Impact

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to actively participating members between February 19 and March 9, 2024, to assess the Forum of Expertise's impact. Covering demographics, program participation, physical activity, and psychosocial health, the survey collected 171 responses, representing a 20% response rate from 865 registered members.

Results and Impacts:

**Social Connection:** 92% of respondents reported forming new friendships, highlighting the forum's role in reducing social isolation.

**Increased Activity:** 90% of participants reported heightened physical activity, demonstrating the program's success in encouraging healthier lifestyles.

**Enhanced Well-being:** Over 81% experienced health improvements, and 91.9% reported overall enhanced well-being.

**Skill Development:** The forum facilitated learning and skill acquisition, with 75% acquiring new skills and 80% learning through diverse activities.

**Reading and Outdoor Engagement:** More than 50% noted increased interest in reading and outdoor activities, reflecting a well-rounded enrichment program.

**Volunteerism:** The forum inspired community engagement, with over half of respondents volunteering either within or outside the program.

**Improved Family Relationships:** Two-thirds experienced better family connections, showcasing positive ripple effects on personal relationships.

**Promotion:** All respondents would recommend the program to friends and family, demonstrating high satisfaction and advocacy.

The Forum of Expertise effectively addresses the needs of older adults, fostering social bonds, physical health, and intellectual growth. By enhancing well-being and community belonging, the program exemplifies a sustainable model for healthy aging, particularly in regions impacted by conflict.

## The Challenge

Aging is a pressing global challenge, particularly in advanced societies, and demands tailored solutions—especially in politically conflicted regions. In conflict-affected areas, the elderly face heightened isolation as restricted mobility and disrupted social networks cut them off from vital connections. The persistent instability amplifies the emotional and psychological strain of aging, leaving many without dependable support systems. Moreover, older adults in these regions often endure severe economic hardships, compounded by diminished purchasing power. This challenge is intensified by rampant inflation and limited access to essential resources, making it increasingly difficult for them to meet their basic needs.

Moreover, the lack of a social security system and comprehensive health insurance compounds these difficulties. Without social safety nets, elderly individuals are vulnerable to economic strain and health risks, unable to access the care they need. As healthcare services become more limited and expensive, many older people are forced to rely on inadequate or fragmented support systems. In such an environment, aging becomes not just a physical challenge, but a socio-economic and emotional one, pushing older people to the margins of society.

## Solution Proposed

The initiative takes a holistic approach to elder care by integrating volunteer leadership, municipal support, and community engagement. This innovative model encourages collective ownership and fosters inclusivity, ensuring that seniors feel valued and empowered. The Forum's design features open spaces, and a variety of programming aimed at promoting interaction among participants. It prioritizes both physical and social accessibility, making it an inclusive space for people of all abilities, including those with disabilities. The core mission is to offer a safe and welcoming environment for seniors to connect, engage, and reduce social isolation. This sense of belonging builds a resilient and supportive community. By providing a range of activities, workshops, and intergenerational programs, the Forum enables seniors to stay active, develop new skills, and contribute their valuable knowledge and life experience to the community.

The initiative thrives on a successful public-private partnership, combining municipal funding with support from the non-profit "Global Community." This partnership includes essential health screenings, addressing health disparities, and promoting health equity. Collaboration with local youth organizations strengthens intergenerational bonds, enriching the community and fostering shared learning across generations. This approach not only empowers seniors but also fosters social justice and equity within the broader community.

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