Executive Summary

- Givat Haviva is a leading Israeli NGO promoting Jewish-Arab relations and peace education in Israel, with over 40 years of experience bringing together Jewish and Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.
- The recent renewal of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations has introduced new opportunities for renewing people-to-people programs between Israeli citizens and residents of the Palestinian Authority.
- While DFID invests significant funds in key sectors of social and economic development of the OPTs, these investments are often put at risk due to the ongoing conflict with Israel and the failure to achieve a two-state solution.
- DFID can play a greater role in advancing a two-state solution by promoting people-to-people programs that can help bring the political peace process under way to fruition.
- With the latest round of peace talks conditioned on the passage of a referendum in both Israeli and Palestinian societies, public opinion in Israel and the OPTs has a crucial role to play in the successful outcome of the process.
- In parallel to the negotiations currently under way on the political level, work must be carried out to influence public attitudes and opinions among the Israeli and Palestinian publics.
- In December 2012, the Palestinian Leadership established the "Palestinian Committee for Interaction with Israeli Society" with the aim to cultivate dialogue with the Israeli public in order to demonstrate that peace is a mutual strategic interest of both sides.
- Tawasul, a leading Palestinian NGO based in Ramallah working to improve relations between Israelis and Palestinians and achieve the two-state solution, works closely with this committee to fulfill its mandate.
- Tawasul approached Givat Haviva in November 2013 to engage in a joint initiative to prepare the ground for the successful passage of referenda on a future Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.
- The organizations aim to hold public discussions in both Israel and the OPTs that forge direct channels of communication between leaders and citizens on both sides in order to deepen the understanding of their respective positions in a final status agreement and thereby generate wide-spread public support for the agreement.
- The public discussions will be accompanied by national campaigns on each side exposing the key messages and positions of the program.
Background: Givat Haviva's Experience in Israeli-Palestinian Grassroots Peace Programs

1. Givat Haviva is a non-profit organization founded in 1949 as the national education center of the Kibbutz Federation in Israel. It is dedicated to promoting mutual responsibility, civic equality and cooperation between divided groups in Israel as the foundation for building a shared future and shared society – critical elements of a sustainable and thriving Israeli democracy. To this end, Givat Haviva serves as a catalyst in activating divided communities to work together towards achieving their common goals, while engaging in a process of interaction, support and empowerment. A leader in its field, Givat Haviva was awarded the 2001 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education for its longstanding work in promoting Jewish-Arab dialogue and reconciliation.

2. The Jewish-Arab Center for Peace at Givat Haviva, founded in 1963, is one of the oldest institutions promoting Jewish-Arab rapprochement in the region. The Center's programs have brought together tens of thousands of children, teenagers, and adults of different ethnic and religious backgrounds in Israel in the territories of the Palestinian Authority. Key methodologies employed in Jewish-Arab programming include: education, instruction of languages, arts, research, counseling and community work.

3. Givat Haviva began developing programs promoting cooperation between Israelis and residents of the Palestinian Authority following signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Initial activity focused on providing short capacity building courses at both the Givat Haviva campus and at the home site of partner organizations in the Palestinian Authority. In a typical year approximately 1,800 Palestinians took part in courses on a variety of topics, such as such topics as democracy, agriculture, women’s issues, Hebrew language, computers, ecology, workers’ rights, nurses’ training, youth leadership and journalism. Encounters between Palestinians and their Israeli counterparts were an integral part of these efforts.

4. In the late 1990’s, Givat Haviva implemented People-to-People programming targeting Israeli and Palestinian educators, university students and youth. The Israeli/Palestinian Educators' Forum for Peace program was the recipient of the prestigious Berlson Award from Ben-Gurion University, Beersheva. Additional program highlights included the joint Palestinian, Israeli and Jordanian English youth magazine Crossing Borders, Community Histories by Youth in the Middle East (CHYME), whose aim was to demonstrate how youth leaders from regions in conflict can enhance their commitments to and capacities for peace building through collaboration in community research projects. Together with Biladi-The Jerusalem Times, Givat Haviva established the All for Peace Radio Station (today a fully independent subsidiary). The station is a unique, joint Israeli-Palestinian radio station, dedicated to building a bridge of understanding between the two peoples. Its mission is to rebuild trust between the two peoples, empower civil society, promote people-to-people activities, and provide information about the other side that is lacking in the traditional media.

5. With the onset of the Second Intifada ("uprising") in 2000, the majority of Givat Haviva programming between Israelis and residents of the Palestinian Authority
was halted, or shifted to international locations. The Jewish-Arab Center for Peace continued and intensified ongoing efforts to promote a shared society between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel within the Green Line, while maintaining communication with Palestinian partners and colleagues in West Bank/Gaza where possible.

6. The recent renewal of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations led by US Secretary of State John Kerry has introduced new opportunities for renewing people-to-people programs between Israeli citizens and residents of the Palestinian territories. It is in this context that the Palestinian NGO Tawasul approached Givat Haviva in November 2013 to forge a civil society partnership aiming to mobilize public support for a two-state solution both in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Rationale: People-to-People Peacebuilding & Public Opinion Support as a Necessary Condition for the Success of Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations

7. DFID invests significant funds in key sectors of social and economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). However, these investments are often put at risk due to the ongoing conflict with Israel and the failure to achieve a two-state solution. Indeed, experience has shown that peace is often a precondition to sustainable development. While international agencies invest heavily in the development of conflict and post-conflict regions, little funding is dedicated to civil society based peacebuilding efforts – a key component of sustaining peace and enabling economic progress.

8. The peacebuilding approach developed by Johan Galtung over 30 years ago and since adopted by the United Nations and international community recognizes "the need for the creation of peacebuilding structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing the 'root causes' of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution." This approach has been adopted in numerous multilateral and bilateral mechanisms, defined by the United Nations as a wide range of activities to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.2

9. Civil society based approaches to peacebuilding have gained increasing attention in recent years as one of the pillars of effective violence prevention, mitigation and rebuilding in conflict contexts around the world. In particular, the "People-to-People" approach to peacebuilding brings representatives of conflicting groups together to interact purposefully in a safe, co-equal space to forge trust and empathy. People-to-people peacebuilding works to break down the barriers between the groups by re-humanizing the other, fostering empathy and mutual understanding, building trust, and creating relationships.3

2 Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Peace (1992).
10. In conflict-prevention contexts, a people-to-people approach can be a tool to address and mitigate tensions before violence is triggered. During violent conflict and in post-conflict contexts, people-to-people programs can be used to minimize the distance between the groups and seek common interests from which to build new relationships, institutions, and enterprises. As the health of the relationships between the groups improve, the likelihood of violence between them declines. There is an assumed progression across a scale of healthy relationships.4

11. The Israeli-Palestinian experience has shown that peace cannot be made by leaders alone. In order to be sustainable, peace must be rooted among citizens. The British government has stated that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a priority. However, a very small percentage of DFID funds are going towards projects bringing Israelis and Palestinians together. DFID can play a greater role in advancing a two-state solution by promoting people-to-people programs that can help bring the political peace process under way to fruition.

12. The latest round of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks launched in July 2013 has been conditioned upon public support from both sides. Indeed, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas have both committed to issuing a referendum on any agreement that might result from the negotiations. The referendum condition means that public opinion in Israel and Palestine has a crucial role to play in the successful outcome of the process.

13. In parallel to the negotiations currently under way on the political level, work must be carried out to influence public attitudes and opinions among the Israeli and Palestinian publics. This must occur before counter efforts to negatively influence a prospective peace agreement take hold. It is imperative to engage the public now.

14. There are indications that a failure to reach an agreement that is acceptable to Israelis and Palestinians would not mean a return to the status quo, but would very likely lead to another round of violence. Recent polls from the last two years show that mutual mistrust and fear of potential harm inflicted by the other side is on the rise among Israelis and Palestinians.5

15. A recent poll conducted in partnership with the U.S. Institute of Peace found that 47 percent of Palestinians and 48 percent of Israelis do not believe that a peace agreement will ever be reached. However, 60 percent of respondents on each side supported the agreement when they heard that the other side was prepared to do the same.6

16. Two broad lessons were derived from this finding: 1) Public opinion is dynamic, and can be moved. 2) In the case of the current peace process, the key drivers for shifting the dial in the direction of an agreement is the prospect of success which, in turn, is contingent upon proof of buy-in from the other side. Networks of Israeli and Palestinian

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4 Ibid.
civil society actors on the ground have a key role to play in promoting trust between the sides and instilling faith in the process.

**Proposed Strategy: Public Discussions with Israeli and Palestinian Opinion Leaders**

17. In December 2012, the Palestinian Leadership established the "Palestinian Committee for Interaction with Israeli Society." The goal of the committee is to cultivate dialogue with the Israeli public in order to demonstrate that peace is a mutual strategic interest of both sides. Towards this end, the committee is mandated to present the positions of Palestinian leadership on key issues to the Israeli public and mobilize support for the principle of a two-state solution. Working closely with the Palestinian leadership and civil society organizations, Tawasul is coordinating closely with this committee. On this basis, Tawasul has engaged in preliminary discussions with Givat Haviva to work together as a Palestinian-Israeli civil society partnership in order to implement this mandate both in Israel and in the Palestinian Authority.

18. The organizations have agreed to hold a series of meetings on both sides, engaging wide sections of diverse publics in open discussion and debate of the issues on the negotiation table. It is important to note that this will represent a unique opportunity for members of the Israeli and Palestinian publics to engage in direct, face-to-face discussion of the core issues that their leaders are working to resolve.

**Activities: Public Meetings in Israel**

19. The program partners will develop and implement a series of 5-6 meetings in different locations across the country, engaging different audiences. As a first step, the partners propose holding a kick-off meeting at the Givat Haviva campus. Representatives of the Palestinian Committee for Interaction with Israeli Society, key opinion leaders in Palestinian society, will travel to Givat Haviva for the day to participate in two events:

- **Meeting with the leaders of Israeli peace and social change organizations at the Givat Haviva Peace Library.** With the expected attendance of some 30 representatives of various organizations, this meeting will allow for an interactive and in-depth discussion. This target group is of particular importance given the general decline of the Israeli peace camp in recent years and disillusionment of many of its members regarding possibilities for peace.

- **Public event for mayors, local leaders and citizens of the Wadi Ara region:** This is envisioned to be a larger event of 200-250 people in the Conference Hall of Givat Haviva who will hear a presentation of Palestinian positions and have the opportunity to pose questions and generate dialogue.

20. A second event will facilitate interaction between the Palestinian committee members and the Arab citizens of Israel. The discussion will focus on the role that Arab/Palestinian-Israelis can play as a bridge to peace with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. As a leader in Jewish-Arab shared society programs in Israel, Givat Haviva is well-positioned to lead this component, an important step in engaging a population too often left out the Israeli-Palestinian discourse and with great potential for helping to advance peace at the grassroots level.

21. These meetings will be followed by 3-4 other events to be held around the country with different target audiences in partnership with other institutions and organizations.
Public Meetings in the Palestinian Authority

22. In the Palestinian Authority, 5-6 public meetings will be held in different locations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The first meeting will be held at the PLO Headquarters in Ramallah with the participation of members of Palestinian peace and social change organizations, 20-30 different leaders, as well as 20-30 Israelis. The second public meeting will held in Beit Jala, where Israelis do not need any permission to enter, to include 20-30 participants from each side. Finally, a public event for different groups on both sides (media, business leaders, teachers) will be held at the Ambassador Hotel in Jerusalem with 20-30 participants from Israel and Palestine.

Public Relations Campaign

23. The public discussions will be accompanied by national campaigns on each side exposing the key messages and positions of the program. An emphasis will be placed on the importance of a two-state solution as a strategic imperative for both sides, as well as educating the public about specific issues on the table and their proposed solutions in a final status agreement.

24. It is expected that these face-to-face and media efforts will make a significant contribution to building support among the Israeli and Palestinian publics for future referenda – an integral step to ensuring a sustainable peace which requires greater attention, resources and efforts in order to fulfill the vision of a two-state solution.

January 2014