

Case Study

Yes Theatre

A deep dive into the journey, organisational structure, service model, and population supported by Yes Theatre, with reflections on its impact and key lessons learnt



Yes Theatre

City Hebron (Al-Khalil)

District Hebron

Country Palestine

Region Middle East



“ The importance of arts in society is undeniable, it communicates across all cultures, tells the stories of the past and present, and inspires minds, both young and old, to do beautiful things. ”



Organisational profile

Team size	Very small (1-10 people)
Age of organisation	6-10 years



Key aspects of our work

Primary contextual issue	Conflict-affected populations
Life stage	All
Gender focus	All
Level of intervention	Prevention & promotion Assessment & direct care
Annual Reach	5000+ people

Contextual issue

Yes Theatre operates in a context shaped by multiple factors that negatively affect mental health, particularly among young people. Prolonged conflict and occupation expose communities to ongoing violence, insecurity, checkpoints, and military raids, creating chronic stress and trauma. **Many youth witness or directly experience traumatic events, contributing to high rates of psychological distress and PTSD symptoms.**

Economic hardship, including high levels of poverty and unemployment, further increases stress, limits future opportunities, and can lead to feelings of hopelessness. **Access to mental health care is also limited** due to shortages of trained professionals, uneven service availability, and under-resourced psychosocial support systems. In addition, stigma surrounding mental health often discourages individuals from seeking help when they need it.

Restrictions on movement and limited access to safe community spaces can increase social isolation and reduce opportunities for support, recreation, and recovery. Together, **these challenges create an environment where emotional distress is widespread and often long-lasting, making accessible, community-based psychosocial support and creative outlets especially important for youth well-being and resilience.**

Objectives

Yes Theatre for Communication among Youth addresses poor mental health and limited opportunities for self-expression by using theatre and cultural activities as tools for youth development. The organization creates safe and supportive spaces where young people can express emotions, build resilience, reduce stress, and develop healthy coping skills. Through participatory theatre, youth strengthen their communication, confidence, teamwork, and interpersonal abilities while learning to share their perspectives effectively.

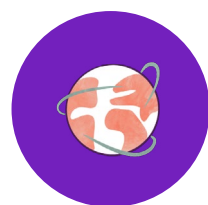
Yes Theatre also promotes engagement with arts and culture as powerful forms of self-expression, social inclusion, and community connection. By encouraging young people to tell their stories, explore their identities, and participate in dialogue on issues affecting their lives, the organization empowers them to become active and confident members of their communities. Through these activities, Yes Theatre helps address gaps in psychosocial support and creative opportunities, contributing to improved well-being, personal growth, and youth empowerment.



WHEN?

When was the organisation established?

Yes Theatre was established in 2008.



WHERE?

Where did the organisation start implementing its activities?

Yes Theatre began its activities in Hebron, where it is still currently based, although it has expanded its work in the West Bank and Gaza.



WHY?

Why did the organisation start its activities?

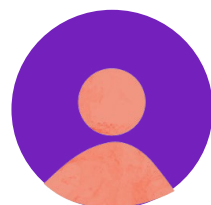
Yes Theatre was established to safeguard the community's access to theatre and drama, addressing cultural, educational and social needs after the closure of the precursor organisation, Ayyam Al Masrah.



WHAT?

What did the organisation do in its initial stages?

The initial focus was drama in education through workshops, animation, storytelling, and theatre productions designed for schoolchildren while also engaging wider community audiences.



WHO?

Who started the organisation?

The initial stages involved three actors from the precursor institution, Ayyam Al Masrah (Theatre Days), joined by a volunteer accountant and the current director to support the transition process.



HOW?

How was the organisation's work started?

Following the closure of Ayyam Al Masrah, three actors established Yes Theatre to continue serving community needs, supported by a \$40,000 transition budget and two volunteers.

Organisational structure

Yes Theatre is led by a General Manager who oversees daily operations, staff, and program delivery. The organization is structured around three areas:

- **Programs, which provide theatre-based psychosocial support for youth**
- **Training & Capacity Building, which develops artistic, leadership, and peer-support skills**
- **Operations & Partnerships, which manages administration, finance, fundraising, and external collaborations**

Strategic decisions are made by the Board in consultation with the General Manager, while operational and programmatic decisions are implemented collaboratively by leadership, program managers, creative teams, and administrative staff.

Financial management

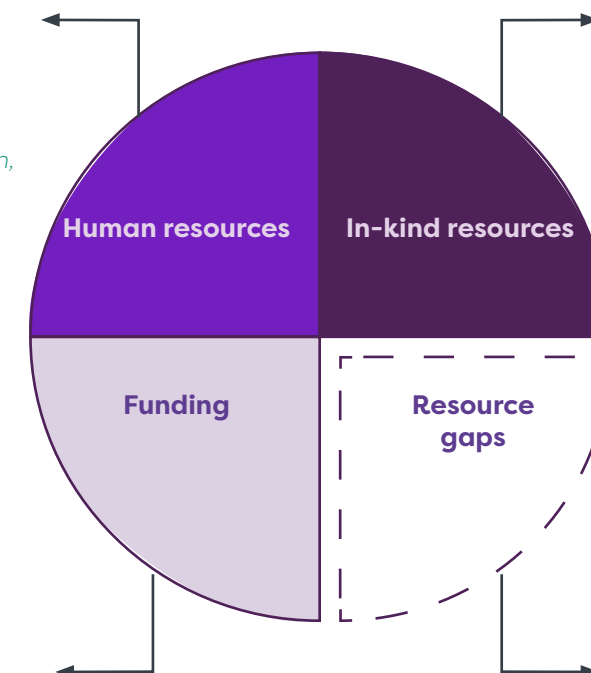
Yes Theatre maintains financial oversight through a dedicated finance and administration officer or accountant responsible for bookkeeping, budgeting, and financial tracking. **Financial performance is reviewed regularly** through internal monthly or quarterly monitoring, while independent external audits are conducted annually to ensure transparency and compliance. The organization operates under formal financial management policies covering budgeting, procurement, expense approvals, payroll, and financial reporting.

Yes Theatre follows Palestinian NGO financial and administrative regulations, alongside donor-specific requirements that often include additional auditing, reporting, and procurement standards. These systems help ensure accountability, transparent use of funds, regulatory compliance, and responsible financial management in a resource-constrained environment.

Resources

Yes Theatre has five full-time paid administrative staff (General Director, Administrative Director, Programs Director, Procurement Officer, and HR Officer), a pool of paid technical and artistic consultants hired per project, and 50 active volunteers supporting workshops, performances, outreach, and events

In addition to financial support, the organization benefits from in-kind contributions including free or reduced-cost venues, 50 volunteers supporting activities, donated or shared technical equipment, and pro bono or discounted professional services. Partnerships with schools, cultural centers, and local institutions also provide space, expertise, and access to communities communication programs.



The organization operates with an annual budget of €600,000 and aims to increase it to €1,000,000 to expand programs, geographic reach, capacity building, and production quality. Funding comes mainly from project-based grants by partners including UNICEF, CSSR, KMW, CCFD, and the Palestinian Ministry of Culture.

The organization faces a €400,000 funding gap (from €600,000 to €1,000,000), limiting expansion, staffing stability, equipment upgrades, and M&E systems. It also has HR gaps (few permanent technical roles), infrastructure needs, and heavy reliance on project-based funding with limited financial diversification and sustainability planning.

Model & activities

Target population

The organization's activities target children, youth, and women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, primarily from underserved and marginalized communities.

Beneficiaries include children (6–12), youth (13–25), and women (18+), both male and female, living in urban and rural areas with limited access to cultural, educational, and psychosocial services.

Services or interventions

Yes Theatre for Communication among Youth (Palestine) uses theatre and creative arts as tools to promote communication, social inclusion, and psychosocial well-being among children, youth, and women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Overall, this model integrates artistic expression, psychosocial support, and community engagement to empower youth and women, enhance life skills, and foster stron

Core Services and Activities

Include a range of participatory, arts-based interventions designed to support personal development and community engagement. Drama and Theatre Workshops engage children and youth in acting, role-playing, improvisation, and storytelling. These activities strengthen communication skills, self-expression, confidence, and teamwork while encouraging creativity and active participation. Drama Therapy Sessions use structured therapeutic drama techniques to help participants cope with stress, trauma, and social challenges, providing safe spaces for emotional expression and psychological support.

Storytelling and Narrative Activities

The activities are central to the organization's approach, enabling participants to share personal experiences, explore identity, and build empathy and understanding among peers. Animation and Puppetry Programs introduce creative media and interactive performance methods that enhance imagination, learning, and emotional expression, particularly for younger participants. Community Performances and Outreach initiatives present public theatre productions and workshops that raise awareness of social issues, strengthen community ties, and amplify youth voices in public discourse.

The organizational approach is based on an integrated participatory and arts-based model that combines creativity with psychosocial support and community development.

Youth-Centered Participation ensures that children and young people are actively involved in the creative process, giving them ownership of performances, stories, and projects. This participatory method fosters agency, leadership, and engagement. Psychosocial Support Through Arts is embedded in all activities, where drama, storytelling, and creative workshops function both as educational tools and therapeutic interventions. These activities help participants process emotions, reduce stress, and develop coping strategies in environments affected by conflict and social pressure.

Community Engagement

Is another key pillar of the model. Performances, workshops, and outreach activities are implemented within local communities to encourage dialogue, social cohesion, and awareness of cultural and social issues. This helps bridge gaps between individuals, families, and broader society. Capacity Building is achieved by training local youth leaders, peer educators, and volunteers, ensuring that knowledge and skills are transferred within communities. This strengthens sustainability and empowers young people to take active roles in facilitating activities and supporting peers. Collaborative Partnerships with schools, cultural institutions, and local organizations enhance the reach, quality, and impact of programs. These partnerships provide access to participants, venues, and additional expertise, allowing the organization to operate more effectively across diverse contexts.



Impact

Key desired outcomes



Improved psychosocial wellbeing, emotional expression, and resilience among children and youth through participatory theatre and creative arts-based engagement.



Increased capacity of children and youth to safely express emotions, experiences, and perspectives through drama, storytelling, and participatory performance methods.



Strengthened community dialogue, empathy, and social cohesion through shared theatre experiences that encourage reflection on social and psychosocial issues.

Methods

- **Yes Theatre uses a primarily qualitative, mixed-methods approach with limited quantitative tracking.**
- **Data is collected through facilitator observations,** post-performance discussions, participant feedback sessions, reflection circles, storytelling, role play exercises, and occasional simple feedback forms. Theatre facilitators and field staff gather data during and immediately after activities, while coordination staff consolidate and organise findings.
- **Analysis is thematic and descriptive, focusing on changes in emotional expression, engagement, communication, and social interaction.** Regular reflection sessions are held after workshops and tours to review insights and adapt programming. Learning is reviewed continuously rather than at fixed intervals due to the flexible and mobile nature of implementation.

Information systems

- The organisation currently uses a **combination of paper-based and simple digital systems.**
- Facilitators document observations, storytelling outcomes, and role play reflections in written notes during activities, which are later consolidated by coordination staff.
- **Digital tools such as spreadsheets and messaging applications are used for storage, coordination, and information sharing across teams.**
- System users include theatre facilitators, field staff, and programme coordinators.
- Strengths include accessibility, flexibility in low-resource settings, and ease of use during mobile theatre activities. Limitations include lack of integration, reliance on manual data entry, limited real-time analysis, and challenges in long-term data tracking and aggregation.

Reflections on impact so far

Since its establishment, Yes Theatre for Communication among Youth has reached thousands of children and young people across different communities through participatory theatre, drama, puppet theatre, and art-based psychosocial activities. The organisation has created safe and inclusive spaces where children are able to express emotions, share experiences, and engage in dialogue in contexts often marked by stress and instability.

Beyond participation numbers, key changes include improved emotional expression, increased confidence, and stronger peer interaction among participants. Teachers, caregivers, and community members frequently report visible shifts in communication, empathy, and engagement following theatre sessions and performances. The work has also helped normalise conversations around emotional and psychosocial wellbeing within communities. However, the organisation's impact measurement systems are still developing, with limited capacity for long-term tracking and outcome measurement.

Learnings

Strengths or drivers

Yes Theatre for Communication among Youth (Palestine) improves mental health by using theatre, drama, puppet theatre, and art therapy as participatory, healing tools. Grounded in questions, perspective, and context, its approach creates safe spaces for expression, reflection, and dialogue.

By engaging communities—especially children and youth—in creative processes, Yes Theatre fosters resilience, emotional well-being, and collective healing in challenging environments.

Limitations

Yes Theatre's work is constrained by limited financial and human resources, affecting the scale and continuity of its theatre tours. Monitoring and evaluation systems remain basic, limiting long-term impact tracking.

While productions reach thousands, follow-up support is limited, particularly for children with deeper psychosocial needs. Dependence on short-term project funding also challenges sustainability and strategic expansion across more underserved communities.

Challenges

A key challenge is the ongoing occupation, including movement restrictions, checkpoints, and sudden closures, which limit access to communities and disrupt planned theatre tours.

Geographic fragmentation makes consistent delivery and follow-up difficult. In addition, the psychological toll of prolonged instability increases demand for services beyond current capacity, requiring continuous adaptation to ensure safe, relevant, and uninterrupted engagement with children across different areas.

Opportunities

There is growing recognition of theatre and creative arts as effective tools for psychosocial support, education, and youth empowerment, creating opportunities to scale programs. Expanding partnerships with schools, NGOs, and cultural institutions could increase reach and sustainability. Investment in digital platforms and media production could enhance engagement, documentation, and visibility. Increased donor interest in mental health and youth wellbeing offers potential for program growth and policy influence.



Partnership Journey

Initial assessment

At the start of the partnership, Yes Theatre demonstrated several strong organisational foundations. The organisation had a clearly articulated vision and mission that guided its activities and long-term strategic planning. It had also developed a distinctive and well-defined model, bringing together multiple integrated elements of its work, which had been documented through a Theory of Change. Organisationally, Yes Theatre benefited from a clear structure, well-defined roles, and robust decision-making processes supported by an executive committee and board of directors. In recent years, the organisation had also intentionally streamlined its team size to reduce overhead costs and strengthen operational sustainability.

- Alongside these strengths, several areas emerged where Ember could provide targeted support. While Yes Theatre is widely recognised as a leading cultural institution in Palestine, the organisation identified challenges in communicating its work to broader audiences, funders, and potential supporters. Strengthening storytelling, branding, and communications across digital platforms was seen as an opportunity to increase visibility and engagement. The team was also interested in expanding its networks and exploring opportunities to connect with funders, partners, and supporters through Ember's wider ecosystem.
- Wellbeing was another important area of focus. The team described operating under significant pressure, intensified by both the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Gaza since October 2023. Alongside responding to these challenges, staff continued to deliver cultural programmes and events across the West Bank. Although the organisation had safeguarding measures and individual coping strategies in place, there was a clear need for additional support to sustain team wellbeing and resilience.
- Looking ahead, Yes Theatre expressed ambitions to expand its reach and deepen its impact through innovative delivery models. This includes developing a mobile support initiative, the Healing through the Arts Bus, to bring therapeutic arts programmes to at-risk communities, as well as exploring opportunities to extend support to Gaza. The organisation was also developing online and telephone-based services, alongside a digital platform that would enable therapeutic interventions to be delivered remotely, increasing accessibility for communities facing barriers to in-person participation.

Key achievements

The partnership resulted in several key achievements for Yes Theatre for Communication among Youth. Internally, staff benefited from regular debriefing and mental health support sessions, strengthening team resilience and well-being in a high-pressure context.

- Externally, Yes Theatre expanded its visibility by being featured through Kokoro's channels and platform.
- Yes Theatre for Communication among Youth was also featured in Ember's Insights report that was published in 2025.
- Ember discussed the organisation's values, highlighting what makes the team special and how the team's goals are aligned. Following that discussion, Ember supported Yes Theatre for Communication among Youth to explore the possibility for an updated brand and visual identity that can then be used to create the organisation's website and social media templates.

