

HIRNUK

The project is based in Palestine and is supported by Gloucestershire Area Meeting, and West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting.

This project provides essential school transport for Palestinian children in Umm al Khair - a Bedouin community in Area C of the West Bank, under Israeli occupation. A girls' school has been built in the area and 22 girls from Umm al Khair attend - aged from kindergarten to 18. However, the children have a long, arduous walk to school over rough countryside, especially in winter and the risk of violence and harassment by Israeli military and settlers is a significant concern.

The bus has been making three trips every morning and afternoon. Six very young children are transported to the kindergarten, and then 22 girls are taken to the girls' school (in two trips). The driver, who was previously unemployed (as he did not have a permit to work in Israel, and paid work in the local area is almost non-existent), has been a valuable source of fundraising. When he heard that this project might be implemented, he collected funds from friends and family, so that he could buy a vehicle for this project. So as well as the educational benefits to the children, cash is injected directly into the community through his wages.

The grant has meant that a regular school transport service could be established, which has benefitted the students and the wider community. However the coronavirus led to Palestinian Authority closing all schools in late March and the transport had to be paused. As part of the aim of the project is to provide resilience for the community and help it withstand the ongoing hardships of the occupation HIRN furloughed the driver, who had used his own money to purchase the vehicle and needed to continue covering its cost.

