

Annual Report

Jerusalem Center for Women

2007

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About the Jerusalem Center for Women

The Jerusalem Center for Women is committed to advancing the rights of women and developing their role in civil society, nation building and the decision-making process, while working to end oppression, poverty and human rights violations of all members of society

Established in 1994, the Jerusalem Center for Women (JCW) is a Palestinian non-governmental women's center located in East Jerusalem. In recent years the Center has greatly increased its focus on the development and capacity building of Palestinian women throughout the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and on documenting human rights violations committed against Palestinian families (particularly women and children) living in occupied East Jerusalem.

Our primary goals are

1. Women's empowerment in community and political activism
2. Protection and advancement of Palestinian women's rights and status
3. Women's involvement in realizing a regional peace based on justice
4. Collaborating with local and international partners to empower women

The Center aims to achieve these goals by providing Palestinian women with venues for training in democratic principles, human rights, advocacy and life skills, by engaging in ongoing peace building activities with Israeli sister organization Bat Shalom, by documenting and producing advocacy material human rights violations committed in East Jerusalem and by engaging in lobbying, advocacy and outreach campaigns with key organizations and individuals locally and internationally.

A Major Focus of Jerusalem Center for Women is Peace building. Together with Bat Shalom, an Israeli women's center in West Jerusalem, JCW engages regularly and fruitfully with Bat Shalom through various peace building programs and activities, under the banner of 'The Jerusalem Link'.

Enduring the Occupation – Reflecting on 2007

2007 marked forty years of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, The West Bank and The Gaza Strip. Throughout the year the Israeli Occupation forces and government continued on a daily basis to violate with impunity the internationally recognized human and humanitarian rights of the Palestinian population. In pursuing their policies of restrictions on movement, committing "targeted assassinations", continuing the construction of the illegal Annexation Wall and settlements, and continuing to demolish scores of Palestinian homes, it was demonstrated over another year that the actions of Israel, regardless of how heinous, are legitimized globally so long as it is maintained that they are carried out under the premise of security.

While the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip deteriorated throughout 2007, residents of the West Bank and East Jerusalem suffered ongoing human rights violations ranging from house demolitions, to harassment and humiliation, to extrajudicial killing/"targeted assassination" at the hands of the Israeli Occupation forces. East Jerusalem suffered an intensified campaign to remove large parts of the Palestinian population from the city limits in order to achieve a ratio of 72 Jews to 28 Arabs in the city by the year 2020.

In such a volatile, impoverished and insecure environment, the rights and concerns of Palestinian women have been diminished and ignored while they bear the heavy burden of the occupation. While the current situation has deep impact on all Palestinians, there are a number of areas in which women's issues are of particular concern:

Violation of Personal Space

House demolition, invasion, damage and land confiscation all severely violate the private space of a woman and ensure that not even her traditional domain can be considered a safe haven. The mere threat or fear of such violence politicizes and militarizes the home, rendering it invalid as a neutral and safe place. As noted by Dr Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "...the home is where women most acutely invest their time, build their safety nets, advance their talents and hobbies, carry on their work of looking after the family, and carrying on with their life responsibilities." When this space is violated, destroyed or threatened, a woman's identity and sense of security is equally damaged.

Destruction of the family unit

Current Israeli policy violates many Palestinian women's right to family life by preventing her from living securely with her spouse and children. The destruction of this most fundamental societal unit has severe knock on effects for society as a whole as it may lead to a woman raising her children alone, being separated from

some or all of her loved ones, or living in fear of her own or her spouse's removal from the city or imprisonment. The oppressive and discriminatory measures that Palestinians face in the occupied territories have essentially forced many Palestinians to go abroad in the hope of an easier existence, thus fragmenting their families further.

Poverty

The policies pursued by Israel to cleanse Jerusalem of its Palestinian population and to confine the residents of the rest of the West Bank to small, enclosed cantons, are pushing women into deep, real and dangerous poverty. All of the elements required for a society to rise above the poverty line – employment opportunities, pro-poor economic growth, security, quality education and healthcare, and participation in civil society – are increasingly being severely curbed, thus running a high risk that the cycle of poverty will continue and intensify significantly for future generations. In such circumstances, women bear the brunt of the burden of poverty, as they try to cope with the frustration of their husbands and the hunger and anger of their children, and to make impossibly small amounts of money and food stretch to meet the needs of their family. Inevitably, it is the impoverished wife and mother who eats last, is clothed last and cared for last.

Threat of violence

Palestinian women live with a constant threat of violence at the hands of the Israeli forces and settlers. Although sexual harassment by Israeli forces is an extremely delicate subject for Palestinians, there has been some documentation of incidents occurring. Families particularly fear for the wellbeing of their daughters in this context, and as a result, often consider it safer for a girl to marry young so that she has the protection of a husband, or prevent her from traveling to school or university out of fear for her safety.

Furthermore, domestic violence has increased in tandem with the oppressive policies of the Israeli government, so that many women live under a double threat of violence. Domestic violence is, of course, a societal problem that has always existed in Palestine, as in every society. However, it is widely considered that the feelings of ineptitude and frustration felt by Palestinian men due to reduced employment opportunities and humiliation at the hands of the Israeli forces have led to a sharp increase in domestic violence in recent years.

Reduction of educational opportunities

Israel's deliberate neglect of essential services for Palestinian Jerusalemites means that there are not nearly enough places for all Palestinian children in state schools and within those schools, facilities are poor, classes are overcrowded, teachers are underpaid and under-qualified. Throughout the rest of the West Bank and Gaza there is better availability of school places but the quality of schooling is deteriorating. As noted by UNICEF, "*School enrolment is high, but it is starting to*

decline. The quality of education is also suffering because schools lack textbooks and other materials. Nearly half of all students have seen their school besieged by troops, and more than 10 per cent have witnessed the killing of a teacher in school.” These figures cover the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, and demonstrate that for young Palestinians, the classroom or lecture theater, as with the home, has become a militarized and unsafe zone.

While the Annexation wall and Israeli educational policy curb access by both girls and boys to educational facilities, they particularly impact on girls and young women as their families fear for their safety when traveling long or dangerous routes to reach their place of education. Thus, many young women are kept from school and college by their parents rather than running the risk of their being attacked or harassed on their journey.

Health

Expectant Palestinian mothers have expressed deep anxiety at the prospect of having to travel once in labor to deliver their babies, for fear that they will be delayed or turned back at checkpoints. Transportation to hospital takes up to five times as long as it did prior to the restrictions on movement throughout the West Bank. For example, the hospitals of East Jerusalem used to be walking distance for the residents of the recently isolated community of Abu Dis to the east of the city; now women in labor must take a two hour car journey to Jericho, and it is never guaranteed that they will be allowed to pass at checkpoints. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 69 women have given birth at checkpoints since 2000 – 35 of those babies died as did five mothers. Furthermore, many of the babies who survived suffered brain damage due to the adverse conditions under which they were born. The anxiety suffered by pregnant women as a result of this callous practice has caused the number of home births in occupied Palestine to increase by 8.2% since 2000, putting both mother and child at further risk.

Civil Society and Activism

Living in isolation, without safe access to education, and fearful of arrest and violence, it is increasingly difficult for Palestinian women to form a united and coherent movement towards seeking a just solution to the current crisis. The Israeli forces regularly prevent meetings of activists from going ahead and used violence to break up peaceful protest. Rumors have circulated amongst women that they risk arrest, violence, the arrest of their children, or damage to their homes if they take part in demonstrations.

Jerusalem Center for Women - Activities in 2007

In the context of the ongoing oppression and reduced opportunities for women in the Palestinian territories, the role of the Jerusalem Center for Women as a feminist peace building and development organization is utterly crucial.

This is particularly the case in East Jerusalem, where a number of factors are contributing to the reduction of women's and human rights organizations operating within the city. High property prices, refusal of operational permits and pressure from the Israeli authorities are all forcing many grassroots organizations to leave East Jerusalem for other parts of the West Bank meaning that now, more than ever, East Jerusalemite women feel isolated and forgotten.

Throughout 2007, the Jerusalem Center for Women focused on four key areas of activity with a view to fulfilling its objectives of peace building, protection of human rights, development and capacity building of Palestinian women and networking on a local and international level for advancing concepts of peace, human rights and gender equality.

1. Peace Building—The Jerusalem Link
2. Human Rights Advocacy Program
3. Training and Empowerment
4. Internal Training and Development

1. Peace Building—The Jerusalem Link

Throughout 2007, the Jerusalem Center for Women continued its activities with Bat Shalom under a program entitled *Building Constituencies for Women's Alternative Ways to Peace*. The participants of the program included staff of JCW and Bat Shalom along with Italian partner Orlando, two Palestinian women's groups (one from the central/Ramallah area of the West Bank and the other from the northern/Jenin area of the West Bank) and two Israeli women's groups from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Over the course of the year, the staff members of the Jerusalem Link organizations met at least monthly, and often fortnightly, in person at the Jerusalem Center for Women offices in Beit Hanina in order specifically to discuss their joint objectives for the year and to plan and implement activities.

Joint activities of the program involving some or all of the women's groups took place on seven occasions throughout 2007.

First meeting – 9th February – Claridge Hotel – Al Ram

This was the first time the Palestinian and Israeli women met together. During their time together, the women introduced themselves and then entered discussions regarding Jerusalem. The women discussed the ongoing occupation of East Jerusalem and its isolation from the rest of the West Bank, along with the level of human rights violations occurring against Palestinian residents of the city. The women also discussed the possibility of sharing the city as part of a two state solution. Many of the West Bank women spoke of their desire to be able to travel to Jerusalem and their frustration at the restrictions on movement imposed by the occupation.

Outcome

This was the first step towards developing a fruitful relationship between the Palestinian and Israeli participants. It was useful for the women to share their personal stories and perspectives in order to develop a culture of mutual understanding between the participants. The discussions highlighted the manner in which the personal lives of the Palestinian participants are utterly politicized by the occupation.

First Joint Seminar – 24th February – Claridge Hotel – Al Ram

On the 24th of February 2007, participants from the four women's groups met together at the Claridge Hotel in Al Ram. There were 30 Palestinian participants. The objectives of the seminar were:

- To explore alternative ways to peace;

- To create a bridge between Palestinian and Israeli women so that they could enter dialogue on political issues in general, and particularly those pertaining to women;
- To find a common mechanism for the women to work together in spite of the restrictions imposed by the occupation; and
- To seek ways for the Israeli women to influence their own society on the Palestinian question.

The format of the day involved the women breaking into groups and writing down issues that were of importance to them on flipcharts and then openly discussing the matters. Subjects included feminism, the Annexation Wall, excavation in Jerusalem (at that time there were excavations taking place at the Western Wall that caused tension as it was believed the work would undermine the foundations of the Dome of the Rock), house demolitions and the right of return.

Outcome

The key outcome of the seminar was that the women agreed that they should work together and communicate to develop a joint campaign for the Palestinian cause supported by the wider Israeli peace movement. The seminar served to foster a spirit of cooperation between the women and to further heighten their mutual understanding of each other.

Second Meeting - International Women's Day Activity – 8th March – Ramallah and Kalandia

The joint activity commenced with a peaceful protest by the Palestinian and Israeli women at the Kalandia checkpoint. The women then traveled together to the Muqat'a (Presidential Compound) in Ramallah and on to the Grand Park Hotel where the board members from both organizations discussed the work of the Jerusalem Link and examined the main obstacles to their work such the actual physical difficulties of meeting in person and the lack of political will to move towards a peace process. The participants of the meeting agreed that International Women's Day was a good opportunity to analyze the impact of occupation on women and reaffirmed their commitment to promoting and reactivating a dialogue that will lead to a just and equal peace agreement. They also discussed the need for an increase in activities on both sides calling for an end to the occupation.

Outcome

In engaging a joint show of solidarity, the participants sent a strong message to the public that there is a will to develop a lasting and gender-balanced peace between Palestine and Israel. The second part of the activity provided an opportunity for the

women to take stock of the program and reaffirm their commitment to planning joint activities towards ending the occupation and promote an equal and just peace.

Third Meeting – 15th March – Claridge Hotel – Al Ram

The third meeting focused on notions of identity, nationalism and statehood among the participants. The women were divided into groups and asked to discuss the three key concepts in their own contexts, with the Palestinian women focusing on the fact that they are a stateless people, with strong nationalist sentiments, living under the military rule of an occupying force. They also spoke about what each group expects from the other within the program.

Outcome

The activity encouraged the participants to examine what it means to them to be of Palestinian/Israeli nationality and to assess the extent to which they define themselves by where they are from. It also assisted the women in defining what they expect to achieve from the program.

Fourth Meeting – 29th March – Claridge Hotel – Al Ram

The key focus of this discussion was the affect that occupation and conflict has on the societies of the different groups. The Palestinian women discussed the manner in which society is becoming more patriarchal and traditional as a result of the occupation and how this impacts on their access to education, employment etc. They further discussed the power structures that exist in their society in the absence of an independent system of governance.

Outcome

This session was a good opportunity for the participants to gain an understanding of the structures of each other's lives and the obstacles they face as women living in a conflict area.

Fifth Meeting – 19th May – Kalandia Refugee Camp

On this occasion, to commemorate the events of the Nakba, the women's groups from the northern region of the West Bank and Tel Aviv met in the Kalandia Refugee Camp. The women took a tour of the camp and heard a life testimony from an elderly Palestinian woman who experienced the Nakba personally. The group also visited the homes of two martyrs where their families discussed the circumstances of their deaths and the daily difficulties faced by Palestinian refugees.

Outcome

This meeting was an excellent opportunity for Israeli women to experience first hand the standard of living of Palestinian refugees and to hear accounts of the suffering incurred by and ongoing ramifications of the events of 1948.

Second Joint Seminar – 2nd to 4th November – Bethlehem

From the 2nd to the 4th of November 2007 participants from each of the women's groups and Italian partner, Orlando met in the Everest Hotel in Bethlehem.

A key focus of the seminar was UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which calls for increased female participation in conflict resolution, with discussions taking place on the Israeli occupation, key players in the peace process, and the affect of the conflict on women. Over the first and second days of the seminar, participants explored and discussed their role in the peace process at this turning point in the conflict. Within group and open sessions, the women exchanged their personal experiences of the conflict, the sharp differences in their daily realities, and the manner in which their personal lives are inescapably politicized by the conflict so that normal life is almost impossible. On the final day of the seminar, the participants took time to reflect on their shared experience and to discuss what had been discovered and achieved over the weekend. In the closing session, the group discussed ways in which to continue to lobby for women's participation in the resolution of the conflict.

The logistics of the seminar clearly illustrated the different realities experienced by the Israeli and Palestinian participants – firstly, the organizers had to choose the location of the event with great care as it is extremely difficult for women from all over the West Bank to reach the same venue. It was not feasible, for example, for the seminar to be hosted in Israel as each Palestinian participant would have to seek a permit, and most likely would not receive one, for the three days. Israeli citizens are similarly forbidden to enter the West Bank. A joint trip to the Dead Sea and Wadi Qelt was planned for the second day so that the women could relax together. However, the trip had to be cancelled as the Palestinian delegates were not granted permission to pass to the Dead Sea, thus providing a stark reminder of the restrictions on movement faced by Palestinians in their everyday lives. Each of the delegates were upset and frustrated by this disruption to the program.

Outcome

Despite the difficulties encountered by the delegates, the seminar proved a challenging and important opportunity for the Israeli and Palestinian women to discuss the current situation, to decide how to act together going forward and to ensure that they have a voice in the conflict. Although the disruption to Saturday's timetable was frustrating for the delegates, it allowed the difficult reality of

Palestinian women to be witnessed first hand by the Israeli delegation in addition to being discussed conceptually.

Separate Activities for Palestinian Participants

In parallel with the joint activities carried by the Jerusalem Link, a series of separate training and evaluation activities took place for the Palestinian women's groups from the central and northern areas of the West Bank. The purpose of the training sessions was to enrich the women's understanding of their rights and entitlements under national and international law and to explain the context of the political instability that was being experienced at the time. The training on the Israeli political parties intended to educate the women about the key players in the Israeli political system.

The evaluation sessions were considered to be critical as there was a feeling after the first number of meetings that the Palestinian women needed to revisit the purpose of the project and the facilitators needed to understand better what the participants hoped to achieve from the program.

The following training sessions for the women from the central region of the West Bank took place over the year:

28th January – Training on political parties of Israel

3rd June – Training on the 4th Geneva Convention

1st July – Training on Personal Status Law

29th July – Palestinian Criminal Law

28th October – Personal Status Law

The following training sessions for the women of the northern region of the West Bank took place over the year:

5th February - Training on political parties of Israel

9th July - Training regarding the emergency government

1st & 2nd September - Personal Status Law

19th July - Arab Initiative

Evaluation Sessions

On 29 April 2007 the Jerusalem Center for Women held two workshops in Jericho

to assess the progress of the Building Constituencies for Peace project. Attendees came from two target groups of the project and comprised 23 women in addition to project staff. The key objectives of the workshops were:

- to assess the progress made and obstacles encountered to date;
- to reaffirm the purpose of the project;
- to assess the extent to which the participants were gaining benefit from the program; and
- to assess the target groups' needs and interests and to incorporate the findings into the following year's program.

The facilitators further sought to analyze the extent to which the target groups understood the project in which they were participating, their level of commitment to the project, the relevance of the project to the target groups' needs and interests and the effectiveness of the coordinators.

[The First Workshop: Central Region of the West Bank](#)

The workshop facilitators discovered throughout the evaluation that the women are extremely concerned about the creation of "facts on the ground" by Israeli authorities, which leads them to question the viability of a two state solution to the conflict. They spoke of the stagnation of the political peace process and the ongoing policies of settlement building, land confiscation, the construction of the Annexation Wall, lack of access to their land and water resources as issues that frustrate them immensely and stifle their hope for an economically viable Palestinian state. While their political vision is that of an independent, autonomous state existing peaceably alongside Israel, the women expressed their anxiety about the prospect of living in a non-continuous, economically stifled Palestinian state that is divided into a series of isolated blocks. Throughout the discussion, the participants identified a number of objectives for joint meetings:

- To get to understand the way the other side thinks and reacts towards specific issues related to the Palestinian question.
- To deliver joint positions and implement concrete practices in support to the Palestinian right to independent viable state.

[The Second Workshop: Participants from the North area of the West Bank](#)

One of the main issues that arose in the workshop was the socioeconomic situation of women in the northern region of the West Bank. The women were more

concerned with discussing issues related directly to them and their communities than abstract political topics. They expressed their desire to discuss key areas such as water shortages, electricity, the Annexation Wall and land confiscation, and learn how best to run advocacy campaigns pertaining to such issues. On the level of joint meetings objectives, the participants specified the following objectives:

- To get to know how the other side thinks and reacts towards specific issues.
- To deliver, speak out and publish positions and statements in support to the Palestinian rights.
- To have the members of the other side be influential and run campaigns and activities in their communities to support the Palestinian right to independence.
- To accurately portray the Palestinian realities and suffering to the Israeli society in reaction to Israeli inaccurate media messages.

2. Human Rights Advocacy Program

Documentation and Advocacy

Throughout the year, the JCW's legal unit provided an ongoing service of legal documentation to families (particularly women and children) whose rights had been violated as a result of the Israeli occupation in East Jerusalem neighborhoods such as Eil il Hilweh, Old City of Jerusalem, Al Walajeh, Bet Anan, Anata, Shu'fat, and Silwan. At least 50 violations were documented over the year.

The legal unit attended house demolitions and recorded the facts of the event using gender sensitive questionnaires. The data gathered included the number of people made homeless, whether force was used during the demolition, the amount of notice, if any, granted to the family in advance of the demolition etc. These reports have, in turn, been used to produce advocacy material relating to the direct impact of house demolitions and housing insecurity on Jerusalemite women. House demolitions have proven to have a particularly profound impact on women as the home is the traditional sphere of influence, security and power for Palestinian women. Living with this threat of homelessness and the violence that often accompanies demolitions has impacted deeply upon the psychological wellbeing of all the Jerusalemite women that the JCW legal field workers encountered during the documentation process.

Further documentation has been made with regard to the impact of the Annexation Wall and other restrictions on movement on women's daily lives including their access to employment, education, healthcare and other services. This documentation has also been used for advocacy material and has highlighted the way in which the occupation is leading to a more traditional, patriarchal society emerging in Palestine under which many women and girls are being forced to marry early not complete their schooling.

A final key area of documentation and research by the legal unit is that of family separation and issues surrounding child registration in East Jerusalem. The Israeli Government has refused since 2000 to allow for any family unification applications to be made by families where one partner is from the West Bank and another from East Jerusalem. Similarly, a moratorium was placed on the registration of children born in East Jerusalem if both their parents are not legal residents of the city. This has created a terrible reality for thousands of Jerusalemite women whereby they must choose between leaving their home and giving up their residency rights and associated benefits, risk harboring their partner illegally in the city, or living separately from their spouse. Each of these options is extremely traumatic for the families involved and is in direct breach of International Human Rights conventions

and covenants including International Covenant on Cultural and Political Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The legal unit in the Center has produced a detailed report on this matter which will be used to produce advocacy material outlining the direct impact on women.

The Center further documented individual cases of violence against women and children by settlers and the Israeli forces and cases of injuries suffered during house demolitions, and issued a series of press releases pertaining to house demolitions and other violations in the East Jerusalem area.

Legal reports compiled by the Center's legal unit in 2007 included the following topics:

- The legal status of East Jerusalem under Occupation;
- The violation of Palestinians' residency rights in East Jerusalem including family unification and child registration, issues of forced migration;
- The legality of settlement construction in East Jerusalem;
- The legality of the route of the Annexation Wall and its impact on women and children; and
- The legality of Israeli policies examined in conjunction with International Bill of Rights, Convention of the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Over the course of 2007, the Jerusalem Center for Women engaged in a series of lobbying and advocacy campaigns both on a local and international level. Using information gathered by the legal unit, the Center developed a series of press releases, fact sheets and reports pertaining to the human rights situation in East Jerusalem, which were then circulated widely to both local and international organizations, including foreign embassies and consulates.

In July 2007, the Center led a field tour of Abu Dis, Al Ezaryia, Sheikh Sa'ad, Sawahra and Al Shayah. Khaleel Tafkje (land and mapping expert) acted as tour guide to the group. The group met with people who have been affected by the route of the Wall and learned about different neighborhoods that have been isolated from Jerusalem and its services, particularly medical services. The group met with a woman who had to separate from her husband because they held different ID cards (one Jerusalem and one for the West Bank) and could not live together as a result.

In October 2007, a second tour was undertaken in the Old City of Jerusalem. The women visited Burj Al Laq Laq in the Old City which is under threat of confiscation by Israeli settlers. The living conditions witnessed were shocking, with some families of up to 10 people living and sleeping in the same room. The women met with local women and spoke to them about the constant harassment, violence and threats they suffer from settlers.

All participants of the tours reported that the conditions they witnessed and the personal testimonies they heard were deeply disturbing. However, the tours provided an invaluable insight into the realities faced by Jerusalem's women and provided a motivation to the Center to commence innovative new programs to help the most marginalized people in Jerusalemite society.

Furthermore, over the course of the year, the Center participated in meetings, activities and demonstrations organized by the Coalition for Jerusalem, and met with a number of overseas delegations from Britain and the US in order to heighten awareness of the current situation and to ask for their assistance in lobbying their own governments to apply pressure on Israel to adhere to its obligations under human rights and humanitarian law. The Center also engaged members of the international media as part of its advocacy program and facilitated the visit of a Canadian film crew to one of the women's groups in Bet Anan, participated in a Spanish photographer's photo-essay on women in peace building and met with a British documentary maker to provide an insight into the challenges faced by Palestinian Jerusalemite women in particular.

Together with Bat Shalom, the Jerusalem Center for Women issued a series of joint statements on key issues and developed a strategy for a joint campaign on the defense of Jerusalem (focusing on house demolitions) which will be implemented in 2008 through the working groups engaged in the *Building Constituencies for Women's Alternative Ways for Peace* program.

Legal and Social Counseling

A key finding made by the Center through the legal research and documentation carried out is that Jerusalemite women are unsure of their rights and feel let down by the international community, in parallel with feeling anxious, frustrated and frightened for their futures and those of their children. Therefore, the legal unit's counseling program played a crucial part in assisting such women to vent their frustrations to a sympathetic professional while also being able to ask any questions they might have pertaining to their rights under international and nation law. 13 such counseling sessions took place over 2007 with between 15 and 18 women

attending each session in the neighborhood of Al Walajeh.

The sessions were facilitated by the JCW social worker and legal consultants and included the following activities and trainings:

- Preparatory meeting about the program with the women's group. A needs assessment was made for the group;
- Trust building exercises and social training;
- Training regarding abuse and violations against women and youth from within their own society. The coordinator of the session took time to speak privately with each woman as the problem is very sensitive;
- The group was visited by a lawyer from the Jerusalem Center for Legal Assistance and Human Rights who gave the women legal counseling on the status of Al Walajeh and the legality of its treatment by the Israeli authorities;
- A fun day for the children of Al Walajeh was held. Activities included artwork, a visit from a clown etc;
- The youth group visited the Ibdaa' Center in the Dhesheh Camp to create a network between youth groups;
- The women's group visited the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling to become aware of the support that WCLAC can offer women with legal and social problems;
- Social training sessions with Al Sadeq Al Tayeb for women and youth regarding drug addiction and smoking;
- The women met with a representative from the Bethlehem Legislative Council to inform him of the social and legal problems faced by the people of Al Walajeh;
- Medical health days – the participants were invited to fill out a gender sensitive medical questionnaire and were examined by dentists and a female doctor. The questionnaires are being used by Dr Nadera Kerovkian in her analysis of women's social problems for the Center;
- The women's group made two visits to Bethlehem for retreats/relaxation.

The feedback received from the Center regarding this aspect of the program has been excellent, with many women stating that this has been their first opportunity to speak about their individual problems in a confidential and comfortable environment. They also reported having gained valuable skills and knowledge to

help them deal with social problems such as drug use, and learning more about their individual rights and entitlements under international law.

A further women's group was established in the village of Bet Anan, to the north of Jerusalem. Activities in Bet Anan included:

- Empowering women towards creating social change in the Palestinian countryside. It also aimed at creating a strong women group in Bet Anan and working with them for implementing different programs and activities.
- Initially, JCW began its work with 15 women through identifying the needs of the women and working with this women group and setting program's priorities.
- A twelve hour training (twice a week took place during Ramadan) on self assertion and psychological counseling has been implemented in Bet Anan village North West Jerusalem. The target group represented women of the Executive Committee of the Women's Committee of Bet Anan.
- Jerusalem Center for Women also implemented a 14-hour training program teaching women computer skills. Further workshops included legal awareness and communication skills. JCW also displayed films and documentaries in these planned workshops.

3. TRAINING AND EMPOWERMENT

Training of Trainers in Facilitation Skills Program

Capacity building is a core program of the Jerusalem Center for Women, and within that context, the training of trainers program is key as it commences a self-perpetuating process whereby women are trained in a new set of skills and, in parallel, are trained to pass on those skills to others. The training is directed at women working in or wishing to enter the civil society field in order to improve their skill sets in the workplace, and also in their personal and societal encounters.

The current pool of participants comes from different women's and human rights organizations and includes directors, legal staff, project managers and social workers. Certain members of the Jerusalem Center for Women staff have also participated in the training. This project took place over 18 months from June 2006 to December 2007. The program was intensive in that the women undertook 176 hours of taught training and then undertook 25 practical training hours in order to put their newly acquired skills into practice. Furthermore, there were a number of meetings and seminars which allowed the women to share their experiences of facilitating group sessions and receive up to date advice from the trainers.

The training activities carried out within the program were of an extremely high quality, in that each of the trainers selected is an expert in his or her field and was able to provide the participants with the most innovative and effective knowledge and skills available. The women were provided with training on every possible aspect of group facilitation including group psychology and dynamics, communications skills, gender analysis, self assertion, presentation skills, evaluation skills and management. Therefore, the participants received a holistic training that allowed them to not only communicate with a group effectively, but also to understand the needs of their own group's participants and achieve the best possible results from a session whereby everyone involved is satisfied that their concerns have been voiced and understood, regardless of how contentious the issue under discussion may be. A key focus of the trainings was to build the participants' confidence so that they are now in position to comfortably facilitate any session.

The practicum training contributed to the program by allowing the participants to demonstrate their new skills in a comfortable environment, allowing for constructive feedback and suggestions to be made for improvement. This experience enabled the women to engage with new groups with the confidence that their methods had been evaluated honestly and new suggestions taken on board.

The feedback received from participants to date has been extremely positive – in certain cases women reported having been employed in new positions based on the skills they gained through the program.

Participation in public forums and international conferences project

Very few Palestinian women have the experience and training to participate in public forums, including local and international peace-related conferences, and therefore only the same few women travel to these conferences again and again. Not only is this a drain on the time and energy of these few women, leading to burnout of these activists, but the same ideas are circulated through the same people, leading to stagnation in the peace work, both internationally and locally. If more Palestinian women are trained to participate effectively in local and international peace conferences, they can contribute to the international peace community as much as they can take from it, creating new perspectives in both directions.

Women comprise over 50% of the population of Occupied Palestine yet are sorely underrepresented in the political sphere, civil society and public life in general. The Jerusalem Center for Women considers that in order for the Palestinian people to achieve a just and lasting peace, and develop an economically and politically viable democratic nation state of their own, women must be involved and fairly represented at every step of the process. One of the first steps towards integrating Palestinian women further into public life and developing their skills so that their contribution carries authority and equal weight to all other participants is for female Palestinian activists to undergo comprehensive training for participation in international peace conferences and other public forums. Ensuring that female activists are well-equipped and prepared for participation in national and international conferences is an important step towards ensuring that any peace agreement and future government is gender balanced and genuinely inclusive, rather than negotiated and designed by men, for men.

The key objective of the Participation in Public Forums and International Conferences Project is to empower Palestinian women to become involved in the international peace and conflict-resolution community; to empower Palestinian women to become involved in resolution of the conflict in creative ways, through trading ideas with the international community; to enlarge the community of grassroots and extra-parliamentary peace activists among Palestinian women; to empower and promote the international peace community as an alternative to the current status quo of politicians and policy makers; to improve the communication skills of participants. This year's program commenced in February and comprised female NGO workers and activists from East Jerusalem and Ramallah. The Center

sought to recruit for the program women of a range of ages, including older women who may have more varied experiences to share, and younger women who will carry on the work to the next generation.

The weekly three-hour training sessions were implemented by lecturers recruited from a pool of Palestinian and Palestine-based experts in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, conflict resolution, gender studies, public relations and media, and public diplomacy. In addition to sharing their particular knowledge in presentation format, the lecturers engage the participants in concrete discussion and analysis of the local and international aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As appropriate, films are used as an educational tool, and outside reading is required, including articles about the history and diplomacy of the conflict, political analyses of the conflict, and articles about peace work related to the conflict, particularly women's peace activities.

The topics covered in the 2007 program included:

- Political and diplomatic history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict
- Legal aspects of the conflict
- Post-Oslo political and diplomatic history
- National liberation movement (South Africa)
- Palestinian-Israeli women's dialogue
- Presentation skills
- Gender studies
- Conflict resolution
- Public diplomacy in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

At the end of the program, some of the participants were asked to participate in a conference exercise to demonstrate and practice the skills and knowledge they have gained during the program. The participants present the papers they prepared during the program to specially invited activists from women's and human rights organizations. The activists were asked to actively engage the participants in discussion of their papers, including posing challenging questions, which the participants should be able to field by the end of the training program. After the conference exercise, all participants who attended at least 80% of the program activities received a certificate of completion.

Development of Young Female Leaders

The Center concluded in 2007 the first phase of a project at Al Quds University in Abu Dis for the empowerment of female university students to promote equality from a grassroots level in their communities. The program, which took place with the cooperation of the Dean of Student Affairs at Abu Dis was initiated in response to the interest of a group of female students who had previously participated in a JCW program for the empowerment of university students by feminist leaders.

The initial phase focused on training the participants in communications skills, self-confidence, team management and lobbying and advocacy. In the next phase, the women will be encouraged to demonstrate the skills they have acquired through the formation of working groups to identify community and feminist issues to be addressed through interviews and workshops. The issues will then be addressed with decision-makers with a view to formulating workable recommendations. JCW found the program to be a great success to date and looks forward to implementing the second phase in 2008.

4. INTERNAL TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Internal Capacity Building

In 2007 JCW contracted the services of both an organizational consultant and a gender consultant in order to evaluate and improve the operational capacity of the Center, and also to enhance and define the Center's gender perspective.

Specifically, the consultant assisted in the following areas:

- board and executive development
- Organizational structure
- Resetting clear job descriptions
- Helping Jerusalem Center for Women staff move from project coordinators to project managers
- Helping Jerusalem Center for Women director shift from role of project management to a wider organizational management
- Strategic planning
- Program development and evaluation
- Activities and resources development
- Staff development

Towards the end of 2007, the Center also contracted the services of a consultancy firm to develop a comprehensive and far reaching long term strategic plan for the organization. In addition, a gender consultant advised Jerusalem Center for Women on methods of including a gender perspective within activities, reports, media outreach, lobbying, advocacy in addition to training aimed at improving gender awareness among Jerusalem Center for Women staff.

Media Workshop

From the 22nd to the 24th of April, JCW and Bat Shalom participated in a media workshop entitled "Building Media Partnership for Successful Project Work" at the JCW office in Beit Hanina. The program was facilitated by Medienhilfe and commissioned by partner organization, CFD. The objective of the workshop was to assist the Jerusalem Link to understand key concepts and relevance of strategic communication, to be able to assess the media landscape and identify key partner media organizations, and to develop a clear media strategy and improve its media outreach.

Topics covered in the workshop over the three days included, *inter alia*:

- targeted campaigning/identifying target groups
- terms and principles of strategic communications
- shaping public opinion
- media assessment
- communication management

A number of insightful and useful recommendations and findings were made by Medienhilfe throughout, and following the workshop:

- That Bat Shalom and JCW operate in very different realities – in both organizational and societal contexts – and as such, their different realities will affect the cooperation between the two partners in media terms.
- To overcome this obstacle, it is necessary for the two partners to each develop their own clear media strategy
- JCW must redefine its self image and how it wishes to be perceived by the public
- JCW must identify the media organizations most relevant to its objectives and build up beneficial partnerships
- The Center must channel its energy into a number of key areas of activity rather than trying to achieve many wide ranging goals.

These recommendations have been accepted by the Center and a fresh media strategy is currently being implemented.

Jerusalem Link Evaluation

Throughout 2007, a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness and achievements of the Jerusalem Link was also undertaken by external consultants. The results of the evaluation will be made available in 2008.

THANK YOU

2007 was an extremely fruitful and productive year for the Jerusalem Center for Women and feedback received from the various target groups of the Center's programs confirm that the women involved in all programs benefited greatly.

This success could only be achieved through the generous support of the Center's donors, partners and volunteers who offered their financial support, dedicated hard work, support, enthusiasm and friendship throughout the year.

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