

Wi'am Yearly Report 2005

Wi'am exists as an integral part of the larger community and it is through our relationships and interactions with other people that we come to be who we are. Without this interaction, we cannot establish a rapport with our all the strata of the community: youth, women, children, adults and grown-ups. A strategic goal of Wi'am centre is helping grassroots develop and improve skills in non-violent conflict resolution, mediation, Democratic norms, non-violent communication, and leadership, by training potential multipliers, groups and respond to community needs through mediation and counseling.

Resolving conflict, spreading the message of reconciliation and promoting peace are essential to Wi'am work in the community. We strive for creating an environment, which supports the fulfillment of basic needs and sustainable livelihood. The process of community transformation must therefore be guided by the principles of managing violence and promoting social justice and reconciliation. The process of change must therefore be guided by the principles of reducing violence, empowering underprivileged groups, reinforcing women role, and educate children in a safe and enriching environment.

People, and especially women, must be equipped with the necessary skills in order to successfully confront violence and build the culture of peace. We fulfill our mission through an array of diverse activities and workshops that target different age groups coming from different geographical areas and backgrounds.

I. Sulha- The Arab Traditional method of Mediation

Wi'am continues with its ministry of reconciliation to mend broken relationships and restore harmonious relationships among families/individuals. Wi'am often finds that injustices happen more frequently to the poorer or less-empowered individuals in a conflict and the successful mediation process actively address this situation of injustice. Resolving community disputes using Sulha reinforces community building and fosters social peace based on mutual respect and equality.

It is obvious that the current socio-political and economic reality in the community exacerbates social disputes. To escape their reality, we notice that people are venting their frustration on each other with nervousness and agitation is on the increase.

When a case comes to our attention, our mediators will be quick to respond and deal with the case with extra care and rapidness. Every case is dealt with according to its merit. Resolving conflict is a process of active listening to the parties involved to the conflict and a shuttling diplomacy that weights all options all way through the reconciliation stages. In the final analysis, the result of the ministry of reconciliation is to restore normality to broken relationships, create a healthy rapport between individuals and preserve the very essence of relationships among families and individuals.

1.1 Cases Mediated During 2005

During the year 2005, we mediated 246 social disputes that include diverse situations across our society- in marriages and families, in neighborhoods, community settings, youth problems, marriages and the workplace.

Our mediators assume that in each situation of conflict everyone has a perspective that is valid and needs to be understood. Therefore, mediation is about enabling those in conflict to communicate with each other, to improve understandings and let Truth grow to reach a reconciliation stage. We strongly believe that when truth and justice are properly served, it do its own work.

A Chart of Cases Dealt with in 2005:

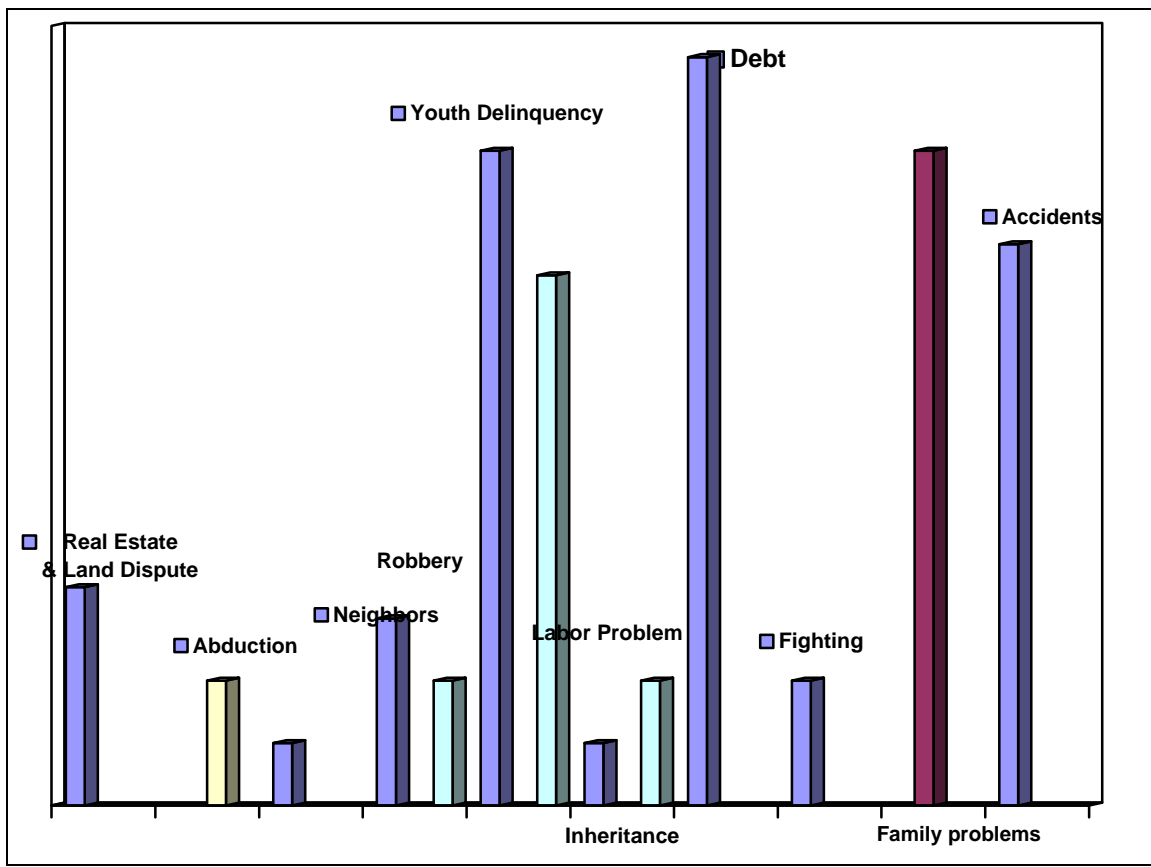


Figure I: type and number of cases intervened during 2005

Social Cases

Type of the cases	# of the cases	Rate of success
1. Real State	20	80%
2. Robbery	8	100%
3. Abduction	4	100%
4. Labor problems	14	70%
5. Neighbor disputes	12	75%
6. Youth Delinquency	34	100%
7. Inheritance	4	60%
8. Family problems	52	100%
9. Fighting	8	100%
10. Accidents	42	70%
11. Debt	48	80%
Total	246	

1.3 Example: Illustrative Social Case of Mediation

The problem is an ordinary case between a man and his wife. After years of bareness, the women conceived a baby and then later gave birth to a deformed baby. The man after realizing the condition of his son fumed with anger. He did not accept the baby and asked his wife to put the baby in a sanatorium. The situation in the family reached a grave impasse with the extended family of both the husband and the wife exchanging accusations and threatening each other. Then the man kicked the wife and she was obliged to take refuge in her family home.

Seeing the gravity of the situation, the wife invoked the help of Wi'am mediation. After a strenuous investigation & shuttle diplomacy between the foes, the mediators concluded that the husband's family (his mother and two sisters) coerced him to relegate his son.

After working on the humanity of the parties, the mediators reached a breakthrough. The husband and his wife backed by their families agree to keep the baby under their custody until he reaches a certain age. After the age of dependency, the husband/the wife agree that they would admit the child to an infirmary for children with special needs.

With this conclusion the relationship between the wife and her husband returned back to normality and they agree to reconcile and put their differences behind their back.

1.4 Impact of the Sulha and the Ministry of Reconciliation on the Community

We can summarize the following impacts:

- ◆ A decrease in unsuccessfully resolved disputes is largely noticed in the community
- ◆ A drop in the tendency of people to resort to violence to settle their differences- people tendency to be manipulated into violent action is has decreased
- ◆ A significant number of families have been able to mend broken relationships among its members, thus, preserving the very family structure from disintegration
- ◆ Most cases reached a transformative outcome in which the solutions go beyond the immediate problems to reinforce restoration of friendly/harmonious relationships among community members.

- ◆ We not only find solutions to people’s problems but also help people change for the better, in the very midst of conflict. We also notice that mediation possesses the power to change how people behave not only toward their adversary in a particular conflict, but also in their day- to- day lives thereafter. That is, our mediation addresses deeper levels of social life.
- ◆ The beneficiaries are empowered by improving their own conflict resolution skills. Parties are empowered when they learn how to listen, communicate, analyze issues, evaluate alternatives, and make decisions more effectively than they could before

II. Youth Programs: “Training for Trainers” in Civic Education and Conflict Transformation skills

The T4T program introduces a range of practical skills in civic education, theoretical input, and analytical tools, which, through program of relevant simulation and case studies, will enhance understanding of conflict and the capacities for handling it effectively.

The program is intended to encourage reflective learning, and to enable multipliers and young people to apply the skills they have learned to an organizational and situational context.

2.1 Target Group

The hallmark of a truly democratic society- one whose ideals are resilient even under challenging circumstance- is empowered, diverse groups of young people and citizens that create dynamic transformation and change, lead in the development process and possess a fundamental faith in the rule of law.





Around 30 training workshops are conducted for 5 groups (25 individuals in each group) and the gender distribution is generally even. The target group are between 18 and 25 years of age and are mostly university students, youth leaders and volunteers from various backgrounds. They should be active in youth work and be able to act as multipliers for issues related to peacebuilding, non-violence and community development.

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These multipliers are ready to commit themselves to implement training workshops and raising awareness regarding social issues of concern.

2.2. Methodology

Through trainings, simulations, practical involvement in community issues and support for grassroots advocacy youth are given a critical role in advancing democracy and promoting the peaceful transformation of conflict.

We have developed Training for Trainers (TOT) approach and programs, which focus on the theoretical civic education on the one hand, and the practical application of the trainings in real life practices on the other. The training focuses on dissemination and how participants themselves can design and implement their own learning events and contribute to facilitating learning among their colleagues. Learning about certain topics is deepened by not only having to go through a certain number of training sessions, but by having to prepare and run learning sessions for others. Many times the trainees would say: “Now I have more confidence in myself and my education storage of information.”

2.3 Areas of Training and Activities

During the year, we have conducted 35 training sessions in different fields of: conflict Transformation, Mediation, non-violent communication, Facilitation, Leadership, Social Drama, Human Rights and Democracy, Globalization, etc.).

2.4 Achievements:

1. Young people have been preparing and running 15 training/learning sessions in different field of civic education. In these trainings, young people contribute to facilitate learning among their peers and engage in proactive discussion about different topics that concern young people and their community such as democracy, human rights, women empowerment, youth problems, non-violence, globalization and the dialogue of cultures.
2. Other participants are able to share in deeper learning experiences which are transformative and which start to build a network or community of people committed to community development and the path of non-violence as a way of life.
3. Young people are able to acquire tools and methods in conflict resolution and peace education that can help
4. More young people are volunteering in different social institutions and train children and young people in different areas of education, e.g. volunteers with social worker knowledge are able to do many activities for children
5. More young people are participating in non-violent activities and advocacy campaigns as part of their outcry against injustices and their call for more robust application of laws

B. Drama Workshop. “Youth for Change: Social Drama as a mean to give a Voice to the Voiceless”

Wi'am has conducted a three- day workshop in Social Drama for a core of 25 young people. An expert in social drama has been leading the group into the basics of drama and its use in promoting the free expression of opinions and reinforcing youth self- esteem.

Methodology:

The workshop focuses on the basics of drama and how the participants can use role- playing to express their feelings and attitude towards a specific issue.

The participants have been working in small and larger groups in a healthy atmosphere that encourage cooperation and innovative communication of ideas and intent.



Achievements:

1. Drama provides the participants for means for personal and emotional expression, for conveying ideas and emotions, i.e. each group made a drama sketch that exposes a social issue of concern (early marriage or violence trends, for instance) and put possible solutions to it.
2. Young people are able to learn new techniques and tools necessary to convey their message effectively: voice tone, verbal/or non- verbal communication, Norms of conveying messages, pragmatic language, negotiation tools, emotions and how to control them, group work verses individual work, initiatives, discovery and innovative solutions
3. More young people are taking initiatives at the family, peer and the community level: more young people are taking part in problem solving and voluntary work in the community (i.e. social work with children with special needs)
4. More young people are more involved in their university environment to promote non- violent methods of dealing with social disputes

C. Wi'am Café: A space for Young people discussing/debating issues of concern

Part of Wi'am policy is to provide young people with a safe- space in which they can discuss different topics in a participatory manner related to youth problems/community issues.



The youth have the chance to exchange ideas and information in an informal setting with their peers. This is essential for maintaining and building a healthy society that believe in freedom of speech and democratic expression of ideas. Through face- to- face talking, young people are able to discuss subjects (i.e. reform, election, non- violence, women participation, early marriage, etc.) that are important to them. The emphasis lies on self- development; these initiatives are building blocks for the mental well- being of the Palestinian society.

III Children Summer Camp(s):

Wi'am successfully conducted 7 summer camps for children aged 6- 12/13- 16 years old with approximately 550 beneficiaries in total.

Each year in the Bethlehem area, Wi'am organization conduct summer camps that are attended by hundreds of children. These summer camps aim to provide opportunities for the children to play, to have fun, to make their own choices, to express themselves, to develop their skills and to learn.

This year, were considered important for adolescents, living through stress, violence hardship because



summer camps particularly children and especially after psychological and economic of the current

Israeli- Palestinian crisis. There is a growing need for Palestinian children to practice their right to play and enjoy their childhood away from all forms of violence.



Achievements:

Summer camps can be summarized along the following areas:

- The provision of psychosocial support to children during the summer camps. This includes children's reactions to crisis, strategies and activities to deal with the major problems of children such as fear, stress and trauma, violence, peer relationship, low-self esteem, hopelessness and risk taking.

Around 20 workshops with approximately 20 summer camp facilitators, social workers and Wi'am staff have been conducted. Each training workshop reached up to 30 participants and the gender distribution was generally even.

These summer camps were characterized by a participatory and active learning approach that provides children with opportunities to play, to express their feelings, hopes and frustrations. The summer camps also gave Palestinian children a chance to develop the life skills they need daily such as critical thinking, listening, stress management, and decision-making.



The program consisted of a variation of educational and scientific activities such as lectures, computer courses and discussion sessions; cultural and artistic activities such as Dabke dance, drawing, songs and theatre; sports activities such as football, volleyball and table tennis; community activities such as voluntary work and visits to community centres and organizations; environmental activities such as working in the garden and cleaning activities and psychosocial activities; education trips such as visiting historical places and locations in Jericho and around Bethlehem area



IV Trauma Coping for Children/Parents

Children are one of the focal point of Wi'am work; their life is far from being peaceful and normal. Children and parents are going through life-changing experiences because of the current political and economic situation. All this have long-term effects on their mental and psychological wellbeing.

The “Trauma” project provides coping and healing outlets for underprivileged children living under stress and trauma. The project is divided into two interrelated tracks: individual counseling sessions for individual cases of stress/trauma and group airing out activities to mitigate children’s emotional conditions and provide a safe space for airing out feelings.

Beneficiaries:

Children between the ages of 5-16 years old as well as parents are the main target audience. The number of children is about 350 with around 80 parents and teachers.



Activities:

Healing-oriented programs include:

- Psychological/entertaining programs. During the year we have conducted 45 workshops and diverse activities that include: creative expression through arts and story-telling; the development and promotion of self-help groups; creation of safe environment in which children play and do different sport; drama acting; drawing; balloon-sculpting; face-painting; clay shaping; environmental awareness visits; field trips to the nature

- Individual counseling and remedial interventions. The group activities are an important indicator for individual psychological needs. Through these activities our counselors and social workers are able to select 40 individual cases of stress that they dealt with promptly and discretely. This entails face- to- face home visits with therapeutic counseling sessions, psychotherapy and family therapy
- Training local community (teachers and parents) in psychosocial support skills. We have conducted 10 training/meeting sessions for the target group.

Achievements:

1. Social workers/counselor indicate that the individual counseling sessions have significantly improved the psychology of children as well as parents
2. A drop in the behavioral and psychological problems facing stressful children has been largely noticed along with a de- escalation in the severity of the cases
3. Parents are more aware of the psychology of children and learn ways to detect changes in the behavior of their children
4. Psychological restoration are a positive consequence to parents- circles; it provides a space for parents- of –children who suffer the consequences of troubled events to share their experiences, listen to each other and support each other
5. Parents are taking the initiative to visit their children at school and meet the social worker to follow their children’s behavior, needs and most importantly get more closer to them
6. Group activities help children ventilate their suppressed feelings and build their self- esteem
7. Teachers are more efficient when dealing with children living under stress in the classroom, i.e. a better response to the need of hyper- active children is noticed

V. “Women empowerment: training for social change and community building”

Through training, advocacy, networking and personal support women can discover their potential and be a positive mechanism and a tool of constructive change. Wi'am is working towards change through different educational programs that increase women awareness about their rights and increase women's knowledge and scope of information. So, our work focuses on the educational and networking level.

Educational programs:

- ❖ Workshops about Methods of conflict resolution, leadership and active citizenship. Women activists, organization and groups develop and improve skills in nonviolent conflict resolution, mediation, and leadership. After the training, women trainees become multipliers /trainers in the field in their organization and the larger community. Women are equipped with the necessary skills in order to successfully confront violence, manage conflict, build a culture of peace and raise the community awareness on Gender issues and women rights.



- ❖ Political Activism and social activism: advocating women rights- i.e. lobbying for fair political representation at the legislative and municipal election; lobbying the decision makers for amendments to regulation and laws that discriminate against women



Women Net working

Wi'am has always invested in networking with 15 local women groups and organizations in a bid facilitate lobbying for social changes in laws and practices that discriminate against women and empowering women groups. Among these groups are: the Palestinian Working Women, Red Crescent, Agricultural Relief, Psycho-social Counseling Center for Women, Family Development Center, etc.



Networking help women consolidate efforts, share resources as well as provide support for its members. We have the engaged in he following activities:

- ❖ Expand and revitalize partnerships with civil society, including the flow of information and systematic consultation at all levels. Civil society- in particular women organizations- are early warning beacons. They are the eyes, hands and ears on the ground, working to prevent conflict, educate the younger generation be at schools or family, and working to prevent conflict, build peace and share in community development. Development, peace and progress are sustainable only if it is locally driven and locally owned.
- ❖ Encourage member institutions to address women concerns, recognize women leadership and create significant opportunities for women to contribute their knowledge

- ❖ Create and promote activities that visibly support women effort, i.e. rally behind women candidates for the municipal and legislative elections in terms of reaching out to the public through debates and public talks

Activity VI: Youth Cultural Exchanges: Dialogue of Cultures

Under the umbrella of Euro- Med project, youth groups from Palestine are able to meet their counterpart from Europe and the rest of the Middle East. The inter- cultural exchange offers young people the opportunity to exchange ideas, work together and foster new initiatives. This dynamic dialogue is an important part in exposing participants to ideas, possibilities, cultures and worldviews of “others” leading to the examination of one’s self, one’s borders and the common spaces between people.

Awareness, understanding and acceptance of differences between cultures are very much consolidated and celebrated between youth groups.

We have been participating in the following exchanges:

1. Meet the history- Understand the present- Improve the future”

Participants: 8 young people from different geographical areas with gender balance

Date of the Exchange: August 6- 22/8/2005

Location: Germany/ HAM



Results:

- Promoting understanding and cooperation between young groups belonging to different nationalities

- Combating stereotypes and pre-judgments through promoting an atmosphere of mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence between different cultures
- Reinforcing the “culture of peace” and dialogue of civilization not their clash

2. “Eyes of Tolerance”

Participants: 8 participants from diverse backgrounds

Date: July 30 –August 14, 2005

Location: Sicily, Palermo

Through “Eyes of Tolerance” theme, young groups learn the importance of accommodating/respecting differences between different groups, ideas, nationalities, races. They learn that through mutual respect of the “Other”, they can combat rising xenophobia, racism that are on the rise in the European and Mediterranean societies.

The exchange, however, has been a meeting space for all cultures to interact and for young people to present their culture in an objective manner. In the final analysis, the exchange sends a clear message to young people that dialogue of cultures is the right answer to those who believe in the “clashes of Civilizations”.

Activity VII Advocacy, Marches and peaceful demonstrations lobbying for justice, societal change and end of occupation

We are proud of our marches and sit-ins that call for social reform or women equal rights, on the one hand, and that call for an end to the unjust occupation and its harsh measures on the ground. We continually protest against the “Separation Wall” and identify with the people who are directly devastated by the Wall. We write petitions, articles to advocate non-violence and call for an end to an unjust political reality. By the same token, we are periodically orienting international groups about the current political situation and call upon the international community to advocate peace and justice for all.

VII Publications: Research/Training Manuals

Wi'am is proud of its publications, manuals and articles in different fields of conflict resolution and civic education. Work is underway for the publication of locally oriented training manuals for youth multipliers/trainers. It covers different fields of civic education in the Arabic language: Conflict resolution, Mediation, Globalization, Civil Society, Communication, Dialogue, Negotiation, etc.

The manuals will take into account our field experiences in conflict transformation, peacebuilding, community development and lessons learned in the field that focuses on the Palestinian context.

In addition, work is underway to publish a book in Arabic about "The Role of traditional Arab Sulha (Mediation) in resolving community disputes". The book will fuse the theoretical side of Sulha with a real-life case-studies specific to the Arab culture.

Wi'am staff is proud of their advocacy writings and articles in different forums and periodicals about experiences in the field of peacebuilding and experiences in community development.