

Narrative Report 2003-2004

A. "Crisis Intervention": Trauma Coping Project and Recreational activities for Children

The master was asked, "What is spirituality?"

He said, "Spirituality is that which succeeds in bringing one to inner transformation.'

"But if I apply the traditional methods handed down by the masters, is that not spirituality?"

"It is not spirituality if it does not perform its function for you. A blanket is no longer a blanket if it does not keep you warm."

"So spirituality does change?"

"People change and need change. So what was spirituality once is spirituality no more. What generally goes under the name of spirituality is merely the record of past methods."

The mission of Wi'am Center is to disseminate knowledge and information to community members. No matter which way we choose to address the developmental challenges and the threat to social harmony, we continually come back to the core issue of education and community empowerment at the grassroots level. The respect of individual's (women, children, and youth) rights as an indivisible part of human rights, the education of children, youth and women in different fields of civic training, is an important step in full participation in economic, social and political life. It has enormous benefits to society, and is key to resolving some of the overarching problems of our time.

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the impact of the Intifada on Palestinian children, it is necessary to understand the events of the last 40 months in the context of its effects on Palestinian society as a whole. As one of the weakest groups in Palestinian society, children suffer disproportionately from the Israeli measures against the whole fabric of Palestinian life.

Palestinian children suffer violations of their rights in every sphere- violations of the right to life and security, education, and the rights of children deprived of their liberty. The effects of this intense form of rights deprivation are long-term, and the resultant physical and emotional damage sustained by Palestinian children will have persistent social and political repercussions, within Palestinian society, and throughout the region as a whole.

Oppression is a social toxin which, through the mechanism of trauma, literally makes people sick. It is a sickness that causes massive personal suffering, and when left to its own devices, it is self-perpetuating and severely impedes efforts to achieve social change and individual recovery. Mobilizing people's traumatic experiences

toward constructive ends will be beneficial for individuals suffering from traumatic stress.

There is no doubt that Palestinian children are exposed to 'layers' of trauma and stress and an ongoing accumulation of bad experiences and there is very little personal space to air out frustration.

The most valid description of Palestinian children is that they are sad, defiant and angry. They are also tense and vigilant. Many are without smiles and when smiles do appear, they are devoid of innocence and a deep sense of enjoyment of life.

These children have learned the language, the action, and the meaning of the occupation and its unjust measures that kill any chance of hope for a better future. They find their lives filled with danger and bad experiences and often feel that his/her life is hopeless. The environment sends this message loudly and clearly in a stark fashion. The language of evil and occupation sends the message that life is not worth living.

Such experiences leave indelible scars on children's perception of themselves, the world of adults around them, and their self-esteem; it even gives them the wrong impression that "life is equal death." The inevitable reaction is a mixture of fear, frustration, helplessness, flashbacks, anger, stress, hypertension, anxiety and perhaps most tragically, traumatic layers of bad experiences that need special care. Recreational and Therapeutic intervention at the hand of experts can help children to better deal and cope with experiences of living under a brutal occupation.

Objectives of Crisis Intervention:

- o To reach individuals (children & parents) who suffer from psychological stress as a reaction to a turbulent situation and to meet their psychological needs.
- o To reduce behavioral and psychological problems facing the children who have been exposed to direct & indirect violent or disturbing encounters and to prevent them from escalation.
- o To foster the understanding of the psychological and spiritual dimension of trauma and stress.
- o To explore the wide range of emotional and physical reactions after the traumatic event;
" To provide remedial preventive measures to mitigate cases of Trauma and stress
- o To increase awareness among family members, parents and the community members; to equip them with knowledge and preventive measures to deal with situations of stress among children and family members;
- o

To assist and support community members to find their own suitable solutions to the symptoms from which they suffer as a result of the prevailing conditions;

o

To refer individual cases/families to the psychologists involved and follow up on their progress through regular home visits.

o

To create awareness in regards to crisis situations among community members of different age groups and backgrounds;

Activities for children: (when, where, what, how many)

A. Airing out Activities for at least 600 Children (ages 6-14).

We have conducted 25 amusement activities and open space visits to different parks, environmental attractions and recreational areas.

The activities are divided into three categories:

1. Environmental Awareness (22/7/2003, 7/9/2003): Children visited Batir village, Olive Press facilities, al-Khader village, Solomon's pool, ancient Monasteries, Artas village and its heritage centre. They had the chance to break away from the stressful and harsh conditions they are living with to enjoy an open space in which they can play and learn constructive patterns of behavior that respect the environment and their fellow friends. The open space activity gives children the chance to "know their country" and learn about different archeological and religious places.

The "Wild Life Association" oriented the children to the geography and history of the places visited as well as to types of immigrating birds. Through these activities children are given the chance to express themselves freely, learn new information and be exposed to a safe-environment that encourages individual efforts and provides reassuring space.

2. Recreational Group Activities at the Golden Park (Beit Sahour): The total number of beneficiaries has been 500 children. The dates were: 21/6/2003, 29/6/2003, 28/7/2003, 8/8/2003, 17/10/2003. Swimming is an activity that allows children to enjoy the open space and burn out their excessive energy in a bid to keep their focus on positive actions and conduct. Energy releasing is one way to help children gain their disoriented balance and encourage constructive thinking and initiatives.

B. Remedial Group Activities: (30/7/2003, 16/7/2003/ 7/8/2003, 8/8/2003, 9/8/2003, 17/4/2003, 22/8/2003, 4/4/2003, 11/4/2003, 10/9/2003, 19/9/2003, 28/9/2003, 3/10/2003, 10/10/2003, 11/4/2003, 26/9/2003, 25/9/2003, 23/9/2003, 10/10/2003, 5/10/2003, 10/9/2003, 3/10/2003, 10/10/2003, 17/10, 2003)

Group activities included Puppet Shows, Music Therapy, Drawing, Writing poetry, Mural drawing, Jar-Labeling, Entertainment Shows by a special band, e.g. "Heart To Heart" and numerous local ones.

The objective behind the aforementioned activities is to help children cope with stress and the complicated layers of traumatic experiences.

Results:

Group activities allowed the children to:

1. Ventilate feelings and suppressed emotions in a free and safe environment where we can manage and confront any signs of aggressive behavior or hostility;
2. Reduce the psychological tension children are facing that prevent them from having normal social interactions;
3. Receive, if needed, individual attention and follow-up by a social worker or counselor;
4. To work out frustration and anxiety. A reduction in anxiety and behavioral problems have been noticed;
5. Through interaction with other children, we help foster personality development and are able to reinforce self-esteem;
6. Recreational activities help in reducing cases of withdrawal and social isolation that undermines children's social progress;

C. Individual Remedial Activities for Children & Families

Let me share with you the following story as narrated by a Traumatic child who witnessed the violent action of foreign adults against innocent family and their children:

"S mi, an 8-year old child, woke up frightened in the middle of the night screaming and looking for his parents. He was looking for his marbles, but he couldn't find them. He needed them urgently!! His loving parents tried to calm him down. He insisted to have the marbles. The parents searched everywhere and found some of them. The frantic child calmed a bit and then told his father to throw them in the toilet. "Why?" the father asked in astonishment. The breathless child said: "Our neighbor, Salim, was playing with marbles when suddenly the Israeli soldiers caught him. The soldiers took his brothers to prison and eventually demolished his home!!! I don't want this to happen to us." S mi screamed. "I love you father, I love my mother and brothers and I like my home also." The parents hugged him and comforted him till he went to sleep in their bedroom."

The symptoms of sleeplessness, nightmares and bed-wetting are found in countless children in Bethlehem and the rest of the occupied territories.

In children with layers of bad experiences and stress, memories of the trauma reoccur unexpectedly, and episodes called "flashbacks" intrude into their current lives. This happens in sudden, vivid memories that are accompanied by painful emotions that take over the victim's attention. This experience or the "flashback" of the traumatic experience is a recollection. It may be so strong that individuals almost feel they are actually re-experiencing the trauma.

Methods of Psychological Intervention during Traumatic Event:

1. Defusing: By defusing we help children deal in a better way with the feelings and reactions created by a specific incident or event and reorganize their thoughts in a more rational way.

2. Revisiting the traumatic event in a secure environment in which individual cases of trauma are present along with the team of counselors and social workers. The intervention team meet the individual cases at their home or in a more secure environment. The objective is to curb any psychological deterioration of the shocking event or traumatic experience.

Results:

Social workers and counselors have been able to detect four psychological disorders as a result of the current situation and resulting negative events:

1. Acute Stress Disorder: it includes the disassociation of feelings; feeling of numbness; inability to remember some important parts of the traumatic event; lack of concentration and disassociation from the real world, withdrawal

2. Adjustment Disorder: It includes turbulence in the social life of the child.

3. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: It includes disinclination towards involvement in social activities; inclination towards avoiding feelings, thoughts or places or even talking about things that make the child remembers the traumatic event; recurrence of the event in a shape of nightmares, negative ideas, hyper-activity, horrifying images or scenes, cases of anger; withdrawal and avoiding others; personality disorder like losing self-esteem, the diminishing of self-respect, feelings of guiltiness, and losing confidence of the outside world

4. Bereavement or Grief Reaction: It appeared on persons who lost a dear one. The symptoms include depression and anxiety

C. Coping Sessions for parents of children and school teachers (1 session a week in which we accomplished 12 sessions during the months of May, July, 2003). These sessions included the following activities:

" Intervention at the Family Level:

Parents learn how to talk with their children about the current situation in a free and honest way in which the whole family takes part in the process. Each member has been able to share his/her experience which includes ideas, fears, hopes, feelings, aspirations without pointing any finger or blaming any person. The parents learn to be sympathetic with the traumatized person or the injured. They learn how to let the traumatic child talk for himself/herself and show solidarity with him/her by letting the person speak about his/her feelings/ideas pre & during and after the tragic event. The child is given reassurance by the father and mother that they are standing behind him and that his brothers and sisters share that feeling.

" Intervention Inside the School Premises

Raising awareness among staff, families and volunteers and the working team in the project is an important step to help children cope with their stress and traumatic experiences. It involves emotional first aid which includes information about trauma

symptoms. Trauma is divided into five categories: physical, cognitive (thinking), emotional, spiritual and behavioral.

The participants learned the following:

o

Children and loved ones may experience a variety of signs and symptoms of stress,

" Symptom might often subside and disappear in few days. Some may linger or reappear briefly for a week or two

o

If the signs of stress your loved ones and school children are experiencing do not begin to subside within approximately several days, or if they intensify, consider seeking further assistance.

o

Dealing with trauma takes a lot of energy. But returning to normal routine, and doing familiar things with the children at home or at school as soon as appropriate provides reassuring structure. Teachers and parents learn how their behavior and action sends a message to the child that life goes on.

o

Parents learn how to encourage their children (but do not pressure)

o

Beneficiaries are provided with a set of techniques for helping individuals gain control over a crisis situation

Parents and teachers learned activities to help children with cope with trauma and stress. They learned:

1. To read stories to children that allow them to project their feelings onto the story characters. This opens a dialogue with a child in a way that is not threatening.

2. Allow children to visualize their hurt, fear or pain. They can draw, make use of clay, or imagine these symbolic feelings by being able to talk. If the hurt could talk, eight years old Rami explained, it would say "Why they are hurting us... They killed my brother... He was just sitting beside me in the living room when the sniper shot him in cold blood... I'll never forget this.. " Feelings of being hurt begin to surface and thus be dealt with in a professional and compassionate fashion.

"By helping children put their feelings outside of themselves we can facilitate healing. Sharing feelings diminishes the hurt". Breaking the Silence (1996)

Parents and teachers learn some guidelines for crisis intervention:

o Seek to open up discussion with simple, factual questions: "what did happen?", "What does bother you?" "Can you tell me about it?"

o Gather specific information beyond what is spontaneously offered

o Respect initial needs to minimize what happened as self-protection.

Recognize pain, fear, suffering, worry. "It must have been terrifying.", "I can see how must you have felt". Gently and slowly help the child understand the situation more realistically.

o Gradually seek to elicit thoughts and feelings and reactions. ("How did you feel about it when it occurred? How do you feel about the incident now?" Provide

encouragement. Acknowledge feelings but don't probe deeply or seek to intensify them-this is crisis intervention, not long term therapy.

- o Focus on the immediate problems, needs, and priorities.
- o Seek to formulate the dimensions of the problem and their meaning to the child.

Screen for signs of violent aggressive thoughts and actions

Parents and teachers learned the following:

- o Set aside a talking hour over the school day to talk about their feelings regarding the reality around them and to hear the thoughts and reactions of the child.
- o Explain in a concrete, direct way what is happening and answer truthfully any questions
- o Be aware that you and (your) the child live in "different worlds". You live in the state of anger and they live in a climate of grief and sorrow because they think of their own trauma and all the children who have lost or exposed to traumatic experience
- o Do not let your children watch the strong pictures gushing from TV sets. Use time away from the television.
- o Reestablish routines in the child's daily rhythm or schedule, especially in relation to bed time

Let the child make a drawing or letter or in other way express their sympathy for those who are exposed to violence and at the same time express his/her own feelings and aspirations.

In conclusion we need to cope up with trauma. Since it is no longer PTSD, since we have lots of layers, layers over layers. Nevertheless, we need to transform ;we need to be strong and this is what we have seen in kinds as Hemingway puts it, "The world breaks everyone, and after words, some are strong in the broken places", "I'm no longer live in the shadow of my past"

B. Christmas Smiles that Bring Hope & Joy to Children and Families

Children are the future hope of every nation that believes in an inclusive society that puts human development as its main goal. We strongly believe that bringing hope and joy to children is one way helping the local community get on with their life despite the harsh reality around them.

One way of bringing joy to the hearts of children is making them engaged in activities and actions that take them from a harsh and depressing reality to a more secure and healthy one.

Christmas, which is a sign of new birth of peace and rejuvenation, is an opportunity to bring children and families together under the spirit of

Christmas so that they can enjoy a day of fun and restore part of their shattered hope for a better future full of joy.

The activity, bringing smiles to the faces of children, hosted 750 children from different backgrounds and from a wide range of underprivileged families. The activity

included a number of diverse educational and entertaining activities that engage the children in a positive and constructive way.

Activities:

- o Puppet show
- o Drama: a play that encourages children to adopt positive behavioral patterns and to discard negative ones
- o Music and children songs
- o Pedagogical activities
- o Distribution of educational gifts
- o Clown Show & Magic presentations

Objectives:

- o To restore children's confidence in a better future full of hope and opportunities
- " To provide children with a safe haven where they can play and enjoy the diverse constructive activities
- o To bring joy to children as an escape from the harsh reality they are living in
- o To help parents cope with their children in a more constructive way
- o To help children air out their suppressed feelings and ventilate their anger and frustration

3. Advocacy

A. "The Word is Power"

The latest EU public opinion poll indicates clearly the power played by the word in advocating cases of social injustice and the aspiration of nations for just peace.

It has been noted that negative images that discredit the Palestinian side have been circulating. Advocacy is one method of using the power of the internet and the mass media to bring about a more positive light to the Palestinian viewpoint by writing articles and newsletters, debriefing to visiting groups, attending different speaking engagements at the local and international level, round-table discussions, conferences panels, interviews and "letters to the editor".

We focus on the release of articles to different international and national bodies, magazines and institutions, including those which are considered "small hometown" publications world wide. The focus of the articles would be to give clear picture of the Palestinian reality and aspiration in all facets of the society. The focus of the articles would also be one that gives a positive and justified light to the Palestinian call for a just and peaceful solution to their political cause based on justice and fairness. Advocacy also involves replies to articles that are seen in publications and public opinions worldwide that are sent by groups that gives a negative and distorted image of the Palestinian people and their strive for liberation.

Objectives: To disseminate and circulate the daily stories of injustice and human suffering that we as Palestinians are facing on a daily basis and writing articles that depict the aspiration and the call of the Palestinian people for justice.

Articles written as part of our advocacy work include:

1. Christian Zionists
2. "The silent Night or the Night of Silence"
3. "Retributive Justice"
4. "Peace and Reconciliation"
5. "Discovering True Peace through Sincere Reconciliation"
6. "Non-Violence as a strategy for Struggle and Method for Peace-Making"

These articles can be found at our Web Page www.planet.edu/~alashlah

B. Speaking engagements

Wi'am staff have been active in speaking engagements and training in different locations across the world. Trauma and conflict in the Middle, Interfaith Dialogue, Prospects for Justice and Peace in Middle East, Conflict Resolution and the Power imbalance, alternative Means to Retribution Justice, non-violence in the Middle East. Partner organizations like WFD, Amos Trust, Irish Palestinian Solidarity Group, Pax-Christi host us in the tour to USA, Canada, Sweden, Ireland, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, Cyprus.....

C. Local Cards

These cards mark Christmas and Easter from a local point of view. They are planned and designed by Wi'am staff and volunteers. Such cards help to raise awareness and also form part of the Art Therapy. You need just a glimpse and you will see that they speak for themselves

D. Ministry of Reconciliation: The Traditional Mediation work of "Sulha"

Peacebuilding today faces daunting challenges like never before. The political climate has socio-economic repercussions, which exacerbates dormant social conflicts and escalates new cases of conflicts.

In the past decade, there has been a growing culture of concern and practice within the field of peacebuilding towards relational approaches which seek to heal and reconcile people and communities and thus break the cycle of revenge and bitterness.

Faced with stringent socio-political and stifling economic situation the Palestinian people find themselves facing variant social problems and internal disputes that require direct intervention from the peacebuilding in the society. An integral part of Wi'am outreach activity is to respond to the community needs through direct intervention in the field and to provide the community members, individuals and groups with alternative means to violence.

Our ministry of reconciliation work in the community centers around II intertwined tracks: educational seminars and workshops related to conflict transformation (e.g. mediation, negotiation) and practical mediation work in the field.

Objectives:

- o To provide target groups with the consistent, "free of charge" services of trained conflict mediators and to model effective nonviolent conflict resolution approaches
- o To help in decreasing unresolved community conflict
- o To restore or create friendly relationships between disputants
- o To train individuals (volunteers, youth groups, parents) on non-contentious norms and methods of conflict transformation and reconciliation
- o To preserve the traditional Palestinian conflict resolution methods (Sulha) and advocate its role
- o Facilitate youth discussion of root causes of conflict, and teach them techniques to prevent conflict

Activities:

- o We have been providing on-call conflict resolution and reconciliation services to target groups and community members. We have intervened in 300 cases of community disputes and hundreds of incidentals: 85% cases reached a reconciliatory result in which the disputants reached a common understanding.
- o Ongoing in-service training for 5 youth groups which include 20 members each. The training entails workshops, peer discussions and focus group discussions.
- o Inviting experienced local/international peacebuilders to give presentations about their experiences in the field of community building and different means of preventing conflict
- o Engaging the trained young mediators & volunteers in actual and simulated reconciliation events that suits their capacity and enhance their capability

Results:

Our ministry of reconciliation yielded results on two tracks:

1. "Ministry of Reconciliation" Through Field Work

Through our "Ministry of Reconciliation" we provide peaceful alternatives to violent acts and helped in bringing social harmony to a tense situation. By targeting all the community members we indirectly helped in reinforcing the very fine fabric of the family which is the backbone of the society.

The following story depicts a successful mediation case which has reached a positive conclusion through the work of our dedicated mediators and volunteers.

" A happy marriage can be turned into a nightmare when the disgruntled husband refuses to accept his newly born disabled baby girl. The matter mushroomed into open enmity between the husband and the wife. At some stage the husband vowed to kill the baby or divorce the wife. In a matter of fact, he kicked the wife and admitted his 3 children to a boarding school.

The matter has reached the church court. The judge ordered the husband to accept the will of God and told him to reconcile with his wife and let her come back to the house and be reunited with her children.

Following the intervention of Wi'am and after listening to both parties separately, the mediators summoned the wife and the husband and talked to other family members to learn more about the subject.

The search for the truth and the exploration of all facets of the matter revealed clearly the injustice committed by the husband to his family and the child. In that respect, our mediators redress the injustice by bringing the two parties face to face to talk about the matter and explore each party's attitude and feelings. After a strenuous process of meetings and the involvement of the extended family, a "transformative" change in the heart and mind of the husband occurred. The turning point has been when the mediators with the help of trusted family members and the local priest convinced the man that this child is a Godly will and that this might be an experience to test their resolve, patience and faith.

The family eventually got united again and the father accepted the very fact of having a disable child and regretted his actions.

2. Ministry of Reconciliation through Civic Education and Training

We have been conducting a number of training workshops, seminars and presentations about the non-contentious Conflict Resolutions Ethics, Conflict Transformation, Mediation, Democracy, human Rights, Reform (judicial and administrative) and Negotiations.

- a. 15 workshops & seminars in Conflict Resolution & Transformation to youth and women groups
- b. 10 workshops in negotiations, Peer-Mediation and Reconciliation
- c. 3 Workshops and presentations about Judicial and Administrative reform in Palestine
- d. 3 Workshops about democracy and Human Rights in a changing world: The Middle East as a case
- e. 5 mediation workshops: "the Methods and techniques of the Traditional method of Mediation and the Western Techniques of Conflict Transformation in changing & turbulent social context"
- f. 2 workshops about "Retributive Justice between application and aspiration"
- g. 3 workshops about Dialogue and Listening: dealing with stereotypes, listening, Breaking the ice, overcoming sentimental walls, the usefulness of humor and storey telling
- h. 2 Workshops about voluntarism and its moral implications at the societal level
- i. English language courses for volunteers and Web site development/Creation

E. Job-Creation Projects for the unemployed

The situational context with its harsh political and economic reality on the ground has quadrupled unemployment in the Palestinian land and driven many families into leaving their home places. The inability of the husband or wife to provide their household with their daily needs has caused many domestic problems. Sensing the hardships facing the community in which unemployment reached up to 60%, Wi'am started a job-creation project that provides temporary work for 600 unemployed workers over the past three years.

The criteria for the selection of the beneficiaries takes into account the economic situation of the unemployed workers, the number of years without work and the size of his/her family. These workers have been doing voluntary work in at least 30 local public institutions (e.g. hospitals, clinics, youth clubs, religious places, Museum, Associations, etc.)

Objectives:

- o To provide temporary income to unemployed workers through working to improve a variety of public places
- o To assist families in meeting some of their financial obligations and help them pay some of their due tuition fees for their children
- o To strengthen the capacity of public institutions by providing them with free laborers for maintenance work
- o To restore the shattered self human dignity of these bread winners who lost any confidence for a better future

Results:

600 unemployed workers have found "temporary" work in at least 30 local institutions and public places in which they have been doing maintenance and renovation work. The revenue generated from their work allows them to meet some of their commitments, particularly, paying part of their overdue pills and meeting the needs of their children at school and their family.

A modest number of the total beneficiaries in the project have been able to find permanent work in the institutions where they worked.

F. Community Activity: Distribution of School Kits to School-Children

Background:

It is all clear that hope comes from being able to bring back smiles and happiness to the most vulnerable in the community, children. No doubt those years of deprivation and scenes of violence has negative impact on children. Therefore, we need to find coping strategies & initiatives that can help children restore their shattered self-esteem and overcome layers of oppressive feelings.

With the support of MCC we have been able to distribute Drums of stationary to 5000 children. Instead of playing with war-games that depict the environment around them, children are given the chance to have stationary and notebooks that can assist their learning process and keep them focused on school duties.

Distribution: the Work of Wi'am's Volunteers and Staff

Different schools and institutions benefited from the campaign. Wi'am staff and the volunteers have been able to reach schools located in Bethlehem area and villages, refugee camps in the area.

Impact:

Back to school is always a huge enterprise to many families living in the Holy Land particularly at this juncture of political and economic downturn. The distribution of 5000 School Kits to the same number of children & Youth (each kits has 4 notebooks, a ruler, pencils and a drawing crayons) is a wise contribution that helps Palestinian Children and their families as they return to school. That gesture helps us focusing the attention of children on constructive educational material that can further their development and enhance their learning and growth.

The impact of these school kits on schools has been encouraging. Schools are appreciative of the content of these kits which help children focus and take pleasure in their studies, as well as giving them the joy of a practical gift, and regain part of their shattered sense of self-esteem. Thirty Five groups have benefited from these kits. Modest numbers have been given to following Benefiting Institutions:

1. Arab women Union- Beit Sahour
2. Catholic Scouts League- Beit Sahour
3. Greek Melkite Scout League- Beit Sahour
4. Sira Institution and School
5. Terra Scanta School-Bethlehem
6. Terra Santa Scout Groups
7. Al-Khader Girls Association
8. Syrian Orthodox Group- Beit Jala
9. Frere School-Bethlehem
10. St. Joseph School for Girls- Bethlehem
11. Terra Santa Scouts for Girls-Bethlehem
12. American School- Beit Jala
13. Zaka(Charity)Committee-Beit Sahour
14. Orthodox Scouts-Bethlehem
15. Latin Scout- Beit Jala
16. Orthodox Shepherd high- School
17. Orthodox Church- Sunday School-Bethlehem
18. Greek Catholic(Melkite) Church
19. Benevolent Iman Association- Bethlehem
20. Arab Educational Institute-Bethlehem
21. St. James Armenian Orthodox Association-Bethlehem
22. Lutheran Shepherd Scout- Beit Sahour
23. Women Committee- Dehesheh Camp- Bethlehem
24. Women Team-Bethlehem
25. Aida Camp- Bethlehem
26. Dehesheh Camp-Bethlehem
27. Students from Bethlehem University
28. Bethlehem Governorate Scout Groups
29. Students from Salahat I- Bethlehem area
30. Students from Asakral- Bethlehem area
31. Syrian Congregation- Bethlehem
32. Orthodox Congregation- Bethlehem
33. Local Governance youth Groups
34. Students from Rakhma-Bethlehem area
35. Local Neighborhood

G. Capacity Building for the Wi'am Centre

Peace-building is an integral part of conflict prevention and management. Building the capacity of civil society organizations to engage in peace-building helps foster the journey towards peace and democracy in our part of the world.

Wi'am staff has been participating in many youth exchange projects, seminars and workshops that help them sharpen their knowledge, widen their field of experience and expand their information.

These include participation in different seminars, courses and workshops:

1. Strategy group building in Egypt and Jordan-2003
2. EMU courses in Conflict Resolution, Mediation and organizational development-Virginia-2003
3. "Out of the invisible City": Sexual Discrimination- Italy-2003
4. Democracy and Elections-2003 America

H. Health assistance

We are able to help 20 families having medical operations through our networking with different medical and benevolent and charitable organization.

I. Cultural Exchange Program & Networking

1. Youth Program Euromed, Action I- Cultural exchange" Palermo-Italy, 1-14/8/2002
2. Youth Program Euromed, 1st -14thAugust, 2003

Union Get Peace is a project based on the experience of Mr. Danilo Dolci and aims to find possible peaceful alternatives to violence. And, to increase the level of the youth awareness coming from the Mediterranean countries and Europe about different issues of interest, e.g. dialogue, youth development, Cultural norms and respect of diversity, communication techniques, conflict transformation and negotiation, Music and Drama, Media and stereotyping, Folk dancing, etc.

" It was such a great pleasure and experience to be among a large number of diverse cultures and nationalities, where each one of us got the chance to represent his/her country to share with others the youth situation there and look for increasing cooperation between the participants in order to enhance the activities...." A young participant- a girl

Youth are the motor of change in every society. The youth exchange program focuses on establishing real partnership between different groups, assessing the different needs of participants and sharing ideas about certain topics of interest. By developing friendships and cooperation between individuals and groups, we foster cross-border relations between disparate groups and identities and help in the integration of different voices and cultures into the universal peace framework.

The youth program targets young people aged between 15-25 years, it offers possibilities to young people in the form of both group exchanges and individual as well as non-formal education. The Youth exchange program is one way of strengthening partnership between different cultures and youth groups to help them find innovative ways to achieve their goals as well as to build a youth leadership that can affect change at the societal level.

Through cultural dialogue and networking, we encourage coalition building and autonomous thinking in all spheres of life. By taking initiatives, we encourage the youth active participation in the society and help young people realize and appreciate the diversity of cultures/identities and wipe out pre-judgments that inflict harm on human relations and human coexistence.

Objectives:

- o To promote dialogue that helps people in the region and worldwide build bridges of hope and mutual understanding
- o To translate dialogue into inner healing process that accommodates the "Other" and diffuse tension, mistrust, misconceptions and prejudices
- o To provide safe environment in which the youth groups can exchange ideas, feelings and aspirations
- o To empower self-confidence among different youth groups, as well as to build a youth leadership that can take decisions and break from negative norms of thinking and behaving
- o To encourage youth participation and involvement in public life

Results:

- o An increase in mutual understanding is noted and a change in the negative opinions about the "other" occurred
- o An open channel of cultural communication and friendship based on cooperation, justice, tolerance, equality has been opened
- o Breaking the psychological barrier is an asset added to the exchange program in which youth groups live in an environment that reinforces individual and group initiatives and self-confidence
- o Individuals from different backgrounds are able to meet and appreciate each other's cultures, norms of thinking and traditions
- o The participants have been successful in changing negative images about certain nations
- o Dialogue causes introspection of one's own position and enlarges and possibly changes negative point of views
- o Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude ready to accept changes to the better able to search for common basic agreement.

2. *- Networking: Internet-Based Conflict Resolution Project

The project aims to provide volunteers, children, youth groups, networking groups, women groups with a computer lab that is connected to an internet network to enable them to communicate with their counterpart at the local and the international

level. Conflict resolution programs tend to engage individuals and groups. This type of activity is in some way or another part of the cross cultural activities and exchange.

Objectives:

- o To enable youth groups to exchange freely and discuss matters related to world current affairs, discuss issues of peace and non-violence and open a window of cultural dialogue between disparate groups
- o To create a pool of ideas, attitudes, essays and aspirations that can be promulgated and developed
- o To embark in a major realignment of negative images, wrong ideas, misconceptions and prejudices through the power of the web
- o To exchange ideas freely and discuss ideas related to peace-building and cultural norms and traditions that is exclusive to each nation and culture

Impact:

The internet based conflict Resolution project is an initiative that allowed youth groups to open a channel of communication with other disparate groups interested in nonviolence and cultural dialogue between different nations. There are so many miss truths, negative images and so little trust among the people belonging to different cultures and national backgrounds, that a major realignment of society attitude must take place. Therefore, an effective mechanism for changing/or influencing the status quo is involving the youth in different activities that can establish and foster exchanges of ideas and wipe out prejudices against the "Other".

2-* E-Symposium- Zoughbi Zoughbi from Wiam has taken a part in the symposium.

The Third E-Symposium on Conflict Prevention

Terrorists or Freedom Fighters?

How can Peace be Achieved in Palestine, Chechnya and Other Conflict Zones?

Co-sponsored by the Japan Center for Conflict Prevention and The Japan Times with the generous support of the Tokyo Club May 22nd-30th, 2003

On the Dialogue Webpage for Conflicts Worldwide

[http:// www.dwcw.org/3rd _e-symposium/](http://www.dwcw.org/3rd_e-symposium/)

H. Non-violent activities:

"Persuasive power" can change people's behavior. It aims at winning support (including support within the opponent's own camp or community) and building bridges. Constructive/transformational action or power creates deeper, more structural and longer lasting change.

We are involved in different Vigils & Marches and Sit-ins against the "separation wall", the "Siege" and other measures of the occupation. By this we are advocating peaceful means of resolving conflict and voice our collective protest in a robust way.

I. Women Empowerment & Gender Training:

Gender issues attained primacy in current development thinking and the role of women as agents of development is very much at the forefront of different activities. The women program is conscious of the pivotal role women play in social transformation when they appropriately mobilized and empowered.

The gender and training activities for women work to achieve gender equality through uniting the efforts of women who believe in equality and women's rights, rejecting limited concepts imposed by the traditional culture.

Objective:

- o To increase women's participation in decision-making process to effectively articulate their interest
- o To assist in building leadership skills through training women at the grass roots level

Activities:

We have conducted training workshops in Democracy and Human Rights, Gender Equality and the Spirit of Voluntarism. In addition, we have group discussions with women groups about different issues of concern and possible means of tackling certain problems.

Results:

More women are trained in different subjects such as gender issues, conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, Human Rights and the role of Women in Social Change. More women are involved in different activities that advocate justice, equality, equal representation of women, and non-violent means of resolving conflicts.