

Annual Report 2004

Introduction:

Drawing our inspiration from Helder's Camara words: "Let every word be the fruit of action and reaction", Wi'am believes that promoting social justice and spreading the culture/education of non-violence are factors that enhance social change, peacebuilding and community development.

We fulfill our message and objective through different activities and program that target community members from different age groups and backgrounds:

I. SULHA: Ongoing Ministry of Conflict Resolution coupled with the Tradition of Community Mediation and Transformation

Target Groups: all Community members, particularly the family structure

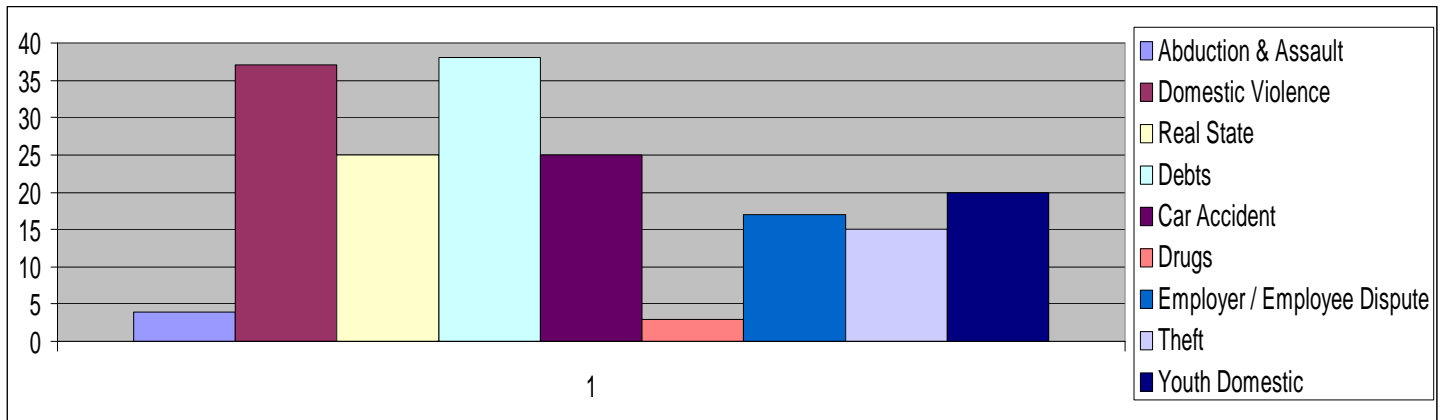
"A society which destroys its children, abandons its old, and relies on vengeance fails fundamental moral tests. Violence is not the solution; it is the clearest sign of our failures." Confronting a cultural of violence, US Catholic Bishops

At Wi'am, we deeply believe that Community Mediation/ Sulha is an artwork of sharing yourself, your spirit, your knowledge, your time, your kindness, your understanding, and your experience with others. For some, the day-to-day activities are only part of the job, but the larger picture shows a commitment to serve and enrich community relationships and to be an integral part of fostering positive changes for our future.

Sulha- Mediation- entails a wide variety of activity, most of which include the work of trained mediators working effectively as third party interveners in conflictual situations across our society- in marriages and families, in neighborhoods, domestic violence, youth infighting, land disputes, landlord-tenant, family feud and car accidents, community settings, and the workplace.

Wi'am is proud of mediating 180 cases in the year 2004 cases of social disputes that involve at least 2500 members of extended family and friends. 90% of these cases have been reconciled and the disputants reached satisfactory results; 10% of the cases are pending further deliberations and thorough follow-up.

The cases Wi'am dealt with are as follows:



Results Achieved:

- A significant decrease in unresolved local disputes has been achieved (90% of cases has reached a reconciliatory results); the other 10% of pending cases are followed up
- Restoration of family bondage has been reached in many cases that involve family disputes in which social harmony & transformation is celebrated
- Community member's are more confident in non-violent methods of dealing with conflict
- Dialogue and understanding has been promoted at inter-and-intra communitarian level
- Promotion of greater joint mobilization around peace values/ non-violence at the local and the wider political level
- A significant decrease in cases of domestic violence is recorded
- More people are embracing non-violent discourse, the language of positive communication and positive behavioral patterns in dealing with domestic disputes
- People confidence in the dialogue of "words" has been increased and rooted
- Local peacebuilding : more people are engaged in processes to heal hostility and division, through dialogue, cooperation and reparation
- Upholding human rights and the rule of law

I. Crisis Intervention

Children, youth, women and families in general are the focal interests of Wi'am centre. The life of children is far from being peaceful or tranquil. Exposure to scenes of bloodshed gushing from TV sets, coupled with physical contact with danger as a result of the political turbulence, increase the risk of trauma, anxiety, depression and stress-related symptoms. The experience of trauma shatters basic healthy assumptions about the self and the world: the belief of personal invulnerability, the view of the self as positive (trauma affects victims by making them feel weak, powerless, fearful and stressful).



A person who suffers from trauma usually feels vulnerable, helpless and out of control in a world no longer predictable. Our observation in the field supported by worldwide researches indicate that early intervention and applying “what we call: first aid” can effectively immune children from developing more serious psychological problems as well as mental illnesses.



The Buddhist concept of turning poison into medicine – or what Thich Nhat Hanh calls “turning garbage into flowers-captures the spirit of our strategic crisis intervention approach in dealing with Trauma and stress.

Our Intervention in the field is divided into three main categories:

- **Group Amusement/ Recreational Activities**
- **Individual Therapeutic Intervention**
- **Educational Activities for Parents, Teachers and Community Members**

1. Group activities (30 meetings) for at least 2000 children during the year 2004. This entails recreational and amusement activities, each activity involve between 50- 60 children.

Recreational/Amusement activities involve the following: Open air excursion to the nature, Environment Awareness, Drama, Mask acting, Folk dancing, Balloon- shaping, Story-telling, Puppet/ clown shows, Pedagogical Games, Music as a relaxing/therapeutic aid, Drawing and Mural painting.

Results:

- psychologist and the social worker are able to select individual cases of Trauma, depression and anxiety and deal with them accordingly
- Children are exposed to safe environment that induces learning and ventilation of suppressed feelings
- Children learned the benefits of peer work and active involvement in group work
- Children self-image and self-esteem has been fostered
- Children learn to express their anger non-violently and humanely
- Children learn ways of protecting nature and respecting the environment
- Children enjoyed different games that build their motor and mental thinking

2. Individual Therapeutic Counseling

Counselors have been able to reach a plethora of individual cases and dealing with them discretely within a safe environment that induce active listening and emotional ventilation.

Results:

- Children's traumatic symptoms has been mitigated and dealt with effectively in a more constructive way
- Children traumatic experiences has been mobilized towards constructive ends in a way that is beneficial to the individual and his/her personality
- Children self-esteem has been harnessed to cope with the fluctuation of the situation
- Children are able to return back to normality and be an active members at their schools, family and enjoy positive interaction with their peers
- Families are able to return to some kind of normality
- Children's who are suffering from powerful flashbacks or powerful dreams has been decreasing sharply

3. Workshops for parents and School teachers. We conducted 12 sessions during year.

Social workers and psychologists conducted training that equipped school educators, children's parents, volunteers, social workers and community members with the needed counseling knowledge to satisfy the Children's psychological needs.



Achievement(s):

1. We have been able to decrease the chance of a traumatic experience to become a fully fledged crisis that can turn the victim of anxiety or trauma into becoming a perpetrator of domestic violence

2. Children are encouraged to talk about their experiences, reactions related to the reality around them in order to avoid being exposed to “silent suffering”
3. We have been able to mitigate cases of anxiety and trauma through different activities and counseling sessions
4. We have been able to provide a “safe Haven” that encourages creativity, reinforcement of self-esteem and personal initiative that supports group initiatives
5. Make parents be more aware that their children live in “different worlds”. We encourage them to keep their children busy with educational activities like reading or playing
6. We have encouraged school teachers to give their pupils more time to express their inner feelings through expressions of feelings in the classroom. For instance, we encourage teachers to give the first 5 minutes to any child who has something to share or say.

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

III WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women community leaders, peace-builders and activists can no longer be excluded from community development and sharing in the decision-making on equal footing with men. A paradigm shift must take place away from marginalizing women constructive societal development role toward gender equality that respects diversity and personal choice.



Wi'am recognizes the urgent need to engage women in community issues and empower their leading role at the family and societal level. Women can no longer be excluded as legitimate stakeholders in community change and dynamic involvement in peace processes. Peace must be redefined as not merely the absence of violent conflict but as the positive and creative process of building sustainable Societies.

Mechanism of Change:

- Through training and personal support we help women 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 increases women awareness about their rights, and through different civic education programs that increases women's knowledge and scope of information.
- We also implement an innovative mechanism of Change by reaching out the people on different levels of power and lobbying for a change that respects the sovereignty of women and their equal rights.

Our Mission working with Women

- Through our diverse programs we are trying to reach a level of equality between men and women in all aspects of the development process. We are also working towards building a Democratic Palestinian State that integrates men and women on equal footing and provides dignity, security, safety and justice to all.

Activities

- Violence & Non violence workshops/ trainings in Methods of conflict resolution and Mediation
- Gender & Development workshops (to raise the community awareness on Gender issues and women's right)
- Empowerment (the women need to develop their self-confidence, self-image, and self-esteem
- Workshops/round-table discussions that tackle issues related to Women abuse/domestic violence
- Leadership skills (To assist in building leadership skills, through training women at the grassroots and articulate their interests.)
- Encourage the involvement of women in Political arena and social activism

Women Networking

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. 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 are engaged in the 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.
- Launching a campaign that calls for an increase in the women quota in Legislative and Municipal elections
- Build a Culture of Peace: Gender equality is a necessary ingredient of the culture of peace.
- Participation in Non-Violent activities:
- During the month of June 2004 a big event protesting against the Wall has been organized. The peaceful demonstration attracted all layers of the community. Their motto is: "We refuse to be Prisoners of the Occupation".
- We held several educational events –i.e. A workshop panel discussing the pros and cons of the "Road Map", Elections, the active participation of women in political life and political Reform.
- Urgent Action: women network remains alert/ flexible enough to respond to events on the ground as they unfold. We continued our nonviolent resistance to closure and home demolitions - confronting bulldozers on more than one occasion –
- Volunteering actively in the olive harvest in an effort to help Palestinian farmers pick their olives against the background of Israeli soldiers harassment and preventing them from reaching their olive groves.

- Our aims will always remain to empower women contribution to peace building and community development.

IV. Children Summer Camps: Ongoing Recreational & Educational Programs for Children_ Target group: Children (5- 13) years old

Summer Camps hosted between 1000-1500 children who enjoyed the safety of an open space and educational training. The ongoing activities engage children in diverse educational, recreational and entertaining activities. Summer camps facilitate peer involvement and dissemination of knowledge.



Activities:

- Airing out Activities for Children: the activities are divided into three categories:

- **Environment Awareness and Nature Excursions:**

Children visited Talitha school “Wild Life” compound, Museums, Solomon’s Historical pool and Heritage centers located in Bethlehem area. Through these excursions they learned about the different migrant birds in the region, the Flora & Iona of our land and they watched an educational film about wild life and environment in Palestine.



II: Drawing and other artistic activities

III. Theatre shows & Drama.

IV. Sport & Recreational Games (Football, Tennis, Handball, Soccer, etc.)



Results:

Children are able to integrate new experiences/ or environmental information into his/her existing cognitive structure and they become more aware of the importance of nature in our own life. In general, the child learns about the best ways to preserve natural life and how to be active in protecting migrating birds. Children also have the chance to observe the different types of immigrating birds and learn new information about their cycle of immigration.

B. Round table Discussions & presentations about Conflict Resolution at the peer/ school level, Positive Behavioral norms at school or at the neighborhood level,

Ways of dealing with Crisis, Volunteering and community work, Role-plays about different problems at the school levels, Violence Vs. non-violence conduct.

Achievements:

Children learned new experiences related to peer behavior and mode of expressions that is needed in dialogue and communication. They learn that negative feelings can be managed and controlled. In addition to the pedagogical aspects of learning about different locations, children are able to escape the stressful and closed reality they are living in and enjoy an open space in which they play, ventilate and learn new patterns of behavior.

V. Workshops/ Seminars/ Trainings/ Panel Discussions about “Youth Intervention for Peace: The Primordial Role of Youth in Conflict Resolution, Human Rights, Mediation and Communal Change”

Target group: Youth from different Backgrounds and Areas (18-24 years old)

Wi'am strongly believes that the youth are the most influential actors in pushing social transformation forward. Therefore, spreading the culture of peace among the youth groups builds a strong society that adopts nonviolence as a mean of resolving conflicts and moving forward with community development.



Activities:

- * Workshops in non-violent Communication/ Mediation/ Building Civil Society/ Women and Gender Issues/Peer-Mediation
- * Workshops about Judicial and legislative reform in the Palestinian
- * Workshops about Human Rights and Democracy in a changing World
- * Workshops about “Volunteering and its moral impact on the society”
- * Workshops about “Retributive Justice between Application and Reality”
 - * In service-training in Mediation (Sulha) that entails a both simulations and practical side:
 - * Training in leadership paradigm
 - * How the conflict transformation techniques can be applied to solve the current conflict:
 - A. Practical application of the Conflict Transformation
 - 1. Analyze the contribution of young people in Generational dialogue/struggle
 - 2. Explore the current position or strategy to resolve the current conflict
 - 3. Proposing alternatives: violence Vs non-violence
 - B. Design alternatives struggle to achieve ultimate goals
 - 1. Exploring Interpersonal and social change
- C. Skill Development
 - 1. Organizational skills
 - 2. Persuasion “negotiation” skills
 - 3. Amalgamation and assimilation “mediation” skills
 - 4. Networking
- D. Role Plays

Achievements:

- ❖ Youth groups are equipped with techniques and methods in conflict resolution/mediation, peace education and peacebuilding
- ❖ Exploring the current situation and suggesting certain strategies to resolve the current situation
- ❖ Analyzing the contribution of young people in community building
- ❖ Young people suggesting practical ideas to affect societal change
- ❖ Young people are using persuasion & negotiation skills at the school and neighborhood level more efficiently
- ❖ Gaining insights about the behaviors, attitudes and patterns that can escalate and de-escalate violence

- ❖ Beneficiaries are able to use problem-solving skills in dealing with family, peer, college, school disputes and group conflicts
- ❖ Young people are more effective in handling challenging situations, including intense emotions and occasions when disagreements reach an impasse
- ❖ Beneficiaries learned skills and approaches which assist in building confidence and trust when working with individuals, groups, and communities in conflict
- ❖ Beneficiaries are able to deepen their contextual and cultural diversity in handling conflicts and building peace
- ❖ The training sessions/workshops engage participants in the exploration of the role of youth in conflict transformation and its practical implementation in inter-group conflicts

B. Workshop: “Christian Presence in the Holy Land: Facts and Challenges”.

- * To emphasize the historical role of Christians in different fields of life-social, political, economic and cultural
- * To inculcate the Christian traditions that calls for the respect of the “Other” and call for the dialogue between civilizations, religions and cultures
- * To foster the Christian role and deepen the attachment to identity and the Palestinian cause

C. Workshop on the “Role of Women at the Negotiation Table”.

Objectives: to discuss the UN's resolution 1325

The workshop discussed the UN's resolution and its impact on women's role and contribution at the negotiating table. It has also discussed the idea of establishing an international women's committee that study the resolution and work for its implementation at the societal level. It is worth noting that the aforementioned resolution can be applied to independent states and not occupied ones. Nevertheless, it is recommended for all communities inter alia Palestine.

After deliberations & active participation, the beneficiaries reached the following recommendations:

1. Disseminate the content of the resolution and reach a full understanding of the content that can be applied to the Palestinian context

2. To build a comprehensive strategy to combat social problems related to discrimination against women, i.e. gender discrimination, women under- representation at the local municipal and legislative levels
3. More community members share the need to divide roles equally between men and women
4. To educate community members on the need to fight stereotypes and prejudice against women in different location of work, family or study
5. Empowering the Talk and the Walk of women in all aspects of community building
6. To influence a constructive change in some negative aspects of the negative interpretations of “cultural” way of thinking/values

D. Seminars:

1. “Balloon Sculpting and Face Painting”

2. “Early Childhood Techniques”

The first seminar target social workers, volunteers, teachers and people working with children. The Balloon Sculpting seminar deals with innovative ways of blowing up the balloons, mask-painting, Handling the balloons, tying, and shaping.

The “Early Childhood Seminar” is a great opportunity for the beneficiaries to learn new techniques/methods that can help them in their work with children. They learned how to deal with children who need special attention and how to have a productive interactive session with children.

E. Workshop on:” Immigration trends and causes in Palestine: It’s Impact on the Local Community Especially the Young People and Ways of Reversing it”.

The workshop has been a frank discussion with students from Talita Kumi School from the 10-12 grades about immigration and its impact on their life. The discussion has been an opportunity to exchange views about the reason behind immigration and ways of dealing with this community bleeding. The students also voiced their frustration about the socio-economic and political situation that influences the decision of people to immigrate. In addition, the discussion has been productive in the sense of evaluating the pros and cons of leaving home and searching for refuge in a land that is different in cultural and social values.

F. **Consultation on: “Gender Role in Building a Non-Violent World”** in Cyprus, September 2004- in cooperation with **IFOR women Peacemakers Program**, Netherland.

Participants from Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Israel, and other Middle Eastern countries took part in the Cyprus consultation. The consultation has brought together 20 women peacebuilders from the Middle East.

The consultation, tentatively called "Communities in conflict: What Can Women Do? The goals of the five-day long consultation are to:

- B. aid participants in deepening their understanding of nonviolent conflict resolution
- C. provide a safe space where participants can exchange their experiences, ideas and strategies for Peacebuilding
- D. Work towards the establishment of a Middle East women's network for nonviolent conflict resolution.

Coming from different social backgrounds, the participants discussed issues related to women empowerment and ways of moving forward in each and every country. The consultation focuses on building personal support to women coming from different cultural affiliations; training in non-violence and strategies that women can adopt in conflict situations related to Human Rights and democratic norms.

G. Participation in the second phase of “ **Group Strategy Building**” in cooperation with the RTC and PENGO (the Palestinian Network of non-Governmental Organizations”.

It is a continuation of trainings for Training-f-Trainers that focus on building a core of local trainers in different geographical areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in Conflict Resolution, Conflict Transformation, Group-Building/Mediation.

VI. Cultural Exchanges for Youth Coming from Europe and the Mediterranean Countries: “TO THINK GLOBALLY TO ACT BETTER LOCALLY”

Youths between the age of (18-25) who come from diverse backgrounds are participating in a Euro-Med youth exchange. In this exchange young people from different cultures and tongues are exposed to ideas, possibilities, cultures and worldviews of “others”. Exchanges give the young groups the possibility to say what’s on their mind and to influence their own future.

We participated in European Union Euro-Med cultural exchanges. It involves different youth groups from diverse cultural/national backgrounds. These young groups belong to European and Mediterranean countries. We have been involved in the following exchanges/seminars related to youth:

1. “Let’s meet the three cultures”, Cordoba, Spain (May, 2004)
2. “Sounds of Friendships”, Palermo, Italy (August, 2004)
3. “Take a Part and Cook a Tart”, Turkey, (May, 2004)
4. “COMED” Project for three Years: Joint cooperation/ communication between Youth organizations dealing with young People.

Objectives:

- To increase the capacity of youth for building positive relationships across cultural and religious differences,
- To develop youth’s abilities for the future for practicing multicultural concepts and building understanding among participants, who will develop strong identities, respect and acceptance of diversity
- To create public performances that communicate a vision of multiculturalism that will positively affect communities in which they live

Achievements:

Cultural exchanges offer young people the opportunity to work together with other young people and youth organizations. In this way we foster new initiatives and support the need of young people on a local, regional, national and international level. More important, during the Cultural exchange we listen to young people and give them the opportunity to voice their opinion.

VII. Ongoing ADVOCACY Work:

Wi'am is proud of welcoming groups of international visitors from all corners of earth and debriefing them about the current political situation and the unjust measures of the occupation. In addition, an integral side of our advocacy work is writing articles in international peace journals and in our web page about non-violence and possible ways of moving forward in the peace track.

VIII. Capacity Building for Wi'am Staff/ Volunteers:

Capacity building for the Staff/volunteer's is one of our main priorities. We make use that we continue with our endeavor to acquire more knowledge, practice and trainings in different aspects of peace education and Conflict Resolution. By this, we keep updated with a plethora of experiences from different parts of the world and with the latest theories and methods of peace education.

We have participated in the following seminars/Workshops and conferences:

- A. "Building Inclusive Communities" IFS. Toronto, Canada. 2004
- B. Hope for a Global Future: 2004 Presbyterian Peace and Justice Conference, Atlanta, 2004-12-13
- C. "Training in "Non-Violence and Mediation" in Lebanon with the Lebanese Centre for Non-violence Training for two Wi'am's volunteers
- D. A workshop in "Human Rights and Democracy" in Cairo with the Middle East Council of Churches

Research: "Psychological Implications of the Wall on Palestinians".

Noting the psychological, economic and political implications of the Separation Wall on the lives of Palestinians, Wi'am has conducted a field research about the "Psychological Implications of the Wall on Palestinians".

The Separation Wall that the Israeli Government is said to building for "security" reasons appears to be a political fact on the ground that affects the socio-economic and the political situation in the Palestinian land.

In the research, we have come to the following conclusions about the implications the Wall on the lives of Palestinians:

- ❖ Limiting social continuity as people are confined to their homes and villages- every town and village is cut off from the other and it will be isolated. The geographical discontinuity will mean the disintegration of families and social relationships will be hampered.
- ❖ Unemployment and poverty is on the increase. The inability of many villagers/ farmers to reach their fertile; and the inability of people to reach their workplace
- ❖ Cases/ Symptoms of Trauma, anxiety, depression, and stress are on the increase as a result of Discrimination, feeling helpless, isolation, abject poverty of many families, academic problems facing children