

Wi'am Annual Report 2006

2006 has seen significant achievements in the work of Wi'am, but they come against a backdrop in which the situation on the ground is as turbulent like never before. Vital services, including educational and financial and medical are disrupted by the occupation on an almost daily basis. As a local NGO, Wi'am shares the people's concerns and thus responds to their needs in a constructive manner. However, thanks to the persistence and perseverance of our staff and the financial and moral support of our partners and friends around the globe; through them we have overcome many impediments to take a pioneering role in responding to community needs, empowering the weak, enhancing our ministry of reconciliation and strengthening of our walk of transformation.

For all of our supporters, we send a bouquet of flowers as a token of appreciation for your involvement whether through spiritual, financial support or through mutual exchange and solidarity visits. Your involvement have baptized our perseverance, sharpened our vision, and given our work more dimension, meaning, and energy



It is not only locally that Wi'am has been operating and developing working relationships, but also regionally and internationally. In that respect we are a member of (ICOM) the international committee of IFOR (International Fellowship of Reconciliation) and partner with Mennonite Central Committee.

I. Ministry of Reconciliation: Sulha

In the current context of the socio-economic and political deterioration, Wi'am mediators continue their services unabated, day and night. The underlying purpose of **Sulha** is the restoration of peaceful relationships, addressing injustices and resolving conflicts between individuals, families, and within neighborhoods.

We were able to mediate around **350** cases of conflicts in 2006, targeting all strata of the community. The conflicts ranged from domestic violence, to infighting, marriage breakdown, youth delinquency, truancy, school problems, land issues, accidents, etc.

The Central aim of the **Sulha** activities is resolving disputes among community members and building harmonious relationships among them based on mutual respect and non-violent methods.

Conflict transformation sets a clear-cut message by adopting and practicing non-violent approaches to resolving conflicts at all levels, from individuals to the larger political conflict.

Human Interest Story:

The problem under attention is the result of a protruded conflict between a husband and his wife. After years of barrenness, the women conceived and gave birth to an abnormal baby. After realizing the condition of his son, the man fumed with anger. Backed by his family, the man adamantly refused to 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 his 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's mediation. After a strenuous investigation & shuttle diplomacy between the sides, the mediators concluded that the husband's family (his mother and two sisters) had coerced him to relegate his son.

After working through the humanity of the parties, the mediators reached a breakthrough. The husband and his wife, backed by their families, agreed to keep the baby under their custody until he reaches a certain age. The

parents agreed to put the child in the infirmary for children with special needs.

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

II. Youth Program: Training for Trainers/ and cross cultural exchanges

A. Training for Trainers Program: we continued with our holistic training for trainers program for 100 young people from both Gender, 25 persons in each group.

The training program is needs-based and intensive in both skills and knowledge. The training combines training, group work, and mapping community conflicts while working with real-life case studies.

The activities are both theoretical and practical in nature. They allow the participants to develop skills, knowledge and tools to work in the field of peace building and conflict transformation.

Themes of the Trainings

- a. Inter community and interreligious dialogue.
- b. Building of local capacities in Civic Education: non-violent communication, advocacy, leadership, negotiation, dialogue, civil society, human rights, democracy, leadership capacities, gender, and conflict resolution.

Activity results:

- Participants are equipped with knowledge in civic education and empowered in the areas of conflict transformation, human rights, democratic process, communication skills, leadership, advocacy, etc.
- Trainers are available to serve in the community
- Young trainers mediate low-key disputes during the year among peers and family members
- Trainees conduct civic education trainings to peer groups in the field of conflict transformation
- Participants are more competent to map conflicts effectively and develop appropriate strategies

B. Cross-Cultural Exchanges: Part of Euro-Med Programs

Youth all over the world are deprived from opportunities to meet their international peers. Young people are living in a vacuum of information about the "other". This creates disconnects between nations and disparaging perspectives that might lead to violence and irrational deeds or ideologies.



International youth Exchange (Germany)

This situation has created great distance between people on both sides of the divide and has created a fake "clash of civilizations". Therefore, the youth exchanges are a new and reciprocal regional relationships based on respecting the humanity of other nations leading to pluralistic thinking.

By giving the youth the means of understanding the "Other", we will enhance the dialogue of cultures and empower diverse youth groups coming from all walks of life to meet and talk about issues of concern.

Objectives behind Youth cultural exchanges and Empowerment:

- The definition of a common area of cultural dialogue, networking, empowerment and peace building through the reinforcement of dialogue
- The rapprochement between peoples through social, cultural and human partnerships aimed at encouraging understanding between civil societies, and fostering dialogue between youth groups...

Either through the recently completed 2-year Training of Trainers program or through additional 1 and 2-day seminars, our Wi'amers are continually equipped with new skills that they can use in their personal and professional development. Through the experiences that our youth acquire at Wi'am and in our partnerships with other agencies, our young people are qualified for even more personal development opportunities. Many have been accepted into graduate schools both locally and abroad, many are moving forward in their careers, and many have been able to take advantage of international opportunities for service and exchange.

Through Wi'am's connections with such agencies as the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and Women Waging Peace, several of our youth and young adults have been able to spend extended periods of time abroad, working in various fields. We have had youth spend two months in Holland working on women's issues; we sent several youth to Eastern Mennonite University in the USA to explore Conflict Resolution; and we were even able to send one youth to the United States to assist in humanitarian aid work after several devastating hurricanes.

Through Wi'am's connections with groups like Euro-Med and the World Council of Churches, we are also able to send small teams youth on cultural exchange opportunities. This year alone, we have connected 30 youth with cultural exchanges in France, Germany, Italy, Brazil, Sweden, South Korea, Holland and Japan. Upon returning from the events, the youth were eager to share their stories, pictures, lessons learned and challenges overcome. We have met with youth groups from the United States, England, Denmark, Korea and other areas. In August, we held a 3-day exchange with a youth group from Scotland. Whether experienced abroad or locally, these youth exchanges provide a safe environment in which young people learn more about themselves, as well as their peers in other cultures. They learn how to speak to the complex realities of living in Palestine, of growing up Palestinian, and they are given the chance to clarify international misconceptions about Palestine.

On a regional level as well, we hold consistent exchanges between the youth here in Bethlehem and youth from Ramallah and Jerusalem. The youth have found many commonalities *and* differences between themselves and with their peers. Though they all live within a 20-mile radius, each faces a common struggle against occupation, but in ways that are specific to each one's geographic area.

Our youth are also actively contributing to the development and progress of their local community. Through voluntary work with the Wi'am office, our youth are motivated to contribute their time and talents to improve this local context. We have volunteers here in our office, assisting us with our website and with numerous programs. By assisting with the children's program, our youth provide the youngest generation with positive role models and teachers. The children love to see the Wi'amers and they are able to learn so much from them. Our Wi'amers are also active in the Sulha program. Whether they accompany our case workers to mediate and resolve conflicts, or whether they contribute to such resolution themselves, these youth are helping to heal hurts society. This work is invaluable.

Through the community service program at Bethlehem University, the Wi'am Center is given the opportunity each semester to host numerous student volunteers. These interns assist both in the continuous work with the Wi'am Center and in service related to their individual academic fields. It is a joy and privilege to participate in the University's community service program.

As the youth program grows, and as we continually evaluate the needs of our youth, we are excited to push forward in the coming year with new activities. We will continue to seek opportunities for our youth to practice and implement all they have learned through the Wi'am trainings and workshops. We are hoping to develop a youth network for young people across the West Bank in order to establish more opportunities for exchange within Palestinian society. Through this network we will train and empower the youth to take action and responsibility for their futures. Through various activities we will give them a safe place in which they can discuss their opinions and formulate action plans to effect change on a local and national level.

Wi'am Participation

During the past years, Wi'am groups have been participating actively in numerous cultural exchanges in different European cities. This summer, four groups of 8 young people, participated in cultural exchanges in Italy, Germany, France, and Korea.

The exchange centers around peace building, conflict management, human rights, advocacy, dialogue of cultures, sports, theatre, cooking, recreation, artistic themes, folk-dancing, traditional food, cultural diversity, and inter-faith dialogue.

The objective is to offer are youth the opportunity to work with other young people and youth organizations. In this way we foster youth initiatives and empower their self-esteem. We also support the needs of young people on local, regional and international levels. Wi'am sees the value of young people voicing their opinions and supports them in doing so.

At the same time, Wi'am hosted a group of youth from Scotland for a three day cultural exchange. They had a great time getting to know each other, sharing their cultures with one another, and learning even more about themselves in the process. They were able to share traditional songs and dance here at the Wi'am Center in Bethlehem. One participant from the Scottish group reflected, "visiting Bethlehem and seeing the extent, height and effect of the wall made an enormous impact on all of us."

III. Crisis Intervention: Trauma Coping and Recreational Activities for Children and Parents

Target group: 1000 children aged (5-12/12-16) during the year 2007

Through our Trauma Coping Program, children are provided with a welcoming and safe space as an escape from the overwhelming experience of growing up under occupation. Children come together on a weekly basis to participate in workshops and activities. Often through group discussions, the children are able to express their fears and frustrations. Through individual and family counseling, the Wi'am Staff is able to assist children *and* their family members coping with their difficult situations. Whether it be through individualized attention, counseling, music therapy, "airing out" activities for an entire groups, Wi'am is committed to helping the most vulnerable youngest members of society to develop and grow in a loving environment.

Goal of Trauma Coping Project

The goal of trauma coping is to give victims a feeling that they have control over their lives and to heal traumatized individuals in order to lead a normal life.

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

I. Individual Therapeutic Intervention for Children

Psychologists indicate that "Healing can only occur through providing the space for individuals to feel heard and for every detail of the traumatic event to be re-experienced in a safe environment.

Through group activities with children and youngsters, social workers detected **45 cases** of trauma and stress. These cases were then followed

up by counselors on individual basis. The feeling of safety encourages victims to open up and unveil details of their ordeal and different experience. Retelling the details of one's story is therapeutic and allows disturbing memories and anxiety to be incorporated into the victim's life story, leading to healing.

Results:

- Children experiencing psychological stress express feelings of safety, security, and feel connected with their trauma in a supportive environment
- Children demonstrate improvements in their confidence and self-esteem
- A significant decrease in the symptoms of traumatic memory and flashbacks among the children is recorded
- Healing helps reduce school, family and peer violence because children learn how to listen to each other and respect their differences
- Negative emotional, physical, and behavioral conduct is dramatically reduced.

II. Group Amusement/Recreational Activities for at least 900 Children.

Group activities help children understand and express emotional turmoil. The activities are characterized by a participatory and active learning approach that provides children with opportunities to play, and to express their feelings both of hope and frustrations. These activities also give Palestinian children a chance to develop life skills such as critical thinking, listening, stress management and decision-making.

Through group activities, counselors and social workers are able to detect individual cases of trauma and stress and deal with it accordingly.

The activities involve:

- Cultural and artistic activities (stories, theatre, songs, films, cultural contests, creative writing, music, drama, mural painting, story-telling, and dancing, including folkloric Dabka dance)
- Sports activities (sports contests, traditional games, swimming, hiking trips....etc.)
- Community activities (voluntary works, trips, visits, etc.)
- Educational and scientific activities (awareness programs and educational games)
- Environmental activities (recycling (i.e. paper-making), recording? Cleaning up pollution and participating in the Making Palestine Green Campaign)
- Mask making, voluntary work, balloon-sculpting, drawing

II. Community-Awareness Workshops for Parents and Teachers.

The training focus on raising awareness about ways of coping with trauma and helping parents/teachers identify and deal with children in crisis.

Through diverse activities and workshops conducted at the hands of psychologists/experts in the field of trauma, parents learn how to deal with different symptoms that children show. For example, they learn how to cope with symptoms of anxiety, depression, and psycho-social needs.

Results:

- More parents are aware of the symptoms of trauma and ways of dealing with trauma
- Teachers are equipped with essential counseling techniques needed when students require counseling
- Children are encouraged to talk about their experiences, reactions to the reality around them in order to avoid and their "silent suffering"
- Periodic visits of parents to their children at school to meet the social worker to learn more about their children's behavioral, needs and to get closer to them
- Field visits to parents at their homes by a psychologist to provide counseling and support to families-in-need
- Follow-up for individual cases on a long-term basis

Human Interest Story

The following is a sample story of an ongoing individual case of “traumatic” experience and psycho-social deprivation:

“Doris, a 12 year old girl, and her five younger brothers and sisters are members of a large family who live at the edge of danger. The family is living under the watchful eyes of the occupying soldiers who have been turning the family's roof top into as an observation post for the past five years. The soldiers are restricting the family's movement and even free access to their house. This puts a grave strain on their daily life in addition to constant exposure to, bullying, sounds of gun fire and other inhumane treatment.

Experiences like these have taken a toll on children and their family. They have been developing the sign of trauma like, nightmares/depression that have dire consequences on their daily life and school achievements.

Sensing the plight of this family, our counselors and social workers were quick to respond to this case with much care and diligence.

Our social workers have been bringing some normality to these children by keeping them involved in activities that encourage their self esteem and help in restoring their lost security. The Therapeutic Individual Sessions are yielding progressive results at the personal and family level. However, ongoing work is very much needed to help these children cope with their trauma particularly with the continuous presence of the outside danger.

IV. Women's Program

An ancient African proverb says, 'If you educate a woman, you educate an entire nation.'

Wi'am offers women in Palestinian society a space where they can form support networks, develop their leadership and work-related skills, and take a more active role in their community and in Palestinian society at large. The Wi'am Women's Project promotes women's advancement with programs that focus on their health, education, employment and legal rights.

Our projects empower women to find the strength of their voices. As they identify and embrace their own strengths, they also strengthen their communities. Working at the grassroots level, we promote education, support diversity, and oppose violence. We seek social change, justice and equality for all women.

We see the wisdom in this proverb and we offer the following activities in our efforts to empower women in Palestine:



A. Weekly Women's Group

Through our weekly women's group, women of all ages come together for a time of mutual support, education and creative activities. Drawing on the resources of the Center as well as the resources each female participant can offer, women are provided with the opportunity to focus on the gifts they have within themselves. Women engage in activities such as Yoga, English courses, crafts and creative arts. These women are learning to take time for themselves so that they can give back to their families and communities.

B. Women Vocational Training for Self-Reliance

As more Palestinian families are stricken by poverty and lack of any economic prospects due to the political situation, we find it essential to empower women to be more dependent and initiate change. There is the reality that girls and women are the ones most impacted by conflict situations, and they are more often the ones left to cope with the harsh reality in the face of conflict and economic crisis. Women have a strong desire to earn their own livelihood. Vocational education is indeed an important way to eradicate poverty.

As a result, vocational training projects for the self-reliance of women in Palestine is an answer to the fresh wounds of the conflict in which thousands

of women and large numbers of families are struggling to search for ways to live and earn decent living.



Sharing ideas for Traditional Crafts

The women's vocational training includes: knitting, glass, drawing ...etc





This makes it all the more important that girls/women are well equipped through education/vocational training to be future leaders in their communities in all areas, from bread making to bread winning, from parenting to community building.

After the training, they are trained in shops and prepare to have their own shops such as dressmaker shops.

Objectives:

1. To learn manual skills that can empower women to earn a decent-living, be more independent and self-supporting
2. To display products done by women and to sell them to generate support, interest and income
3. To contribute to poverty-eradication

Beneficiaries:

Around 35 women were carefully selected from impoverished backgrounds. They are given 40 hours training at the hands of craft specialists in various fields: black-printing of textiles, basket-making, embroidery, glass-shaping, etc. They are also equipped with knowledge in computers, management and entrepreneurship. Upon completion of their training, women can use their skills to earn a decent living through producing items that can generate revenue for the household.

C. Trainings/Workshops in Conflict Resolution and Civic Education Subjects

Every week were offering a workshop and trainings in the field of Non-Violence, Democracy, Human Rights, Conflict Mediation, Communication and

Gender Issues for women in and around Bethlehem. Women are educated and empowered to assert their natural leadership roles. We include women of all ages and from all different backgrounds to participate in our workshops, and the response has been enormous. Women in Palestinian society are highly motivated for opportunities to learn.



Practicing Non violent Communication Skills in Am-Salamona

D. Advocacy in the Civil Society

Wi'am helps to expose women to the many facets of Civil Society Development. By participating in marches, vigils, demonstrations and advocacy initiatives, women are able to put into practice the theories they learn. We have been organizing many marches and sit-ins that call for social reform and lobbying decision makers for women's equal rights, and calling 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.



Advocacy for Dialogue within the Government

Non-Violence Celebration

In addition to our continuous Non-Violence Programs – the Sulha program and our weekly trainings with children, youth and women – we continue to provide opportunities for the community to learn about and witness the power of Non-Violence. In early September we held a Ten-Day Celebration of Non-Violence during



Which we commemorated the 100th Anniversary of Gandhi's Non-Violence movement, as well as the 10th Anniversary of the opening of

the Wi'am Palestinian Conflict Resolution Centre office. Through documentaries, panel discussions, spiritual reflections, activities for children and youth, and exposure to direct non-violent action we engaged the community in creative and transforming ways. We will continue such actions in the future as we seek to "be the change we wish to see in the world" (Gandhi).

Interns

We are always pleased to welcome interns to the Wi'am family. Currently, we are hosting five students from the Bethlehem University who are all completing their requirements for Community Service. As well, we have two

volunteers from Germany and one volunteer from the United States.

International Conferences

In addition to countless hours spent on Sulha cases and our other weekly programs, the staff and the director Zoughbi Zoughbi has been able to attend several workshops, cultural exchanges activities and present thematic papers as several international conferences.

In Japan, Zoughbi has been elected as a member of the committee of the international Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). We are still active members of many boards: Bethlehem Peace Center, Mennonite Central Committee, Sabeel "Liberation Theology Center", LRJ of EAPPI of "World Council of Churches", Global Network for Non-violence (UN University), Arab Partnership for Non-violence. Global Network for the Prevention of Conflict, and consultant to the establishment of Ministry of Peace, and Department of Peace Global Aliens.



The International Committee (IFOR) was elected at the Council in Japan, October 2006

In such venues we discuss the multi-faceted struggles, injustices experienced here in Palestine and prospects of peace, justice, and

reconciliation. We look forward to participating in such conferences in the future, and we are thankful to our hosts for their hospitality and the opportunity to spread awareness.

DELEGATIONS AND SOLIDARITY VISITS

We are always happy to host visitors and have welcomed many guests these past few months. We have coordinated home stays and programs for groups from Britain, Korea and the United States. We also joined with a youth group from Scotland for a 4-day youth exchange that took place in Bethlehem and Jericho. We are grateful for all the internationals who visit us in efforts to bring support and solidarity to the Palestinian people. We are glad to make new friends and look forward to our continuing partnerships.

Computer Lab Addition

Not only do our youth desire to have an internet space in which to share their hopes, dreams and aspirations with other young people around the world, but a computer center will benefit all age groups that look to Wi'am for new opportunities.

We continue to develop our Computer Lab in the Wi'am Centre. By the end of the year we hope to have the server and basic system, along with two computers installed in the Centre. As we continue to expand the computer lab and identify funds for more computers, we will initiate educational programs for the many people who come to Wi'am. As we educate

young and old alike on basic computer skills (as well as more advanced programs), we hope to equip these people with communications and computer skills. Wi'am computer Hall has been turning into a nucleus in which young children meet, interact and exchange ideas about divers subject, youth/ children are able to establish and consolidate contacts at the national, regional and international levels. They forge friendships, establish networks and communicate with their peers. Keeping dialogue following between young groups from different corners of the earth and different affiliations is a compelling method to obliterate the so called "clash of civilizations" and inter-ethnic divergence.



Exchange with youth from Korea

We are thankful to the many people who have contributed their time and resources to Wi'am these past few months. It is an honor and a privilege to work in this Bethlehem community and we could not do it without your support.

Drama and Creative Arts

Many times, art is the best form for expressing one's struggles, joys, thoughts and emotions. In an activity as simple as drawing or a dance as complex as Dabka, our children are learning the beautiful art of expression. We have participated in learning creative arts such as drawing, painting, clay-shaping and pottery. One of our young adult Wi'amer's taught the performing art of Dabka (traditional Palestinian folk dancing), and the children were able to perform for their families. As well, the children have learned new songs and played new instruments through performing in choir and taking lessons. Finally, we have all benefited from the love the children have for drama. Whether it be through drama workshops by local actors, or skits developed by the children themselves, these young people find great joy in performing for others and for one another. We are so grateful to be in the presence of so many talented young people.



Excursions and Field Trips

Though travel is very limited within the West Bank, there are several villages and cities to which the people of Bethlehem still have access. For children, it can be quite a challenge to learn about your country if you have no access to it. Thus Wi'am takes opportunities to expose our young people to the surrounding lands of Palestine. With trips to Ramallah and Jericho, children can

experience the culture of larger cities in Palestine. In visiting nearby villages such as Beit Sahour and Artas, the children can also experience the lifestyles of those living off the land. It is always an exciting experience for the kids to travel outside the walls of little Bethlehem. Though the way can be long and arduous with checkpoints and terminals, the children are able to hold on to their energy and excitement for experiencing their homeland.



Youth Excursion to Jericho

Environmental Awareness

Our young people are greatly involved in improving their community – both with their minds as well as their hands. At Wi'am, we believe that *all* people are responsible for preserving the health of creation. Thus, we educate children that to take an active role in caring for the environment, for themselves, and for others. In traveling to a local Environmental Education Center (at Talita a Kumi), they see and learn about the many needs of the environment. Through workshops and discussion groups on Health and Nutrition, they learn about the many needs of the human body. And through voluntary work, such as cleaning old church grounds, they actively put into practice what they have learned by restoring health to the land and to their own bodies as well. We are excited to see how our Environmental Awareness program will continue to grow in the future.



*Making our community beautiful during
Environmental Awareness Week*



Christmas Smiles Program

Each year , we look forward to the celebration of Christmas. During this time of year we feel the hope, joy, love and peace of Christmas time. We recognize however the great stress of life in Palestine: parents are often left in a difficult position when they are unable to provide their children with basic necessities. Many are unable to provide their children with a Christmas present that might restore a smile. Naturally, the Christmas season is the ideal time to identify with children and help them feel secure and wanted.

We strongly believe that bringing hope and joy to children is one of the best ways we can reject the anxiety and oppression of the occupation. To bring encouragement and support to children is to invest in the local community; it is to help all in the community to proceed with their lives despite the harsh realities around them. One way of bringing joy to the hearts of children is to engage them in activities that provide them with a different perspective. To remind them of the good things life and the important people in their community.



Santa Singing Christmas carols

(Distributing the gifts)

Christmas, which is a sign of new birth, peace, and rejuvenation, is an opportunity to bring children and families together to enjoy some time for service and fun, in order to restore hope and joy.

Through our annual Christmas Smile Program, the Wi'am Center offers various opportunities to bring smiles to the children and community in Bethlehem. With clown shows, music, arts, crafts and food, the children are given some exciting

activities, along with Christmas joy. They then spread that joy by reaching out to the elderly in the community, through visits with them in their homes. Christmas was born in Bethlehem and we pray that smiles will be born again throughout our community during this special season each year.



Wi'am Summer Camp for Kids

From May - September, the staff and volunteers at the Wi'am Center were actively engaged with over 120 children in the Bethlehem area for our annual Summer Camp. Ranging from ages 6-17, the kids coming to the Wi'am Center enjoyed various activities, challenging projects and educational trips throughout the summer. We were thrilled to have so many children attend, and we were all able to learn and grow through the time we spent together this summer.

Coming together each Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday of the week, the staff and volunteers provided a regular schedule for the kids. Through our continuing Trauma-Coping Program, lessons were offered in art, drama, theatre, dance, music, English, and sports.



In addition to such weekly activities, there were also several special projects and educational trips included in the Summer Camp schedule. During the second week of July, all the kids participated in an Environmental Week. This project took place mainly at the Melkite Church here in Bethlehem. The kids helped clean the garden, participated in sports, and learned through art about different topics involving the environment. They were also able to travel to Beit Jala, to the Talita Kumi school for an entire day on Environmental Awareness and in order to visit the Environmental Center there.

Continuing to educate through the arts, the older kids (age 12-17) were given the opportunity to learn the art of expression through photography. After a few courses detailing how best to take photographs, the kids took to the streets and to the wall to shoot some photos and to spend some time reflecting on the meaning of those photos.

The photos are now displayed in our Conference Room, and we all take great pride in their hard work.

Many educational and entertainment trips took place each week as well. Traveling to the nearby village of Artas, the kids were able to visit a local monastery and helped do some voluntary work while there. Artas is a lovely area in which we were all able to enjoy being in nature and having some time to relax in a very scenic setting. There were several opportunities as well, to swim at local pools then to go on to Jericho for swimming and relaxation. Our summer trips came to an end with our final adventure to Fun Land Park in Ramallah. The kids enjoyed fun rides, games and time to celebrate just being young.

The summer was capped off by our End of Camp Celebration at the Mary Doty Park here in Bethlehem. Eager to share their new skills and hobbies with friends and family, the kids put together several songs, dances, plays and musical performances. We showcased their artwork and we were able to provide them with certificates and t-shirts as well. In our efforts to help get them excited about the return to school, we were also able to provide each child with school supplies and handbags in which to carry their books.



We had an amazing summer. The kids learned so much, and they taught us much about laughter, hope, and energy... they have a lot of all three of these things to go around! We are grateful to everyone who volunteered and to our staff for their commitment to creating opportunities for young people.

World Café: Open space'

Wi'am's groups and young people have a weekly meetings in which they discuss different themes and subjects that relate to their life and aspirations. The sessions are scheduled with the specific intent of allowing participants the possibility to direct their own learning and share experiences.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING For WOMEN

Palestinian Apprenticeship Project: Livelihood Improvement

Background

The deteriorating political situation in the West Bank and Gaza strip, overshadows all aspects of Palestinian development. The long erosion of people's livelihood combined with the impact of closure policies and movement restrictions have led to an increasingly insecure environment for the Palestinians. There are over 120 Israeli checkpoints dividing the West Bank into 300 hundred separate clusters. It is found the since October 2000, the Palestinian economy lost over 50% of its GDP, unemployment had increased threefold and more than two -thirds of household are living below poverty line with around 30% unemployment. The World Bank indicated that 58% of households in the West Bank and 53% in Gaza have lost over half of their usual income before the intifada.

Families and communities, therefore, are living under the prolonged stress of poverty and loss of income. This has increase household's vulnerability, eroded the family coping mechanisms; strained community and intra-household relationships.

Sensing the hardships the Palestinian households are enduring on a daily basis, Wi'am started with the job-creation project. The project has benefited hundreds of breadwinners, which later become the "Palestinian Apprenticeship Project" which has since provided temporary work for 600 breadwinners from both sexes over the past three years.

Benefits to the worker

Apprenticeship is one of the best ways for a worker to acquire experience and training to get established in a career. Participants in the PAP undergo an orientation session in which they attend Wi'am workshops, and they are matched with a skilled teacher as they learn new skills, or improve upon

existing ones. Through the apprenticeship, an apprentice receives supervised structured on-the-job training combined with related technical instructions.

Criteria for Selection

Each participant is interviewed to determine interests, experience and qualifications and then referred to a program and field of work. The criteria for the selection take into consideration the economic situation of the unemployed worker, the family size and the days of redundancy.

Objectives:

- To assist families in meeting some of their financial obligations, improve their livelihood security
- To improve food security

Outcomes

At least 600 apprentices/breadwinners have found temporary work in at least 30 institutions and community centers in which they have been doing maintenance work. The generated income will help them reduce vulnerability by supporting people's ability to meet basic life requirements such as food, education and shelter.

A small number of the benefiting workers who have shown dedication and professionalism in their work have been employed on a regular basis by the institutions in which they have done their apprenticeship.

C. Our objectives

1. Present young people with creative activities in a safe environment.
2. Provide children, youth and women with opportunities to communicate with other groups overseas and exchange opinions, ideas, and network together
3. Establish a computer training center with the intention of job-creation for community members.
4. Enable young people to research leadership training and educational opportunities locally and abroad.

Hosting Groups: Meeting the People of the Land

Wi'am is proud of welcoming/hosting diverse overseas groups all over the year as part of meeting the "Living Stones" of the Holy Land. The hosting program is a unique opportunity that gives people from all over the world the chance to encounter the life and culture in Palestine, visit different geographical and religious sites, learn first hand information about the political, social and cultural life of the Palestinians.

Participants also have the opportunity to listen and question speakers of various positions and expertise.

Through generous we are able to extend our social contribution of churches, individuals and groups we are able to extend our social hand to others in need, whether by assisting in health issues , bills and tuitions. We receiving freely and humbly and we share in modesty and in dignity. w