

20<sup>th</sup> January, 2020

**Dear Sisters and Brothers in Humanity,**

**Martin Luther King says, “Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of the dedicated individuals”.**

I truly agree with Martin Luther King one hundred percent where always the potential of our involvement in any activity for change includes sacrifice, suffering and struggle. We at Wi'am who are considered dedicated individuals with passion, resilience and perseverance join all of those who are travelling with us the less traveled road through tireless exertions, compassion, and empathy.

If we want to have viable and continuous change, we are in dire need of sustainable efforts in peace building, conflict transformation, civil society education, activism, restorative justice and creative endeavors.

Allow us to share with you our summary of actions and Wi'am's activities throughout the year of 2019. Our staff has been blessed with partners like you who have given us more meaning, more depth and more hope. An exotic bouquet of flowers to all of you with hugs and kisses blessed with agape.

Special thanks to our colleague Imad who has been able to collect all the information and to all the staff, mentors and volunteers in the Holy Land including Lucy, Usama, Tarek, Saliba, Sawsan, Hana, Sami, Nadeem, Yara, Marcelle, Hiya, Victoria, Haneen, Isra'a, Farah, Islam, Sheikh Maher and Fr. Jacob.

**"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." 2 Corinthians 4:8**

**“Allah created both night and day. If it's dark in your life right now, be patient. And if it's light right now then be thankful. But know that the sun must also set. Life is filled with ups and downs. Put your Trust in Allah and don't ever give up”.**

**Zoughbi Zoughbi  
Founder and Director**

**"If you are depressed, you are living in the past; if you are anxious, you are living in the future; if you are at peace, you are living in the present."**

***-Lao Tzu***

***Introduction:***

Our annual report invites you to learn more about the work we have accomplished and the goals we have attained in 2019. It was a year full of exciting achievements, challenges and continued work to achieve sustainable results and community change at different levels. It is a year when we had to stand firm amidst several socio-political and economical challenges. Our minimum agenda as civil society organization has been the consensus that in all our work and human journey, the individual is central to our work. We shall therefore continue to pursue an agenda that always uplifts and responds to citizen's needs and aspirations and links these to the civil society projects and programs. As an organization, we spent significant time examining our internal systems to ensure that we build a resilient organization. In the larger civil society space, we spent time working at several levels to empower youth, children, women and the family at large. It was a year full of exciting achievements.

Together with our local communities, beneficiaries and partners, we were passionately engaged in transforming community conflicts, enhancing peacebuilding efforts and empowering children, youth and women as agents of change and social transformation. But despite our visible impact, our community remain very fragile and still fall short from attaining peace that can bring much peacefulness needed to build a community infrastructure based on the values of peace, justice and social equality.

This year, we have doubled our efforts in mediation, advocacy, trainings, inter/intra- community dialogue support, and creating space for young peacebuilders to engage in social/peacebuilding initiatives.

We are more convinced that advancing sustainable conflict transformation, social change and gender equality requires the combined skills, resources, and influence of many stakeholders.

We have been working hard providing support when conflicting parties decide to revert to violence. We extended our outreach and explored new spaces for Sulha-conflict transformation. We have doubled our efforts in mediation, advocacy, capacity-building trainings, awareness-raising, non-violence and dialogue support.

We therefore look to the future recognizing the immense need for us to continue building a civil society that is inclusive, responsive and true to the need of serving the individuals and communities it serves.

As the end of 2019 approaches, we've gathered up some of the good news to highlight: the progress and accomplishments of Wi'am through the following activities.

### **SULHA Mediation**

Mediation is used both for the purposes of de-escalation and restoration of internal peace and harmony after an outbreak of violence through mending and preserving ongoing relationships. In our experience, the process of reconciliation is worthy of adopting to reach a win-win situation that can empower the weak and bring the “powerful” - the perpetrator(s) - to his/her or their senses. Sulha arose to respond to the need to restore order between families/groups/individuals, so that quarrels and feuds do not threaten the stability of the larger community. It relies upon shared values of forgiveness, honor, respect, and reconciliation through public humility and the sharing of food. Sulha is effective because it is honorable, restorative and because it is permeated with respect.

During the year 2019, Wi'am provided Sulha to 395 cases. The top categories of conflict included: neighbor disputes, car accidents, youth disputes, cyber bullying and school violence, etc. When disputes arise in the community, the conflicting parties prefer to use informal forms of mediation than to approach the police or legal system. The legal system is expensive and requires a lot of time. It involves police and the court and the end results will not be based on win-win equity. Thus, many prefer the Sulha approach only and if only it creates justice and peace without bribes, procrastination, and favoring the powerful.

The mediation process usually includes five components; 1) fact-finding stage; 2) initial three-day truce liable to extension; 3) shuttle-diplomacy visits between the parties involved; 4) humanization of parties involved; 5) reconciliation process (Sulha).

The mediation process begins with the selection of the mediator and the mediation team (Jaha). The mediation process usually takes place in a neutral setting, such as Wi'am premises. In the first stage, the mediators embark on a fact-finding stage seeking to learn about the background of the disputants, the relationship between the parties involved and the history of the conflict at hand. During this stage the mediators also listen to each of the conflicting parties separately, in order to hear the perspectives, interests, positions, and needs of all of the parties involved. To this end, both parties are given the opportunity to describe the events from their perspectives. By allowing each party to express their view and to vent their anger, this stage serves to build-up trust and create an atmosphere of confidence. After this fact-finding stage, the disputants are subsequently brought together in a face-to-face setting. The discussion is facilitated by the mediators and aims to help disputants to take responsibility for the process and come to an agreement by themselves. The mediators develop a compromise solution (win-win) that will be accepted by the conflicting parties. As many disputants explained to us, the ownership of the process increases the ultimate authority of the outcome, since the disputants perceive the agreement as the product of their own efforts.

### **Case 1: School Violence**

While a Math teacher in one of the West Bank schools was delivering the lesson to the students, he was surprised to see two students fighting with each other psychically. He was quick to separate the two students to end their fight. One of the students went to his father and told him that the teacher hit him and put him to the ground in a violent manner without mentioning that the fight was between him and another classmate. On the second day, while the teacher was in the classroom, the father came yelling, shouting abuse and trying to attack the teacher psychically. The social worker in the school and other teachers were quick to intervene and calm the situation temporarily.

After that, the social worker in coordination with the school principal and other teachers agreed to call Wi'am mediators to intervene in this case on the same day. The mediator was quick to arrange a meeting between the father involved and subject teacher, social worker, administration and other teachers to put an end to the conflict before it escalated as the two families were on their nerves.

During the meeting, the father was quick to accuse the teacher of hitting his son and physically attacking him. The mediator(s), then, asked the teacher to narrate his story and they listened to the story of the student. To the astonishment of the father, he discovered that his son didn't tell him the whole story. The student said "while he was in the middle of a fight with his classmate, the teacher intervened so as to disperse them and lost his balance and fell on his hand. The teacher said that "he has no intention whatsoever to hit any of them."

After listening to the story, the father was in complete shock because his son didn't tell him the whole story and the fact that his son lied. The father was quick to apologize to the main teacher, the headmaster and the other teachers. He said: "would his son have told him the whole story; he wouldn't have blamed the teacher for all this."

## **2. Youth Activities: "Empowering Youth as Active Peacebuilders"**

Wi'am Center believes that the positive potential of youth demands possibilities, outlets to channel their energies that can contribute to youth empowerment. There is a widespread sense of despair amongst the youths as a result of the massive unemployment, economic deprivation and a deteriorating political situation. Thus, engaging young people positively and giving them a stake in peacebuilding and promoting civic peace is important for long-term peace and security. Young people can be important drivers and agents of change in the development of their societies.

### **The objectives of youth program:**

1. Building the capacities of 80 young people during the year from different parts of the WB with conflict transformation and their peacebuilding and Mediation (Sulha ) skills and knowledge
2. Generate a large cadre of young people who will become the next generation of influential leaders and peacebuilders
3. Providing opportunities for young people via “Youth Friendly Space” to respond to other youth’s needs and provide them with advice, guidance to air out their problems, engage in frank dialogue to enhance the civil society , share their stories and finally addressing their needs and transforming conflicts .
4. Mobilizing youth to engage in peace-building, social initiatives and confidence building in their communities

### **Activity 2.1: Offering guidance, safe-space and advice to youth facing problems Via the Youth Friendly Space (YFS) at Wi’am center**

Forty young trainees are constantly providing a point of learning, mentoring, and guidance for young people who approach YFS seeking its services. About eighty young people from different areas of the West Bank sought the help and guidance of the YFS to help them cope with their problems. In that respect, young people responsible for running the YFS in close cooperation with Wi’am staff, and provided guidance, advice and basic psychosocial support to distressed young women and men to openly express their problems, thereby helping them to cope with their stress and overcoming their problems and return to normalcy.

When a case comes to the YFS, youth cadre aided Wi’am mediators and staff deal with it in a very confidential manner through listening to the person(s) involved, applying what they have learned in active listening and mapping the problem. This involves identifying the parties involved, history of the problem, relations between the parties involved, attitudes and interests of the parties. In that respect, the young cadre exert much effort to calm the situation by providing basic counseling and guidance tips that can help the

parties involved calm down and feel more secure. After the initial screening of the problem, young cadres aided by the mediators meet separately to decide next step in their effort to deal with the problem at hand.

I can share with you a very sensitive case that young people dealt with via the YFS aided directly and under the supervision of the Wi'am mediators:

### **Case 1: Patriarchal Mentality and Gender Discrimination**

One of the most intricate and sensitive cases that came to the YFS was the case of a University girl from a conservative family, who was at the center of a smear campaign orchestrated by her friend via the Facebook. She was threatening her to share her photo while she was sitting with her classmate in the University. Something considered a taboo in her family and community. As the girl came from a Patriarchal family, she felt that this situation can lead to a grave consequence on her.

When she arrived at the YFS she asked that her case be treated by young Cadres with utmost confidentiality. She told them that if her parents know about this, she will be incarcerated at home even she can be exposed to the worst-case scenarios. The youth cadre listened to her case, calmed her down as she was in a critical nervous break-down. They provided her with tips about keeping a low-profile on her Facebook and try to be cool so that her family will not suspect that there is something wrong.

The young cadre in close cooperation with the mediators quickly went to the university and managed after some difficulty to talk to the girl at the center of the problem. After talking to her about their intention and the work they are doing to promote reconciliation and empowering youth, they invited her to visit the YFS to talk in a very friendly space.

When she came to the center the next day, they started reassuring her that their intention is to bring justice to this case and help both of them reach win-win situation and restore their friendship away from jealousy.

Behind closed doors, the youth cadre (3 girls and 2 males), reminded the girl of the grave repercussions of manipulating/disclosing private photos on the person involved, particularly if a girl is involved. They also reminded her of

the fact that conservative communities and families don't tolerate seeing their daughter with a chap on the Facebook pages.

After a lot of accusations and wrangling that shows a jealousy factor that the girl was "stealing" her friend and teasing her, the girl admitted that she has done wrong exposing the photos. She immediately omits the photos from her account and apologized to the girl and to the young Cadre and mediators.

The case was a success that is added to the reference group (youth Cadre) who worked hard to help the two girls reaching a happy ending and a success in calming a tense situation that can break into a family crisis if the matter hadn't been dealt with promptly and with sensitivity.

### **Activity 2.2.: Organize Multiplication Trainings (Training of Trainers) for 80 young people during the year**

Wi'am has been working diligently to increase the capacities of young people to have an impact on their own societies and work for peace and community change. We emphasize training young people in multiplier positions within youth organizations and youth clubs, who can disseminate the training outcomes to a wider audience. The training enabled 80 young people (aged 18-22) from different areas of West Bank to identify/analyse problems, jointly brainstorm solutions, and work in a team to apply them. So, the training was successful in building skills in facilitation, problem solving, training skills, conflict transformation, Sulha, leadership, advocacy and the creation of peaceful narratives.

The youth proactively participated in the training workshops, actively engaged in the sessions and learned from their own experiences (experiential learning). The various energizers and activities, as well as the group work, contributed to the positive, friendly, and highly dynamic atmosphere.

### **Topics covered in the training:**

1. SULHA Mediation as Arab Indigenous Traditions and Culture: for conflict transformation; Learning from our mechanism of mediating conflict with case studies analyzed

Experience

2. Conflict Analysis: Understanding Conflict

3. Tools for Conflict Analysis

4. Ways of Analyzing Conflict: The triangle/tree

5. Conflict transformation: Terms and Definitions/Roles Played in Conflict Situations

6. Cultural aspects influencing conflict resolution

7. Communication skills: Active Listening

8. Facilitation/ Key Steps in Training Design

9. Basic counseling/guidance

### **Outputs:**

1. 80 participants developed skills in areas of analyzing and transforming conflicts facilitation, mediation
2. 40 participants planned and carried out 10 training sessions in 5 schools and three youth clubs
3. The participants enhanced their competencies in planning, designing, delivering and evaluating peace education workshops

### **2.3: Small Action Projects: Youth Trainees Deliver a social initiative “Violence Free School” advocating safer schools**

Building on the knowledge and skills that our youth trainees acquired, 30 young people from different areas of Bethlehem and Hebron implemented a peace-building initiative, “Violence Free School”, against normalization and acceptance of violence in schools and society.

**Aim:** The aim of the initiative was tackling the reasons for violence conflicts in schools and reducing the acceptance of violence among. It is all about of helping the next generation to have more sound attitude to deal with school conflicts in a very rational manner.

In implementing the initiative, a group of 30 Youth Cadre working in small groups in close cooperation with Wi'am staff, implemented the initiative in two areas: 3 schools in Dora/Hebron (Al-Razi School, Ibn-Sina school) during the month of (June July, 2019) reaching 100 students with mixed gender grade (7-12); while the other location was Hebron areas with 4 schools/summer camp targeted in Bethlehem areas (Terra Santa school, hope school, Frere school, St. Joseph school) reaching grade (7-12) with a total of 120 students. The training in Hebron/Dora areas covered 20 hours; while the training in Bethlehem covered 30 hours.

### **The training structure:**

Before carrying out any of the trainings, a group of 4-6 youth designed a training plan. Prior to each training, trainers prepared the necessary supplies and handouts according to the training notes and considered how each training can be best adapted to meet the needs of the training participants.

During the training, young trainees imparted theoretical material, facilitated discussions and role-playing scenarios to stimulate participation and promote the acquisition of skills.

In addition, the students had the chance to discuss discussed real-life cases that happened in their school and the relationship between the teacher and the students. They suggest that this relationship being based on mutual respect and not physical punishment.

### **Impact on Students:**

1. Students were able to skills in mapping conflicts and engaging peer-
2. Students learned problem-solving, how to negotiate constructive resolutions to peer school conflicts.

3. Students developed communication skills and empathy- ability to see another perspective,

6. Maintain relationships. Students learn how they can maintain relationships even after a dispute and can use mediation skills on their own in other situations.

7. Lead by example. All students involved set the example for others by choosing mediation as the first option to settling a disagreement.

B. The impact of the training on youth Cadre:

The social intuitive have proved that young trainers have the potential to engage in peacebuilding activities and multiplication trainings that can break the patters of violence in their communities and provide skills to other groups to negotiate and influence peaceful solution to conflicts.

#### **Activity 2.4: Organize a monthly Wi'am Peace Café for young people**

Location: Wi'am Center

When: 5 meetings a month, 3 hours each meeting

How many: 120 youth benefited during the year

#### **PEACE CAFÉ:**

Through regular meetings via Wi'am café, we encourage young people to discuss issues of concern and suggest solution to existing social problems related to civic peace, youth aspirations, problems they face and suggest solutions to existing conflicts in their communities. Dialogue Café is based on the premise of giving young people a safe space to explore their interests, stimulating ideas that address the major issues of today. These kinds of conversations and collaborations lead to new ways of thinking and doing. It can empower individuals and communities to break down prejudices that discriminate against the other.

## **Objective:**

-To engage young people in dialogue, discussions that can lead to putting solutions to existing social problems they face in their life

-To encourage young people to put solutions, design interventions or solutions to existing youth/social problems

## **Setting of the Wi'am Peace Cafe:**

The setting of the Peace Café is a small working group of ~ 6 youth (gender equality) with a speaker presenting the ideas to the larger audience, followed by general discussions and recommendations.

## **Some of the topics discussed:**

1. How to engage young people actively in peacebuilding and mediation?
2. Gender rights and ways of more involvement of girls/women in peacebuilding
3. Is there a clash between SULHA and customary laws?
4. Rising violence among youth, community members and students in schools, and ways of dealing with such phenomena actively?

The discussion was very interactive and rewarding during the whole sessions.

## **The following ideas were raised:**

### **Point 1: “How to engage young people actively in peacebuilding and mediation?”**

- a. There is a consensus among the participants on the need to engage youth more actively in peacebuilding initiatives in their communities.
- b. They agree that ostracizing youth from active peacebuilding efforts and mediation can lead to a social gap between the elderly and young people. They see a need to have more consultation with the elderly and senior mediators in different areas and to take the example of

- Wi'am as a role model of cooperation between senior mediators, elderly, Mukhtars and young generation
- c. A need to Support youth strategies and programs that promote youth-led initiatives that go beyond specific youth leaders and members of political parties to involve wider marginalized youth communities.

### **Point 2: Gender rights and ways of more involvement of girls/women in peacebuilding**

Many participants were challenged to rethink their perceptions on gender, thereby increasing their awareness of the vital role of women in promoting civic peace. They agreed that gender in-equality is more influenced by the culture, religion, customs, traditions, etc.

This session was proving really more challenging to youth coming from different backgrounds. For instance, Youth coming from rural and conservative communities were influenced by a rigid patriarchal mentality that oppose giving women a space for political and social participation. On the other hand, youth coming from urban background, advocate for more women involvement and participation in political and civic activism. Through the meetings, youth provided examples of successful Palestinian women who left and still their mark in negotiations, advocacy work, women organizations, public and private office (i.e. Hana Ashrawi). All the participates agree that there should be a real work to ease the Patriarchal mentality and make it less entrenched in opposing women's role in peacebuilding, decision-making, civic life and civic peace.

The breakthrough was that young people who oppose women participation in civic life were finally convinced that their point of views are discriminatory about women rights, acknowledging that there is a need for enabling women to engage in political and civic life and giving them more saying in their life.

### **Point 3: Is tribal laws complimentary to tribal laws in SULHA?**

The discussion was fruitful in which all the participants agree that there should be a balance between existing customary laws and tribal laws. They agree that mediation is more personal and shortens the time that any case

takes in court. However, many youths agree that laws of the land should be exercised to punish the perpetrators of crimes and offences. They gave an example of “honor Killing” cases. The majority of young people agree that tribal law should work side-by-side with legal system to punish the perpetrator stressing that we shouldn’t succumb to the pressures of Patriarchal structures that resort to procrastination to save the face of the family of the offender.

**Point 4: Rising violence among youth, community members and students in schools, and ways of dealing with it actively?**

During the discussions, Youth quoted the Central Bureau of Statistics which indicated that 51% percent of Palestinian children 12-17 years old who were exposed to physical or Psychological violence from students or teachers during the period. 51.0% of children 12-17 years were exposed to violence inside the household by one individual member of the household in 2011; 45.8% in West Bank.

All the participants agree that schools should adopt a more rigorous curriculum for both students and teachers in areas of peer-mediation, communication skills and conflict Transformation. The fact that there is less dialogue between parents and children at the family level, reflect itself negatively in schools and the wider community. The participants agree that, this communication gap between generations should be dealt with wisely by the larger community and civic society organizations through different activities and trainings that can help parents understand the psycho-social needs of their children and how to respond to these needs. Another important point raised is the fact that schools should have a conducive environment that promotes extra-curricular activities, trainings and gives students more space to mediate conflicts in their classrooms.

They agree that Students, teachers, and parents all have an important role in promoting school safety. They can:

- Create a safe, supportive school climate (e.g., school-wide behavioral expectations, caring school climate programs, positive interventions and supports, and psychological and counseling services).

-Encourage students to take responsibility for their part in maintaining safe school environments, including student participation in extra-curricular activities.

-Reiterate the school rules and request that students report potential problems to school social worker

-Emphasize the efforts of the school to teach students alternatives to violence including peaceful conflict resolution and positive interpersonal skills.

-Create a hotline between social workers and parents to intercept any negative behavior among children and have mechanism of follow-up in schools and inside families.

### **Summer Camp**

The annual Summer Camp is one of the most important events into which all the staff members, facilitators and volunteers put their effort and experience to make it a success and achieve everything necessary to support children and their families.

The goal of the Summer Camp is to engage children in quality programming that provides opportunities for growth, education, enrichment, fun and positive relationships with peers and adult role models. We seek to foster a healthy self-concept for each child in a caring and supportive atmosphere.

Beneficiaries:

The 2019 summer camp caters for 120 children aged 6-16 years old. The target group included marginalized children with no access to such activities.

### **Activities:**

#### 1. Outings: Trips to Parks

Kids had a weekly outing, to fun parks in the Jericho and Ramallah areas. These trips have contributed greatly to children's self-esteem and giving them a sense of happiness and joy.

#### 2. Life Saving Skills: First Aid Training conducted by the Red Crescent

We aren't always nearby when our children get hurt. The camp was visited by the members of the Red Crescent who provided children with a few basic

first aid skills. The training was designed to provide children with an elementary knowledge of first aid. It is practical, lots of fun and involves lots of activities for the children to enjoy. It covered a range of fundamental but essential skills: how to get a hold of emergency services, what to ask for, and how to describe someone's condition.

Instilling first aid skills in children is essential as it helps to build confidence, communication skills, and the ability to work well in a team.

### **3. Environmental Awareness Activities:**

We aimed to create a generation of environmental leaders who love and respond to the environment, and play in a way that respects our natural spaces. Educated in a positive way about the environment, we created a sense of consciousness and participation among children, and help them acquire knowledge of environmental principles.

Children learned:

-How to use the appropriate receptacle for their waste: reduce, reuse, and recycle as much as you can. They are more aware that using little things, using paper bags is a powerful lesson for them, especially in these difficult times of plastic.

-How to work together in the garden and the compost project. They planted trees and learned to take care of it.

- The same way we taught kids to respect others (humans), we also teach them to respect nature.

**Let's Plant a Tree:** Day by day we see how nature suffers from the indifference and carelessness of people whose behavior damages the environment. Thus, we have gathered children, staff, to plant small trees in the courtyard to show that voluntary acts have no obstacles or age limits. village life, and the traditional cultural expression (tangible and intangible heritage related to agriculture and nature).

## **A VISIT to the Palestine Museum of Natural History (PMNH)**

The environmental activities included a number of visits to the Palestine Museum of Natural History (PMNH). Children learned about activities that the Natural history Museum is doing to protect the environment. Similarly, they are more aware of the nature of the botanical gardens and the conservation of flora. They also had the chance to see a collection of over 6,000 animal specimens as well as living scorpions, spiders, snakes, lizards, and mealworm colonies. During the visit, children learned about the fauna and flora of the land and ways of preserving their environment. The children had the chance to see the botanical garden and the types of protected birds, wild plants and animals.

The environmental awareness included picking-up trash and did composting with different items and trash that they collect at the end of each camp day.

### **4. Art: drama, theatre, Painting and Drawing:**

Every child has an imagination. Art takes it a step further. Through art, children create something that, until that point, was only imagined. At the Summer Camp, children are provided with an opportunity to discover their creativity in a nurturing environment that encourages self-expression. Drama kids and acting classes are a place where all children, from the shy to the outgoing developed at their own pace, with plenty of positive encouragement. We used a wide range of unique drama activities in our children's acting classes to focus the outspoken child and to draw out the quiet child or the inarticulate child and help them reach into themselves to discover their full potential. Drama enabled children to develop:

- o Basic Acting skills
- o Creative Thinking Skills
- o Leadership Skills
- o Self Confidence
- o A Positive Approach to Life

Campers also learned basic techniques and different ways to use acrylic paint: Blending and textures are learned with assorted subjects available to

paint. Every step involves making a decision: what color to use, how to make a line, what size to make something. Children are provided with opportunities to collaborate with one another in creative art activities.

Theater and puppetry activities, helped children explore their emotional range and develop emotional control. Arts and crafts gave children participating in the camp a great way to express themselves. Through drawing, pottery coloring, clay-shaping, children made connections to real life experiences and used their imagination to do art work that reflects their life and future aspirations

One of the portraits drawn by a group of children was the Pigeon of PEACE with the Palestinian flag. It represents their aspiration and yearning for freedom and justice in their homeland away from violence that they live under. For many children, art work is a way of self-expression and a viable mean of expressing their desires that they cannot reach due to injustices.

## **5. Sports: Swimming**

Swimming, proved to be the best outdoor activities that children enjoyed. Each week, children enjoyed swimming at the Golden Park pools. They spent most of the day swimming, diving, and learning new tricks in the water. Some of the campers did not know how to swim, so we held lessons to help them learn. They were perfect days for fun at the pool, surrounded by laughter and great splashes of excitement.

## **6. Traditional Palestinian Dance-DABKA:**

The Dabka is an Arab folk dance came from the Levant. During the summer camp, Wi'am embarked on training a group of children on the Traditional Dance, Dabka. By this, we contribute towards connecting children to their tradition and cultural heritage. At the closing ceremony of the summer camp, the Dabka group performed a pleasant performance in a very impressive way that draws the appreciation of the audience present

## **7. Field visits: Museums, the Mosaic school, and the Church of the Nativity**

Taking your child to a local museum, Mosaic center and the Nativity Church is a great way to spend time together. The point of departure of this visit is reviving the sense of belonging, starting from one's own history with a look at Palestinian tradition and art, at archaeological sites and even at one's own identity.

The Museum and the Icon Center visits provided children with a deeper understanding and appreciation for Palestine's heritage, identity, culture and art. The museum serves to increase understanding of Palestine through the eyes of Bethlehem natives, by highlight the role our ancestors have played in preserving local identity in the Holy Land for two millennia. Museum increases students' cultural capital and world knowledge- it exhibits features ancient histories/cultural artifacts: from the Roman, Byzantine eras until the current period.

The visit to the Church of the Nativity made children know more of their history and the religious significance of the church as one of the oldest churches in existence today. The first Church was built by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the 4th century AD, over the grotto where Mary gave birth to Jesus. Constantine and his mother, Helena, built a magnificent and majestic church adorned with beautiful marble and mosaics. The actual guardianship of the Church is shared by three Christian denominations: Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Armenian.

## **8. Peer-Mediation Training:**

Our Peer Mediation (PM) training Program during the summer camp has proved to be a powerful, positive initiative because it offers effective life skills, conflict resolution tools and support to anti-bullying strategies. We have discovered that these simple, transferable skills need to be practiced and lived by everyone in schools if children are to catch their value.

### **The training helped:**

- Help children recognize that many problems have many possible answers. The goal is to explore and discover.
- Help children monitor and accept their own feelings.
- Value children's creativity, even when it's messy.
- Learn conflict resolution technique

In the Camp we helped children set up a Peer Mediation desk made of 12 trained peer-mediators. The volunteer peer-mediator worked with their peers to help resolve low level conflicts that happen in the Camp. Each peer-mediator was responsible for following-up problems that happen in the camp and resolving it accordingly. By this way, the camp atmosphere was conducive and relaxing for the majority of the participants and this encouraged children with problems to approach the peer-mediators for a resolution of their disputes, particularly, issues of bullying.

## **9. COOKING**

During the Summer Camp, children were busy making pizza which turned the camp into a much more relaxed experience. Our children in the Camp really enjoyed eating their own handmade pizza and regularly ask to make them again.

## **10. Visit to the Carmelite Monastery:**

The day started with visiting the Carmelite Monastery and enjoying the quietness and the serenity of the place with beautiful nature around. After an introduction about the history of the Carmelites and its mission, Campers engaged in drama and theater learning makes learning fun and experiential.

## **11. Farewell Party**

Wi'am Center, on Monday, concluded its 19th summer camp that ran for 3 weeks and hosted 120 children from Bethlehem Areas aged (6-15 years old) under the slogan "My Beautiful Homeland" ( حلوة يا بلدي ). The event was attended by the camp children, community members and parents of the children.

The ceremony commenced with a word from the Director of Wi'am, Zoughbi Zoughbi, who welcomed the guests and praised the children for their active participation in the camp activities. He highlighted the vital role of the camp in developing the personality of the children, shaping their mental/physical skills and enhancing their critical thinking. This was followed by another word from Maher Assaf, a civic educator, who praised the work of Wi'am in empowering children and encouraging them to be diligent and creative in their life.

With lots of fun-filled activities, education, physical activities, fun, sports, environmental awareness activities, peer-mediation training, mental well-being and development, the camp nurtured the children's creativity and inspire them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Children in-the-camp not only discovered their innate skills and talents, but also acquired the motivation to be innovative, confident and initiators. The fun element is also an intrinsic ingredient of all the camp activities.

Throughout the three-week camp period, participants received intensive training in theater, drama, folk dancing, cognitive activities, art, cultural activities, sports, social and environmental activities. Children have gained skills in problem solving and constructive thinking based on allowing children to apply what they acquired in practice. The camp also included visits to environmental institutions, museums, sports, swimming and trips that contributed to the joy of children and gave them information about the history of Palestine, its customs, traditions, religious and heritage sites.

During the ceremony, a group of children presented a meaningful theatrical presentation on domestic violence and drug abuse and how to deal with these societal problems. The participants also performed folkloric dances, national songs, Dabkeh and poetry.

The Camp included wonderful displays of talent by the summer camp kids. At the end of the ceremony, the artworks carried out by the children were displayed throughout the period of the camp, which included works of clay, ceramics and artistic drawings. Certificates were awarded to outstanding performers of the camp.

The children were filled with glee and their parents were all proud of their children. Upon speaking to many children, we discovered that they were all very interested in the camp and they insisted we maintain this connection and continue offering camps at Wi'am. On their behalf, the parents of the children expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for the activities of the camp, where they praised the contribution of the camp in honing the personality of the children, giving them new life skills and cultivating the values of belonging, dialogue and cooperation.

Saliba, the supervisor of the camp, thanked the children, facilitators, youth leaders, and the parents for their trust in Wi'am work. In the end, there was hospitality for the dignitaries and children.

### **Evaluation:**

Through the month-long summer camp sessions, the Camp sought to provide children with essential life skills, critical thinking methods and experiences: independence, leadership, critical thinking and resilience, peer-mediation skills, environmental awareness and healthy life style. etc.

We have a random sample of children, parents, volunteers and facilitators. We used oral questions, observations and round-table meetings to assess the impact of the camp. We found that 100% of the children felt that they benefited from the learning experiences in the **camp, while their parents we much** appreciative of the development they felt in their children's behavior and thinking norms at home and in the community.

Most of the participants indicate that they developed new friendships and that they had lots of fun. They also indicated that they acquired essential Educational knowledge and life skills with critical Thinking/Problem Solving skills. At the end, they gained much creativity, innovation, Communication skills, collaboration, art skills, teamwork, environmental skills, drama and sport skills.

Some of the feedback we received from the children and parents alike:

“The chosen venue is much appreciated because of its friendly environment with so much trees, plants, which provided an atmosphere for us as children to explore. Also, it provided us with an atmosphere to learn, interact, have fun, create, and to listen to the wind that bristles through the leaves, breathe the fresh air...” (a group of children)

“The experience was a positive one. He had a fabulous week with you, in particular he enjoyed the entire activities; every day was a highlight for him”

“We just want to thank you very much for the wonderful experience that children in the camp. Everything was fine. Children had a great time. They have learned useful life skills and were able to express themselves openly” (parents of the children)

“The Camp was incredibly accommodating for all our needs. The staff were enthusiastic, professional and ensured that all of our children had a fantastic time. The activities were well organized and very engaging. Thank you for the Camp!”(Suha, 14 years old girl from a marginalized community)

“We enjoyed excellent multi-activity camp. We were always challenged to think and do things that help us build an independent personality, with critical thinking, while at the same time having a lot of fun with other children” (Mais, 10 years old boy)

### **Challenges/Lessons Learned:**

What children ask us repeatedly during Summer is a safe environment where they can spend their time away from lack of access to places that provide activities/summer camps for children and the crowdedness of refugee camps. Children need extra-curricular activities that can challenge their thinking and give them a space to learn, think out of the box, and be creative in way that empower their personality. Thus, it is highly recommended that we engage children in such activities.

### **Citizen Diplomacy:**

Tourism in Palestine provides visitors with a particularly rewarding and enriching experience. Not only may the tourist discover the beauty, spirituality and hospitality of the country but also come to encounter some of the political, economic, and social facts on the ground that shape the daily lives of Palestinians. One of Wi'am's programs is to encourage travelers to Palestine and meet the Palestinians, by organizing home-stays and offering Palestinian hospitality through traditional meals and orientations and lectures, guided tours for street art, Hike and desert experience and educational tours.

Wi'am has been organizing programs that give our partner organizations, university students, leaders of Churches and individuals a unique insight into the complex historical, cultural, social, political and religious aspects of the Holy Land enabling visitors to return home with an educated insight through first-hand experience of the people of the land. Responsible and just forms of tourism offer communities opportunities to share their cultures, tell their stories, request solidarity and foster tolerance and greater understanding.

This year Wi'am has seen an increase in international visitors in which we welcomed 120 small and big groups of visitors from the USA, Europe and members of other continents. In addition, around 1371 visitors and passersby visited our center and received orientations and small tours that gave them much information about our civic society work and the socio-political and economic situation in Palestine.

### **Christmas Festival: little sign of hope**

#### **Background:**

December is a festival season; it is a time that marginalized Children and elderly awaits patiently. The Christmas event are an excellent opportunity for kids and elderly to enjoy the joy of Christmas and make them feel that they are cared for and that the community is taking care of them.

We do believe that Christmas activities are a constant reminder for children to look at the bright side of life, and be a good example of giving. On the other hand, Christmas activities for the elderly make them feel that their

example of goodness is an inspiration to the younger generation that they will never forget.

We also believe that Christmas activities can inspire kids', challenge them to think, create a safe and happy environment for them, let them have fun and make them enjoy the pleasure of a Constructive educational gift.

AIM: The aim is to bring the joyous spirit of Christmas to impoverished children and elderly in the community.

### **Beneficiaries:**

We have careful to select the most impoverished and deprived of the young of the age and the wise of the age. We have invited 120 children both males and females (6-14 years old) and 50 elderly coming from marginalized community groups, scouts, impoverished families in Bethlehem Governorate mainly living in (Beit Jala, Bethlehem and Beit Sahour) and marginalized neighborhoods.

### **The Day of the Christmas Party:**

About 120 children with their parents and 60 elderly gathered on the 21st. of December at the Roman-Catholic Church. After a welcoming note from Wi'am Director and staff that focused on welcoming the audience and wishing them a Blessed Christmas, we started the event with a reading from the Holy Bible done By Fr. Jacob, the Parish Priest, and Fr. Ray. The speakers read the story of the Birth of Christ from the Bible, taking some time explaining the story of the birth of Jesus so that the children will have a clear understanding of the meaning of Christmas. They also shared with the children the special visitors' gifts to the baby Jesus after his birth and the giving of the gifts. When children see the correlation between the birth of Christ and the giving of gifts to Him and the giving of gifts at Christmas, they will understand the true meaning of Christmas and the message behind what occurred over two thousand years ago. It's the perfect example of a "true gift." By this, we encourage children to "out give" each other by coming up with more ways of giving to others-how giving a gift can also come as serving others. We took advantage of the fact that Christmas really

brings peace in our hearts and peace to the whole world at this time when we really need it.

The event continued with the singing of a number of hymns and Christmas carols (Jingle Bells, here Comes Santa Claus, Silent Night and Away in a Manger), in which everyone joined the singing which made the participants feel the spirit of Christmas and encouraged them to participate actively.

The children and elderly enjoyed listening to George Th., a blind Scout boy, Playing the Middle Eastern stringed Musical Instrument, Qanun, which evokes ancient Middle Eastern culture and tradition passed down through the centuries. His musical playing echoed traditional music and tunes that touched the audience present in the Hall and give a feeling of awe and serenity to the event.

The party also included a Spectacular clown show offering non-stop fun and entertainment. All our children's clowns that offered a fantastic range of jaw dropping magic, party games and puppet shows. The clown show added a special flavor to the event by engaging children in the activities and having fun in the process.

The event was crowned with Carol singing by the seniors who sang together Christmas songs in Arabic and English. By this, we gave the senior the chance to feel that they are not forgotten and that their favor and sacrifices are cherished by all generations.

The Feedback we got after the event from the parents indicate clearly how important fun and humor is to the children. Helping children laugh, make them trust others, and can help them overcome any traumatic experience they are passing through such as economic deprivation or the fact that they live under difficult political reality.

I hereby include feedback from many children and parents who really enjoyed the festival:

“It was a great event, it made me live the joy and happiness of Christmas... it helped me meet other folks and leave my isolation” (Mary, a senior citizen participant)

“I enjoyed the event greatly, it made me feel that children still have a room to smile and celebrate. Thanks to Wi'am Centre and to all the people who

helped with this festival and gave me the chance to taste delicious food and chocolates “12 years old orphan girl from Bethlehem area”

### **Children’s Play:**

A group of children who were part of our summer Camp performed a play about the meaning and the story of Christmas. The Play was a reenactment of the Story of the Birth of Jesus. It depicted different characters that bear a resemblance to life today. The characters of the Holy Family, baby Jesus and the wise Men symbolize the goodness that we all yearn for in our life. The character of the roman soldier and Herod resemble the evil side of life that we should abhor and avoid. In the play, children understand the need to help others such as those who told the Holy family: “there is no room in the Inn”.

At the end, we can say that the play was a chance for parents to see how their children can do better if they are given the chance and the opportunity to be trained. At the same time, the play was a mental refresh for the kids to act a scene that they practiced.

### **Gifts are a major attraction of Christmas**

Nobody wants a sad child. Once your child is happy, he or she will be able to do well in every aspect of life, live healthily and generally be the kind of child you have always wished for.

Children bursting with energy welcome a Santa figure, lending that excitement to the atmosphere. Each child/senior citizen was presented with a gift from Father Christmas. For children, we provided them with an educational gift (toys) and we presented the seniors with a warm winter blanket that can surely keep them warm during the long cold winter.

Before leaving the premises, the guests were invited to have some Christmas treat: light food, Christmas cookies, pastries, cake and beverages.

## **Women Program:**

The diverse roles of women as community leaders, Peacebuilders and activists can no longer be denied in Palestine. Wi'am recognizes the urgent need to engage women in community issues and empower their leadership roles at both the domestic and societal levels. Our Women's Group works for gender equality and the abolition of all forms of oppression through empowering and mobilizing women to participate in social, cultural, and political spheres. As they identify and embrace their own strengths, women also strengthen their families and their communities. "Women are not only victims in conflict, but agents for positive change." – Asha Hagi Elmi Amin, UN Security Council 2009, Resolution 1889.

## **Wi'am Women Club Meetings:**

Our weekly Club is a pioneering idea through which the organization provides physical space for 60 women from wide geographical areas and backgrounds to meet, interact and learn in a safe environment. It responds to the immediate needs of women (addressing the vulnerability and dissatisfaction of women), and prepare the foundation to address long-term needs. The community center provide women with all the necessary facilities to enhance their development and improve their quality of life.

Educational activities take the form of workshops and discussion groups for women and young women are among the main activities of the program. The program conducts training courses to develop women's knowledge, to change the gender stereotypes, and to build women's leadership capacities. We also organizing workshops to highlight issues related to women's rights in general such as social protection, raise awareness of their rights and women's rights, participation in decision- making processes, and gender equality within the various aspects of the society.

## **"Together Against Domestic Violence against Women"**

We tackled domestic violence in order reduce the relatively high rates of abuse within the homes of Palestinians in by addressing issues of prevention and of protection. Program activities are implemented in West bank areas (Bethlehem/Hebron areas, with particular attention given to marginalized

areas. We targeted 80 women and girls (age 18-50; our mediation intervention to counter domestic violence. We target 10 social workers working in different civic organizations dealing with women rights. The discussion groups targeted 60 men and 110 women and girls from all walks of life. The counseling services will reach 40 women and girls (40 cases) all over the year.

### Case Study I: Abuse of the Social Media

As increasing numbers of adolescent girls interact via the social media outlets, they search for ways to break down their isolation and get access to the outside world. But what are the dangers of exploitation that girls can face via the cyberspace? One of the girls who approached our mediation services come from a conservative family in. She was very shaky with a hush voice that speaks volumes about the psychology of the girl. She told the mediator that she's the victim of a cyber-abuse (electronic exploitation). The story begins with one of the folks staking her and threatening to make public her private photos that she has on her lost mobile when she was dancing in a birthday party with her friends at a private party. He is embezzling the girl threatening to disclose her photos to the public if she didn't pay him a thousand of US dollars. The senior mediator was dispatched to the field and met the girl and listened to her story attentively. After the listening/mapping stage, the mediator followed a well-devised action plan based on two interrelated tracks: first, working with the girl's parents to make them understand that their daughter is the victim of embezzlement and deterring them from any revenge against their daughter in case her photos were disclosed to the public; Second, reaching the abuser to make him aware of his grave mistake and convince him to submit any material/photos he has to the mediator or the family.

The first track with the girl's parents, was very intricate and hard which took much effort and lot of convincing that the girl's photos were just.

It is worth noting that dealing with the abuser was completely hard as he was denying the charge completely. However, when confronting him with all his e-mails and some of the recorded calls, he broke-down and admitted his guilt.

After a lot of wrangling, the parties reached a compromise that preserves the dignity of the girl and keep the matter under a cloud of secrecy. The girl's

family agree to accept the apology of the young abuser and not file a complaint in the police. In the process, the young man gave the mediator all the photos and the material he has of the girl and her friends. This compromise helped save the face of the boy as he was showing remorse and avoided the girl social scandal that might hit her honor very hard and make her life intolerable.

### **Quotations from the beneficiaries**

“Excellent training, lots of information for me to reflect on and build into my practice” one of the female participants

### **Women Peace and Security project:**

The project aims to increase women’s voice and participate in peace process and decision-making related to the defense of human rights, access and ability of women victims, and effective use by the CSo’s and Women Human Rights defenders of national laws and international Human Rights frameworks, such as UNCSR 1325, CEDAW and related resolutions.

Wi’am’s women, peace, and security project boosted to increase the capacity of women and their male allies to raise awareness about gender-based violence. The project also built the capacity of women and men to advocate for women’s rights to be enshrined in both within Palestinian and international legislation.

These objective achieved through activities that include psychosocial counseling for women victims of violence, workshops for women and me on the psychosocial impacts of conflict and training in human rights, gender equality and human rights.

The training for 140 women/girls coming from Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Hebron areas, and Jericho certainly increased the participants’ knowledge about Domestic violence: who is the victim? Who is the perpetrator(s)? What to do when witnessing a DV case? How to report the Case, to who? The training helped the participants in areas of gathering information about DV, reporting mechanisms, conflict transformation, particularly on conflict analysis/mapping and resolution of conflicts. The training imparted women

with learning about documenting cases of DV and other related gender rights abuses.

The objective behind this is to give women the chance to act as preventive and monitoring tool that can capture these violations, decide what/when to document, follow-up the documentation in cases of legal action. The participants are more able to fight back when it comes to gender stereotypes that men have more power and control over women.

The training gave the participants the opportunity to develop an essential knowledge about women human rights issues and its connectedness with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is described as the International Bill of Rights of Women as it establishes that women have civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which are to be enjoyed by women on an equal basis with men regardless of marital status.

### **Activities:**

- Every three months we have 1 Discussion group with men comprising 4 sessions with men, security forces and lawyers, and developing work strategies with men (reaching 60 people in total)
- The 4 informal discussion sessions hosted around 60 in total during the year hosting key stakeholders (men, security officers, lawyers, social workers, activists). It was very constructive in terms of giving the participants discussed many issues related to gender violence in the community, the role of mediators and police to curb this trend of violence; ways of protecting the victims of violence; ways of providing shelter and support to victims and their families.

They also discussed cases of gender discrimination/DV and how to overcome shortcomings and build on successes. These discussion address the concept of violence, matriarchal tradition, laws, perspective of religion on women rights, inheritance issues, the effect of domestic violence on the family and means of reducing violence at home.

The participants agree to establish an informal contact and working mechanism of responding to cases of DV in which mediators

will be the focal point of intervention to help victims. This working mechanism is a kind of networking that can be a future model for coordination and bringing together the effort of the local police, mediators, social workers, lawyers, advocates, human rights advocates, women activists and civic organizations.

The participants discussed issues of masculinity, culture and the abuse of power. This is a space where men can speak separately from the women about domestic violence and their role in helping to create a culture that does and/or does not support domestic violence.

ii) Every three months we have 1 discussion groups in Bethlehem and Hebron areas comprising 4 sessions for women, girls, and their families (reaching more than 110 people in total).

III) Individual counseling for 40 cases of domestic violence during the year (the aforementioned sessions with men and women seek to address the concept of domestic violence, its forms and causes, the implications of violence on the family ways of reducing/combating

The general intent behind counseling interventions is to alleviate the distress that often accompanies victimization (e.g., depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress symptoms, guilt, shame) and to increase survivors' sense of self and well-being.

### **Case Study: X, 19 years old married girl**

It's only in the last year that I began to think that my life is just a mirage. I thought that a family could be a good place to be...a home. a shelter". I'm the eldest, and I took a lot of my husband's fury. I know that my marriage against my will always be a curse not a blessing to me. In fact, I sometimes get terrified that I'll react like him. He beat me on daily basis and threaten to divorce me if I tell my family of my ordeal.

"Anyway, sometimes we would just argue and shout, but then I'd seen what he could do when he loses it. I had to go hospital once and it was just horrible". "I don't know ... I couldn't bear it, and I wanted to kill him". I reached a stage in which I couldn't I bear the psychological and the psychical pain anymore, I cannot hide my pain anymore.... it is over".

One day I spoke to someone on a helpline who referred me to Wi'am Center. Then we had a counselor who talked to me, my child and my husband. My husband has been approached by the mediator who managed to work with him.

Outcome: After many counseling sessions, the psychological pain of the wife has eased dramatically and I had been relieved from stress and depression. While, the mediation contributed towards convincing my husband to relinquish his violent behavior and think of his family in a more passionate manner.

### **Kairos Project on “Women PEACE & Security”**

Through the second year of implementation, 21 counseling sessions were implemented with over 140 beneficiaries. The counseling sessions were designed in both individual and group settings to provide much needed psycho-social support to women victims and survivors of violence, especially domestic violence.

- Through different workshops and training, we increased the capacity of 140 women victims and survivors of gender-based violence and human rights abuses, after receiving appropriate care and counseling, to participate in human rights, peace and development processes.

R. comes from a village near Hebron, has two children and was recently divorced. She has been active with her group as well as the larger Wi'am group. R. said: When I first got divorced, I was not sure how I would survive. My family asked me to return to my husband, but I could not. My cousin who supported me told me that she was connected with this group and invited me one day. When I arrived, I heard women talking about the difficulties of life that they endure. I was invited to share and was very hesitant. I then decided to share a little about my problems and how difficult my decision was. The women listened and supported me and told me that I had made the right decision. I was able to share with them about the violence that I suffered and instead of feeling shamed was supported. It may sound silly, but I had known that I didn't deserve to be hit, but I didn't truly realize

it was wrong until I shared it. I was always afraid to say what I feel and believe, but now I must. It might help someone, just like they helped me.

### **Advocacy Campaign**

In close cooperation with our women networks, we organized a march commemorating Women International Day”, calling for an end to Domestic violence and gender discrimination that women and girls are facing in their communities. The march which took place in Bethlehem was attended by 250 individuals from the larger community/different West Bank areas with the participation of women activists, peace advocates, academics, mediators, men of religion, lawyers, lay people, university students, and members police and the authorities.

### **Recommendations:**

- Engage women/ girls, youth (both males and females) in Capacity Enhancement to raise their awareness about domestic violence and ways of responding to this evil
- Engage in Partnership with other organizations and academic universities, schools to disseminate gender maintaining issues, UN resolution and conventions (UNR1325, CEDAW) and gender equality as a way of life
- Expand the Advocacy camping to reach more areas, civic organizations, men communities, and larger communities
- At the community level, the decision makers are predominantly male. support for victims’ access to justice; training for police officers, medical authorities, judges, prosecutors, and lawyers;
- Assistance for women’s resource centers that provide legal and psychosocial support to victims, and sharing of experience through roundtable meetings and study tours.
- Women should be treated as active members of the society and

they are important in building and developing it. The whole community should overlook certain traditions and attitudes that encourage and provoke the conflict between the two genders in the Palestinian society.

- The image of women should be improved in the media and school books
- The inherited norms and Patriarchal tradition and mentalities need to be adjusted to accommodate women in community change by highlighting the positive and suppressing the negative ones.
- The civic society organization should raise women's awareness and develop their skills and abilities to increase their participation in public life through providing sufficient training in the fields of politics, economy, human rights, advocacy, leadership, in addition to training programs that enhance their skills.