



مركز الدراسات النسوية  
Women's Studies Centre

Annual Report  
**2019**

## Submitted to:

The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented by  
The Danish Representation office in Ramallah

## Project implemented under:

Thematic Programme 3 - (TP3): Strengthening Human Rights and Democratic Accountability under the Danish Palestine Country Programme 2016-2020.

## General Information

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Reporting Period	1st of January 2019 – 31st of December 2019
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## Introduction

The year 2019 marks the third year of the Women's Studies Center (WSC) strategic plan for the four years (2017-2020), through which the vision and mission of the center were emphasized, and the strategic goals of the center were reviewed and set, and to ensure that WSC work is still in line with its mission and vision, and that the common values that were positioned as the basis for the work of the center are still implemented while implementing the various programs. This is considered as the continuation of the major leadership role that the center is playing in the Palestinian Feminist arena, and in supporting the progressive feminist discourse that is based on the values of social justice, equality, and the promotion of human rights concepts, as it came out in the international human rights law, and the international humanitarian law and international conventions. In addition to that, the aim of the centers' plan is to focus on preparing studies that are aimed at studying and analyzing the Palestinian women status, with the goal to design interventions that would contribute towards empowering women, and increasing their access to and control over resources.

Furthermore, the plan also focuses on contributing towards building community leadership and youth, and enhancing the local, regional, and the international partnerships, to help in building a democratic civil society, which respects full equality and human justice, without making any concessions regarding human rights values in general, and women's rights in particular. What we aim for is to pressure on the Palestinian National Authority in order to adopt these values, in its various plans and programs, through publishing the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in the local official newspaper, and aligning all the national laws with the provisions of this agreement fully, especially since the President of the State of Palestine had signed the agreement without marking any reservations.

Accordingly, it was emphasized of what has been presented in the Center's recent strategic plan in terms of vision, mission and goals. To highlight more emphasis on it, we are including it in this annual report:

### Vision:

A society in which full gender equality prevails in a secular, democratic Palestinian State, which respects the freedom and dignity of all its citizens.

### Mission:

A secular feminist human rights secular organization that works towards developing and disseminating a progressive feminist discourse, based on the values of social justice and gender equality, and dedicating human rights concepts in accordance with international laws and conventions, which seeks to research and analyze the reality and status of Palestinian women and empower them, enhancing their opportunities to access all available community resources, and contributing towards building youth community leaders, strengthening local, regional and international partnerships, and contributes to building a civil democratic society that respects full gender equality.



Women's Studies Centre (WSC) is considered as a Palestinian, non-governmental organization, which is defiant in presenting women's issues away from any truce with traditional discourses, and therefore WSC is considered as a pioneering organization in its work that aims at bringing quality changes in the social and political fields in Palestine.

Moreover, WSC works holistically in facing all kinds of discrimination against women, whether those resulting from patriarchal societal culture, which still considers women inferior to men, view and defines their roles, and put obstacles in front of their access to and control of all available community resources, or those set by the Israeli occupation, which are intertwined with that culture, to reinforce the isolation of women and enabling them to access and control the various resources. This is a result of the various occupation policies imposed, such as road closures and military barriers, and the presence of the prevailing societal culture which impedes women more than men. Adding to this is the demolition of homes by the occupation forces in some areas, and its impact on women, under a conservative traditional society, besides the continuous arrests of the main breadwinner of the family, and in many cases are imposed on women who are not qualified to support families, and inevitably to search for sources to support their families, which will result in increasing Poverty rate in families headed and supported by women, as confirmed by the results of the statistics of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).

The center is considered as a national and regional reference in the field of gender analysis and gender auditing. It is worth mentioning that through its general director, who obtained an international certificate in Participatory Gender Audit, the center has led many Gender Audit missions at local and regional levels, and within the governmental, non-governmental levels, and within the private sector as well.

It is notable here that the WSC is considered as a leading organization in dealing with women issues on both national and regional levels. This is true, as WSC is an active partner and member in a number of women-feminist networks such as:

- The Arab Women Forum – Aisha (Regional network where WSC had been in charge of general coordination for a period of ten years).
- Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO).
- Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network against Violence against Women.
- Poverty Forum.
- The Civil Coalition to Defend Palestinians' Right in Jerusalem.
- The Jerusalemites Feminist Coalition.
- General Union of Palestinian Women.
- The National committees interested in amending domestic laws, such as the Penal Code, the Family Protection from Violence Law, the Personal Status Law, and the Child Law.
- The Unsafe Abortion Coalition.
- The Palestinian Educational Coalition.
- The 1325 Coalition.
- The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) Coalition.
- Girls Not Brides.

The year 2019 had marked the center's work in continuing to develop its qualitative programs, and signing the extension of partnership agreements with the Ministry of Education regarding the "Aman" program, which is aimed at educating students about sexual violence and how to address it, and the program "Promoting Female child rights", which focused this year on raising awareness on the issue and dangers of early marriage. As well, the center had participated with different feminist organizations on compelling the Palestinian authority to raise

the age of marriage to 18 years, which was already issued by the Palestinian President Abbas, but with some (unlimited or defined) exceptions that we are still combating in order to be defined and limited. At the same time the WSC general director was chosen as a member of the National Curriculum Review Committee, that was formed by her excellency the Minister of Women Affairs, in cooperation with His Excellency the Minister of Education, with the aim of reviewing the curriculum, and the Ministry's work policies from a gender perspective. Also, the WSC was chosen as a member of the Consultative Council of Women, who works with the Minister of Women's affairs, with the aim of developing national programs and policies that improve the status of women.

To add, this year the WSC gave a greater role to the Center's branches, in working in the three governorates in which it operates, according to the needs of the different areas, and according to the different challenges that have emerged from time to time in those governorates, especially in standing firmly in the face of the tribal attack in Hebron, to mobilize and pressure on cancelling the accession of Palestine to the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and all the accompanying threats that were targeted towards feminist organizations, and the request to the Palestinian President to retract on the law of raising the age of marriage to 18 years.

At the time, when the WSC Jerusalem branch was working on documenting the tales of steadfastness and the daily struggle, with the voice of Jerusalem women, and publishing these stories to form an educational tool for organizations working in Jerusalem, about the needs of Jerusalem women. These publications included producing analytical documentary study, in addition to the stories of daily resilience and struggles from Jerusalemite Women's perspective.

With the aim of registering change and its impact on a wider scale, the centre had strengthened its work with the youth sector, believing in the important role that this group can play in bringing about the change. For this, youth groups of both genders had been empowered in a way that will give them the chance to work with their local communities, in order to raise community awareness about discriminatory practices and policies against women, and its negative impact on the society, in addition to the importance of engaging youth in rejecting these practices and policies, each one from his/her own location or position.

The work of the WSC is not limited to working with different societal groups. Rather than that, it is implemented through the participation with different organizations (governmental, non-governmental and private), in order to identify gender gaps and their negative impact on the work of these organizations, and thus develop recommendations to address these gaps and work to integrate gender Social work in those organizations, through the consulting unit that provides awareness programs and carries out audit from a gender perspective in those institutions and based on special agreements. Therefore, the audit tool is used to identify gaps and suggest methods to improve gender mainstreaming within these organizations.

In order to achieve its goals, the WSC also works to develop the capacities of its female employees, by providing them with training opportunities, and encouraging them to attend local and international conferences, as means of learning and participation, and as a way to represent and spread the center's mission and reflect the needs and conditions of women in Palestine. It is important to note here that the center's programs are not independent of one another, but they are all connected, simultaneous, and adhere to the recommendations and needs of the target groups. For example, school counselors who have been trained to raise awareness of school children about female child rights, have requested the center to work with them and to train them to understand and integrate gender issues in the different areas of their work, so that they can implement awareness-raising sessions efficiently. Based on these recommendations, the center has worked to add gender mainstreaming to the training courses offered to them.



## WSC Goals/Objectives and programs:

The center has committed to the following objectives that were developed in the strategic plan:

1. Contribute to developing the legal and political environment from a gender perspective.
2. Create positive change and improve the quality of life for the target groups, by working to achieve the following goals:
  - Empowering women socially, economically, and building women's capabilities.
  - Protecting women and girls from gender-based violence.
  - Study and analyze the situation of Palestinian women, and publish the findings and recommendations.
3. Encouraging investment in capacity building, and assisting the local society organizations to achieve discrimination from a gender perspective.
4. Development of financial, human and organizational resources of the Women's Studies Center (WSC).

### Achievements towards Goals/Objectives:

## First Goal: Contributing to the Development of a Legal and Political Environment for a Gender Perspective

In line with this goal, the center had strengthened its participation in the national committees, federations and networks that seek to undertake joint action, in order to develop a legal and political environment from a gender perspective. Accordingly, the center's role in the following networks has been strengthened and developed as the following:

- The Forum of combating violence against women, which had worked during the year 2019 on two prominent issues:
  1. The first: related to raising the age of marriage in Palestine, where recently a law was issued by a presidential decree on raising the age of marriage to 18 years, with unspecified exceptions.
  2. The second: It is linked towards approving the Law on the Protection of the Family from Violence, and how the legal work is still ongoing towards approving this law. In addition to the Forum's work in pushing for the publication of the CEDAW Agreement in the official newspaper, in preparation for the harmonization of national laws with the terms of this Agreement.
- The center is a member of the 1325 coalition, and had worked and cooperated with partner organizations to develop a 1325 action plan and implement it. The director general of the center participated in a meeting held in Jordan, to coordinate with feminist organizations working with refugee women in Jordan and Lebanon, in order to develop a coalition action plan and follow up on its implementation in all the places where Palestinian people are located.
- The center had participated within its membership in the Forum of opposition of violence against Women, in reviewing and developing the draft law on protecting the family from violence, which has not been approved so far, due to the tribal attack, and the announcement of the Palestinian Bar Association of launching a campaign to reject this law. Through their speech, the Palestinian Bar Association that this law contradicts the principles of Islamic Sharia. Therefore, the work had been done by the forum to confront these campaigns, pressure towards the adoption of the law, taking into account that the amendments that were put in place by the forum are being presented from a secular human rights perspective.
- The center is a member of the Advisory Council for the Hebron Governorate, where it participated in following up on the outputs, recommendations and procedures for the work of civil society organizations.
- The center is a member of the Local Government Forum, which works to increase the number and effectiveness of women's participation in the local government. In this field, the forum had launched a campaign to raise the women's quota up to 30%, instead of 20%, and worked on holding many awareness and empowerment sessions for women members of the local government. The center had participated in the implementation of these courses.

## Second Goal: Achieving Positive Change and Improving the Quality of Life for the targeted groups by working to achieve the following goals:

- Empowering women socially, economically, and building women's capabilities.
- Protecting women and girls from gender-based violence.
- Studying and analyzing the situation of Palestinian women, and publishing the finding and recommendations.

With regards to empowering women socially, economically, and building women's capabilities, the center worked on implementing this through the following programs:

### 1) Empowering female university students in need

with the aim of empowering them economically, by contributing to covering university tuition fees for them. In this field, the center worked on organizing some social activities (trips, breakfasts, evenings, collecting donations), and the proceedings of these activities were channeled to pay the installments of the university female students in need. The center opened the door for female students in need to submit applications, and accordingly the status of the student was investigated, and in the event that her need was approved, and at the same time that she was a committed student at the university, arrangements were made with the university to pay her tuition fees directly by the center. In this field, during the year 2019, WSC had supported 45 female students in An-Najah University, Al-Quds Open University, and the University of Abu Dis.

### 2) The program for the rehabilitation of new graduates to enter the labor market

This program aimed to empower young female graduates (University and Institutes graduates) economically, by helping them break into the labor market, as studies issued by the WSC indicated a decrease in the employment rate of graduates in general, and female graduates in particular, for different economic reasons in general, and other cultural reasons in particular. This culture had confirmed that the reproductive role is still a role dedicated for men, and that the entry of women had only a form of unnecessary prestigious actions. During the year 2019, we were able to implement the project in only two governorates, Hebron and Nablus, according to the funding resources that were available for us.

**Hebron Governorate:** An emphasis was placed on the economic empowerment of female graduates of community colleges, where work was done with the university graduates, in cooperation with the International Presence project in Hebron, with the aim of improving their livelihood opportunities, and creating job opportunities for them, in a manner that will ensure an increased participation in the labor market.

In this regard, 16 graduates were selected and trained in the following skills:

- Leadership skills.
- Enhancing self-confidence skills.
- How to write a personal resumes, and attend job interviews.

- Increasing their competence in their field of specialization, and according to the needs of the market, which were previously identified during the year 2018.

**Nablus Governorate:** In Nablus governorate, we were able to obtain funding for this program from the Helia Foundation from Barcelona, and it was agreed with them that the focus will be on graduates of intermediate institutes, and accordingly, during the year 2019, the following was accomplished:

The training and qualifying of 20 graduates with a specialization in Psychology and Sociology. This training was carried out in two phases:

The first stage: During which, a theoretical training was organized with 12 training sessions, at a rate of 84 training hours, in the topics of mental health, self-empowerment, the Palestinian labor and workers law, CEDAW Agreement, the Personal Status Law and other topics related to the specialization of female graduates, with a view to providing them with additional experience in the field of specialization, in order to enable them to compete for available jobs.

The second stage: It included practical training, where the graduates were hosted by the ten partner organizations in the governorate, in addition to the social development directorate and the municipality of Nablus, with the aim of going through practical training experience, during which a small amount for each trainee will be paid, to cover the basic expenses of mobility and daily expenses. Accordingly, a coordinating committee of the various institutions was formulated that received the female trainees, and had met several times to share and evaluate experiences. Additionally, an employment day was organized, with the participation of the General Federation of Palestinian Trade Unions, and the directorate of labor / employment department, where graduates were nominated for the workers' union, and two of them were elected to be in the administrative authority of the professional workers union, and their names were listed on the national employment Link in the ministry of labor.

The result: four of the female graduates were able to obtain full-time jobs, and the other six were given part-time jobs, while the others continued to volunteer in these organizations awaiting different employment opportunities that may arise.

### 3) Sanad Program:

Based on our conviction that the societal change towards promoting the values of freedom, dignity and equality is a societal responsibility that falls on all governmental and non-governmental agencies, and achieving that requires enlisting the greatest possible efforts and that preserving this change requires the participation of the largest possible number of citizens especially among the young groups that will assume the role of community leadership, we have started to work on this program, specifically with women's organizations as representative of women, directly targeted from this change, and youth organizations as representative of the promising changing leaders of tomorrow, which will ensure work from the bottom to the top, and where the demand for change will start from a concrete base convinced in change, up to the decision maker at the top of the political hierarchy.

We have worked in previous years to involve young men and women in women's issues, by documenting the stories of oppressed women and analyzing them, and then holding awareness workshops for young men and women, in order to research, analyze, and measure their negative impact on the individual and the family in particular, and on the society in general. As a result, we were able to achieve great achievements in terms of enrolling young people in these matters, who greatly volunteered to work on them.

Accordingly, and based on the aim of the Sanad Program, which is related to enhancing the participation of young men and women in raising and defending women's issues on one hand, and enhancing opportunities for young women to participate in public life and find work opportunities for them on the other, the work on this program continued during the year 2019, and work was carried out in the Jerusalem Governorate, since women in Jerusalem suffer particularly from double social and political persecution. We selected a group of young women



and worked with them on:

Training and preparing them as an integrated research team, operating under the supervision of a specialized researcher. This team was formed of 20 active young women, who were trained on how to prepare analytical documentary studies, who was funded by Oxfam foundation, with the aim to understand the violations experienced by women in Jerusalem, and then trained to prepare researches in coordination and partnership with 10 organizations: (the Community Action Center - Al-Quds University, Al-Dameer Organization, the International Movement for the Defense of Children, the Federation of Women Work Committees, the Federation of Working Women Committees, the Union of Palestinian Women Committees, the Arab Jahalin Women group, the Payalara organization, the Initiative, the Law Institute of Birzeit University and a number of activists. The following was implemented:

- Forming an advisory committee of partner institutions and some independent personalities, to ensure that training is provided in the best way possible, and according to the needs of the institutions.
- Young women were trained on gender issues, information gathering, documentation, information analysis, and research results formulation.
- Under the supervision of the trainer, the young women conducted the meetings, gathered information and then analyzed it.
- The study was published by the center: entitled "Stories of Daily Resilience and Struggles from Jerusalem Women's perspective", where 60 stories were documented from Jerusalem women stories.
- A short documentary film was also produced, with the participation of the researchers, where 4 Jerusalemite women participated in reflecting the nature of their different experiences in facing Israeli violations.
- A national conference was held with the participation of a number of civil society organizations, to launch the analytical study and to screen the produced film. The conference was covered by three media outlets with the aim of spreading awareness about the nature of violations experienced by women in Jerusalem, and its impact on their social and economic lives, and to present young women trainees as researchers.

## 4) Women Political Participation Program:

To enhance the capabilities of female members in local and municipal councils This project was launched in the year 2016, as a joint project with the Development Action Center (Ma'an), with the generous support of the British Council in a regional project that was formulated to be implemented in Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, in response to the Palestinian feminist movement's interest in activating women's participation in political life. That interest had intersected with WSC goal of empowering Palestinian women, as political participation is considered one of the most important aspects of empowerment, and because it has an expected impact on responding to women's specific needs and achieving their best interest in a well-organized manner. Accordingly, in the year 2016, the center prepared a study on enhancing women's participation in local councils in the West Bank, specifically in the governorates of Jerusalem, Hebron, Ramallah, and Nablus.

Based on the results of this study, the center had developed a special program on the participation of women in local and municipal councils, which was implemented during the year 2017, through which the focus was on training women candidates for local government councils, and training volunteers to work with female candidates during their election campaigns. On the other hand, in 2018 it emphasis were placed on training the elected members, in order to enable them to perform the roles assigned to them within the councils in the best way possible,

especially since many of them do not have previous experience in the subject, and there are permanent attempts by the male members of the councils to exclude them, and marginalize their roles. The trainings included training on the nature of work in local government on one hand, and strengthening personal skills required on the other. In 2019, initiatives were launched by the local government members, where they conducted meetings with women in each governorate, to sensitize women's needs. Accordingly, the work was implemented in coordination with the WSC, to target women with training courses based on the needs that were identified. The courses were coordinated, hosted, and conducted by the local government members. On the other side, the center had provided trainers and required materials, which gave credibility to the members in terms of their response to the needs of women in these areas. In this context, special courses had been conducted in the field of self-empowerment for women, self-esteem, communication and communication skills, and discussion of social pressures that women are exposed to and how to face them, psychological depriving, obtaining positive energy. Below is a table of the most important courses that have been implemented in various areas that have been implemented within the mentioned topics:

### Jerusalem Governorate

Location	Training conducted in coordination with:	Number of trainings	Number of Participants
Shu'fat Camp	WSC and Development Action Center	4 trainings with a duration of 6 hours per training	16
Jaba'	Directly with the local council member Mrs. Nuha Darwsih	4 trainings with a duration of 6 hours per training	12
Arab Al-Jahaleen	Directly with the local council member Mrs. Hamdah Sayayleh	4 trainings with a duration of 6 hours per training	12
Al-Tur – Mount of Olives	Al-Tur Women Club	4 trainings with a duration of 6 hours per training	15

### Hebron Governorate:

In Hebron governorate, the initiatives differed with the focus on the following:

1. Establishing a new fund to support the poor female students, under the supervision of the female council members.
2. Holding dialogue meetings between the council members and chairpersons of the councils, along with the elected members, to discuss how to activate the role of female members.
3. Organizing an awareness raising program on early marriage issue, supervised by the members of the local councils, and in cooperation with the WSC.
4. The most important achievements included the following:
  - o Meeting of female members in the governor's office, and presenting the initiative to the governor.
  - o Meeting of the Female members with the male members of the local council to discuss their roles in the council, and to agree on participating in the process of running the council in each of Idna, Carmel and Al-Hadeb.
  - o Holding an awareness-raising workshops in Idna, Carmel, and Al-Hadeb on the risks of early marriage, in cooperation with the staff of the WSC.



**As for protecting women and girls from gender-based violence, the following had been undertaken:**

## First: Aman Program

Given to what children and youth of both genders are exposed to different forms of sexual violence, and given that the Palestinian society is a conservative society in which children or young adults do not dare to disclose this form of violence, especially girls and adolescent girls and young women, and because there is no community readiness to sympathize with them or tolerate the results of this form of violence, the center during the past two years had conducted the first study on sexual harassment in the family, and the second one about the extent of school students awareness of forms of sexual violence, and their exposure to this type of violence and how they deal with it. The study found out that there are different forms of sexual violence to which males and females are exposed, while most of them are ashamed or afraid to seek protection from any party. Therefore, the center has developed this program, which aimed to sensitize them to this form of violence and how to prevent it, and how to seek help in the event that any of them is exposed to this form of violence.

In this field, the center had developed various tools and signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Education, through which the school counselors were trained to use the tools, and incorporate them within the social worker working program in the school. This year, after we reached about 800 schools in previous years, including childcare facilities and adolescents with disabilities (appropriate tools were provided for these students such as Braille printing, video and audio tapes into sign language), the work was not implemented directly with schools, as it was sufficient to monitor the progress of the program in schools through the guidance department of the Ministry of Education, and by providing all the necessary training guides for the new male and female counselors, children's stories and tapes, that were prepared for this purpose. The Ministry was unable to do so, because there wasn't enough budget allocated for this activity. Consequently, the program manager held different meetings with counselling directors in various governorates, in order to determine the needs of the program, and to develop and follow-up training programs that were organized for new male and female counselors, with the aim to ensure incorporating the program in the schools that the program didn't reached yet.

## Second: Female Child Rights Program

During the year 2019, a focus was placed on one aspect of female rights, which is protecting girls from early marriage. For that, a new special project was developed within this program entitled "Anti-marriage for young women", to complement what was worked on during the years 2017, 2018. Where in 2017, the center conducted a study to examine the causes and consequences of early marriage for girls in the Jerusalem governorate, in partnership with the directorate of education in the Jerusalem governorate, as a sample and whose results can be generalized to the rest of the governorates in further stages.

The sample included male and female students from grades seven to eleven. The number of schools that were targeted during the year reached 108 schools in the three governorates (Jerusalem, Nablus, and Hebron), and through the 8 education directorates distributed over these governorates as the following:

The project was implemented in 108 schools (29 schools in Jerusalem governorate, 44 schools in Hebron governorate, and 35 schools in Nablus governorate).

The first goal: To raise the awareness of students and their parents about the risks of early marriage In this regard, the project has been institutionalized in 108 new schools this year in the three governorates. Below is a table summarizing the most important achievements that were implemented during the year 2019, and the number of male and female beneficiaries of these activities:

Type of Activity	Number of workshops	Number of beneficiaries
Class workshops with male and female students (seven grade-eleven grade)	3324 workshops	20,453 male and female students
Meeting with the schools' consolors who worked with us during the year to evaluate their experiences and benefit from their strengths and weaknesses	3 meetings	80 male and female counselors and class supervisors.
Training workshops for the new male and female counselors	3 workshops	46 male and female counselors
Workshops with students' parents in schools	147 workshops	3950 parents
Producing Children stories by the students themselves	6 stories ready for printing, after working with these students who wrote these stories. Some modifications where conducted based on the previous trainings that the students took.	108 male and female students participated. A match was announced to select the best stories.
Community awareness workshops on successful marriage concepts and conditions	15 workshops	170 male and female youth, and mothers
Filming TV episodes to raise awareness about the dangers of early marriage	3	Audience in general
Production and broadcasting of radio spotlights on early marriage	2	Audience in general
Production of two electronic awareness bulletins (Info graphs)	2	Audience in general

Additionally, we worked on signing petitions that calls for raising up the age of marriage within "the national campaign to raise the age of marriage", which resulted in the issuance of the presidential decree to raise the age of marriage to 18 years. This thing had sparked a broad societal debate, accompanied by an attack by "liberators", fundamentalist forces that



## **Demanded to the retraction of this law.**

Successful cases had been registered, and the most important are listed below:

- Several initiatives issued by students, such as the distribution of gifts to male and female teachers on Teacher's Day by female students, wrapped in a tape with anti-marriage drawings prepared by students.
- Creating a Facebook page by some students about early marriage.
- Producing plays in schools about early marriage.
- Response by a mother from Anata, who called off the engagement of her child.
- Some mothers reached out to the counselors, and opened discussions with them aimed at answering their questions.
- The participation of male school counselors in the discussion about the topic of early marriage.
- Produce murals in some schools that advocated against early marriage.
- Production of wall newspapers in some schools against early marriage.
- Some of the male and female counselors conducted more meetings than what was included in the plan, as a result of the students' interaction.
- The students' talents appeared in writing, and their writing will be published.
- Some mothers had dare and gave lectures about their difficult experiences in early marriage.
- Many schools that we did not reach requested to implement the project in their schools in the future.

## **Our partners who were involved in the implementation of the program included the following:**

- The directorates of counselling and special education in the three governorates that are linked to the Ministry of Education.
- Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) in Jerusalem.
- Al-Quds University - Abu Dis.
- Al-Quds Open University - Al-Quds.
- Childhood Programs Foundation – Jerusalem.
- Al-Quds Open University - Nablus
- An-Najah National University - Nablus
- The Mothers' School Association - Nablus
- Palestinian Working Women Society for Development- Nablus
- The Faraa Women's Center - Nablus
- Al-Quds Open University - Dora
- The Palestine Ahliya University - Bethlehem
- Sawaed Forum - Hebron
- Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees - Hebron

## **Three: Women, occupation, and Bereavement program**

The beginning of this program was in the year 2002, after the Israeli forces committed a war crime in Jenin camp, where they conducted a massacre in the camp that resulted in a large number of martyrs, missing persons, detainees and the demolition of a large number of camp houses. In continuation of the killings and demolitions undertaken in all governorates of the West Bank, it was really necessary to examine the effects of these policies on women in particular, especially since women are the weakest group that has not been qualified to assume material responsibilities, while the prevailing societal culture continues to impede the empowerment of women at the economic and social level.

Therefore, we chose to start working in the three governorates are Jenin, Nablus, and Bethlehem, with a goal of:

- Identifying the reactions of Palestinian women following the invasion of Jenin, Nablus and Bethlehem and the accompanying war crimes that were analyzed and examined.
- Healing some common wounds and grief with a number of Palestinian women who suffered from these crimes.
- Elaborating and implementing new treatment strategies for intervention, in order to reduce the impact of these traumas on women.
- Documenting and distributing the stories of Palestinian women on war crimes.

During the year 2019, and in full cooperation with the Swedish organization Kvinna till kvinna (KTK), which started working with us on this program since 2002 until today, work on this program had continued.

The overall goal of the program: The mental health of bereaved women was improved, and became more equipped and able to defend their rights, and other stakeholders from human rights organizations, are more responsive to bereaved women to defend their rights.

### **Specific objectives of the program:**

- Supporting bereaved women and providing them with enough space to express their feelings and enabling them to escape the trauma of loss.
- Documenting a bereaved to bereaved approach that was developed in dealing with the shock of loss.
- To develop societal awareness about dealing with the concept of loss from a gender perspective.
- Mainstreaming the approach and experience in the local community organizations and the surrounding environment.
- The number of female employees working on this program: 30
  1. Program Director
  2. Three coordinators in each coordinated governorate (Jenin, Jerusalem, and Hebron)
  3. 18 supportive bereaved women.
  4. 6 specialists from partner organizations
  5. One volunteer
  6. One advisor



## The most important achievements during the year 2019 included the following:

- Coordination and networking with advisory committees that were previously formed in the three governorates, and which was formed from the civil society organizations (4 organizations in Jerusalem, three organizations in Hebron, and 7 organizations in Jenin).
- Providing individual support to bereaved women, where we succeeded to reach 69 cases and worked with them, with a rate of two to three visits per case, to reach 207 visits in the three governorates, targeting 21 cases in Jenin, 21 cases in Jerusalem, and 27 cases in Hebron).
- Collective intervention, where 29 meetings were held in the three governorates, targeting 45 beneficiaries. Pre- and post-application forms were filled in order to evaluate the meetings.
- Implementation of 3 training days for 18 supporters, with 18 training hours.
- Implementation of a recreational evaluation tour for the bereaved women, with the participation of 80 women, from the three governorates, and 15 members from the advisory Committees and partner organizations.
- Carrying out two depriving days, using the integrated security and depriving mechanisms, with the participation of 18 supporters from the three governorates.
- Implementation of 4 professional supervisory meetings for women supporters, in order to support and supervise the implementation of the program.
- Collaboration with (KTK) organization and selecting one bereaved women to train in integrated security and well-being.
- 37 locations/sites were targeted in the governorates of Jerusalem, Jenin, and Hebron, to conduct 50 awareness raising meetings. The following meetings were conducted: (11 meetings in Jerusalem, 16 meetings in Hebron, and 23 meetings in Jenin). 643 participants participated in these meeting about the issues of loss and its impact on the lives of the Palestinian women and their families.
- A meeting was held with the Swedish Representative Office on 21st of March 2019, to inform them of the experience.
- We contacted Al-Jazeera TV Channel, and worked with them on preparing a report on the center's experience with Women and bereavement program in Jerusalem on 9/4/2019.
- A guide to practice support strategies has been prepared.
- Producing a short movie about the program and its development since 2002, and the achievements that were achieved, within a range of 8 minutes, and being implemented by the voices of the bereaved women.
- A national conference on the program was organized and held on 12/4/2019, under the patronage of the Minister of Women Affairs and the Minister of Prisoners, and in the presence of 150 male and female representatives of national institutions, civil society organizations, media and academic figures.
- A reportage about the program had been prepared, which was implemented in Hebron governorate.
- A television interview was also conducted on Palestine TV, which focused on the program's awareness role in dealing with cases of loss.
- Networking and cooperation were also held with the Jerusalemite Women's Association and the General Union of Palestinian Women, where visits were organized for four Palestinian families in Jerusalem from the families of the prisoners, in order to honor the mothers of the prisoners.
- Organizing visits to some organizations in Jerusalem with the aim of cooperating on organizing economic empowerment programs for bereaved women.
- Coordination with some institutions and organizations to transfer cases that need psychological support to bereaved woman or to their children.
- 4 training days were organized and conducted for staff working in the program, under the supervision of Dr. Fathi Fleifel.
- Participation of the program's staff in a specialized training on measuring indicators and results.
- The participation of the program director and program coordinator in Jerusalem in the digital security training organized by (KtK) organization during the month of October 2019.

## Third Goal/Objective: Promoting Investment in Capacity building and Helping Local Community based Organizations to Achieve Distinction from a Gender Perspective

**The WSC continued to play a prominent role at the local and regional levels, in the field of integrating gender in all aspects of life, by focusing on the following:**

- 1) Training in the field of gender.
- 2) Auditing from a gender perspective.

This training in the field of gender aimed to help the various organizations to build the capacities of their cadres in sensitizing to gender issues, and in the field of integrating gender in the projects and programs that are based on it, as much as possible.

In this field, the WSC and within the consulting unit that was established years ago, had become an address for many local and regional organizations in the field of gender. During the year 2019, the center contracted with some organizations to carry out the following trainings:

- Training for male and female employees of the Municipality of Nablus on gender issues, carried out by the director of the center. This this training comes as an introduction to a gender audit program, which will be implemented with the municipality during the year 2020. Note that this training was financially covered by a generous donation of the municipality of Catalonia, Spain.
- Training for male and female employees of the ILO partner organizations in Jordan.
- Complementary training for Lebanese women, who obtained a gender audit certificate from the International Labor Organization. The training was implemented in Jordan with the aim of enabling them to start conducting auditing tracks in Lebanon.

In the field of auditing from a gender perspective, during the year 2019, the following was implemented:

- Signing an agreement with ESCWA and the AMAN Foundation in Qatar to implement the audit. Actually, it has been started and the General Director of the WSC visited Qatar and prepared the first report, and is awaiting the second visit to present and discuss the first draft of the report.
- Implementing a gender audit in agreement with ESCWA for the Jordanian National Committee For women.
- Developing the strategic plan for gender mainstreaming in the Municipality of Madaba in Jordan, and for gender mainstreaming through contracting with ILO. It is important to bear in mind that the audit for the Municipality of Madaba was conducted by the center in the year 2018.
- The General Director of the Center had also volunteered to prepare the strategic plan for the Forum to Combat Violence against Women, as the Center is a member of this forum, and had contributed to part of the forum expenses through the funding that we obtained from the Swedish (KtK) organization.



# Fourth Goal: Development of financial Human and Institutional resources of the WSC

In order to achieve its goals, the center worked to develop the capacities of its female employees, by providing them with training opportunities, and encouraging them to attend local and international conferences, as a way to learn and participate, and as a way to represent and spread the center's message, and reflect the needs and conditions of women in Palestine.

## The center worked to achieve this goal through:

- Raising the administrative and operational efficiency of the center.
- Organizing and developing the financial resources of the center, where the center was able to partner with the Danish Representative office to obtain core funding.
- Reach new funding sources, IM from Sweden and the South African Fund.
- To enhance communication and develop partnerships at the local and international levels.

## As for building the capabilities of the center's staff:

- The participation of the Finance and Accounting Director in a course entitled Training on Advance Excel, which was organized by GIZ in the period between 27-29/11/2019.
- The director of the Jerusalem branch office, and the director of the Child Rights Promotion Program participated in a training course with Al-Haq organization on the Convention of the Rights of the Child in February 2019.
- The participation of the Program Manager and the Director of the Aman Program in a training course on digital security organized by the KtK organization in Ramallah during the period from 5-8/8/2019.
- The director of the Aman Program, who represents the Jerusalem office, participated with the Forum to Combat Violence against Women in the Forum's strategic planning workshop, which was held in two phases in Jordan and Egypt.
- Aman Program Manager Yara Al-Abwah and Amina Aslan, Program Safety Coordinator in Nablus, had participated in a training session with the KtK organization on first aid, during the month of November 2019.
- The director of Aman program Yara Al-Abwah, and the Program coordinator of Aman in Nablus office, had participated in a training course on the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, organized by the Forum to Combat Violence against Women.

## Achievements of the WSC at the programs level:

- The Center has become a well-known reference in the field of gender consultations, especially in gender strategies, where the center's director was chosen as an expert in this field, to work with ESCWA on a regional level, where she audited the Jordanian National Committee, and Aman Foundation in Qatar, in addition to being accredited by the Palestinian Non-governmental, governmental and private sector organizations.
- The Center continues to institutionalize Aman program within the educational system in Palestine. Currently, the Palestinian Ministry of Education is using a safety guide on protecting children and

adolescents from sexual violence and other publications on this in schools. The issue of sexual violence, which is considered as a taboo, has become more open to discussion and research in schools, clubs and institutions, and there is a constant demand by feminist and youth organizations, and institutions to provide them with our publications, and provide different trainings on this matter.

- The center has a rich library for Palestinian children. So far, the center's publications for children have reached 11 stories, which reflects the reality of Palestinian children and their problems, and which works on preparing a new generation with new expectations that are far from traditional views on gender and gender-related violence. Also, the center was able to encourage children to write, and some stories written by children were published. This year, we succeeded to publish a set of stories targeting teenagers, which actually was written by them.
- The center, in cooperation with the organizations of the forum against violence against women, was able to influence the Palestinian President to issue a law that raises the age of marriage to 18 years.
- The WSC is one of the most active feminist organizations in Jerusalem, and is a prominent member of the Jerusalemite Women's Coalition, which deals with issues of Jerusalemite women who suffer from gender-based violence, political violence, and the absence of the national authority that deals with women's issues. The coalition was a representative of the Jerusalemite women's issues in the presence of consulates, embassies and delegations coming to Jerusalem, through the representation of Jerusalemite women at the national and international levels.

## Also, the coalition continued to issue data on the status of women in Jerusalem, and on the other side, WSC played an important role in drafting these documents.

- The center had become a part of the Hebron Governorate committees, and is treated as a specialized center in women's issues.
- As a result of the center's work in the field, and its impact on the local community in Nablus, we at WSC had obtained a joint project funded by Barcelona municipality, to develop and support gender mainstreaming in Nablus municipality.
- The center had provided a safe space for the bereaved women, to express their feelings and interests, and supported them in drafting an action plan that will help them to overcome the physical and emotional burdens they face.
- The center was also able to raise the issue of girls' higher education, and to point on the responsibility of the local community to support this issue, by donating money to help educating girls in need, because that would be a way to empower these girls and help them. This is done in order to become self-reliant individuals, and reduce the poverty rate within the Palestinian society, especially since the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that poverty is high among families headed by women, or other families that depended on one breadwinner (usually men).
- Through the stories produced by the center, the center managed and succeeded in combating the exclusion speech, and promoting the gender equality discourse.
- The center was able to integrate youth in its work, especially through the Sanad program, and male children through the Aman program and the Female child rights program, because the center believes that achieving social justice and equality is done with all parties.
- The center was able to impose a progressive discourse in women's forums, by sticking to its position in separating religion from the state, and the need to work on civil laws, despite the fact that only a small number of women's institutions did not take it in Palestine. On the other hand, although many organizations believe that they should follow the local discourse, and not requesting what is not allowed, but we believe that we must strive for change, and if we do not, no real change will take place.



## Challenges:

The year 2019 marked a hard year for the center, as we faced financial difficulties, as funding was delayed, and consequently the salaries of female employees were disbursed for the months of July, August, September, October and November at the end of November.

Additionally, the attack by fundamentalist parties against feminist organizations and their demand for the Palestinian National Authority to withdraw from the CEDAW agreement required a special action. As a result, a counter-media campaign was launched and the center's director was hosted by local, regional and international media to talk about this issue. It also required organizing meetings with several parties and the responsible authorities including the Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, Governor of Jerusalem, Minister of Women Affairs, in addition to the General Secretaries of the different Parties. As a result of the Center's failure to obtain funding for this year for the AMAN program, the number of schools that we are working in has not been expanded, and the numbers that we had previously reached, were considered sufficient for this period.

## Future directions towards the work of the WSC:

After reviewing and studying the future directions by the center's staff and members of the General Assembly, it was decided to adhere to some of the previous directions with some additions, so our

Future directions towards the work of the center will be:

- Focusing on working in Jerusalem, as it is considered as an isolated area from the West Bank, and where the needs of women are increasing in light of the cumulative policies of displacement and marginalization adopted by the Israeli occupation.
- Reaching out to persons with disabilities (PWDs) and working with them, to gradually integrate them into the center's programs.
- To develop the role of the center as a pioneering organization in building the capacities of governmental, non-governmental, and private organizations in mainstreaming gender perspective in its work on the national and regional levels.
- Building the capacities of the center's female employees, in line with the new directions adopted by the WSC.
- Allocating part of the center's budget to support the forum against violence against women, and the women's coalitions in which the center operates, with the aim of achieving common goals.
- Continue to provide advisory or consulting support to the forums that the center joined, with the aim to develop its work.

## Women's Studies Center (WSC) Staff:

**There are 14 full-time employees working in the center, one part-time employee, and two volunteers.**

### Jerusalem office:

- Sama Owaida – General / Executive Director
- Nivine Al-Maso - Administrative and Financial Director
- Nuha Sharaf - Director of Programs and Public Relations
- Aida Al-Issawi - Director of the Jerusalem Branch Office, and Director of the Child Rights Promotion Program
- Yara Al-Abwah - Director of Aman Program
- Sahar Omar - Director of Sanad Program
- Sirine Soudah – Accountant
- Raneen Sandouka - Administrative Assistant

### Hebron office:

- Sana' Al-Syouri: Branch Office Manager and Safety Program Coordinator
- Abeer Abu Turk: Coordinator of the Women, Occupation and Bereavement program, and the Female Child Rights Program
- Bayyan Abu Tebaneh: Volunteer
- Manar Al-Natesheh: Volunteer

### Nablus office:

- Rawda Al-Basir: Branch Office Manager
- Amal Al-Ahmad: Director of the Women, Occupation and Bereavement Program
- Aminah Aslan: Projects Coordinator - Nablus Office
- Fatima Al-Haj Muhammad: Administrative Assistant in Nablus Office
- Suhad Dalbah: Project Coordinator for Women, Occupation and Bereavement Program in Jenin





## مركز الدراسات النسوية Women's Studies Centre

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