



Palestinian Counseling Center

Promoting Mental Health
Services and Policies

Dear partners and friends, It is our pleasure to share with you the Palestinian Counseling Center's third electronic newsletter for the year 2015. This newsletter covers the most important activities and achievements of the Center during the months of September-December 2015.

The Palestinian Counseling Center

Releases its Strategic plan for the years 2016-2020

Long-term strategic planning is considered one of the main foundations of PCC's work, as it takes into consideration internal and external changes, identifies sectors and beneficiaries that will be targeted by the PCC's work, and maintains harmony between the center's vision, activities, and its surrounding environment. The strategic planning process reflects the PCC's constant interest in renewal, change, and adaptability, while maintaining the PCC's main goal towards improving the mental well-being of the Palestinian individual within Palestinian society, at the same time paying attention to the environmental changes that affect Palestinian well-being.

One of the most important PCC achievements during this period is the release of its five year strategic plan for the years 2016-2020. The development of the plan was based on a comprehensive external evaluation of our work covering our previous strategic planning period of 2010-2014, the active engagement and participation of all stakeholders, including the Board of Directors, internal management, employees, target groups, government agencies, NGOs and CBOs, and community members. Additionally, various PCC departments carried out internal assessments of their work. As a result of these assessments, the PCC identified additional stakeholders that need to be targeted in our work, the change that needs to take place on the level of behavior of target groups, primary issues to be addressed, and strategies for intervention with each target group over the next five years.



The results of the organizational evaluation reflected a uniqueness in PCC's vision, mission and strategic objectives, and their relevance to the needs of the Palestinian community, in addition to suggestions towards improving the intervention strategies. The new strategic plan takes incorporates the most significant evaluation results, which identify three main target groups to work with over the next five years: children, adolescents and women (rights-holders), linking the four areas of PCC's work (therapy, prevention, capacity building and advocacy) to serve these target groups, and policy-level initiatives and campaigns in partnership with networks and coalitions.

The strategic plan employs professional teams of experienced PCC staff members, specialized in working with the three groups, to implement the center's various projects and programs.

The PCC identified four strategies that contribute to the realization of PCC's vision: 1) provision of therapy for individuals and groups that suffer from psychological problems and disorders; 2) implementation of awareness

raising programs to prevent the development of psychosocial problems among individuals and groups; 3) provision of capacity building for individuals and organizations that work in the field of mental health to improve the quality of mental health services in Palestine; 4) implementation of advocacy and lobbying campaigns aimed at realizing positive change on the level of legislations and policies and procedures related to mental health.

In its new strategic plan, the PCC maintains its philosophy on holistic intervention by ensuring that the Palestinian individual is in harmony with his/her environment. Provision of psychosocial services take into consideration the individual and his/her privacy, while at the same time addressing the holistic needs of the community that surrounds the individual, ensuring complementarity of interventions.

It is customary for the PCC to employ the most recent psychosocial interventions in implementing its strategic plan, taking into consideration the environmental changes that affect Palestinians. The PCC monitors new trends and emergency conditions in the field of mental health, and employs them whenever necessary. At the same time, the PCC applies expressive art therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, music therapy, positive discipline, professional supervision, sports as therapy, etc. as proven methods to respond to the changing needs of the community.

These tools have helped the PCC to respond swiftly and effectively to changing circumstances. Based on our experience in responding to emergency conditions resulting from Israeli aggression on the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the summer of 2014, the PCC developed an emergency preparedness and response plan. In response to the emergency crisis situation within the protracted crisis situation, the PCC staff in addition to newly recruited mental health staff, worked to implement the emergency plan developed based on the emergency preparedness and response plan. 1. To provide psychological first-aid to individuals and families directly affected by the present situation (families of Martyrs, families whose homes have been demolished, and individuals with serious injury) within 72 hours of the incident; 2. To provide awareness information to the



community at large through media and publications, such as brochures on to deal with children in crisis situations; and 3. To build the capacity of CBOs and Ministries in Jerusalem, Nablus, and Al-Khalil in order to ensure continued psycho-social services in these areas while building the capacity of organizations/institutions located in these areas As a result of the present situation, PCC's governance and management have taken a decision that while maintaining our current programs at 80% as outlined in the strategic plan, 20% of our time will be dedicated to respond to emergency situations as outlined in our contingency plan.

Since its establishment, the PCC has provided much needed counseling services in Jerusalem, neglected by the Israeli government. In fact, the Israeli occupation has been the main reason behind the deterioration of Palestinian mental well-being, especially in Jerusalem, in addition to shortcomings in providing much needed mental health services in the West Bank. The PCC has played a leading role in fulfilling a significant need of target groups in the Palestinian community through therapy and counseling, as well as awareness raising on mental health

Activities implemented by the Palestinian Counseling Center during the months of September- December 2015

PCC's Emergency Psycho-social First-Aid Response

Through PCC's emergency psycho-social first-aid response, the PCC worked on several levels: Home visits to affected families who lost a loved one (Martyr); families whose home has been demolished; and individuals seriously injured within 72 hours of the incident while maintaining safety of staff. During the period of October to December 2015, the PCC staff reached 49 families; 96 children; and 123 adults in the Jerusalem, Nablus and Ramallah areas. The PCC organized regular visits to Palestinian hospitals including Al-Maqased Hospital in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in the Ramallah area. Staff provided psychological first-aid to 55 patients in Jerusalem and Ramallah. In order to maximize outreach, the PCC recruited volunteers on the one hand, and built the capacity of CBOs and Ministry of Education counsellors and principals in Jerusalem, on the other. In terms of volunteers, 15 volunteers were trained in coordination with Al-Saraya Center in the Old City of Jerusalem. Moreover, the PCC conducted a training for a total of 18 volunteers in Jabal Al-Mukaber, Jerusalem on psychological first aid through partnership with two CBOs. A total of 20 volunteers in Nablus: 12 were trained in Nablus on psychological first aid for families through home visits and 8 on psychological first aid for those injured and in hospitals. The PCC provided the following with Ministry of Education Awqaf schools in Jerusalem: 1. A three-day training for 15 counsellors on developing and implementing an emergency intervention plan; and 2. A one-day training for 15 principals on developing and implementing an emergency intervention plan. It is important to note that these trainings included space to also provide support for individuals (volunteers, counsellors and principals) in dealing with their feelings (fear, anxiety, etc.) besides the capacity building

Positive Discipline training- Jericho

In cooperation with Juzoor for Health and Social Development and UNRWA, and in partnership with Save the Children, the PCC held a training on positive discipline on December 13 – 14 and 22 – 23 for a total of 20 facilitators that work as counselors of the mentioned partners in different locations. The PCC used a manual on positive discipline developed by Save the Children that was revised, edited and adapted by the various partners to be implemented in Palestine. The manual proved invaluable on the subject of positive discipline.





Barometer for Local Women's Safety

In cooperation with the Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy and the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, the PCC's Advocacy Department implemented a workshop on December 23 to present findings and recommendations of women that participated in the barometer for local women's safety initiative, funded by Cordaid. The barometer worked on compiling stories of Palestinian women from the field around their personal safety.

The workshop was conducted in order to share the results of the report with the 60 participating women and included women's stories, following which the results were discussed. Women shared their recommendations for programs and plans that aim at putting an end to all forms of violence against women, including lobby and advocacy campaigns targeted towards the international community, the Palestinian Authority, civil society, media, and the family.



Workshop entitled: An Empowered Woman can Challenge Reality and Realize Change

The Women's Empowerment Program, implemented by the Prevention Department, held a workshop on December 22 in Nablus entitled: 'An Empowered Woman can Challenge Reality and Realize Change', with support from Cordaid. A total of 60 women participated in this workshop, all of whom were part of the program during the past five years, and were empowered on the psycho-social level to be able to address various stresses and difficulties they face in life, whether financial, familial, social or personal. The program also improved women's abilities to express themselves, take decisions, and become active and influential members of their communities. A group of women from the Gaza Strip also participated in the workshop through a video conference due to their inability to participate in person as a result of Israel's siege on Gaza.

All participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences, discussing the benefits of the program, highlighting success stories, but also highlighting challenges, given that all the women targeted in the program live in marginalized areas that suffer from Israeli occupation policies.

A workshop for youth addressing emergency conditions in Jerusalem

The PCC organized an awareness raising workshop for youth in Jerusalem at the beginning of November 2015, due to the emergency conditions confronting the city as a result of Israeli occupation policies and practices and arbitrary measures imposed on members of the Palestinian community in Jerusalem, especially youth. The workshop was implemented in partnership with the YWCA, Palestinian Vision, Youth Development department, Al-Dameer Institute, Burj Al-Laqlaq Center, and representatives from the Jerusalem Youth Forum.

A total of 30 youth from various areas in Jerusalem participated in the awareness raising workshop, and benefited from tips on dealing with emotions during emergencies. Expressive art therapy activities were implemented during the workshop with the aim of empowering youth with anger management techniques in order to enable them to protect themselves from Israeli occupation offenses. During the workshop, the PCC also distributed brochures targeting all age groups (youth, children and adults) on addressing difficulties during emergencies including brochures on dealing with crisis situations, dealing with trauma as well as information on service providers across the West Bank including Jerusalem for various services such as legal, health and mental health care.

Completion of a training on Positive Discipline

On November 12, the PCC trained a total of 18 women from the villages of Qusra and Burqa in the Nablus area on positive discipline to empower them to facilitate the implementation of awareness raising sessions for parents in their villages, with the aim of reaching out to the largest number of beneficiaries in their communities, and spread positive child rearing skills.

This training was implemented as part of the project entitled “Enhance mental health services for children, youth and families in the Nablus governorate,” in partnership with the Palestinian Ministry of Health and MDM- France, with funding from the French Development Agency (AFD). A Series of activities have been implemented as part of the program, including the rehabilitation of a room at the Ministry of Health to accept young patients (children and youth) with psychological problems; capacity building for 82 primary health doctors and nurses on mental health; provision of primary psychological services to beneficiaries; training 30 counselors from the Ministry of Education on mental health and parenting skills; inclusion of child and adolescent specializations at Palestinian universities; and the activation of the referral system.



“I Challenge:” Youth Summer Camp in Jerusalem:

With the aim of empowering youth between the ages of 15 - 18 to challenge themselves on steadfastness, the PCC held a summer camp from August 17 – 25 for 45 youth from the Jerusalem area. The summer camp, ‘I Challenge’ was implemented in partnership with Save the Children and through funding from Danida. The summer camp including challenging tours to displaced villages, such as EinKarem and Sataf in Jerusalem, Wad Al-Qirn in the Upper Galilee; visits to the Latin Patriarchate in the village of Ein Areek near Ramallah and Battir village near Bethlehem. Activities of the summer camp were conducted at the Dominican Convent in Jerusalem, all of which helped youth discover their strengths to remain steadfast and challenge the difficult conditions they are experiencing, in addition to getting to know various cultures and accepting “the other.”

Mahdi, one of the youth participating in the program, said: “this camp taught me that life is full of challenges and we have to face them. For example, the water trails were very difficult, and we had to cross them in order to get to the other side, and this taught me that I should never give up, and I should always try to fulfil my goal.”



The Graduation of a group of professional supervisors

On September 17, the PCC in partnership with BASR (Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation) held a graduation ceremony for 53 professional supervisors working in the field of mental health in the West Bank. The professional supervisors completed two years of training, and are now ready to provide support to, and develop services of, Palestinian organizations both administratively and professionally.

The professional supervisors were trained by 9 professionals who had previously received Diplomas in Supervision from the Free University of Berlin in Germany, as part of a program entitled: “Kicking the Ball and Taking Care,” implemented by the PCC with funding from the German Foreign Ministry.



The Summer Camp: "By learning, I educate others:"

the PCC held a 9-day summer camp from August 5 – 15 entitled "By learning, I educate others" with 32 children from Jerusalem, in partnership with Save the Children through the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights program. During the summer camp, children were provided with information and important skills to help them protect themselves from all forms of violence and assault. Topics covered include: rights, physical and psychological changes, personal hygiene, sexually transmitted diseases, acceptance of others, early marriage, sexual harassment, protection and first aid.



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