



ثلاثون عام من أجل صحة
نفسية ايجابية في فلسطين

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المركز الفلسطيني للإرشاد

The Palestinian Counseling Center NEWSLETTER

September-December 2013



Welcome to the third edition of the Palestinian Counseling Center's newsletter! We would like to end the year with updates on PCC activities on the occasion of 30 years since the PCC's establishment. The PCC organized several activities to celebrate 30 years of service to the Palestinian community in the field of mental health. Updates on projects and activities are also included in this newsletter. The PCC would like to take this opportunity to extend its wishes for a happy new year to all of our partners and friends.

The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 Years On- Our Mission for Palestinian Well Being Continues

2013 marks the Palestinian Counseling Center's 30th year in operation.

Founded in 1983, the PCC - the first mental health center in Palestine – was established by a group of psychologists, social workers, and educators in East Jerusalem, initially focusing its efforts on raising awareness within the Palestinian community on the importance of psychological counseling. Since then, the PCC has been able to maintain a presence in East Jerusalem, while simultaneously expanding its work to other areas of the West Bank, including Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, and Qalqilia, as well as Gaza.

Today, the PCC provides interventions through clinical therapy, preventative empowerment programs, capacity building, and advocacy. This holistic approach emphasizes the PCC's focus on maintaining a balance between the individual and his/her surrounding environment, including the family, community, school structure, and larger political context, all of which contribute to mental well-being. The PCC strives towards establishing a healthy balance among each of these areas of a person's life, seeing a direct connection between psychological struggle and a lack of harmony between the individual and his/her environment.

Hence, the PCC targets the individual directly through therapy and empowerment activities, while concurrently striving to change or challenge the environment on the macro level with awareness-raising, advocacy, and lobbying efforts.

"The PCC believes that behavior is the result of the interaction between the person and his/her environment," Executive Director of the PCC, Rana Nashashibi, explains,





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“so, in order to build a healthy society, we need to care for the needs of its individuals. A person whose needs are ignored or surpassed will not be able to devote much attention to his or her community and national needs.” Nashashibi also notes that it is vital to work toward enhancing the surrounding environment as a community that fosters healthy mindsets, stating, “People living under political occupation – like Palestinians – will not have healthy well-beings until they are rid of these oppressive conditions. We also need to work to eradicate other sources of violence, whether in school or at home, that create an environment of repression and aggression.”

The past 30 years of on-going awareness-raising efforts and development of professional psycho-social services through capacity-building by the PCC have led to a growing number of Palestinians seeking psychological and social support from various service providers in the occupied Palestinian territory. The PCC is thrilled to have contributed to the promotion of the importance of mental well-being in this regard, as well as to have grown itself as a professional mental health organization, from a small office in Jerusalem to an organization with five branches throughout the West Bank. During the last ten years, the PCC has also witnessed the development of national strategic plans for mental health by the Ministry of Health. The PCC has dedicated great energy in lobbying for the integration of mental health services in primary healthcare, and was also able to introduce a variety of approaches and methods in psychological intervention, such as expressive art therapy.

In commemoration of this milestone, the PCC hosted a series of events in the field of mental health, including a meeting for its donors, mobile clinics in a number of marginalized areas, a psychology seminar in the city of Ramallah, and a beneficiaries reception in Jerusalem.

More than 100 people attended the reception – the PCC’s final commemorative event – that was held at the Dar Issaf

al Nashashibi center in Sheikh Jerrah, including women, children and youth, a number of the Center’s founders and members of the Board of Directors, as well as staff and employees of the PCC. The ceremony included a welcome speech by Ms. Nashashibi, as well as a presentation on the history of the PCC from Prevention Department director, Rimal Salah. Music and theatrical performances were also conducted by PCC staff members.

The PCC also organized a seminar entitled, “Thirty years of counseling, treatment and psychological supervision” at the Red Crescent in Al Bireh, co-hosted by Dr. Mubarak Awad, founder of the Palestinian Counseling Center, who came from his residence in the US specifically for the celebrations, as well as Dr. Shafiq Masalha (Clinical Psychologist and a long time friend of the PCC). Dr. Awad explained the beginnings of the PCC’s work, including initial efforts made to raise awareness on the importance of counseling and psychotherapy and touched on the difficulties encountered during the organization’s establishment. After three decades of operation, Mr. Awad expressed his delight in the center’s continued work to change the shape of mental health in Palestine.

Furthermore, the PCC arranged for a mobile services clinic to visit villages in the Negev, Jiftlik and Fasayel in the Jordan Valley, Beit Sakariya in Bethlehem, and Susia in the Hebron area – all of which are underserved. The clinics conducted awareness-raising activities for the local communities, targeting women and children, as well as individual consultations.

The PCC organized a meeting for its donors, which was attended by several partners, including Save the Children, Drosos Foundation, Oxfam Novib, Diakonia and MDM-France. The meeting included a presentation by Dr. Mubarak Awad, the founder of the PCC, on the beginnings of the center, as well as a presentation on the current approach, programs and financial situation of the center.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights project

In cooperation with Save the Children, the PCC began to implement the second phase of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights project in three areas of Jerusalem: Shufat Camp, Jabal Al-Mukabber, and Sur Baher. The project aims at raising the awareness and knowledge of service providers, children and parents on sexual and reproductive health rights through various trainings, activities and advocacy programs. Training topics for service providers include unification of concepts, child to child approach, puppet making, production of animation films, and training based on a sexual and reproductive health rights manual.





Radio spots on the occasion of 30 years of PCC's establishment

The PCC prepared 10 radio spots for its 30th anniversary that were broadcast 5 times a day from the 15th of October- 10th of November on Ajyal radio station. The radio spots are translated as follows:

- The beginnings were in Jerusalem. The individual's mental health was our mission. Programs and projects that serve people were and continue to be our goal. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- 30 years on, our mission and identity have not changed. We continue to work for the individual's mental health. Children, youth, women and men all have a role in our programs. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- Children have a right to play safely, and to be protected from abuse. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- My adolescence is a normal development. Protect me by understanding and supporting me, and providing me with scientific information. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- The roots of many physical problems are psychological. Let's pay attention to our mental well being in order to protect our bodies. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- 30 years ago, discussing counseling was a taboo. Today, we say it is important to talk about our mental well being, and to realize it in our homes. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- The psychiatric patient is a human being. It is his/her right to receive medication and free treatment, in addition to equal access to job opportunities. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- We support women dealing with stress to express their feelings and make decisions, maintain their mental well being and invest in their abilities. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- You can help me by supporting my right to education. Specific educational tools should be used to help students with learning disabilities. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.
- Through volunteerism and training we build the capacity and skills of professionals. The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 years for positive mental health in Palestine.

PCC team of supervisors attend a training course in Germany

7 mental health professionals from the PCC travelled to Germany in October for a two-week training course on training of trainers for professional supervisors at the Free University of Berlin as part of the Kicking the Ball project. The PCC professionals who attended the training include Ms. Rana Nashashibi, Director of PCC; Ms. Luma Tarazi, Capacity Building director; Ms. Remal Salah, director of Prevention department; Mr. Murad Amr, director of Clinical department; Mr Shadi Jaber, PCC consultant; Ms. Zuhira Fares, coordinator of the Women's Empowerment program; and Ms. Nisreen Bushie, counselor and advocacy coordinator.





International Legal Workshop on Residency Revocation

As a member of the Coalition for Jerusalem, the PCC hosted a legal workshop focused on residency rights violations on November 29th – the International day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The workshop was held as part of the **International Campaign to Protect Palestinian Residency in Jerusalem**, an initiative supported by Oxfam-Novib and the European Union. Over 25 people attended the closed-door event, including community leaders, local advocates, and 2 international participants who are specialized in the field of international law. Together the participants analyzed the various mechanisms available to hold Israel accountable for its residency rights violations against Jerusalemites within an international law framework. This workshop is seen as a launching point for a cohesive strategy amongst Palestinian civil society with regard to residency revocation.



Women Prisoners project

The PCC began to implement a project in coordination with UN Women entitled "Support for delivery of security and justice services for women" in November 2013. The project aims at improving access to justice for women victims of violence in four correction and rehabilitation centers in the West Bank. The PCC's role in the project is to organize and implement gardening trainings as an income-generating activity, coordinate the provision of sport and yoga sessions to the inmates on a weekly basis, accompaniment and support of social workers, connecting female inmates in need of legal representation to lawyers, as well as liaising with the Independent Commission for Human Rights and its human rights monitors, who track and examine women's access to justice.

Capacity building of MOH-run Community Mental Health Centers (CMC)

The PCC signed a contract with the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide technical support, on the job training and supervision of mental health professionals at 13 CMH centers throughout the West Bank. Training topics for mental health professionals include cognitive behavioral therapy; family therapy; child and adolescent mental health; and rehabilitation. Along with the training and on-going supervision, the PCC will develop manuals for the training topics, as well as pre and post evaluation forms. The comprehensive capacity building of the CMS's will conclude in August 2014.

PCC Beit Hanina Office has moved

In October, the PCC moved the location of its office in Beit Hanina from Khalil Al-Sakakini street to Shajret Al-Dur street, near Al-Nizamiye School. The PCC office is now bigger, and we have absorbed an additional number of staff members who moved to join us from the Old City office. The PCC maintains a small office in the Old City of Jerusalem, where the Central Inclusive Education Unit for children with learning disabilities continues to operate.

Link to PCC film:

The PCC produced a film on the occasion of 30 years of its establishment entitled: "The Palestinian Counseling Center: 30 Years On- Our Mission for Palestinian Well Being Continues." The film can be viewed at the following link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFCEoo6-kcw&feature=youtu.be>