



# المركز الفلسطيني للإرشاد Palestinian Counseling Center

Electronic Newsletter

April /2013

Welcome to the first edition of the Palestinian Counseling Center's newsletter! We are excited to take on this new endeavor, and to familiarize readers with the latest developments at the PCC. Our newsletters will serve as a forum for updates on our programs and projects, offering a more personalized view of how we work. Produced three times per year, each edition will have an underlying theme that will guide the stories within and present a more detailed view of how the PCC approaches the particular subject through its programs.

For our first publication, we are highlighting the PCC's work on child protection. Through the stories included here, we offer some insight into the various methods the PCC uses to combat violence against children and empower both children and communities to be agents of change in the cycle of abuse.

## Palestinian Children and Their Need for Protection

The PCC's Child Protection Program is being implemented for the fourth consecutive year by the Prevention department. The program is one of three implemented by the Prevention Department, which works on protecting children, youth and women from developing psycho-social problems in marginalized areas. The Child Protection Program targets Palestinian children between the ages of 6-14. A cornerstone of the PCC's work, the program seeks both to build children's protection skills in response to violence while also working with parents and communities at large to deter future instances of mistreatment from taking place.

The primary source of abuse and exploitation against children in Palestine remains the Israeli occupation. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), trends show that an estimated 20% of youth —and 40% of the male population—will be arrested, detained and likely imprisoned. In addition to physical abuse and torture often endured during such arrests, children face frequent exposure to shootings, tear gas, and harassment on a daily basis. Israeli forces often use their discriminatory and violent policies to target Palestinian children directly.

Likewise, the colonization of Palestine has severely hindered the development of the Palestinian economy, resulting in significant levels of poverty amongst the population. According to the PCBS, 27.2% of Palestinian children are impoverished. This, in turn, contributes to a vastly stressful and traumatic environment for affected families, who are often without sufficient support systems to counter this strain. Subsequently, abuse regularly reveals itself within the family structure as well, exacerbating the child's vulnerability to violence. In fact, according to the PCBS, parents are the most direct source of violence against children. In 2011, 51% of children in the 12-17 age groups were exposed to violence within the home.



Performance of children from the Child Protection Program in the celebration on the Universal Children's Day, organized by Save the Children, at the Ramallah Cultural Palace.



Open day at Rawdat Al-Zuhur School in Jerusalem

Such widespread exposure to abuse leads many children to display signs of psycho-social trauma, including anxiety, stress, sleeping disorders, and aggression. Unaware of how to effectively address the suffering endured, children have a tendency to internalize this mistreatment and fall victim to cycles of abuse that may continue on for years.

The PCC's Child Protection Program seeks to prevent these cyclical developments by teaching young children how to recognize abuse and effective methods of protection. Children from across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, participate in regular group sessions and social activities that address a range of topics, including self-esteem, self-expression, effective communication, rights and responsibilities, and privacy and setting limits for others. Through their participation, children are provided a safe forum to discuss the different forms of violence and abuse that they are exposed to in their lives, thereby enhancing their abilities to recognize such mistreatment and prevent instances from occurring in the future.

The PCC also works with parents and community members to help each gain healthy understandings of children's needs. Groups discuss subjects including different forms of violence and how to discover what is happening with one's child, the psycho-social effects of violence on a child, and positive child-rearing techniques. The PCC's group facilitators adopt a rights-based approach, encouraging parents and community members to focus on a child's right to information, learning, and knowledge of his or her rights.

Together, these activities serve to address the needs of Palestinian children in a comprehensive and holistic manner, recognizing that political violence remains the primary cause for mental health trauma. "Violence is an exercise of power in an abusive manner," Director of the PCC, Rana Nashashibi explains, "The abuser's intent is to debilitate and dominate their victims and render them helpless and hopeless of their ability to have control over their lives. Therefore, whether we are referring to occupation, domestic violence, violence on the street or any form of violence, the victim's energy is focused on survival and is shifted away from progress and growth" by empowering children, their parents, and the community at large, the PCC's Child Protection Program seeks to strengthen the resilience of young people in Palestine and enable them to lead happy and healthy childhoods.

### Child Labor Program

In 2013, in cooperation with Save the Children and through funding from the European Union, the PCC began to implement a program to fight child labor. The program aims to increase the quality of services provided to victims of child labor through increasing the capacity of schools in detecting drop outs and the risk of child labor. The program will target schools, communities, and families through awareness raising activities as well as advocacy initiatives. During the first few months of 2013, the PCC selected 7 schools in which to implement the program that will benefit a total of 210 children in one year. The PCC will form child protection groups in each of these schools with the goal of enhancing children's self-confidence and protection skills.

### Inclusive Education

With support from the Drosos Foundation, the PCC has been implementing a therapeutic program for children with learning disabilities and children with behavioral and emotional problems in Jerusalem, Nablus and Ramallah. Over the past few months, the PCC has conducted a total of 11 therapeutic groups for children with learning disabilities in Jerusalem and Nablus. The groups focus on improving children's mathematical skills and Arabic reading and writing skills. The PCC has also provided individual therapy to 58 children in Jerusalem, Nablus and Ramallah over the past few months. Parents of children involved in this program received guidance on addressing the special conditions that their children face.

With support from Save the Children, the Palestinian Counseling Center has been establishing a Central Inclusive Education Unit (CIEU) in Jerusalem that caters to children with special needs, including children with learning disabilities. The main aim of the unit is to improve the well-being of children in the 6-14 age groups with special needs through the provision of educational and therapeutic support. The CIEU is based in the PCC's Old City premises in Jerusalem as well as the Child Center at the University of Jerusalem in Beit Hanina. As part of this initiative, teachers from Ministry of Education schools will receive training on initial diagnosis to help them identify children with special needs to be referred to the CIEU or other specialized medical centers.

Transfer of the Non-Formal Education program to MOE schools is also part of the PCC's inclusive education programming. Over the past few months, the PCC trained and supervised teachers in 3 Jerusalem-based schools. The teachers are responsible for conducting remedial education groups with 7 children's groups, benefiting 35 students while focusing on improving their mathematical skills as well as reading and writing abilities in Arabic. 550 children also benefited from enrichment activities.



Open day at Rawdat Al-Zuhur School in Jerusalem

### Improving Psycho-Social Service Provision in Jerusalem

In partnership with UNICEF and with support from the EU, the Palestinian Counseling Center is in its second year of a project aimed at improving protection services and psychosocial support for Jerusalem children. The PCC works with four organizations in Jerusalem – the Mada Center in Silwan, Rawdat Al Zuhur School, Al Zuhur Center and Kindergarten in Shuafat refugee camp, and Dar Al Riayyeh in the Old City – to build the capacities of psycho-social service workers. The PCC provides supervision to the social workers who conduct direct intervention activities with children, including group work and recreational events.

During the first quarter of 2013, the program engaged 175 boys and girls through group sessions and 500 children via creative activities.

### Launch of Assessment Study

The Palestinian Counseling Center was contracted by UNICEF to conduct a national assessment study on learning challenges experienced by Palestinian students in schools run by the Ministry of Education. The PCC launched the study in March, and it will continue to be conducted over the course of the coming months in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with a sample of 3000 children from the 2nd, 4th and 6th grades. The study will address two main research questions:

- To what extent do Palestinian children suffer from learning challenges - difficulties/disabilities/disadvantages?
- To what extent do these challenges have implications on learning achievement?

## Kicking the Ball / Supervision Program

In 2013, the Palestinian Counseling Center signed a 2-year contract with the Office of Psychological Issues - the Free University of Berlin for the implementation of a program entitled Kicking the Ball and Taking Care in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The program has two components, one of which is a professional supervision program, where 10 mental health professionals who previously received a supervision diploma from the Free University of Berlin, will be involved in training a new group of mental health workers to become professional supervisors. The second component of the program aims at training football coaches, who have acquired basic mental health knowledge during the previous phase of the project, to train an additional number of football coaches and transfer the same set of skills to them.

## Residency Rights Campaign in Jerusalem

With support from the European Union and Oxfam-Novib, the PCC is representing the Coalition for Jerusalem in a residency rights campaign for Jerusalemites. The International Campaign to Protect Palestinian Residency in Jerusalem works both to bolster the resilience of the Palestinian community in Jerusalem and push for global action to be taken to hold Israel accountable for its rights violations. Awareness raising workshops on the rights of Jerusalemites and relevant municipal laws have been held throughout the city. Simultaneously, the PCC campaign staff is working to develop international partnerships with groups overseas to broaden awareness of residency revocation and activate solidarity counterparts.

## Protection Department Director's Participation in a Workshop in Spain

Shadi Jaber, Director of the Prevention Department at the Palestinian Counseling Center, participated in a workshop organized by the UNRWA Spanish Committee in Madrid, Spain from the 19th-21st of March, 2013. The aim of the workshop was to analyze the application of the Human Rights-Based Approach in interventions with children and youth, as well as becoming more familiar with the humanitarian situation of these groups in the OPT. Mr. Jaber was the keynote speaker on Children's and Youth Humanitarian Context in the OPT, and participated in the roundtable session on Children and Teenagers as vulnerable groups in humanitarian crisis.

## Animation Films

One of the activities utilized in the PCC's Child Protection program is the creation of animation films. These films are made to help illustrate to children effective methods of protection from harm and violence and how to properly identify abuse. Participating children have contributed to the creation of 8 films so far, produced with the help of volunteers. The movies are screened at various children's events held by the PCC as well as other venues around the community.

To view some of the animation films, please click on the following links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GhlPwbPgMY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvp995577mo>



Two children working on the preparation of an animation film at PCCs Old City Center