

# The YWCA as an Agent for Change

فلسطين PALESTINE



## Annual Report 2011



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# 1. Message from the National President

## The YWCA as an Agent for Change



In 1893, a group of women started the YWCA in Palestine. Those women were moved by a sincere sense of commitment to serve and bring about changes in the lives of Palestinian women. Throughout its history, the YWCA of Palestine initiated and developed programs to meet the needs of young women in different communities and became one of the leading associations to address the developing needs of young women in Palestine. In spite of the changing political situation in Palestine, the YWCA continued to challenge and overcome the difficulties that it faced throughout the history of our people. It developed programs to meet the arising needs in the various Palestinian communities and specifically in the refugee camps.

The mission was clear and with love and commitment it advanced to provide opportunities for a better life and hope, in times when helplessness prevailed due to the ongoing political struggle of our people. All this was accomplished with a great deal of courage and strong faith in changing the helplessness feeling to hopefulness that change is possible.

With modesty we know that our YWCA influenced the development of many programs and organizations that serve the Palestinian women in areas of women and child development, vocational education, human rights, and advocacy for peace and women rights. Our leadership has always played an important part in the lives of many young women as role models of what women can accomplish, not only for themselves but for the people around them.

This year, we had newly elected boards for our three associations in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Jericho. We are proud that young and professional women joined those boards with remarkable enthusiasm to experience a leadership that sets itself as an instrument for change.

Our challenge has been, and for many years, how to move smoothly towards institutionalizing our work while keeping a good balance between the contribution of the volunteers and the work of the professionals. The evolving needs and requirements to advance our work and procedures made it necessary to move towards developing up to date systems to facilitate the huge work that needs to be accomplished. While this continues to be a big challenge, we are aware and committed to keeping the balance between the voluntary aspect of our work and the needed professional approach.

All that has been achieved would not have been accomplished without the support and commitment of the voluntary body that governs this association. With the same importance, the diligence and hard work of our executives and staff who made it possible.

A note of appreciation is highly commendable to both the governing body and the executives, who made a pledge to serve with love and a sincere commitment to being agents of change. We express deep appreciation to every one of them and to all our friends and partners who believed in our mission and who have been great supporters of our work.

Abla Nasir  
National President



## 2. Reflections for 2011



When we decided as a group to give this year's report a title "YWCA as an Agent for Change", we had many reasons and many perspectives to this concept. We have been working for so many years, and as the work is culminating now, we are able to see some major changes happening.

This report is about celebrating our achievements, and proudly so, and it is a collective effort of so many staff writing about their own efforts and achievements. This report is allowing every staff member to recognize that "change" is a deliberate and conscience process that we need to articulate, learn from, involve others in, and celebrate.

On the level of governance, the YWCA's organizational structure is now stabilizing and operational. More than ever before, the roles and responsibilities of the voluntary body or Board versus the staff or executive structure is well documented. For the first time, the national office invested in putting together a Board User Manual that helps Boards perform their roles with utmost diligence and transparency. This practical manual is a reference point, and will definitely bring about lots of positive changes on the governance level in the future. The Manual is also intended to be shared with the global movement.

The YWCA recognized and acknowledged few years ago that it is not enough to offer vocational training for women, but what is more important is to offer the kind of training that will produce positive changes in their lives. The training that can offer them the opportunity to position themselves at a higher ranking in the formal labor market, and make sustainable incomes, and change the perception of the community towards women's roles is what the VTC should be all about. For the first time, the vocational training is seen as a proactive educational tool of change, and all the efforts invested have materialized finally in 2011.

The YWCA food and crafts production programs have been there for many years, and several women have been employed through these ventures, but the major change is that we are recognizing that making income alone is not enough, and will not necessarily change the women's lives or empower them: the process of change is much more complex, longer term, and multi-dimensional. The YWCA is transforming the institutional setup of these projects, so they lead to serious empowerment of the women. Thanks for all our partners and donors who were willing to accompany us in this transitional and courageous process.

Today, we are constantly asking ourselves the very hard questions: what is it that we want to achieve, what is it that we want to change, and whose lives are we changing? Can we do it, and can we do it alone, or in partnership? Is it enough to offer the women the service, or should we rather focus on changing policies that prohibit them from accessing the services, or should we do both? And how can we measure that we really have made a positive impact on the lives of the women, the youth, the children and communities we are working with. The many policy researches and market studies that we have conducted the last few years confirmed to us that as we deliver the service, we also need to create lobby groups who can take forward the very issues that affect the lives of women.

We are sure that every reader of this report will see and feel that the YWCA is not only making serious changes in its programs, direction, and strategy, but is actually empowering women to make the positive changes in their own lives as well as the lives of their communities.

Mira Rizak  
National General Secretary



## 3. 2011 Highlights

### 3.1 Staff Retreat: Looking into the Future

Around mid October, the National Council of the YWCA of Palestine organized a strategic retreat for the YWCA staff in Jordan, to review the present strategic plan 2010-2015 in light of the ever changing political situation, and identify staff development and training needs which can help move the organization forward.

Eleven staff members from the three local associations including the National Council Office participated in the retreat. The staff are: Abeer Ghanem, Abeer Totah, Arda Aghazarian, Daisy Rumman, Hanan Kamar, Marina Kuttah, May Amireh, Mayadah Tarazi, Mira Rizek, Nazar Halteh, and Rulla Sarras, in addition to the PME consultant, Anna Maria Pacano, the retreat facilitator, and Heidi G. Velasquez, the retreat reporter.

The retreat focused on 3 main objectives:

1. Forward-looking and Visioning beyond 2012
2. Organizational Development: Assessing organizational needs and formulating the CB/OD Action Plan.
3. Team Building.

The retreat was inspiring and allowed us to reflect on where we are, what our strengths and weaknesses are, what we need to do, and all in an environment free of stress and every day burdens. The organization had gone through a lot of restructuring and re-formulation of mandates and governance, and the division of roles, responsibility and mandates between the national and local associations continue to challenge us.

At the end of the retreat, the staff expressed their gratitude and thanked the council office for giving them such a unique opportunity which allowed them not to only understand the functioning and organization's strategic direction but also to know their peer colleagues out of the work environment. This got them closer to each other and more appreciative of the differences and diversities of each. As a matter of fact, this was acknowledged as one of our greatest strengths and assets.

The staff also came out with a list of issues that they felt needed special attention in the next few years, or issues that will continue to challenge us and need to be resolved:

1. There is a pressing need for the organization to work on its visibility. Capitalizing on its good reputation, the organization should come up with a strategic visibility plan.





2. The YWCA is delivering good services and impacting women, youth and communities in positive ways, but there is potential to expand the organization's services and work harder to reach the more marginalized target beneficiaries. To identify and define clearly the specific targets based on participatory needs assessments and clear criteria was proposed.
3. To think more carefully about how we can stop looking at our beneficiaries as passive beneficiaries, and how can communities and target groups become active partners/participants and agents of change.
4. Opening doors for youth to widen their network and to engage them to become agents of change.
5. We also recognized how uncertain funding is for Palestine, and the need for the YWCA to continue to reduce its dependency on external support. The organization should continue to think of self-sustaining programs, and how to make assets more productive and income generating.

The end result was a much stronger team, unified vision, and a sense of belonging to the same mission. The most important achievement was the fact that the group had fun, and was able to think freely. The National Association is grateful to Y-Global, which is a major partner of the association for making this gathering possible by supporting this event.

### 3.2 The YWCA of Palestine Takes Part in the Solidarity Visit and Sthree Mela Conference in Sri Lanka

As part of the project which specifically targets young women, with the support of FOKUS and in partnership with the World YWCA, Y-Global and the YWCAs of South Sudan and Sri Lanka, young women from YWCAs in countries of conflict were given the opportunity to partake in a visit to Sri Lanka from December 3-11, 2011 and attend the Sthree Mela conference. The Project is supported by the World YWCA and YWCA of Palestine *Power to Change Fund* under the title "Enhancing Leadership and Civic Engagement of Young Women to become Advocates for Change".



Young women from the YWCAs of Palestine, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Myanmar and Colombia participated in the young women's dialogue and shared their experiences in conflict-driven areas and the challenges they face in their communities before setting off on the solidarity visit to Jaffna.



The group of eleven, namely Sarah Arumugam (YWCA of Sri Lanka), Indrani Gamarachchi (YWCA of Sri Lanka), Marie-Claude Julsaint (World YWCA), Tor Kjetil Edland (Y-Global, Norway), Arda Aghazarian (YWCA of Palestine), Christine Abdallah (YWCA of Palestine), Sichelesile Ndlovu (YWCA of Zimbabwe), Lucy Nadeyo Basha (YWCA of South Sudan), Laetitia Benito (YWCA of South Sudan), Magda Lopez Cardenas (YWCA of Colombia), and KueKu Paw (YWCA of Myanmar) had an overview of the conflict in Sri Lanka, the difficult circumstances and remnants of struggle that have remained after the war has ended in 2009. Some of the visits in Jaffna included the Refugees Rehabilitation Organization, four families in the IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camp, Jaffna Hospital, meeting with the first Government Agent in Sri Lanka, Mrs. Emelda Sukumar, in addition to a cultural evening hosted by the YWCA of Jaffna. The intensive 5-day bus trip brought to the participants' eyes vulnerable people who have been affected by being placed in war-torn areas.

Upon the return of the YWCA young women from their visit to Jaffna, the group was joined by Juli Dugdale from the World YWCA, Mira Rizek the General Secretary of the YWCA of Palestine, and World YWCA General Secretary Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda in Colombo. They were all hosted to a special viewing of the film "Peace Unveiled" of the *Women, War and Peace* series (one of the five films in the PBS TV Series by Abigail Disney, who personally met the delegates and listened to some of the young women's challenges).

December the 8th marked the opening ceremony of the Sthree Mela (Voices of Sri Lankan Women) exhibition and conference held in Colombo. The YWCA participated in three panel discussions at Sthree Mela; two of which had panelists from the YWCA of Palestine, namely Arda Aghazarian on the "Using Media for Peace-Building" panel, and Mira Rizek on the "Implementation of UN Resolution 1325" panel. The third panel was specific to the YWCA and was moderated by Marie-Claude Julsaint from the World YWCA and gave voice to the three young women panelists from Zimbabwe, Myanmar and Colombia.

The visit to Sri Lanka has infused a strong sense to stay committed as a movement and double the efforts in creating safe spaces for women.

### **3.3 Women Creating a Safe World: The YWCA of Palestine's Active Participation at World Council in Zurich, Switzerland**

Over 850 women from 115 YWCA delegations came together as one decision-making body in Zurich in July 2011. After receiving inspiration from the Young Women's Leadership Dialogue and the Pre-Council, delegates from every corner of the globe flooded Zurich to discuss the topic, "Women Creating a Safe World."

The YWCA of Palestine was present with a full delegation of six at World Council, represented by the National President Abla Nasir, National Vice-President Haifa Baramki, National General Secretary Mira Rizek, YWCA Jerusalem Board Member Sandrine Amer, YWCA Jericho Member Queen Massoud and YWCA Ramallah Program Officer Faten Husari. Also present was Arda Aghazarian, the young woman World Board Member of the Middle East Region (2007-2011) from the YWCA of Palestine.





The YWCA of Palestine had a leading role in a good number of sessions and workshops in Zurich. Prior to their participation at World Council, all delegates attended local meetings in preparation for the International visit and presentations. The delegates also attended breakout sessions and workshops, and joined in the regional meetings and visioning breakout sessions.

Among the highlights at World Council this year was the official endorsement of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) campaign that pushes for the compliance of International law when it comes to Palestinian rights. Also among the highlights was the election of the new Board of the World YWCA amidst a flurry of excitement, laughter, red cards and applause. Headed by the new President Deborah Thomas (Trinidad & Tobago), the new Board is now made up of 18 women, 8 of whom are young women under the age of 30. Representing the Middle East Region on the World YWCA Board are Haifa Baramki (Palestine) and Hoda Kamal El Mankabady (Egypt).

### 3.4 The 55th Session on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York City

#### Enhancing Leadership and Civic Engagement for Young Women to Become Advocates for Change

Under the World YWCA Power to Change Project and through the Y-Global partnership program between the YWCAs of Palestine, Sudan and Sri Lanka with the support of FOKUS, three young women from the YWCA of Palestine and one from the YWCA of Sri Lanka participated at CSW (the UN Commission on the Status of Women) in Feb-March 2011 in New York City.

Young women, namely Faten Husari and Maylena David from the YWCA of Palestine and Sarah Arumugam from the YWCA of Sri Lanka, together with the Supervisor of the Project Arda Aghazarian made a presentation with the support of the World YWCA and Y-Global. The presentation focused on creating safe spaces for young women's education, as well as peace building and the implementation of UNSCR1325, highlighting the work the YWCAs in Palestine, Sri Lanka and South Sudan have been doing in this respect.

Other highlights during CSW were the World YWCA Intergenerational Dialogue Session, the launch of UN Women, and the submission of the World YWCA's statement. Participants were also inspired by sessions that highlighted issues around women and education, and by hearing youth perspectives. The YWCA of Palestine was excited to be involved, and affirmed its presence in various panel discussions, as well as in workshops and key events.





## 4. 2011 Program Update

Programs are never stagnant at the YWCA of Palestine, and for the last few years, every program has gone through an evaluation, or a review, an assessment, or a market study or re-visioning. This process has produced lots of learning, sharing and challenges, and has led to the development of either totally new projects within the thematic framework, or new strategies and approaches for existing projects.

This section is a brief on projects, which are classified as new, transitional and ongoing.

### 4.1 New initiatives

#### **Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters: New Initiative in the Jordan Valley**

For the first time in Palestine, the YWCA and two other partners namely YMCA and PARC in the West Bank and Gaza were granted a project by Christian Aid funded by DIFID to implement a “Community Resilience” program for a duration of 3 years.

This initiative has been made in response to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015; which aims at: “Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”. This framework is endorsed by the UN to mitigate the effects of disasters and thus the financial and human losses.



The ultimate goal of this program is to enforce disaster risk preparedness and emergency mitigation activities into the law and national policies in Palestine. In order to initiate this, a scoping study was conducted to assess the existing policies in comparison with international standards.

YWCA chose three communities to work with under this project, namely, Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp, Al Nwei'meh and Al Dyok Villages. In this project, the YWCA is establishing a new approach in building community resilience in three targeted communities as a pilot phase where PVCA trainings will include almost all community categories. Community capacities and vulnerabilities will be recognized and highlighted to be strengthened

During October 2011, the three partners (including the YWCA) received training on how to conduct PVCA “Participatory, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment”. Partners were also provided with training on DRR (Disaster) Risk Reduction, CCA (Climate Change Adaptation) and HAP (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership). PVCA differs from needs assessment in a way that it examines the risks and vulnerabilities of a certain community rather than its needs. It is a livelihood approach whereas community members engage in certain exercises to identify their vulnerabilities and capacities and see how their capacities can be used to overcome their vulnerabilities. The final product of those exercises is an action plan done with and by the community members. This methodology has more credibility because it includes all categories of the community; especially the marginalized one.



In November 2011, the YWCA coordinated with the local organizations and CBOs in the three localities and requested the organizations to nominate volunteers in order to be trained and qualified to conduct PVCA with and by their communities.

In December 2011, the volunteers received training on PVCA, DRR, CCA and HAP, were prepared to help in the assessment that will take place in 2012.

## 4.2 Transitional projects

### 4.2.1 From Employment Generation to Economic Empowerment: The New Direction for the Production Projects at the YWCA of Palestine

The YWCA of Palestine has historically been implementing two production projects, a food production project in Jericho, and a crafts production project in Jalazone. These projects have passed through many stages of development, and during 2011 the projects exited from a strategic crossroads. The question that always had been a dilemma was: are these projects intended to employ women, or are they intended to generate income for the organization, or can they meet both objectives? Many strategic sessions were held at the level of the National Council, at the end of which it was determined that these projects should demonstrate potential for sustainability, but most important these projects should offer the space for women to improve their lives, by ensuring sustainable incomes, contributing to family well-being, impacting traditional gender roles and decision-making within the household, and finally enable women to graduate and seek employment in formal markets.



Like other projects, an external consultant was hired to review the project and the recommendations to move these projects into a “social enterprise” were endorsed. With the support of Oxfam/Quebec, a new Business Development / Marketing Advisor post was advertised in 2011, and a consultant was selected. This post will be filled in 2012, and will serve to advise on both projects. The YWCA management is seeking to implement the following steps:

- Construct a new production center at the Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp in an effort to expand production and employ more refugee women, as well as meet the needed health and environmental standards.
- Train more women from the most marginalized communities in various food production techniques, business skills and management, then recruit them in the project, or link them up with credit institutions to access credit and start up their own businesses.
- Act as a mediator between women producers and the market, and create marketing opportunities for house-based food industries.

- Create job opportunities for at least 100 young women in the next 4-5 years in food production, and link them up with local markets.

It is worth mentioning that the Jericho Production has celebrated its 10th anniversary in the summer, and succeeded in covering its costs fully with no external funding.

The Jalazone Crafts project has also been evaluated, and new products were identified. The YWCA has been seeking new donors to support the production of traditional dolls, in addition to other Palestinian products that will cater for the needs of local households.

## Success Story

**Majeda Hassan Mohammad Ayyad** has been working in the food production program in Jericho since 2005. She lives with her husband, three children, and mother in-law in a modest house in Jericho city. Majeda started working at the YWCA because the income of her husband is not sufficient to cover the high expenses of the family. With the kids growing older and school fees getting higher they could not afford to send their children to the university without a second income, Majeda said.

Majeda considers herself lucky to have been offered this job opportunity in her place of living. "There aren't many employment opportunities for women without a university degree in this area, and the food production project at the YWCA was a lifesaver. With my paycheck, I am able to pay all the school-fees for my children so they can get an education." Today, her two eldest children go to university in Abu Dies -Jerusalem, and the youngest is finishing his last year of high school.



### 4.3 Ongoing projects

#### 4.3.1 Market Driven Specializations and Compatible Employment Opportunities for Youth through Vocational Training Education

The year 2011 was considered the year of harvesting of all the efforts that have been exerted for more than three consecutive years in the upgrading and restructuring of the Vocational Training Programs in both Jerusalem and Ramallah. Modules and subject matters were adopted to allow offering a wider variety of subjects to VTC students.



It might all seem like a normal restructuring and upgrading process but the current transition from being traditional to becoming innovative seemed inevitable and it came as a result of market studies and assessments of both the Ramallah and Jerusalem markets that examined the local labor market needs for Secretaries and the needed specific competencies in a secretary.

Several positive indicators were found to demonstrate the increasing demands for secretaries particularly in the Ramallah labor market, most importantly:

- The stable increase in the number of economic establishments.
- Growth of the number of the mid-size and large organizations and companies which employ more than one secretary.
- Growth in the public sector and the need for secretaries and/or office managers.

The market studies of both Ramallah and Jerusalem also revealed the fact that traditional secretarial skills were no longer adequate to satisfy the demand of the developing and transforming local market; employers favor secretaries with advanced technical skills and outstanding personal attributes. Graduating secretaries nowadays reinforce a very traditional and menial role for women, and continuing in this direction will neither serve to upgrade women's skills and prepare them for higher paid jobs in the formal labor market, nor will this allow them to compete with men on highly technical jobs. The market needs office managers with multi functional competencies needed to manage offices, arrange for meetings, conduct book keeping functions, reporting and maintaining the equipment in the office. More importantly, employers need to have professional workers who understand and demonstrate high levels of office ethics. Accordingly, the YWCA changed its diploma from Secretarial to Office Management.



Furthermore, the studies also highlighted the need for other specializations that the YWCA can offer to its students and the community.

**In Ramallah,** Events Management and Customer Relations were prioritized in the market study and the YWCA is currently working on developing the curricula and training material and tools for those two specializations. Starting the scholastic year 2012-2013, the YWCA of Ramallah will offer the Events Management specialization to its students and the community and the Customer Relations specialization will be offered the following scholastic year. The curricula development has been handled by a Dutch agency called PUM which consists of a pool of experts in curricula development and who showed interest in developing the teaching material and tools for those two specializations in addition to training the trainers.



During the year 2011 a total of 46 VTC students graduated and were offered the opportunity to have internships for one month (160 working hours) in various private sector organizations which allowed them job opportunities later on. The scholastic year 2011 – 2012 started with 58 students and we aspire that with the new specializations the number will eventually increase.



Additionally, the construction of the first floor of the new Ramallah YWCA has been completed and the Vocational Center moved to the new building. The center was inaugurated on September 6, 2011 by the Governor of Ramallah Ms. Janet Michael and many members of the community and representatives of organizations and government offices. The new center can absorb at least 90 students for the day courses, and will be open for short technical afternoon courses on demand.

**In Jerusalem**, the Project Management, accredited from Cambridge International in Britain, and the Accounting specializations are being offered to the VTC students and interested community members in need of such technical skills to either advance in their work and/or to expand their employment opportunities. The two specializations were offered to VTC students starting the scholastic year of 2010-2011. Furthermore, Multimedia is another specialization that was highlighted by the study and employers, which the YWCA is working on developing through the PUM experts. This specialization will be offered starting the scholastic year 2012-2013.

In September 2011, 64 students graduated in Office Management and 84 new ones were enrolled for 2012. Eight new employers from various organizations such as the UN joined the project management specialization to help them advance in their work. The 64 graduates were sent to practical training in local institutions in Jerusalem with the hope that later on they will offer them job opportunities.

The change in the structure of the Vocational Training Centers and the upgrading of the curricula to meet the labor market needs is merely the small picture; the wider, more strategic process has been focusing on media and community education with the intention of changing the traditional perceptions of Vocational Training from a menial level of education, to education for jobs.

The process was led by a deliberate objective to change: on one hand, to change the perception of students themselves about vocational training and create an understanding that earning a vocational diploma is only the first step on the road to empowerment and self actualization; and on the other hand and more importantly, to change the perceptions of the community that vocational training is not a last resort. This change in perceptions will be combated by the media campaign. Now that the new specializations are targeted for market employment, students will be armed with the belief that they can change their status, income, households, and more importantly their role in the formal labor market. Students will be empowered to take on any challenge; overcome any obstacle and outperform any expectation. Our students are more likely to grow, learn, build their own beliefs, steer their own life and influence others. After all, that is what a change agent is all about.





# Success Story

## Georgette Khoury - Perseverant Mother and Student

Whoever meets Georgette will find it hard to believe that she is a forty-year-old single mother of five children. The passion she has for knowledge makes her stand out as very youthful and vibrant. "The difficult circumstances I have been under took away a good number of years from my life, but at this point, every piece of new information I acquire feels precious to me, and I want to educate myself as much as possible. The education I have acquired at the YWCA has boosted my self-confidence and changed my way of thinking." Georgette, who had no access to computers before signing up at the YWCA, is now not only adept at using the Internet, but she is also



good at accounting, bank reconciliation and filing, among other things. "I have a lot of ambition and interest in a lot of things, [such as catering, high design and accounting,] and I would like to make my stand. For many years, I have abandoned my own needs and gave in to a defeatist attitude. Despite the discouragement and mocking remarks I have heard from even some of my close network of friends, I took on a personal challenge and decided to empower myself. I realized that by empowering myself, I would also be empowering my kids. Since the moment I applied to the VTC program, I have noticed that my personality and sense of self have become stronger, and despite the very difficult challenges I am facing, I continue to look at new and better horizons."

### 4.3.2 Promoting Palestinian Women's Rights and Economic Participation through the FOKUS Project

The YWCA of Palestine organized 3 days of trainings in February 2011 for the three associations' Executive Directors (EDs), Program and Project Staff as well as the National staff, in Advocacy and Lobbying for Women's and Gender Rights. The trainings highlighted the link between the National Plan and the UNSCR1325, forming coalitions and working within networks, as well as on working on advocacy strategies with a larger community on the local and International levels.

Furthermore in 2011, two trainings were carried out on Women's Rights and UNSCR1325 under the FOKUS project:

- The training on Nov. 22 in Ramallah: 30 women (25% of whom are young women) attended. Most of the participants were from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem and from Jalazone refugee camp.
- The training on Nov. 24 in Jericho: 47 women attended this training. Attendance was made up of women from different age groups (half of them below the age of 30), and from different areas (mostly from the districts of Jericho and Jerusalem, and nearby villages.)

The trainings gave a good overview about the UN resolution and showcased how being active, pressuring governments for the implementation of women's rights, and taking part in creating change in communities can have direct impacts on the lives of women in the Palestinian society.



Through the successful advocacy and lobbying that has been achieved through this project, the YWCA of Palestine has been encouraged to submit a similar project to the World YWCA "Power to Change" in 2011 with a focus on enhancing leadership and civic engagement of young women to become advocates for change.

The "Power to Change" project has been successfully implemented along the lines of the FOKUS programme, and continued to involve more young women in advocacy, decision-making and lobbying. In addition to providing young women the opportunity to actively participate at CSW 2011, the YWCA of Palestine had 3-day trainings in women's rights and UNSCR 1325 as well as advocacy and civic engagement for young women. The total number of attendants in these trainings was up to 50 women.

### 4.3.3 Building the Future Generations of Palestine

Building and developing youth leaders continues to be the priority for the YWCA of Palestine when working with youth. The YWCA believes that working with new generations, training and preparing them to take leadership roles in their societies remains to be the best human investment towards a real positive change in the situation and the only hope for a better future.

As a young women's association, the YWCA of Palestine has historically worked with young women and youth in general, in different programs and activities aiming at creating and promoting youth leaders who can play an active role in the building of the Palestinian society. Over the years, and in its different locations, in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jericho and surrounding refugee camps, the YWCA has offered a wide range of programs and activities including leadership and civic engagement trainings, summer camps, drama and traditional dance groups (dabkeh). Those different programs were inspired by youth members and are planned with them in response to their specific interests and needs

For the last six years, the Swedish Mission Council (SMC), has been supporting the YWCA of Palestine through the YWCA-YMCA of Sweden to implement various youth programs focusing on promoting leadership and civic engagement. During the year 2011 and through this generous support of SMC, the YWCA was able to offer around 100 youth various educational and recreational activities such as trainings in human rights, civic engagement, leadership and summer camps in addition to establishing 3 permanent youth groups, 2 at the YWCA of Jericho and 1 at the YWCA of Ramallah.



It is worth mentioning that the extensive leadership trainings that were provided to youth in the past three years encouraged youth members from Ramallah for the first time to participate in the Ramallah YWCA board elections and to become board members of the newly elected board in October 2011. Presently 33% of the Ramallah Board is made up of young members under the age of 30.



Furthermore, the YWCA of Jerusalem was able to target around 300 youth from Jerusalem through the various programs and activities it offers to youth, most importantly in leadership training, which is planned to enhance the self esteem of participants and to educate them about their human rights, mainly in relation to the situation in Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem.

Finally, and in an initiative to further strengthen the youth programs and to ensure youth civic engagement and leadership initiatives within the Palestinian community, the YWCA during 2011 initiated the preparation for a youth sector strategy that reflects youth actual needs and suggestions that builds on the experiences of the previous youth programs and lessons learned. This process will entail various tasks starting from evaluating the implemented youth projects, carrying out needs assessments, involving benefiting and new youth, then ending up with the formulation of the youth strategy.

## Success Story

### A Youth Member at the YWCA of Ramallah becomes a Board Member

Mais Abu Leil, a former VTC graduate and a very active youth member was determined to stand for the Board elections that took place in October of 2011. Not only was she able to get a good number of votes that qualified her to be an official acting member of the Board, but most importantly she conveyed the message of how the leadership training she undertook under the SMC project helped her understand that youth are not only recipients of services in the community but given the means and opportunities, can and should play a major role in community development. She is willing to pass on her experience to the new members that she intends to recruit.



### 4.3.4 Advancing Children Cognitive Skills and Abilities

#### 4.3.4.1 Jalazone Refugee Camp Center and Kindergarten

Making a difference in the lives of marginalized women and children at the Jalazone Refugee camp has always been the YWCA's main concern. Established in 1968, the Jalazone centre was the first in the camp to provide many needed services to the local community. From embroidery to technical skills training for young women, physical health and women's rights awareness, the centre continues to support women's economic empowerment, gender awareness and provide a safe haven for the Jalazone women. But perhaps the highlight of all is what the Jalazone centre continues to offer to the children of the refugee camp.

Palestinian children grow up differently from most others; their development is distorted by an occupation that destroys their innocence, dreams and well-being. They live in constant

fear, are forced to grow up at a very early age and to challenge the toughest of circumstances. Consequently, the investment in children's early childhood education signifies a necessity and an obligation anticipated to help Palestinian children develop their capacity to deal with the challenges of life under occupation and to provide them with a good foundation that will equip them with adaptive skills and knowledge. Our goal of the preschool program at the Jalazone centre is to help children build a positive self-concept through encouraging their physical, intellectual, cognitive, social and emotional growth. A special emphasis is made on enhancing a child's inquisitive skills; children are helped and encouraged to explore the world around them, to ask why things happen and how things work.



For 44 years now, the YWCA has been providing the space for the Jalazone children to function within a participatory learning environment in which they can work both independently and as members of small and large groups. It is true that children are being taught to attend to and finish a task, listen to a story in a group, take turns and share, follow rules, respect the property of others and care for their belongings, but more importantly, they are being informed day in and day out that every one of them is unique; has a different personality, possesses different strengths and that each and every one of them deserves the opportunity to learn in ways that make the most of his/her strengths and help them overcome their weaknesses.

During the year 2011, 70 kids benefited from the Kindergarten and were ready to start their school life with more confidence and ambition





# Success Story

## Abdel Kareem Omar

Abdel Kareem Omar is a 5 year old child from the Jalazone Refugee Camp, Ramallah. He joined the YWCA Kindergarten the scholastic year of 2010-2011, and it was his first year of education. Abdel Kareem is considered a unique and new case at the Kindergarten. When he joined the KG, he did not have any kind of communication skills to the extent that the only accent he used to talk with the kids and teachers was the formal Arabic accent.



Due to this, he was unable to understand his teachers when they spoke to him. After discussing Abdel Kareem's situation and language barriers with his parents, we discovered that he learned the Arabic language from watching religious shows, documentaries and cartoons in the formal Arabic language. Since he was born, he did not mingle with any kids, friends, neighbors, not even with his family members at home, the only activity he used to practice was watching TV.

It is a difficult situation because neither the teachers nor the kids were able to communicate with him and he had to learn his own language but in the colloquial accent. He did not even have any basic knowledge of life skills and social interaction means.

After two months of enrollment at the YWCA KG with extensive focus on teaching Abdel Kareem the Arabic language informal dialect, he was able to gain new language and educational skills. Currently, he can communicate and interact normally with his friends and teachers, and this is due to the great support of the teachers and parents who played a major role in his language and educational advancement.

Abdel Kareem's parents expressed their gratitude to the support, patience and help offered to their kid. They indicated that "our kid not only gained informal Arabic language but also became a more social and active kid".

### 4.3.4.2 Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp Kindergarten

Preschool education at the Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp kindergarten follows cognitive-social learning approaches that fulfill the needs of children; intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically. The program provides child's enthusiasm for learning and expanding her/his world of ideas through exploration, self-discovery and directed learning activities where teachers help children to independently search out and use existing knowledge and new information to solve problems and acquire new skills.

Preschool education at the YWCA kindergarten made and still makes a difference in later school performance of the disadvantaged children of Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp. The 80 graduated kids during the scholastic year 2010 – 2011 have showed a significant increase in their use of acquired knowledge and skills and positive changes in their behavior such



as hygiene habits, taking responsibility, compliance with instructions and peer acceptance and support of each other as noticed and commented by parents, school teachers and local community members.

This was achieved by using various types of theme -based curricula, open framework, child-centered, and protection mechanisms, where teachers develop techniques that are adaptive to the needs and requirements of the children, and by encouraging learning through a variety of media and equipment tools such as books, educational games, audio and video CDs, etc.

Teachers and parents especially mothers are involved in the development of the child's character and enhancement of self-esteem during the two scholastic years of preschool education. The YWCA KG offers children and their mothers an environment of enforcing good values such as tolerance, accepting others with their differences. Local and international visitors of the KG and volunteers add qualitative perspectives to the cultural diversity that children are exposed to.

Furthermore, the teachers at the YWCA KG have adequate certified education degrees in addition to a considerable practical experience. They are also enrolled in upgrading training courses which intend to increase their competencies to help them find ways to improve the teaching and learning processes in their own specific area.





#### 4.3.4.3 Children Center in Jerusalem

The YWCA invests in establishing educational, creative and safe spaces for children where they can acquire skills to enable them to discover and understand their needs, abilities and skills in an inspired and encouraging way.

During the year 2011, the YWCA of Jerusalem offered a total of 433 Jerusalemite children from both sexes, ages between 4-14 years various recreational, entertaining, educational and cultural activities, like drawing, ballet dancing, and drama courses, and organized two summer camps for 30 young male and female members.

Additionally, a total of 560 school children from six schools in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jericho benefited from the schools' supportive education and recreational program funded by AVSI, an Italian NGO. This school program has actually assisted the organization in expanding its target groups and promoting its activities among young students in schools.

Furthermore a dabkeh dance group consisting of 15 male and female youth was formed almost two years ago and during the year 2011 the group received extensive trainings in various dabkeh dances in preparation for the official launching ceremony of the YWCA dabkeh group that is planned to take place beginning of 2012.



## 5. Our Representation, Advocacy and International Visitors

The year 2011 witnessed an active role for the YWCA of Palestine in awareness building for women on their rights, and the creation of networks so the women can actually access organizations and policy bodies to impact these rights. At the local level, the YWCA is entering an important era, and has established many good women networks which will be formalized in 2012 and beyond. The YWCA realized that as important as delivering services, or securing access to services for women, if laws, rules and regulations governing women do not change, impacting positively women's lives and creating safe spaces for women, where they can feel empowered and practice their rights, will continue to be limited.

Also, the YWCA changed its approach in this sector, and is partnering with many other women organizations and creating different coalitions that will address critical issues in international forums like the CSW and other human rights platforms.

During 2011, many international delegations were received, and many staff members participated overseas in conferences, advocacy trips and workshops. As always, raising awareness about the political situation and its implications on women continues to be the focus of the YWCA. During the World Council meeting in Zurich in July 2011, the Palestine delegation organized several workshops with partners, and delivered several presentations. One major presentation was about the Arab Spring, its implications on the area, and how it changes the roles of the YWCAs in the region. It was clear that more work needs to be done with the youth, to ensure that they feel a sense of integration, ownership and belonging to the many societal processes which are aspired to bring positive changes in their lives.





## 6. YWCA National and Local Associations' New Boards

During the last quarter of the year 2011, the three local associations of the YWCA of Palestine elected their board members, and this year the elections recorded a remarkable achievement in attracting young members to join the governing bodies of the YWCA. In Ramallah 33% of the Board is made up of young members under the age of 30.

National YWCA of Palestine Board Members		Ramallah Board Members	
Abla Nasir	National President	Layla Khoury	Board President
Haifa Baramki	National Vice President	Luma Tarazi	Vice President
Vera Pano	National Vice President	Faten Husari	Treasurer
Mira Rizik	Ex-Officio Member	Queen Massoud	Minutes Secretary
Hala Salem	Treasure	Dana Awwad	Member
Rana Majrouh	Minutes Secretary	Tami Rafidi	Member
Mireille Ghneim	Member	Rana Stephan	Member
Mary Sahhar	Member	Mais Abu Leil	Member
Dana Awwad	Member	Lubna Ghanayem	Member
Tami Rafidi	Member	Daisy Rumman	Ex-Officio Member
Layla Khoury	Member	Jericho Board Members	
Fadia Massoud	Member	Fadia Massoud	Board President
Linda Ammar	Member	Jessica Hatar	Vice President
Jerusalem YWCA Board Members		Lilian Hatar	Treasurer
Mireille Ghneim	Board President	Rana Majrouh	Minutes Secretary
Mary Sahhar	Vice President	Nadira Makhoulf	Member
Hala Salem	Treasurer	Linda Ammar	Member
Fadwa Khader	Minutes Secretary	Majida Hatar	Member
Helen Khader	Member	Loura Nashnash	Member
Hadil Mousa	Member	Hanan Naber	Member
Lily Said	Member	Nazar Halteh	Ex-Officio Member
Sandrine Amer	Ex-Officio Member		

## 7.Visitors of the YWCA of Palestine during 2011

Month	Who	From where
January	Lott Törngren	YW/YM Sweden
March	Presbyterian Women and Pal Craft aid	USA
March	Dylan Mathews	Y-Care International
April	Fredrik Glad Gjernes Guro Wiik	Y Global Norway
April	Adamo Antoniadis Bruno Essig	Horyzon
May	Mieke Zagt John Veron	ICCO
June	Vincent Gainey	Christian Aid
June	Visit of Disciples of Christ Church The Moluccan Protestant Church Group	USA Netherlands
July	Fahim Kashefi Sara Fowler Journey for Justice Group	Y- Care International Y-Care International International group
August	Peter Makari	Global Ministries - USA
October	Marie Benktson	YW/YM Sweden
November	Presbyterian Church Group	USA

**“The YWCA would like to thank all its visitors and partners for their valuable support and for believing in us and in the work we do in serving the Palestinian community and in making positive change in the lives of thousands of Palestinian improvised and marginalized people”.**



## 8. Travels and Missions during 2011

Month	Where	Who	Event
Feb/March	USA	Arda Aghazarian Maylena David Faten Husari	CSW
April	USA	Mira Rizek	Global Ministries Board Meeting YWCA Greensboro Visit YWCA Walnut Creek/San Francisco Visit
July	Zurich	Seven Delegates from the YWCA of Palestine.	World Council Meeting
October	Dead Sea	Senior Staff (Council and Local Associations)	Staff Strategic Review and Team Building Retreat
November	London	Mira Rizek	Christian Aid Partners Meeting Meetings with Y-Care International
December	Sri Lanka	Mira Rizek Arda Aghazarian Christine Abdallah	FOKUS Meetings Meetings with Sri Lanka YWCA Sthree Mela Conference (Women, War and Peace)