

Annual Report 2013





Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

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YWCA Educating and Advocating for Our Rights Reflections on the History of the YWCA by the National President

Mrs. Abla Nasir

This report speaks for itself in terms of plans, challenges and achievements. What I want to share with you, dear friends, colleagues and partners, is a reflection on the YWCA of Palestine.

Established over a hundred years ago, one of our big challenges continues to be maintaining a young membership... Interested and committed. We struggle to live up to the name, "Young" Women's Christian Association; we look around and find that among our membership, "the Young" are only a few. So who is the "Young" in our name? Is it us the service providers and members of this great association, or the young to whom our programs are directed?

The founders are no longer with us, but a legacy has been made by those who followed and the story is still being written but not fully told. The ones who know the story or know of the story are a handful. Those few that have remained have a responsibility to relate the story to the others.

The current leadership is a mix of the third generation and the new. It's a healthy balance if the old share and let go of some, and the "Young" keep their enthusiasm to listen and think of how to complete what has already been built and add new dimensions to it.

The YWCA history and work can only be a collective effort if all constituencies participate. This is how we distinguish ourselves from other existing organizations. One leadership breeds another and this allows the associations to move forward. Maybe the pace differs sometimes, but what creates the Movement and gives it sustainability is the parts working as a whole.

I have been privileged to be part of the whole. It's a commitment that does not stop by the end of a term or a job.




Reflections for 2013: National General Secretary

Ms. Mira Rizeq

During 2013, the YWCA of Palestine took serious steps to implement and substantiate the rights-based approach in programming, complementing this with its new, bold and well defined advocacy strategy. The YWCA of Palestine, like any other NGO should be focusing more on complementing the Palestinian government services, as well as advocating with and on behalf of right holders, the poor, the marginalized and the excluded. This would have been the case under normal circumstances, but with the continued Israeli military Occupation, and the shrinking and control of Palestinian resources, this continues to be our mission impossible and great challenge.

Despite the ongoing Occupation, the YWCA's programs continue to focus on establishing creative new programs for replication, especially those focusing on women and youth empowerment. For example, the YWCA of Jerusalem continues to be a strategic and important service provider especially because Jerusalem is completely cut off from the rest of the Palestinian communities, with the wall and the check points making it difficult for Palestinians from the West Bank to access Jerusalem. The YWCA of Jerusalem thus, is an important institution in the life of the community, offering a safe space for women, youth, and children to gather, learn, experiment, and to engage in civic life.





Although the challenges continue we have not been discouraged, on the contrary, the year 2013 has been strategic in defining new program directions and laying down the foundation for a new strategic plan to be issued in 2015. Our challenge will always continue to be how to best empower the poor and marginalized, the young, and the women. 2013 is the year we have explored and deepened our commitment to following a rights based approach in our programs and advocacy strategies. We see a focus on human rights, the observance of international and humanitarian law as essential ways for us to empower and develop new leaders.

In the spring, we launched the Fabric of Our Lives project. This is both an advocacy project which calls for the Right of Return as an essential component of a Just Peace and recognizes women rights to tell their stories of forced transfer and thus exercise their political rights. Their stories inspire us all to work harder for peace. This project also supports women's livelihoods, especially refugee women who have been displaced and have had to face numerous hardships for over 65 years.

In addition to our work with women in refugee camps, The YWCA of Palestine extended its services to at least 10 new rural areas including 3 new communities around Jerusalem helping us reach out to those with the greatest need and in communities who need us the most.

This report sheds light on all these new developments in addition to our core programming. This report also thus, recognizes new partnerships with our international donors and partners as we seek together to make a difference and work for a Just Peace. Together through programs that empower and develop leadership we are making a difference in the lives of women and their communities.

Highlights for 2013: Strengthening Partnerships for Peace and Justice

The year 2013 has been very strategic in promoting Peace with Justice and building partnerships locally and internationally around the following interventions

■ . A. The Fabric of Our Lives

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Everyone has the right to leave any country and return to his or her own country. Article 13 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the spring of 2013, after months of planning, we decided to move forward on an advocacy project that would link our program work to our rights based work on peace and justice. We wanted an advocacy project that would link our work on Security Council Resolution 1325 with our support for economic empowerment through the support of women's livelihoods.

We decided to lift up our elders, the Palestinian women in our refugee camps in Aqbet Jaber near Jericho and Jalazoune near Ramallah, who remember the Nakba, the Great Catastrophe. Their tragic stories of dispossession, death, and destruction and their steadfast hope for a return to their home and lands have inspired us to continue to call for the Right of Return as an essential non-negotiable component for a Just Peace. The YWCA along with many others believes in and supports the full implementation of all UN resolutions on Palestine and full observance of human rights and international humanitarian law under occupation. We continue to support UN Resolution 194 based on the Declaration of Human Rights that clearly states refugees have the right of return to their homes. This right has no statute of limitation and cannot be extinguished by a peace treaty or the establishment of a state. UN General Assembly Resolution 194 resolves that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible."



The fabric of Palestinian lives was ripped apart between 1947-1949 when over 750,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes and lands. By listening to the women tell their stories about what happened that day or days, how they have survived not only this catastrophe but many more (ongoing Nakba) due to Israel's ongoing occupation, the longest in history, we have come to a new understanding about the role of women's leadership and dignity in trying to keep their families and communities together.

Will you hear my story?
Will you support me?
Oppression can never prohibit me from expressing
my culture, heritage, history, faith, and dignity.
My past was stolen, but will you help me restore my
future?

We have begun this project by highlighting five women from different regions of Palestine. We interviewed Zahiyyah from Al-Masmiya Al-Kabira (Gaza), Fatima from Dayr Al-Dubban (Hebron), Heigar from Al-Dawayima (Hebron), Zuhdiyah from Dayr Yasin (Jerusalem), and Mariam from Beit Nabala (Jaffa).

We honor their brave lives by creating a doll in their name with an embroidered dress from the region they fled and tell part of their story and that of their village in a small book that accompanies each doll. These brave Palestinian women, with their embroidered dresses and large keys, have inspired us to continue to work for freedom, justice, and peace for all.

Our hope is that these dolls will be used for advocacy purposes. At this moment the United Church of Christ, one of our ecumenical partners, has agreed to help us sell the dolls in the United States. We are looking for other partners to sell the dolls both abroad and here in Palestine.

In the words of Mira Rizeq, National General Secretary, The Fabric of Our Lives Project "captures the stories, but, more importantly the project delivers messages of peace: without peace these women can never restore their dignity. Without justice, these women and their families can never live in peace."

■ B. Youth Peace Performers (YPP)

The Young Peace performer (YPP) is an exchange program funded by the Fredskorpset initiated by Y-Global (YWCA/YMCA of Norway, partnering with different YWCA's and YMCA's: Palestine, Norway, Kenya, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Zambia and Southern Sudan. Each year, the program is hosted by one of the countries. In 2013, the YWCA of Palestine, East Jerusalem YMCA, and the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) hosted the program. Every year 20 youth between the ages of 18-25 from 7 different countries come together for 8 months to travel to different countries to advocate for justice and peace through drama, music, theater and workshops.

The 2013 – 2014 Young Peace Performers (YPP) program started in August 2013 in Jordan, with the participation of 20 participants from Palestine, Norway, Kenya, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Zambia and Southern Sudan. In Jordan, the participants had orientation on the aims of the program, historical background to the conflict in Israel / Palestine, the political situation in Israel / Palestine including what is a military occupation and how it violates the rights of Palestinians. They were educated on international and humanitarian law as well as the multiple non-violent ways Palestinians and the international community are resisting. They paid particular attention to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) global Movement and the KAIROS Palestine document. They explored how they could contribute to this Movement and inspire others.

They received training and workshops on: inter-cultural communication; team building; tools for working in a group and handling conflict; how to engage in meaningful dialogue; how to hear a story; how to transform youth from Subjects to Citizens (S2C) training; and how to prepare a presentation on BDS for the Palestinian context.

Only 10 participants out of the 20 participants of the program (namely the Norwegians and Palestinians) were able to enter Palestine. The others were not granted Visas to enter Israel and thus participate in this program. The program in Palestine started in early September and went until late December 2013, during which they had visits and meetings arranged by the JAI. They also performed their BDS shows and workshops with various Palestinian student and youth groups in Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Hebron, Jericho and Nablus areas. These groups including working with youth in scouts, schools, universities, popular committees and of course YMCA and YWCA youth groups.



They promoted the BDS campaign locally, illustrated the impact of the BDS campaign on the international and local levels, and encouraged teenagers and students to boycott Israeli products and promote the campaign among their friends and communities, hence engage in global advocacy efforts to end the occupation.

The key objective of this project was to build international solidarity especially amongst young people with the people of Palestine through witnessing their daily life, and listening to their stories. The participants will then go to their respective countries and raise awareness of YWCA and YMCA associations/members and their communities and help them promote these campaigns in an effort to build peace with justice. This program is one for the most instrumental programs of empowering youth to engage in peace building and understand justice issues, and thus build global partnerships around peace and justice.



Program Updates

■ A. Economic Empowerment Thematic Area

The Economic Justice thematic area was the highlight of the year. It began with the preparation and finalization of our economic justice strategy paper which outlines the strategic interventions and directions of this thematic area. We are continuing with our focus on vocational training and education for the labor force but have added a new and exciting component called Business Enterpruenship Development Services (BEDS).

a.1 Business Enterpruenship Development Services (BEDS)

a.1.1 Outreach Enterpruenship Initiatives

During 2013, the YWCA of Palestine invested immensely in developing the frame work for this component for how to provide this new component to various marginalized areas in the West Bank. Y-Global - Norway and OXFAM Quebec were our two main donors for supporting this component which aspires to provide training services to different targeted groups in Palestine, mainly women entrepreneurs and women groups working individually or through cooperatives and local CBOs in the villages and Refugee Camps.

The aim of this component is to strengthen women impact on the economy, provide additional income for their families and empower them to have a respected role within their communities. Overall, BEDS aims to contribute to the sustainable development efforts, improve the quality of Palestinian lives in the rural and marginalized areas and to build the values of economic justice in Palestine.

Through the generous support of Y-Global, we were able to provide economic support to various groups of women in various rural areas in Ramallah and Jericho governorates.

In Ramallah, a group of 23 women from Aboud Village decided to become entrepreneurs and start their own business in mushroom cultivation after receiving all the needed technical skills, financial and management trainings in addition to all other planned social, gender, rights and civic engagement trainings. Most of these women were uneducated housewives who had lived their lives raising their families and managing their homes. By joining this group, they became enthusiastic and determined to start up an economic enterprise so they could support their families. Many of the women were widowed and needed to find a way to provide for their family. In addition, the women learned the importance of working collectively and how to demand their rights as women.

In Jericho, 3 groups, 2 from Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp and 1 from Nuwei'meh village were able to establish their new businesses and 4 existing women groups/enterprises, 2 from Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp and 2 from Nuwei'meh village were able to enhance their already existing businesses.

The group of 20 women from Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp started their business in producing several kinds of pickles. The YWCA supported this group of women by displaying their products in several food exhibitions in addition to selling their products at the YWCA of Jericho food production store. Another women group (9 members) in Nuwei'meh started producing palm dates molasses. Additionally a youth group (18 members, 10 women and 8 men) from Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp proposed to start their event management business after receiving trainings in event and financial management.



Moreover, Nuwei'meh cooperative Association for the development of traditional crafts developed their production in mosaic; they went on a study tour to Deir Hijlah Monastery nearby Jericho in which there is a highly-developed mosaic workshop, to enhance their skills in production and explore the opportunity to obtain qualified trainers. The women also participated in the financial training course to enhance their skills in costing and pricing.

With another generous fund from Oxfam Quebec, the livelihood and financial status of dozens of women from Nuwei'meh, 'Ein Dyouk villages, Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp and 'Ein el Sultan Refugee Camp were enhanced after being trained in food processing, Mushroom cultivation, and photography.

Four entrepreneurs (Samah, Rana, Adeeleh and Sahar) from Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp who had been trained in photography were supported to open their own photography studio thus proving that women can be equal with men in running economic interventions and businesses. Two of them are continuing their university education. Their studio business helps them cover their university tuition fees. Parallel to the enterpruenship trainings targeted women also received awareness raising trainings in gender equality, women's rights, and UN SCR 1325 which have resulted in demonstrated changes in attitudes, perceptions, and self assertiveness.



Success Story

Rabab Abu Salem, a 35 year old woman with 6 kids from Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp, joined the technical skills trainings in food processing, including pickling, pastry and sweets production, mushroom cultivation, and financial management. These trainings helped her start her own business in pickle production. The YWCA of Jericho also helped her enhance the packaging of her products by providing her with glass jars. This helped her to better market her products and to exhibit them in various food exhibitions in Ramallah and Jericho.

Rahab husband's is a worker in Israel and had been the only breadwinner for the family. Rahab wanted to contribute economically to enhance her family's financial situation and to provide a better life for her children. Rahab had felt depressed and frustrated because she married very young, age of 16, and not finished her education which limited her work opportunities. She was thus very enthusiastic to take advantage of the YWCA of Jericho's economic training programs. With the help of the YWCA, Rahab started a page on Face book and created links with w holesalers and traders from Jericho, Ramallah and Abu Dees. The food production project at the YWCA of Jericho also sells her products. Within a limited period of time, she has been able to build a solid base of customers that has allowed her to steadily increase her income and provide for her family.

Rahab now feels productive and empowered and able to contribute to her family's income and improve the financial conditions and influence the decision making within her family and community. Currently, she is studying the feasibility of establishing a cooperative with other women where she can expand the business and employ more women.



a.1.2 Jericho Food Production

The Jericho Food production located at the YWCA of Jericho continues to provide economic support to various women from the Jericho Governorate particularly to those working full time at the food production center.

The YWCA established the Food Production Project as an income-generating initiative targeting unemployed and marginalized women living in Jericho and the refugee camps. Women were trained and continue to be trained in food processing techniques and are employed on a full-time basis in the food production unit under the supervision of the YWCA Management and Local Board. Throughout the years, the food production project in Jericho has shown a great potential in improving women's livelihoods. Currently, the food production project serves around 13 women and 2 men as direct beneficiaries, and hundreds of family members. The food production project became a very well-known platform for training, marketing and promoting women's products in addition to helping many women and NGO's in Jericho Governorate to develop their own businesses.

The Food Production Project managed to gain and sustain the good reputation and to increase sales by 40% in 2013 when compared to the year in 2012

Shadia Mustafa Hamza

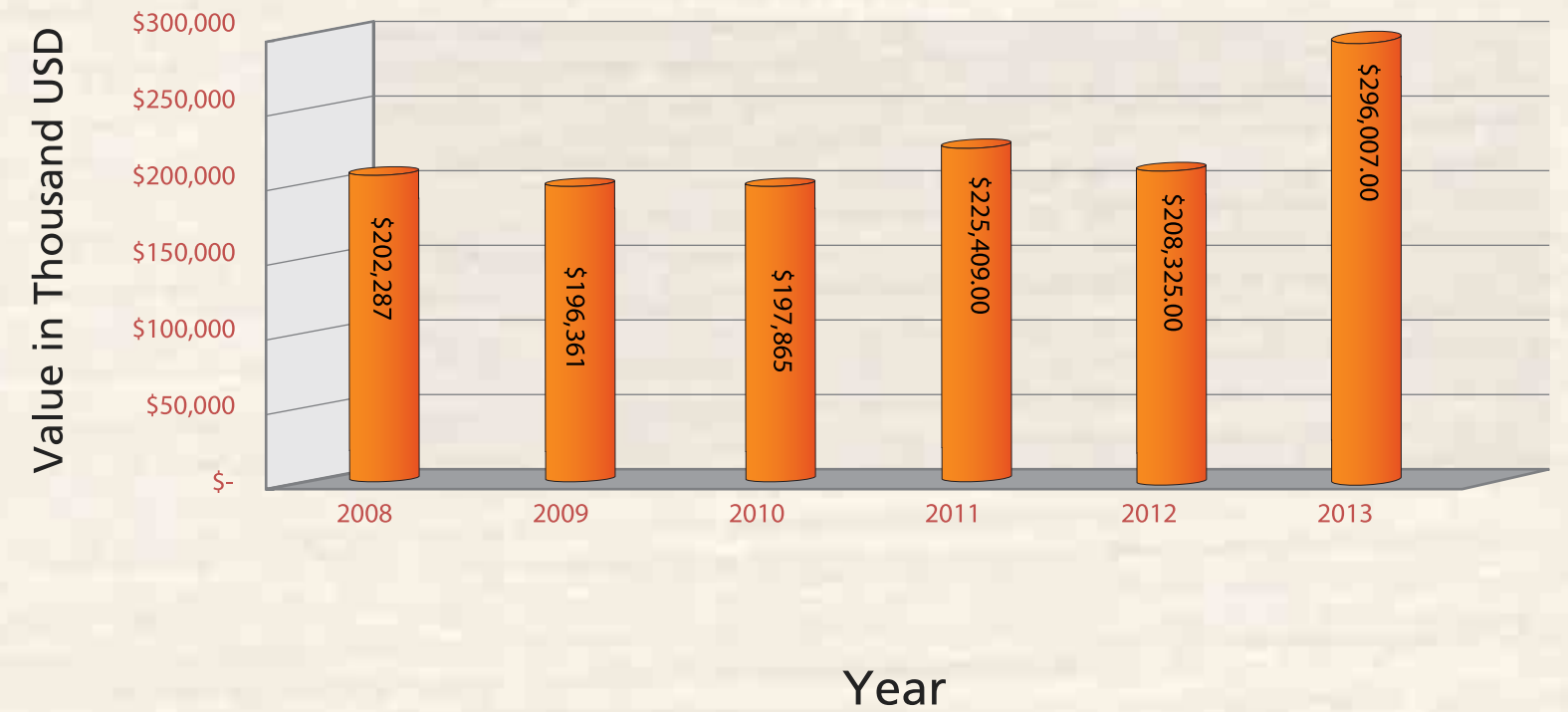
is a refugee from Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp and one of the women who contributed to establishment of the Jericho Food Production Project in 2001, after the Second Intifada. Shadia developed her leadership skills while working at the Food Project and became responsible for taking customers' orders, organizing work and following up production and delivery. On a personal level she has become the "family consultant" for all family members. They take her opinions seriously before making any decisions regarding marriage, economic ventures, or even health issues in the family. Even her father and brothers consult with her, which is not common in our culture.

While working at the Food Production Project, Shadia was trained in various technical and managerial topics and attended many workshops about violence against women. She was able to confidentially talk about violence against woman from her own experience with her two divorced sisters.

Growth Production Sale



Sales of Jericho Production



a.2. Vocational Training and Education (VTE)

a.2.1 Vocational Training Center at the YWCA of Ramallah

The YWCA of Ramallah Vocational Training Center (VTC) continues to play a critical role in addressing competitive and market-driven specializations and targeting new groups of beneficiaries by offering them specializations that match their needs and skills. This approach responds to the changing economy and labour market. We are grateful to our main donor “Bread for the World” who believed in us and this approach for improving women’s economic lives.

One example of a market driven specialization is our Events Management training which has succeeded in attracting new groups of women who are educated and need specific skills to advance in their work place. This specialization was offered for the second year attracting 14 new students who have University degrees (BA). They now have access to jobs with various institutions such as the Ramallah Municipality, the Palestinian Monitory Authority, banks, and other private sector institutions. Thus, at the end of the program these students will have increased employment opportunities and hopefully will advance in their jobs and earn higher incomes.



The table below gives an indicator of VTC graduates enrolled and employed during the year 2013

Specialization	Number of VTC graduates in 2013	% employed during 2013	Enrolled for the year 2013 - 2014
Office Management	78	65%	75
Events Management	12	100%	14
Total	90		89

A number of VTC graduates indicated that having the opportunity to join the VTC programs contributed to engaging them actively and equitably in the labor market and to earn an income. In addition it has informed them about their rights as a worker under labor laws and how to be competitive in this market.



Success story

Abeer Badwan, is a 19 year- old young woman who divorced after being married for only two weeks, after an arranged marriage. When she was 18, Abeer had to follow and obey the social norms of accepting this arranged marriage to one of her relatives. Being a divorced young women was not socially acceptable and so she became depressed.

Abeer's older sister encouraged her to enroll in the Office Management (OM) program at the YWCA since she herself was one of the Office Management course graduates. Knowing the excellent reputation of the YWCA in helping marginalized women to find jobs after graduation, she encouraged her to take a step to change her life, by joining the OM program. Abeer said: "This was a turning point in my life. I felt that I lost many things in my life. I gained back my confidence and hope to envision a better future for myself." Abeer indicated that with the help and support of her trainers she was able to regain self confidence. She is now one of the top notch students reflecting a positive attitude toward her new life. She has also encouraged other students to never give up but work harder. She is now two months away from graduating. She is a role model for many women and an affirmation that women's economic well being affects all parts of their life and can lead to leadership development.



a.2.2 Vocational Training Center at the YWCA of Jerusalem

Lots of efforts were invested in upgrading the Office Management specialization modules this year to better meet the needs of the trainees and the market as well. This process of customization and change moved the newly employed graduates from subordinates into participants in the decision making processes of their respective institutions. This VTC continues to be generously funded by Bread for the World.

The YWCA continued to develop the Multimedia specialization which introduces young women to an area that has been mostly controlled by men. These students face a huge challenge in this rapidly growing industry. We are grateful for their expertise in filming many events that take place for the YWCA of Jerusalem.

In addition to these specializations, the YWCA of Jerusalem offers short courses for enrichment or skills where VTC graduates and employed women can enroll in order to enhance their work status and gain better income. These courses include practical accounting, and principles of taxation and English and Hebrew languages.



Specialization	Number of VTC graduates in 2013	% employed during 2013	Enrolled for the year 2013 - 2014
Office Management	76	41%	77
Multi Media	11	45%	11
Project Management	7	100%	5
Total	94		93



Success story

With teary eyes and a trembling voice, Mona who does not possess the minimal registration fees needed in order to apply and study at VTC of the YWCA of Jerusalem, shared her story with us. Taking our mission and vision seriously, we had more reason to accept this woman in our VTC. Mona possessed what was more important than fees. She had resilience and a dream to fulfill.

Still with the same teary eyes and trembling voice, Mona announced that she had gone into early marriage because her family thought that through marriage, the family would solve its financial burdens. Mona had to skip school for a couple of months, yet her determination placed her back on the academic road and she passed the governmental exam but with an average much below than her expectations. Her determination and brightness did not stop her from pursuing vocational education. She joined the Office Management Specialization in the academic year 2012-2013 and the YWCA is helping her to get employed in an institution that can fulfill her dreams and ensure her financial independency and stability.



Reflections by May Amierh, VTC of Jerusalem Supervisor

"There are at least a handful of stories like this every year in the Vocational Training Center in the YWCA of Jerusalem. These are the stories that the trainees and staff work very hard to transform into successes. These are the stories that give us the power and strength to pursue our mission no matter how complicated or rough the road is.

Jerusalemite women who come to study at the VTC of the YWCA of Jerusalem - such as Mona possess what it takes to succeed; we only help them discover it. The family atmosphere that prevails in the VTC is very important; we try hard to understand and not judge them, we work hard to make them proud of what they are, we help them trigger their ambitions and look forward passionately at their future. All this is backed by constant counseling and warm appreciation and guidance. These women are very special; this is why we offer them the technical skills that are compatible with the market needs and work very hard to locate suitable jobs for them. We indulge in using creative and participatory methods in training them. We refrain from using the traditional way of "talk and chalk in the classrooms".

During the period of vocational education those women are introduced to all the skills needed for their future jobs. Drama and art are used in order to introduce the soft skills simply because those skills cannot be adopted otherwise. Team building, decision making, planning and budgeting, risk and venture are some of the skills being trained in the KAB (Know about Business) course that we offer in order to introduce the idea of entrepreneurship to them.

Group work and active class activities are applied in teaching the languages and business topics. Computer and publishing skills are introduced through the best IT techniques to the degree that visiting Jerusalemite school principals were astonished by the techniques used in teaching during one of the open days.

Yet, the harsh economic, political and social situation the Jerusalemites face tremendously affects all aspects of life and consequently contributes to extensive declines in economic investments and businesses which results in decreasing employment opportunities and pay rates. This is why we exert double efforts in placing the graduates in working positions and keeping them there. We feel we are going uphill all the time but it's our hill and our perseverance and we are enjoying it.



■ B Youth Civic Engagement Thematic Area

b.1 Youth Interventions at the YWCA of Ramallah

Through the generous support of Y-Global, Y-Sweden, and the Church of Scotland the YWCA of Ramallah was able to expand its outreach initiatives and target youth groups from marginalized rural areas and refugee camps, particularly those affected by the apartheid wall such as Aboud Village and Jalazoune Refugee Camp. 45 youth benefited from a variety of activities and trainings which have contributed to transforming them from being idle to being more aware of their human rights and working towards standing up for them. By partnering with Al-Mada Association for Art-Based Community Development, youth developed their leadership and communication skills through music, and managed to compose and record 2 songs reflecting some of the issues they face as Palestinian youth.

As a result of the awareness raising sessions in human rights, advocacy, active citizenship, economic and labor rights and gender, the youth were able to develop an enhanced sense of personal responsibility towards serving their communities. The youth also had several opportunities for civic and political participation by means of nonviolent resistance, such as taking part in the BDS movement, calling for peace and justice in Palestine, and mobilizing other youth to actively engage in this initiative.

Moreover, a number of youth members and VTC students' participated in the Human Rights Marathon in Ramallah in May, which allowed them to raise their voices and join forces with the rest of the world on the International Day for Human Rights, demanding the rights they are entitled to as Palestinian youth living under occupation.



Success Story

Hadeel Batrawi is a highly motivated 17-year old young woman who joined the YWCA of Ramallah in 2010. Since then, she has been actively engaged in the activities of the YWCA. This year she raised her voice and that of Palestinian youth at the **Global Youth Partnership Conference** held in Istanbul in November 2013 following her engagement in the Joint Advocacy Initiative in August 2013. The JAI selected Hadeel to participate in this conference based on her active engagement in the Journey For Justice program and her commitment to advocate for the rights of Palestinian youth living under occupation. "From my experience", Hadeel says, It is crucial for us Palestinian youth to learn about our historical narrative, in order to fight for our cause and for justice to prevail. Saying you are Palestinian is not enough, but you have to act upon it and become an agent for change"



b.2 Youth interventions at the YWCA of Jericho

Youth interventions in Jericho were mainly supported by Y-Global - Norway in the form of establishing “Saving Groups” for civic engagement and economic empowerment purposes. The concept of Saving Groups entails actual saving of money by the group members to support their own individual and or group interventions on economic, educational, and social. A youth Savings Group of 20 youth, males and females, ages between 18 to 26 from Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp and Nweimeh village in the Palestinian Valley was formed and received various raising awareness sessions in areas such as economic and labor rights, gender concepts/social roles, democracy, lobbying, and advocacy and campaigning techniques where many of the topics contributed directly to the youth demanding their labor rights at work and how to use the best tools of lobbying and advocacy to achieve maximum results in their daily life and at the workplace.

Group members had the opportunity to meet with other young people (males and females) from various areas in Jericho to discuss real life issues and role play within small groups. This gave them the chance to enhance their understanding and respect towards rights and freedom of expression for others particularly about gender rights and equality.

These trainings have contributed to establishing well informed and empowered youth who have the knowledge and tools to act on certain issues particularly in raising community members’ awareness in various areas including difficult such difficult issues such as honor killing which has been on the rise in Palestine.

Remarkably 10 out of the 20 trained youth are in the process of establishing their own community organizations in the Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp in cooperation with the various CBOs, Popular Committee in the Refugee Camp, and Jericho Governorate where youth are totally excluded from. This initiative will materialize in 2014, and it would be exciting to see what the outcomes will be.



b.3 Youth interventions at the YWCA of Jerusalem

The preparations for establishing the Jerusalemite Youth Forum to put forward strategies and plans for the youth sector in Jerusalem was the highlight of this year. The YWCA of Jerusalem was able to attract 8 youth organizations in Jerusalem to join the youth forum. These included the following: Burj Al Laqlaq, Union for Charitable Societies, YMCA of Jerusalem, Union of health work Committees, the African Committee, Caritas Jerusalem, Sawa and Palestinian vision. On November 7th the YWCA of Jerusalem organized a workshop for these 8 organizations to facilitate the drafting of internal Bylaws and working principles for the forum through a participatory process.

Launching the “Know Yourself and Rights” awareness campaign was another initiative this year where more than 120 youth from four locations in Jerusalem namely, Shufat refugee camp (Al Maseereh school), Silwan (Unrwa school), Old City (Frere school) in addition to the YWCA’s youth group from Jerusalem district designed seven initiatives under the “Know Yourself Campaign” that will be implemented in various schools in Jerusalem in 2014. Every initiative had a method of presentation consisting of drama, poetry, and rap singing. The themes of the initiatives included: Duties as rights; Jerusalem is calling you; What is your goal? Put Yourself in my shoes; Change my Syllabus; The Start of a Dream; and what is in your head.



■ C. Promoting Women's Rights Thematic Area

This thematic area has been mainly supported by the Y-Global (Norway) and the World YWCA since 2010 through the FOKUS Project and then implemented in partnership with YWCA of Sudan and Sri Lanka. The first phase of the project focused on building the capacity of the YWCA as a women's rights organization. In 2012, the focus was shifted to training communities in women's rights, advocacy, lobbying and developing a common understanding of the UNSR 1325.

In 2013 through this Project, the YWCA's capacity for delivering effective development programs and impacting advocacy strategies in relation to UNSCR 1325 made serious progress. The YWCA of Palestine managed to exceed pre-defined goals and do more than what is expected. It has helped the YWCA of Palestine move from a service delivery to a rights-based organization. The YWCA of Palestine has helped its associations today clearly campaign for the implementation of women's rights for political participation, peace building and security, and most importantly how to support local forums. The YWCA of Palestine is currently an active member and partner with Al-Muntada, the Forum for Combating Violence Against Women which is a forum of more than fifteen local women NGOs.

Also, the YWCA of Palestine has been invited to join the 1325 National governmental Coalition. We are already a member of a civil society coalition on 1325 which includes approximately 80 local NGO members.

A total of 5 trainings on UNSCR 1325 and Ending Violence against Women were delivered within our different associations. Each of the trainings had approximately 20 women participants of which 50% were young women. Components included: Understanding UNSCR 1325; application in daily life of UNSCR 1325; strategic approaches to involve women in decision-making; and how to advocate and lobby for your rights.



The Campaign: Making Women Agents of Change

Women from the Refugee Camps of Jalazoune and Aqbet Jaber exercised their civil/social rights by lobbying local authorities to protect them and their children from the illegal distribution of drugs in both refugee camps. The Refugee Camps women's group initiated and led these campaigns with support from YWCA Palestine. Both groups appointed a woman leader to lead the groups and held discussions with the male dominated local council, local civil and community based organizations. They also met with local schools about the campaign. Training sessions were organized for these various groups ahead of launching the campaign. The logo and slogan were developed based on a school's competition which included a children's competition aimed at understanding the campaign theme through art and creative writing. The winning piece was chosen for the poster and slogan for the campaign. Banners, Posters, t-shirts and vests were produced carrying the theme and were distributed among the community.

Then, it was agreed that the campaign would take place over a two-year period, with the YWCA of Palestine providing strong support in the first year and the women taking the full responsibility in the second year as part of sustaining their ownership, empowerment and leadership development.

Moving women from the passive mode to the active mode and supporting them to become agents of change has been the central achievement of this campaign.



Finally, The YWCA of Palestine started preparations for an International Conference for UNSCR 1325 in Palestine as part of the next stage for the FOKUS project. The conference aims to shed light nationally and internationally on the importance of implementing this resolution, as well as facilitating all parties to come up with the National Action Plan (NAP). We are looking forward to technical assistance and support in building a consensus around the need to build this NAP.

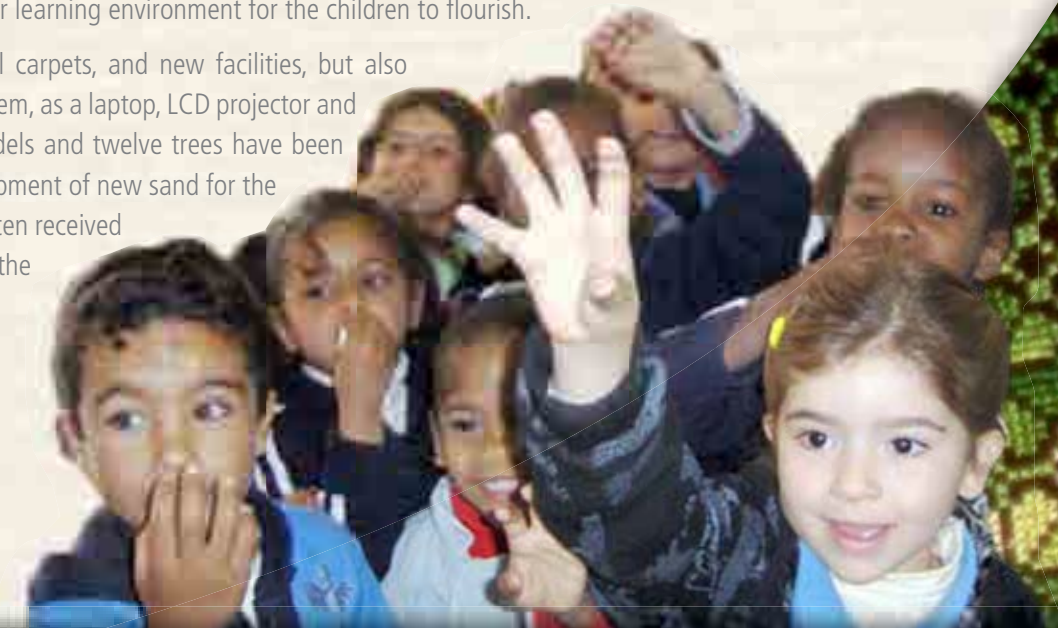


■ D. Children's Cognitive Skills and Abilities Thematic Area

d.1 Jalazoune Refugee Camp Center and Kindergarten

Being one of the main facilities at the YWCA Jalazoune Center, the center's kindergarten which has been graduating generations of camp residents, welcomed 98 children (45 boys and 53 girls) from the camp during the year 2013. With the support of the United Palestinian Appeal (UPA), and as a continuation to the work done in 2012, the different classrooms were fully developed into learning centers--- the Imagination Center and the Concentration Center. The newly developed centers, with its various corners, toys and tools, serve as platforms for enhancing children's cognitive and social skills by providing a better learning environment for the children to flourish.

Not only were the centers furnished with wall to wall carpets, and new facilities, but also technology was incorporated within the educational system, as a laptop, LCD projector and speakers were obtained. Moreover, six educational models and twelve trees have been donated to the center by the UNRWA, in addition to shipment of new sand for the outdoor playground. The new additions to the kindergarten received positive feedback from parents, teachers, partners and the children themselves.





Success Story

Salem Sameer, a four-year old child, from Jalazoune Refugee Camp is amongst numbers of children living with learning disabilities. Upon joining the kindergarten at the YWCA Jalazoune Center, our teachers discovered that although he has good pronunciation, he was unable to name ordinary objects or form sentences to express himself. Instead, he would point at things without knowing their name or ways to describe them. Through fun games, songs, storytelling and other creative methods, the teachers were able to successfully increase his knowledge in vocabulary and he is now able to form complete sentences and express himself comfortably just like his peers, leading to a more positive learning experience for him and a highly improved academic performance in the different topics. Over the past fifty years, the YWCA has changed many children's lives, and brought some happiness in their lives, which visitors always observe when visiting our Kindergartens. It is these children who bring hope for a positive future.



d.2 Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp Kindergarten

The YWCA kindergarten (KG) at Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp follows cognitive-social learning approaches that fulfill the needs of children intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically. 60 kids (35 boys and 25 girls) were enrolled in the scholastic year 2012/2013 which started on September 1, 2013.



Learning by Doing Activities

As part of the learning by doing methodology, children participated in picking olives during the olive harvest season in the camp and the next day they participated in the process of pickling the olives by preserving/pickling them in salted water, green pepper and lemon.

The children also participated in a baking bread day facilitated by a Bedouin woman from the camp who brought the traditional oven and made the bread. The children enjoyed this day and ate breakfast made by their own hot bread dipped with olive oil, thyme and olives.

The kindergarten focuses on enhancing the relationship between teachers, mothers and children. Several fun activities were organized for mothers and their children on the occasion of Mother's Day 20/3 in cooperation with the Municipality Child Center in addition to organizing an open fun day for the children's mothers on November 6.

The KG program also works on enhancing teachers' competencies and teaching methods and during April the Right to Play Foundation in cooperation with the Directorate of Education in Jericho organized a training course for the KG teachers on how to teach through playing.

On 27 May 2014, 57 kids attended the KG graduation ceremony which was organized at the kindergarten premises and attended by local representatives and parents of children



Success Story

Nour and Safa'a are two girls who lost their mother after a period of struggling with cancer. On top their father is unemployed. Safa'a was only three months when her mother died so the two girls moved to live with their uncle and aunt who raised them with their own kid Muhammad.

The two girls were feeling lonely and isolated in spite of all the efforts invested by their new family to make them happy. In cooperation with their aunt and the constant follow up of our KG teachers, the two girls found in the KG a safe and supporting environment, love and care which helped Nour and Safa'a to become more self confident in expressing themselves and their needs which resulted in better analytical and creative expressions of thoughts and inspirations. Today, the KG is the center of their life.



d.3 Children Center in Jerusalem

Around 450 children from the Jerusalem governorate and other neighboring areas joined the various activities of the children center at the YWCA of Jerusalem all through the year 2013. The center is growing day by day by offering a wider variety of activities aimed at increasing children cognitive and recreational skills. The YWCA attracts children between the ages of 4-12 years old in its activities which include Ballet, Dabkeh, Taekwondo, Chess, and creative art.

Two open days were also organized during the year where kids came and joined all of the above mentioned activities for free in addition to drawing on faces by clowns, as well as motivational games and songs.

Summer camps are integral part of the children program which are organized the beginning of June until end of August. The purpose of these camps is to help children to utilize their time in positive ways during the summer period, and spend fun times through their multiple activities that help them to hone their skills, abilities, creativity, and to develop their talents. The camp included several educational recreational, technical, and cultural activities including small chef, small photographer, taekwondo and chess.

Weekly trips were organized to several historic and touristic locations around the country in addition to the regular activities like swimming, painting handicrafts, art and sports. Also the program included awareness raising sessions, especially on the issue of personal safety, and safety on roads in addition to medical days. An open day was organized at the end of the summer camp closing ceremony where families got a chance to see different presentations and performances by their children, expressing what they learnt and accomplished during their time at the YWCA. The event included an art exhibition work done by the kids, singing and dancing performance, and other sport activities.

More than 340 boys and girls from Jerusalem area ages between 4 and 12 joined the summer camps. Two short summer camps and two long ones were organized to cover the whole summer vacation from 8:00 am until 4:00 pm where healthy hot meals were offered to children.

Finally, the center organized seasonal activities for kids such as egg hunt during Easter, Christmas parties, and Palestinian Child day. A total of 450 kids from various areas in Jerusalem joined those activities



E. YWCA of Palestine Policy, Advocacy and Research (PAR)

During the year, the YWCA of Palestine developed and finalized an Advocacy Strategy for Peace and Justice in October based on the following:

- Rights based approach,
- The intersection of our program work,
- Our commitment to Christian values and ethics as expressed by the YWCA Constitution and the World YWCA,
- The World Council Resolutions, and
- Commitment to human rights, humanitarian and international law.

The plan outlines our area of focus intervention at the international, national, and community level and who is responsible. It includes our commitment to work with the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) and allies.

Under the Women's Social and Economic Rights focus area we published the following study which was an important resource for understating the barriers for women's participation in the labor force.

The YWCA believes that economic justice for women is not attainable if there is no influence made on changing policies, as well as social attitudes and practices that hinder women from entering the labor market. On October 29, the YWCA in coordination with Birzeit University Development Studies Center organized a workshop at Birzeit University to launch the study titled "Barriers to Female Labor Market Participation and Entrepreneurship" that was commissioned in May 2013 to Birzeit University Development Studies Center, funded by Christian Aid, one of the YWCA main partners. Around one hundred participants attended the event including the Minister of Women Affairs, Ms. Rabiha Diab, the Minister of Labor, Mr. Ahmad Majdalani, two Christian Aid personnel monitoring the project, Ms. Phoebe Rison and Madeleine McGivern, and ITL team who were visiting the Project at the time of the launching ceremony, in addition to representatives from the NGO sector and international community.

This study highlighted the challenges that women face in the business sector. It indicated that there are a number of factors that impede women in becoming entrepreneurs or to be employed by the formal labor market. These factors include political situations, mobility restrictions, structural and social constraints (that are mostly related to societal perceptions of women's roles in economy). All of these continue to be a major constraint for female entrepreneurship development. Lastly, there is little access to resources, especially financial resources for women. The study also exposed that women entrepreneurs have no protection and that Israeli products compete heavily with their products thus making their businesses difficult to sustain.

The YWCA is planning to present the findings of the study to other NGOs and to share this information with as many stakeholders as possible in order to Address the constraints and lobby for regulatory changes with other women NGOs. If anything, the study clearly exposed practices and laws producing economic injustice which needs to be addressed by women institutions like the YWCA.

Part of our advocacy work is to participate in international forums and conferences to discuss our advocacy initiatives and achievements, below are three of the main advocacy participation by the National General Secretary and Advocacy and Church Relations Coordinator.





The National General Secretary, Ms. Mira Rizeq represented the association in the United Church of Christ (UCC) LINK event on Environmental Justice, in Cleveland from 16-18 April, and made a presentation on the environmental “injustices” in Palestine and the deterioration and degradation of the environment as a result of the practices of the Israeli Occupation. This was a very important eye opener for churches, and gave them a new dimension and forum for their advocacy. The GS continues to be a resource for this group, and engages in all the drafting of statements and resolutions in the U.S.A.

Additionally, the GS also attended the UCC General Synod Meeting held in Long Beach from 28 June to 2 July 2013, and participated in two workshops with other speakers on a panel on Palestine organized by the Palestine/Israel Network (UCCPIN). Prior to

the Conference, the GS participated in the visit organized by the UCC to the Mexican Borders to see the Wall that was built between the two countries. The GS also presented the Address for the Wider Church/Global Ministries Luncheon.

Rev. Loren McGrail, Advocacy and Church Relations Coordinator, went on a speaking tour in the summer as part of her mission work for the United Church of Christ, our partner. She spoke to over 40 UCC churches and others about the work of the YWCA of Palestine and in particular The Fabric of Our Lives, the project she coordinates.

International Visitors

- During the year 2013 we had number of visitors to the YWCA of Palestine. Most of our visitors were our partners or donors. We thank them for believing in our work and their ongoing support.
- In January we welcomed a Delegation from the United Church of Christ (UCC) led by Mr. Dan Smith and had a visit to the YWCA center in Jalazoune refugee camp. We also hosted another Delegation from UCC in February who wanted to know more about our work as the we are a partner with the UCC.
- In March Y Global had their staff retreat in Palestine and visited the YWCA of Palestine where the General Secretary Mira Rizeq and the YWCA Staff welcomed them and presented our work in the context of living under a military occupation.
- A very old YWCA good friend Ms. Liz Knott from the Presbyterian Women and Pal Craft Aid visited the YWCA of Palestine before participating in the Sabeel Conference.
- Like every year the YWCA hosted the Journey for Justice Group and the Olive picking group for a day of presentations about our work and campaigns.



Many other partners/donors visited the YWCA as part of their regular monitoring or program formulation missions, most importantly:

- Ms. Karolina Karlsson from the YWCA/YMCA of Sweden and the SMC team;
- Ms. Susannah Taylor from Y- Care International;
- Mr. Lutz Wollziefer from Bread for the World;
- Mr. Bruno Essig from Horyzon;
- Mr. Fredrik Glad-Gjernes and Margit Aas Onstein from Y Global Norway;
- Ms. Pheobe Aranki Stoves and Ms. Madeleien McGivern from Christian Aid, who came for the study "Barriers to Female Labour Market Participation and Entrepreneurship in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", accompanied by some of the private donors to the "In Their Lifetime" Fund.



National Staff Changes

2013 saw changes in our staffing at the National Office

Rev. Loren Mcgrail was seconded to the YWCA of Palestine as a Mission Personnel of the United Church of Christ/Gloal Ministries. Rev. Macgrail started his job in January 2013 as Communications and Church Relations Coordinator

Arda Aghazarian, the Advocacy and Communication Coordinator, left us in June to pursue new work endeavors including filmmaking.

In June 2013, we welcomed Suhair Ramadan to work with the YWCA of Palestine team on the Women's Advocacy interventions focusing on UN SCR 1325.

Marco Azzalini, the Economic Development Advisor, who was one of the Volunteers seconded to the YWCA by Oxfam Quebec, left the YWCA of Palestine in December 2013.

In August 2013, we welcomed Wael Obeidi to join the YWCA of Palestine national team as Field Manager, to help strengthen the programs outreach especially within the economic empowerment thematic area.

YWCA External Versus Internal Funding

