



2008 Annual report

Women's Affairs Technical Committee

WATC

Women's affairs Technical Committee

Head office: Al Irsa' street, Awwad Building, 2nd floor, p.o.Box 2197, Ramallah

Tel: 00972-2-2987783/4

Fax: 00972-2-2964746

Gaza Office: Saied Al as street, off Al wehda main road, AL Rimal area, Ni'ma building, 1st floor

Tel: 00972-8-2844322

www.watcpal.org

Program's and Administrative Report

2008

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Word of the president

In its three years strategy (2006-2008) WATC have identified its vision towards establishing a democratic diverse society that respects human right, and provides dignified and secure life for all citizens without discriminating against any for his or her color, religion, origin, or sex.

As a coalition of women's institutes and individual activists, WATC agreed that to get closer to our vision, we need to play a major role in the development of the Palestinian women's movement. Therefore, we involved ourselves in establishing women energetic frameworks and structures that would, in turn, help to empower women and eliminate the discrimination practiced against them; particular attention is given to rural women and young women leaders in remote and marginalized areas where basic services are still poor or insufficient.

WATC had two major challenges ahead of it for 2008; the Israeli war on Gaza and the Palestinian internal split. WATC called for national solidarity against the Israeli occupation and opposed all acts and practices that favor the interest of a party or a movement on national Palestinian interest. We adopted articles of the *prisoners' charter* as the bases towards national unity, and promote for it as the tool to exert societal pressure on conflicting parties to force them to bring their disputes to an end. The women movement, along with WATC had organized a rally on 8th march; demonstration and all other marches organized by WATC had been protesting against the internal split, and called for national unity.

Along with the General union for Palestinian women, WATC have made it its duty to enlighten women on their rights that are stated by the *women's rights' charter*, and that are to be used as a reference for the family law. WATC and other women organizations have established committees in most districts of the West Bank to guarantee the widespread of the charter and its perspective.

In terms of laws and regulation, WATC worked with family law coalition to draft a family law that coincides with articles in the women's charter, and matches with articles in the Palestinian basic law and the charter of independence. We also worked with the coalition for penal law towards amendment of article 340 of the law that impose light sentence on killers "for honor"; we demanded that honor killing to be treated as a full crime, and killers should be held accountable for their actions.

AS a member in the platform, *End Violence against Women*, we put together a guiding booklet to be used by campaigners and by the women to protect them against violence and defend their rights. WATC also participated in the international platform *End Violence against Women* through its paper *voice of women*, and our radio program *against silence*.

Participation of women in policymaking is one of WATC major concerns, and we believe that in light to the major role that women have been playing in the national struggle and building of state institutions, their space in policymaking is still unsatisfactory.

However, and although we salute appointing of several women figures in high ranking positions that have been restricted to men like the religious courts, decisive ministries, local councils, and the PLC, we still think that political and economic developments have not given newly appointed women the chance to make a change, and provide evidence of their true capabilities.

We hope that our women's struggle would give them liberty to choose the roles they want to play, without having to be limited within the division of roles that had been set to them.

Nahla Qourah



Nahla Qourah

President of WATC

Political and economic situation in 2008

Political situation:

Critical political developments in 2008 have left its traces on all segments of the Palestinian national movement, including the women movement. The Israeli destructive war on Gaza that started at the beginning of the year and accelerated till the end of 2008 had left Gaza with destroyed infrastructure, burned fields and agricultural areas, and invalid economic institution that used to employ thousands of workers.

Although the Israeli direct war on Gaza was halted, the siege and closure of Gaza continued and was tighten. Crossing points to Gaza have been shut most of the time for more than two years which brought unemployment to an unprecedented ratio of 55% of the working population. According to the institute for development studies in Gaza, the families living under poverty line are about 80% of the population; 66.5% of which are described to be awfully poor.

Situation left the people of the strip almost totally independent on humanitarian relieve and international aid, and raised the waves of immigrating young men away from Gaza. Figures of the ministry of foreign affairs shows that 45000 applications for immigration have been delivered to a number of foreign embassies and consulates in the Palestinian areas by 2006; the national bureau of statistics shows that people between 20-24 years of age makes 44% of the applicants.

Impact of the siege and poverty on women and children was most obvious as many women have chosen to veil their faces/ or have been pushed to do so, in order for them to hit the streets and turn into beggars as family savings and assets have drained away. Unemployed and helpless men are left with low self-esteem and psychological distortions that are reflected in men's negative practices within their families. Domestic violence and retarded social concepts and habits that have been disappearing are rising again; young couples express their hope to have boys 'children -not girls and young girls are forced into marriages. According to the center for development studies, school children appear to be distorted and unable to concentrate on their education, this is one outcome of the deteriorating quality of their diets as well the violence directed against them and against the women in their homes.

On the other hand, the Israeli occupation in the West Bank have been confiscating more and more Palestinian lands to annex to new and existing Israeli settlements, and to complete building of the separation wall. Northern, central and southern West Bank areas continue to be separated by 630 of the Israeli military checkpoints that hinder the travel and normal flow of individuals and goods between the Palestinian areas. Agricultural areas and farms that had been confiscated to erect the separation wall have caged and isolated tens of the villages and thousands of their citizens from the rest of the West Bank; farmers behind the wall have lost access to their water resources and to the lands that feeds them.

In the province of Qalqiliya for instance, 65000 Dunoms of land are separated from the rest of province by the wall, and 83000 olive trees were uprooted during the first phase of building the wall. Drop of the annual harvest of olive oil and other harvests is totally related to Israeli violent attacks on Palestinian lands and water; the Israeli authorities have abducted 80% of the West Bank ground water.

Several Palestinian women villagers have lost their lives in battles to defend their lands and olive trees. For the villagers, defending the land is not just a national struggle, but also a battle against depriving them from their source of living.

Situation in East Jerusalem is even worse with the excessive Israeli measures to wipe out the Palestinian Arab identity of the city. Knocking down 90 Arab homes and giving ultimatums to some 60000 other Palestinians asking them to evacuate their homes that are to be demolished is one example of those measures. The Israeli vicious attempts to portray East Jerusalem as a Jewish city have driven huge numbers of the Palestinians Jerusalemites away from their city. Harsh measures and regulations against imprisoned Jerusalemites are also applied to force them to live away from the city when released.

Next to the Israeli dividing measures to isolate Palestinian areas, the Palestinian internal political split has made the segregation between Gaza and the West Bank even worse. The Palestinian civil society and women movement brought forwards some initiatives in favor of the national unity; one charter on national unity was put together by the Political prisoners' society in 2006 and was adopted and signed by all Palestinian political factions. WATC regarded the charter as a solid base for reconciliation and as foundation to defeat the occupation, lift the siege, rebuild Gaza, and restore Palestinian national and legitimate rights.

Impact of the internal division on the youth community has led concerned parties to put the question of national unity on top of all agendas, both for the civil society and women's movement. The central bureau of statistics revealed that after the internal division, 33% of the Palestinian youth said they have some or little confident in Palestinian political parties and civil society institutes, while 48% have zero trust in them.

Last elections in Israel have brought Zionist right wings back to the governing seat with their policies of expansion and their defiance to all international resolutions and proposals, Palestinian factions, along with the active participation of the women and civil society representatives had to stand up and fight against those policies.

Economic situation:

The political turmoil in the Palestinian areas left deep scars on social and economic sectors in the Palestinian areas; more than 400 institutions known for delivering social and economic services to the public were forced to shut down, and all their properties had been confiscated. Women were among the most affected by those developments, as about half of the vanishing institutes were mainly providing services to needy women.

Israeli confiscation of the lands have affected rural women and led them to search for unfamiliar jobs in sectors other than farming after losing the farms that had always been their only source of living. By knowing that Palestinian rural women forms the majority among working women, one can tell that Israeli measures against the lands have seriously affected domestic status of the working women, as well as their status as participants in the making of decision in their communities.

In most cases, collapse of rural women earning's abilities coincided with loss of jobs within private sector , and in the Israeli labor market, which put the women in Gaza and the poor areas of the West Bank under great pressure. Women found themselves left them to manage their lives with very little or no incomes and were forced to search for alternative educational and health care services for their families.

Collapse of the economy have led to closing of of several private industries and manufactures on top of which came the textile and clothing industry that used to employ armies of women. Manufactures have to close as they lost their Israeli importers after imposing siege on Gaza, and erection of separation wall in the West Bank.

Participation of Palestinian women in the work force is the highest among the women in the Arab world, and in 2008, Palestinian working women occupied 16% of the work force against 65% for men although women wages comes up to 84% of the average wages paid for men. Rise in numbers of 13+ girls in schools have also been noticed, and figures in this regards suggest that girls' commitment to education is best when their work chances decrees, while things are the other way round for boys.

Hard living condition have in many areas hindered women from seeking proper health services and thus led to deteriorating of their health and to spread of cancer that came to be the 2nd cause of death in the Palestinian society; women by large do not have access to early medical checkups for breast and cervical cancers.

Increase of poverty rates and lack of security and stability in Gaza have provided excuses to withdrawal of girls from schools, burst out of early marriages, and widespread of violence against women. 60% of the Gaza women with basic education said that they were subjects to physical violence at some stage of their lives, and 25 women and girls were murdered in 2008 in the West Bank and Gaza for "*honor*"; women between 18- 35 years of age are the most targeted and abused among the rest of women.

Administrative council report

On the institutional level, WATC 2009-2011 strategy have been ratified by the general assembly. Throughout 2008, the administrative council continued its work on WATC strategy, and was able to take it up to the general assembly after giving the strategy a thorough and comprehensive study and evaluation on 8/11/2008; the GA ratified the strategy and approved it.

The council established a special committee to plan for adding the community education center and staff of the administrative and financial departments to WATC new structural map. We have also appointed directors for the advocacy and finance departments as a transitional step towards finalizing the new structure that would be classified according to the working departments.

Appointments of director of the local empowerment and capacity building for 2009 have been postponed to allow the smooth transaction towards the new strategy and new structural forms.

One profound achievement for 2008 plans was setting of the detailed plans for the solidarity department, and launching of work in this section according to articles in the plan. Projects' activities have been clearly related to WATC 2008 strategy, and preparations were taken to move forwards and relate activities to the concern departments according to the new structure, instead of relating activities to the projects as it was the case in the old structure.

Leading figures of WATC:

In 2008, WATC general assembly has unfortunately lost one of its capable and influential figures. Deputy of WATC President Maha Mustaklim have passed away after long years of the hard work and struggle for the national and women cause.

The General Assembly:

The GA regular meeting was held on 8/11/2008 with presence of Gaza members through the video conference. Financial and administrative reports for 2007 were discussed and ratified. Contract of the financial auditor was renewed, and administrative council members were nominated for a second term in office; the vacant position of deceased Maha Mustaklim was occupied by election of GA member Nida Abu Awwad.

The executive committee:

The committee held 8 meetings during 2008, and meetings discussed the following issues:

1. On 5th Jan. 2008, the committee discussed problem of quorum in board's meetings and its impact on the resolutions and decisions of the board. The meeting also proposed cutting down body of the board from 13 to 11 members, and agreed to bring issue to GA attention for ratification.
2. On 23/4/2008, a new strategy was ratified and took into account suggestions of the GA members. A new committee was formed to interview new applicants for the merging positions in the new structure.
3. On 12/6/2008, the meeting discussed Palestinian family law and the coalition that was established for this matter. The relation between WATC, the general union for Palestinian women and the regional family law project was also discussed. Members asked WATC have to follow up with regional committee for updates.
4. On 12/8/2008, the meeting discussed status of staff of the administrative and financial departments as proposed by the Birzeit University Center for Continuing Education (CCE).proposal was compared with other hierarchies in similar institutes. Meeting signed the financial part of proposal and discussed other major elements regarding structure of WATC. The meeting recommended symposiums and debates on women and political and national issues to be held in the future.
5. On 16/10/2008, the meeting discussed the financial report for 2007 in the presence of the financial auditor. Auditor said that he approved the report and had no reservations, for report does not reflect any financial problems and shows that WATC have been rational in their spending. He proposed adoption of specific tools to help WATC to measure meeting of program goals.
6. On 1/11/2008, the meeting discussed Voice of Women status in the light of fund shortage for the paper and proposed a set of ideas to raise funds from local and Arab resources; a committee from the board was formed to deal with the issue and to study all options in this regards.

7. On 4/9/2008, the meeting discussed and studied the CCE proposal for new WATC structure to be based on working departments and not programs of WATC.
8. On 24/11/2008, the meeting discussed and agreed on tasks of the board members after being elected for a new term in office by the GA. Members agreed to keep their previous positions and tasks, and accordingly, personals were reassigned as follow: Nahla Qoura- president, Nida Abu Awwad- vice president, Siham Bargouti- treasurer, and Ibtisam Zaidan- general secretary.
9. On 17/12/2008, the meeting discussed tasks of the advocacy department, and confirmed that the political stand of WATC must be included in the introduction of plan for each of the departments. It had also been agreed to complete steps needed to finalize structure of the new merging local empowerment and capacity building departments, in order to accelerate process to implement WATC strategy for 2009.

WATC programs and projects:

1. On 24/11/2008, the board met with Zuhaira Kamal, director of the Palestinian women center for research and documents to discuss cooperation between the two parties and to coordinate activities of WATC and the center. Zahira explained that the center would not personally implement its own projects, but would rather do that through women institutes like the general union for Palestinian women GUPW and WATC.

WATC expressed its willingness to get engaged with some of the center's projects as long as they match with its strategy.

2. On 12/6/2008, the board met with the general secretariat of GUPW and discussed Palestinian family law and the relation between the Palestinian coalition on the family law and the regional project where family laws in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Palestine have been studied and adjusted.
3. The board took part in the two general meetings that were held to discuss Palestinian family law on 16/6/2008 and 23/7/2008. Members of the family law coalition, legal bodies, women institutions, and the legal advisor for the Palestinian presidency were invited to discuss a draft family law that was submitted to the president by the chief of judges; draft law was described to be disappointing and unacceptable for the women movement. The two meetings agreed to introduce reforms to structure of family law committee in order to allow participation of political parties and movements. A smaller committee of the coalition was asked to prepare for the national committee meeting and bring forwards all previous proposals and documents

regarding the family law to be discussed by the coalition before asking the National committee to say its verdict.

4. On 23/7/2008, the board met with Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and proposed a family law draft to be submitted by women and judicial institutes. Meeting outputs were presented during the general meeting of family law coalition, and participants agreed on the need to prepare all documents related to the cohesive family law draft that was put together back in 2003, in order to present documents to the civil society and political parties.
5. A set of agreements were concluded with WATC partner funders along with WATC strategy for the years 2006-2008. The annexed chart shows the agreements reached in 2008 and funders for each project or part of a project.

Coordination and networking

In its 2006-2008 strategy, WATC gives special attention and concern to its interrelations with grass root organizations as well as private, public, and formal bodies in order to enhance support and advocacy to the women's issues; networking in this regards could be classified as follow:

Interrelations with women centers and organizations

WATC itself is a coalition of women institutes and frameworks that cooperate and coordinate their work to best serve Palestinian women and defend their cases. WATC pays special attention to its relation with the GUPW and women's legal bodies in lobbying for women's issues and their right to be represented at the decision making level. WATC supported the charter that had been drawn by the GUPW and regarded it as the solid base for uniting women's efforts and vision. WATC, along with GUPW is particularly engaged in tackling legal issues concerning women, and in lobbying for the ratification of the document on legal principles that was put together in 1994 by WATC and some legal and women institutes.

Coordination between WATC, GUPW, and other institutes can be spotted in more than one field as all of these partners work for national issues as well as for women issues; WATC is working hard in favor of national dialogue and reconciliation and against the use of force and violence in solving internal Palestinian dispute.

IN 2008 WATC had been engaged in activities with the following local bodies and partners:

1. The platform “End Violence against Women”
2. Family law coalition
3. Penal law coalition
4. Death penalty coalition
5. NGO’s against corruption
6. PENGO/ Gaza (women, youth, and human rights)
7. PENGO/ Ramallah
8. Coalition against poverty

WATC, GUPW, and PENGO, have organized a number of marches and issued press releases that were distributed during demonstrations and were reprinted in local papers and in the VOW; appeals and press releases were e mailed to specialized bodies at the UN.

WATC maintained efficient networking with the ministry of women’s affairs and several other bodies to alert against ratification of some Palestinian laws by a presidential decree. The Palestinian Legislative Council is the body to ratify decrees, but as PLC was made frozen for some time now, presidential decrees have been issued to fill the gap. According to WATC, procedure must not become the norm and should only be applied for very urgent national matters.

Because of the obstacles on movement to and from Gaza, WATC have been working in partnership with some relief institutes and services providers in the strip- each in their field of specialty. WATC from its part dealt with empowerment of women and grass root organizations as well as network and lobbying for women’s rights and issues. WATC partners on the other hand dealt with relief and service providing as it is the case with our current project in Gaza that is held in partnership with the union for agricultural working committees and sponsorship of the UNDP

Interrelations with funders: partnership and sponsorship

International and local political developments over the years have affected WATC funding arena. WATC have successfully established relations with several donors and funders; the following 11 institutes have been sponsoring WATC’s projects in 2008:

1. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
2. Ford Foundation
3. Diakonia
4. Women’s Learning Partnership WLP
5. National Endowment for Democracy NED
6. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
7. CARE International
8. MPDL(Spanish peace movement)
9. NGO Development Center

Grants provided by above institutes support proposed projects that are part of WATC general strategy, with the exception of two of the funders that have decided to shift their aid from being related to WATC projects towards being directed to the institute itself; Ford foundation and the WLP are the institutes referred to here.

Relations with international networks and bodies

WATC relations with international bodies are built on bases of coordinating in specific issues related to women's rights and their participation in decision making, lobbying, campaigns, and exchange of data on women, success stories, and capacity buildings.

WATC teams participate constantly in international conferences and symposiums on women. And through its affiliation in global networks like WLP, WATC had been able to communicate with the 20 members of WLP that works towards elimination of discrimination against women and formation of nucleolus global women movement. WATC partnership with WLP has enabled us to take part in several international meeting and to contribute for the overall strategy of the network.

We also contributed in the capacity building of Diakonia's partner institutes; training focused on merging gender issues in projects, activities, and in selection of targeted groups.

WATC was partially engaged with the Washington based "Advocacy Project" by providing a desk and access to the internet for a project's volunteer, to use a in our Ramallah office. The "project" from their part provided coverage to WATC activities in their webpage.

We also take part in conferences and meetings on empowerment of the youth that are organized by the Spanish peace movement and Anna Lind foundation.

WATC coordinates with PENGO in the conflict resolution project that is run by Responding to Conflict –RTC. Project aims to work with staff of the Palestinian NGO's and improve their abilities to find solutions to conflicts.

Networking and relations with targeted groups

Through its activities in the different Palestinian areas, WATC is building ties with women from all walks of life and is maintaining its relation with individual women and groups in all districts. Our coordinators are female activists and are devoted to their mission; they succeeded to a large extend to involve women in WATC public meetings and marches. Recruitment of average Palestinian women in public activities reflects the positive relation and mutual trust between our coordinators and the women in the different localities. Positive relation also reflects itself on success of empowerment programs that targeted young leadership, rural women, and pressure groups for women rights in decision-making positions.

Along this line, WATC arranged trainings on networking for young women leaders, Sanabel group, and members of the local councils to enable them to build bridges among them, and between them and the civil society to exchange experiences and resources on specific issues and matters of common interest.

Political situation in 2008 and impact on WATC

1. 2008 have witnessed unpleasant and accelerated political developments in the Palestinian area and in Gaza in particular. The Israeli siege on Gaza was tighten, military attacks and closer of crossing points to Gaza continued to exist. The civil society and women organization in particular had to update their strategies and plans to balance between merging national requirements and women issues.
2. Israeli constant attacks on the Palestinian areas and their violation to Palestinian human rights put more pressures on our women and guided the women movement to use the UN resolution 1325 on protection of women in conflict areas in order to alert to the situation and demand global and international support in this regards.
3. With siege being tighten on most Palestinian areas, figures of unemployed workers and families below poverty line had increased. Frustration within households and increase of domestic violence is seen to be one direct impact of the situation; violence against women in particular appeared to be increasing. WATC and other Women organizations responded and enhanced coordination among them to face the new challenges and try to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian families by empowering the women in those household and increase their awareness on issues related to gender based discrimination.
4. The overall political developments have left the Palestinian areas in a sort of internal chaos were laws and regulations were broken and lack of security dominated the scene; disorder reached its beak with the military coop of Hamas in Gaza. Women there, being the weakest element in this mess have paid the biggest price; 12 women were killed, 30 were subjects to domestic assaults, and 72 women were injured.
Although some of the murdered women were said to be killed for “honor”, it had been proven that most of them were actually killed for reasons related to disputes on inheritance or for political reasons. Between 7th June and 21st June, 161 Palestinians (men and women) were killed in Gaza, 7 of them were women. The horrifying figures again underline more challenges on the women movement and the civil society. Struggle towards building a democratic society based on respect of law and human rights is becoming more demanding.
5. We see the political separation of Gaza strip from the West Bank as a validation for the Israeli procedures to separate Gaza geographically from the rest of Palestinian areas. The women movement that regarded this development as a huge and major obstacle on the way to build the independent and sovereign Palestinian state has exerted efforts to bring the dispute to an end. The movement called the parties to sit, talk, and try to reach a common ground based on the National reconciliation charter that was laid down by representatives of the political prisoners’ movement.
6. The fact that most PLC members are imprisoned by Israel has left the council frozen and many draft laws and regulations including laws on women status were kept locked in the drawers of the council. The women movement had to fill the gap and have launched public campaigns on women rights and status with special focus on Issues that were decided and agreed upon by the family law coalition; regulations mainly tackles early marriages, divorce, and polygamy .

7. In the absence of democratic practices and the PLC participation, it became even more difficult for the women movement to protect and maintain previous achievements of the movement and the civil society. Retreat and withdrawal of achievements in democracy and human rights that appeared as a threat to us have urged WATC to call the women movement to unite and join efforts to be able to defeat such possibilities.
8. Persistence of closure and separating military checkpoints was hindering the communication between the Palestinian areas and entailed the founding of a new emergency plan that can provide alternative tools to facilitate communication; manipulation of the new technologies like e mailing and video conferences was part of the solution. A new plan was set to adopt decentralization of our work, which means empowerment of WATC Gaza office, enable and enhance abilities of field workers in all localities, and build capacities of the women institutes and frameworks in the provinces to be sure that they would carry on the mission in all circumstances.

Work environment in WATC offices

Resources

We provided an electric generator to our Gaza office to help the staff maintain work when the main power is cut. The video conference line with Gaza had also secured constant communication between Ramallah and Gaza office and staff. Number of staff members in Gaza was increased to enable their active participate in awareness campaigns, empowerment projects, and capacity building. Gaza team was equipped with needed skills to communicate and coordinate with other institutes, and was trained in principles of evaluation according to Bonat criteria to be able to provide assessments on the capabilities of targeted institutes.

Programs and bylaws:

WATC have successfully reviewed its administrative, structural, and financial charters along with the professional help of the CCE, the process included association between our human and financial resources and institutes of similar interests and structures. Criteria for transparency and accountability had been put in place, job description for most primary positions was fixed, and interrelations and overlapping duties between the departments were tackled to enable the smooth transition towards the new strategy to be implemented in 2009.

The evaluation carried by CCE for WATC activities in 2008 made it possible for us to agree on next steps needed to further empower our staff , build their capacities and skills in order for them to be ready for the transaction and active involvement with 2009 strategy of WATC.

Work environment and staff interrelations:

WATC staff and members are individuals known for their loyalty and devotion to national and women issues. And although our staff embraces WATC vision and values, they show some signs of

restlessness and worry regarding their professional status as they don't feel secure in their positions. Cut of donation money is one major fear that haunts our staff and occasionally leaves them suspicious and depressed.

However, specific elements in new WATC strategy and structure have provided a sort of security among the staff; elements of strength in the strategy can be summarized as follow:

1. Staff are to participate in planning and evaluation
2. Decentralization policy would allow coordinators in the provinces some margins of independency, and the chance to organize activities and processes in patterns that best suit the needs of their areas and communities.
3. Team work is the foundation that regulates relations of staff members of WATC; networking between directors of departments and between directors and field coordinators provide a safe umbrella to staff work and efforts.
4. Special care is given to empower staff members and enable them to carry awareness activities and training to meet WATC objectives and aspirations.
5. WATC staff is regularly present in meetings with other institutes and in national and international conferences.
6. WATC staff members were given the tools to be able to develop their skills and specialize each in their field of choice, which strengthen the team and increased efficiency of their work.

WATC strategy for 2006-2008

WATC, being a coalition of women institutes and bodies is mainly concerned of women issues. Seven different women organizations have met in 1992 and together launched the birth of WATC coalition. Coalition aimed at elimination of discrimination against women, empowerment of women to enable their participation in the making of decision by recognizing their right to occupy higher positions in their society.

WATC gives special attention to status of women in Rural and marginalized areas and potential young women leaders that are able to take active role in the national struggle against the occupation as well the social struggle for a democratic society based on pluralism and respect of human rights.

Alongside theses lines, WATC have agreed on the following principles to guide its 2006-2008 strategy:

1. Increase abilities of grass root women institutes and frameworks and enhance their participation in the national struggle and social change.
2. Enhance and develop networking with civil society partners to promote the struggle for women's rights.
3. Monitor conventions, regulations, policies, and projects to guarantee applications of practices that would help eliminate discrimination between the sexes, and protect women's rights in all fields.
4. Empower women and enable their arrival to high positions on the decision making level.

5. Embrace creative women and support them.
6. Launch societal awareness programs on women's issues and rights, and to change stereotyped images on role and status of women.

To meet above targets, WATC work alongside the five following programs:

1. Capacity building
2. Networking and advocacy
3. Empowerment of local agents
4. Societal and media awareness
5. Gender awareness for partner institutes

Follow is a summary of the programs' activities that took place in 2008 to meet the above six components of the strategy:

Target no. 1: develop and enhance abilities of grass root women organization and engage them in the national struggle and social change

- In coordination with RTC, 15 women leaders from the organizations members in WATC coalition were given training of trainers in women empowerment. The step is a follow up for TOT 2007 project that aimed to increase participants' knowledge and skills in conflict resolving in general, and in manipulating this knowledge to serve women issues and ordeals.
- Through its project "Build- development and improvement of communities" that is sponsored by Care International and implemented in partnership with women affairs center, WATC implemented a scheme to build capacities of 10 grass root women organizations in 5 provinces in Gaza strip. Training aimed to enhance advocacy on women's issues and their connection to development strategies, as well as enhancement of women's roles in social, political, and economic sectors.
- The above project targeted some 2500 women between 18-45 years of age and the ten grass root organizations mentioned earlier. WATC staff and teams have been directly supervising the flow of activities in the 5 provinces that included areas of Rafah and Khan Yunis. Program also included and targeted 20 journalists and 8 women from the local councils; total beneficiaries from the whole process came up to 200000 persons.

- In its project Build, WATC held evaluations for 10 targeted institutions by applying Bonat criterion that was developed by Care International. Evaluation aimed to recognize the actual capabilities of the 10 targeted institutes to be able to assess their needs and tailor purpose built training programs for their staff; training would tackle internal governing, financial administration, fund raising, and project proposals.
- Staff in grass root organizations is also trained in research and investigation skills for them to be able develop their own projects and schemes that reflect true interests and needs of the women in their communities and the beneficiaries from their organizations. Increase their knowledge in networking and advocacy gives them extra power in organizing campaigns and pressure groups for women issues and rights, and enables them to best present and serve their communities and localities.
- WATC project Build- held several trainings for its own staff, staff of the women affairs center, and workers in the ten partner organizations to develop their skills in a way that empower them personally and reflects on their institutions and their delivery.
- WATC staff and staff of the women’s affairs center and the partner organizations have benefited from the following trainings:- reporting in Arabic and English, tools for networking and advocacy, proposal writing and fund raising, research and investigation for data. Training was held side by side with issuing of a number of training booklets: Bonat guide for evaluation of need assessments, Guide for networking and advocacy, Guide for proposal writing and fund raising, and Guide to quick search and data collection.
- Some other guiding books were put together by Al Rowwad for Development to meet some of the needs of the organizations that had been assessed accordingly with Botan criteria; Al Rowwad project was concluded with supervision of Care International, WATC, and the women’s affairs center. Guiding books varied and covered different spheres in the administrative work like archiving, book- keeping and others.

Success stories of WATC project “Build”

- Volunteer Ulfat Kafarneh has successfully held a training session on *quick search* and data gathering for partner organizations. It was the first experience for Ulfat as a trainer, and Ulfat describe it as “new and rewarding experience that added a lot to me and gave me self esteem, I am more confident now and have no fears to address gatherings and crowds any more”.

- Amal Abu Kosh comments on trainings and says: “I have been in several trainings on *quick search*, but I am confident to say that this session has extended my knowledge in the use of proper tools for quick search”.
- Ala’ Al Khateeb from the women programs’ center said: “my experience was limited to the office work in the public sector, and it’s my first experience with practical training, I feel that community work is more rewarding and interesting than office work”.
- Hanan Zu’rob from *Happy Families* said: “I had training on this same subject before, but honestly it’s now that I feel I understand how to use the tree of analyzes to accurately identify problems”.
- Coordinators of the five partnering institutes in WATC project- Build have agreed that the training they received have added a lot to their abilities in proposal writing. This was reflected (according to them) in the fact that the proposals of all five institutes that were submitted to the EU had been accepted and each of them was granted 8000 Euros for the projects that covers the following areas:-
 - Enhancement of mother and child health care- by Rafah based institute, *Happy family*,
 - Establishment of legal and psychological aid unit- by Khan Yunis based institute *Al Najdah*,
 - Increase participation of women with special needs in societal activities –by Khan Yunis based institute *Amirah*.
 - Literacy and awareness program for women- by Rafah based institute *Al mawasi for agricultural cooperation*.
 - Project to prepare graduates for the labor market, and revival of the legal unite of *the women programs’ center* in Rafah.
- WATC coordinator for our Diakonia funded project “youth are seeds of change” participated in the general meeting of WLP in Washington in April 2008. Coordinator of the same project in Tulkarm area participated in network, advocacy, and joint development policies program that were held by the ESCWA in Amman in May 2008. Project coordinator in Bethlehem area participated in TOT for capacity building in documentation of stories on violations against women. She also took part in a workshop on the family laws in the Arab world that commenced in Jordan during August 2008.
- WATC, and in conjunction with its *Societal Rehabilitation Program* carried a series of trainings for field workers in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jordan. The training in the West Bank ran for 14 days and was held between Oct.2007 and May 2008; it focused on tools to merge gender issues in implementation of societal projects. Training in Gaza and Jordan on the other hand, ran for 6 days for each and aimed to enhance awareness and understanding of participants in gender concepts and applications.

- WATC have also held a 3 days training session in the beginning of 2008 for its staff in the West Bank; training tackled issues related to communication, coordination, follow up, and self esteem.

Target no. 2: improve level of networking and coordination with civil society institutes to lobby in favor of women's issues and rights

1. In response to a request from Diakonia, WATC held training on tools to merge gender principles in programs and activities of the Diakonia partner institutions in the West Bank. Training inspected validation of gender principles during all stages; planning, implementation, evaluation of institute's projects and in promoting and publishing materials regarding their tasks.

Training extended through 2007 and 2008 and included 4 of the Diakonia partner institutes:- Tamer for community education, Wi'am, Al Naizak, and Alternative information center.

2. Alongside our project "*Youth as Seeds of Change*", WATC carried out several networking and coordination tasks with several local institutes. Beneficiaries of the program included 12 institutes from Tulkarm, 17 from west Nablus and Jenin, 15 from Bethlehem, and 5 from Ramallah.

3. WATC project "*Empowerment of Young Women for Societal Change*" is sponsored by the Spanish movement for peace MPDL and aimed to train young women in leadership skills, decision-making, defiance of discrimination against women, and skills needed in planning for their communities and the women and youth institutes they work with. Trainees were also acknowledged of the challenges facing young women in the West bank and Gaza, and on role of awareness and advocacy campaign to meet those challenges. Topics like writing proposals from a gender perspective, interviewing, reporting, communication and coordination leaders in the community, were also part of the training.

4. WATC held trainings in running meetings of focus groups and facilitation for those groups. Training highlighted on significance of the gathered data for future projects and on involvement of different women institutes in discussing women issues and interests. Trainees were also provided with basic IT skills that would facilitate communication and interrelation between the two sets of groups in Gaza and the West bank, as well as to assist them in launching of promotions and campaigns.

5. WATC organized common meetings with a number of women and youth institutes as an initiative to bring those institutes together and open the doors for them to get to know each other's projects and needs and to best serve their communities in joint and combined efforts. WATC, along with Al Salah institute, held trainings for the women on management of small private ventures to serve rural women and improve their economic status.

Achievements of the project “*Empowerment of young women for societal change*” in Gaza can be recognized in impact of the program on trainees:

- Training in reporting and journalistic writing from a gender perspective led some trainees to identify some creative and talented participants; by end of training, Aidah Atawneh expressed her desire to write to VOW.
- WATC enhanced its work in networking and coordination with partner organizations, and helped to build a linkage between the different institutes.
- The evaluation made by trainees showed that they benefited greatly from the IT training sessions.
- Trainees benefited from their presence near WATC library and borrowed books and studies on women's issues.
- Hosting some of the partner institutes to implement their activities in WATC training center gave our staff and visiting staffs the chance to get to know each other and exchange expertise; members of our staff were selected for specific assignments in other institutes.
 - Tahrir Labaki and I'timad Risk from our volunteers were invited to take part in a workshop for women journalists that were held by the union for societal work committees in Eastern Gaza.
 - Our volunteers Samaher Abu daher, Aidah Atawneh, and Tahrir Labaki took part in training on documentation of violent incidents directed against women; this was part of activities carried out by the project “*lets break the silence*” that was sponsored by UNIFEM and implemented by the center for research and legal counseling for women.
 - Ilham Shahin represented WATC in the public gathering on “*Safe and secure Palestinian society*” that was organized by Panorama- the Palestinian center for democracy.
- All the volunteers that were engaged in this program were invited to participate in the activities of the 8th March.

- Program coordinators and the participants agreed that participants are to go back and apply activities within their institutes; Hidayah Hamdan held a workshop titled “***Palestinian women achievements in Al Taher Firm***”.
- Cooperation and coordination between participants in the program took another spectrum when Najla Salem, the volunteer from Rafah joined Fida Za’anin, the volunteer from Bit hanon and both girls implemented an activity for the ***Land Day***.
- Some of the participants took the opportunity and used our computer lab to work on their university assignments as power is cut most of the time in Gaza.
- Many participants were selected for activities in other institutes; project “***Do not besiege our brains***”, that was run by the women graduates society have nominated several participants for the project.
- The project integrated and served other WATC projects and activities; the computer lab for example was used to train participants in IT skills alongside “***stronger women***” project that was sponsored by Care International. Project coordinator held trainings in gender issues for Al Rai’ed institute’s program titled “***empowerment of poor Palestinian families***”, that was carried in cooperation between WATC and the union for agricultural work committees. Other volunteers were selected to work in some of WATC programs; Tahani Dardasawi, I’timad Al Zuq, Shaima’ Abu Mizied, and Samahe Abu Daher were appointed to facilitate for “***gender initiative program/ face domestic violence***” , that was run by WATC and sponsored by the UNRWA.
- The participants discussed alternative tools and instruments to evaluate success of programs and their implementation.
- Participants were able to coordinate and link between their institutes and the project. Fida Za’anin from “***Al Watan Al Hurr***” coordinated and facilitated one focus group, Noor Rabi’e the coordinator from “***let us start together***” coordinated and facilitated for a focus group in her institute; both attempts are seen as important part of the project’s output.
- By getting engaged in the project, several participants received assistance to find jobs: Ilham Shahin was assigned as a coordinator for “the mental guidance department” at Sharik youth forum. Suha Jibril, the coordinator of a project at the society for rehabilitation of the disables”. Najwa Shahin, the psychological expert of Sharik youth forum. Samaher Abu Daher, the coordinator of a project at the center for development of the youth and families.

- Several activities were carried in cooperation with partner institutes that were forced to shut down after confiscating all their belongings.
- Coordination and good networking did not only reflect itself on the relations with partner institutes, but also on relations with the participants in focus groups; 26 years old Amal Abu Jumaizeh from Al Qararah/ Khan Yunis was assisted in installment of her university fees to be able to resume her studies.
- A “*young women’s forum*” was established in defiance of the horrible political and security situation in Gaza; forum embraced youth and women partner institutions and have elected its board in a transparent and democratic practice.
- Participants in program were able to identify important problems and obstacles that stop in their way and agreed on the most crucial issues that need to be tackled in the coming campaigns; a very important output in the project.

Target no. 3: Monitor laws, regulations, policies, and programs that would lead to elimination of discrimination between the sexes, and to protection of women’s rights in all fields

In May 2008, according to WATC new structure and in response to the recommendations submitted to us to boost our work, we established the advocacy department -AD and recruited a director for the public relation and fund raising department.

Activities of the AD for 2008 focused on local and provincial networking and promotional tasks. The department took part in meetings and gatherings organized by coalition of family law, the regional campaign to develop family laws, coalition to modify Palestinian penal law, and forum against violence on women; WATC outlook on discussed issues is presented in the papers we delivered for those meetings.

As member of the forum “*End violence against women*”, our staff engaged themselves in the international campaigns to oppose violence against women 25th Oct,- 10th Dec.2008 and wrote several articles for VOW on violence against women and the tools to end it.

The AD provided the needed support and backing to all campaigns organized by WATC among which was, *Sanabel*’s campaign that was held in Jenin and concluded in the conference on: “*Education as a goal and a challenge*”. The conference was meant to respond and try to answer some of the queries

that appeared to be bothering parents regarding their children education and future; worries were reflected in the opinion poll that we conducted earlier in the province.

AD had also organized for the campaign on violence against women that ran along with BUILD project in Gaza. Project tried to respond to specific societal needs and was held in coordination between ten partner institutes; brochures, posters, and kits for trainers were distributed to promote and lobby the public around the cause. Special poster on the 8th March was also circulated.

To strength and maintain campaign's output, we invited partner organizations for a number of meetings to prepare for launching an effective coalition able to spread campaigns slogans and goals. Campaigns are partially to exert pressure on policy makers to bring them to adopt articles on women's rights and on protection of women from violence.

The public relation and fund raising department started its actual work in August 2008. By end of the year, the department submitted a number of proposals to raise funds for the VOW, "Sanabel" project, the radio program "stop the silence", and the project to support UN resolution 1325. The UN resolution on protection of women in conflict areas and enhancement of women's participation in Peace building was adopted by WATC general assembly back in 2005, and was merged into WATC programs and activities.

Target no. 4: Empowerment of women and their escort to positions in the policy making level

To build on the activities that had been running in most Palestinian areas for the past years, WATC, along with sponsorship of WLP held trainings for participants of its programs and projects to promote for principles of shared leadership.

Training included participants in "**young women for social change**", "**Sanabel**", and "**youth are seeds of change**", to enhance their awareness on legal and judicial issues, as well as their leadership capacities in order for women to take the lead for change in their families, communities, and the society by large.

Project also aimed to provide platform for young women activists to guarantee flow of generation of the human resources into the women's movement and institutes, including WATC itself.

A guide titled "**making choices**" was put together to help young leaders and provide them with tools to lead societal campaigns in favor of positive social change. Guide helped to build capacities of targeted groups and individuals and tackled training of women in IT, communication, and advocacy skills.

We can sum up the trainings held in this field as follow:

- 5 workshops in principles of **shared leadership**
- 4 workshops with 59 participants from the governorate of Jenin were trained alongside **empowerment of rural women** "Sanabel" that was sponsored by the NED.

- Workshops for 23 women in “*field workers and societal rehabilitation*”; CBR nominated the participants to join the program that came as part of “*merging gender issue*” which is sponsored by the Diakonia.
- Workshops to train 50 young women members in two of the work group in “*empower women to empower society*” that is held in the West Bank and Gaza, and is sponsored by the Spanish movement for peace MPDL.
- 4 workshops with 79 participants (52 women+27 men) from “*youth are seeds of change*” were held in Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem, and Tulkarm with the sponsorship of Diakonia. Training aimed to revive spirit of the youth and enhance their engagement in the development and progress of a democratic society that recognize the youth skills and abilities and allow their participant in building a just society were men and women are treated on equal footing in all fields –including leadership of their communities.
- By engaging the youth in trainings and workshops, WATC have been building bridges between generations, introducing young women to existing platforms and campaigns, and empowering them with the tools needed to allow their active participation in the social change of their communities.
- All 6 groups that took part in the project have received trainings in IT skills; the WLP manual “*Making IT Our Own: “Information & Communication Technology Training of Trainers*” was used during these trainings.
- According to some and ours evaluations, trainings by large are seen to have positively affected the individual behaviors and work practices of most participants.
- The project “*Tamkin-empower poor families*” that was sponsored by UNDP was held in partnership with the Union for agricultural working committees to meet the pooping and urgent needs of the population of Gaza strip. The project targeted 900 of the martyrs’ family as well as poorest of the poor in the provinces of Jabalia, Bit lahia, Bit Hanon, Dir el balah, Wadi saqqa, Qarah, Bani Sheil, Abasan, Khaza’a, and Al Mawasi. Project aimed to improve life condition of the families below poverty line by supporting the economic actions they undertake to provide for their family members. Some small women ventures were funded and women were trained in capacity building to ensure success of their businesses and to facilitate their merging in the labor market.

Success stories from *Tamkin- project to empower poor Palestinian families:*

- Faiza Qasem and her husband from Bit lahia were struggling to finish building their family home that had been left standing with no doors, windows, or necessary furniture. As the husband lost his job in the Israeli labor market years ago, he and Faiza have been working in berries’ farming in a nearby rented land. Faiza was given 4 sheeps and 6 months food supply for the sheep by Tamikin project to start breeding the cattle in the rented land. In 6 months time

Faiza expanded the cattle and now breeds 10 sheep that she hopes to sell in order to use the many to finish building her home.

- WATC have trained a number of women graduates in issues related to democracy, human rights, and women rights. Training empowered the graduates, enlightened them on importance of awareness campaigns on women's issues, and encouraged them to take part in related activities and campaigns to pave the way for the merging of leading young women who are capable of defending societal and women's issues.
- Fifty graduates along this project were trained in gender issues and were given necessary knowledge to be able to read laws and regulation from gender perspective. Workshops also included trainings in communication and negotiation skills, self esteem, and advocacy.
- Trainees participated in WATC awareness campaigns that aimed to reach 10000 women in order to deliver principles of women's rights to them.
- The project financially supported 50 university students and provided fees for their last year in college to facilitate their graduation.
- Trainees were given basic skills needed to prepare them for the labor market; trainings focused mainly on English language and IT skills.

Success stories from the project” *stronger women*”

- The graduates participated in training sessions and showed great desire to defy all odds and difficulties that their communities have been facing during 2008; women reflected strong believe in themselves as major players in the social change.
- 23 years old Suha El halabi from Al Shati' refugee camp is a fine arts student in Al Aqsa University. Suha said: “I hardly new anything about women's rights before joining the training and I never cared to know. Now I recognize that the information I learned from the people around me on women's rights, civil laws and Islamic shari'a were misleading. I am more confident now and I am certain and strong when I discuss these issues with family members and friends. I used to run away from similar discussions before”. Suha explains that by being empowered herself she was able to assist a neighbor that had been physically assaulted by her husband for a long time; she invited the battered woman to a workshop on domestic violence then lead her to a center for legal aid; the woman finally filed a case against her husband. Although the case is still in court's hand, the woman is satisfied to have been able to act against her abuser, and Suha is even happier to know that she now can make a change.

- 22 years old Zinat Nsier is specializing in mental counseling in Al Azhar university, she described her experience during and after training and said: “next to my university studies, I used to volunteer with an institute that serves children, hoping that this would open work opportunities for me when I graduate. I followed regulations and did what I was asked to do without thinking or questioning anything. I am stronger now and can defend my own views. During training in “stronger women” project, I used to go home, gather my family, and practice what we had in training on them, I could see that we all benefited a lot from this as we sit together a lot and talk and discuss matters in positive atmosphere; our relations are indeed tighter and stronger than before”. Zienat adds that English was a major obstacle in her university studies, but after she enrolled for the English course within project, she passed her tests and scored good marks.
- Faiza Jojo studies pharmacy in Al Azhar University, she said: “I primarily joined the training just to be able to get the scholarship offered by WATC. I thought that I am into pharmaceutical and have no interest in the trainings offered – but I would take it to qualify for the grant. I know now that knowledge cannot and should not be limited to scientific books and that societal awareness is crucial to us all. I could see that when I was asked to run a workshop in health education at the university, I instantly felt the difference and noticed that I’ve gained the power and ability to address crowds and discuss things with them; training was successful”.
- 22 years old Samar Shakhrit from Dir El Balah is a psychology student at Al Azhar University, she said: “I used to be a very shy person; I avoided talking to others although my area of expertise demands good communication and influential skills. In the project “**stronger women**” I started to discover my hidden abilities and learned new skills that boosted my self esteem and allowed me to express myself and my thoughts. By having the chance to participate in awareness campaigns, I was eager to deliver the messages in simple and straight forward way to others, and I worked hard and searched the books and the internet for more information and tools”. Samar adds that later on she held two workshops by her own initiatives for her mates at the university. She trained her friends on Palestinian women’s rights and achievements, and on violence against women. She commented on this and said: “I was happy to be able to add to those women’s knowledge, as some of them new nothing about Palestinian women achievements”.

Samar was appointed as an assistant teacher at the university and is doing well in her career.

Target no. 5: care for creative women and embrace them

- In a public gathering held in Ramallah, WATC celebrated the launching of the book “*feminine imprint*” that documents for the lives and achievements of 14 Palestinian women leaders, 7 of which are members of WATC and one is the coordinator for Sanabel project. The book also published the latest interview held with the deceased board member Maha Mustaklim.
- WATC also launched a book with 12 success stories for rural women that took part in Sanabel project; “*Sanabel Shamaliyyah*” or Sanabel from the north is the name of the book that was published in March 2008.

Target no. 6: Societal awareness in women’s rights and issues, and promote for changing stereotyped thoughts on women status and roles

The media department at WATC supports and leads awareness activities in the different communities through the materials published in VOW and those broadcasted in the weekly radio program “*against silence*”.

Voice of Women:

- The paper VOW manipulates all its financial and human resources to keep voices of our women alive and high, especially during periods of internal split and retreat of civil liberties and jurisdictions. WATC made sure that the 22 issues of the paper that were published in 2008 reach readers in all provinces in the West Bank and Gaza; 506 thousand copies had been distributed in over 110 different locations.
- VOW introduces itself as platform to defend women’s rights and achievements, and along this vision it highlights on successful and pioneering women that fight hard to change their status and things in their communities. The paper reflects on women’s worries, demands to be protected against violence, just laws that do not discriminate against their sex, their right in more choices and opportunities that mirror their abilities and knowledge, and their demand in a democratic society with equal rights for all. On 8th March, the paper stretched its pages to promote for women achievements from all over the world, with special focus on the Palestinian women’s interest and engagement in the national and social struggle.

- VOW works with a clear feminine journalistic vision that was reflected in the themes selected to guide the dialogue on women and national issues. Unification of women's voices, Gaza women sufferings under Israeli siege, role of women institutes in response to women's problems, killing women for "honor", right of Palestinian women prisoners in the Israeli jails, right of women in decent job opportunities, impact of Gaza war on the women, and creative women writers are part of the paper's concerns.
- Themes of VOW steered lots of debated within the local communities and provided a platform for many journalists and writers that kept sending their writing and comments to the paper for publishing. VOW decision to organize specialized workshops for writes and journalists to discuss women issues proved to be successful as could be seen by the output of these workshops.

Program "against silence"

- WATC weekly radio program "against silence" complete the efforts of the VOW in providing another platform for the audiences that do not get hold of the paper. "Against silence" provides a space for the women to talk about their interests, problems, and dreams and fills a huge gap in the audio programs presented by the formal Palestinian radio- Voice of Palestine.
- "Against silence" for the women is like a fixed address and reference point that enlighten and update them with news on women institutes and the activities that takes place in their communities. Several experts (men and women) have been invited for talks during the 32 episodes of the program during 2008 and issues of public interests and women interests were discussed.
- "Against silence" have broadcasted a special episode on the 8th March and highlighted on the individual initiatives of women that came to run development enterprises and women centers. Another episode was devoted to the Palestinian child's day and violation of children's rights by Israeli authorities.
- On the Palestinian national level, the program broadcasted a special episode on the Palestinian Nakba (1948 catastrophe) and its impact on the Palestinian culture.
- With the huge number of merging local radios in the Palestinian areas, WATC programs survived and maintained popularity and reputation as a good and responsible program for women. The program is aired through the Voice of Palestine and Ajyal private radio stations,

and allows women from all walks of life to speak their minds and discuss issues that either interest or bother them.

- “Against silence” provided coverage for issues not tackled by the media like women’s success stories, details on laws and regulations that affect women, election laws and role of women in the process, and reform and the battle against corruption and disorder. By the wise and careful selection of the issues to discuss, the program built a wide network of relation with individual women and institutions that refer to it as a platform to promote their cases.

Societal advocacy

With support of the NED, “Sanabel” project to empower rural women have been playing a major role in the lives of rural women since its launching back in 1997. Program aims to enable rural women to be actively engaged in advocacy and lobbying for reforms and against policies and regulation that discriminate against them. To meet these goals, the program provides women with knowledge in legal and judicial facts and skills they need to stand up and trigger their communities towards the individual and societal changes needed to meet requirements of the reform.

The women in Sanabel groups showed good ability to steer women in their community during elections in favor of women voters and candidates on the local and national levels. They also participated in the awareness and advocacy campaigns that have been organized by WATC and other women organizations.

During 2008, “Sanabel” groups managed a campaign for “*challenges in education*” that included production of three TV episodes that were broadcasted in a local TV station in Jenin; episodes hosted profound figures in education and discussed issues that concern all parents and educators. A fourth TV episode was devoted for the students to talk about their worries regarding violence within their schools, problems in the curriculum, and other similar topics; the fourth episode was more like an opinion poll for school children.

Output of the campaign was finalized in activities and sessions of Sanabel annual conference that was held under the title “*aspiration and challenges of education*”. Educators, profound personalities, and experts from the public and private sectors were invited to the conference and the mayor of Jenin opened the sessions.

Recommendations of the conference focused on the crucial role of education in the Palestinians' lives, the obstacles in face of the educational process, the need to unite efforts to eliminate violence in schools, and the right of children with special needs in education.

The 24 Sanabel groups have been dynamic in the activities held in solidarity with the population in Gaza as well as in activities to commemorate national occasions. Success of Sanabel can also be measured by enrollment of some of Samabel members in women and labor unions and bodies and the establishment of several women centers in localities that didn't have their centers before; new centers in Al Matallah and Arbonah villages are just examples.

Sanabel's advocacy campaign in the new locations that were included in project have resulted in opening a kindergarten in Al Matallah, and in the participation of Sanabel women in Jenin's exhibition for handmade and home made products like embroidery, pickles, jams, and other home products.

Stability of Sanabel and persistence of its project members for more than a decade, have indeed left positive traces and introduced changes to the local communities:

- In most targeted villages, the idea of having men and women together in meetings and gatherings is being accepted.
- Women participants in outdoors national and public events is welcomed
- More women in villages that have no public halls like Al matallah volunteered to host trainings in their homes for as long as the project entails.
- Leading and public figures participated in project's activities that were held in coordination with local councils and municipalities.
- Increase in women awareness on issues related to their rights; this was revealed by the participants' engagement in discussions and their active responses during trainings and meetings. Participants planning skills was particularly effective in running the advocacy campaigns in their communities.
- Participants networking and abilities to define and recognize the needs of their communities reflect the high standard of awareness they acquired, and the fact that most women wanted to have their daughters on board and demanded to get them engaged in the conference procedures, reflect their trust in the project and their consensus with its goals.

- Success of Sanabel have laid foundation for a strong trust relation between WATC and the local communities that were involved in project; reputation have even spread to further communities that WATC projects didn't reach yet.
- We can thus describe Sanabel to be the project that built a solid public foundation for WATC and the GUPW as well for other women and national organizations that are to work with grass root organizations and communities in rural and marginalized areas.

Advocacy against domestic violence:

With the support of the UNRWA in Gaza, WATC was involved in the project “*gender perspective initiative against domestic violence*”.

Project aimed to raise awareness of young men and women in an attempt to tackle domestic physical, psychological, and sexual violence by addressing the issue and talk loudly about violence in general, and domestic violence in particular.

Project recruited women to deliver information and spread facts and knowledge in their environments. Empowerment of young men and women in shared leadership skills, and bring participants to recognize their roles and the impact of their roles in advocacy campaigns against domestic violence.

Success stories from the project “*gender perspective initiative against domestic violence*”:

1. Hind is a 14 years school student, and lives in AlShati' refugee camp in Gaza. She participated in one of the discussion groups that was held by the “society of Al shati' youth for development” and received training in communication skills. Hind's enthusiasm towards the project was obstructed by her mother's hesitance and fears that project might delay her studies and prevent her from doing her homework. However, says Hind: “I sat with my mother and managed to convince her, it was the first time ever I manage to do so, and I think it was all because of the communication skills I learned in training. I've chosen the correct and suitable time to talk to her, and I calmly listened to her before I comment and respond. I highlighted on the positive effects the project have left on my personality and my

life, and at the end, mom was convinced”. Hind is now one of the active participants in the discussion groups.

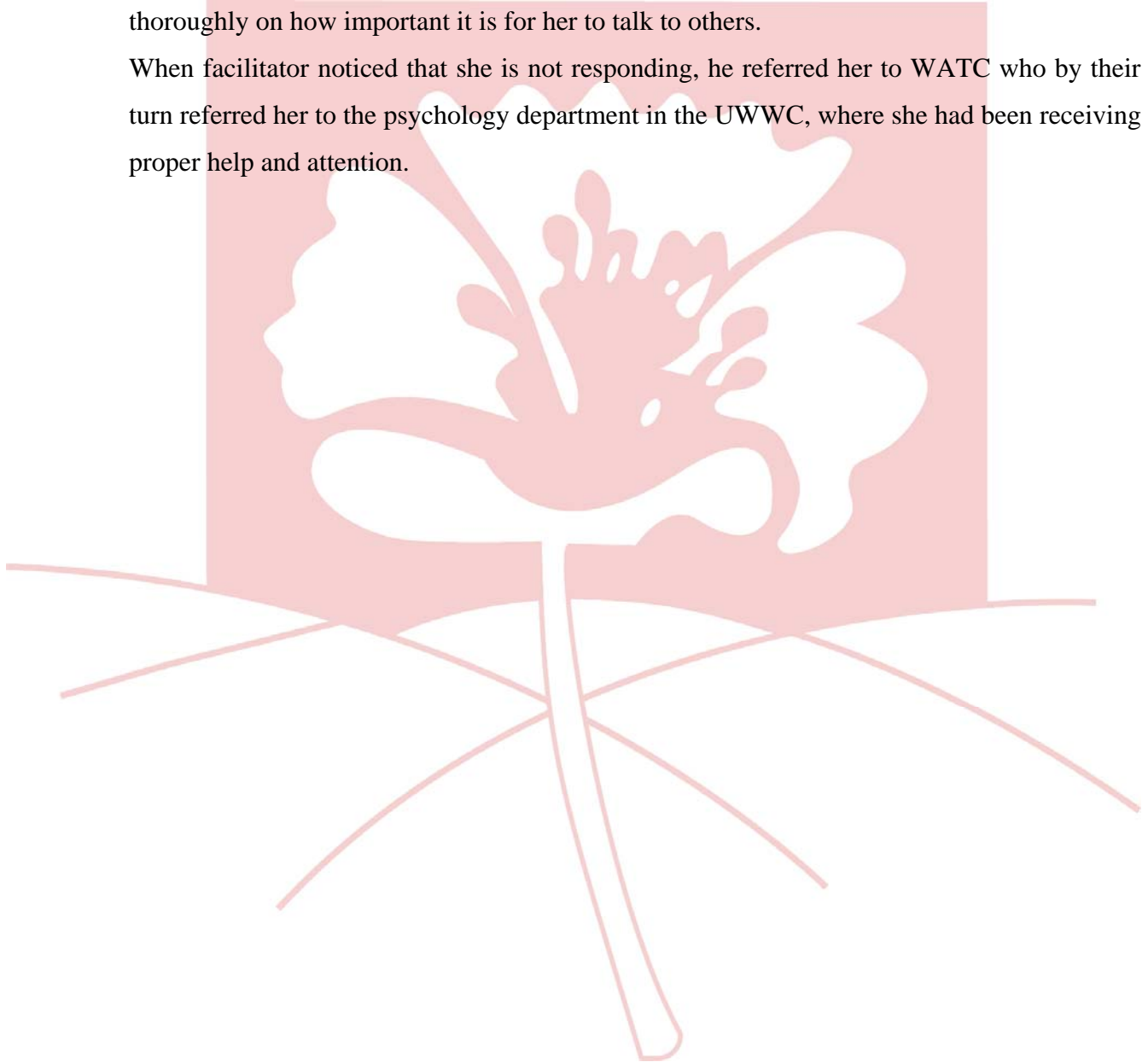
2. 25 years old Muhammed took part in the educational groups that was organized by the “Friends of the society in Bit Lahia”. Mohammed was guided to join the group as he asked for professional assistance to be able to control his anger and the violent actions he takes against his wife without being able to justify what he does; Mohammed was not happy with his behavior, but couldn’t control it or change it. In the educational group, Muhammad learned how to respect women, and was trained in self control and anger management. Later on by the end of training, Mohammed said that he is happy for he didn’t beat his wife since first day of training, he added that whenever he is angry, he simply walks out of home until he calms down.
3. When 29 years old Ahmad enrolled in the group, he was sure and insisted that domestic violence is an imported term related to other societies- but not ours. However, being engaged in several sessions and discussions, and having the chance to listen to true stories on the violence against women, Ahmad came to admit the reality and showed readiness to join efforts to end violence against women in our society.
4. Mahmud is a young participant from Hittin society at Dir El Balah. When joined training on domestic violence, his first reaction was that “women’s actions and behaviors should be always monitored, and women are not to travel alone because if any harm was done to them it would infect theirs and their family’s honor. After few discussions with facilitator Layla Bayyomi from UNRWA on women’s rights, abilities, strength, and self-confidence, Mahmoud appeared to be convinced that women can and are able to lead their way in life wisely.
5. Two of the participants from the Palestinian society approached the facilitator Wai’el Ba’losheh and confided to him that one of their friends is living in a very violent home; the 20 years old friend (x) was abused by his father that beaten him and treated him badly. Lately the father remarried and moved with his new wife to live in Jordan and left the young man (x) with his two brothers without any support. X was frustrated and couldn’t bear the burden left on his shoulders and found himself treating his brothers in the same bad way his father treated him; he has been beating and insulting them. X’s friends asked Ba’losheh to meet x and try to help him, and ba’losheh did. After several sessions with x, the young man

became conscious about his behavior, started to respond to training, and showed willingness to change.

6. 13 years old Riham participated in the meetings organized by the working women committees in Abasan, and after few sessions the facilitator noticed that Riham was hostile to other participants. When he talked to her, the facilitator learnt that Riham is treated badly by her mother that beats her and controls all members of the family including her helpless and unemployed father. The facilitator called the mother and talked to her, he explained the dangerous and hidden results that might affect the future of the child if mother continues to abuse her. Mother was alerted and showed sincere willingness to change her behavior, and in session 8 of the training Riham came forwards, expressed her relief because she is having better relations with her mother, and said that she feels safe.
7. 14 years old Madlin participated in training organized by the union for women committees in Rafah. She's been living in a miserable dirty environment with her grandmother since her mother was divorced, she couldn't handle the food her grandmother offers to her for utensils and cooking surface didn't look hygienic to her, but she was afraid to talk to her nanny. After being to the sessions, she said that her life changed as she found a diplomatic way to handle the problem. She politely approached her grandmother and asked her to teach her cooking. The plan worked perfectly well and Madlin eventually became in charge of the cooking as well as cleaning.
8. 13 years old Bisan from Rafah participated in trainings held by the union of women committees, she said: "getting involved with the group have helped me to control my anger and change my behavior, I am not as bad now when I am angry, I don't bang my head to the wall, I don't break things or hit other people or swear, I know now that these are bad violent behaviors".
9. 25 years old Saleh participated in sessions held by Ajiyal society in Gaza city, and after few sessions, the facilitator noticed that Saleh's interaction with group members was not positive. He was not friendly and was opposing the ideas being discussed, he has also been repeating offensive phrases regarding women and described them as **no body** and said that beating them is the only suitable way to deal with them. By the end of trainings, saleh admitted that he was wrong, confirmed that he is looking at his wife from a new angle, and is doing his best to change his behavior at home.

10. 13 years old Khawla participated in sessions run by the union for working women committees in Abasan/ Khan Yunis. Khawla was struggling with her inability to speak up her mind to others which was revealed from the first session when the facilitator asked her about her name. Khawla said that she would rather write it down, adding that she prefers to communicate with him and the group in writing –not talking. The facilitator talked to her thoroughly on how important it is for her to talk to others.

When facilitator noticed that she is not responding, he referred her to WATC who by their turn referred her to the psychology department in the UWWC, where she had been receiving proper help and attention.



List of WATC projects for 2008

No.	project	budget	funder	duration
.1	Empowerment of Palestinian women/development and improvement "Build"	249,648.56\$	CARE International	2010-2008
.2	Toward Stronger women in Gaza "Taziz"	\$ 75,204.00	CARE International	2008-2007
.3	Empowerment of young women for the social change and struggle for equality	€107,864.13	MPDL	2009-2007
.4	Gender initiative/ against domestic violence	\$ 65,480.00	UNRWA	2008
.5	Youth as seeds of change	\$ 207,963.00	Diakonia	2010-2007
.6	Gender training/ societal rehabilitation project	\$ 23,000.00	Diakonia	2008-2007
.7	Gender merging/ Diakonia partners	\$ 11,891.00	Diakonia	2009-2007
.8	Empowerment of women	\$ 19,910.00	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	2008
.9	Institutional support	\$ 150,000.00	Ford Foundation	2008-2007
.10	Institutional support	\$ 80,000.00	WLP	2009-2007
.11	Institutional support	\$ 25,000.00	WLP	2009-2008
.12	Empowerment of rural women/ Sanabel	\$ 39,300.00	NED	2009-2008
.13	"Voice of women" newspaper	\$ 136,740.00	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung	2008