



Annual Report of 2017

Women Rights are Human Rights: Inalienable, Indivisible, Interdependent and Interrelated

Submitted to the Human Right & International Humanitarian Law Secretariat

29 March 2018

Table of Contents

Thanks and Appreciation	3
General Context	4
Main Achievements and Outcomes.....	5
Women Empowerment Program.....	8
Psychosocial Counselling Program.....	16
Lobbying and Advocacy	21

Thanks and Appreciation

PWWSD extends its thanks and appreciation to all its staff, volunteers, women and youth in CSOs, CBOs, networks in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and all donating entities for their supporting efforts that help PWWSD in implementing, facilitating, and mainstreaming its mission and objectives.

Your consistent support, ideas, practice, implementation, and initiatives paved the way towards achieving all the results of PWWSD's work during 2017.

Francoise Dawoud

Chairperson

PWWSD

General Context

During 2017, PWWSD continued its interventions in accordance with its vision and strategic objectives. Utilizing all mechanism to empower women and girls in the public sphere as well as the private sphere to gain gender equality, PWWSD focused on women leadership in building gender responsive governance and justice, mobilizing youth in support of a gender justice agenda, and women security and peace agenda based on the IHRL and IHL. Women's leadership takes place in a complex environment; balancing opportunities at the local level with profound power asymmetries in the context of the Israeli occupation and shrinking space for civil society in light the Palestinian internal division. Last year was characterized with ongoing suppression and political stalemate overdrawn by orders of the Israeli government, which led to an expansion of illegal settlements, Judaization of Jerusalem, and the ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip. In addition, President Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the Occupation State has deeply affected the political situation and threatened the two-state solution. There was adverse effects on the lives of the Palestinian people and women in particular, taking into consideration the dangerous side effects of the Occupying Forces against the national struggle and the process of developing a democratic society in terms of diminishing freedoms and obstructing the work of the Legislative Council.

The PA signed the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2014, and it was the only Arab state to have signed the convention without any reservations. The absence of a national legislative council to endorse international treaties and ensure that national legislations are complaint will mean that their implementation in national court and informal justice systems is limited. Women's organizations view this as an opportunity to bridge the gap between current legislations and CEDAW and ensure mobilization for reinstating gender justice at local levels and on policy agendas in Palestine. The lack of political will creates a tremendous challenge for women and youth because the two groups are particularly excluded as they face high unemployment rate and low involvement in the decision-making process; 19% of women participated in the labor force in 2017 and 65.8% of youth females aged of (15-29 years) were unemployed. Poverty is one of the main factors leading to women exclusion and low involvement in public life; even though any peace building process cannot be made without the involvement of women and youth, or its sustainability would be put at risk. However, in practice the current political participation of women is very low compared to men. For instance, only 21.2% of the members of the local councils are females in the West Bank, while 78.8% were males. In the other hand, the youth trust and confidence in politics in the oPT shrank drastically as the political division continued. It is crucial for PWWSD to work through many networks and coalitions to contribute to social democratic and political change on the grounds of the principles of UNSCR1325 and CEDAW, in addition to the other international Human rights laws and conventions.

Main Achievements and Outcomes

PWWSD was able to reach significant outcomes in accordance with its strategic objectives and programs through coordination and networking, raising awareness, mobilization, and advocacy at the national, regional, and international levels. PWWSD mobilized women in shadow councils, labor unions, cooperatives, and projects and developed the capacities of its employees, volunteers, women and youth in the grassroots.



- ❖ PWWSD launched a campaign to combat GBV called: "بكفي سن سكاكين سكاكين، لازم" - *Enough drawing knives, laws must be drawn against domestic violence.* PWWSD coordinated a march in front of the Legislative Council, gathered 7500 signatures, and sent a Memorandum to the President to drop Article 308 in the Penal Code and endorse the Family Protection Law. These efforts come as part of the women movement in Palestine, which revolved around demanding the endorsement of the Penal Code and Personal Status Law according and based on CEDAW. The Palestinian government acknowledged the role of PWWSD and it was nominated to be a member in the National Monitor to Combat Violence in a decision made by the Palestinian Cabinet.
- ❖ PWWSD in cooperation with women organizations and Irada Social Movement waged a campaign asking for the endorsement of procedures and additional amendments on the Penal Code. The demands entailed:
 - Women's right to apply for passports for their children,
 - Women's right to create bank accounts for their children,
 - Women's right to transfer their children to different schools,
 - Amending the Penal Code No. 16 of 1960, by not considering murders based on the so-called family honor part of the lenient punishments, and revoking Article 308, which enables rapists to escape punishment by marrying the victim.
- ❖ PWWSD documented 70 cases on women rights to create unified families and on their rights to family reunification. Some of these cases were published through a joint report in cooperation with WCLAW, TAM, and MIFTAH. This report was disseminated within the efforts of PWWSD to hold Israel accountable in CSW62 during March 2018.
- ❖ PWWSD became a member of the National Coalition to Implement UNSCR1325 by a Cabinet decision and participated in drafting indicators for the National Action Plan objectives.
- ❖ PWWSD contributed to increasing the representation of women in the dialogue to end the national division that took place in Cairo in November, where PWWSD called upon women representing parties and civil society and formed a pressure group called the Women Democratic Trend. A MoU was drafted and later considered as one of the

documents of the reconciliation process and women representation increased to four women instead of one woman, as was in 2011.

- ❖ PWWSD contributed to adding a paragraph to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) report in March 2017, following the ratification by the UN General Assembly of the final document of the Committee, where the impact of the occupation and its responsibility to obstruct the economic development of Palestinian women were highlighted.
- ❖ PWWSD drafted a shadow report on Israel's Country report to CEDAW. The report was submitted to the Committee and included some of the violations of the occupation; the status of Palestinian female prisoners in Israeli prisons, and the right of women to family reunification.
- ❖ PWWSD contributed to drafting the NGOs report on the Palestinian State report in cooperation with other women NGOs and the General Union of Women for the pre-session. PWWSD also took part in the consultation of drafting the Country report that was held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ❖ PWWSD contributed to the application and deepening of the joint professional work to protect women from violence through the national referral system for women who face violence in coordination with the Ministry of Health and the Forum against Violence against Women.
- ❖ PWWSD worked on encouraging women to form labor unions to defend the rights of women in the beauty sector, and pressured towards the application of the minimum wage for working women.
- ❖ As a result of coordination at the regional and Euro-Mediterranean level, through the National Dialogue and through the Gender Dialogue Platform within to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership process, and specifically through the civil society conference for women's institutions organized by the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Initiative in Cairo in November 2017, PWWSD contributed to bringing Palestinian women, peace and security agenda to the Ministerial Conference that was conducted in Cairo in the same period. In particular, a recommendation to end the occupation was submitted to the Ministerial conference as a Euro-Mediterranean women's priority.
- ❖ PWWSD increased its role in representing women in regular and Sharia courts, especially in marginalized areas such as Yatta, Dura, Jenin, Ramallah, Nablus, and Tulkarem. PWWSD expanded its legal services and combating violence intervention after winning a tender offered by the Ministry of Social Development to provide services in some of the said areas.
- ❖ PWWSD contributed to the drafting of the Family Protection Law against violence and cybercrimes, and the amendments to the Social Security Law issued in 2017.

- ❖ PWWSD expanded its international advocacy by involving a number of young women in advocacy activities, particularly in the 36th session of the Human Rights Council, as well as on the 17th anniversary of the issuance of UNSCR1325. The capacity of 12 participants was built in writing Universal Periodic Reports. PWWSD also participated in the open day with the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process in order to raise the issues of women and the effects of the occupation on them, especially women refugees and prisoner, Gazan women, and those living in areas surrounded by the apartheid wall and settlements.



- ❖ Through its offices in Gaza, Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Yatta, and Dura, PWWSD became a reference for institutions and women who seek psychosocial support and who wish to file complaints against perpetrators. As well, the role of PWWSD to assist women survivors of violence expanded to economically empowering them.
- ❖ PWWSD contributed to the increase of women representation in the local councils, where 50 women from the shadow councils ran for the last local council elections. In addition, 79 women from the ones PWWSD works with through capacity building and awareness raising ran for the elections as well. The result was that 75 women won in the elections of the municipal and local councils in the West Bank.
- ❖ PWWSD followed up with the Anti-Corruption Commission on issuing a women strategy to combat corruption, and worked on increasing women awareness on the same issues based on democratic principles and the rule of law.
- ❖ PWWSD conducted its periodic elections of its Executive Board and there was an increase in young women participation in the General Assembly.

Women Empowerment Program

Program Strategic Goal:

Contribute to the enhancement of women's roles and duties in all aspects of life on the basis of gender equality.

This program aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

Specific Objective I

Palestinian women targeted by the program are aware of their legal and civic rights and have the capacity to advocate for these rights.

Women have participated in awareness-raising activities and capacity building in areas of civil, legal, economic, political, and social rights activists as follows:

1.1. Empowerment and Social Awareness



During 2017, 391 educational workshops were held for specific target groups in which 3420 individuals participated; 3170 women and young girls, 250 men and young boys, with a varied class of participants such as housewives, public and private sector workers, university students, members of grassroots institutions, women's rights representatives, political party members, show council

members, etc.

Inas Abdul Jawad: *"Through my participation in these workshops I have gained some useful insight into the obstacles that stand against the enactment of CEDAW conventions and UNSCR1325. These conventions require the enactment of laws which adhere to women's rights and which include CEDAW provisions. As an effect of gaining this new information I have begun volunteering at the organization and have implemented several workshops to educate student target groups on CEDAW and UNSCR1325"*

Maymounah Abu Hantash: *"These workshops and meetings are important in introducing us to the concept of women's rights and how society continues to place obstacles against women under the*

guise of customs and traditions; more institutes need to spread awareness among all target groups in order to specify the violations which women face whether from society, the occupation or as a result to the economic situation, poverty and unemployment.”

Outcomes:

- * The target group gained knowledge as per their rights through providing them with information regarding legal and civil rights concepts; they were also introduced to the legal, social, and political environment by which they are surrounded.
- * The beneficiaries were introduced to the legal services provided by PWWSD.
- * The workshops enhanced networking and coordination opportunities with community-based organizations, civil society organizations, legal and women’s rights organizations and political party leaders.

1.2. Capacity Building and Development

PWWSD coordinated 21 training sessions in which 308 participants took part: members of NGOs, university students, members of shadow councils and local governance councils, women candidates in the local governance elections, professional working women, lawyers and advocates, where discussions were held concerning topics of economics, leadership, participation in political events, lobbying and advocacy, filing complaints, and formulating UPRs.



PWWSD also facilitated for its staff and volunteers to develop their capacities through different training and workshops in PWWSD and other organizations in the fields of monitoring and evaluation, advocacy, reporting, documentation, and violence against women.

Mr. Mahmoud Maysami, Director of the Central Election Commission in Nablus: *“We consider PWWSD to be a highly professional organization that does not give way to impartiality; PWWSD plays a major role in supporting women in reaching decision-making status and playing a part in forming a consolidated democratic society. I have learned a great deal from the young women who took part in monitoring the local elections where they clarified wrong-doings of voters in a professional manner and raised reports of such issues to the Central Electoral Commission.”*

Outcomes:

- * Unlocking possibilities for participants to increase their capacity to influence other groups while raising their level of responsibility

- * Raise individual preparedness to advocate for change in their local communities while increasing the number of youth volunteers
- * The training sessions gave leeway for participants to deeply discuss issues important to women and especially to youth groups
- * The training sessions contributed to open discussions of these issues among community settings in which the beneficiaries are surrounded
- * The performance of PWWSD staff and volunteers was developed. In principle, these young women and men have demonstrated high potential; the capacity-building component only enhanced their skills in a coherent and structured manner and channeled it towards efficient practice of the acquired knowledge.

1.3. Panel Sessions and Discussion Groups:



PWWSD implemented 80 panel sessions and discussion groups throughout the WB and Gaza Strip in which 1819 people participated (1674 women, 145 men). The following categories of participants took part in the sessions: a mix of women and young girls, representatives of civil and governmental organizations, representatives of political parties, decision-makers and influencers, reporters and journalists, PWWSD volunteers, members of the labor union, etc. Many topics were discussed during these sessions with

the most prominent topics revolving around women integration in politics and the decision-making process, the reconciliation process, and the significance of holding presidential and legislative elections and the implementation of UNSCR1325. It is worth noting that these sessions were implemented with the help of volunteers who also took part in conveying important messages to other youth groups concerning lobbying and advocating to reenact UNSCR1325.

Outcomes:

- * Ending the division and restoring national unity are a prelude to conducting presidential and legislative elections and forming a national council with the participation of a fair number of women
- * Shedding light on the reconciliation process and its influence on presidential and legislative elections
- * Exchanging experiences between shadow council members and local municipal councils; deep discussion concerning enhancing a woman's role in politics; shedding light on experiences gained during local body elections; lobbying at the Ministry of Labor for the monitoring of minimum wage standards
- * Expanding knowledge on the establishment of a national plan and overseen by the National Commission for the implementation of UNSCR1325; shedding light on women's statuses in the absence of the Legislative Council

- * Relaying details of how the police deal with referred cases, intervention procedures between relevant institutions, and protection procedures carried out to safeguard women escaping domestic abuse; improving the mechanisms of cooperation and coordination between institutions concerning referred cases.

1.4. Mobilizing and organizing among women:

During 2017, PWWSD worked with 60 different groups (28 women's groups + 32 youth groups) and implemented activities for each target group, including community awareness-raising workshops.

Shadow Councils: 13 new shadow councils were formed in 2017 with a total of 98 women members; follow-up was carried out to 73 shadow councils formed in 2013-2017 and totaling to 86 councils distributed over separate governorates in the WB and Gaza Strip. Once the new 13 councils were formed, 13 introductory meetings were held to describe the duties and tasks expected of these councils. PWWSD implemented recreational gatherings for the shadow councils in Ramallah where 40 female members participated. The aim was to break the barriers between the members and develop team spirit through engaging in various activities as yoga and dance which gave each member a positive reflection of self.



These shadow councils also implemented their community-based activities with cooperation from local councils in their area. Approaches were taken to formulate strategic plans exclusively for shadow councils; they also agreed to continue regularly implement community-based activities that aim to enhance a woman's role in politics and to encourage women to nominate, run, and engage in local governance elections that took place in 2017. The council members also participated in formulating strategic plans to combat corruption in cooperation with the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Various activities were also implemented in cooperation with 72 **community-based organizations** and 4 worker women groups to raise awareness among target groups and to encourage women in the beauty and cosmetics field to form a union of their own. Follow-up was conducted with 9 different **Neighborhood Committees** established in 2015/2016, and a new one was formed, which play a major role in empowering women to take an active role in working on women's issues in society and politics. Volunteers from the shadow councils continued to follow up with workers and trainees in the beauty sector in order to encourage the women to form a union that would allow them to raise their issues and defend their personal cases. Various activities were also initiated in cooperation with the Kindergarten Teachers Union.

Encouraging more women from target groups to participate on different levels in **decision-making processes**:

Local Councils elections 2017: led to an extensive working and training with target groups of women where 50 woman shadow council members were nominated for elections

in their local governance councils, in addition to the nomination of 79 young women targeted by the organization throughout its different activities. Out of the abovementioned women, 50 shadow council members won the elections and became members of their local governance councils, in addition to another 25 women targeted in the capacity building and mobilization activities of PWWSD (Total 75 women).

23 women engaged in shadowing opportunities where they accompanied members of their local governance councils; in some cases, these women were permitted to shadow the council chairperson for 2 consecutive weeks. PWWSD documented these experiences in a booklet titled: Experiences in the Realm of Leadership - Empowering Palestinian Women and Enhancing their Political Participation in Local Governance.

Suhad Shaban, member of the shadow council in Al Jalamah village who escorted Reem Al Sha'er, a council member: *"the shadowing opportunity has given me the chance to work alongside council members as policy makers in our village. This has greatly improved my character; I have learned many new mechanisms in solving conflicts that may arise between the council and the women's center or with members of the local village council. This opportunity has prompted me to face challenges within my community with the objective of empowering women in order that we may reach decision-making status and fulfil the needs of women in our village."*

Increased involvement of women in the national and social struggle - **Women Peace and Security Agenda:**



Activities initiated to end the division: women were encouraged to engage in the reconciliation process by forming shadow councils for the Reconciliation Committee with an aim of lobbying for the inclusion of women in the Reconciliation Committee, and to participate in a research study on the impact of the division on women.

The women participated in various other activities concerning the reconciliation with combined efforts from "Nationals to End the Division", which included a series of conferences, meetings, and the participation in demonstrations and workshops. The major outcome was the increased number of women who were present at the negotiations in Cairo.

Creating opportunities for women to access justice through the provision of legal services:

Legal counseling services: 1021 legal counseling services had been offered to community members particularly to 618 women who sought advice concerning the Personal Status Law, the Penal Code, Labor Laws, and the Family Protection Law; they also sought advice regarding court rulings and other cases. Many people were encouraged to take legal action through the assistance of PWWSD lawyers.

Court proceedings: in 2017, 303 women filed 373 lawsuits to the courts, 311 cases of which were closed and women received a fair ruling. Note that 40 cases were dropped by order of the beneficiary for many reasons such as pressure from family members; reconciliation between spouses; the agreement to divorce under mutual understanding between spouses; 95% of women achieved court victory and received justice.

Legal phone counseling: 185 legal phone-counseling services have been offered in which 148 people benefited; 65 cases were referred to the courts with assistance from PWWSD lawyers.

Oftentimes, cases are referred to and from PWWSD, and beneficiaries are referred to the Psychosocial Counseling program offered by volunteers from other centers, the Shari'a Court, the Ministry of Social Development, the Family Protection Unit (police), legal women's groups, Social Protection Centers, safe houses, etc. The number of cases which have been referred to and from the Counseling Program totaled to 90 cases; and the number of cases referred to from outside sources to PWWSD totaled 173 (all women's cases). Note that women who seek legal advice sometimes receive counseling as well through coordination between counselors and lawyers.

Specific Objective II

Duty bearers targeted by the program demonstrate increased readiness to fulfill their obligations to reinforce women's rights.

The demands of women were raised to members of the Legislative Council, politicians, government representatives, and civil institutes and they expressed full preparedness to support and pass laws that are fair to women. For example, the draft of the Family Protection Law was prepared in consultation between civil society and the legislative blocs, Cabinet, and the General Prosecution Officer. The Women Forum to Combat Violence (of which PWWSD is a cofounder and member) was part of a national committee was created to adapt local laws to CEDAW. In addition, there are ongoing consultations with the High Judicial Officer and Sharia Courts to develop procedures to facilitate access to justice for women.

Outcomes:

- * Meetings with decision-makers and lobbying at the community level: PWWSD conducted several meetings with the Ministry of Local Governance, political party representatives, and decision-makers concerning their role in supporting the involvement of women in local council elections.
- * Campaigns and panel sessions: 2 panel sessions were held (one in the WB and the other in Gaza) and broadcasted on Watan TV. The panel sessions focused on the violations women face in the workplace and the minimum wage rates. A decision had been made to increase women participation in the decision-making process at a rate not exceeding 30%. PWWSD had also continued its campaign to protect women and young girls from exploitation on social media websites.
- * Coalitions and networks: PWWSD continues its membership in coalitions established in previous years; in 2017, PWWSD joined 5 new coalitions including the Gender-Based Forum at the Local Governance Council. The coalition was launched in a conference held in 12/4/2017 under title "Campaigning towards Local Governance Elections with Fair Rights for Women."

Specific Objective III

Local community is more sensitized on gender equality and feminist progressive discourse.

Media's role in promoting women's rights and gender equality and increasing discussions concerning gender-based bias on different society levels.

- Production and broadcasting of 25 radio programs titled "Through Women Eyes"
- The radio program was broadcasted 180 times. Posters, flyers, pamphlets, and several press releases were published.
- Updating social media platforms.
- The publishing of a case study titled "Women in the Beauty Industry with a Gender-Based Perspective"
- Releasing several posters and videos to mark PWWSD campaign to combat violence against women in alignment with the International 16 Days of Activism
- Distribution of pamphlets by the Local Shadow Councils documenting the experiences of shadowers in 2016.
- Publishing several press releases concerning women in local council elections
- Participation of organization employees in 19 TV interviews and 45 radio interviews hosted by local TV and radio stations

Specific Objective IV

Women are empowered economically.

Launching income-generating projects that played a role in developing local businesses.

The program produced the following outcomes:

- ❖ Follow-up work conducted in cooperation with 12 cooperatives and 1 Women Economic Group; initiating 5 individual income-generating opportunities for women through Arts & Crafts Shop. In addition, 2 new cooperatives were established in 2017.
- ❖ Continuing to develop work opportunities for women which focus on embroidery and sewing and marketing these works at galleries and embroidery shops, and facilitate the access to resources (whether utilities, capacity building, on-job training, or temporary and permanent points of sales and exhibitions) for women cooperatives starting their own initiatives.
- ❖ Participation of women cooperatives from the West Bank and Gaza in galleries run by PWWSD to help women market their products.
- ❖ Follow-up on the organic farmer's market in Beit Sira where PWWSD rented out a piece of land as part of a 5 year agreement between the land owner and the women's charity group.
- ❖ Encouraging women to participate in coalitions and businesswomen forums.
- ❖ Follow-up on working women cases and providing orientation as necessary (either to the Ministry of Labor or to labor unions).
- ❖ Conducting regular field visits to women at their workplace especially women in the beauty and cosmetics field, or seamstresses at tailor shops or office secretaries

or Child Pioneer Society staff. Encouraging women to participate in labor union elections initiated by the trade unionists.

Raising women's awareness as per their legal, economic, and social rights:

- ❖ Participation in a conference titled "Reality of Cooperatives in Palestine"
- ❖ Participation in a meeting with the Palestinian Bar Association in an effort to enhance women's roles in labor unions.
- ❖ Targeting women working on awareness-raising activities initiated by PWWSD.

Psychosocial Counselling Program

Program Strategic Goal:

To contribute to improving the psychological well-being of Palestinian women and to counter all forms of violence against women and girls

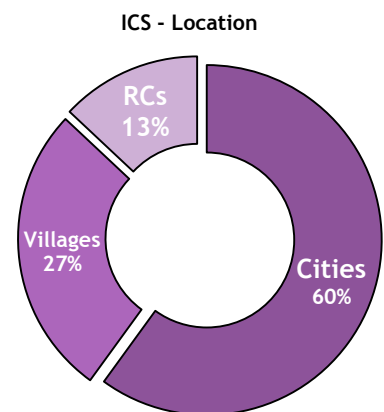
This program aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

Specific Objective I

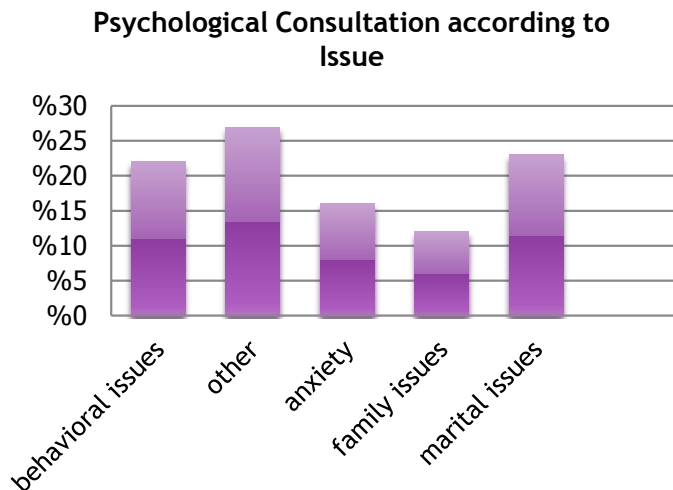
A healthy psychological balance of targeted individuals is fostered.

Reaching out to young women so that they can benefit from the Psychosocial Counseling Program. Several activities have been implemented as part of the program such as providing counseling and consultation services to individuals and family members as well as to local communities, setting up a psychological help hotline, and intervening in times of crises.

1.1. Individual counseling services: have been offered to as many as 700 individuals including 3% of men, 89% of women, and 8% of children of which 3% were male and 5% female.. PWWS's database showed an uneven number in the beneficiaries of the individual counseling program depending on gender and geographical distribution where 60% of individuals were city-dwellers, therefore having easy access to the organization, compared to 27% and 13% of individuals who came from nearby villages and refugee camps, taking into consideration that the UNRWA Agencies provide psychological health services in those areas. Our data also put cases of marital issues at 31% and 17% were due to family-related issues.



1.2. Psychological help hotline: our psychological help hotline has benefited over 183 individuals where 86% were women 12% were men and 2% were children: 1% males and 1% females, according to the organization's database for 2017. Our data indicated that 44% of beneficiaries were city-dwellers, 27% were from nearby villages, and 12% were from refugee camps. Our database monitor indicated the highest number of statistics resulted from marital issues (23%) and family-related issues (12%) and behavioral issues (22%) followed by anxiety sufferers (16%).



1.3. Psychological Consultation services: have been provided to over 848 individuals. The number of women who have benefited from the services of field and office counselors put them at 86%, adult males 6% and children 8% (3% males and 5% females). The diagram to the left indicates the percentage of individuals who have benefitted from these services according to consultation topics.

Individuals who have received psychological counseling generally suffered from personal trauma, loss, anxiety, fear, depression, marital

and family-related issues, behavioral issues, psychological disorders and learning difficulties. This program helps to protect these individuals while enabling them to vent and release negative emotions.

Various counseling skills have been utilized such as listening skills, the encouragement to reflect upon thoughts, feeling, and most importantly respecting the principal of confidentiality. This has helped build a safe environment between the counselor and patient. Other tools utilized during counseling sessions include relaxation therapy, theatre and drama, arts and crafts, and projection tools such as flash cards containing stimulating words or photos.

"I know that there are no magical solutions to any problem, but today I am able to search within my inner self to find peace. In the past I was always anxious and easily triggered but ever since I started practicing the breathing and relaxation techniques I have become a better person to myself as well as to my family; I now feel relaxed and am able to live my life without anxiety."

A woman who lost her husband to a fatal incident near a military checkpoint confesses: "I was always afraid to leave my home. I used to see the world as an empty place void of life. I did not have anything worth living for. After partaking in the individual counselling sessions, however, I have become capable of defining a purpose for my life; I will strive to be a better mother to my children. I feel I am able to connect with my children especially when we engage in fun family activities. Life for me seems to have only just begun. I always carry the memory of my husband wherever I go, but I will try hard to start over to give my children a better life, a life they deserve."

1.4. Support groups:

During 2017, several women's support groups were formed and which consisted of a number of women suffering from distress resulting from social, psychological or political issues; these groups also contained young men and women who were of special needs, and students from different geographical locations. Individuals working with these groups gained the ability to express innermost thoughts and feelings and they learned to develop a deeper perception of self. 181 counseling groups were formed and individual psychological counseling services were provided to 179 individuals working with these groups.

These counseling groups learned to address different personal or social issues such as: personal trauma; developing methods to protect oneself from social violence; teenage troubles; raising family awareness on how to raise a child with special needs; marital issues; behavioral issues; mental/psychological stress; loss; addressing individuals who possess self-assertion problems.

The purpose of these meetings was to gain conceptual and practical knowledge of the topics put forward during the discussion. Theoretical, cognitive, and educational resources were utilized to raise individual awareness on the concept of personal trauma, its symptoms, and methods of self-protection, and on the concepts of anxiety, loss and gender-based violence.

These group therapy sessions have helped to enhance self-care and protection through strengthening the connection of mind, body, and soul. They have helped individuals build social ties with other members of the group by learning to develop inner peace, reaching a personal level of self-satisfaction, and finding inner balance. They have also worked to strengthen ties between parents and their children, especially teenagers, where parents learned to create a safe, child-friendly environment built on active participation, which has helped create a sense of trust between parents and their children.

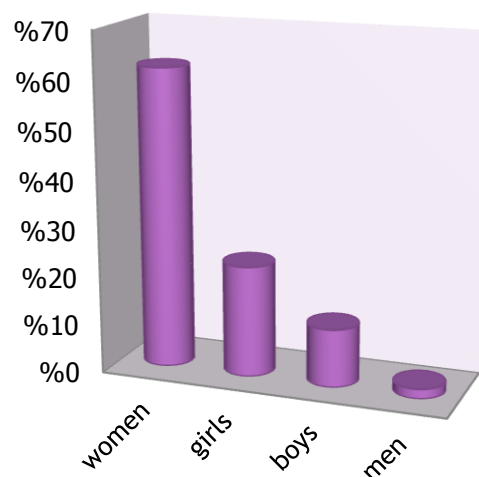
"Whenever I participate in a session, I truly feel I am being heard without being judged; these people give me the strength I need to carry on with my life. I always feel my problems are miniscule compared to those around me."

"Every time I return home in an angry mood, instead of taking my anger out on my children I go to my room, I take a deep breath and visualize the safe place that which I have created for myself. This gives me the chance to look back on the sweet memories of my childhood and when I return to reality, I am calmer and at peace with myself."

"I am a woman who has lost 2 of her sons in the tunnels, however, listening to the struggles of the other participants has helped me cope with my sadness. I will strive to help other women who face the same situation as mine."

1.5. Intervening in times of crises:

10 meetings were conducted and aimed at providing financial contributions during the holy month of Ramadan and food parcels were distributed to poor families. Group therapy sessions were held in Gaza, in coordination with local institutes, in which 897 people benefited from these sessions: 21 men, 565 women, 107 male children, and 204 female children. Local institutes helped organize fun events and activities; they even organized several banquets to mark the end of the fast, and provided healthcare services to those in need.



Specific Objective II

Targeted women and community have increased awareness of psychosocial well-being and contribute to combating GBV.



Awareness-raising workshops:

As part of the Psychosocial Counseling Program, 348 awareness-raising workshops had been implemented in 2017 with the number of participants totaling 7164 and of which 83 participants were male, 5554 females, 294 male children and 1233 female children. A number of 110 participants received psychological and counseling services. These workshops were held in cooperation with major institutes and organizations, local schools, women's rights organizations, universities and civil society institutions; the effects of these workshops reach a whole dimension of prevention and awareness. A major result of these workshops was the



participation of 480 people with disabilities: this gave women an insight to the rights and needs of handicapped people as well the important realization that handicapped people have a right to engage in various community activities and receive special services offered in target areas. Psychological counseling services had been offered to 875 people with special needs and disabilities.

Specific Objective III

The professional capacities of the counseling staff are developed.

As part of the Psychological Counseling Program, an initiative had been taken to provide further training opportunities to the counselors in order to gain proper support that will help mitigate work-related pressure, increase personal job satisfaction, enhance positive outreach between working staff members in the West Bank and Gaza, and contribute to the development of intervention strategies related to the implementation of the program. As a result, 19 supervision sessions and trainings had been implemented in order to reduce the struggles the working crew faces on a daily basis. The trainings addressed the following topics: psychological first aid, narrative therapy, train the trainer, psychological support training, psychological self-care training, follow-up and assessment, PTSD training, case management, and the mechanisms of working with people with disabilities. PWWSD implemented a training session in which psychologists were trained to recognize suicidal tendencies in patients.

- 10 psychologists and social workers received training in Gaza on topics concerning: case management; individual counseling services; the mechanisms of dealing with PTSD patients; combating gender-based violence; and the referral system.
- 10 developmental and training groups were formed consisting of 174 anthropology graduates: 34 males, 140 females, who received 256 hours of training.
- 15 trainers received individual training on how to successfully write reports concerning case management studies while utilizing extension models.
- 16 volunteers participated in PWWSD program and activities, and 4 volunteers were actively involved in coordinating PWWSD events and meetings with decision makers.

“Through the training sessions I have learned to develop my personal skills and to depend on myself when searching for ways to improve my capabilities. I never realized that whenever my brother got angry with me and he would sometimes push me around, that this was in fact an act of abuse. My self-confidence improved when my training coach encouraged me to sign up for monitoring duty at the local municipality during elections. This has led me to believe that I truly possess leadership skills and capabilities.”

Lobbying and Advocacy

At the national local level: participation in several national-level activities based on the right to self-determination platform, ending the occupation and establishing peace in accordance with the International Humanitarian Law and the International Human Rights Law and in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike in Israeli prisons. Solidarity activities included staging protests and mass sit-ins to protest against the installment of electronic gates and surveillance cameras around Al Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem; and to protest against US President Trump's decision to relocate the US embassy to Tel Aviv and recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Other demonstrations were held to mark the anniversary of Al Nakba, International Women's Day, etc.

70 cases of violations against women, during the process of submitting an Application for Reunification, have been documented. These testimonies will be gathered in a report and raised to relevant international and local parties.

An increase in media focus regarding cases of violence against women: 110 informational events were held to discuss acts of violence committed against women in which 80 were audio-visual interviews, 11 individual interviews, and 11 journalistic interviews. Special press releases had been published regarding the campaign against domestic violence; three short documentaries were produced one of which revealed the struggles women living in caravans in Gaza face on a daily basis, and the other displayed the speech therapy program launched in Gaza; a radio show campaigning for the combat of domestic violence was broadcasted over 200 times on several radio stations and electronic websites.

At the regional and international levels: PWWSD participated in many meetings and conferences initiated by the UN, EU and NGO representatives where PWWSD representatives demanded that International organizations hold Israel accountable for its violation of human rights against the Palestinian people while utilizing International instruments of justice. PWWSD also participated in the annual conference held by UN Secretary General and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; PWWSD had participated as well in a meeting with the UFM deputy director by invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to follow-up on the status of Palestinian women interlinked with the Istanbul Ministerial Plan. Finally, PWWSD participated in the Cross-regional Summit to Build Peace and held in Sweden.

PWWSD participated in a widespread movement to ensure the ratification of the Family Protection Law and in cooperation with local governance institutions and civil society institutions. A rough draft had been formulated in conjunction with community-based organizations laying the foundations for the End to Violence Act. There was also considerable debate to revise the Family Protection Law during conferences held by community-based organizations, along with discussions held by civil society organizations and the National Commission. During 2017, the topic of the referral system for battered women had undergone some debate as well where the Ministry of Women's Affairs, in cooperation with the Public Prosecution's Office, held a workshop to oversee the reactivation of the referral system during 2018. The Ministry of Women's Affairs led a conference to release a consolidated procedures manual that will reactivate the referral system for battered women and that will combat gender-based violence. The year 2017 witnessed increased activity regarding the reactivation of the National Referral System that had been ratified by the Prime Minister's Office 2013, however, the NRS was neither implemented nor handled as a system contributing to developing protocols that could assist service providers

working in separate districts; the NRS offers protection to victims of domestic violence while providing special services that will help raise women's awareness of their rights guaranteed by National and International Legislation's policies. PWWSD has agreed to conduct a study led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the economic cost of domestic violence in Palestine. PWWSD has also participated in the establishment of a National Monitoring Centre for Battered Women, also led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. PWWSD participated in demonstrations calling for the trial and prosecution of the murderers of Suha al Deek and Niveen Awawdah.

PWWSD's campaign in alignment with the International 16 Days of Activism: with the escalation of violence on the local, Arab and International level, and as part of the International Campaign to Combat Violence, PWWSD had decided to prepare its own lobbying and advocacy campaign under title: "Enough drawing knives, you must draw laws," in light of 396 cases of domestic violence monitored by the organization and where 35% of all cases reported were marital and family matters cases. Several meetings and activities have been implemented at separate PWWSD work locations, in cooperation with AlQuds Open University and the Public Prosecution's Office in Nablus City, regarding electronic blackmail, under title "From a domestic abuse survivor to a battered woman", in which battered women and domestic abuse survivors openly discussed their experiences of abuse and violence. In another activity, the women discussed the services provided by social workers and the challenges they faced in their village of Dura. Civil society institutes along with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Shari'a Court were invited to a meeting where PWWSD demonstrated the services that can be offered to women, which will enable them to lead dignified lives, such as psychological counseling services, and social and legal services. A hearing was also held in Ramallah City where representatives of the Public Prosecution's Office and the Ministries of Social Affairs and Women's Affairs debated on the issue of ratifying the Family Protection Law on one side, and advocates, citizens, and activists gave their piece on the other side.