

Annual Report
2007 – 2008

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The Trust of Programs for Early Childhood
Family and Community Education

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Foreword

Once again we are pleased to submit to you the annual report of our institution hoping to give you an adequate update concerning Trust's different and diversified programs. As you must know these programs have been and are aiming at improving life quality and empowering marginalised groups of the Arab society both in Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) areas in a holistic and integrative approach.

As much as our achievements may be seen modest compared with struggling world wide with wars' destruction, poverty, and other human suffering, nevertheless our contribution to the well being and the continuous improvement of the quality of life of our clients, individuals as well as groups, is rewarding. We hope that world economic crises will not halt our drive and programs.

Many of our paraprofessionals have been loudly clearly indicating the leap they had in their life as result of our program. As one of them said to me: "I am no longer a marginalised person or a victim of verbal violence, after I joined the Trust I started to see a new look in the people's eyes, they wanted my opinion about my area of work. I know that I'm paid the minimum but I earned my family's and community's respect to the maximum".

I would like to highlight another point which many of you might have heard about the tragic clashes which took place in the northern town of Akko at the end of last September. It is very much disturbing to see how a small group of extremists can cause damage to the already fragile relations between Arabs and Jews, and shaking the many efforts to improve these relations and the work has been done to this effect over the years. This has made me even more convinced than ever that it is crucial to improve the quality of life among Arabs in the mixed cities and maintain our policy of implementing programs at “eye level” so that we can bridge the gap between the two communities and help them find better ways to together at peace.

We indeed extend our thanks and profound gratitude to you all as our friends and supporters who help us make it real and hoping that your good spirit and devoted mission will continue to bring the light of hope to the “have-nots” and the spirit of support to the “haves” to enhance community empowerment and realize human rights to all individuals and communities around the glob.

Farid Abu Gosh
President

About The Trust

The Trust of Programs for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education was established in 1984 in Jerusalem, in order to empower members of the Arab community through education and leadership development. The Trust is an indigenous developmental agency registered as a non-profit NGO governed by a board of directors. The programs that the Trust has developed have grown out of the needs of the local communities, building on the potential of local residents and community involvement.

Consequently to this multiple mission our challenge is clearly the task empowering marginalized communities which are subjected to social deprivation and political conflicts. Recent statistics indicate that over 50% of the Palestinian Israeli communities are living under the poverty line. The most vulnerable communities are those who live in mixed cities (Arabs and Jews) and in the PNA areas over 60% of the population live under the poverty line and the unemployment rate is over 60%.

The goals of Trust

- To strength the structure of the community at large and to further develop its services.
- To actively encourage the empowerment of various segments of the society.
- To preserve and promote the Palestinian cultural identity
- To provide effective bases for the development of children and women.
- To promote the creation of networks and mutual help among individuals and organizations with similar values and objectives.
- To promote leadership and community symbols.

The Trust leads different and diversified programs

The Mother-to-Mother Program

This program supports and strengthens the parenting skills of young mothers (and fathers) and empowers the parents both individually and as group. It also trains mothers as Para-professionals to work with and support other mothers with children from birth to three years old.

The Learn-by-Play Program

This program seeks to prevent drop of pupils in elementary schools. College students and young people are engaged in this program as volunteers.

The Young Women's Program

This activity seeks to raise the self-awareness of young and socially marginalized women and to develop their leadership skills.

The Teachers Training Program

Via this program, the skills of kindergarten teachers without sufficient formal qualifications are enhanced.

Combating Domestic Violence that aims at actively contributing in combating domestic violence against women and children.



Another deliberate program activity is Networking

The Trust organizes regular seminars, study days and workshops for the target population and for local organizations, this encourages mutual learning and increases the outreach capacity.



Programs Highlights

Mother-to-Mother Program

The Mother-to-Mother program continued to function with all its components according to the planned objectives of the program at all its sites. During year 2007-2008 the program can be distinguished by exerting extra effort in two areas:

- Studying and executing the conclusions and recommendations of the constructive evaluation of the program which was performed by Ms. Afnan Masarweh during the month of September 2007.
- Cementing and expanding the program to new sites in multi-cultural cities like Lod, Haifa, Akko, and Ma'alot Tarsheeha based on our successful experience in Ramla.

The program is modular in nature, its different dimensions are:

- Paraprofessional training for mothers who become supervisors.
- Home visiting where the supervisors visit their peers at their home.
- Group supervision at the Trust of Programs.
- Couples group supervision.

The program has proved to become a base to family intervention and women empowerment programs, as many family and women programs stemmed from the mother to mother program. Last year the mother-to-mother program in Ramla was disseminated to Lod, Haifa, Ma'alot Tarsheeha and Akko following the need assessment we conducted in the mixed city. On the International level the program was adopted by the RAA in Essen-Germany and is still running.

We started last year a multicultural program in Ramla and Lod both Arab and Jewish mothers to interact on common parenthood and gender issues to reflect on cross-cultural and cultural matters of parenting and education through afternoon meetings and constructive activities with their children.

In September 07 evaluation of the Mother-to-Mother program which highlighted the significant contribution of the program to family relations, and the importance of focusing more on fathers involvement towards a functional practices in the family. The evaluator noted the extent the program changed many characteristics and behaviours among the participating families.

These changes covered areas like: Child upbringing, Family interrelations, emphasizing and strengthening women's role, nutrition, influence of the extended family, and the husbands role in upbringing and family matters. This year we develop all written materials and focus on fathers in the process of improving parenthood practices within the family. The program will also focus on motivating the mothers on searching for new challenges outside the house, such as continuing their education or getting a job.

Graduates of the Mother-to-Mother program were happy that we gained the approval of the role of the "Mother-to-Mother paraprofessional" from the Ministry



Programs Highlights

of Education. All issued certificates of the graduates are formally approved by the Ministry and that will help them to find jobs out-side the Trust.

"... we have learned a lot and the program changed us a lot, the group has become an integral part".



"It is hard to leave the group since we have gone through a rich experience but we know that others must benefit from program like we did"

The Learn-by-Play Program

The program works towards improving the educational level and adjusting the behaviour of the participating students utilizing non-methodical learning tools that depend mostly on play and games. A group of young women volunteers from our “Young Women Program” participate in running the program. Their effective role in the program emphasizes their own educational and social perspective.

The program has taken a major role at the schools where it is implemented, especially if we compare it with the general situation of the other schools who are still suffering of a high rate of low school achievement, learning difficulties and drop out. It is seen clearly in the program through parents and students feed back that since it started it has had an additive value on the pupils, the teachers and the parents as well.

The Learn-by-Play last year was implemented not only at five of the neighbouring villages of Ramallah but also at five areas in Jerusalem and in the Negev. There was a great demand by the schools to join the program, thus in cooperation with the school principles and teachers we were able to decide who really needs the program and who will benefit from it.

The program had a great influence on the educational system to become tuned to the children’s needs through involving parents and educators. As many schools are approaching us to implement the program.

Programs Highlights



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The major achievement of the program was increasing the parents involvement in Jerusalem and starting to work with parents in Rahat - the Negev which will start after the teachers finish a special training course. The Learn-by-Play program is now implemented at four schools in the Negev.

The parents groups meetings caused a positive change in their understanding of their childrens needs. The mothers declared that the meetings led them to discover their own capabilities especially that some of the mothers went on to continue their high school education while other joined the work force.

The program will continue in the Negev this year, after it progressed fruitfully last year,

“Our children have improved on the educational level where they can read, spell correctly, write in both languages, and solve math problems”.

we are planning to start an early childhood centre addressing developmental problems and offering occupational and mental therapy, Offering special training for teachers and focusing more on parent's involvement, in addition to networking with the local organizations.



The program has proven to be effective in improving the pupils' reading, writing, math, the English language and in recognizing the letters. The school results bear witness of the students' improvements and the teachers made several remarks concerning the progress of some of the students, both in their behaviour, and in their school achievement. This improvement is indicated by our follow up with the schools and the families, which has encouraged us to continue our mission and consolidate the program more.

"The children are no longer ashamed to show their grades, they have developed remarkably over the past year, especially those who have started with us from the 2nd grade, they have grown with the program to become confident, active and, enthusiastic, you can clearly differentiate them from the new pupils who have just joined the program."

Programs Highlights

The Young Women Empowerment Program

This program has changed the life of about 150 young women. It isn't easy to live in a patriarchal society where gender discrimination and abuse are a common practice. Young women and teen age girls are being deprived of their simplest rights like education and freedom of being, becoming socially marginalized. So by contributing to improve and raise awareness of these young women and their families is a chance worth taking.



The specific mission regarding this specific group is to give the young women the power to make their own individual choice and performance through offering them status achievement and alternative value practices.

Each year we see young faces joining the program, some are new and some are familiar faces hanging on to the program, some are afraid to change, others are eager to learn to finally show what they can do, many of them just want to experience new friendships and most of them seek attention and sense of belonging.

- The program succeeded in moving these young women from exclusion to inclusion many of them have become active members in the community.
- Many of the drop outs we worked with are now continuing their school studies and others have taken part in the volunteer program either at the Hospital, or in the Learn-by-Play program.
- A major achievement was joining forces in establishing a Forum composed of the major stakeholders in the city of Ramla, formal organizations like the police, the social and educational departments of the local council and informal community leaders, educators and religion leaders...
- In February 08, in partnership with the forum we held a conference on “family violence” attended by local stakeholder of the different city departments and informal community leaders on violence against women and children that was conducted in February 08. The conference had large media coverage and a very fruitful recommendation resulted on how we should move forward and pull formal and informal resources for a better tomorrow.

The need of this program is based on the:

- Low status of Arab women
- Limited opportunities
- High drop out rate of schools.
- Lack of awareness of personal status rights and responsibilities.
- Abuse of young women for what is so called family honor.
- Premature marriages.

Programs Highlights



The program has developed largely, in Jerusalem some of the young women are now involved in our learn-by-play programs in Jerusalem and the Negev. In Ramla we opened a day care centre for younger women ages 13+ to offer them a warm and loving environment in a preventive and developmental program, where the young women from the first program will act as their older sisters.

The young women at all areas are volunteering in different and diversified community activities.

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In Ramla, the centre performs different services to support the girls of different age groups. Recently we developed our work to include the total family as one unit and raise the mothers awareness. We are now focusing our work on eliminating drop out from the school system we have 21 young women who dropped out of preparatory school due to socio-economical problems or family pressure.

We are now in the process of conducting a survey to find out the numbers and the needs of young women who have already dropped out of school. We have already obtained a license to start building a centre for young women and children at a property we own in the Old City of Ramla.

“Every young woman is entitled to a fair chance for a peaceful and secure life and to fulfil her basic needs like: educational, work, and establishment of happy family within a supportive and accepting family and community environments”.

The Teachers' On-the-Job Training Program

It is a known fact that “early childhood” is a very crucial period in the child’s personality development on the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. It is also known that within the PNA areas, specially in the poverty striking areas, early childhood is one of the most underserved sectors in the community.

The significance of this program lies in addressing the lack of professional educational backgrounds and professional training of teachers by offering the necessary training and supervision. Our intervention is also necessary because the preschools we work with have poor educational environment, they are unsafe and lack didactical games with limited space for the child’s activities.

The Teachers’ training program has been running for several years in Ramallah and Jerusalem by our two professional trainers who have experience both on the subject matter of early childhood development, counselling, networking and parent’s involvement.

“We discovered that we are able to excel when we find those who can help us accomplish that, thanks to the program and to the coordinator who continued to enrich us during and after the training course”.



Programs Highlights

The program works on the following:

1. on the teacher's level: Improving and developing the teacher's potential on a professional and personal level through the training courses, study days, follow-up and supervision and arts workshop.
2. The methods of child rearing: Following the active learning process, and planning activities based on the child's needs in addition to the required curriculum.
3. on the educational level: Working according to Plan, yearly, monthly, weekly and daily plan.
4. The kindergarten environment: to make it safe and suitable for the child's needs and growth.
5. Parents' involvement: to work on reaching a partnership between the teachers and the parents for the child's educational growth.
6. the cultural heritage: strengthening the child's cultural identity through the activities.



This year we conducted an evaluation of the program which highlighted the successes and the limits of the program. The major recommendation was to adopt the criterion of selecting the schools in a way that allows a comprehensive perspective of the schools involved. The teachers and the owners should be willing to improve the preschool's educational environment and adopt the active learning in working with children and parents.

In Rahat, the Negev, we started preschool teachers training program with 18 teachers, and 10 teachers got on-job training and are now working with ten parents.

Parents are an active partner and an essential element for the success of the educational process, and the teachers today welcome the idea of having one of the mothers taking turns in assisting in classroom activities of in school trips, olive picking, group breakfast... and the mothers in their turn are accepting to improve and strengthen their relation with their children.

Dealing with Posttraumatic Symptoms program

About 75% of the Palestinian children have suffered from traumatic and post-traumatic symptoms. There is a severe lack of specialists such as psychiatrists and counselling centres that deal with this phenomenon. So the Palestinian Child and his family, finds themselves trapped in a vicious circle of lack of resources to meet their basic needs.

Based on the Trust's holistic and integrative approach the program is implemented through the kindergartens that are already part of our "Teachers' Training Program" as by enriching the teachers and the parents on the right methods of dealing with the children's changing behaviour (fear of death, grieving, aggression, bed wetting, depression, etc...) we can hopefully ensure a safer and more pleasant environment for the children.

The program works with the child's direct environment, through his teacher and through involving his parents.

Aiming at:

- Preventing the posttraumatic symptoms from controlling the child's daily life and his future behaviour.
- Helping the teachers identify the symptoms of post-trauma.
- Equipping the parents and teachers with the right skills on methods of intervention.
- Enhancing the relations between the parents and teachers to better understand and handle the children.

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It is worth mentioning that the program coordinators, through the applied training, offer guidance and follow up to twenty two kindergarten teachers; fourteen of those completed the basic course in Jerusalem, and eight completed the advanced course in Ramallah.



Combating Domestic Violence Program

The phenomenon of domestic violence should be seen as part of a larger phenomenon that the families are paying the price of poverty, economic deprivation and lack of sufficient community and government services for their well-being. In 2004 the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) reported that 53.5% of the West Bank households lived under the poverty line. PCBS reported that at the end of 2006, 26% of the labour force in the West Bank was unemployed. Symptoms of the socio-economical crisis often appear in negative behaviours such as committing crimes, drug abuses, sexual deviation, increase in the divorce rate, family crisis and domestic violence.

The team has reported that among the families visited by the program around 82% were subjected to mental and verbal violence. In addition some 16% of them suffered from physical violence and 2% suffered from sexual abuse. Most of those suffered from verbal and mental violence, except for very few, shared this information with our staff. Hardly any women who have shown signs of physical violence were willing to share this information with our staff. Victims of sexual violence declined to admit it.



After providing proper training for the new staff the program will be more active in supervision and measuring of progress. Among the activities of the program will be dealing with the victims of frequent violence namely the mental and verbal violence, to improve family interrelations, develop group supervision to children and families and involve them into group discussions.

This would require building new intake system for referring families to the different program components. We will still have difficulties to treat severe cases of physical violence against women. We would also have difficulties dealing with teen age school girls that may get pregnant outside marriage.

“The program has greatly improved my relation with my daughter, I understand her feelings and I am willing to defend her rights at any time”



Networking

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Networking is highly encouraged whether formal with Ministries and social department, or informal between the program sites and with other organizations sharing our values. It takes place, mainly, in the form of workshops and study days to exchange experiences and learn more about common subjects raised in the field. This helps the consolidation and development of the programs. A special focus this year will be on Ramla in order to combat the phenomenon of killing young women and women in general.

The major achievement of our network strategy was pooling together all major stakeholders for combating family violence in the villages North-West Jerusalem. In Ramla we started a Forum composed from the city departments, the police and the families in order to find ways to prevent the large phenomenon of killing young women.

The young women empowerment program continued to network and cooperate with Asaf Haroofi Hospital, the Welfare Organization, and the Youth Organization, is a good proof of the program's capabilities in networking and communications with a lively network of organizations.

One of the young women volunteers expressed with tears, “While wearing my white uniform at the hospital I feel like I am dreaming, I took the uniform home to show it to my family...I never expected to get to this stage”.

We had a successful experience networking with the S.O.S, Kattan and Y.M.C.A. in Ramallah on a cooperative program that includes the child, the teacher and the parent for the school year.

- They help us implement fun days and trips.
- Raising the teachers' awareness to the symptoms of violence and abuse.
- And participating in our training courses on developmental behaviour.

In cooperation with the early childhood development department and the social work and psychological department of the local authority in Rahat, the Ministry of education, "Layali" a local association we established last year the early childhood and parents centre.

Plans and priorities

We will consolidate the Mother-to-Mother program in Jerusalem and Ramla, and continue from last year in Akko, Lod, Ma'alot Tarsheeha and Haifa, and start the program in Rahat. We will develop all materials into a resource Kit.

Continue to offer the services of the Learn-by-Play program in Jerusalem and in the villages north west of Jerusalem, in addition to offering supervision for the volunteers who work with the pupils to better implement the program.

Our Young Women Program will continue in Jerusalem with all its components. In Ramla, we would like to start a study to find out the numbers and the needs of young women who have already dropped out of school. We have already obtained a license to start building a centre for young women and children at a property we own in the Old City of Ramla. We will continue to prevent school drop outs and prevent early marriages working with both the teens and their families.

Combating domestic violence program: the program evaluation emphasised the need of the program and that we should draw a clear line between treatment and prevention. We will consolidate and deepen the program at the five villages from phase one of the program and we will expand into two new villages North-West Jerusalem to reach seven villages. We will start a counselling centre that offers awareness and family intervention, to improve family interrelations and contribute in reducing family violence. In Jerusalem, the program will continue in the Old City and Shu'fat with the mothers.

Our Preschool Teachers on-the-job Training Program continues to score successes, this year we will concentrate on Parents' involvement in the educational process in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Ramla and consolidate the program that started in Rahat in the Negev.

We will establish an early childhood centre in Rahat to Offer occupational and mental therapy for children, after training kindergarten teachers on special techniques that allow them to diagnose children with special needs requiring special attention.

The Trust leads different and diversified programs in different areas as shown on the map.



