
SITE VISIT: NAZARETH NURSERIES INSTITUTE

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[Al-Tufula Early Childhood Education Center and Multipurpose Women's Center—Background, Achievements in 1996 and Programs for Nazareth 1997.](#)

The Nazareth Nurseries Institute (NNI) is a non-profit voluntary, women's organization. It was established in 1984 by a group of Palestinian women in Israel, who have been working to develop a support system for women, and for the empowerment of women in Palestinian society in Israel. The NNI is located in the historic city of Nazareth, the largest Arab city in Israel, and the center of Palestinian life within the State of Israel. It involves both Christian and Muslim Palestinian women of various professions, including educators, psychologists, doctors, and homemakers.

The NNI committees are open to any women who would like to contribute to the NNI work. Its board is elected yearly.

The NNI has been involved in the establishment of two projects: The Nazareth Nursery (1984), and the Al-Tufula Pedagogical Center and Multipurpose Women's Center (1989). The board is directly responsible for these two projects.

Background

Prior to 1948, the Palestinian society was agriculturally based with institutions and values appropriate for such a society. During the war of 1948, thousands of Palestinians moved, or were forced to move, from their homes and became refugees throughout the world. The 150,000 Palestinians who remained in Israel—whose number has since grown to 800,000—were left after the war with a shattered economy and society and no institutional infrastructure.

The Israeli government policy of discrimination and massive land confiscation contributed significantly to this destruction. Many Palestinians were forced to search for work outside their villages. Nazareth, the only Arab town remaining at the time, was not prepared to meet the basic needs of its own population, let alone those of the refugees who flooded in from nearby villages that had been destroyed. Over the years, Palestinians have found themselves without land and have been forced to find new types of employment as unskilled or semiskilled workers in the Jewish economy, but they were unable to meet the needs of their families on such low salaries.

Gradually, Palestinian women were forced to seek employment in the wider economy. This, coupled with their being uprooted from their villages and extended families, left them without the support that had become essential to their way of life. Among other things, participation in an industrialized society created new needs, such as day care centers and kindergartens.

The government, which would normally be expected to provide the services or budgets for nurseries has been meeting this obligation for Jewish children while neglecting the needs of the country's Arab population. This policy is evinced by the fact that the compulsory education law, intended to be fully implemented by the year 1992, was implemented with 98% of pre-school aged children from the Jewish sector, and only 52% of the children from the Arab sector.

We, as Palestinian women in Israel, active in a number of civic organizations, have taken it upon ourselves to articulate these needs, organize locally to meet them, and raise public consciousness as to their importance. Our activities also enable us to be in contact with women from different parts of the country and from different religious and political affiliations.

Over the years, the group itself has undergone a process of change. We have realized that we must take the responsibility to help ourselves and to demand our rights, and our people's rights.

In the beginning, our first concern was simply to provide a service for working women, enabling them to work in the public sector, by providing the nursery as a support system; therefore we opened the nursery and kindergarten in 1984. After the nursery had been in operation for six years, we realized that those services were in need of further development and this could only be obtained with the guidance of a guiding, professional, infrastructure. With this in mind, we developed the Al-Tufula Center for the purpose of creating a professional infrastructure, not only for our nursery, but also for all early childhood education institutions.

Over the years, we have developed our own approach, based on the principles of individual empowerment, women's empowerment and the appreciation of our cultural heritage. Our programs aim to put our empowerment approach into practice. As you will see in this report, we have shifted our emphasis from early childhood education and development, to creating a support system for women in a new dimension. Women's empowerment through professional training, health training, early childhood education, counseling services, etc. We realize today that our work contributes to the building of a civil society in which women have an important role and should have equal opportunities.

Aims and Objectives

The empowerment of Palestinian women, in Israel, in a changing society, via;

- Empowerment through professional training for caregivers and training in nursery and daycare management.
- Creating specific educational and cultural programs for Palestinian women, in Israel, with the specific goal of empowerment.
- Creating a support system enabling women to continue working in their professions after having a baby.

- Increasing awareness of the importance of nurseries as a support system for working women.
- Special courses to support women entering the business world.
- Empowerment through health education.
- Leadership training for Palestinian women.
- Establishing a meeting place for various women's groups.
- Creating a model women's project.
- Creating women's coalitions on specific issues and enhancing networking possibilities on these issues.
- Publishing material on women's issues and gender equality.

To develop early childhood education in the Palestinian society in Israel, via;

- Professional training for caregivers.
- Increased public awareness of the importance and the characteristics of the early childhood period.
- Increased parental involvement in nurseries and increased awareness of specific issues such as health issues and children's rights.
- The support of caregivers, in the field, through professional in-service training and advice before employment.
- Cooperation with people who are interested in this field, enabling us to interpret and apply concepts of early childhood education in the Palestinian society in Israel.
- Support of the existing nurseries and kindergartens and development of a model nursery and kindergarten.
- Development of educational material in Arabic for the caregivers and parents.
- Expansion of the field of children's literature in Arabic.
- Collection of existing materials on early childhood education and the establishment of a resource center for parents and caregivers.
- Conducting research pertaining to early childhood education and evaluating the existing programs and resources.
- Networking activities to enhance cooperation between Palestinian organizations working in the field of early childhood education.
- Networking activities to develop a wider understanding of the importance of early childhood education in the Arab world.

- Networking with Palestinian organizations in Israel to advocate and lobby for legislation, especially raising public awareness of the issues concerning early childhood education and encouraging involvement of individuals.

Project Beneficiaries

The Center, which was founded and is operated by a group of women, provides a "model" for women in the community at large. The Center is run collectively by a group of women. The staff has evolved into a non-hierarchical structure and consists entirely of women.

Since the majority of caregivers and beneficiaries of this service are women, we felt that as a women's organization that cares for the interests of women, we must provide new professional training possibilities for women, while at the same time supporting women in the process of change.

The direct beneficiaries of this project are women who participate in the training programs and other activities at the Center, those who use the NNI Nurseries, women in various women's organizations and all Palestinian women in Israel. Some additional beneficiaries include institutions that deal with early childhood education in Nazareth and its environs, all parents, and the community at large.

The Al-Tufula Center provides opportunities for teachers and parents to learn about the child's needs during the first year of life, and also serves as a support network for women.

The Nazareth Nurseries Institute Projects

The following projects have been developed over the years as a means of achieving our goals.

- The Nazareth Nursery
- The Al-Tufula Pedagogical Center and Women's Multipurpose Center with the various activities.
 - Training courses
 - Counseling Service
 - Educational Resources
 - Children's Literature
 - In-service Training
 - Workshops
 - Resource Center and sale of books.
 - Women's empowerment
 - Networking on women's issues, early childhood issues, and general issues of national interest.
 - Fundraising
 - International contacts

Achievements in 1996

■ THE NAZARETH NURSERY

■ THE NAZARETH NURSERY, ESTABLISHED IN 1984 IN NAZARETH, WAS THE FIRST NURSERY IN THE ARAB COMMUNITY IN ISRAEL WHICH PROVIDED CARE FOR CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF THREE MONTHS AND THREE YEARS. IT BEGAN WITH ONLY 10 CHILDREN, BUT THE NEED FOR THIS SERVICE BECAME OBVIOUS AS THIS NUMBER INCREASED TO 50 CHILDREN. THE NURSERY FUNCTIONED WITH SEVEN CAREGIVERS, A COOK AND A DIRECTOR UNTIL SEPTEMBER OF 1996. IN SEPTEMBER WE WERE EVICTED FROM THE PREVIOUS BUILDING AND WE ARE NOW OPERATING TEMPORARILY IN A HOME WITH A SMALL GROUP OF CHILDREN.

The activities in the Nursery have been developed in accordance with current scientific research and our experience with early childhood education. The NNI program strives to learn and benefit from the experience of others, while also meeting the specific and unique needs of our society.

■ STAFF MEMBERS

The staff has a wide range of qualifications and experience. Our staff includes a psychologist (M.A.) with extensive experience in education and women's empowerment, educational counselors (M.A.), early childhood educational specialists, a Ph.D. of Education with many years of experience and a specialization in early childhood education, a public health specialist with many years of experience in community health, an art specialist, a music therapist, and others.

In 1996, the Al-Tufula Early Childhood Center functioned with a full-time Director, a secretary, a full-time in-service training and field adviser, a half-time workshop coordinator, a half-time coordinator for the development of children's literature (which became a part time job in September), a half-time health specialist, and an advice Center specialist who is employed on an hourly basis.

■ NON HIERARCHICAL MODEL

The style of the working staff, in various capacities in the Center, from the managing board, to the part-time and full-time teachers, presents a practical example of teamwork, a team that is very supportive of each other. Any woman participating in the Center's activities can also observe how the team encourages, initiates and supports women in their process of self—and group—empowerment. Decisions are also made as a group, collectively and democratically.

■ STAFF TRAINING

Staff training is an ongoing process which deepens our commitment to each other, and to our work. To increase awareness of this shared vision this year, we decided to conduct special encounters for all of the staff members. It began with internal training which aimed to share and formulate the goals and objectives of the training course for caregivers, and to formulate the philosophical framework of this training.

This process made us aware of our need for further training on documentation, planning and evaluation. This training was conducted with the support of Shatil, and outside consultation from Ms. Emily Macky, from the United States. Ms. Macky visited Israel and was invited to present a special workshop for our staff. This was a very informative and enriching experience. Now we are in the process of implementation of the concepts we learned during this training.

Our staff also participated in various workshops held abroad. Two staff members participated in the Arab Resource Collective workshop on early childhood education held in Cyprus. One staff member participated at ARC in a workshop on "Creating Learning Experiences in the Institution." Another staff member participated in an ARC workshop on the "Child-to-Child Approach" and "Training for Transformation". Others also participated in several workshops on women's issues which were held by Friedrich Ebert Stifting. The latest was in Brussels. There we learned about the European Community and the possibilities for us within the European Community.

Al-Tufula Programs

There are many different functions which the Al-Tufula Center fulfils such as:

1. Training:
 - Early childhood
 - Women's leadership
 - Community training

2. Development:
 - Human resources
 - Knowledge resources
 - Other resources

3. Marketing:
 - Resources
 - The philosophy of the Center
 - Activities

4. Networking:
 - Early childhood
 - Women
 - The community in general

5. Counseling:
 - Individual
 - Groups
 - Institutional

The following is a brief outline of the many projects and achievements during 1996.

Training

■ PROFESSIONALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The training philosophy is that "one cannot give what one does not have". Therefore, the training program provides intensive practical training in early childhood education, while simultaneously supporting and encouraging women to believe in their own abilities and to discover their own potential. It concentrates on the ability of women to actively decide about their own lives, and to appreciate their own value, strengths, knowledge and experience. This empowerment approach has become a specific goal and is utilized in all of the Center's activities.

The course program takes into consideration the following factors:

- The scientific background of the students.
- The social background of each student.
- The cultural background of the Palestinian society.
- The standards of the Ministry of Labor.

The program is modified with each group of students in an effort to fully address all of these factors and to incorporate the experience of previous courses.

The one-year training course for professional caregivers in nurseries and kindergartens is recognized by the Ministry of Labor and has been conducted in the Center since 1990. The success rate of the Center's course, according to the Ministry of Labor standard exam, is 94%. More than 60% of our graduates are employed. In May of 1996, 38 women had graduated from our training courses, while another 22 are currently in training.

While meeting the required education standards, the program also supports and encourages the women to fulfil their potential by giving 1155 hours of teaching and field experiences, rather than the government required 720 hours.

The course provides professional training which in itself empowers the women. Direct activities within this course (such as group discussions, empowerment through health education, seminars, etc.) facilitate this process.

Meanwhile, the mere opportunity to bring women together in a new forum is another factor which contributes to consciousness-raising. We believe that all these factors, combined with the "model" provided by the group of women working in the Center, support the participants and empower them.

Our experience and evaluation of the participants in the courses has shown that the women have acquired a lot of personal growth during the course, in addition to the clear academic successes achieved in the standardized national exam.

This year, we also began a process of documentation of the training philosophy, training approach, and methods. This process will make our approach more comprehensive to us and to

others who are interested in understanding our empowering approach and are willing to use it in their field of interest. This documentation process has been conducted as a collective effort by all staff members. Three long workshops were conducted with the staff on the philosophy, aims, and methods of training. These workshops were documented and will be used as a basis for a special bulletin on the training course.

■ PROFESSIONAL TRAINING COURSE FOR WOMEN ON BUSINESS INITIATIVES

The city of Nazareth is preparing for a great celebration in the year 2000, which will open new possibilities for the people of Nazareth, especially in the field of tourism. In watching the development, we realized that if we, as women, do not initiate an activity to bring women in, and to provide them with a chance to take advantage of these open opportunities, no one will, and women will be left outside of this new field.

This motivated us to initiate a course for women to enter business careers. We call it "Business Initiatives for Women". The idea was discussed in a group of women and men from various institutions. This group has become an advisory committee for the course which we developed. The advisory committee is also responsible for follow-up on the implementation of the course. We were able to cooperate with other organizations to make this course possible. During October of this year, 25 women began to receive training in the field of business administration.

The Course will be continuing in 1997. This is a new initiative in the Palestinian community, and it also reflects the empowering approach. We have hired a special coordinator to follow up on this course and to document the progress. At the end, she will prepare a report on the course, as a reference to be used by others.

Counseling

■ PERSONAL COUNSELING

This service has been established to address needs in the Arab community for a professional service dealing with the needs of children and personal or family problems.

The Palestinian society, within Israel, is considered to be a society in transition. Families are facing difficulties in coping with traditional hierarchy, as opposed to non-traditional democratic ways of child rearing. In this respect, the counseling service is open to the public in Nazareth and nearby areas to provide the following services:

- Advice on dealing with children and family problems.
- Counseling for personal problems.
- Vocational and career advice.

The professional staff in the Center has worked in personal counseling and has served more than 80 children and their parents, along with 20 individual women. An interesting outcome of this service is that usually the mother comes with the children seeking help with their problems. Afterward, in many cases, the counseling evolves, from focusing on the child, to the personal

problems of the parents. This clearly demonstrates that our decision to open counseling for parents, was a wise one. Women who need counseling support can benefit from the Center through this program. It is also less threatening and more socially acceptable for a mother to ask for help with her child's problem, rather than to seek help for herself.

This year, our counseling services continued to help unmarried women find answers. This group was normally seeking support on issues such as:

- low self esteem
- decision-making problems
- rape examination anxiety
- vocational counseling

Empowerment Through Health—Awareness in Nurseries

Our health specialist conducted a special program for the parents of children in 4 different nurseries. In each nursery, two parental encounters were conducted with a specialist from the Mother and Child Center on home injuries and how to protect children from accidents in the home. This program was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

Educational Resources—For Parents and Professionals

The lack of educational materials in Arabic has motivated us to develop resource materials in Arabic. To date, these include books, booklets, and visual aid products. These materials are based upon scientific knowledge and reflect Palestinian heritage and reality. The materials have been developed by a group of women and are available for use by both parents and professionals.

Work in this field has resulted in the publication of several resources:

- "Child Care and Development in the First Two Years."
- "Kindergarten: Programs and Activities."
- "Mokaghah" a child's diary prepared with information for parents' use.
- "How to Choose a Book for Your Baby", complete with a list of recommended books.
- "The Sunflower"—a bilingual children's story (Hebrew and Arabic)
- "Development and Toys."

During 1996, we were able to publish a new book, "Family Pictures," which is based on the experience of the advise department in the Center, and the rich experience of the writer in working with parents. The book is addressed to parents and concentrates on the approach they use in dealing with their children. The book has been very well received by many different groups.

As planned, we completed the music cassette, "Mokaghah", which offers additional support for parents in their important role with children. This music cassette was produced to accompany the text from our diary for parents and children in the first year. Rim Banna, an artist from Nazareth, with the help of Leoneed and Bischara, produced the music which is registered to be used as a cassette for children. The music cassette is a mixture of traditional nursery rhymes with traditional music and modern music for some of the rhymes and other texts.

The cassette registration is completed and we are now in the process of preparing the cover which will be ready for publication soon.

During 1996, we finished writing a new book on sex education in early ages (from birth to 6 years). The staff has reviewed the text and we are now preparing the cover of the book and illustrations in preparation for final printing and publication.

We also reprinted our first children's book "The Sunflower", which was published in 1990. This bilingual children's book (Hebrew-Arabic) sold out and we published a second edition of the same book.

During 1996, we also worked on bulletins which will be published in 1997, on:

- The training course for caregivers.
- The empowerment approach of the Center.
- The I.D. of the Center.
- Food and its components—critical approach to reinforcing some traditional norms and healthy habits.

Children's Literature

Most of the children's stories in the Arabic language are designed for children over five years of age. There are hardly any stories for the earlier years. Where they do exist, they normally do not have any connection with the child's needs, emotions or reality. If emotion and feelings are included, they are limited to positive aspects. This may stem from the long held superstition that to speak of negative things may cause them to happen or teach them to the children. These stories are full of stereotypes, especially concerning division of roles between men and women. Non-discriminatory children's literature in the Arabic language is a rare item.

The Center recognizes the importance of books for child development and the potential of books to address the child's personal, psychological, and social needs. Early in our activities, we realized the essential need for a project on the development of children's literature. We began this work in 1992. During 1996, we were able to make progress in many areas in this concern.

■ INCREASING PARENTAL AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

We conducted several lectures for parents in organizations such as the Rotary Club and the Catholic School, as well as in different neighborhoods in Nazareth and Tamra village. An

important issue related to children's literature, which was also addressed in the various activities, was the subject of language development and the importance of books for language development. We also talked about the importance of a mother language for those in our community. In our language there is a large difference between the spoken and the written language. A discussion was held about the specific challenges involved in this area of language development. In some communities, two languages are commonly used (Hebrew and Arabic). We conducted lectures for parents on this issue. Our students conducted story-telling sessions in various kindergartens. Our specialist joined in on this activity and used it as a further opportunity for training students.

■ IN-SERVICE TRAINING COURSES FOR PROFESSIONALS

During this year we were also approached by the Ministry of Education to conduct special training for teachers in kindergartens.

We hosted 22 teachers, from 17 different kindergartens and schools in our Center to participate in training which began in October of 1995, and lasted 7 months. At the end of the training they were required to tell one of the stories using all of the methods they had learnt throughout the training. These presentations were filmed and the film is now being used to further develop their abilities.

We also participated in other training which was presented to kindergarten teachers in the village of Tamra, and organized a group of 35 women who were trained in the University of Auranim. We took one day to meet and discuss gender division in children's stories.

Another special training on children's literature was given for two groups of women, 20 women in each group who were trained in our Center as caregivers in nurseries. By the end of this training, the participants were to tell a story in different kindergartens, in Nazareth and the surrounding area. The training also included the use of hand and finger puppets as a tool in storytelling.

The Center also hosted two professional storytellers who conducted a workshop on story telling for the women who participated in our training.

Supporting Young Writers

When we began our activities, we conducted several activities with writers and potential writers because we believe that an essential element in creating an infrastructure for children's literature is to support a group of writers and potential writers and to develop their awareness of the importance and uniqueness of writing for children. Although the activities were conducted with success this year, we decided to concentrate on young writers by creating a special training session for creative writing with children.

Some of these activities were conducted with schools as part of creativity day. We were able to give support for schoolteachers by presenting them with ideas on creative writing.

Another important achievement this year was a visit by Tagrid Alnagar, a Palestinian writer of children's literature who resides in Jordan. She was invited to Nazareth to share her experiences as a writer with children and interested adults.

The aim was to:

- Promote interest in children's literature in the general public.
- Encourage and support children interested in creative writing, especially children's stories.

Four large events were organized for this purpose.

- Workshops with children.
- A meeting with parents of the children.
- A reception and lecture for the general public.
- Participation in a children's festival in Ramallah.

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■ WORKSHOPS WITH CHILDREN

We contacted all twelve elementary schools in the Nazareth area, both public and private. We asked them to select 2 children, one girl and one boy, from the fourth or fifth grades, who have shown an interest in writing. A total of 25 children from Nazareth schools participated in a 3-day workshop. They met in the Center for 3 hours each day with writer Tagrid Alnagar. By the end of the workshop, each child had produced a book of his/her own. The children were very enthusiastic and enjoyed the experience. They also learned a great deal and gained confidence as writers.

They asked for a continuation of such activities. Our evaluation of the workshop was positive, and we also felt the need for a continuation of activities with the children. Three of our staff members, along with a volunteer from the women friends of the organization, and a specialist in creative writing, continued the process which Tagrid had begun. Three other Workshops were conducted with the children. Much of the process with Tagrid and the follow-up with the staff has been filmed and documented. Our aim is to document the entire process for use in the future. This way interested people could learn from the same approach used by Tagrid and the staff.

■ MEETING WITH PARENTS

At the end of the workshop, we invited parents to meet Tagrid Alnagar. She explained the program she had conducted with the children, and encouraged the parents to ask questions and share their experiences. The parents were very interested and eager to share information and experiences. They discussed the achievements their children had made and how much they had enjoyed the experience. The parents also requested a continuation of the program.

■ RECEPTION AND LECTURE FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

We invited all of the women's organizations in Nazareth, and Friends of the Organization, as well as interested writers and critics, to our reception for the general public. Many people traveled long distances to meet the writer and hear of her experiences. It was a very interesting evening with more than 60 participants. This meeting offered the opportunity to raise interest and discussion, as well as inform the public about the importance of children's literature. The evening ended with a small reception in honor of Tagrid Alnagar and her writing.

■ EXPLANATION ON VARIATIONS IN STORYTELLING

The visit of Tagrid provided us with an opportunity to present to the public different variations in storytelling. The Workshop coordinator in our Center presented one of Tagrid's stories in different ways. Everyone who visited the Center during this time, and who participated in the reception, was exposed to new methods of story telling, such as shadow theatre, magic lamp and other ideas as another means of developing the use of children's literature in kindergartens.

■ PARTICIPATION IN THE CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL IN RAMALLAH

Following her visit in Nazareth, Tagrid Alnagar was able to participate in a session with children in Ramallah.

The visit was a great success, although it came at a very tense time. The massacre in Kanna, Lebanon, created a highly sensitive political situation in our area and we were unable to publish a report of the visit in the newspapers. However, we do feel that the visit opened new doors and new possibilities for us, and for the many people who were able to take part. Especially for the children who participated in the workshop.

We believe that actions and activities carried out by individuals and small organizations throughout the world, that may seem of little significance, are actually the catalysts that spark action, and through these actions we are able to help change the world.

A meeting like this can also create new opportunities in our region. It is very important for our children to feel connected with other countries and cultures, especially with those in other areas who share our culture.

■ SUPPORTING SCHOOL STAFF FOR CREATIVITY DAY

Following these activities, we were approached by the "Al-Rasiy" school, in Nazareth, to support their staff in organizing a creativity day in the school. Three of our staff members gave advice to school staff, and two of our staff members participated during this day with a special workshop on creative writing and creativity materials.

Folklore Festival

In December of 1995, we began the first meeting in preparation for the Folklore Festival. From the very beginning we were aware that this was a huge project and should be planned in

cooperation with others. We contacted a number of organizations and individuals who are interested in folklore stories and began to develop and study the idea.

From the beginning we realized that the festival itself is not an ultimate goal, but one of many projects which should be carried out in the interest of raising public awareness of the rich traditions and folklore that exist in our culture. We also view folklore as yet another resource for children's stories.

The goals of this process will be:

- to raise consciousness of the importance of children's literature, especially folklore stories.
- to collect and document folklore stories.
- to create an interest in children's stories in the general public and in different groups.
- to regain confidence in ourselves, our heritage and our culture, which we believe to be the basis for any real change.

As this process evolved, the ideas were dynamically changing as we began to work. In the end, the Nazareth Municipality agreed to make the theme for the Nazareth Art Festival, which is traditionally held in Nazareth, folklore art. Folklore stories were one of the major elements of this festival.

We worked in cooperation with the Cultural Center and the Public Library, (both departments within the Municipality), in preparation for this event. Two of our staff members were actively involved in the preparation committee for the festival.

The Center also prepared material on the festival, and on folklore literature, especially the folklore story and the role of the storyteller. This material was distributed to all participants in preparation for the festival. We contacted organizations that had done some documentation and studies on the issue and then created a collection of resources to be used by any interested person. We also met with the Art Director of the festival and shared our vision and updated him on the whole process. This enabled him to take this process into consideration in his work.

We also collected stories from different resources and gathered written studies on the folklore story, folklore and children, the role of folklore in education, and the models of studying and collecting folklore stories. In addition, we also prepared a resource list in Arabic. All of this material was collected in the Center and is available for use by all interested parties.

To generate interest in the general public we contacted several groups such as women's clubs, schools, public libraries, artists and senior citizens groups, in Nazareth.

■ WOMEN

Most of the women's groups in Nazareth are charitable organizations with many older women as members, others are part of the elderly community centers. Many of them remember the folklore stories and are also good storytellers. We contacted them by mail and phone, explaining the idea and then met with 10 different individual organizations. We explained the idea and then we

invited them to our Center to follow up with interested parties. Some organizations sent representatives to the Center for further information on the issues and then discussed them within their organizations. Later, we teamed them up with students who volunteered to help in writing and documenting the stories.

■ SCHOOLS

A similar process was done with the high schools in Nazareth but the aim was to conduct studies on folklore stories in schools. Again we explained our aim in writing and then held a meeting in each school and later met with the student volunteers. We worked intensively with the American School in Nazareth. An interesting outcome of this was that the school later conducted a folklore week. They contacted the Center for books and resources on the subject, which demonstrates an expanding interest in the subject.

■ THE STORY COLLECTORS

A special group of volunteers was formed from schools, university students, and other volunteers from neighborhood clubs. Our staff met with this group and trained them on how to collect and document stories.

■ THE ARTISTS

The first meeting was conducted with artists and storytellers to present the idea to them. The interested group continued preparations for the festival. Three additional meetings were conducted with them to clarify their role in the festival.

■ THE NAZARETH FESTIVAL

A folklore story was the highlight of the opening ceremony of the festival. Other activities were conducted in different parts of the city. Some activities were conducted especially for schools in preparation for the festival. The festival was held at the end of October, but it is not the end of our work in this area as mobilizers and as a support system for all interested actors and persons. The success of the festival has generated further interest, not only by us, but by many different parties.

A major task ahead of us is the documentation of all of the collected material and preparation of some of it for further use.

Networking on the Issue of Children's Literature

Networking with other organizations in this field, such as the Tamer Institute in Ramallah, the Resource Center for Early childhood, and Bethlehem University, has given us additional opportunities to share experience. We learned about activities, workshops and books which were published by others. This enables us to build bridges between these organizations and cooperate on projects with interested organizations in this field. One such example is the establishment of a partnership between the Public Library in Nazareth and the Tamer Institute in a campaign to encourage reading in the Palestinian community. We were also able to share the visit of Tagrid Alnagar with them. There were also plans for two visitors from Sweden to visit Tamer and the

Resource Center to conduct a workshop with us, but their visit was postponed due to the situation in Jerusalem.

■ INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

In continuing contacts with IBBY, (International Board on Books for Children and Youth) which began over two years ago, we once again sent representatives to the International conference held in Holland. Our children's specialist and our illustrator were able to participate in this great event.

■ MEDIA

Aside from coverage in the Arabic newspaper, the Israeli TV did a film on the activities in the Center. A major part of the film focused on children's literature. Our specialist was also invited to a discussion on children's literature for TV

In-Service Training and Field Advice

We believe that the training courses conducted for caregivers are the first step in a continuous process. The in-service training and counseling in the field provide further support for this process. The one year program gives the women the opportunity to learn and practice new approaches, and to some extent, internalize them. To retain these achievements is very difficult unless they are supported by in-service training and supervision in the field. Meetings for all ex-students, whether they are employed or not, continue the supportive relationship between the women and the Center. The meetings also serve as an opportunity for students to update their knowledge and share their experiences, while field meetings on an individual basis empower the women as caregivers and help to enhance early childhood education.

The in-service training program is prepared with the help of Center graduates. We work with the women as a group and also on an individual basis. The program is open, not only for graduates, but also for all caregivers in the field.

The field supervision this year concentrated on the students who were doing their practice experience in different nurseries and kindergartens, and on specific supervision of kindergarten staff. This year we developed a new concept for practice within the training course. We divided the practice hours into two stages: in the first stage we concentrated on planned projects, by visiting projects in the community, including some projects in the Jewish community. We were able to organize 9 such trips during which the students were able to learn about each institution and its work in early childhood education and development. The students were also able to observe the various specialists in their work with children and parents, and to discuss what they observed with these professionals, and also with the field advisor in the Center. The second stage was a guided practice in the different Arab nurseries.

More than 100 hours were given to individual meetings, and nursery and kindergarten field visits to meet with the students. The students learn and internalize the knowledge if they have the opportunity to put this knowledge to use through immediate experience in the nursery.

These hours were used to observe the students in the work place and to discuss experiences with them. Through this process, we learned about problems in the field as well as strengths and weaknesses in our training, such as problems with planning activities, problems internalizing knowledge, etc. Then we were able to reevaluate our work and make adjustments in the program accordingly. To address these problems, we conducted further group sessions with the students. Thirty-two such sessions were held to discuss different issues identified during field observation. These sessions were also accompanied by active participation of the students, such as observation of children in their environment, drama, and direct personal experience. The work with our students influenced not only the individuals, but the entire atmosphere in the kindergarten or nursery.

This experience demonstrated the need for more intensive work with the nurseries, which we are unable to fully provide due to a lack of available staff to work in the field. We worked with 18 different Nurseries in Nazareth and the area. During our activities in the field, several kindergartens and nurseries approached us for advice on specific issues. Although we were unable to respond to all of the requests for advice with our limited staff, we were able to answer the needs of several kindergartens, such as the Sandralla Kindergarten. Two group sessions were conducted with the staff and with parents. A program was developed with another specialist in the Center, in response to some of the specific needs of the staff. We were also able to offer supervision to the Catholic Boy Scout Kindergarten in Jaffa, and to the Princess Kindergarten. Some Nurseries also asked for special guidance in facing problems in their work with children and parents.

Several meetings were conducted with parents and practitioners on issues such as violence against children. We also met with parent groups in Nazareth and discussed several subjects including:

- Language Development: a meeting with a group of workers in family intervention programs.
- Partnership with Parents: a meeting with home nursery coordinators in the Jerusalem area.
- Nurseries and Home Nurseries: a meeting with heads of pedagogical departments from all over the country.
- Children's Rights: a workshop with mothers in the community center in Yarca Village.
- Two workshops for youth groups in the Salvatory School. (80 schoolgirls participated.)
- Two workshops on Health and Heritage Norms for women. (We conducted one in Nazareth and one in Ossifia.)
- Prevention from pregnancy for girls.
- Healthy Food workshop with children.

This contact with Nurseries and professionals proves to be effective.

In-Service Training and Follow-up on Our Graduates

We began a new project with some of the graduates who were unemployed. The in-service training aimed to support their effort to find jobs and also train them to be support staff, especially in working with children and parents. The positive experience in 1995 has encouraged us to develop and expand this effort further in 1996.

We conducted special workshops for the graduates on searching for and finding jobs, and preparation for work in the field. These workshops aimed at increasing opportunities for employment. As a result of the Center's involvement, some of the graduates were placed in jobs. A survey, which we conducted to follow-up on our students, demonstrates that a total of 74.42% of our graduates were employed after completing this training. (A special report is available upon request.)

We also conducted different workshops with themes related to Christmas, Ramadan and Easter. The graduates who participated in these workshops were sent as representatives of the Center to conduct similar workshops in children's clubs and kindergartens. We believe that these efforts were fruitful and created new job opportunities for our graduates.

We further developed our networking with an emphasis on finding new job opportunities for our graduates. Over the years, we have been engaged in many network activities, which are increasing and our center is becoming a resource center for all organizations dealing with early childhood education and women's issues. They contact us for information and advice on many issues, including information about the graduates. This enables us to recommend our graduates for new positions.

We conducted a follow-up study with our graduates over the past 4 years, in an attempt to learn about their present situation and especially about their employment history.

The follow-up study, which we conducted in July of 1996, demonstrated that 58.19% of our graduates found jobs in the field of early childhood education. Another 10.85% found jobs in other fields. Almost 70% of our graduates were able to find a job, and the majority of them were able to maintain their position of employment over a four-year period of time. The employment figures for the group that completed studies in February and officially graduated in May of 1996, show that 13 of them have already found jobs.

Workshops

We have opened a workshop for all caregivers and families. We collected hundreds of ideas for recycling household goods into toys for children. Each participant learned how to create his or her own toys at a minimal expense.

The workshop presents educational materials such as books, toys, and games which express the Palestinian heritage and contemporary reality. It also empowers parents to use their accumulated knowledge with their children, and to regain confidence in their own abilities.

According to the Annual National Insurance Report of 1993, 57% of Arab families and 62% of Arab children in Israel, are living in conditions below poverty level. Creating an alternative for families to produce toys from refuse and inexpensive materials can provide toys for children who might otherwise go without. Kindergartens and nurseries which operate privately in the Arab community also have the opportunity to create needed toys.

In February of 1996, we conducted special workshops for caregivers in nurseries and kindergartens on Ramadan (a Muslim Holiday). A special training session was presented to our graduates. Afterwards, at the request of the Municipality of Nazareth, we conducted workshops on Ramadan for children in 5 neighborhood clubs.

In the Center we also conducted a workshop open to the public. Our goal this year was to train caregivers to use Ramadan as a theme for special activities with children, especially those from poor neighborhoods.

Our students organized a special Ramadan dinner with the staff. This very special evening was also shared with some of our students' family members. One of the fathers was invited to share stories about Ramadan during the evening. (Mr. Gerias Tanasra, a Christian, shared his talent for story telling with us during this wonderful evening). A similar dinner party was also arranged with the children and parents from our nursery.

On Easter, during April of 1996, special training was conducted with a group of caregivers. This training was held in 3 sessions and focused on Easter, and ways to use this theme in special projects for children.

On Christmas, (a Christian Holiday) special workshops, in which caregivers participated, were held in the Center. All of these very interesting and enjoyable workshops were a great success. On each such occasion a special exhibition was prepared in the Center and shared with our many visitors and students.

The workshop activities are also integrated in other projects, such as the training course and the training program on children's literature. The workshop teaches skills for the use of hand puppets and presents them as an alternative means of telling stories. It also presents ideas for home made books for children. A special exhibition was also prepared for Tagrid Alnagar's books (see children's literature section of this report).

Resource Center and Sale of Books

Since its establishment, the Center has been collecting and analyzing existing material on early childhood education and women's issues. We hope to raise awareness as to the importance of this issue and to facilitate further development of material.

The Center provides support and a resource Center for early childhood education and women's issues, for professionals and other interested people in the area.

We have also selected a collection of books, which were published by other NGOs, and are not found in most bookshops. These books can be purchased by any interested party. By promotion of these publications, we are able to support other organizations and individuals, as well as further our own cause for the development of educational material on early childhood education and the status of women. We published a brochure (internal) on these books and the contents of these books. They are available for anyone to use as he or she likes.

Women's Empowerment

The Center is a women's Center and was established by a women's organization. The majority of the staff has a clear attitude toward supporting women in a changing society.

Our work toward the empowerment of women was awarded in 1994, when our coordinator was elected as one of the top 10 women in Israel by Lady Globac, a financial women's journal. In 1995, she was honored by the Women's Network in Israel, and given special recognition for her work to improve the status of women, particularly Palestinian women, in Israel. This year, she was presented with the Alice Shalvei Leadership Award, by the New Israel Fund during a special ceremony which was held in Boston, MA., in the United States.

In the Center, our activities have centered around a deep belief in the unique attributes and abilities of women. Our role is to empower women to use these qualities by creating opportunities, and serving as a support system for women as they endeavor to try new things and enter into new roles in a very traditional society.

Many Palestinian women in our society have similar problems. However, there is a severe lack of support groups for women, and generally they receive little or no support in these matters from their families or society. The Center provides this support for women.

Through training services, many women are attracted to the Center. They are brought together, meet each other, and learn about their similarities. The professional staff and volunteers support this process. Some women join the training course, which provides them with opportunities to discover and develop their abilities and to understand their professional choices.

The Center is working with an underlying philosophy which aims at widening the horizons of the women in the community, and supporting them in their changing roles. Our vision reflects the need to support women's liberation in a new approach. This is achieved by women addressing their own needs from within the community, rather than having outside professional groups dictate what they assume are the needs of local women.

We remain actively involved in women's issues in the Center, as well as in the community. Women's empowerment is an overall approach (and not a program) that is integrated in all of the programs at the Center. Aside from all of these projects, the Center was able to conduct further activities this year, such as:

■ LEADERSHIP TRAINING

In conjunction with other groups, we conducted a very unique leadership training course for women from different Palestinian NGOs. This course was conducted in Haifa. The entire process was documented and shared with others in written form, which enables other women to use the approach developed in this training program.

This leadership training was developed by Nabila Espanioly (from the Center) and Iman Kandalaft (from the Rape Crisis Center in Haifa). We also shared this training with a steering committee of women who are active in women's projects in the field.

This training is well documented and could be used for training by any other women's groups desiring to conduct such a program. Further work should be done on the training kit before publishing it officially. This could be a future program.

■ EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING

The van Leer Foundation in Holland supported community centers in Arab villages, in the beginning of a new project for early childhood development. Eight such projects were established in villages.

The community centers soon realized that the eight coordinators were in need of special training. These women needed training to assume responsibility and take action in a "man's world", as well as develop their own professional skills.

They contacted the Center and asked us to develop special leadership training for this group of eight women. In the planning of this course, we worked with the community centers, as well as the women themselves, in an attempt to target specific needs and issues. This program was an overwhelming success and received positive reactions from the participants and responsible staff.

Additional training for gender sensibility was given to 35 women who were in special training as coordinators for early childhood education programs.

■ EMPOWERING WOMEN WRITERS

Short Story Competition. We joined a group of women, Jewish and Arab, who have undertaken the task of supporting women's feminist writing. Through a competition for feminist short stories, one Arab and one Jewish woman will be chosen to participate in a Mediterranean celebration to be held in France in March of 1997.

We took it upon ourselves to organize the Arab sector for this competition. We advertised in the newspaper and contacted writers to participate in this competition. We received 20 short stories from 15 different women writers. We also created a committee of feminist women and feminist writers to choose one of these stories to submit for the competition. This committee will decide how they will choose the story and how to share this process with the women participants. This process will be continued in 1997, by organizing a workshop for all writers and by sending the winner to France in March.

■ WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The British Council in Jerusalem invited Ms. Lesley Abdulla to visit the country and conduct several workshops on women's political participation. In November 1996, we invited several women from various women's organizations and women from the area who are politically active to take part in this training along with our staff. Lesley shared her rich experience with us and conducted a workshop on women's political participation, and how to increase women's involvement in politics. It was a very rich and enlightening experience.

■ NETWORKING

We consider networking to be an essential part of our work which provides us with support and resources to continue and sustain our activities.

Members of the Center staff were active in various committees with the aim of highlighting women's issues and the development of early childhood education.

The Center is active in several networks to develop the status of women such as:

- Arab Women's Cooperation Network
- The Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women in Israel.
- The Group on the Personal Status Law.
- Other Network activities.

Arab Women's Cooperation Network. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Israel invited us, together with another 4 Palestinian women from Israel, 5 Palestinian women from Palestine, 5 Jordanian women, and 5 Egyptian women to a meeting in Cyprus. This meeting led to the development of a core group for a cooperation network of Arab women which is now in the process of formation. We were chosen to be coordinators of the Palestinian women's group from Israel. The group conducted further meetings in Jordan and Egypt, and also coordinated a meeting in Amman, Jordan, to prepare a proposal for further activities which we will continue developing.

The last meeting, this year, was held in Brussels, with support from Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The aim of this meeting was to learn about the European community and about the possibilities of support for our Network. The group decided to continue its efforts for cooperation between Arab women, and we are planning future activities. Nabila Espanioly was elected to coordinate with the other groups.

The Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women in Israel. This group is a coalition of women's organizations and individuals, which was initiated in July 1996. We became aware of the fact that the government of Israel presented the Cedura Committee in the UN with a report about women in Israel. In an entire 18-page report, they only mentioned the Palestinian women twice. Once as Arab women, and once as Christian, Muslim, and Druse. We decided to create an alternative report on the status of Palestinian women in Israel. This essential report was prepared

by a group of women including representatives from our Center (Nabila, Siham, and Hala). After completion of the initial report, we learned that the Israeli Government had recalled its report for further review and are planning to present a new report in 1997. The group decided to continue its work in writing a comprehensive report on the status of Palestinian women in Israel, and to publish it in three languages. This group will continue its work and is aiming to create a situation where the official representatives in Israel will be forced to deal with the State policies of discrimination against Palestinian women in Israel.

The Group on the Personal Status Law. This group is another network group from different NGOs and individuals which was created for the purpose of struggling for equality in personal status laws for Palestinian women in Israel. Although personal status issues of marriage and divorce are religious issues in Israel, (to be dealt with in religious courts), Jewish women are allowed to choose to file in a civil court or a religious court in a divorce case. The group is working to change laws that would enable Palestinian women from the various religious sectors the same right to choose. This group is working to raise awareness in the general public as well as engaging in advocacy and lobbying to change laws. This year the group conducted a study day, presenting the issue to the general public and especially to professional groups (social workers, lawyers, and others who deal with women facing such problems). We also began lobbying to bring about changes in the existing laws.

Al-Badil (The Alternative) and other Women's Coalitions. We were active in the formation of a group which is called Al-Badil (The Alternative), which was established to bring about public awareness of a specific very brutal act of violence against women in our society.

In the past, as well as today, in some sectors of Arab society, it has been regarded as "socially acceptable" to kill a woman for behavior seen as "disgraceful" to the family. In the past, such action was taken "behind closed doors", and kept within the family. Everyone knew, no one said anything.

We have been actively working to bring this phenomenon into the public eye, raise public awareness and put an end to this injustice and violence against women.

Women's Council. In 1994, this new organization was established in Israel by the city and village councils. The function of the Women's Council is to create activities for women, and also serve as counsel for the mayor on women's issues. This sparked interest in the Palestinian communities, and we were invited this year to help in the creation of women's councils in the villages of Yaffet Alnasra, Kokab Abu Alhaga, and in Nazareth.

Women Against Violence. As a support system for other women's organizations, we serve on the board of Women Against Violence, and are involved in the advisory committee for the hot-line which is open for women in Nazareth.

In conjunction with the Rape Crisis Center in Haifa, we conducted a special weekend for all of the volunteers in Haifa and Nazareth. We also gave lectures in the Arab villages of Daliat Al

Carmel and Tamra, on the issue of violence against women. In the Rotary club the issue of the legitimization of femicide to protect the family's honor was discussed.

■ MEDIA

In addition to articles which were published in the Arabic newspaper, three major TV programs on Israeli TV invited the director of the Center to share her vision on women's issues. One of these programs, a Hebrew and Arabic program, made a portrayal of Nabila's work. On another very popular Hebrew program, Nabila participated on a panel. The third program was in Arabic and was concentrated around the subject of women's issues.

■ ARAB-JEWISH ENCOUNTERS

We moderated several meetings of Arab-Jewish women's encounters in villages and cities such as in Kibbutz Sarid (Bat shalom activity) in Bet Beral, in leadership training and in the Mediterranean Women's conference and in Acco.

■ LECTURES

Other forms of community involvement include lectures given by staff members in different parts of the country for various organizations. The Center has conducted several lectures on Women's issues, such as a lecture to the International WISO (a Jewish women's organization) conference on "challenges and obstacles in front of Palestinian women in Israel", "Women's Council—a Means of Political Participation", "The Other Feminism", "Violence Against Women" and other issues. We were involved in 24 different encounters on women's issues.

■ INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S COOPERATION

We began our women's exchange program with Germany in 1994. Through our contacts, a group of Arab and Jewish women were able to visit women's projects in Germany, and become familiar with the different activities. In November of 1995, a delegation of German women came to visit us and spent 15 days. Some of this time was spent in hotels and some with individual families. They also went on trips and met with different Israeli and Palestinian women's groups.

The German women went back to Germany and created a friendship group with our Center. They are conducting several activities and speaking about what they learned during their stay in our country and in our Center. They also collect money for Center activities. We maintain contact with the group on a personal as well as a professional level.

Networking on Early Childhood Education Issues

The Center staff was active in various groups this year:

■ THE COMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The director of the Center was elected to chair and coordinate the committee for the advancement of early childhood education in the Arab Community which was formed by Shatil (an advisory organization for non-governmental organizations) in an attempt to raise the issue of

equality in education. This work demanded extensive travel and consensus work. The group coordinator for the project formulated a document on early childhood education, addressed to the Ministry of Education, and another document addressed to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Work (a summary of the group's three years of work is available).

This year we conducted special study days for all workers in the educational department in Arab Cities and village councils. The aim was to make it a priority to open kindergartens in their villages with the goal of increasing interest in the early childhood education. During these study days Mona Sroujy and Hala Hazan, from the staff of our Center, were key speakers and gave lectures. Nabila Espanioly moderated one of the sessions.

We have been able to develop a partnership for advocacy and lobbying with other organizations. This has proven to be very effective and demonstrates the importance of networking activities. After 4 years of work on this project, the Shatil organization, which oversees the project, ordered an evaluation of the project.

■ THE PARLIAMENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON NURSERIES

This subcommittee is chaired by Knesset member Tamar Gogansky and focuses a special interest on developing Arab nurseries. Various meetings are conducted with all involved parties to address this issue. The Center has been participating in these meetings and in the formulation of requests that are later discussed in the Parliament. This year the subcommittee went out to different communities. We played a very active role in the organization and activities of this subcommittee. After the election of the new parliament, the work of the subcommittee was stopped. The subcommittee was concentrating on nurseries in the Arab sector and the new government is continuing policies of discrimination against the Arab population. We continue to strive for change in government policies and are working to reactivate this subcommittee.

■ THE FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE ON ARAB EDUCATION

Two Center staff members are active on this committee on Education, and one of our staff was elected to chair this important committee. She was the first woman to be elected to such an important political position. Our staff members were actively involved in planning the Arab education study days on the goals of Arab education. During these study days we formulated goals for Arab education, as we perceive them.

To date, the goals of Arab education have been decided upon by the government without consultation with Arab Education specialists. During the study days, this process was different. Specialists worked together on the formulation and articulation of specific goals. The second stage now facing us is the integration of these goals into the curriculum. We share in this process and work in partnership with the Follow-up Committee on Arab Education.

We also participated in The Equality Conference and prepared and presented a paper on the status of early childhood education in the Arab community in Israel. This document was published in the conference publications.

■ PALESTINIAN NGOS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

After meeting several times abroad in conferences and workshops, we decided to meet here at home. We have encountered difficulties as the majority of the group is from the West Bank and Gaza. We were able to meet several times with the aim of creating networking and exchange opportunities. During this year the Arab council on early childhood education approached the group to provide a researcher with advice on how she should conduct her research.

■ LECTURES

Several groups visited our Center to learn about our activities and for some of them we organized a day long program including lectures and workshops. These included groups from Daraltifil Alaraby Arara, Durat Fafal Arabi, Acco, a group of mothers from Tiba (45 women), a group from the Golan and another group from Aosfia. We were also invited to several places to give lectures such as in Rahat, in Tamra and other places. Our workshop coordinator was invited to present a special workshop for a group of mothers. A special meeting on children's rights was also organized by our staff in the village of Yarka. In the Orthodox women's club in Nazareth a special lecture was given on the relationship between grandmothers and children.

■ REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

In 1996 we were invited to participate in the preparation committee for an early childhood workshop held by ARC (the Arab Resource Collective) in Cyprus. This was a meeting of different specialists from the Arab world interested in early childhood education. We also participated in specific workshops on "Creating a Learning Atmosphere in the Organisation", "Child to Child", "Training for Transformation " and "Children's Rights" as well as a workshop on the regional newsletter.

Community Involvement

■ COOPERATION WITH THE MUNICIPALITY OF NAZARETH

In our attempt to develop early childhood education we are constantly searching for associates and partners on the local, national and international levels. One significant partner is the Municipality of Nazareth, which began activities in this field three years ago. We attempt to coordinate activities with them and encourage increased support and cooperation.

During 1996 we were an active part of the subcommittee on early childhood education which is involved in the development of a special program as part of a rehabilitation plan for poor neighborhoods in Nazareth.

■ HOSPITAL PROJECT—CHILD TO CHILD

The International Day for Children on June first was celebrated in a unique way in 1995. We initiated the establishment of a book and toys library in the hospitals in Nazareth.

In Nazareth there are 3 private hospitals, and none of them have any activities for children during hospitalization. This fact, plus the fact that these hospitals constantly face financial difficulties, motivated us to celebrate children's day in a unique way, by collecting toys and books for presentation to the 3 hospitals and the children in those hospitals.

This activity was also presented during a visit to Holland in an attempt to collect additional funds for the project. A representative from Holland visited us here in Nazareth and also visited the area hospitals.

After the toys were presented to the hospitals in 1995, we discovered that these toys were not in full use in the facilities. This is one reason we discovered a new approach using the principles of "child to child". We wanted to motivate youth to volunteer to visit children in hospitals. We knew that each student in the tenth grade has to volunteer 60 hours in community activities as a personal commitment to his community. These 60 hours are often not used, probably due to a lack of organizational effort. We took advantage of this opportunity and contacted all the schools in Nazareth, asking them to send representatives to a special training course on creativity and health issues, which we held in the Center. This enabled them to work with sick children, and gave them the necessary knowledge to protect themselves in a hospital setting. We also included training on using creative material with children and story telling. This course lasted for 15 hours and afterward each participant volunteered 45 hours of service in the hospitals. The youths (15 years of age) are continuing in their volunteer work. Each hospital received new toys and books along with the volunteers. The volunteers are integrated in the timetable of the staff and are followed-up by the head nurse in the department. The program is still continuing and we will evaluate it as soon as it is completed and decide on further action.

■ LOBBYING

In July of 1996, a group of non-governmental Arab organizations met and discussed the question of how we could contribute to raise Palestinian issues within the Parliament and the Government. The group decided to begin a lobbying effort in the Parliament with the aim of creating a "pressure group" to try to defend our rights on different issues. Our Center worked with the group and were able to hire a lobbyist to work on the creation of an Arab lobby in the Parliament as a pilot project until the end of the year and until a decision on the budget.

A member of the Center joined this activity and the lobbyist worked with different parties and especially with Arab members in the Parliament to develop the different issues we had chosen to concentrate on. Within these issues were two subjects which are very important to us, education and especially early childhood education, and women's empowerment.

This pilot project motivated the NGO coalition and Shatil to present a new project to the European community for funding. If they agree to fund this project, it will be an official project after July of 1997.

We were able to learn and gain some experience from this project on how to develop new methods of advocating for our rights as citizens of this country.

■ THE NGOS COMMITTEE

In September of 1996, we rejoined "Itigah"—a coalition of Arab NGOs. "Itigah" was created with the aim to coordinate between all Arab NGOs in the country. We were actively involved in the creation of this coalition 2 years ago, but the group was inactive for a long time and we left the group during this period of time. Now with the reorganization of "Itigah", we thought that we should join the efforts again with the hope that we can contribute to the work of advocacy and networking between the Arab NGOs.

■ NEWSLETTER

We at the Center are aware of the importance of sharing information with others in the field. The first step was to look into different means of information sharing. One of these, which we knew to be a success, was a newsletter. In the past years, we had published several newsletters for our graduates and had a very positive response. This year we decided to begin a newsletter for all early childhood practitioners. The first edition was published over Christmas. We are planning to continue this project next year.

■ FRIENDS OF THE ORGANIZATION

This year we continue our activities with a large women's group which joined us and formed "Friends of the Organization." The group meets and discusses different issues of common interest. The Center staff participates in the group and is able to support the group in different ways, including presentation of communication workshops.

This group proved to be strong support, not only to members, but also to the Center. Members participated actively in organizing some of our activities, like Children's Day and Women's Day. They also hosted visitors and informed them about our work. A special meeting was conducted this year with the women's council from Fierenze after they signed a partnership agreement with Nazareth. The members of the organization in Nazareth were also invited to this meeting.

■ FUND RAISING

This year we have been active in fund raising, not only through written reports to several organizations, but also through meetings in this country and abroad with funding organizations.

In Israel we met with representatives of the New Israel Fund, the Netherlands Embassy, Brot Fur die welt, Misearo, Oxfam, Diakona, ICCI, ICCO. Some of these meetings were very fruitful and contacts were established, others were not.

During a visit to USA, we were able to meet with representatives from The Abraham Fund, Save the Children US, US/Israel Women to Women, the Ford Foundation and the Cuakares peace service. We also met with Mr. Dick Engel, a Pastor in Holland, who came to Nazareth and

visited the Center and the hospitals in Nazareth. Pastor Engel is involved in collecting funds for hospitals, from Churches in Holland.

■ INTERNATIONAL ENCOUNTERS

This year, as in previous years, we have had the opportunity to share our work and ideas with various groups and individuals who visited the Center. Some of them became "Friends of the Center Abroad" and we remain in contact with them.

These groups included 12 different groups from Germany, a group from the USA, one women's group from South Africa and one from Holland.

During a trip to the United States to receive a leadership award from the New Israel Fund, Nabila Espanioly was able to contact several different groups and present our work.

Building and Renovation

As a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization the NNI has been operating in rented housing. This has led to several problems.

- As renters, we are unable to make changes in the existing building. Such changes are necessary to make the building suitable for a nursery.
- There is no available space for a playground or garden around the rented housing.
- Normally the period of time we can stay in one house is very limited (to 2 or 3 years). This results in the additional expense of moving, plus makes it very difficult for the parents to reach us.
- Most of the buildings available are small and unsuitable for a nursery or a kindergarten.
- The prices are very high.

The NNI and Housing

In 1984, the NNI established its first nursery and for a few years operated from various rented houses.

In 1986-87, we were very pleased to be able to purchase a house. Although it was an old building, it had 600 square meters of space around it. We began to dream of renovating this old building and enlarging it to be used as a nursery, kindergarten, and a Center for women.

The house is a very old building with some very good elements which we are interested in preserving in addition to building additional space on the available surrounding area.

The old buildings in Nazareth are high enough to enable us to make two areas in the same old building. One which could be used as a nursery, and another for use as a kindergarten. The third area will be used as a Center for women.

The Nursery and the Kindergarten

The nursery and kindergarten is planned especially for children of working women. We strive to provide an atmosphere where children can learn, develop, and receive quality care. This will leave mothers free to pursue a career with the confidence of knowing her children are well cared for. We see this as an essential support system for parents, especially women.

Additionally, it could also be used in conjunction with the training courses which are offered at the Center. The Center offers a course for early childhood specialists. The nursery and kindergarten could be available for study and practice. They could also be a model for other organizations to develop a similar project.

The Center for Women

The Center activities provide women with training, advice and support. (The many activities are too numerous to mention here, but a detailed report about our work is available upon request.) With additional space the Center could increase activities and participation in these activities.

Outdoors

The new building will also make it possible for outdoor activities with the children. At the present rented facility there is no space available for outdoor activities.

This year we were able to begin this important project and we have completed the first phase of the building. Now we are waiting for additional funds to enable us to continue with this essential project.

Future Activities

We intend to continue our current activities as well as expand in different directions with new and productive programs.

Newsletter

We are in need of funds which would enable us to publish a newsletter for the caregivers in our nursery dealing with different issues of interest to them. This newsletter would serve as a source of educational information and answer questions regarding the development of children and provide support for caregivers.

We intend to publish the newsletter every 3 months. March, June, September, and December of 1997.

The first edition issued in December of 1996 was very well received in the field and we hope we can create stronger ties with practitioners in the field through this newsletter.

The goal of the newsletter is to be a tool of communication and a means of support for practitioners in their important roles in the field.

Child to Child

We intend to intensify our work with ARC (The Arab Resource Center) in Cyprus and with partners here by use of this approach on different projects. We will act as coordinators for the project and conduct training for interested agencies with the support of the ARC.

In 1996, Mona Sroujy from the Center participated in training for "Child to Child" at the ARC in Cyprus. After returning, she prepared a written summary on this approach and began the search for partners who could use this approach and develop it in their projects.

We invited partners from The Galilee Association and The Association for the Development of the Golan, who had expressed an interest in this project to a meeting with Julia Gilkes, a regional consultant for the project. In a later meeting we began planning for 1997. We agreed on the need for orientation and training on the approach which will be continued in 1997.

Training for Transformation

This approach is also promoted by the ARC and for the last 4 years was experienced in several Arab countries. We intend to create a network of professionals to learn this material and use it in their daily practice and in developing specific issues. In 1996, Mona Sroujy participated in training in Cyprus. We are now building the network for continuation in 1997.

Nazareth 2000

This is a new project, initiated by our staff members, which was presented to the City Council and then presented to the Ministry of Education. Now, after the acceptance of this project by the Ministry, we will be concentrating on developing the project for kindergartens. The aim of this project will be to create a stronger connection between the child and his city. The goal will be to teach children about Nazareth and the historical significance of this city. We hope to instill a sense of pride and encourage youngsters to become involved and care about their community.

Women's Empowerment

We intend to further develop our work in this concern by providing women with different training possibilities, creating opportunities, and empowering women in their positions. Specifically to:

- enable 40 new women to participate in the caregivers training course;
- enable 20 new women to participate in a special training course for management of kindergartens;
- further develop our business initiative course for women;
- further support women writers, and

- empower women through health education.

Children's Literature

We would like to further develop this field and the different activities which are important to us such as:

- Development of a creative writing training kit.
- Documentation of the Tagrid Al-Nagar workshop.
- Documentation of Palestinian folklore stories.
- To host Mona Hinning and Olla from Sweden, for workshops with teachers, children and parents.
- To further conduct activities to raise consciousness and further professional training.
- Book publication.
- Workshops on stories using puppets, props, etc.

We will also continue our efforts in the different functions

- Training
- Networking
- Advocacy
- Counseling
- Developing
- Marketing in the field of early childhood and women's empowerment.

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Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1999.