

# Moving forward despite a precarious existence

Annual Narrative Report  
2013



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## Annual Director's Message

### Is peace without principles possible?

This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the start of the First World War. Two world wars later, and nearly 80 million dead, world leaders attempted to prevent such carnage from occurring again by implementing a legal framework that exists to this day. The post-war generation of leaders acknowledged that it was the “disregard and contempt for human rights” that had to be addressed if further suffering was to be avoided. Key elements of the framework they developed include the [UN Charter](#) (1945), the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (1948), and the [Geneva Conventions](#) (1949). In turn, the Declaration of Human Rights provided a foundation for the multiple human rights treaties that were to follow.<sup>1</sup>

One of the objectives of this legal framework was to identify some of the main causes of conflict and to devise ways to minimise or prevent them. So, for example, territorial expansion was out, as was settlement in occupied territory, unlawful discrimination and arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. In came self-determination, equality before the law, freedom of expression and movement, as well as the idea of democratic principles for all.

As a Palestinian I cannot but feel hopeful on reading the principles contained in these legal instruments, but somewhat baffled at the gulf between the written word and what I see on the ground. This gulf is never more apparent than during the various peace processes that periodically come to our shores. The latest efforts by the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, are no different. Like every peace process before, the discussions assiduously avoid holding the occupying power to its legal obligations under international law. So, for example, instead of calling for the immediate removal of Israeli settlements in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention, short-term political expediency dictates that this is just another agenda item that needs to be negotiated between the parties when the time is right. And by dealing with the issue in this way one of the most basic of all legal principles is violated – namely, that unlawful activity should never be rewarded – because as we all know appeasement never works.

Although one of the main driving forces behind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a woman, Eleanor Roosevelt, the current push for peace, like those before, is largely being driven by men, even though the UN Security Council has acknowledged the importance of women's “equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.”<sup>2</sup> This makes me wonder what the post-war generation of leaders would make of the current talks where there is little participation of women, and almost no regard for the legal principles that emerged from the rubble in 1945.

After 20 years in the business of providing legal aid and counseling services to Palestinian women I am struck by the similarities between the domestic and international legal order and their limitations if not supported with integrity. In the domestic legal context we are

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<sup>1</sup> For example: Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) (1965); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979); Convention Against Torture (1984); and Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

<sup>2</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000.

finding ourselves more often than before in situations where women are falling through the cracks of existing legal and protective systems due to the physical fragmentation of Palestinian society. Consequently, women are increasingly forced to resort to tribal and family networks for dispute resolution, which if available, generally prioritise family and community harmony, over justice to the individual. This trend frequently puts women in compromising and vulnerable positions. However, in my experience the pursuit of harmonious fixes outside established legal networks rarely produces lasting solutions.

There is one thing I am quite certain of, and that is, those who believe that peace with justice can be achieved without regard to well established legal principles or representative participation in the process, are deluding themselves. It may be that due to the unequal bargaining power between the parties a temporary arrangement may be imposed, but under well-established legal principles such a deal can be rendered null and void.<sup>3</sup>

## **Part I – Summary Report**

### **General Information:**

**Name of NGO:** Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)

**Reporting period:** 1 January 2013 – 30 December 2013

**Date of last report:** 15 August 2013

**Date of this report:** 3-3-2014

### **Short Political Brief**

#### **Introduction**

The launch of negotiations in July marked 2013 as a pivotal year in the peace process. Globally, initial hopes for a settlement looked positive, and as talks have progressed there has been a tangible shift in international perspective. In November, the UN General Assembly named 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and the BDS movement has gained significant momentum. Despite these positive signs, however, reports indicate that progress toward a final treaty is faltering.<sup>4</sup> Israel continues to announce the construction of new illegal settlements, living conditions in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem have become increasingly difficult, and restrictions, arrests and violence against Palestinians, both from Israeli authorities and settlers, have increased. With regard to both historical precedent and the present context of negotiations, this escalation should be understood as provocation toward an uprising, the outbreak of which would shift blame for failed negotiations onto the Palestinian side. Coupled with the enduring issues associated with patriarchal society, these factors are having an enormously debilitating impact on the lives of Palestinian women.

#### **Diplomacy**

Six months since the opening of a new round of peace talks, brokered by US Secretary of State John Kerry, the hope of reaching an acceptable final status agreement seems distant.

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<sup>3</sup> Article 8 of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that “Protected persons may in no circumstances renounce in part or in entirety the rights secured to them by the present Convention.”

<sup>4</sup> Lazar Berman, ‘Obama: Less than 50% chance of Israeli-Palestinian Peace’ (*The Times of Israel*, 20 January 2014) <<http://www.timesofisrael.com/obama-less-than-50-chance-of-israeli-palestinian-peace/>> accessed 23 January 2014.

During the course of negotiations the killing of Palestinians, ongoing Israeli expansion into the West Bank and extensive other violations of international law have continued, and indications that terms of any proposal are likely to be unfavorable to Palestinians have provoked serious objection. US Secretary of State John Kerry has implied that if this round of peace negotiations fail a third Intifada is likely to break out.<sup>5</sup>

The internal political context of the occupied Palestinian territories has created further challenges, as well as opportunities. A new Cabinet of 24 retained the three female ministers of the outgoing government, with Rahiba Diab remaining as Minister for Women's Affairs, and a cross-sectoral National Gender Strategy for the period 2011-2013 highlighted the Palestinian Authority's efforts to reform attitudes and policy surrounding gender. However, patriarchal norms continue to make it difficult for women to enter the political sphere, particularly in more conservative areas,<sup>6</sup> and obstacles are exacerbated by the fractures and limitations of the Palestinian Authority.<sup>7</sup> Historical colonisation means Palestinians live under a patchwork of Jordanian, British, Ottoman and Israeli legal systems, which prove inadequate to defend and protect the rights of women.<sup>8</sup> Since the suspension of the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006, the only means of passing new laws is by presidential decree, a politically problematic route, and as a result very little progress has been made toward reforming the Personal Status and Criminal Law and taking steps to ensuring men and women remain equal in the eyes of the law.<sup>9</sup>

### **Violence from Israeli forces**

2013 has seen a rise in the regularity and severity of violence from Israeli forces against Palestinians. During 2013 more Palestinians were injured in Israeli related violence than in any other year since 2005: in the West Bank there were 27 Palestinian deaths and 3921 casualties, with over 60 percent of injuries occurring through clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces during demonstrations.<sup>10</sup> In three incidents, soldiers fired while lying in wait to capture stone-throwers; in four, they discharged lethal gunfire when Palestinians were throwing stones. Deaths occurred during Israeli arrest raids in Palestinian areas, from hidden snipers, and in response to stone throwing. Of these incidents, the greatest loss of life occurred on August 26<sup>th</sup>, when three men were killed by live Israeli fire in Qalandia Refugee camp when the army raided the camp in the early hours of the morning. Thousands of mourners attended the funerals of the men and UNRWA condemned the killing.

In 2013, one-third of injuries of this kind affected children.<sup>11</sup> During 2013 Israeli soldiers hiding near schools killed two children; in January 16-year-old Sameer Awad was shot dead as he ran away from gunfire near Budrus,<sup>12</sup> and in December 15-year-old Wajhi al-Ramhi was shot in the back and killed as he stood outside his school in Jalazone refugee camp.<sup>13</sup> In May

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<sup>5</sup> Lesley Wroughton, 'Kerry warns Israel of troubles ahead if peace talks fail' (*Reuters*, 7 November 2013),

<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/07/us-palestinians-israel-kerry-idUSBRE9A60P220131107>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Galia Golan, 'Palestinian Women: Catalysts for Change' (1995) *The Palestine-Israel Journal*, Vol. 2 No. 3

<<http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=620>> accessed 15 February 2014

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Rought-Brooks, Salwa Duaibis, Soraida Hussein, 'Palestinian Women: Caught in the Cross-Fire Between Occupation and Patriarchy' (2010) *Feminist Formations*. 22(3) 125.

<sup>8</sup> Hallie Ludsin, 'Women and the draft constitution of Palestine' (2011) WCLAC, p 48

<[http://www.wclac.org/userfiles/wclac\\_2011\\_women\\_and\\_the\\_draft\\_constitution\\_of\\_Palestine.pdf](http://www.wclac.org/userfiles/wclac_2011_women_and_the_draft_constitution_of_Palestine.pdf)> accessed 15 February 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Ashraf Abu Hayyeh, 'The Experience of Personal Status Law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories' (2011) WCLAC, p 6

<[http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/PersonalStatusLaw%20inEnglish1Ashraf%20finl%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/PersonalStatusLaw%20inEnglish1Ashraf%20finl%20(2).pdf)> accessed 15 February 2014.

<sup>10</sup> B'Tselem, 'B'Tselem reviews 2013: 5-year high in number of Palestinian fatalities in West Bank'

<[http://www.btselem.org/press\\_releases/20131230\\_2013\\_fatalities\\_statistics](http://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20131230_2013_fatalities_statistics)> accessed 23 January 2014.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: Occupied Palestinian Territory, 'Life, Liberty and Security',

<<http://www.ochaopt.org/content.aspx?id=1010057>> accessed 22 January 2013.

<sup>12</sup> 'Voices from the Occupation: Sameer Awad - Fatality' (*Defence for Children International Palestine*, 26 January 2013) <<http://www.dci-palestine.org/documents/voices-occupation-sameer-awad-fatality>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Mya Guarnieri, 'Israeli troops shoot Palestinian teen in back near Ramallah' (*+927 Magazine*, 7 December 2013)

<<http://972mag.com/israeli-troops-shoot-palestinian-teen-in-back-near-ramallah/83203/>> accessed 22 January 2014.

outside the same school, 12-year-old Atta Sabah was hit by a bullet that left him paralysed.<sup>14</sup> Beyond these tragedies, the long-term detrimental impacts of violence and conflict prevent children's normal development and violate their rights under international law.<sup>15</sup> Ill-treatment of children who come into contact with the military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and institutionalized from the moment of arrest until prosecution, conviction and sentencing.<sup>16</sup>

Impact on children in turn has a hugely detrimental psychological impact on family life, and a particularly disproportionate effect on women. In the aftermath of tragedy mothers, wives, sisters daughters and grandmothers are forced to manage and come to terms with grave losses of human life and injury, and mothers feel they are unable to protect family members, especially their children. In some cases women must take on the role of breadwinner and financial provider as well as continuing to fulfil their traditional roles in childcare and homemaking. This reflects how the occupation has partially deconstructed traditional roles and has a profound influence on women's status in the Palestinian society.<sup>17</sup>

High levels of stress and long term psychological trauma induced by the constant threat of violence are underpinned by knowledge that perpetrators of crimes and human rights violations are able to act with impunity. Faced with a hamstrung Palestinian legal system and Israeli power holders who are unwilling hold perpetrators legally accountable, women continue to live in a context of uncertainty, with no access to systems or institutions that can be depended upon to defend and uphold their rights. Statistics illustrating Israeli impunity are striking. Between January 2001 and late 2010, 645 complaints were filed against Israeli Security Agency (ISA) interrogators for alleged ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian detainees, yet no criminal investigations were conducted. In the same period, a complaint lodged by a Palestinian against an Israeli soldier had a 96.5 percent chance of being dismissed without an indictment. In 2010, the conviction rate for Palestinians in military courts was 99.74 percent. Israeli authorities are both disregarding their legal obligation to protect the rights of Palestinians and failing to maintain the public order and safety in the occupied Palestinian territory, a legal obligation as an occupying power.<sup>18</sup>

### **Detentions**

Large numbers of Palestinians continue to be arrested by Israeli forces, and Israel continues to hold Palestinian women in Israeli jails outside the occupied Palestinian territories, in violation of Article 76 of the fourth Geneva Convention. Violations of prisoner rights, such as the denial of family visits, medical neglect, solitary confinement, administrative detention and interrogation, are widely documented within Israeli jails. Palestinians in the occupied territories are prosecuted in military courts, which regularly flout guarantees of fair trial including the right to a presumption of innocence, access to a lawyer, and interpretation and translation.<sup>19</sup> Palestinian women and girls are also subject to arbitrary arrest and detention, and children are routinely arrested at checkpoints, off the street, and from their homes in the early hours of the morning.

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<sup>14</sup> 'Failing to abide by regulations, Israeli soldiers inflict serious injuries to Palestinian children' (*Defence for Children International Palestine*, 21 August 2013) <<http://www.dci-palestine.org/documents/failing-abide-regulations-israeli-soldiers-inflict-serious-injuries-palestinian-children>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: Occupied Palestinian Territory, 'Life, Liberty and Security', <<http://www.ochaopt.org/content.aspx?id=1010057>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Children in Israeli Military detention Observations and Recommendations. (*Unicef*, February 2013)

<[http://www.unicef.org/oPt/JUNICEF\\_oPt\\_Children\\_in\\_Israeli\\_Military\\_Detention\\_Observations\\_and\\_Recommendations\\_-\\_6\\_March\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/JUNICEF_oPt_Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention_Observations_and_Recommendations_-_6_March_2013.pdf)> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Through Womens Eyes II: Gender Specific Report on the Latest Israeli Offensive' (*Palestinian Center for Human Rights*, 2013)

<<http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/2013/PCHR-through%20womens%20eyes%20202.pdf>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>18</sup> UNGA, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, (2013) UN Doc A/68/513

<sup>19</sup> 'General Briefing: Palestinian Political Prisoners in Israeli Prisons' (ADDAMEER) <<http://www.addameer.org/etemplate.php?id=359>> accessed 22 January 2014.

At present, there are 4,996 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails, including 14 female prisoners and 159 child prisoners.<sup>20</sup> Female prisoners are kept in institutions that lack gender sensitive approaches, and an investigation carried out by Addameer in 2008 revealed that approximately 38% of Palestinian female prisoners in Israeli jails suffer from treatable diseases that go untreated.<sup>21</sup> Notable recent arrests of women include the case of Nariman Tamimi and Rana Hamadah, who were charged in July for their involvement in a demonstration in Nabi Saleh. In another high-profile arrest case, five teenagers from the village of Hares and Kifl Hares are facing 25 years to life in prison, after being charged with 25 counts of attempted murder. The case rests on the confession of one boy, and the children were tried as adults in a military court following harsh interrogation and solitary confinement without access to a lawyer. In setting a precedent for disproportionate sentencing for stone-throwers and their families the case could have serious consequences for Palestinian children and their families.

### **Settlement Expansion and Displacement**

While the close of 2013 saw the third of four prisoner releases, each round has been accompanied by new announcements of settlement expansion in the West Bank. During the reporting period, Israeli settlements continued to expand rapidly. In the first six months of 2013, the UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recorded a 33 percent increase in structures demolished by Israeli authorities in East Jerusalem compared to the previous year.<sup>22</sup> There are now more than 500,000 Jewish settlers living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> Despite international condemnation, the Israeli authorities are enthusiastic in the expansion of settlements: December saw the announcement of 1,400 new units,<sup>24</sup> and in August 1,200 new homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem were confirmed.<sup>25</sup> For Palestinians, this means forced eviction, demolition and land confiscation on a significant scale: in November alone demolitions in East Jerusalem displaced nearly 300 Palestinians, the highest monthly number since 2009.<sup>26</sup>

As women's lives are more likely to revolve around the home they tend to be disproportionately affected by these forced evictions and home demolitions, and the trauma of these incidents is frequently detrimental both to women's mental health and that of the children they normally care for.<sup>27</sup> Protection against forced displacement is highlighted in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as the responsibility of both Palestinian and Israeli authorities, and guidelines also set out that state parties must protect the rights to basic services of displaced women and girls. The evidence demonstrates that these guidelines are not being adhered to.

In 2013, WCLAC documented the story of Areej Al Zeer, from East Jerusalem, whose case echoes those of many other women. "At 6:00 a.m. on 20 August, I was preparing my daughters for school when I heard voices outside the house," recalls Areej. "I looked out the window and saw a large number of Israeli soldiers and police surrounding our house. One of

<sup>20</sup>Statistics (ADDAMEER) <<http://www.addameer.org/>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Key Issues - Women (ADDAMEER) <<http://www.addameer.org/etemplate.php?id=295>> accessed 17 February 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Women's Voices: Nadia H. - Home demolition (WCLAC, 25 January 2013) <<http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1233>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>23</sup> 'Israel challenges EU anti-settlement stances' (*Aljazeera*, 17 January 2014)

<<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/01/israel-summons-envoys-over-pro-palestine-bias-20141171366870452.html>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> 'Israel backs new Jewish settlement homes' (*BBC News*, 11 August 2013) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-23655661>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Humanitarian Bulletin Monthly Report (OCHA, November 2013)

<[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_the\\_humanitarian\\_monitor\\_2013\\_12\\_16\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2013_12_16_english.pdf)> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Hannah Rought-Brooks, Salwa Duaibis, Soraida Hussein, 'Palestinian Women: Caught in the Cross-Fire Between Occupation and Patriarchy' (2010) *Feminist Formations*. 22(3) 139.

the Israeli soldiers showed my husband an official note with orders to demolish our house and said we must evacuate immediately. We had no choice but to gather our daughters and leave the house. They then started demolishing our house without giving us a chance to take out any of our belongings.”<sup>28</sup> In the aftermath of the forced eviction, Areej and her family had no choice but to live in a cave for a week before moving in with her family-in-law’s house where there were already five people living.

### **Settler Violence**

The expansion of settlements has been accompanied by continued and increased incidents of settler violence against Palestinians and their property: in 2013, there were 306 incidents of Israeli settler violence resulting in damage to Palestinian property or land, up from 267 in 2012.<sup>29</sup> Violence peaked after the stabbing of a settler at the Zatar checkpoint in April, prompting violence including stone throwing, attacking cars, setting fields alight and, in one incident, attacking female students travelling in a schoolbus.<sup>30</sup>

Violence continued throughout the year, generating increasing senses of fear for women in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In the *Women’s Voices* series WCLAC has documented several serious cases of settler violence: one mother, for example, was hospitalised after being severely beaten by settlers in front of her young son, as she picked herbs in the hills near Ramallah.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the actual number of incidents of settler violence is likely to be higher than those reported, as Palestinian women have scant faith in Israeli complaint mechanisms. Those who attempt to report crimes report lengthy, humiliating and intimidating investigation procedure. The long term effects on women’s emotional wellbeing are serious and have even been described by one psychoanalyst as a ‘trauma vortex’, in which trauma consumes the victim in a deteriorating cycle that seriously inhibits their ability to deal with other issues in their communities.<sup>32</sup>

## **Progress towards strategic goals**

The year 2013 marked the first of year of WCLAC’s new three year strategy “Moving forward despite a precarious existence”. The three main goals of this programme are as follows:

- **Strategic goal 1:** Contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence.
- **Strategic goal 2:** Promote women's rights and combat negative practices against women.
- **Strategic goal 3:** Develop institutional and human capacity in order to ensure the sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of WCLAC.

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<sup>28</sup> Women's Voices: Areej Z. - Property destruction (WCLAC, 20 August 2013) <<http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1247>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: Occupied Palestinian Territory, 'Life, Liberty and Security', <<http://www.ochaopt.org/content.aspx?id=1010057>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>30</sup> PA official: Over 20 injured as settlers riot near Nablus (*Ma'an News Agency*, 30 April 2013) <<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=590837>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Women's Voices: Khatmeh S. - Settler violence (WCLAC, 18 July 2013) <<http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1234>> accessed 22 January 2014.

<sup>32</sup> 'Proposed General Recommendation on Human Rights of Women in Situations of Conflict and Post Conflict: Occupied Palestine Territory', (WCLAC, 25 March 2012) <[http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/WCLAC%20submission-CEDAW-Proposed%20General%20Recommendation-Women%20in%20conflict%20situations%20\(March%202012\)%5b20120612131845%5d.pdf](http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/WCLAC%20submission-CEDAW-Proposed%20General%20Recommendation-Women%20in%20conflict%20situations%20(March%202012)%5b20120612131845%5d.pdf)> accessed 22 January 2014.



This narrative summary deals with each of these, in turn, to highlight some of the progress made during the reporting period.

## Highlights of the year

### Service Provision

WCLAC's service unit forms much of the backbone of the Centre's work. Following over 20 years of experience in this field, 2013 was a particularly successful year for the continuing sustainability of service provision for women victims of violence in the oPt. The re-opening of WCLAC's emergency shelter after a two year closure was one of the Centre's major achievements this year. The WCLAC-run shelter originally opened in 2006 and was the first of its kind in the West Bank, providing refuge for women whose lives are at risk from domestic violence. After extensive renovations, the shelter re-opened on the 30th of May 2013 and has since sheltered 30 women victims of violence whose lives were under threat. The opening ceremony was held with the Minister of Social Affairs, the Governor of Jericho and the Jordan Valley, WCLAC's General Director, and in the presence of WCLAC staff, partners and donors. Progress on protecting women at risk of violence continued, with WCLAC and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) signing a MOU to protect women at risk of violence on the 5th of June.



WCLAC's General Director Maha Abu-Dayyeh with the Minister of Social Affairs Majidah Al-Masri at the re-opening of the Emergency Shelter on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2013.

Other highlights this year related to service provision include WCLAC's provision of essential legal and social work, which saw 472 new cases. WCLAC continues to provide services to women through a team of lawyers and social workers based in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron.

### Legislative Reform

A few legal milestones have been achieved this year. These include the Family Protection from Violence law and the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence, or Takamol. These were introduced to the Cabinet by the National Committee for Combating Violence, which consisted of representatives from the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Minister of Social Affairs. The National Referral System has now been accepted by the Cabinet and The Family Protection from Violence law has been provisionally accepted but has been referred to discussion on its legislative applicability with the Palestinian Constitution.

These achievements are the product of many years of work by WCLAC and other key service providers. The Takamol system will ensure that when women seek protection from violence they will receive services that are well integrated, organised and institutionalized, and which thus much better serve complex and serious needs. Although full adoption of the system is in the early stages, previous training means key service providers are already equipped with a foundation of knowledge and skills that will vastly improve their ability to cater to the needs of women.

### **Awareness raising**

An essential component of WCLAC's strategy is awareness-raising which increases women's access to services and changes attitudes and behavior through increasing understandings of gender issues and women's rights. Through WCLAC's awareness raising sessions it has introduced many concepts of the Personal Status Law in key sectors of Palestinian society. Through this the Centre has been mobilizing support for Criminal Law and Personal Status Law reform at the grassroots level by explaining the current legislative situation and the amendments WCLAC advocates for. Attendees of WCLAC's awareness-raising sessions include both male and female participants, lawyers, religious leaders, activists, decision-makers and service providers, including representatives of the police force. In 2013, WCLAC further expanded its awareness-raising activities to include workshops for local women activists and women living in the seam zone reaching over 2980 beneficiaries. WCLAC's awareness raising programme is unique of its kind as it offers participants essential knowledge in protection mechanisms for women, and practical information regarding custody, alimony and divorce rights. Additionally, many of WCLAC's awareness raising sessions are a source of referrals for social and legal counselling.

### **Youth volunteer networks**

Over the years, and mainly due to the political situation, the focus of WCLAC's work has shifted from lobbying on the legislative, decision-making level to the grassroots and effecting attitudinal change on the ground. WCLAC also believes that meaningful changes in favor of women's rights must begin at the grassroots level. This grassroots work prepares the ground for change and the future possibility of a functioning PLC, while also ensuring more public support for women's rights. At the same time, WCLAC's volunteer clusters also allow women and men who support women's rights to empower themselves with skills to improve their self-esteem, social status and voice in the public sphere. They become advocates for women's rights in their communities and this training, WCLAC believes, has a knock on effect on the individual, societal level.

WCLAC's volunteer programme has achieved the promotion of voluntarism within the Palestinian community, a spirit which has been in a gradual decline since the first intifada, and has also provided local communities with trained social actors who can spread

awareness among the people of women's rights and legal issues, allowing them to become real actors in their own lives.

The success of this grassroots approach is evident through the success stories emerging, and the fact that more marginalized Palestinian villages, which often receive little to no services are now being reached. Examples of this include, the small marginalized village near Tulkarim, Akaba, whose lands are threatened by confiscation from the occupation and suffers from a particular lack of services. One of WCLAC's volunteer clusters decided to begin intervention in this area. The first step began with a needs assessment, which showed a lack of schools, transport, and health centres. Meetings and coordination then began with the relevant stakeholders, which included the Director of Health, the Director of Culture in the province and other organizations in the area were invited to begin shaping an intervention which takes into consideration the particular needs of women. Simultaneously, the volunteers worked in coordination with media organizations in order to raise awareness on the situations of women in these marginalized areas who are suffering as a result of the settlements and their inhabitants. A visual report was made on WCLAC's intervention in these areas which was aired on major news outlets several times. As a result of the intervention, the Health Director for the region has agreed to prepare a room in the village as a clinic for reproductive health and vaccinations for children. WCLAC also prepared a room in the village hall for women, where meetings and trainings can occur. The Centre will now follow up this successful action to ensure that the governorate continues to provide more services to this area that take into account the specific needs of women.

Similar success stories from WCLAC's other volunteer clusters include the village of Jaba'a near Bethlehem, which suffers from political and social isolation. Little to no services are offered to the village, due in part to the fact that transport to the village is dangerous, thanks to settler attacks, and expensive. An in-depth survey was undertaken by WCLAC for the village of Jaba'a and the specific needs of the community were highlighted by the volunteer groups. They then went on to carry out community projects that aim to overcome negative attitudes towards women. Through volunteer clusters such as these, more links have been made with more isolated communities and WCLAC has attempted to overcome the three main challenges to its work in this field.

A second example is the village of Khirbit Ghwain in Area C of the West Bank, where communities lack basic services. WCLAC managed to persuade the Palestinian Ministry of Education to provide a taxi service to take girls from the community to school. A committee including women from the community has also been established to provide a link between the community and relevant local and international agencies interested in supporting the village. WCLAC has now taken a step back and the women from the community are able to communicate their concerns and needs to the relevant authorities.

WCLAC's volunteers now represent an amazing cadre of young professionals, male and female, working tirelessly and cost effectively to promote women's rights in their communities. With one third of the volunteers being young men, this cadre embodies WCLAC's outreach to men as well as women.

### **Capacity building and training of key stakeholders and service providers**

WCLAC's extensive experience in the field of women's rights in Palestine has enabled it to identify potential key targets for training and awareness-raising. One example of this work is WCLAC's cooperation with the Shari'a courts. Although for the past couple of years WCLAC has worked closely with Shari'a Court employees more generally, this year it targeted Shari'a marriage registrars 'Ma'thounen'. There was overall a positive reception of WCLAC's

message. The aim of the trainings were to raise awareness of women's rights while also offering training to this group in ensuring women can integrate their rights in the marriage contract. Through its work in offering services to women WCLAC realized that many marital related legal/social cases could have been avoided if the woman had been able to include her rights in the marriage contract. In striving to achieve this aim, a total of 66 Shari'a court marriage registrars were trained this year, and an additional 23 Shari'a court counsellors.

### **International Advocacy**

The documentation of the impact of Israeli human rights violations against Palestinian women has continued to increase this year following the October 2012 publication of 'Women's Voices'. An archive of 'Women's Voices' on WCLAC's website is expanding with 63 statements transformed into "voices" in 2013.<sup>33</sup> These short testimonies address a plethora of human rights abuses issues faced by women such as settler violence, identity cards, child arrests and property destruction.

### **Challenges and Lessons Learnt**

A particularly difficult challenge faced by the Service Unit in 2013 is the planned introduction of help desks for women at Shari'a Courts. WCLAC's proposal to set up three help desks for women was refused by the Supreme Judge Department, due to issues regarding lack of space and a perceived conflict between Shari'a Court lawyers and WCLAC lawyers offering free counseling. To overcome the issue, the Service Unit is pursuing several alternatives, including stationing a competent trainee lawyer in the Shari'a Court, and providing lawyers to accompany women with alimony cases, for example, in the civil courts. In addition, a trained lawyer is working in Ezariyeh, an area of Jerusalem cut off from the city by the wall and identified as suffering a severe deficiency of services for women. Rather than targeting women in the courts, the lawyer is able to provide similar consultation services to women within their communities, particularly through the cooperation of existing organisations in the area that enable access to, and raise awareness among, women in need of legal services.

In the face of obstacles confronting the Shari'a Court helpdesk the Unit is also turning its focus to alternative possibilities in the family court in East Jerusalem. Court materials in the family court are prepared in Hebrew, and Palestinian women are forced to navigate their cases in a language they cannot understand. Providing a help desk with a volunteer lawyer in Jerusalem courts has the potential to make a huge impact in these cases, and is likely to be a more achievable area of focus for achieving the goals of legal consultation and support within courts in the future. The Service Unit is currently pursuing evaluation of the service, which is planned for 2014.

With regards to legislative change, WCLAC still faces huge obstacles in implementing effective change. This is due to the continuing situation regarding the division between Fatah and Hamas, which means that the Palestinian Legislative Council has still not convened since 2006. This complicates a democratic passage of law, meaning that the Centre's work on legislative change and advocacy concentrates on documenting discrimination and violations while building and maintaining strategic relations with the various ministries. A scheduled activity was on documenting the violations of women's rights as a result of an absence of a social security safety net. This activity was postponed to 2014 due to an ongoing internal discussion and investigation by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) on the issue of social security. WCLAC decided that the implementation of this activity would be more effective after waiting for the results of the discussions within MOSA.

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<sup>33</sup><http://www.wclac.org/english/einside.php?id=27>

A continued source of concern for WCLAC is the practice of gender-based killing or 'femicide'. WCLAC uses the term femicide rather than 'honour killing', as this term might infer some justification of what WCLAC considers to be the violent death of a woman (often carried out by a family member or intimate partner) which is in no way honourable. In 2013 WCLAC documented 27 cases of femicide. The issue has now reached a point of tension in the society because legislation is not developing at the same pace as public opinion, due to the lack of progress on legal reform. In general, the population is sensitive and aware of the issue of femicide yet the legislation in its current form allows the perpetrators to receive lenient sentences, and thus does not offer a deterrent to such actions.

As part of its work towards legal reform and the Penal Code in particular, WCLAC tried to use the documentation of femicide cases to place increasing pressure on the Palestinian Authority to make these changes. Unfortunately, President Abbas's Legal Advisor declared that there would be no major changes made to the Penal Code due to the sensitivity of the issue in the current political climate. The lack of a functioning PLC could make changes to this law appear un-democratic and potentially complicate the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. WCLAC responded to this challenge by organizing, in coordination with the Coalition and Al-Muntada, a workshop with the President's advisor to discuss some necessary amendments to the Penal Code. Until now, however, there has been no other progress on this matter.

Finally, some local and regional networks, such as the SALMA and AISHA network, did not convene this year which resulted in some of the scheduled coalition and networking meetings not to occur.

## **Part II – Detailed Activity Report**

**Strategic goal 1: Contribute to the protection and empowerment of women suffering discrimination and violence**

### **1.1 Provide professional legal and social services to women who are victims of violence, abuse and gender-based discrimination**

#### **1.1.1 Extend thorough legal and social services to women in the West Bank**

Throughout 2013 WCLAC continued to provide legal and social services to women through a team of lawyers and social workers based in East Jerusalem, Ramallah and the south of the West Bank. In the reporting period, WCLAC provided legal and social counseling to total of 472 women. 318 one-time legal and social services were offered to women (34 in Jerusalem; 284 in the West Bank), and 104 e-counseling sessions were offered to women.

These services include taking cases to court, giving legal advice in one-off advice sessions and mediating discussions between family members. From the total number of cases, 26 women were referred using the protocols of the national referral system Takamol, which symbolizes a successful beginning to the system. Furthermore, through an interview with the Director of the Health Works Committee, WCLAC learned that the referral system is being more systematically used to refer women victims of violence.

Additionally WCLAC aims to empower women with information and guidance on taking cases to court. A total of 114 women were assisted in filling out court paperwork, and a total of 950 manuals on custody and alimony manuals were distributed.

		<b>Ramallah</b>	<b>South of the west bank</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Type of service</b>	Legal and Social	40	130	63	233
	Legal	43	95	34	172
	Social	42	17	8	67
	Total	125	242	105	472

		<b>Ramallah</b>	<b>South of the west bank</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Level of education</b>	Higher Degree	41	78	31	150
	Secondary	52	101	39	192
	Preparatory	24	60	29	113
	Literate	5	3	0	8
	Unknown	3	1	5	9
		<b>Ramallah</b>	<b>South of the West Bank</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Age</b>	over 37	17	43	33	93
	18-36	104	195	70	369
	under 18	2	4	1	7
	Unknown	2	1	0	3
		<b>Ramallah</b>	<b>South of the West Bank</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Personal status</b>	Abandoned	12	32	10	54
	Widowed	5	39	4	48
	Divorced	49	59	30	138
	Separated from Family	7	22	4	33
	Married	35	71	44	150

	Fiancé	3	9	8	20
	Single	14	10	5	29
	Total	125	242	105	472
		<b>Ramallah</b>	<b>South of the west bank</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Perpetrator</b>	Outside the family	7	15	5	27
	Family member	24	40	16	80
	Ex-husband	15	24	14	53
	Husband's family	3	19	4	26
	Husband	67	142	66	275
	Other	9	2	0	11
	Total	125	242	105	472
		<b>Ramallah</b>	<b>South of the west bank</b>	<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Source of Referral</b>	Lawyers	3	6	5	14
	Health sector	1	2	2	5
	Police	7	12	0	19
	Governorates	4	1	0	5
	Social Services	16	10	3	29

<b>Origin of Client</b>	
South	264
Central	200
North	8

Type of work	Number of cases
Housewife	226
Employed in Governmental Sector, private sector, or NGO sector	56
Student	33
Unemployed	13
Unknown	122
Irregular work	21
Total	472

Referring Institutions				Type of Follow Up		Number transferred to the Emergency Shelter
Medical Institutions	Institutions	Individuals	Police Department	Consultation	File	
5	53		20	318	472	30

		Ramallah	Hebron	Jerusalem	Total
Help from Lawyer	Marital Obedience	4	7	0	11
	Custody Visitations	18	33	24	85
	Alimony	122	220	38	380
	Dowry	18	21	1	30



	Divorce	22	39	14	75
	Compensation for divorce	13	4	0	17
	House rent & custody	1	2	0	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>601</b>

### *Analysis of the cases*

WCLAC is happy to note that it is offering services to an increasingly large number of women, all over the West Bank and East Jerusalem. WCLAC realised that many of the cases began simply as legal services and then proceeded to combine both social and legal services. A large majority of the services provided were legal (178 out of 472 cases), this suggests that WCLAC's primary function is as a service-provider for women seeking legal services. Other organisations do provide social services, however legal services are often referred to WCLAC. As an example of the success of WCLAC's methods, the high number of alimony and maintenance cases WCLAC received (380 cases) suggested that we are a primary service-provider for women divorcing or separating from their husbands. This information from the service unit informed WCLAC to develop and distribute a self-help manual which empowers women to understand their rights to maintenance in divorce and can take them, step-by-step through the necessary processes to claim their rights.

It is interesting to note that in 275 of 472 cases the kinship towards the 'antagonist' was a husband, with the second highest number the 'antagonists' being a family member or an ex-husband. Most clients were young adults at 369; and over 288 cases were of clients either divorced or married, these figures put together with Palestine's high marriage rate and traditions of marriage at a relatively young age, this suggests that many women are experiencing difficulties either in entering marriage or in the first few years of married life. However, the second highest number of middle-aged clients at 93 cases, which indicates that difficulties can also emerge well into married life. These difficulties often relate to the social and economic stresses inherent in life within an economy strangled by occupation. These stresses are exacerbated as children in the family mature and family expenses are increased by the growing cost of food, education, clothing and more besides.

Furthermore, an overwhelming number of cases (369) the client was either unemployed, in irregular work, or a housewife meaning that they would have less bargaining power within the household. Unemployed women are, in general, more vulnerable to violence explaining the higher number of cases of clients from that category. Only 14 percent of Palestinian women are in the labour force (giving them the possibility of direct access to income). Additionally, (192) of WCLAC's clients did not pursue higher education (college or university), making it more difficult to obtain the skills and experience required to enter the labour market.

### **Special project** :*Protect the Rights and Improve the Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in East Jerusalem*

In 2012 WCLAC began work on an ambitious multi-donor, multi-partner project to revive Palestinian civil society organizations presence in East Jerusalem and mobilize communities

in five neighborhoods to actively participate in improving access to and protection of their social, political and economic rights. The project has been generously funded by the EU and Oxfam Novib and is being implemented by WCLAC, the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS), the Agriculture Development Association (PARC), Juzoor for Health and Social Development, and the Palestinian Counselling Centre (PCC) /Jerusalem Coalition.

In 2013, WCLAC provided legal and social counselling to a total of 80 women. WCLAC also conducted 23 awareness sessions for 40 women on the following topics: violence; gender; first aid; accommodation issues; treatment of children and adolescents; the social and psychological and health effects of early marriage, and a further 12 sessions for a group of 10 women who needed legal aid.

WCLAC also conducted two training courses (40 training hours) for 64 University students specializing in social service, health and law to educate college students of all genders about women's rights. Training subjects included the difference between sex and gender, the roles of men and women in the society, the strategic and the practical needs of women, violence against women and gender based violence, and how the trainees, as current students and in their future careers, can contribute to the reduction of violence against women.

WCLAC enlisted 20 volunteers to work with them in order to spread the vision of the Centre and to acquire basic skills and knowledge on women's rights. WCLAC conducted six days of training (36 hours) for 25 volunteers on 'Gender and Women's Rights'. 30 hours of supervision monthly meetings were conducted with 20 volunteers.

Less visible effects of Israeli occupation are particularly present in East Jerusalem where precarious residency rights and the ban on family reunification affect women particularly. Women find themselves even more confined to the private domain, and Israeli forces engage in methods to intimidate Palestinian women, such as targeting their children, leaving them reluctant to report threats, dangers or assaults to their lives. With regards to lobbying international advocacy targets based locally, a total of 14 lobbying meetings were conducted with international advocacy targets. Furthermore, there was one aspect of WCLAC's service provision work in East Jerusalem that was particularly successful. This was the 'Group Support Meetings', which are organised for women in similar situations to compare experiences among themselves and offer one another support. WCLAC was happy to note the positive impact this has had on the women's lives, as the women expressed their deep satisfaction with these meetings. The women expressed a reduction in their stress levels, reported no longer having a feeling of loneliness, and thus felt stronger and more resilient to face their problems.

#### *Shari'a court help desk*

A particularly difficult challenge faced by the Service Unit in 2013 is the planned introduction of help desks for women at Shari'a Courts. WCLAC's proposal to set up three help desks for women was refused by the Supreme Judge Department, due to issues regarding lack of space and a perceived conflict between Shari'a Court lawyers and WCLAC lawyers offering free counseling. To overcome the issue, the Service Unit is pursuing several alternatives, including stationing a competent trainee lawyer in the Shari'a Court, and providing lawyers to accompany women with alimony cases, for example, in the civil courts. In addition, a trained lawyer is working in Ezariyeh, an area of Jerusalem cut off from the city by the wall and identified as suffering a severe deficiency of services for women. Rather than targeting women in the courts, the lawyer is able to provide similar consultation services to women

within their communities, particularly through the cooperation of existing organisations in the area that enable access to, and raise awareness among, women in need of legal services.

In the face of obstacles confronting the Shari'a Court helpdesk the Unit is also turning its focus to alternative possibilities in the family court in East Jerusalem. Court materials in the family court are prepared in Hebrew, and Palestinian women are forced to navigate their cases in a language they cannot understand. Providing a help desk with a volunteer lawyer in Jerusalem courts has the potential to make a huge impact in these cases, and is likely to be a more achievable area of focus for achieving the goals of legal consultation and support within courts in the future. The Service Unit is currently pursuing evaluation of the service, which is planned for 2014.

#### *Help-line for women seeking social and emergency counseling services*

The helpline for social and emergency counseling was established by the end of the year after numerous obstacles. A lengthy technical process meant that the helpline took longer than planned, especially since WCLAC wanted the helpline to be free of charge.

Two sets of interviews were carried out in order to choose volunteers from the north and the south of the West Bank who would be trained to work on the helpline. Coincidentally the two volunteers from Hebron were also existing volunteers with WCLAC for the past 6 years, this is very positive as the volunteers are clearly very committed to WCLAC's work and very familiar with the Centre's vision. These volunteers were trained for a total of 2 days (12 hours).

Afterwards, advertising for the service began and 5,000 text messages were sent out through the Palestinian mobile phone company Jawal and virtual advertisements prepared for news sites.

### **1.1.2 Maintain and develop the capacity of WCLAC's Service Unit to respond to the needs of Palestinian women**

WCLAC views supporting our lawyers and social workers as an integral part of our work, and values the methodology we share with partners in seeking to implement service provision for women. In 2013, there were 8 supervision sessions for WCLAC's entire social work and legal team, one of which served as an overview of the entire year. WCLAC's Service Unit staff participated in a total of 9 local training courses, and 2 international trainings, one of which included a training in Jordan on inheritance rights organized by Asala and Oxfam with participants from many neighboring countries. These trainings maintain WCLAC's standards of continuing to exchange experiences with other service provision organisations in order to provide quality legal and social services to clients.

WCLAC continues to write and publish analysis papers identifying and analysing trends based on WCLAC's database of client files. In 2013, the Centre prepared 9 brief analysis papers on the situation of women in Palestine; the first paper on gender-based violence and the second on the Personal Status law.

#### *Develop and maintain strategic relations for the Service Unit and WCLAC's shelter*

The service unit and WCLAC's shelter seek to develop and maintain strategic relations with relevant institutions such as the local authorities, security forces, the justice sector and Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). In 2013 WCLAC held 13 regular meetings with partner

organisations in order to exchange better practices in provision services to protect female victims of violence. It also held 8 ad hoc meetings with the MOSA, police, Ministry of Health and the governorate in order to exchange practices on issues of emergency intervention, and WCLAC's emergency shelter. WCLAC is also a partner in the psychological support team in Jerusalem and Hebron with organisations such as DCI and General Union of Palestinian Women and others that offer psychosocial support. WCLAC participated in 4 meetings to discuss the action plan of future.

### **1.1.3 Offer protection services to women survivors and those who are at risk of violence**

In May, WCLAC re-opened the Emergency shelter in Jericho after a two-year closure. The opening ceremony took place with the Minister of Social Affairs, the Governor of Jericho and the Jordan Valley and WCLAC's General Director in the presence of a number of WCLAC staff, partners and donors. The opening of the shelter and the ceremony, in the presence of key stakeholder representatives shows the importance of networking and partnering in order to effect change. In a difficult and insecure political climate it is all the more important to effect change through nourishing and maintaining strategic relations with ministries and governmental institutions to ensure women's protection. Towards the end of the year, WCLAC also carried out extensive renovations to the shelter and installed a gym for the women to use, as well as a more pleasant outside area for the women. In 2013, WCLAC offered 30 women emergency protection from violence at the shelter.

In 2013, WCLAC held 80 meetings with stakeholders, including MOSA, police and the governorate, to develop an intervention plan for each client at the shelter. Furthermore, WCLAC and Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to protect women at risk of violence in June.

WCLAC held a total of 13 meetings for shelter staff and volunteer assistants in order to define the roles and develop the programme of work inside the shelter. A total of 4 supervision sessions were held for the house mothers, and 1 two-day training course for dealing with crisis cases. WCLAC organized for the shelter house mothers to visit 2 other local protection shelters, one in Nazareth and one in Nablus.

Further training courses were offered to staff on the following topics: documentation and reporting; mental health of women after childbirth; conference to discuss emergency cases; development of media skills to write newspaper articles; personality disorders and finally, inheritance rights.

## **1.2 Raise awareness of women's legal and social rights amongst Palestinians communities in the West Bank**

### **1.2.1 Raise awareness amongst Palestinian women so that they can identify and condemn negative practices against women and can access resources for help**

#### *Awareness raising workshops*

The participants of the awareness raising workshops were women who were either housewives or come from a similar sector of society and are thus united by a common experience. There are several aims in targeting relatively homogeneous groups of women

for these workshops; firstly it aids the workshop implementation as the women are often united by a shared experience and therefore more comfortable in participating, secondly it raises women's confidence to disseminate the information they receive in an informal manner to their families, colleagues and/or communities as they know they are not speaking alone. This sense of camaraderie was very much built upon by WCLAC, who was able to respond to key questions, concerns or misunderstandings that arose during the course.

A total of 41 awareness-raising workshops were held across the West Bank, which reached 150 women. The areas WCLAC reached through these awareness raising sessions included particularly marginalized areas such as Tel Rumaida in Hebron, and the village of Bireen which suffers from settler attacks. Topics covered in the sessions included introductions to types of gender-based violence, legal and social discrimination, criminal law and inheritance rights. A total of 27 women also sought one time legal/social counselling through the awareness raising sessions. **Please refer to annex A for more detailed information about the sessions.**

#### *Empower local women activists*

In 2013, WCLAC further expanded its awareness-raising activities to include workshops for local women activists. This was done in coordination with the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) in 9 branches which included Jenin, Tulkarem, Hebron, Bethlehem, Salfit, Nablus, Ramallah, Jericho, and Qalqilya. A 2-day awareness-raising session was carried out for each branch. A total of 173 local women activists were empowered through sessions regarding reforms to Palestinian legislation related to women's rights. **The table of workshops held by WCLAC in 2013 can be found in Appendix B.**

The interaction was very positive and the participants were very impressed with training. The group recommendations advised holding similar activities to larger groups of women through various activities and awareness sessions. It is interesting to note that in some groups, it was the first time they had participated in a session on such topics despite the fact that some the participants were employed in governorate. For example, when discussing the laws, there was often shock and surprise among participants at how discriminatory the laws are towards women. Strategically as well, attracting participants from this target group will be beneficial as their support and increased knowledge of legal reform will greatly impact their work. The activity was very successful in this regard.

#### *Women living in the seam zone*

In 2013, WCLAC also expanded its awareness-raising activities to include workshops for women living in the seam zone. A total of 52 women living in the seam zone were provided with support by raising-awareness about their rights through the formation of two women's groups, which received a total of 16 sessions/ 32 hours. The workshops were targeted at women from particularly marginalized areas in Hebron and its surrounding areas, where women suffer from movement restrictions and a lack of services due to the Israeli occupation and violent settlers. Some of the aims of the activity were to empower the women participants to express themselves and their demands to decision makers, and thus some of the outputs of this activity were two meetings that were held with decision makers from the Hebron region and media professionals. The women had many recommendations and demands and a follow up committee was formed in order to ensure their implementation. A final debriefing day was organized for both the women's groups, with a total of 44 participants. Overall there was a confirmation by all the participants of the pressures they face in sending their children to school due to settler attacks, and the difficult

living conditions they navigate. At the same time, initiative was exhibited by the women participants who requested to coordinate further with WCLAC in bringing international delegations to view the situation.

### **1.2.2 Raise awareness within key target groups who can support a positive attitude toward women's rights**

WCLAC believes that changing youth opinions will challenge the prevailing opinions among adults of the future. Therefore, with regards to working with university students, WCLAC has created an adaptable module entitled 'Women's Rights are Human Rights'.

In 2013, WCLAC led four 'Women's Rights are Human Rights' courses in Birzeit University, American University of Jenin, Istiqlal University, and Hebron University. WCLAC carried out a pre and post session questionnaire to the students, which showed the following results; the American University in Jenin showed the highest rate of change from 43% to 60%, whereas Istiqlal University for Security forces showed the least at 45% before the questionnaire and 57% afterwards. Al Quds University exhibited 45% before and 61% of knowledge of selected topics, whereas Birzeit University had the highest rate of knowledge of the topics before the session and afterwards at 51% to 65%.

Four awareness raising sessions were also held with students from colleges, which included Al Tireh college in Ramallah, Al Umeh college in Jerusalem, the textiles section of the vocational training Centre in Hebron and the "Al An'ash Family Centre" college. A total of 191 youth and university students (136f, 55m) were reached through the workshops on women's rights. A winter camp (4 days of awareness raising sessions on subjects related to women's rights) was also held for 23 young men.

**For more information about the workshops please refer to annex C.**

Overall there was a positive reaction to WCLAC's messages; however in certain cases there was resistance from male participants to women participating in the workforce as architects, instead deeming this field to be "men's work". This highlights the importance of WCLAC's work for youth and university students as it offers them an empowering alternative to dominant gendered narratives.

*Lead awareness within key target groups who can support a positive attitude toward women's rights*

WCLAC continues to respond to opportunities and requests for information sessions throughout the year from institutions, NGOs, CBOs, and groups of individuals in the first stages of self-organising. In 2013, a total of 15 awareness raising sessions were held with 6 other institutions which included the UNRWA, Juzoor, Health Work Committees, the A'seera Village Committee, the Women's program center and the Arab learning organization; Sumood. Over 254 women were reached through these sessions, increasing the number of groups who have been exposed to women's rights. **Please refer to annex D for more information regarding awareness raising sessions with target groups and partners.**

Meanwhile, Women's day events included 5 partner organisations and reached a total of 394 women, and for the days of action on violence against women a workshop was held for all GUPW branches from all over the West Bank which attracted over 42 women. **For more information on women's day events please refer to annex E.**

**Special project:** 'AMAL' Supporting Women's Transformative Leadership in Changing Times in Middle East and North Africa

In September 2012, WCLAC began work on a three-year, multi-country, multi-organisation project AMAL. The project aims to promote the active participation and leadership of women in the MENA region, especially poorer and more marginalised women in local, national and regional governance structures and decision-making processes. Ensuring that they have a say in the formulation of/and that their needs and priorities are reflected in socio-economic policies and practice at all levels. The project symbolises wider regional cooperation and adds an important dimension to WCLAC's work, which transcends the occupied Palestinian territory.

In 2013, WCLAC attended the Project Steering Committee meeting with all project partners. WCLAC conducted awareness workshops targeted at groups of women and young people in the North and South of the West Bank. For women, WCLAC conducted 16 workshops in the North and 16 in the South. For youth, WCLAC conducted 8 workshops in the North and 8 in the South. The workshops included the following topics: feminist theories; the establishment of the feminist movement in Palestine; political participation and access to decision-making positions; gender and gender-based violence and finally the Family Protection Law. Each workshop was attended by between (18-20) women and (16-20) youth. The majority of participants requested copies of the workshop materials so they could work independently to transfer the experience and knowledge to their community. Between (4-6) participants expressed the wish to stand for election in governmental positions, demonstrating confidence in expressing their politics rights.

### **1.3 Build the capacity of service professionals and grassroots women's organizations to provide protection to women**

#### **1.3.1 Extend women's service provision to underserved parts of Palestine through partnering and building the capacity of selected grassroots organizations**

In 2013, WCLAC continued its partnerships with Tubas Charitable Society (TCS), Women for Life (WFL) and Al-Najdeh-Tulkarem, and carries on to build upon the capacity of their service provision staff and to monitor the quality of their work. WCLAC provided a total of 48 hours of professional supervision for the legal and social work teams in the three grassroots organisations. WCLAC also conducted 2 study days for the three organisations to share experiences and to develop their abilities to deal with emergency cases.

Activities included supervising and supporting 102 cases of legal and social services and conducting 52 awareness-raising sessions with TCS. This took place in particularly marginalized areas of the northern Jordan Valley where very little services are available and their lands are under threat by the Israeli occupation. Some of the areas reached include Aatoof, village of Akaba, Al-Far'a Refugee camp, Tamoon village, Tubas, village of Aqaba. Other activities included preparing manuals and leaflets (a manual on service provision procedures and a booklet on divorce). The manual on service provision procedures includes specific details on the national referral system for women victims of violence in the area of Tubas and the position of TCS.

Much of WCLAC's work with these grassroots organisations has been aimed at working in a strategic manner to develop the skills their staff and help build the grassroots organisations' capacities for self-management and sustainability. To achieve this aim, WCLAC carried out various supervisory meetings, totaling 5 general supervisory meetings, such as progression of the activities, and development of the strategic plan. A total of 3 meetings with the finance team at TCS to develop their finance department, as well as a total of 2 meetings to monitor the quality of service provision. Evaluations of the services provided by TCS were

carried out through two meetings where the activities were overviewed and it was found that staff at TCS were facing capacity challenges in dealing with the very high need for services for women in the Northern region. A further 21 meetings were held with the staff teams of WFL, in order to follow up with the Society, and continue to provide support to the service provision team and the administration.

TCS was also accompanied on two fieldwork visits, one of which was a meeting on gender-based violence in the Al Fari'a camp with 22 women participants. Overall the participants were satisfied with the meeting, and WCLAC staff noticed an improvement in the fieldworker's ability to effectively present the topic. Another fieldworker was accompanied by WCLAC to a meeting with 30 university students on the topic of divorce. Through such partnerships WCLAC has expanded the number of beneficiaries exposed to WCLAC's vision and increased awareness of women's rights and protection mechanisms in Palestinian society. At the same time, WCLAC has been essential in building the capacity of TCS to carry out quality legal and social services as well as awareness-raising.

WCLAC supported and supervised TCS in implementing 2 landmark central activities with the local community for women's day and for the week of combating violence against women. For women's day, TCS held a workshop hosted by the Supreme Judge Sheikh 'Yusuf Adeis' who presented the amendments that deal with divorce and custody rights with over 110 participants including members of the courts and the police force. For the week of combating violence against women, an event was held at TCS with 80 participants, which offered an overview of the services available for women as well as clarifying the roles of various service providers. The question and answer sessions were very lively with interventions from the police.

In order to continue to develop the organisations' relations with key stakeholders, WCLAC accompanied TCS in 2 visits to the MOSA and police to publicise the program of legal and social services and to review the strengths and weaknesses in the relationship. The visits were productive and confirmed strong and trusting relationships with official institutions. More generally, mentoring and advice on fundraising and donor relations was offered to TCS by WCLAC's external relations department. WCLAC continued to provide support to the service provision teams at Al Najdeh and Women for Life via phone, email and emergency meetings.

Some of the main achievements of these partnerships have been the dissemination of information regarding women's rights in the Tubas and Jenin regions, and consequently more women who are aware of their rights. Regarding the awareness-raising sessions new groups were targeted and there was a high commitment to the sessions through a constant participation and attendance by the women. At the same time the sessions strengthened relations between the women attendees who were able to share personal experiences with one another, which broke the barrier of silence that normally shrouds such topics.

### **1.3.2 Train state and non-state service providers in order to develop best practices in dealing with women victims of violence**

#### *Promoting gender-sensitive professional practice among Shari'a court employees*

In 2013, WCLAC conducted a 3 day workshop (18 training hours) entitled 'Implementations of Women's Human Rights within Shari'a Courts'. The workshop was attended by 23 Shari'a Court counsellors, judges, and marriage registrars.

#### *Workshops among Shari'a court employees and Ma'thoun (Marriage Registrars)*



Specific training for the Ma'thoun (marriage registrars) took place for a total of 9 workshops (54 hours) in the north, south and centre of the West Bank and reached over 66 marriage registrars. The course covered the following topics: basics of a professional documentation process; practical applications in the necessary conditions for the effective documentation and key skills in documenting work with cases; practical applications of report writing skills; the terms and conditions of the marriage contract and finally the practical applications to ensure women's rights. **For more details of the training course offered to the Ma'thoun (marriage registrars) see Appendix F.**

The training course produced recommendations from the participants to the President of the Shari'a Judicial Council, and mandates a committee of the Shari'a Judicial Council and of the Office of the Minister of Justice to work with WCLAC in order to develop an internal procedure system. This ensures effective and professional documentation, which in turn is more likely to guarantee women's rights before going to court or getting married.

The most important recommendations from the Ma'thoun training included; preparing a couple and guiding them in all the rights and responsibilities relating to the marriage contract; raising awareness through the marriage registrars (Ma'thoun) about marriage rights, the conditions of the marriage contract and how to deal with the particular personal circumstances and finally creating a guidebook which raises awareness of rights and offers guidance to couples before they sign a marriage contract. For WCLAC, this signifies a huge success as an outcome of the training, as implementation of the recommendations will preemptively prepare couples and especially women before marriage to be aware of their rights.

This was a new step for WCLAC, and one that has proved highly successful. WCLAC also has acquired and maintained the support of the general prosecutor in the Sharia courts, who has affirmed the need to continue such trainings. Although some challenges were faced when undertaking training with this target group is that there is often resistance to the idea of women's rights and defensiveness, however such a group will now be more sensitive to women's issues, especially when signing the marriage contract. This will be hugely beneficial for particularly for women when signing the contract, as they would be able to integrate key elements that ensure their rights thus minimizing the risk of bigger problems later on in their married life. The majority of women in Palestine sign the marriage contract in the Shari'a courts, therefore training this sector is seen as highly strategic by the Centre.

## Strategic goal 2: Promote women's rights and combat negative practices against women.

### 2.1 Contribute to the development of gender-sensitive legislation and institutional policies that support, protect and empower women in the public and private spheres

#### 2.1.1 Identify inadequacies within the judicial system related to cases of femicide and incest

WCLAC highlighted the need to develop and improve its standards of documenting femicide and in 2013 developed a gender-sensitive methodology to document cases to be implemented by the whole Centre.

WCLAC preliminarily communicated with researchers in the field and with institutions that document and encounter cases of murder and suicide. WCLAC then worked with the researcher on developing a methodology with partner institutions with the aim of preparing a standard form with the institutions, researchers and WCLAC staff. WCLAC saw the need for a methodology that is gender sensitive, which goes further than simply documenting cases but rather attempts to offer a picture of the woman's life.

An action plan was set up on implementing the new methodology along with a list of institutions to consult regarding the development of a documentation methodology. A total of 4 meetings were held with various partner organisations in order to develop the methodology. These partner organisations included: the Ministry of Health, Mehwer Center, Ministry of Women's Affairs, ICHR, Center for Women's Studies, General Prosecutor, and Palestinian Center for Statistics. A committee was formed to discuss the development of this methodology, which held a total of 3 meetings.

Overall there was great cooperation from all the different parties. There was a lively exchange of information and experiences by other organisations and institutions in the meetings and the suggestions of the partners were integrated into the new documentation methodology. The partners expressed the challenges faced in documenting cases of suicide and a debate ensued on whether a separate documentation methodology should be developed for suicide cases.

Initially, MOU's with service providers and state institutions that receive cases of femicide should have been signed in order to ensure that cooperation would be constant on the documentation of femicide. However no formal MOU was signed with the stakeholders. Instead, memos were exchanged between the different partners, primarily regarding facilitation of researcher's access to their files and information. This process was successful as it also provided a preliminary base-ground between various institutions on documenting femicide. For example, although the police could not publically publish their affidavits collected when investigating a case, WCLAC could however transform and incorporate some of this information in its questionnaire. There were also good relations with the General Prosecutor Office, which are important to maintain in order to improve possibilities for WCLAC to attend and follow femicide cases in court.

The femicide report named "*The killing of women in Palestinian society in 2011-2012*" is in the final stages of editing and is in the process of being translated to English. A thousand copies of the full report were printed. The final version is 80 pages long including the Arabic and English sections.

A summary of the report was made in Arabic and 500 copies were distributed at WCLAC's workshops in Universities both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip in awareness workshops on gender-based violence and femicide. The full version and summary of the report will be used as a tool of awareness raising and as a reference document for the cases of femicide both for the awareness workshops in Universities and also for other relevant organisations

Two press conferences were held to present the femicide report; one in Gaza and one in the West Bank. The aims of the press conference were to present the findings of WCLAC's documentation of femicide from 2011-2012, such as the increase in the number of femicide cases in 2012. In the West Bank all major Palestinian news outlets came to the press conference, including other Arabic news outlets such as Al Jazeera and Ru'ya a Jordanian news channel. In Gaza, all major Palestinian news outlets came to the press conference, such as Palestine TV, Watan TV, and from other Arabic news outlets the Iraqi Chanel,

'Fada'yit Tunis' from Tunisia attended, and from international news outlets France 24 attended. A total of 26 reporters were present at the press conference.



*Latifa Sehwaïl project coordinator speaking at WCLAC's press conference*

The results of the press conference was putting the topic of femicide on the media and national agenda while also increasing pressure on decision makers to take the necessary steps to implement legal reform.

#### *Awareness-raising sessions for university students*

All the sessions for the students were on the topic of femicide in Palestinian society in 2012, where students received a presentation on the legislative situation regarding femicide in Palestinian society followed by a discussion. The awareness-raising sessions reached a total of 321 students in both Gaza and the West Bank. The first awareness raising session took place at the Al Aqsa University in Gaza, with 50 students attending. The second session took place in the University of Palestine in Gaza with 51 students attending. The third session took place at the Al Quds Open University in Gaza with 60 attendees. The fourth and fifth sessions took place in the West Bank at Birzeit University with 60 students attending and Istiqlal University in Jericho with 100 attendees.

Overall recommendations from the sessions highlighted the importance and urgency of legal reform, coordination between organisations and institutions to combat the phenomena and placing pressure on media outlets to cover the issues in a gender-sensitive way. In the Gaza Strip, the students recommended that more awareness raising workshops should take place but they not just be limited to the history of femicide cases but also look at practical ways of implementing justice, such as organising media campaigns.

#### **2.1.2 Propose reforms based on an analysis of existing legislation and institutional policies which have a specific impact on women's rights**

With regards to legislative change, WCLAC still faces huge obstacles in implementing effective change. This is due to the continuing situation regarding the division between Fatah and Hamas, which means that the Palestinian Legislative Council has still not convened since 2006. This complicates a democratic passage of law, meaning that the Centre's work on legislative change and advocacy concentrates on documenting discrimination and violations while building and maintaining strategic relations with the various ministries.

### *Social Security*

A scheduled activity was on documenting the violations of women's rights as a result of an absence of a social security safety net. This activity was postponed to 2014 due to an ongoing internal discussion and investigation by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) on the issue of social security. WCLAC decided that the implementation of this activity would be more effective after waiting for the results of the discussions within MOSA.

### *The Pension Law*

WCLAC believes that women experience significant discrimination as a result of regulations within the pension system. Regarding the draft report on the pension system, WCLAC is still in contact with the Pension Authority on some of the issues raised in the report. All comments and problems with the text have been sent and the amendments have been discussed. The feedback of the report was integrated and the final version of the report is now being printed where it will include the courts decisions, details of interviews with women, and analysis from a gender perspective. For WCLAC, the first stages of reform begin by identifying and documenting the discrimination of the existing law before moving on to proposing legal reform. The Centre aims to continue this work into 2014.

### *Law for People with Disabilities*

WCLAC produced a report regarding the discrimination women with disabilities face a draft of which was sent to relevant ministries such as MOSA. Comments on the report were integrated and now the report is in the process of being printed.

### *Legislation concerning banking procedures related to women*

Following the study that the Centre developed on the discrimination women face in banking procedures some amendments to banking procedures have been developed and are to be sent to the Finance Ministry in 2014.

### *Shari'a Courts*

With regards the Shari'a courts, WCLAC has drafted some specific articles that protect women's rights within Shari'a court procedures. The booklet published by WCLAC 'Procedures of the Shari'a Courts in the West Bank' can be found in Arabic and English<sup>34</sup>. Some of the recommendations presented to the High Judicial Council as a result of the study include publishing educational pamphlets that help women understand relevant legal jargon, free legal aid for women in need, enforcement mechanisms for the rulings of Shari'a court decisions, as well as providing necessary facilities such as clean toilets, a space for children and suitable waiting rooms.

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<sup>34</sup><http://www.wclac.org/atemplate.php?id=267>

WCLAC then held a meeting with the High Judicial Council of the Shari'a Courts to discuss the proposed draft articles and to deliver the study on the Pension Law. This was followed by a mini-workshop at the request of the High Judicial Council, with 5 judges that represent the Shari'a courts and the results were positive. Finally, the amendments that were submitted to the High Judicial Council were all accepted and thanks to WCLAC's work, it was also agreed that meetings should be held in the future to discuss further amendments and recommendations that emerged from WCLAC's study and how they can be implemented in partnership with WCLAC. However the main obstacle to implementation is the lack of funding within the Shari'a courts. For example offering women free legal services in the Shari'a courts would require significant funds, whereas other processes such as the delay of court cases without taking into consideration the importance of timings and appointments for women, would incur little to no cost. The court has pledged to address the issues that are not costly immediately.

**Special Project:** *Falling through the Cracks: How the Israeli Occupation Breaks Palestinian Families*

In 2011, WCLAC began work on an ambitious multi-donor, multi-partner project to provide legal aid and counselling to women whose right to family life is undermined or denied by Israeli occupation practices, and to advocate for their rights. The project, funded by the UNDP and the Foundation Open Society Institute, sees three Palestinian women's organisations working together with different capacities, in different contexts, and despite the arbitrary obstacles imposed on them by Israel. The project is being implemented by WCLAC, the Jerusalem Centre for Women (JCW) and the Centre for Women's Legal Research and Consulting (CWLRC) in Gaza, with considerable programme support from UNDP.

Continuing this cooperation and coordination among all partner organisations WCLAC obtained feedback from the project partners on the advocacy paper produced last year. The advocacy paper was prepared and reviewed by the steering committee, and comments were incorporated, preparation has begun to hold a conference to diplomatic and foreign bodies and local and international institutions. So far this year, 150 legal aid services were given to women who were struggling with Israeli created obstacles. WCLAC also produced a study on citizen's rights and international standards to protect marriage rights such as family reunification. The study has now been printed and is available in the Centre.

### **2.1.3 Advocate for the passage of draft legislation that protects women's rights**

*Family Protection from Violence Law and the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence*

WCLAC is continuously advocating for the passage of draft legislation that protects women's rights. Since 2004, WCLAC has worked with civil society organisations to develop a final draft Law on Family Protection from Violence.

In March, WCLAC held two meetings with the Legal Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Legal Department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, as well as the Muntada Forum in order to put the final touches on the Family Protection from Violence law in order to complete the final draft of the bill. However an obstacle WCLAC is facing is that the laws must be shown to have an already existing legal basis within the constitution. The Cabinet agreed to make a small committee to discuss the draft and make comments to be sent to the legislative committee. The committee included MOSA, WCLAC, and the Institute of Law at Birzeit University. Subsequently, the relevant ministries and authorities made final notes

and comments on the laws, in the next year, WCLAC will re-draft the law and submit it to the cabinet.

The National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence was submitted to the cabinet by the 'National Committee for Combating Violence', the Minister of Women's Affairs and the Minister of Social Affairs. After years of work, WCLAC is pleased to announce that the Referral System has been approved by the Cabinet, and is now an obligation for all relevant parties to implement.

The developments regarding the Family Protection from Violence Law and especially the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence is a huge milestone for the Centre.

### *Criminal Law*

WCLAC has long been pressing for revisions to be made to the Criminal Law and, accordingly, is a founding member of the Criminal Law Coalition. The coalition brings together civil society organisations that seek to unify and reinforce civil society demands for change in the Criminal Law. WCLAC has contributed to the development of the draft Criminal Law as a member of the Ministry of Justice's national drafting committee.

In 2013, Al-Muntada, which is the forum for Combating Violence against Women and the Coalition on Criminal law, organised a conference on Violence against Women and the Criminal law, in the presence of the Legal Advisor to the President and several religious leaders. Unfortunately, President Abbas's Legal Advisor declared at the conference that there would no replacement of the Penal Code due to the sensitivity of the issue in the current political climate. The lack of a functioning PLC could make changes to this law appear un-democratic and potentially complicate the reconciliation between Fateh and Hamas. WCLAC responded to this challenge by organising, in coordination with the Coalition and Al Muntada, a workshop with the President's advisor to discuss necessary amendments to the Penal Code.

The most important outcome of the workshop was the agreed need for there to be a meeting with specialists in the field of law and the Office of the President for Legal Affairs, in order to discuss the proposed amendments to the law. WCLAC intends to continue to work to keep pressure on the President to ensure the passage of the draft Criminal Law, and created a memo with the Ministry of Justice and other NGOs to sign calling on the President to pass the bill.

### *Personal Status Law*

A committee was formed to follow up the legislation that consisted of the Minister of Justice, the Legal Advisor to the President and the General Prosecutor. It was decided to form this national committee that would include all relevant parties regarding the personal status law. Two meetings occurred within this committee in the second half of the year, however there was no particular headway in the discussion.

### *Model Parliament for Women and Legislation in Palestine*

The Model parliament in Palestine occurred at a critical junction in the women's movement. It took place soon after the Oslo accords and aimed to hold a mock parliament to highlight women's issues. The parliament highlighted many important lessons on the marginalization of women's rights to 'other' issues deemed more important. WCLAC feels it is therefore vital

that these experiences be documented, especially in light of recent events in Egypt. Five chapters have been produced by the Center so far.

### *Regional committees*

WCLAC believes in the importance having regional committees that support WCLAC's advocacy work. A total of 180 participants attended WCLAC's central meeting. One of the very positive outcomes of these regional committees is that the participants are now able to become advocates in their own communities on the vision of the Centre and calling for legislative reform that guarantees women's rights.

### **Special Project** : *Promote the rights of Palestinian women's social and economic rights development through promoting access to inheritance*

As part of its focus on women's access to economic rights, WCLAC began to turn its attention to inheritance procedures, believing that this is a significant area of discrimination against women, but also an area in which WCLAC could achieve tangible results with long-term positive impacts. The goal for WCLAC in this sector is to see a special state-sanctioned department developed, secular in character, which has a mandate to officiate inheritance proceedings. This department should work to ensure that women know the amount of inheritance available to them and the rights they have to claim them, and should have powers to enforce court orders on behalf of women in claiming inheritance payments.

In May 2013, WCLAC began work on a three-year, multi-partner project, which aims to promote the access of Palestinian women to inheritance and property as a means of empowering women. Furthermore, it aims to train local Palestinian communities, women's organisations and community leaders to help women receive their social and economic rights.

The project is funded by EU and Dan Church Aid (DCA) and is being implemented by WCLAC and Women's Affairs Centre (WAC). Currently, the project is still in the early stages but so far the National Committee to Ensure Inheritance Rights (NCEIR) has been formed consisting of state and civil society actors. WCLAC strives to create a legal and political environment in which women's access to inheritance is protected. This national committee will lay the groundwork and lobby for the creation of a new inheritance department in the Ministry of Justice. A first draft of a guidebook on inheritance procedures was also prepared in conjunction with various departments such as the Shari'a court and the MOJ.

## **2.2 Advocate for Palestinian women's rights in cooperation with local and international networks and mobilize support for a culture of respect for women's rights**

### **2.2.1 Engage with active networks and coalitions to support women's rights**

WCLAC believes that working through building and supporting coalitions, change is made more possible as the voices and efforts of civil society organisations pushing for positive change, of whatever sort, are magnified when speaking and working together. At the local level, WCLAC remains a contributing member in a number of networks and coalitions focused on human rights and women's rights issues. At a more regional and international levels, WCLAC's participation offers a forum in which it can share its experience of working with women in conflict.

### *Council of Palestinian Human Rights Organisations*

This Coalition was formed in 2008 with WCLAC, Al Haq, Centre for Rehabilitation of Tortured Victims, Defense for Children International, Mandela and the Jerusalem Centre for Legal Aid. Its mission is to identify human rights violations and to monitor and report them to the relevant authorities, to visit Palestinian prisons, to issue reports of violations and to receive complaints from citizens. Part of the aim of the Council is to magnify the voice of Palestinian civil society by uniting and unifying positions on key issues.

In the past year, the Council held 3 regular meetings, where the Council met with the President of the International Criminal Court. A brief summary of the Council's statements regarding Palestine include; a call to the Palestinian state to immediately sign the Treaty of Rome and join the International Criminal Court; a call for the need for the Hamas and Fatah to put an immediate end to the interior human rights violations, and the need for the status quo to end and the reconciliation process to continue. In the second half of the year the Council published a statement regarding Hizb Al Tahrir and their threats and campaigns against Palestinian women's organizations. Regarding the problem of funding for Palestinian Civil Society organisations the Council decided to formulate a paper on this and agreed to work to organize direct meetings with donors to change the existing conditions.

### *Other National Coalitions*

**National Committee to Support Women in the Workforce:** Newly formed in 2011 to work on improving policies that control the entry of women into the workforce, providing women with equal employment opportunities and combating discrimination against women in the workforce. Members include the Ministry of Labour, International Labour Organisation and other governmental and non-governmental organisations. This year, WCLAC attended one workshop to overview a study on the overall goals for the next strategic plan for the next three years. The Centre also attended another workshop where the central committee was expanded and 4 new members were elected bringing the total number to 9. Emails were also sent out to all participating organizations to confirm their commitment to the committee.

**NGO Forum on Violence Against Women (Al Muntada):**

In 2013, WCLAC participated in various activities of the forum; WCLAC attended a total of seven Forum meetings, and organized one conference with the forum on Criminal Law reform.

WCLAC participated in a two day workshop on the forum action plan, which was followed by another three day workshop in Cairo on the same topic. The Centre also participated in a workshop on the criminal code with the forum. With regards to campaigns, the Centre aided the forum in launching a media campaign regarding violence against women, additionally after an incident of femicide WCLAC participated in a protest outside the Prime Minister's office organized by the forum.

**The Alimony Fund:** WCLAC participated in one meeting with the board of directors of the Alimony Fund. Topics addressed included; the placement of institutions for the management of the Alimony Fund; approving the budget of 2012 and discussing the budget of 2013. One further meeting occurred, as well as a workshop on the protection of childhood in Yatta in addition to a conference for 31 participants hosted in the Centre for the psychological support team.

**Palestinian Forum for Safe Abortion:** No meetings were held with this coalition this year.



**The Jerusalem Civil Coalition:** WCLAC participated in 3 meetings of this coalition so far this year.

**The National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women and its subcommittees:** WCLAC continues to be member of the coalition however no meetings were held this year.

**The Arab Network for Human Rights and Citizenship Education (ANHRE) Network:** WCLAC participates in this coalition, which works to unify efforts and coordinate between various civil society organisations in the field of human rights, citizenship and education to influence policies and legislation to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights. However no meetings were held with this coalition this year.

**The Palestinian National Coalition on UN Resolution 1325:** No meetings were held with this coalition this year.

### *International Coalitions*

WCLAC is a member of several international groups whose value is in solidarity, sharing information, training opportunities, sharing best practices and spreading advocacy messages.

**SALMA Network:** WCLAC continues to be member of the coalition however no meetings were held this year.

**AISHA Network:** WCLAC continues to be member of the coalition however no meetings were held this year.

**Musawa Coalition (Equality without Reservations):** WCLAC participates in the Musawa Coalition, which works towards removing reservations of CEDAW articles in Arab countries. Member countries include: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, Palestine and Yemen. WCLAC attended a conference and two meetings of the coordinating committee in Cairo. One staff member from WCLAC attended the conference training weekend in Cairo. The training workshop was aimed towards participants under the age of 35 to train them in using social and alternative media in pressuring governments to lift reservations or in some cases to ratify the convention. Therefore the workshops included strategic and practical tools on how to use slogans and messages in campaigns and how to use virtual media such as videos to support campaigns in innovative ways. This training should aid the Centre in its development of a media strategy which builds upon the rich experience of other women activists in other Arab countries.

**JusourNetwork:** This newly formed network is led by the Teacher's Creativity Centre in Ramallah, and focuses on the political participation of women. Member countries include: Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. WCLAC attended two meetings and participated in a three day workshop with the coalition.

**Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN):** WCLAC is a proud member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights network and the Gender Working Group. In 2013 WCLAC participated in a total of 21 meetings with this network, one of which included a 4-day trip to Brussels for a conference with the network, where the Centre published a report on the topic of the consequences on women in violent conflict. An international advocacy fieldworker took part in a regional training course in Tunisia on the protection of women in armed conflict in light of the changes in the Arab world.

## **2.2.2 Increase coverage of women's rights issues in mainstream and social media**

## **2.3 Empower youth volunteer networks to publicise women's rights issues within their communities**

*Build a network of media professionals that support women's rights*

A 3-day workshop (19 hours) was held for 19 young media professionals in their final year of University and young professionals working in the field of media. The aim was to sensitise the workshop participants on women's issues, with specific focus on the phenomena of femicide. Topics included, WCLAC's work and experience in documenting femicide, an extensive legal workshop on the legislative situation in the oPt regarding the issue and was followed by a discussion. The final session was held in coordination with the external media trainer, who built their capacities on the following topics: professional journalistic investigation, press statements, and writing articles for the press. All of these were done with specific focus on reporting femicide cases.

The importance of this workshop lay in giving the participants a base of knowledge for the future, and training them in writing articles on the topic of femicide, which would be published by WCLAC. In this regard, a final follow up workshop was held with the external media consultant which critically discussed the articles set for publication. Each article was presented after which the consultant gave their comments and the participants exchanged thoughts and advice for improvement. A total of 16 articles were published (in Arabic) in a small booklet under the title "The killing of women: between dominant culture and the law". A total of 500 copies were published in November and they were distributed as a tool for WCLAC when conducting awareness raising workshops.

WCLAC attracts significant Arabic language local media coverage and its representatives make frequent appearances on radio and television channels reaching audiences across the Arab region. In 2013, WCLAC continued to be a primary address for media professionals seeking information on topics including: women's rights, violence against women, sexual violence, the Criminal Law, femicide, equality between men and women, women's inheritance rights and the rights of divorced women and widows. **For a full list of WCLAC's media coverage in 2013 please refer to annex J.**

#### *WCLAC Library*

WCLAC continues to archive media coverage of violence against women in Palestine's three main newspapers. The WCLAC library uses the libsys cataloguing system. This year, WCLAC has printed a press archive for 2012 and one of WCLAC's staff participated in a three-day training course in Cairo named "Media Monitoring Analysis of Women's Image in Visual Media" in order to better analyze news coverage. Furthermore, WCLAC recruited a volunteer to help WCLAC staff archive media coverage.

#### *Write and publish materials about women's issues*

WCLAC responded to an article that attacked the feminist movement by writing two public replies in the media. WCLAC also published a number of announcements regarding the Centre's activities in a number of media outlets, newspapers as well as on WCLAC's website and Facebook page. WCLAC published its annual newsletter, which included general news regarding Palestinian women, the Centre, some of the main activities during 2012, as well as publications of the Center completed in 2012.

#### *Electronic media tools*

WCLAC still maintains its English (<http://www.wclac.org/english>) and Arabic (<http://www.wclac.org/arabic.php>) websites and keeps them vibrantly up-to-date with reports, audio-visual materials, and links to interviews with WCLAC staff. The website also publishes testimonies from Palestinian women who tell their own story of how Israeli occupation affects their lives. WCLAC also collates articles and publishes links to stories of

particular interest by other organisations, authors and journalists addressing issues of Israeli violations of Palestinian rights, and its particular impact on women. With regards to social media, WCLAC regularly updates its Facebook, YouTube and Twitter accounts with latest news and information. Other forms of outreach have included maintaining the WCLAC mailing list for news and updates, and a total of 1250 names were added in the first semester of 2013.

WCLAC's volunteers have been working on creating a CD that explains WCLAC's history and activities, and a first draft has been prepared.

### **2.3.1 Form and develop a network of volunteers that advocate for women's rights within Palestinian communities**

WCLAC understands the importance of including young people as volunteers and advocates for women's rights. WCLAC believes that working with volunteers is a cost effective way to change negative attitudes and behavior towards women through building a network of volunteers who learn to identify and condemn negative practices in their own communities. Volunteers are selected from remote areas and through the training and support they receive from WCLAC, are able to have a significant impact in communities that WCLAC might not otherwise reach. For this reason, WCLAC continued to support the activities of 4 volunteer clusters in the remote communities throughout the West Bank.

Overall this is proving to be highly successful, in 2013 at least 12 of WCLAC's volunteers were able to receive employment due to a WCLAC recommendation letter. WCLAC also believes in the importance of targeting male volunteers in its programmes, and indeed the number of male volunteers form approximately one third of our total number of volunteers (120). This volunteer work is greatly facilitated by relations with key stakeholders and partnerships, and 2013 was no exception with over 4 MOUs signed with local community organisations, as well as a total of 91 volunteers received training in partnership with other Palestinian organisations. Indeed the Centre has a team of highly effective and committed volunteers all over the West Bank. One volunteer for example, has been with the Centre over 6 years and now has increased her volunteering with WCLAC to include working on the Centre's emergency helpline.

This year, WCLAC has held 12 meetings with the four clusters (in the remote communities of Jericho, Hebron, Bethlehem and Tulkarem), in order to build the action plan for 2013 and set the groundwork for each cluster. One central meeting was also held with 30 participants from all the four areas where lessons learnt, challenges and success were shared between the participants.

#### *Training and capacity building of volunteers*

In order to build the capacity of volunteer groups in organising community activities, WCLAC held a 3-day training course with a total of 18 training hours, entitled 'Advocacy Skills to Combat Gender-Based Violence'. The workshops were attended by 17 participants from the Hebron and Bethlehem volunteer clusters. The training course produced a plan for a total of three campaigns to promote and protect the rights of women on a regional basis according to the needs of each region. WCLAC conducted a 4-day training course covering 24 training hours with 17 participants, entitled 'participatory leadership for community work to achieve social justice'. The training was based on 4 main topics: the development of self-awareness, participatory leadership, and the leadership skills of community activities.

WCLAC strives to ensure that its volunteer networks receive relevant training by other local and international organisations to improve their skills. A total of 84 volunteers in all the four areas received training with the Women’s media foundation “Tam” on ‘Gender discrimination and communication’. A total of 5 volunteers were nominated to participate in a training course with Al Haq on a training on media and advocacy while using international agreements and legislation. Two volunteers from Tulkarem were also nominated for a training course on legislation regarding violence against women with Juzoor.

### *Community Projects*

The volunteer clusters have been encouraged to develop ideas for community projects with each cluster choosing projects according to their identified community needs. After the needs assessments were completed in Hebron, Tulkarem and Jericho, WCLAC decided to implement community projects in the “Al-Gwen” area near Hebron, “Jaba’a” near Bethelhem, “Akaba” near Tulkarem, and the Jordan Valley area near Jericho. The selection of these areas is particularly significant and each area was selected for particular problematic conditions they are subject to, such as marginalization or social or political isolation.

WCLAC held 12 meetings with the 4 clusters in order to monitor the progress and follow-up activities related to the implementation of the community projects. **For a detailed list, please see Appendix I.**

### **FEATURE: Akaba Village**



Akaba is a small marginalized village near Tulkarem whose lands are threatened by confiscation from the occupation and suffers from a particular lack of services. One of WCLAC’s volunteer clusters decided to begin intervention in this area. The first step began with a needs assessment, which showed a

lack of schools, transport, and health centres. Meetings and coordination then began with the relevant stakeholders, which included the Director of Health, the Director of Culture in the province and other organizations in the area were invited to begin shaping an intervention which takes into consideration the particular needs of women. Simultaneously, the volunteers worked in coordination with media organizations in order to raise awareness on the situations of women in these marginalized areas who are suffering from the settlements and their inhabitants. A visual report was made on WCLAC’s intervention in

these areas, which was aired on major news outlets several times.

Some of the major successes of this intervention include; the Health Director for the region has agreed to prepare a room in the village as a clinic for reproductive health and vaccinations for children. WCLAC also prepared a room in the village hall for women, where meetings and trainings can occur. The Centre will now WCLAC now follows up this successful action to ensure that the governorate continues to provide more services to this area that take into account the specific needs of women.

### *Awareness-Raising*

The volunteer network has an amazing role to play in organizing and – now that the volunteers have been trained by WCLAC over several years- in leading awareness-raising workshops. Several of the events marked International Women’s day on the 8th of March and others more generally on issues related to women’s rights. The volunteer clusters held a total of 79 activities and reached over 602 people. **For a detailed list, please see Appendix H.**

In order to ensure the high quality of the awareness raising activities carried out by the volunteer clusters, the Centre accompanied the volunteers in 8 awareness raising activities. One of the sessions was on the topic of early marriage and polygamy, a total of 13 young men and women from the village attended. Such accompaniment is important as WCLAC is able to share its extensive experience in offering awareness-raising sessions to the volunteers by offering them feedback on ways to improve.

### *Facilitating the creation of a network of local community organisations*

WCLAC has held many meetings with the volunteers and has worked over the years to encourage the volunteer clusters to initiate and maintain partnerships with local community based groups, NGOs and various authorities. WCLAC has encouraged volunteers to work with like-minded local partners in order to develop a network of community supporters who are committed to protecting and supporting women’s rights. An additional benefit of these partnerships is that volunteers are able to reduce the costs of their activities by finding local support and community contributions, for example, such as meeting rooms and equipment or catering. In 2013, WCLAC held 4 meetings with the various organisations such as, the Women's Media Foundation “Tam”, the “Wings of Hope” Foundation on their domestic violence project, the Directorate of Culture in Tulkarem in order to build a plan of action for promoting women’s rights in the province. Furthermore, in Jericho, WCLAC held a meeting with the Prisoners' Club and Al-Quds Open University in order to explore the possibility of cooperating together to facilitate the volunteers in the implementation of community activities.

WCLAC has also worked with the volunteer groups to draft and sign 4 MOU's with local community organisations such as; the YMCA, Al-Quds Open University, and the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR). Furthermore, WCLAC has signed a partnership agreement with the (YMCA) to work within a psychological support team with two WCLAC volunteers.

## **2.4 Advocate for Palestinian women living under the Israeli occupation**

### **2.4.1 Highlight the impact of Israel's human rights violations on Palestinian women**

It has been WCLAC's aim to highlight the impact of Israel's human rights violations on Palestinian women. In order to achieve this, 77 testimonies of women's experiences were gathered, covering East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank. The statements are at different stages of being finalized; 63 of these have been transformed into advocacy tools called 'Women's Voices' and put on the WCLAC website by the International Advocacy team.

<sup>35</sup>Each statement is accompanied by a photograph of the woman. A total of three electronic bulletins were issued and distributed electronically, along with 12 public statements.

The WCLAC coordinator participated in five international trips abroad, during one of which they presented a paper at the American Association of Psychologists in New York. The paper highlighted the impact of night raids and child arrests on women, and was produced in collaboration with an American psychoanalyst.

WCLAC aims to target specific international advocacy targets while using international mechanisms. In this regard, the project coordinator participated in a meeting organized by UN women and the CEDAW Committee in Amman. The purpose of the meeting was to draft a general statement on women in armed conflict which could be submitted to both the CEDAW Convention the 57th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York. The theme for this year was "Elimination and Prevention of all forms of Violence against Women and Girls".

Additionally, a complaint was submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. The report focused on the effect of Israeli settler violence on Palestinian women living in remote communities in the West Bank. The submission was timed to mark the six-month anniversary since the UN published a report on the impact of Israeli settlements on the rights of Palestinians living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The UN Report concluded, *inter alia*, that: "*The establishment of the settlements in the West Bank including East Jerusalem is a mesh of construction and infrastructure leading to a creeping annexation that prevents the establishment of a contiguous and viable Palestinian State and undermines the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination ... The existence of the settlements has had a heavy toll on the rights of the Palestinians. Their rights to freedom of self-determination, non-discrimination, freedom of movement, equality, due process, fair trial, not to be arbitrarily detained, liberty and security of person, freedom of expression, freedom to access places of worship, education, water, housing, adequate standard of living, property, access to natural resources and effective remedy are being violated consistently and on a daily basis.*"<sup>36</sup>

The coordinator also presented a paper at a UN conference in Addis Ababa on the inalienable rights of Palestinian people, and participated in a delegation of human rights activists who met with US State Department Officials to discuss and offer comment on the State Department's Human Rights Report for 2012.

A total of 48 targeted advocacy field trips and meetings were conducted with Parliamentarians, foreign politicians, diplomats, media professionals, human rights advocates, donors, representatives of international human rights organizations, international university students, and members of churches. WCLAC took delegates to affected areas—for example, Silwan, Nabi Saleh, Old City of Hebron, Beit Omar, Jordan Vally, etc.—to meet with women whose stories have been documented by WCLAC, and with

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<sup>35</sup><http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1235>

<sup>36</sup>

whom WCLAC is working to empower so that they become advocates for their own cause.

WCLAC has worked on a report entitled 'Jerusalem: Past, Present and Future', which will be released in 2014. The Centre's online work has included maintaining a bulletin and stream of public statements, both of which are posted on our organisation's Facebook and Twitter pages. WCLAC's pool of online followers have also been steadily increasing.

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### **2.4.2 Build the capacity of local human rights activists to advocate on behalf of Palestinian women**

WCLAC gives on-going coaching and accompaniment to a team of field workers finding and documenting particular cases of Israeli rights violations against Palestinian women.

WCLAC's programme coordinator accompanied the field workers on 9 field visits with the aim of giving them intense on-the-job training to improve their ability to document and write statements. Women were also given some general guidelines on how to present to visiting delegations with the aim of improving their communication skills. This allows the women to become advocates who can confidently speak about their experiences. WCLAC's programmes are designed to empower women so that instead of remaining victims, they become agents of change in their own lives and in the lives of their communities.

The team has also expanded with a young Palestinian woman joining the team on a part-time basis.

## **Strategic goal 3: Develop institutional and human capacity in order to ensure the sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of WCLAC.**

### **3.1 Enhance the efficiency of WCLAC's internal operations**

#### **3.1.1 Improve WCLAC's internal policies, procedures and practices**

Three meetings were held with the senior management of WCLAC to review the organizational structure of the Centre. Another meeting was held with one of the board members with expertise in management on this topic where it is expected to have the new organizational structure approved by the beginning of the New Year. During the meeting the following policies and procedures were discussed and improved: a final draft of the staff evaluation system was completed which was trialed on most of the staff in the first semester, WCLAC will implement this reformulation in 2014. Several meetings took place this year with the senior management regarding revision to the organisation's incentives policy and other organisations have been contacted for consultation and a first draft has been prepared for review.

In order to improve the financial manual and to create a procurement manual, WCLAC hired an external consultant from an audit firm. The comprehensive reviewed draft was then discussed internally with the Centre's procurement officer and accountant and has been presented to the board for approval.

Staff by-laws were drafted and discussed by the senior staff. Afterwards they were sent to WCLAC's legal advisor, to ensure the by-laws are in line with Palestinian law and are pending approval by the BoD.

### **3.1.2 Enhance WCLAC's programme and information management systems**

*Expand the use of electronic and hard-copy information management systems organisation-wide*

WCLAC's Service Unit has been using the MIS system for several years now, however WCLAC aims to expand the use of MIS to all programmes. This year, all of WCLAC's strategic and action plans have been inserted into MIS and written instructions were made for staff. The Centre faced some challenges in this regard but recruited a full-time IT officer at the beginning of the year. Feedback was collected from staff after a presentation to them by the IT consultant and WCLAC's IT officer. The Centre established a committee consisting of programme staff, the General Director, the librarian, and the IT officer in order to follow up the Centre's current archiving mechanism.

The Service Unit now enters data into MIS with a view to maintaining files in a structured and easily analysed way. The Service Unit requested adjustments to their questionnaire. For this, MIS needs to be adapted so WCLAC contracted a software company to implement this and it was completed in the second half of 2013.

*Evaluations of WCLAC*

The Palestinian Association for Empowerment and Local Development (Reform) evaluated WCLAC's awareness-raising programmes. The evaluation was very positive and included good results and strong recommendations that are already being taken into account in the programme implementation.

United Nations Association of International Service (UNAIS) conducted an organisational self-assessment in WCLAC with most of the staff from various levels and units participating. The assessment took two days in total, which highlighted areas of improvement for the Centre such as human resources, fundraising diversification and archiving system.

*Develop WCLAC's strategic plan (2013-2015), budget and annual work plans and administrative reports*

WCLAC's board met 8 times this year and the General Assembly met twice. WCLAC invited and contacted 15 new individuals to be members of the General Assembly, bringing the total number of members to 35. WCLAC prepared and distributed an annual financial and narrative report for 2012, as well as a semi-annual report for 2013. Reports were also prepared for individual funders as required. In 2013, over 15 special reports were prepared.

*WCLAC's library*

WCLAC's library facilities are being improved, with media reports about VAW by Israelis as well as from within the Palestinian community being systematically archived, and with the Libsys library cataloguing system is now installed and two staff members having been trained on how to enter data and use the system.



During 2013, 158 people visited WCLAC's Ramallah library and 35 people used the Hebron library. The library offers access to a range of English and Arabic-language publications, which includes reports by NGOs, as well as published books on gender issues in Palestine, with topics including feminism, and gender and violence more generally. In 2013, WCLAC entered and classified 120 books on the library program (Libsys), WCLAC has also made a monthly list of books and materials obtained by the library, which has been circulated to the staff.

### **3.2 Empower WCLAC staff to excel personally and professionally**

#### **3.2.1 Implement training for staff and develop working practices which meet staff needs**

##### *Training for Staff*

The Service Unit undertook a training at Birzeit University on the topic of advocacy and media. It included training on how to speak to media outlets, and how to write articles and press releases. The training was one week in total, with some staff returning for a further two weeks in a personal capacity. WCLAC's staff participated in a three-day training course in Cairo named 'Media Monitoring Analysis of Women's Image in Visual Media' in order to better analyze news coverage, as well as the Musawa Coalition conference (Equality without Reservations) in Egypt. WCLAC staff also participated in a workshop on 'mechanisms against domestic violence'.

##### *Staff performance evaluations*

WCLAC values its healthy working environment and with this in mind new evaluation forms have been created for WCLAC staff. In the previous evaluation system all the heads of units evaluated their own staff, while the senior management evaluated the heads of units. This system was felt to be unsatisfactory by WCLAC staff and did not suit all the employees. Therefore, a new staff performance evaluation system was implemented which is more suited to the specific job description of the employee. However, WCLAC still maintains its principle that each employee was and should be individually evaluated.

#### **3.2.2 Promote critical thinking about women's rights discourse amongst WCLAC staff**

WCLAC aspires for all its staff to be able articulate and discuss important principles in women's rights discourse. Furthermore it hopes that an increased understanding of women's rights issues will improve WCLAC staff's ability incorporate feminist principles into their work. WCLAC ensures that cases related to human rights are always put to discussion in staff meetings. In this year, discussions were held on the history of the women's movement in Palestine and its vision. Additionally, in the WCLAC staff bulletin, four articles were written that aim to spread feminist ideas and that empower Palestinian women.

#### **3.2.3 Contribute to WCLAC's positive working environment**

WCLAC believes that a positive working environment will result in more employees expressing satisfaction with their jobs, meaning a lower staff turnover rate and ultimately a better, and more consistent service delivery by WCLAC. An annual team-building event was held at the beginning of the year for all staff. This year, WCLAC has developed and

distributed an internal staff bulletin highlighting aspects of good work and areas of organisational excellence. The bulletin allows staff to write articles on new developments within the work of the Centre or on women's issues in general. Also a policy of recognition for outstanding staff is being planned for implementation through the Centre's new incentives policy.

### **3.3 Improve WCLAC's financial sustainability**

#### **3.3.1 Maintain a diversity of funding resources**

In order to maintain all current relations with WCLAC's donors and to keep them engaged in our activities, the external relations unit maintains communication with partners and donors through mailing lists, bulletins, and success stories. WCLAC continues to organise and accompany our donors on field visits to our programmes. It also continues to provide specialised, tailored reports for project orientated donors. In 2013, 11 special reports have been prepared. This has significantly increased the workload on WCLAC, with some of the reports being administratively quite heavy. Despite this, donor feedback remains very positive, and WCLAC is able to cope with the new requirements and deliver high quality reports on time. WCLAC also held its annual donor consortium meeting at its Ramallah offices, and accompanied donors in a total of 5 field visits throughout the year.

#### *Develop and diversify relations with new donors*

WCLAC has worked to diversify our sources of funding on the local, regional and international level in order to cope with the many of the challenges WCLAC has been facing since the last financial crisis. The challenges include the fact that there is now much less funding being available, more competition to access said funding, less core funding being available and a strong shift in donors policies towards special projects instead of programme funding.

This is a huge obstacle for the external relations units as it faces difficulties in fundraising for core funding and thus is forced into fragmenting WCLAC's strategy into special projects. This comes with a whole set of other consequences, with some parts of WCLAC's core not being covered and the organisational structure of WCLAC (for example in terms of staffing) being continuously challenged. WCLAC has taken several measures to limit some of the negative impact of special projects funding by trying to submit proposals that include core costs and current staff but this remains a challenge.

Despite these challenges however, WCLAC has been successful in developing new funding opportunities. One positive development is that WCLAC has started to target more Arab funding. WCLAC has also joined Donor Direct Action (DDA), which is a platform where private individuals or organizations can donate online towards WCLAC activities. This is very new and has so far shown to be quite effective (with 7425 USD raised in 2013). The link 'donate' to DDA is now available on the WCLAC website. Finally, WCLAC is proud to receive very positive feedback on the quality of its proposals, and still enjoys a good reputation as a women's organisation in Palestine. WCLAC is still able to attract new funders and despite the situation acquiring a few new core funders with two new core funders for 2013.

WCLAC has maintained close relations with the following financial supporters and international project partners – some of which have involved ongoing funding partnerships and others smaller joint project work or simply discussions of prospective partnerships:

- Open Society Institute

- Caritas Switzerland
- Dan Church Aid
- The Representative Office of Norway
- Bread of the World
- German Representative Office
- Oxfam Novib
- NDC-HR GG Secretariat
- BroderlijkDelen
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Iceland
- EU/Oxfam Novib: East Jerusalem Project
- OSI MENA: IHL Documentation Project
- Oxfam Novib/ SIDA: Transformative leadership Project
- DCA – EU: Inheritance Rights
- Open Society Institute, co-funded by UNDP

This list does not include all the potential donors and project partners with which WCLAC maintains periodic contact with a view to information sharing or possible future partnerships.

#### *Expand WCLAC's income generating activities*

WCLAC is constantly looking to expand its sustainability and to find alternative sources of income. WCLAC's resource centre Dar Makhoulf, in BeitJala (near Bethlehem), has now receives overnight visitors and continues to host events both led by WCLAC or by other groups sharing WCLAC's vision who need a large meeting space. Groups and individuals who use the Centre are asked to make a financial contribution to WCLAC, which adds essential diversity to WCLAC's sources of revenue.

Additionally, WCLAC's meeting rooms in Ramallah have frequently been used by WCLAC to host coalition meetings or large meetings with working groups or by student groups learning about women's rights. The rooms have also been used frequently by other NGO's, making a significant contribution to the diversification of WCLAC's funding streams.

WCLAC was asked to offer a training to Juzoor for Health and Social development, training regarding the referral system and gender. Training took place in the Centre, North and South of the West Bank.