

KURVE Documentations No. 3 - 2009

Contents



Critical questioning
of everyday habits

*Training as a means of initiating
processes of change*

*Insights gained from
a Civil Peace Service project in Palestine*

1.	Preface	3
2.	Outline	4
3.	Introduction	4
4.	Framework conditions	6
5.	The project	8
	<i>Project approach</i>	8
	<i>Project implementation</i>	8
6.	Training work	10
	<i>Training activities</i>	10
	<i>Training approach</i>	11
	<i>ChartTraining</i>	12
	<i>Training contents</i>	15
	<i>Gender</i>	15
	<i>Nonviolent conflict transformation</i>	18
	<i>Further training contents</i>	20
7.	Lessons learned from the training work	22
	<i>Project design</i>	22
	<i>Establishment of framework conditions</i>	23
	<i>Training implementation</i>	24
	<i>Values and attitudes</i>	26
8.	Conclusion	30
9.	Bibliography	32
10.	About the authors	33
	Imprint	34

In Palestine, hotels are rarely booked by business or holiday travellers, but often for workshops and trainings. Trainings are a product that international cooperation organisations much like to sell. Most probably they are the 'best-seller' among the non-material products, a typical commodity.

The training process reflected and documented in the present field report contrasts favourably to these standard concepts. It is a piece of hand-crafted, tailor-made work. That is why it is so special.

Trainings are not an end in themselves, but always just a means to achieve an end. In civil conflict transformation, this end is a process of social change. Only if trainings are not transacted as a non-recurring event, but are understood to be a process to be implemented carefully and precisely in such a change process, there is a high probability that they will be effective. 'Effective' means here that they support and promote the change process.

This field report describes how an effective training process can be set up, what has to be considered, where the limitations are, and how to deal with many other problems. The documented project focused on the work with women in rural areas of Palestine. However, the experiences gained are also valuable and essential for many other contexts, even beyond the Palestine borders. We would like to warmly recommend its reading at least to all those who work with training processes within the framework of the BMZ instrument „Civil Peace Service“.

What becomes apparent, too, when reading this report is that the trainers Rimonda Mansour and Ulrike Ramlow have followed the Tavistock tradition (which has been somewhat forgotten, though unjustifiedly) in that they skilfully combined the systemic approach with the analytical, group dynamic one though these are often opposed to each other.

The text contains references to this approach repeatedly, including hidden, further knowledge and experiences to be discovered. Therefore, giving an insider tip to all our 'trainer colleagues' in the CPS, we recommend to contact the two trainers directly.

Dirk Sprenger

2. Outline

In the framework of a five years' project of Civil Peace Service in Palestine, training was used as a possible means to empower women and to expand their space for social and political action.

The cross-project insights from the project work are as follows:

- Quality takes priority over quantity: To give profound training to a group of multipliers, but also to monitor them in the implementation of their work (transfer) has proven to be particularly sustainable.
- Besides the communication of contents and skills, it is essential for the training process to work with group dynamics so that learning processes of the group can be put into the larger context of the desired social changes. For this, it is favourable to offer long-term training programmes of several modules and also follow-up workshops.
- Training is only one of several possible ways, but not a means in itself. It can best make a contribution to social changes if it is combined with other measures (creation of interfaces).

3. Introduction

The concern

From December 2003 to November 2008, **KURVE Wustrow; Centre for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action** (www.kurvewustrow.org) and the **Union of Palestinian Women Committees** (www.upwc.org.ps) cooperated in a project of Civil Peace Service with the objective to empower women coming mainly from rural areas, to establish decentralised training structures at grassroots level, and to set up and network a group of trainers. Seen in a larger context, this measure was intended to make a contribution to *„expand women's leeway of political, social, and/or cultural action and to contribute to gender equalisation and the development of democratic structures“*.¹

The present documentation deals with an important part of the project, namely the training programmes for the training of trainers with a focus on conflict transformation and gender.

In the following, other fields of work that were relevant for the project work, like project management and the monitoring of organisation development processes, are sketched only if they are necessary for the understanding of the training work as the whole project has already been surveyed in two external evaluations;² a coherent investigation of the training activities, however, has not yet been conducted.

It is the objective of this documentation to record the training approach and implementation and to reflect about the effects achieved, and to sum up the insights gained from this (lessons learned).

The following questions will be addressed:

- To what extent can the conduction of training measures contribute to the desired changes?
- In which way can individual learning and change processes have an impact from the concrete training work on society?
- Which are the factors that support this work?
- In what way can sustainability be ensured?

Our insights are mainly based on the experiences made in the training work in connection with Palestine. Yet I think that some of the results can certainly be transferred to comparable training projects in other regions which, by the empowerment³ of groups less powerful in society, render a contribution to social change processes.

This documentation is based on evaluations and reflections of the trainer team (Ulrike Ramlow and Rimonda Mansour⁴), a series of internal evaluations of the training programmes, and the evaluations as mentioned above.

It was instructive and motivating for us, the trainers, and for the participants to reflect about what we have achieved together. Therefore we hope that the reviewing of our work will also be motivating and useful for others campaigning for social changes.

Structure of the documentation

First the framework conditions of the project work are described; next the approach and implementation are explained. In chapter 6, the concrete training work with its activities, approach and contents are described in more detail, and in chapter 7 the lessons learned from the training work are specified. In conclusion, the training processes are reviewed again in the context of the overall project.

The cooperation partners

The **Union of Palestinian Women Committees (UPWC)** was established in 1980. It defines itself to be a progressive women's organisation with a secular orientation, working mainly at grassroots level in the rural areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It seeks to improve gender equalisation and the development of a free, equitable and democratic society in Palestine. Its activities include measures of vocational training and income generation, lobbying for women's rights, counselling and health care, the awarding of grants, and the support of families in need.

Its about 4,000 members are organised in over 100 local and 12 regional committees in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with its head office in Ramallah where seven employees work. Regional work is developed in the committees and monitored by the competent coordinators.

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KURVE Wustrow, Centre for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action, was established in 1980 with the objective to contribute to a development where the concern about armed conflicts, the destruction of the environment and social injustice can be transformed into rational, nonviolent action. To share their insights gained and to learn from other experiences, KURVE Wustrow have conducted cooperation projects together with partner organisations in conflict areas abroad since 1999. Within the scope of projects of Civil Peace Service, the partners cooperate with the peace experts seconded by KURVE Wustrow in developing concepts for long-term peace work with a bottom-up approach, for example by the building of trainer pools and training structures for nonviolent conflict transformation, the combination of mediation and traditional methods of dispute resolution, or supporting the networking of local initiatives. www.kurvewustrow.org

1 - Cf. project proposal from March 2001.

2 - Dittli, Roland: „Mid-term Review des ZFD-Projekts“, April 2006; Jasser, Saed Dr.: Evaluation „Empowering women to contribute to building a just, equal, and democratic society“, August 2008. Available from info@kurviewustrow.org

3 - Empowerment is about strengthening the power of an individual or a collective to become enabled to carry out activities and shape processes by their own efforts. Thus power, in this context, means options for action an individual or collective will have in reality. This is not a matter of power as an instrument of power over others. Following this logic, empowerment cannot be decreed from top to bottom. Cf. „Focus on Gender and Peace Building“, March 2004, cfd, Schweizer Direktion für Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit.

4 - Rimonda Mansour worked as a freelancing trainer in the CPS project from the beginning of 2005 to mid-2008.

4. Framework conditions

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the prolonged, highly escalated conflicts about identity and land. The conflict is characterized by a considerable asymmetry of powers in favour of Israel. Since 1967, the Palestinian areas have been occupied by Israel's armed forces. Annexions of land, Jewish settlements, and a system of Israeli border posts have led to a splitting-up of the area of Palestine. Relevant structures are under the control of Israel, for example the means of transport within the areas and to the outside, the civil register (births, residence), infrastructural measures, and the goods traffic.

From this background, the following framework conditions resulted for the project work in Palestine: Occupation means severe restrictions of movement in the Palestinian areas, long drives, sometimes also searches during the night and arrests, administrative detentions without a hearing or trial, destructions of houses, the separation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. People are daily confronted with violence – not only directly and physically, but also with structural and cultural violence. The building of the Wall has led to the situation that it is practically no longer possible for Palestinians to go to Israel

or for Israelis to go to Palestine. This means that the possibilities of cross-border encounters of civilians are very limited. In addition there are the inner-Palestinian conflicts between Hamas and Fatah that have been increasingly violent in the last years and, in summer 2008, resulted in not only a spatial, but also a complete political division of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. On the whole, the economic, political, and social life perspectives of the people living there have worsened considerably since the beginning of the second Intifada (September 2000).⁵

Particularly girls and women are affected by the situation. It seems that, in times of a crisis, the process of identity formation is more and more backward-looking, taking recourse to tradition. There are indications that incidents of domestic violence (against children and women) are increasing; the same holds true for the tendency to marry girls at a young age (early marriage), and also the so-called honour killings are growing in number.⁶ Concepts like honour and also religious precepts are of a higher relevance for everyday life than only 10 or 15 years ago. For example, for the women living in rural areas it has become more difficult not to wear a headscarf because of the increased social pressure. The poor economic situation leads to the disadvantage of young women: If the parents cannot raise the university fees for several children, it is mostly the daughters who are affected; if there are checkpoints on the way to school, it is the girls who are first taken from school for fear of – sexual – insults and the loss of honour of the whole family. Because of the many checkpoints and the detours caused by the building of the Wall, medical care for pregnant women and for infants is poor.⁷

However, every situation has two faces, no matter how difficult it may be. This is highlighted by a study of the Gender Studies Institute of Birzeit University: *„Different examples indicate that practices and indicators that cause women's disempowerment like the Wall, or closure policy, or unemployment of breadwinners, there is another side of the coin where the same practices create coping and survival strategies that empower women and maintain their inevitable role in sustaining the community and households. There is a dialectic relationship between empowerment and disempowerment which is projected in the Palestinian context under colonial occupation“*.⁸

For the project work this means that, on one hand, women's opportunities to pursue their needs of further education offers may be limited by existential problems. On the other hand, the context is highly disconcerting and frustrating, but at the same time requires a high degree of willingness to change so as to cope with the increasingly worsening life conditions.



5 - Cf. Economic and social repercussion of Israeli Occupation, Report by the Economic and Social Council. General Assembly of the United Nations. May 2007 A/62/75-E/2007/13

6 - Cf. „Palestinian Women's Health During the Second Intifada. Some Facts and Figures“, April 2005. Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, Jerusalem & Human Right Watch Report 2006 & Ruggi, Suzanne: „Commodifying Honor in Female Sexuality: Honor Killing in Palestine“, in: Middle East Report

7 - Cf. for example: UN study: „Palestinian Women hard hit by Israeli Occupation“, Thalif Deen, February 5, 2004. http://www.ifamericansknew.org/cur_sit/women.html

8 - Abu Nahleh, Lamis; Nasser, Randa; Kuttab, Eileen: „Palestinian Women's Empowerment: An Assessment. A Study for UNESCO“, Women Studies Institute. Birzeit University, Palestine, March 2006, p.12

5. The project

The superordinate objective of the CPS project was the empowerment of the Palestinian civil society. The approach of conflict transformation taken as a basis here involves the empowerment of the weaker conflict partner in an asymmetric conflict. The better power relations between the conflict parties are balanced, the more the chances of successful negotiations and sustainable peace increase.

The project took the empowerment of women and the expansion of their possibilities to actively shape a free, democratic and equal society as its starting point. In Palestine, women are also structurally disadvantaged; for example, they are not legally equated with men. However, if they are equally involved in the building of societal structures, political decision-making processes and peace negotiations, there will be better chances of finding a sustainable solution of internal conflicts and of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The project started from grassroots level in the rural areas of Palestine (West Bank⁹). Training measures were conducted in cooperation with the other UPWC programmes. Especially those population strata and areas were involved where comparatively few measures are offered, but the effects of the occupation are particularly strongly felt.

9 - In the first two years of the project (2003 to 2005) we also cooperated with the UPWC committee in the Gaza Strip. Deplorably, this work could not be continued in the project extension period (2005 to 2008) because of the escalating political situation and the limited staff capacities of the CPS project. This was regrettable, as it is exactly the Gaza Strip where demand is high, but there are far fewer programmes on offer than in the West Bank because of the political situation.

Project implementation

In the frame of the project, trainers were trained about the subjects gender and conflict transformation in two intensive training cycles. In addition, further training measures in project management skills were conducted for employees of the partner organisation. Furthermore, we organised inter-national seminars in Germany, France, and Palestine in cooperation

with other organisations and trainers. Moreover, workshops on strategy development, on working with videos, concept development for leadership programmes, and working with volunteers were offered.

In the years 2005 and 2006, 25 women and men¹⁰ were trained in the programmes for trainers. They started already during the training and under supervision to conduct programmes about subjects like gender, management, communication, coping with violence, project management, education of children and adolescents, health care, and further trainings for trainers mostly in rural communities.

On the whole, over 800 adolescents and women, mainly from the rural areas of the West Bank, were reached by the programmes during the period from 2005 to 2008.

The basis for the implementation of the training programmes was that UPWC had identified needs of further training in their network. At first, ideas with respect to contents and volume were rather vague. Besides the further training of women, UPWC also hoped for an activation and expansion of their membership.

It can be stated that the majority of women of UPWC were very open for the seminar offers. This may be connected with the fact that some of them had not been able to continue their school or university educations, which they deplored. What is more, women in rural areas are offered much less further education than women in towns or cities. Certainly it was additionally motivating that this offer was made by the 'own' organisation. This opened up opportunities for regular meetings and a continuing exchange by which the internal network was strengthened; this had been impossible in the previous years because of the limited freedom of movement and the high travel expenses. The involvement of men in the training programmes was expressly requested by UPWC and the women participating as it was assumed that sustainable change can only be brought about by the joint commitment of women and men. Furthermore, the seminars were welcomed as a chance to exchange experiences and to learn more about the life realities and life plans of others. Such opportunities are very rare outside the families.



The following steps were relevant for the project implementation:

- Announcement of the project, initial short 'taster' trainings, getting to know each other, trust building and needs assessment.
- Transfer of the training work – requirement of structures: The structure provided by UPWC involved the trainees in the work of the respective regional UPWC committees from the start. This was a great chance and

excellent condition for the transfer and connection of the training with other UPWC programmes (sustainability).

- Implementation of the Training for Trainers and a cycle of other training programmes for women, adolescents and UPWC employees.
- Regular feedback loops and evaluations to meet the present needs in the best possible way and to facilitate mutual learning processes.
- Support of the transfer of what was learned: This included regular planning and reflection workshops, counselling of the preparation of training plans, training visits and feedback, and advanced level training offers.
- Support of the development of a training unit: establishment of structural conditions for continuing the training programmes following the end of the project (sustainability).

At the beginning of 2009, the training group comprised 30 trainers (community trainers) with a completed further training. In our estimation, twelve of them are capable of conducting training measures on their own. They constitute the core of the group and conduct programmes in the communities in cooperation with the Community Trainers.

Selection of subjects

To establish the 'need' for definite subjects proved to be a comparatively difficult task. In view of the political and economic situation, most participants favoured income generating measures or vocational training programmes.

What training for trainers is about and what trainers do was less known, however. In agreement with UPWC we decided to offer training programmes on gender and constructive conflict management. Gender was expressly requested by the organisation. Constructive conflict management makes sense in connection with changes that often occur alongside conflicts. When this subject was suggested, reactions were quite restrained, as it did not mean anything to many of those present. Possibly it was also feared that there might be a tendency to the following approach: Some foreigners are coming along here who will know everything better and tell us how to deal with the Israelis.

10 - In the first course in 2005, fourteen women and two men were trained in altogether 26 training days (eight modules). The advanced course in 2006 was attended by eleven women and three men. It comprised 18 training days in six modules. Five of the women participated in both the courses.

6. Training work

Training activities

In the frame of the project, different trainings and workshops were conducted, focusing mainly on two intensive training cycles about training for trainers: a basic training about gender and constructive conflict management and an

advanced training programme about constructive conflict management. It was our aim, also in terms of sustainability, to set up a group of trainers who would be capable to independently develop training programmes and implement them. Twenty women and five men from different places of the West Bank participated in these two training programmes, which took place at a central location, Ramallah or Bethlehem, for three days each. We offered parallel workshops on the planning and monitoring of training measures. After conclusion of the intensive training cycles, six workshops (of one and a half day each) based on these cycles were offered for the monitoring of the trainers at their work and also two intensive trainings about conflict transformation and gender. In addition, 19 coordinators of UPWC participated in a further training measure on project management skills.¹¹ What is more, workshops on reflecting about leadership concepts and working with volunteers were offered. Furthermore we conducted several international encounters with partner organisations from France, Algeria and Germany on subjects like conflict transformation in a cross-cultural context and working with videos as a method of youth work, which took place within the frame of the project, but with external funding. These inter-national seminars were not only an opportunity of learning about other life realities, but also of experiencing oneself in the exchange with foreign cultures from a different and new perspective. These cross-cultural learning processes support skills like perspective-taking and also the ability of empathy which, in conflict transformation, is just as relevant. One's own ideas and attitudes could be reviewed in the encounter with people with other life contexts and led to enriching reflections (please refer to "lessons learned – values and attitudes"). Moreover, for most of the attendees the participation in these programmes was the only chance to travel out of the country, which was highly motivating especially for the volunteers.

11 - The programme included six modules about the subject 'project management'. They were funded by the German Fund for Palestinian NGOs. As to information on the German Fund for Palestinian NGOs, cf. <http://www.gtz.de/de/weltweit/maghreb-naher-osten/palaestinisensische-gebiete/9874.htm>

Training approach

In the frame of the project, training was used as one of several possible means for the empowerment of women. We understand empowerment to be „(...) a complex, dynamic process enlarging women's collective and individual skills and also their room for manoeuvre.“ This implies the „(...) strengthening of awareness and of the confidence into one's own abilities, the reflection of positions and attitudes in society, and how to change them“.¹² This means a process that is about the dismantling of power relations and discrimination, involving individual and collective processes of change as well as structural elements of society.

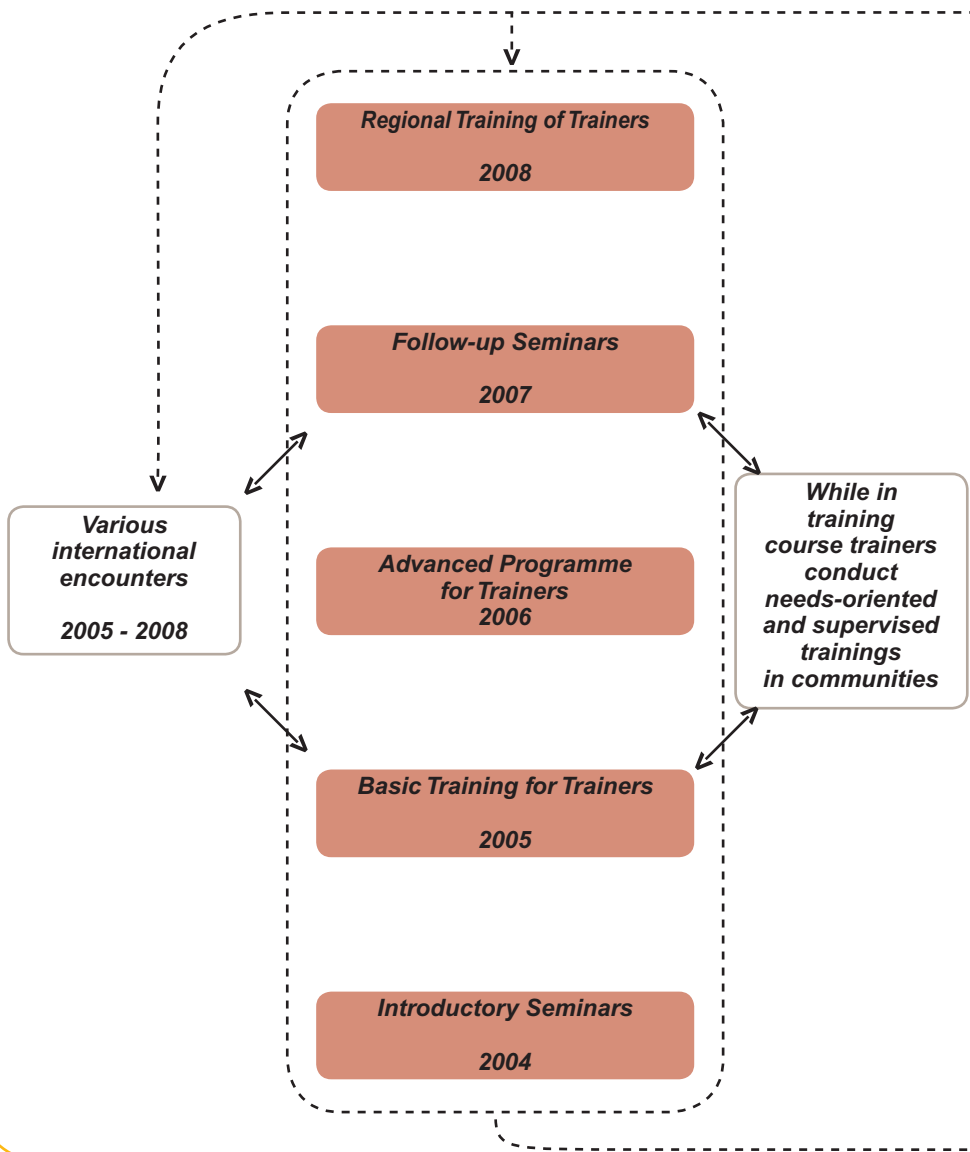
International Programmes



CPS-Training Programmes

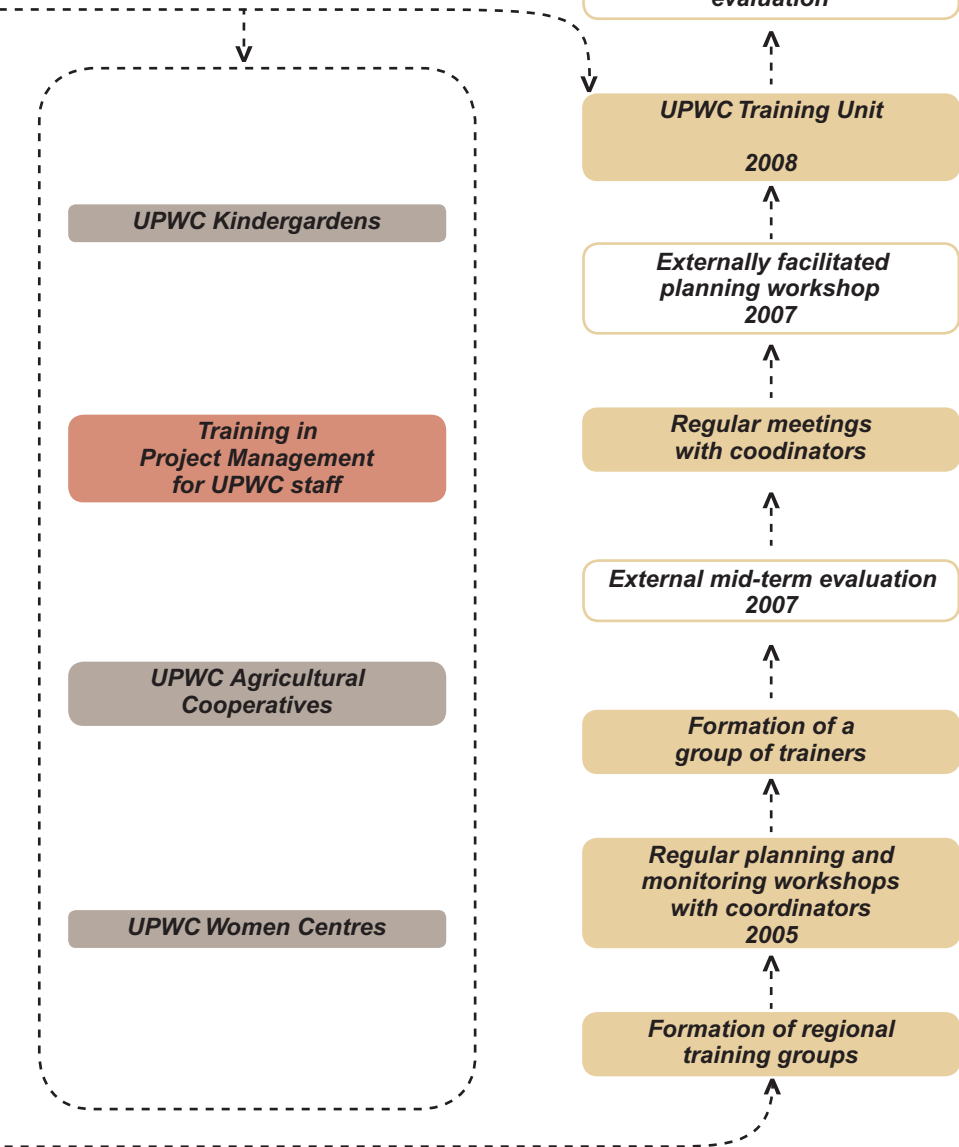


Other Training





Programmes



Our approach to the training work

We, the trainers, understand training to be an opportunity to empower the participants and to transfer skills and knowledge to them so that they will be able to contribute constructively to processes of change in society. We start out from the assumption that training work can contribute to the desired changes particularly if the training process allows for a reviewing and, if necessary, a change of one's own ideas and attitudes. This implies for us to work especially with group dynamics and to enable the participants not only to contribute with their own experiences, but also to experience new situations. According to our own experiences, the linking of the three levels of learning – emotions, behaviour, and intellect – is important when questioning patterns of behaviour that have been learned early, like one's own conflict behaviour and acquired gender roles, but also patterns of meaning widely spread in society.

Such a process of reviewing needs time. Thus it was important for us to monitor it with supervision and advanced level trainings. We directed our awareness to changes that are seemingly 'small': Where does every individual position her- or himself in relation to the discussed subjects? What changes are desired, and how are they reflected in everyday life? What are the roles that individuals are able and wish to play in these processes?

Beyond the level of practical training work, it was also important for us to consider the structural project level, which means posing the question, what ought to be done so that the project, which should not remain a singular event but have effects beyond

individual processes, contributes to the further development of UPWC and to social change.

In view of this aspect it was a huge advantage that the CPS project offered an opportunity of long-term cooperation on various levels.

The time frame of the project enabled us to monitor the transfer into the communities.

The budget provided us with the necessary financial planning reliability. The double

function as a trainer, on one hand, and a project manager on the other hand, was

another advantage here, as the project management facilitated interventions on the

level of the work processes and the UPWC

structure.¹³ Certainly his constructive interlinking of different levels of intervention contributed substantially to the fact that the project work can be continued after the project ends.



12 - Cf. Focus on gender and peacebuilding, 3/04. Empowerment, Gender and Peacebuilding. Christlicher Friedensdienst

13 - In this context, there were feedback rounds, internal and external evaluations, joint planning workshops, counselling during organisation development processes, and workshops on the acquisition of funds.

In the following I will discuss in essence the two intensive training programmes because they constituted the main focus of the CPS training work with regard to contents.

These two measures were long-term training programmes for trainers on the subjects of gender, constructive conflict management, and training skills.

What the three main focuses have in common is the idea to contribute to processes of change in society: gender-oriented work aims at bringing about a fairer distribution of social chances and power relations between men and women. Constructive conflict management involves the transformation of an initial situation felt to be impeding to a situation deemed to be satisfactory by the conflicting parties. Training work may be used to initiate and to monitor these change processes.

One could observe that, initially, it provoked irritations and fears from the participants to realize that work would focus on the challenging and changing of one's own attitudes and behaviour patterns. The exchange about this problem was an important factor in the training in order to find one's own position and to be able to assume the function as a 'change agent'.

Gender

Approaching the subject

Gender as a subject was not only warmly recommended to us by UPWC, but also by the women themselves, which, for a women's organisation, is not at all surprising. It turned out, however, that the ideas what the concept of gender actually stands for differed a lot within the organisation and also within the training group, ranging from "something about men and women" to a "new Western concept advocating equality, but not being applicable in an Arab context." In the training we approached the subject initially by way of individual experiences. Subsequently we began to analyse gender roles,¹⁴ gender stereotypes and existing power structures,¹⁵ thus explaining the concept.¹⁶ These analyses were related to the following questions: Who or what transports these concepts? What is the function of the media, of religion, of school, and of the families? As a next step, we picked our own options for action: In what way do we contribute to maintaining these functions? How can we change them in case we wish to?

In this context it was also discussed how to deal with one's own limits and contradictions. The sensitisation for gender specific violence, and how to tackle this problem, was another aspect. Methodical aspects how to approach the issues were: cooperation in small groups, films and discussions, working with the individual participants, role plays, input and plenums.

Critical questioning of everyday habits

In the training process it was reflected how one's own behaviour, for example in the families or towards one's own children, was in accord with the demand for equality and equal opportunities for men and women. As was reported to us, this encouraged discussions also outside the training with husbands, relatives and children.

One participant told us about one of her experiences: In a shared taxi she refused to change her place so that a man who got in had to sit next to her. It would have been in accordance with the 'standard' conventions to change places. But she was tired, did not want to get up and did not see any problem in sitting next to a male stranger. She told us that, even if the men were severely alienated, she felt good about defending her place. One of the younger participants living in a very conservative environment explained that previously she would have asked her father for permission if she wanted to go to Ramallah for a seminar, whereas now she just informs him. She also told us that today she puts herself more into the development of her village and conducts events and trainings, and that her environment reacts positively on these changes.

Also the discussions about contradictions were interesting. One woman expressed herself thus: "Personally I do no mind if at night my daughter still goes out into the street or shopping. But in the village where we live I would not let her go out after dark. It wouldn't be good for our reputation."

Another woman brought her two children along to the training with her.

This triggered off a discussion why the younger sister had to serve her elder brother, and in what way the education of children contributes to preserving prevalent patterns of behaviour or to changing them.



From our perspective, this critical questioning of everyday habits is essential to examine in how far one's own behaviour corresponds with the desire for change of many of the participating women and, at the same time, to reflect in what way every individual woman or man can cooperate in bringing about change processes.

Gender specific violence

Women and girls are exposed to other forms of violence than men as, for example, the so-called honour killings, domestic violence, sexual harassment (cf. also framework conditions). The structural gender inequality (legal, political, and economical) and religious-cultural norms result in the fact that this use of violence is widely accepted.¹⁷

In the training we raised awareness for gender specific violence with respect to the occupation (in what way do its effects have different impacts on women or men) and for gender specific violence in the inner-Palestinian context. As far as desired and if possible, we talked about experiences of violence and,

in some cases, informed about support offers. In the further course of the training, the question was brought up virulent what strategies there are to cope with violence. We were expressly told that there is high demand for this, all the more as there are too few psychological counselling centres and counselling offers.

Stumbling blocks for the transfer of training work to the communities

During the gender trainings in the communities, the trained trainers encountered some difficulties.

For example, they found themselves to be confronted with religious objections like the argument that the demand for equality of men and women is against the Koran. In the present political situation it is difficult for many to openly take a critical view of the prevalent religious dogmas. We were told, however, that in the seminars with younger adults this was less problematic. Here the participants were more open for a critical view of gender roles.

The reasons given for the critical or even negative attitude towards gender trainings are sometimes that it is a Western concept non-applicable to realities in Arab countries. Indications that above all this is an analytical concept but not an instruction for action were sometimes useful but not always convincing. Generally these objections were rather vague; so it was difficult to examine them more closely. Yet this serves to clarify the importance of questioning men's and women's roles in society, taking their life realities as a basis. Thus the probability that these reflections will be rejected as coming from outside is immensely reduced, all the more as, in our experience, many women are dissatisfied with the present situation. Initially one can definitely proceed without using gender as a title if it can be assumed that this term might provoke resistance. At a later point of time, this concept can then be named accordingly and put into a relevant context.

For a few months, efforts have been made by UPWC in cooperation with other organisations to define a 'gender concept' for the Palestinian context, a process that has not been completed yet.

The presenting of gender subjects is also made difficult by the fact that sometimes this is interpreted to be a threat of inner peace. The reasons given are that women and men ought to subordinate their needs to the superordinated goal of the liberation from occupation and the creation of a state of Palestine. Not only does the presumption that an independent Palestine is tantamount to the equality of men and women stand in contradiction to the experiences made by other independence movements (for example the first Intifada, and Algeria's war of liberation) but also to the fact that the powerful will not surrender their position of power without further ado. That is why UPWC hold the opinion that the "(...) fight for women's liberation and the fight for the liberation of Palestine are inseparable".¹⁸

14 - With reference to social standards and socially defined identity.

15 - How are social processes and institutions organised within society?

16 - The social construction of social relationships between men and women.

17 - Cf. for example Human Rights Watch Report: „A question of security. Violence against Palestinian Women and Girls.“, November 2006.

18 - Verbally Maha Nassar.

Approaching the subject

Conflict transformation as a proposed subject was brought into the group by us in our function as trainers. The aim was here to enhance one's own ability to deal with conflict and, in connection with this, to develop an enlarged, positive understanding of conflict, resulting in pointing out nonviolent alternatives of action oriented towards the needs and interests and also the equal involvement of the participants. In the training we called this constructive conflict management as, translated into Arabic, this was more easily understood than conflict transformation.

In Arabic, there are two words for 'conflict': *nisa'a* (rather a social, not highly escalated conflict) and *sira'a* (a highly escalated, violent conflict). We worked mainly with examples of the first category that were brought in by the participants. Our aim was the training of the relevant skills.¹⁹ Above all, practical methods were needed that contribute to a transformation of conflicts as, for example, communication techniques, but also methods analogous to mediation which facilitate perspective-taking and support an attitude of empathy towards the other party.²⁰ Also creative methods, like a seminar about the Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal) in cooperation with the Ashtar Theatre, were very positively received.

Results

In the progress of the training we found out that there is an urgent need of instruments and skills for conflict transformation. We rate it as a great success that the participants' attitudes towards conflicts has changed: the more the individuals discovered their own possible courses of action in a conflict, the more they were willing to understand conflicts as a chance of change.

We think it was shown by this how a constructive handling of conflicts can prevent an escalation, and that it can be helpful to intensify invisible conflicts, to make them transparent and thus get a chance to handle them. The latter was also discussed in respect of gender relations.

Tradition as an obstacle?

For some of the participants it was frustrating that they could hardly see any chance to contribute with their newly acquired skills on the social level. They informed us that they applied different communication methods in their families, and that the analysing tools had helped them to act more deliberately in a conflict. Yet, there were only few possibilities to transfer this to the social level. One woman told us about a conflict in a village between another woman and her husband's family. It was mainly the woman who suffered from this conflict as her husband was absent and worked abroad. The woman who participated in our training would have liked to commit herself more strongly, but she did not see any chance to do so, being confronted with the traditional methods of dispute resolution that had been put to use.²¹

The discussions were interesting about the question whether for women it is

strategically more advisable to get access to the traditional mechanisms or to support the strengthening of alternative, legal methods. This corresponds to the efforts made by the women's organisations to strengthen the legal system in contrast to the traditional methods.

Conflict analysis

The modules on conflict analysis were especially stimulating for the group when they analysed their 'own' conflicts. The example of a highly escalated conflict between two family clans where one of the training participants was involved and that resulted in a death showed clearly the possible differences in perceiving the situation, the conflict cause, the effects and the roles of the parties involved. After the conflict had been analysed by means of different models (mapping, Conflict Tree), the group discussed about de-escalating options of intervention as,

for example, the influencing of a family member who demanded for blood vengeance. The group also reflected on the possibilities how support could best be given to the participant in this situation, for example by visiting him to show him that he was cared for, by procuring psychological and legal support, and by pointing out nonviolent options of action. The question of guilt was of less importance in the discussions. It was much more important to contribute in a constructive way to dealing with the conflict without judging or disapproving, taking one's own possibilities as a basis. This was quite extraordinary, all the more as it emerged from the wider environment that some people preferred not to 'meddle' as they feared disadvantages to themselves.

This experience showed us clearly that training in the field of conflict transformation may contribute to a change of thinking and acting if it takes life realities as a starting point. The training did not relieve the concern about the horrible consequences of the family conflict, but helped to generate possible courses of action and implement them. In this way, one of the relevant actors was strengthened to such a degree that he was willing to desist from any steps leading to further escalation.



The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

In an advanced course we analysed also escalated, political conflicts and, among others, also the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

What was surprising in the first place was the fact that some participants refused to define this problem as a conflict at all as they were no longer able to bring the political situation in line with the positive understanding of conflicts they had acquired in the meantime. They called this 'the occupation' and felt to be at the occupants' mercy. They felt to be powerless victims.

Others regarded this definitely to be a highly escalated, violent conflict within which they did practically not see any options of action.

Nonviolence

The analysis of nonviolent resistance movements, like the one of the committees against the building of the Wall, met with mixed reactions. The nonviolent resistance was, for some, too inactive, though admittedly it has already had some success. In their opinion it was still a quite passive strategy that did not sufficiently confront the Israelis with the consequences of their action.

In the seminars, nonviolence was discussed in the group more as a strategy than as a moral value or ethic principle. In respect of inner-Palestinian problems, the use of violence is rejected by the majority. With reference to the fight against the occupation, however, opinions are divided. Some do accept the use of violence as a means of resistance.

For us as trainers it was important to hold the discussion of these problems openly and without any moral limitations. The aim was here also to encourage the participants to reflect and to review their own position.

We posed the question of accepting and using violence on an ethical level and also with reference to the society one lives in. The following questions were addressed: How do the individual persons assess the probability that conflicts can be settled in a nonviolent manner within a society or a state that constitutes itself with violence? To what extent should the applied means be in accordance with the aspired aim? What effect might a violence-glorifying discourse have on the society one lives in?

In this context, also the violently waged conflict between Fatah and Hamas was discussed.

19 - Among these are active listening, paraphrasing, constructive feedback, perspective-taking, empathy, several models of conflict analysis, recognizing one's own needs and interests and being able to express them, being aware of one's own emotions, and being able to analyse different forms of violence.

20 - Cf. for example Wüsthube, Ljubjana: *Konfliktperspektivanalyse – ein mediationsanaloges Instrument zur konstruktiven Analyse und Bearbeitung in Konflikten*. *Perspektive Mediation*, January 2004. pp.18-22. http://www.institut-inmedio.eu/papers/pdf_010207/wue_Konflikt-Perspektiv-Analyse.pdf

21 - Women have only restricted access to the traditional Arab methods of dispute resolution (Sulha). But for a few exceptions, they are not represented in the 'committees of mediators' (Jaha). Sulha is a mediation process that is especially used also in highly escalated conflicts among families / clans. It is very efficient if the point is to prevent further escalations and to re-establish social peace. The Sulha procedure and symbolism are firmly established in society. Its results are binding for law courts and are published in the relevant daily newspapers. Sulha is criticized for stabilizing existing power relations: large, influential clans will have far better chances to achieve good results. As was already mentioned, women play a marginal role only in this process.

Further training contents

Training skills

The subjects gender and conflict transformation were followed by another thematic block dealing with training skills. This complex included the role and tasks of trainers, theoretical approaches of adult education, the setting up of

training schedules, moderation and presentation skills, decision-making processes and methods of working with groups. These subjects ran parallel to the intensive training cycles, with many practical exercises and some theoretical inputs. Especially presentation practice was repeatedly in demand. In particular, the participants valued the protected training environment and the feedback given by the group and the trainers.

Leadership

In Palestine, training programmes on Leadership or Young Women Leadership are very popular, also with donors. Also UPWC offer some measures in this field. To support this work and to develop a concept for this, the trainers asked us to moderate a workshop. This workshop was open to members, women in leading positions, and trainers of UPWC.

We took the following questions as a starting point:

- What is our understanding of good leadership?
- Which qualities are associated with leadership personalities?
- What is the relationship between persons in leading positions and subordinates?

In a Palestinian context, the tendency can be identified to transfer the responsibility for decisions to strong, charismatic leadership personalities. Thus it was not surprising that the qualities attributed to a positively perceived leadership personality were various and demands made on them were extensive: courage, power, the ability to influence others, decision-making power, a sense of responsibility, being challenging and strong-willed, the ability to work with groups and in teams, generosity, a sense of belonging, and commitment were listed.²²

Results

Questions about the thematic complex 'leadership and responsibility' were addressed, also within the own organisation. As UPWC have found themselves in a restructuring process since 2005, it suggests itself that these reflections will be of relevance there. In this context also the essential question was raised how UPWC's claim of initiating and supporting social changes with an orientation towards equality and participation can be in accordance with the image of a powerful leadership personality.

With respect to the conception of leadership training, the participating trainers arrived at the conclusion that it would definitely be feasible for them to offer programmes to leadership competencies like communication skills, decision-making and the management of groups and teams, but that the definition of a good leadership personality should be openly discussed in the relevant seminars.

Project management

Another subject favoured by the organisation was project management, which was covered by us in theory and practice in planning and monitoring workshops with the regional training coordinators, involving needs assessment, planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and budget preparation and monitoring.

Results

At the end of the project term, the coordinators had successfully implemented some projects of their own and accounted for funds (on the basis of BMZ directives), which may be deemed a great success.

In addition we offered a training programme on this subject for coordinators of the regional committees. Here it became apparent that the management regarded the enhancing of the coordinators' competences as a solution to problems of an organisational nature, but was not sufficiently prepared to shape work processes in such a way that these competences could be used. Further interventions would be beneficial here.

22 - Cf. the protocol of the workshops on 13 & 14 November 2008 in Arabic (accessible in the UPWC head office in Ramallah)

7. Lessons learned from the training work

In our understanding, training programmes will be successful if participants are supported when assuming a constructive role in social change processes. We understand these programmes to be learning processes for all those involved, leaving room for making experiences and reflecting about it.

- So, what have we learned during the training processes?
- What do we consider to be of importance during the implementation of training programmes?
- What was worth taking a closer look at?
- Which moments were surprising and informative for us?

In the following we have summed up our insights from five years of training work in the framework of the CPS project, categorized into the subjects of project design, creating of framework conditions, training implementation, and values and attitudes.

Project design

The goal was to draft the training programmes in such a way that the results of this work can also be used after completion of the project work.²³ To achieve this it was important to imagine the level of the training work together with possible interventions on a structural and management level.

- Here it was relevant to explain that training is not an aim in itself, but one of several means to empower women and to initiate social changes.
- Training can be effective mainly if it is conceptualized together with further measures. It was decisive here to use interfaces and to integrate training activities into other UPWC programmes (for example agricultural cooperatives, reproductive health). This way, perspectives opened up very soon how the work could be continued following the end of the CPS project.
- Furthermore, our approach of sustainability was based on the method to train a group of trainers in such a way that they would be able to continue the training work without the content-related support by the CPS project. This meant to give preference to quality over quantity. In doing so, it was essential to discuss this openly with the partner organisations and to give reasons for taking this course of action. As UPWC preferred a quantitative approach, some explanations were necessary to enhance their readiness to support a qualitative approach. During the course of the project, however, our approach was valued positively, all the more as it became apparent that more people can be addressed by way of the training group than merely by way of the project.
- Moreover this meant that the group had to be monitored in the planning and implementation of their own training programmes by way of coaching and feedback, of support and making room for problem analysis and solutions.
- Regular meetings with the three training coordinators and the organisation management contributed to this process. In these meetings, objectives and implementation measures were developed.
- In the last one and a half years, we intensified our work to establish the training work structurally and strategically within the organisation. For this, a model of a training unit was developed together with the organisation management and the trainers, where the group of trainers can utilize and further develop their knowledge, experiences and skills.

23 - We had favourable framework conditions in so far as the CPS project was not only extended so that the project period was five years, but this extension was organised in such a way that there was no period of discontinuance, and staff continuity and planning security were ensured. This benefited the progress of the project decisively.

Establishment of framework conditions

It was necessary to create framework conditions for the training work in a very difficult political context (occupation, permanent stress, desolate economic conditions). Yet we gathered positive experiences applying the following strategies:

- **Training programmes** were offered that were divided into several modules, leaving room for personal development and the transfer of learned contents. In this context it turned out to be definitely useful to offer seminars where participants stayed overnight together, which was not easy in the beginning.

A longer preparatory phase was needed, sometimes also discussions with the families, because it is not common to stay away from home for several days, especially for women.

- **The selection of participants** was left to the responsibility of the partner organisation. We as trainers formulated the criteria of participation (as, for example in the advanced course, experience in dealing with groups) and stipulated the maximum number of participants. We think that this was beneficial for the integration of training work into the strategy and structure of UPWC (ownership).
- **Commitments were created** (clearly defined agreements, schedules). We insisted that participants should attend the training regularly and respect the agreed time frames. If these agreements were repeatedly disregarded, we talked to the persons concerned; in one case this resulted in the exclusion from further participation in the programme. This was quite extraordinary for many participants as they are rather used to handle time as flexible. We think that our clearly defined time structures had a stabilising effect and also demonstrated that the work was serious.
- A **one-to-one interview** with each of the participants before the training and the conclusion of a **training contract**²⁴ contributed to the clarification of mutual expectations and responsibilities in this context.

24 - In the training contract it was stipulated which contents and time frame the training programme will have and what UPWC's participation conditions will be. Moreover, regulations on days of absence and the implementation of seminars on a voluntary basis under supervision as a part of the training were fixed.

Training implementation

In respect of training implementation we have learned that the following is of importance:

- Working with **group dynamics**. For us this stood for allowing latitude for individual change processes and to place them into a context of social developments. What was useful here, among other things, were **regular reflection and feedback groups**.
- The **monitoring of the transfer** of what was learned in the trainings into one's own working and living environment. This includes leaving the protected training environment and reviewing what can be put into practice in the relevant life realities. In the advanced seminars, these experiences were taken up and reflected. This was, at the same time, a condition for the sustainability of the project work.
- **Establishment of clarity**: We have had positive experiences with clearly communicating our **training approach** and our **course of action**. This was important also because our approach was unusual for the group. The establishment of clarity was an important step towards the clarification of mutual expectations and thus had a positive influence on the training process.

- We did this claim of clarity justice also when **explaining our self-concept of the role and function of a trainer**. Here it was especially important for us to describe the difference between managers / decision-makers and trainers. We emphasized that we see our task in establishing a framework, offering measures, structuring the learning process, and supporting decision-making processes, but not in judging what is right or wrong. The mirroring of responsibility into the group has led to processes of reorientation. By and by, the group took their affairs into their own hands. Good morning circles and daily closing circles were also used more and more to reflect about one's own behaviour, to address conflicts, and to give constructive feedback.
- **Flexibility in planning the training**. Often we had to restructure the training plan in order to deal with topics urgent for the group before we were able to continue with the planned contents. It was definitely a challenge to keep the balance between the content-related work on subjects and the group processes. But the allowing of latitude for clarification processes provided a basis for participants to accept the training as their 'own' process.
- Giving **space and time for stress relief** at the beginning of each training session. A first basis for openness towards the training process was often created by speaking out about the daily worries that sometimes were even existential and about the humiliations, for example at Israeli checkpoints, by sharing this verbally with others. What was more, mutual trust was also strengthened by these processes.
- Always taking the **participants' realities** as a basis when introducing subjects. Especially the creating of relations between one's own experiences and the training subjects was received very positively by the participants. As a result, they experienced the training to be very intensive and profound ("digging deeper, touching my feelings").
- Facilitating the gaining of **experiential knowledge** by practical exercises, above all before the background that, in Palestine, learning is understood to be mainly a cognitive process.
- When working with conflict transformation it was useful to think about the **choice of words** and to consider how something will be translated. It turned out that it is not really advisable to speak of conflict resolution. Apart from conceptual problems, conflict resolution is associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We use the terms conflict management or constructive conflict management, which can also be understood when translated into Arabic and is also rather connected with not highly escalated conflicts. Conceptual differences were addressed later in an advanced course.
- Work with the **participant's own conflicts**. In the first training module with the title Constructive conflict management, the participants disclosed their personal conflicts to us. Also conflicts within the group were revealed. We were expected to mediate, and we were much surprised by this frankness. The implementation of mediations then resulted in an increased acceptance of the methods taught by us.
- In the training work on conflict transformation, we made positive experiences with the **drama triangle** as used in transactional analysis.²⁵ In our training and project work we were often confronted with attitudes like, "But what can I do about it?" or, "I think it's amazing how you organise

your work. Could you do this for me, too? I can't do it on my own". These appeals for being helped without intending to contribute actively or taking responsibility oneself is hardly beneficial for development processes. The disclosure of these structures was a key experience for some of the participants. They realized that playing the role of the victim, and also of the pursuer or saviour, prevents constructive change. Understanding the 'rules' of this 'game' contributed considerably to the fact that the participants actively tried to find solutions and strived to adopt a more active attitude in change processes.

- **Making use of trainers' internal and external functions:** For me as an outsider it was easier to 'naïvely' challenge prevalent patterns of behaviour and to introduce new methods. In contrast to that, it was no problem for Rimonda Mansour to provokingly hold up a mirror to the group and criticize it as she, being a Palestinian, included herself in her criticism.

25 - Cf. Berne, Eric: „Spiele der Erwachsenen, Psychologie der menschlichen Beziehungen“ ('Games people play'). Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main 1967, ISBN 3-499-16735-2.

Values and attitudes

- **Perceive one's own limits**

It was comparatively easy to agree on some basic rules for the common work, including respect and tolerance. To review, however, what this means for the individuals and where the limits are was a definitely challenging process. Later it became apparent that certain concepts are understood differently by different persons. It was important for us to work with participants' various interpretations, make them transparent, and thematize the resulting contradictions. Perceiving one's own limits was often the first step towards reviewing and sometimes even shifting these limits. Where are the limits to my tolerance? Can I accept it if a training participant brings his girlfriend to the hotel and they spend the night in the same room? What stance do I take on this? Will this possibly reflect upon my reputation? Am I prepared to address this openly, or do I expect others (trainers, UPWC managers) to do this?

Further subjects that served to elucidate tolerance limits were sexuality and homosexuality. When we talked about homosexuality there were no open-minded, tolerant voices to be heard in the group. There were indications that such opinions existed, but no one dared give them. Opposing opinions were given openly, and their holders proclaimed that there were no homosexuals in Palestine, and this was a disease that should be cured. While in the course of the training process the group became increasingly open to exchange opinions about sexuality, homosexuality remained a taboo.

This subject was only taken up at informal occasions and about concrete questions, for example when some participants visited Christopher Street Day, as the Pride Parade is called in Berlin, during a trilingual exchange.

- **Address what was not said**

Often there are subjects, latent conflicts or taboos that are not addressed openly, but hang in the air nevertheless; moreover, they influence people's attitudes and behaviour. Addressing what was not said and question it critically was very important for the group dynamics and the learning process. This approach was provocative and led to reflecting and to taking a more differentiated, critical view of 'normality'.

For instance, in the three days' training course on gender it happened that the group did not of its own accord thematize the influence religion exerts on the role ascription of men and women. This tabooization was touched no earlier than in the closing circle. Step by step, the function of religion for the legitimization of certain role ascriptions was discussed with increasing openness in follow-up trainings. This led to the result that Christian and Muslim women could openly exchange their experiences, which was felt to be a real improvement. Also in concrete conflict situations some examples clearly showed that it can be positive to direct attention to what is not said: In a German-Palestinian training an irritating situation developed because the German participants were much more willing to contribute with their personal examples to the group work. The Palestinian women preferred to keep to mostly impersonal examples from society in general. This resulted in an unexpressed conflict in the group as one of the women felt shown up and disrespected. The situation was clarified by making visible this latent conflict and the attitudes concealed behind it, which had also a positive effect on the participants' openness to further cooperation.

- **How to deal with questions of religion**

Religion was a difficult subject. Quite some time was needed to create the trust necessary for open discussions. There were hidden conflicts between women who were more secular and those who were more oriented towards religion; the point here seemed to be mainly, but not exclusively, mutual acceptance. By the time, interpretations of the Koran were critically questioned in gender seminars with reference to the role of women (and men), and it became possible to discuss this. In this context the question was also thematized to what degree the implementation of tolerance and mutual respect is influenced by the prevalent religious and traditional canon of values. This happened also when, during the fasting month of Ramadan, respect and tolerance of others were at issue: one woman who was fasting thought it acceptable that another woman would not do that, but unacceptable that restaurants and cafés would open, and that people would eat in public before



the fast breaking. Then the secular group members asked how the rights of others in public space could then be respected. By means of this example, also questions about power relations in society, minority rights and the rights of dissenters were raised.

- **Understanding of power**

If training is intended to make a contribution to social change, then there is also the question of how to deal with power and how it is understood. We thematised this problem with relevance to our situation: How do I perceive the distribution of power in the group, within UPWC, in society? What is the mutual relation between decision-making power and responsibility? What is the advantage if an individual leaves decisions to the leaders? Would I like to exert influence myself? What are my possibilities to do so? What kind of responsibility would I have to take over then? Occasions to ask such questions arose, for example, from dissatisfaction with the UPWC managers about a lack of offers relating to the trainers' perspectives following the end of the project. We raised the question in how far they could themselves contribute to an improvement of the situation. When issues like the handling of power and the understanding of formal and informal power, also of control mechanisms and decision-making structures in an organisation, were picked up, this had the result that individual trainers were elected into different UPWC committees (regional committee, executive committee) so that now they are directly involved in decision-making processes.

- **Confidentiality**

Another interesting topic was confidentiality within the group. The following questions were raised: Who is 'inside' and who is 'outside'? Does confidentiality mean that everything that was said will remain inside the training group? Does the organisation also have a right to be informed what is done and said in the training by whom? What does this mean with respect to friends and the family? In a collective society with a high degree of social control it is surely advisable to be careful with respect to what is revealed. We observed the following: When the fear among people to be 'controlled' lessened, when group members familiarized themselves more and more with each other, and when individual persons were increasingly empowered in their training work, the atmosphere of communication was increasingly supportive and appreciative, and openness to touch even personal matters grew.

- **The self in the encounter with the other**

In the framework of the international training, an opportunity was offered to critically examine one's self and the other. In a German-French-Palestinian seminar and on occasion of a practice about self-perception and perception of others, a woman from Palestine offended against the standard practice not to communicate different opinions within the Palestinian group to the outside world. In different situations in seminars I have experienced how important it can be in Palestinian groups to present a uniform appearance to the other groups. This woman, however, openly expressed her dissenting opinion with reference to the question what it was that characterized Palestine. This behaviour met with a lack of understanding and brought up causes for conflict,

but did not have a disconcerting effect on the German and French participants, who were not anxious to present a uniform picture. This process was unsettling for the Palestinian group; but it showed them clearly that they were definitely capable of handling it, and that it did not necessarily have a negative impact on the outside world. It seemed to have also a stimulating effect that now it was permitted to openly support dissenting opinions and to follow one's own desires. This had also an effect on the leisure time activities of the whole group. Now, various groups teamed up rather for their common interests and because they liked each other than for their origin. In another seminar a conflict arose when one of the French women disclosed that her family was of Jewish faith, and that she was of Jewish origin, though not a believer. For most of the Palestine participants this was most disconcerting. Now they were forced to think about the question to what degree an inherited group membership influenced or changed their attitude towards a person. This must be seen before the background of their life situation, where encounters with people of Jewish origin are mostly limited to coming across the soldiers at the checkpoints and the settlers. Sometimes 'being Jewish' is regarded to be equivalent to 'being Israeli'.

Initially, the Palestinian group discussed what this meant to them and how they felt about it. As became apparent later, the spectrum ranged from, „I can't talk to her any more now. She should have told us from the start, I don't trust her“ to „She has become my friend. We have eaten, danced and laughed together. Religion does not make any difference here.“ This experience was a challenge for the whole group; yet, in retrospect the French woman and some Palestine women rated this as positive.



Certainly it is one of the most difficult processes to question oneself and to review one's own principles and values. For all the participants (including the trainers) it meant that they had to confront themselves again and again with the prevailing opinions and behaviour patterns. For each individual it means to be forced to question oneself and to face the task of finding an attitude of one's own, and to answer for it. We regard it as great achievement of the participants that, in the training as well as within the organisation, they took over more and more responsibility and sometimes even questioned the prevailing opinions and decisions quite openly.

8. Conclusion

In the present documentation, we have described the programmes of 'training the trainers' in the framework of a CPS project carried out in Palestine and presented the resulting, relevant experiences (lessons learned). The experiences made in further training activities (for example during international encounters) were included. Some of the measures on the levels of project management (planning workshops, evaluations) and organisational development (development of a training unit) were just touched upon; but to present them in more detail would go beyond the scope of this documentation. That is why I would like to emphasize the following here: our experiences showed that it is worth it to consider the transfer of what is trained and to make use of interfaces with other interventions already at the stage of project design, but also when the project is carried out. This will enhance the chances to achieve sustainability of the project results. Similarly, the external evaluator who investigated the effects of the project and the training work on the organisation and the communities arrived at the following conclusion in summer 2008: *„The project at its recent stage shows positive outcomes. (...) for example it provided UPWC with new management skills, working procedures and how to learn from the accumulated experience (...) it supported the organization in building its capacities – planning, monitoring and evaluation, time management, reporting –, and in strengthening the working values and principles, in the establishment of the Training Unit and the creation of a pool of skilled and dynamic trainers...“*²⁶

In this context I would like to encourage the reader to carry out a systemic reflection, directing his or her view to the question which interventions promote the implementation of the acquired competences in which positions. In our case, on the structural level the establishment of a training unit within UPWC considerably benefited the conditions for a continuation of the work after the project ends.

Also the qualitative training approach and the monitoring of the trainers in their work showed positive effects: *„The training had benefited the participants considerably by giving them special skills. The project provided the UPWC with more and better qualified activists in the region. Those trainees who will now work as trainers in their communities have gained self-confidence. The TOT created changes in the collective mentality such as: prepare from scratch instead of replicating what is already in existence, ask others when you do not know, support others when they need you, and work as a team, helping your fellow team members when they need assistance. It created a model for active thinking and trends for searching for solutions to the problems in their communities (if you know how, do it; if you don't know, learn how to make it). The training enhanced the social role of the trainees and it increased awareness among them about community issues“.*²⁷

At the end of 2008, the first successes became apparent: UPWC was entrusted with the implementation of a training project of several years in the West Bank by the General Union for Palestinian Women. What is more, in the meantime some of the women trainers have been approached by other organisations, which allows some inferences on the quality of their work. Also the training work on the international level is continued: several encounter projects have already taken place in 2009 or are in the planning phase.

Even the first crisis has been overcome: the coordinator of the training unit, who had been trained during the project, has accepted a job offer of another organisation that is better paid. Her leaving could be compensated by hiring a trainer from the training group.

There are some indications that the changes in the participants' way of thinking and behaviour have (or will have) an impact on their direct environment. It depends not least on the political and economic framework conditions to what degree this work can contribute to the desired changes on the social level. Unfortunately, conditions have much worsened in the last years. The fact that the UPWC members are still prepared to do voluntary work, undergo training measures, work on themselves, and campaign for changes inspires me with much respect. Surely this is also very encouraging for the future.

The establishing of democratic structures, a 'normal' social development and an ongoing improvement of the economic situation under Israeli occupation is a more than difficult enterprise; it might even be impossible to achieve this. A clear demand by international politics to stop the occupation, to grant the Palestinians self-government, to definitely prosecute the violations of human rights and the war crimes, and to exert an influence that the political issues still open (Jerusalem, a right of return, settlements, borders) are clarified would certainly have more impact than the financing of development projects which contribute to the maintenance of the status quo.

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26 - Jasser, Saed Dr.: External Evaluation Report „Empowering women to contribute to building a just, equal, and democratic society“ in Palestine. Report of 18 August 2008, *ibid.*, p. 38

27 - *ibid.*, p. 37 and 38

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