

**Creating Change Agents:
Palestinian & Israeli Professionals in Dialogue and Action**

**End of First Year Report
Covering Period June 25, 2010 through September 30, 2011**

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COTR: Rima Ghandour

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Submitted by (PRIME):

American Friends of Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam
12925 Riverside Drive, 3rd Floor
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423
Tel: 818-325-8884 · Fax: 818-325-8983
Contact: Deanna Armbruster
Email: deanna@oasisofpeace.org



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First Year Report (June 25, 2010 – September 30, 2011)
Creating Change Agents: Palestinian & Israeli professionals in dialogue and action.
Women journalists, environmentalists and young politicians

The Creating Change Agents program is run by the School for Peace at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam in Israel in cooperation with Tawasul, an organization operating from the West Bank. The Creating Change Agents course was made possible through the support of the USAID. The program brings together Israeli and Palestinian professionals from three separate fields—journalism, environmentalism and politics—to have a sustained dialogue about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the participants' personal and professional responsibility to take ownership of it. The overall goal of the courses is to train influential professionals in Israel and Palestine to become *agents for change*, justice and equality in their specific fields.

With 40 participants in each of the three courses split between Israelis and Palestinians, Creating Change Agents trains and educates a cadre of 120 professionals. The participants consist of 48 Israeli-Jews, 24 Palestinians citizens of Israel and 48 Palestinians from the West Bank. They are all professionals dedicated to cooperation and community-based reconciliation. By providing tools and profession-specific expertise, the program challenges its 120 participants to design and implement cooperative projects which help to foster conditions for a constructive peace process.

The 120 key stakeholders in the Change Agents program -- women journalists, environmentalists and up-and-coming politicians -- are impacted at the *personal* level, as the intergroup dialogues help them to take responsibility for their role in the conflict by enhancing their understanding of their own group's identity. At the *relational* level, participants confront and challenge negative stereotypes of the 'other,' develop a mutual understanding of each other's historical narratives and of the impact that national identities and narratives have on the conflict. At the *structural* level, participants learn how the dialogue experience is a microcosm of intergroup dynamics in Israeli and Palestinian society, thereby gaining insight into real-world power asymmetries between the two groups. These stakeholders can form a critical mass dedicated to institutional change and equality. By having both uninational and binational meetings, members of the courses can identify and analyze group dynamics, institutional successes and challenges from multiple viewpoints. For many of the Palestinian participants from the West Bank, not only are these courses a rare opportunity to meet Israeli Jews that aren't in uniform, but it's also a unique chance to meet Palestinians from the other side of the Green Line.

The program places an added emphasis on psychology, teaching its participants to practice approaches to conflict management that promote understanding and empathy regarding loss and trauma, rather than reinforcing and rewarding feelings of victimization and anger. Group members are taught to understand the asymmetries between Jews and Palestinians within Israeli society and between Israel and the Occupied Territories. With this information group members can better interpret the flawed way in which institutions function and how to change them to work in a more equitable way.

Perhaps most importantly, the program puts a real face and personality on the conception of the 'other.' Israelis and Palestinians end up using their power as allies and partners rather than enemies to initiate projects in their professions, environments and/or communities that reflect what they have learned. Since participants within each of the three courses work in the same professional field, the "Creating Change Agents" course establishes, and then expands, an intergroup network for profession-specific cooperation and problem-solving.

There was remarkable interest in the course among applicants and an admirable commitment to the course among its eventual participants. Due to the success of previous courses, some candidates

had to be turned away from the program. Those who participated attended many sessions against all obstacles, including their professional commitments, academic responsibilities at university, and restrictions of movement due to the political reality.

Each of the courses takes place over a 21-month period and is divided into three components: Dialogue & Intergroup Process; Becoming a Change Agent; and Building Capacity and Implementing Projects. The first phase, Dialogue & Intergroup Process, introduces the participants to both their uninationa group and binational groups. This component of the course furthers the participants' knowledge of the social and political aspects of the conflict and trains them to take responsibility for their role and engage in actions that promote reconciliation. As a result of the second phase, Becoming a Change Agent, participants connect their professional identity to their national identity, gaining knowledge about their specific profession and how it relates to the conflict. In the final phase, Building Capacity and Implementing Projects, participants finalize the planning and implementation of their projects and present them to the full binational group.

The philosophy behind “Creating Change Agents” is to influence people who can influence others, creating a wider network of professional understanding and cooperation. Within each professional course is a diverse group of people in age, background, and nationality. By heightening awareness of the conflict and civic activism among women journalists, environmentalists and young politicians, the program creates a ripple effect. Its graduates become ambassadors of goodwill and mutual respect, armed with the knowledge of the realities of the conflict and the motivation to act to change them.

Women Journalists as Change Agents

The media plays a large role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict influencing what people perceive about the conflict and about the ‘other’ side. A course was designed by the School for Peace and Tawasul focusing exclusively on women in the professional media sector, which highlights the School for Peace and Tawasul's priority to advance female empowerment.

The women journalists who participate in the “Creating Change Agents” program are motivated, committed and diverse. Among the Jewish participants are Ashkenazi Jews, Mizrahi (Sephardic) Jews and Ethiopian Jews. The program has Muslim and Christian Palestinians and participants from different locations of the West Bank including participants from the northern and southern peripheries. The program features journalists working for important Israeli and Palestinian media outlets like Haaretz, Kalkalist, Channel 1 of Israeli TV, the Mabat Sheni documentary program, the Jerusalem Post, Y-net, NRG-Maariv web, Palestinian National TV, Wafa, and Radio of Peace in Jerusalem, among others.

As in previous programs, the School for Peace and Tawasul's activities can be unexpectedly hindered by real events on the ground. For the women journalists, potential participants from Gaza had to await permits to attend meeting in Ramallah, and several Palestinian journalists faced sanctions from their unions if they participated in a program with Israeli Jews. The Palestinian journalist union is officially boycotting any form of cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis and against the normalization of relations between the occupied and the occupier, and actively participates in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel.

The course began in October 2010, the ten year anniversary of the start of the Second Intifada. The events of October 2000 were central to the first dialogue of the group between the Israelis, comprised of both Jewish and Palestinian citizens. The latter spoke about their frustration regarding the deaths of 13 Palestinians citizens of Israel in the hands of Israeli police forces. The

opening meeting was affected by the macro processes in Israeli society—the current political and social reality entered the dialogue immediately.

In the first Palestinian uninational workshop, the group met in the West Bank to get acquainted and talk about their hopes and fears in meeting the Israeli group. The Palestinians didn't want to hide their feelings and wanted to confront the Israeli group over its actions and their complicity as journalists in hiding the reality of the occupation.

In a later dialogue, the Israeli group discussed the topic of land confiscation, which was sparked by an announcement by the Rabbi of Zfat for his residents not to rent apartments to Arabs. In the matching Palestinian meeting, the participants discussed the differences between Israelis and Palestinians ahead of the first binational meetings, and expressed fears that the upcoming binational meeting in Aqaba amounted to "running away from facing reality." Energized by the dialogues, the group decided to talk more by phone and email outside of planned interaction time.

The course included several lectures by prominent journalists and academics about the conflict. Haaretz columnist Akiva Eldar addressed the group in a lecture about the role of Israeli journalists in situations involving violence and new peace initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians. Later on in the course, the participants heard a lecture from historian Dr. Mustafa Kabaha on the events of 1948, known to Palestinians as al-Nakba, or the Catastrophe. The topic underscored the School for Peace's philosophy that it's important to understand history in order to make progress toward a more just society. The Israeli participants had difficulty processing the new information about Jewish atrocities during the war, which created more than 700,000 refugees. Palestinian participants told them stories of the destruction of their families' villages. Another lecture by the School for Peace's own Dr. Nava Sonnenschein focused on how dialogue could alter identity, helping the Jewish participants to conceptualize the processes of evolution their perspectives had undergone as a result of the course.

After the first round of uninational workshops, the whole group finally came together in Aqaba, Jordan. The Palestinian participants appreciated that the Israelis made the effort to come to Jordan and be open to hearing from the other side. The Jewish participants admired that many of the Palestinians came in spite of threat to their careers as a result of the BDS movement. The dialogue was very sincere and honest, as the groups discussed the military occupation, housing demolitions, checkpoints, the 10,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, the siege on Gaza and the situation in East Jerusalem. The Israeli journalists expressed their fears about Palestinian terror, specifically the threat of Qassam rockets from Gaza by Hamas. The Palestinian group countered, imploring the Israelis, as the strongest side, to end the occupation and begin the sequence of events needed to come to reconciliation. As time went by, the dialogue involved less arguing and self-victimization, and instead featured more listening and respect.

After the Aqaba workshop, one Palestinian participant said that she "sent a text message to my youngest daughter who told me that 'we don't want you, stay in Aqaba with the Jews'...but this makes me more determined to continue in doing such a thing...it's helpful for us to understand and for them to know our case and our suffering." An Israeli journalist said that she "came to the conclusion that it is always easy not to hear the difficult things but what can we do when reality is composed of difficult things?"

After Aqaba, the Palestinian participants from Palestine experienced several dialogues, lectures and presentations regarding journalism, feminism, Islam and the relationship between them. Mayson Kawasmi, a famous female Muslim journalist discussed women's role in the media in times of crisis. A Palestinian student followed the lecture with a presentation about feminism in Islam.

Another participant led a discussion about Islam and the media around the world, and the negative perceptions that the international media perpetuated about Muslims (Islamophobia). The Palestinian members of the course discussed the difficulties they had to overcome as a result of their choice to dress in the conservative Hijab.

Later on, the Israeli group met in Tel-Aviv, where they wished to participate in a march for human rights. One of the Israeli Arab participants said that on the way back from Aqaba, she was threatened by a taxi driver, who pointed a gun at her. She brought the story to the group, sparking a discussion about racism in Israeli society. Later in the day, the group participated in the human rights demonstration in Rabin Square with 10,000 others. The master of ceremonies of the event was one of the group's Jewish members, Einat Weitzman Diamond.

In a subsequent uninational meeting of the Israeli group the group discussed the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and how they were portrayed in the Israeli media. The conclusion was that the coverage was from an ethnocentric Orientalist approach, mainly concerned with how the push for freedom and democracy in these countries would adversely affect Israel. In the dialogues, current events provided crucial jumping-off points for dialogue between the two sides.

The women in the group are already reporting stories in the media that advance peace. Two participants wrote about the first binational workshop in Aqaba, and one of them also wrote an article in Maa' El Hadath about the School for Peace and its director in Arabic. Einat Weitzman Diamond wrote an article in the web site MySay about Breaking the Silence, the organization of Israeli ex-military that publishes testimony about the IDF atrocities in the Occupied Territories. Hadas Shefer published an article in Kalkalist on the Palestinian businessman. As the course went on, the participants successfully internalized the information they gained from the workshop and were able to translate this knowledge into their culture, words, and professional work.

Despite the previously mentioned articles written by the program's members, the participants from both sides complained about the limited control they had over their stories at the second binational workshop, which took place in Beit Jala. Many participants claimed that because of their editors, as well as economic and political forces outside of their control, the best stories often did not receive coverage. The participants discussed the media as a whole and how it covers the conflict, particularly focusing on the relationship between the media and women's voices.

As the course progressed, the women began to plan their projects. As hoped, the group came up with very creative and dynamic proposals. One idea was to make a documentary film about four of the women participating in the course, focusing on the feminist trends in their careers, activism and personal lives. Another was to create a video art about charged concepts or words to which people from both sides respond, like 'land' and 'home,' among others. Another proposal was to make a documentary about the difficulty of the checkpoints which focused on human diversity. The film would be told from the perspective of a Jewish soldier, a Palestinian trying to cross into Israel and a Druz soldier. Another participant proposed making a black comedy film about the absurdity of the occupation. The individuals are continuing to work and develop their projects with the guidance of the senior journalist in Haaretz, Avirama Golan.

Another integral part of the course was the binational field trips. The Israeli and Palestinian women journalists visited Bedouins in the Negev desert, and learned about their experience with displacement. The group visited the destroyed village of El Araqib, and discussed the Prayer Plan, an Israeli government initiative to expel 30,000 Bedouins from their homes and confiscate their land. The group heard about the joint Jewish and Arab struggle in the Negev to retain their property. Later the group traveled to Laqia, another Bedouin encampment, to hear a lecture and

presentation from the women there, who were determined to study despite the limitations of their culture. The women talked about facing double oppression—from the state and their patriarchal society. The tour ended in Jaffa, which excited the Palestinian participants especially, who don't have the opportunity to enjoy the Mediterranean beaches because of the restrictions on their movement.

Throughout the course, the participants continued to publish stories relevant to Israeli-Palestinian peace in the media. Einat Weitzman Diamond published an interview with PM Hanin Zuabi and Avigaile Gertz published two articles about the conflict in Maariv. Another Palestinian journalist had an idea for a report about her position as a Jerusalemite married to a man from the West Bank, which has caused her and women like her to lose residency rights in Jerusalem.

Environmentalists as Change Agents

Environmentalists, due to their attention to topics such as pollution, water accessibility and access to clean living conditions, are another professional group that the School for Peace and Tawasul identified as potential Change Agents. The sanitation conditions in Arab towns and neighborhoods, where waste and sewage are often dumped, are demonstrably worse than those in Israeli Jewish areas. Through this course, the School for Peace and Tawasul seek to train and motivate environmentalists to fight for equal living standards and environmental justice for Israelis and Palestinians. By doing this, the environmentalist course graduates can use their specific professional skills to create more just and equitable Israeli and Palestinian societies in general

The Environmentalist course attracted a large pool of applicants because of the lack of similar courses in environmental justice for Israeli & Palestinian professionals. The School for Peace & Tawasul recruited a diverse group of participants in both age and professional expertise. The Israeli members of the course range in age from 23-60, but the Palestinian professionals are much younger than the Israelis since it is a newer field in Palestine. The participants work in activist organizations, government, academia, the environmental media, the environmental business sector, eco tourism, environmental law and environmental NGOs. The Palestinian participants are between 24-45 years old and most of them work in the environmental field for environment organizations. Some of them are engineers, employed in both government and the private sector. Many of them are already extremely experienced in their field and all of them are especially knowledgeable about the environment and its impact.

In the first meeting of the Israeli side, the group discussed why more waste is dumped in Arab towns than Jewish ones. The group concluded that the wealthier Jewish towns know the system better, and fill out the required documents more effectively than the less fortunate Arab municipalities. The group surmised that the system was skewed in favor of the Jewish towns. At the beginning of the course, the Jewish participants sought to jump directly into proposals to achieve more environmental justice and focus on tangible issues, statistics and data.

Conversely, the Palestinians felt that they had to put their issues with the conflict on the table first, and establish a connection between the society's asymmetric reality and the environment. The course's facilitators spoke about the need to talk about the conflict first and more specific environmental issues later, emphasizing that the group could not skip the painful dialogue about the conflict. The Palestinians also learned from their first uninational meeting how the situations in nearby countries can affect the conflict. Mr. Ashraf Al-Ajrami, a former prisoners minister, gave a lecture about how the situation in Egypt might affect the political process between the Palestinians and the Israelis. They expressed concern that Israelis working in the same field as them couldn't

understand that pollution and uprooting trees and other environmental issues will destroy all the peace process if they don't stop the Jewish settlers from wreaking havoc.

At the first binational workshop in Aqaba, Jordan, the Palestinian participants connected the discrimination in the water supply and the Israeli government ban on development in Area C of the West Bank as being rooted in the same phenomenon. The Jewish participants felt that poor management by the Palestinians, not the occupation, was to blame for the unequal environmental conditions.

On the second day of the binational workshop, the Palestinian participants talked about how the settlements were adversely affecting their lives. They spoke about how difficult it was to go to work in Palestine because of the time it takes to get through checkpoints, and how the settlements cut off the cultural and commercial connections between cities in the West Bank. One of the Palestinian participants shared that he had to leave his wife and kids for the whole week, because it was impossible to get from his home to his workplace every day. Some Jews agreed about the settlements while others shifted the blame onto Israeli leaders. The Jewish participants spoke about their fears from Palestinian terror attacks. The Palestinians explained that, while they don't condemn the killing of innocent civilians, that terrorism was a weapon of the weak, that the misery of the occupation and dominance of Israelis left them few options. They rightly asserted that the Israeli army kills far more civilians than do terrorists.

As the Aqaba workshop closed, the Jews connected the separation wall with the need for security from would-be terrorists. The group discussed 'national security' as a justification for using power, control, and the occupation. In the end, the group agreed that it was vital to open the course with dialogue about difficult issues before moving on to how they could help to minimize the conflict as professional environmentalists. The Palestinians in particular felt that the Jewish environmentalists should realize that environmental issues could not be disconnected from the larger context of the occupation. Members of both nationalities spoke about their concern for their children and grandchildren, and reiterated the importance of reaching a lasting peace agreement soon.

As the course continued, the Jewish environmentalists began to undergo a transformation, especially after their first binational workshop with their Palestinian colleagues. The Israeli group discussed the painful reality they were exposed to and mentioned that Israelis were not confronted with the occupation in their everyday lives. The participants talked about the asymmetry of power in Israeli society and the fear Israelis had of losing hegemony in the state, becoming more aware of their society's paternalistic approach towards their Palestinian counterparts. One of the participants commented that it was unfair to restrict the Palestinians' freedom of opportunity and not let them develop and later criticize them for not being developed enough.

At the Palestinian group's unination meeting after the Aqaba workshop, Dr. Ghassan Barghouti sparked a discussion about the water situation in the West Bank and Gaza strip. Dr. Barghouti gave the participants extensive information about the water wells, water distribution, the unequal share of the Palestinian citizen compared to the settlers and the suffering of the citizen of the scarcity of water during the summer.

At a subsequent Palestinian unination meeting, participants discussed the issue of the solid waste and the wastewater, providing maps of areas affected by the settlements and the illegal dumps. Mohammad Saaydah, a participant from Jericho, showed the participants how he and his team work in Jericho area on the Eco-Tourism and how much it's helpful for international visitors to explore Palestine from different aspects.

At another workshop, three of the Palestinian participants prepared lectures themselves to present to the group. A participant who works for the Department of Water in Hebron discussed the solid

waste in his city and the statistics behind the suffering people in Hebron suffer from because of settlers and the settlements around it. A participant from Nablus reported on the water situation in Palestine, and how the Israeli water authorities prevent Palestinian use of wells and water resources. A third group member gave a presentation about global warming, and what participants could do at home to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Throughout the course, the participants were exposed to a variety of fascinating lecturers. The first of them was Dr. Mustafa Kabaha from Open University regarding the 1948 War, known to Palestinians as al-Naqba, or the Catastrophe. The lecture was followed by an animated discussion between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians from Israel about the events of 1948 and their importance even today. After the meeting, the participants took the individual initiative to exchange emails about nationality and the history of the Palestinian people amongst themselves. The uninational Israeli group also heard a lecture from Professor Oren Yftachel of Ben Gurion University on the concept of ethnocracy. Professor Yftachel discussed the Israeli government's discriminatory land policy and its implication on the society and the environment. When asked by one of the 1948 Palestinian participants about how he felt about the new information he was hearing, a Jewish participant said that he was deeply disturbed by the inequality, that he would henceforth strive to foster true symmetry, even if it meant giving up some of his property. Another Jewish participant said that it would often take a week or two for the difficult things he learned about during the meetings to sink into his new reality regarding the conflict. A Palestinian participant commented on Yftachel's lecture, saying that Palestinian areas were surrounded and squeezed, prevented from any expansion or development.

The environmentalists' chief professional concern relates to issues within Israel and Palestine but they are not blind to the events happening in their field around the world. This global focus was exemplified by Nisreen Mazzawi, a Palestinian from Israel, who wrote an article about green energy and atomic energy after the disaster in Japan, which appeared the April-June 2011 issue of the journal *Isha Le Isha*, or "Women to Women."

At another Israeli uninational workshop in NS/WAS was opened by Professor Avner Deshalit, who gave a lecture on environmental issues and their connection to ethnicity, status and nationality in Israel. After Professor Deshalit's lecture, a member of the Israeli group asked why the Palestinian community was undereducated about sanitation and garbage. He thought that there was more garbage in the streets of the poor and Palestinian areas because of a lack of awareness. A Palestinian participant strongly disagreed, and correctly pointed out that the biggest polluters and creators of waste are the wealthiest and industrialized parts of global society. The group discussed the case of a group of Bedouins living near Ma'ale Adumim who were going to be relocated by the occupational authorities to an area adjacent to a garbage dump. One of the Israelis told the group that he approached the committee in charge and testified that it was not humane to force a group of people to live next to such a facility.

On the 23rd and 24th of September 2011, the School for Peace and Tawasul conducted the second binational workshop in Beit Jala. Most of the participants came despite the coincidental overlapping of the workshop with Mahmoud Abbas' address to the United Nations General Assembly. Due to the historic moment, many of the roads in the West Bank were blocked by settlers, causing many of the Palestinians to arrive a night early to avoid congestion at the checkpoints. The focus of the workshop was to bring the participants together to brainstorm their environmental projects. However, since six months had passed since the last binational meeting, the participants engaged in a substantive dialogue about their hopes and fears ahead of the statehood bid at the UN. They also discussed the settlers' provocation of the Palestinians in the West Bank. Later, the group heard a lecture by Professor Danny Rabinowitz, the professional consultant for the Israeli environmentalists, about the collapse of the neoliberalist-capitalist system and its effect on

the environmental crisis. Professor Rabinowitz, who lectures at Tel-Aviv University, theorized that the capitalist system, which is driven by private interests, leaves no one to consider the public losses from pollution and other damage to the environment. After the lecture, the group, with the guidance of Waseen Birumi and Keren Dahan, presented their ideas for their projects and began to move from the theoretical to the tangible. They spoke about existing initiatives and what has caused them to succeed or fail. The participants were able to present their ideas and receive constructive feedback from a smaller group of attentive listeners. The project managers made posters describing their projects and detailed what they needed to order to make their projects realistic. The entire group weighed in on the projects, and approved fourteen projects for the group to pursue. There was a lot of goodwill and interaction between participants from both Israel and Palestine. At around 7PM on the workshop's first day, the group's discussions were put on hold so the participants could watch Abu Mazen's speech to the UN on a large screen. The Israeli participants were moved by how emotional the Palestinian group was by the event, and some of the Israelis even joined the Palestinians in dancing in front of the screen after Abu Mazen handed in his request for statehood.

The group also worked outside of the scheduled meeting times throughout the course to advance equality in the environmental sphere. For example, Nisreen Mazzawi, a group participant, invited the rest of her group members to an event on eco-feminist dialogue that she organized at the Women to Women Center in Haifa. At the event, Mazawi and Dr. Edna Goren discussed eco-feminist theories and the relations between nature, culture and society in Israel.

Up-and-Coming Politicians as Change Agents

The third group that the School for Peace identified as vital change agents was young, up-and-coming politicians. Civil society has a crucial role to play in cultivating Israeli society for peace by fostering conditions of equality in human rights, media coverage, access to land, and living conditions. However, ultimately, a final peace agreement will result from dialogue between the political representatives of the Israelis and Palestinians. Therefore, the School for Peace, alongside Tawasul, recruited participants, predominately in their thirties, who work primarily as assistants or consultants of parliament members. The group represented a plethora of political parties and organizations, such as Likud, Kadima, Avoda, Meretz, Hadash, Raam-Taal & Balad. The Palestinian participants worked for several political parties, most notably Fatah, the National Front and Hizb el-Shaab. Furthermore, the SFP and Tawasul enlisted social activists who plan to enter politics from non-governmental organizations such as Koach Laovdim ("Power to the Workers"), Peace Now, the Agik-Negeev Institute, and Zach Ela. Many of the Palestinian participants worked for NGOs, including Tawasul, Al Quds University, the Youth Council, Safe Trading Between Israelis & Palestinians, and Saved Home- Against Sexual Abuse. The hope is that these political leaders of tomorrow can succeed where the politicians of yesterday have failed—in creating a just and equal society in which Palestinians and Jews can live together side-by-side in peace.

Like previous School for Peace and Tawasul initiatives, the up-coming politicians course placed a special emphasis on empowering women. The Palestinian group facilitated by Tawasul was fortunate enough to hear Dr. Najat Abo Baker speak about the role of women politicians in Palestinian society. A member of the legislative council, Dr. Abo Baker inspired the young politicians by discussing the role of women in the recent revolutions in the Arab world, and how their contribution may affect the Palestinian women and society. After the discussion, the Palestinian group drafted a group contract, emphasizing the importance of listening to each other, openness, and tolerance of different opinions and acceptance of conflict topics. The Israeli group, consisting of Jews and Israeli Arabs, discussed their expectations for the course as well. The participants were interested in engaging in open dialogues, and wished to discuss power relations,

the definition of the character of the Israeli state, identity issues, racism, gender discrimination and other contentious topics.

The group's first binational dialogue in Aqaba, Jordan was impressively honest and many core issues of the conflict were discussed openly, not only during the scheduled sessions but also on breaks between them. Issues such as the military occupation's effect on Palestinians' lives and Palestinian prisoners were discussed. One of the Palestinian participants shared a painful personal story about her brother, who has spent nine years in an Israeli prison. The participants also discuss the issue of defining Israel as a Jewish state. The Palestinians from both sides of the Green Line explained why they could not accept this definition, which would prevent them from ever being considered equals in Israeli society. Some of the Jewish participants tried to explain the importance of the "Jewish" distinction to them, leading to a substantial debate. The Palestinian said that their leaders had recognized Israel, but not as a Jewish state, which would infer preferential treatment on ethnic and religious terms. For their part, the Jews wished that the Palestinians would acknowledge their right to fulfill their national identity. Throughout the dialogue, the Palestinians from Israel attempted to bridge the gap between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians from Palestine.

The participants found the dialogue to be very constructive and stimulating. One of the Palestinian participants said that some of the issues they took on weren't even discussed in official negotiations. Another Palestinian participant said that it was important to her that the Israelis discuss their new humanized perception of the Palestinians to the Israeli street. She said that her group also needed to take the picture of the Israeli group, which desperately wanted coexistence, to the Palestinian street. An Israeli Jew said that the dehumanization element was reduced in both sides' minds as the dialogue progressed. Another Palestinian participant said that it was her first time meeting Israelis, and the experience exceeded her expectations. She said that she loved seeing the humane side of people, and hoped that her group could be the future politicians that will bring change to Israel.

After the binational workshop in Aqaba, the Israeli group met by itself. The participants commented on how meaningful the experience was, even though it was very shaking and eye-opening. They spoke about morality and the injustice of the occupation. The dialogues were profound in their levels of depth and in the quality of the participants' analysis. In the second session after watching the film *Nahmani Diaries* by Dalia Karpel they spoke on what the meaning of Zionism is for them and discussed the right of return. They spoke on the responsibility of their generation for the past generations' injustice.

A subsequent meeting at NS/WAS opened with a talk from Adv. Abir Baker, a human rights lawyer who worked years in Adallah, on the legal issues between the state and its Arab citizens. Towards the end of her lecture she also spoke about the future vision documents and their suggestions for the future relations between the State and its Arab citizens. Following the lecture the group had two sessions of interesting discussion about the meaning of citizenship and the contradiction between Israel as a Jewish state and a democratic state. The discussion was lively with a high level of involvement from all of the participants.

At a later dialogue in September 2011, the Israeli participants discussed the protests for social justice that attracted over 500,000 people to take to the streets in Tel-Aviv and other cities. While the protests were very popular with the majority of Israelis, several of the up-coming Israeli politicians were critical of the movement. To them, the protest's participants were all Ashkenazi Jews from the middle class and reflected the perspective of the most dominant elements of Israeli society. The protesters in Tel-Aviv, the participants agreed, were more concerned with the social and economic stresses of the middle class than the unjust discrimination against the Palestinians.

The group discussed other critical current events, including Israel's falling out with Turkey and the impending Palestinian statehood bid at the United Nations. Group members expressed their fears about these developments, afraid that they could lead to violence in Israel. While most of the group supported the Palestinians right to go the UN, especially given the hard-line stance of the Israeli government, they felt that uncertain times lay ahead.

Lessons Learned

We found that the long term format for the Change Agents courses (21 months long) is difficult for the population of the women journalists. The format however is very suitable for the up and coming politicians and for the environmentalists. In the future, the courses for journalists will have a significantly shorter program. We overcame this obstacle by recruiting some new participants to replace those who were forced to drop out of the course because of professional commitments.

Although the participants push to address professional issues immediately in the beginning of the courses, our insistence that first we deal with the conflict and then with the connection between the conflict and the profession was very beneficial to the groups' progress. When they are planning their ideas for the projects they are freer to concentrate on the projects because they already spoke about the conflict before.

The beginning stages, when the ideas for projects are first being envisioned, are very important. For this process we invited Keren Dahan, who is a consultant on creative thinking, to join us in the brainstorming process. She is a graduate of the SFP's earlier Change Agents course for mental health professionals, and her way to encourage the participants to envision projects was very fruitful. Her imaginative techniques motivated the participants to develop many innovative ideas for the projects.

We found that the groups need extra time, in addition to the official time allotted by the course, to work on their projects. Therefore, we have to create for them more opportunities to let their projects develop.

We also included experts from the participants' professional field as a part of the course. In the course for environmentalists, we hired Prof. Dani Rabinowitz from Tel-Aviv University, who is an expert in environmental justice. For the journalists we hired senior journalist Avirama Golan from Ha'aretz newspaper. Both Rabinowitz and Golan have been very helpful in consulting and guiding the participants in their projects.

We feel that the participants benefit greatly from seeing the tangible facts on the ground during our site visits and we want to conduct more of them in the future at the uninational and binational level. On the Palestinian side, Tawasul felt that the program would be aided greatly if the USAID could help secure permits for the Palestinian participants to move more freely across the Green Line for the site visits. We also feel that the program could be more effective if we take our time—making sure participants can fit the course into their schedule before accepting them and also developing more communication skills and conflict resolution skills within the groups in the beginning of the course.

We found that the combination between up & coming politicians and social activists is very fruitful for the course and enriches the process and the content of the dialogue.

The combination of high quality facilitation & dialogue, hiring the best lecturers in the field & providing high quality guidance for projects is cultivating a high status for those courses. We succeeded in recruiting high level and influential participants more than in the past.

Achievements

The three courses were opened and run successfully, as planned, with very minor changes, despite the unstable political situation. The binational second workshop for the environmentalists was conducted while Abu Mazen delivered his speech at the UN. In spite of warnings about violence, participants came and continued their dialogue and also began to formulate their projects. None of the courses stopped because of the political situation and we succeed to create dialogue on the current political issues with the participants.

In all three courses the dialogue is of a high quality and is very lively. In the meetings, serious issues are discussed and participants continue those discussions online outside of scheduled meeting times. We think that the issue contributing to the success of the lively honest dialogue is the high quality of the facilitation.

The strong cooperation between the SFP and Tawasul is helping to make the courses successful. We maintain meetings between the management and between the staff of the courses. The dialogue is open and sincere and we succeed in solving conflicts that arise in a peaceful way.

We found that in the courses there are two levels of projects. The first is the influence of the course on the writing or actions of the participants in relation to their field. For the women journalists, we see good results already. There were many articles written by participants that are advancing peace, human rights and social justice issues.

We built a website for the Change Agents program and hope the participants will start activating it as another venue for influence and communication. It can be found at www.change-agents.org

The other level of projects consists of the specific projects participants started to work on, which we hope will be completed by the end of the course. This is more applicable to the environmentalists, since they are influential professionals in their field they already initiated changes in their area for example:

- Nisrin Mazawi, following the discussion on who is responsible for producing garbage, sent the group a chapter from a book the Global Woman by Barbara Ehrenreich on the trail of garbage that underprivileged women from the third world are cleaning up globally.
- Nisrin Mazawi also invited the whole course to a public event she organized about ecofeminist theories. The event was conducted on 29.6.11 at the Woman to Woman center in Haifa, and included an ecofeminist dialogue in which Ms. Mazawi and Dr. Edna Goreni discussed the book Goreni just published on ecofeminist theories: " Relations Between Nature Culture and Society in Israel"
- Dr. Smuel Ben Naftali, one of the course participants, together with Prof. Mustafa Kabaha, an historian who is lecturing in the courses about the Nakba, are organizing a new course for training tour guides that present both Israeli and Palestinian narratives of history while guiding tours.
- Gili Sofer, another participant, published an article on the Hasviva website about the rejection of a new law by the government that was suggested by Adam Teva Vadin. The law would've reexamined old plans that didn't take into account environmental issues (see attached).
- Hader Agbaria, a Palestinian participant, told the group about a project he initiated. He is responsible for the committee for safety of roads in the north of Israel. As a result of participating in the course, he initiated few weeks of intensive checks in the north of Israel for drivers who pollute the air with their cars. The checks were much more thorough than usual. Although he got a lot of criticism by Arab drivers who often have older cars that pollute more, he insisted on those intensive checks and kept the initiative going on.

- One of the Israelis told the group that he approached the committee in charge of dislocating the Bedouins living near Ma'ale Adumim to an area next to a garbage dumping place. The Israeli testified that it was not humane to force a group of people to live next to such a facility.
- A small group of participants from the environmentalist group had an idea to launch an initiative in Wadi Fukin, near Hebron, which has been threatened by a serious environmental pollution due to the presence of wastewater from a nearby Jewish settlement. The members then presented their project from Wadi Fukin to the rest of the group, leading many other participants in the environmentalist group to think in the same way and to do the same work in places threatened in their areas.
- The Palestinians in the West Bank reported that meeting the Palestinian citizens from Israel felt like a family reunion. They were very thankful that the program allowed them to meet these Palestinians from the other side of the Green Line.
- One of the Palestinian women journalists visited the USA for work and she with some Americans journalists. After her explanation of the Creating Change Agents project one of the American journalists asked her to invite two Palestinian participants from the environment group to come visit the USA and see how American organizations interested in environment work with the local society there. After the two environmentalists came back from the USA visit, we got a new invitation for another two participants to go do the same visit to the United States.
- Field visits, for example the last one to Hebron, were very rich with political and media information. Both groups, the women journalists and the politicians, were very happy to visit such places inside the city of Hebron. For the Palestinians, it was first time to see the “Tal Romedah” settlement and the “Shohada street,” which have been closed for visitors since the beginning of the second Intifada. For many, it was the first time to come to see Hebron and to walk in its old city.
- The environmentalists group created a Facebook page where they meet, chat and exchange information. They can easily communication between themselves and with the Tawasul staff. The program's staff can send the participants anything that maybe required from them. The politicians group also created a similar page for their own group.

These are just few examples of initiatives for change that the participants started even before their official projects were due as a result of participating in this course. With the up & coming politicians it is still too early to know what will transpire because they were the last to start the course.

Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) Summary

The Performance Monitoring Plan for the “Creating Change Agents” program highlights the success of the program to date. The targeted number of people participating in the program is 120, and 112 persons have remained committed to the program including 72 women and men. More women are participating in this program as the Women’s Journalists program is gender exclusive. However, this total of 112 persons includes the number of persons attending facilitated events geared toward strengthening understanding among conflict affected groups, number of persons participating in uninational sessions, number of persons participating in binational workshops and number of persons trained in conflict mitigation/resolution skills with U.S. government assistance. The number of project ideas developed and presented by participants is 36 total to date, significantly more than the 21 projects intended as planned. The number of projects implemented – one – remains on course with the actual intended and this number is set to increase significantly during the next year of the program. Finally, the number of people who have benefited from the projects initiated as part of the “Creating Change Agents” program ranges from 60-1000 dependent upon the level of media coverage. Numerous articles have appeared in Israeli and Palestinian press resulting from the program. Below are the specific details from the PMP:

<u>Indicator Name</u>	<u>Indicator Format</u>	<u>PMP Indicator Type</u>	<u>Starting Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Planned Value for FY1</u>	<u>Actual Value for FY1</u>	<u>Planned Value for FY2</u>	<u>Actual Value for FY2</u>	<u>Planned Value for FY3</u>	<u>Actual Value for FY3</u>
<u>Number of people attending facilitated events that are geared toward strengthening understanding among conflict affected groups that were supported with USG assistance</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>OP std</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>112</u>		
<u># of projects implemented by the targeted professionals</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>36</u>		
<u># of uni-national sessions (disaggregated by Israeli/Palestinian, and by male/female)</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>45</u>		
<u># of bi-national sessions (disaggregated by Israeli/Palestinian and by sex)</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>		
<u># of participants in uni-national workshops</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>112</u>		
<u># of participants in binational workshops</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>112</u>		

<u>Number of people trained in conflict mitigation/resolution skills with USG assistance</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>OP cust</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>112</u>
<u># of project ideas developed and presented by the participants</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>36</u>
<u># of site visits conducted</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>#of projects designed by the participants are being implemented</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>25</u>
<u># of people who benefited from the projects initiated as part of the "change agents" program</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>Mgmt</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>60-1000</u>	<u>60-1000</u>
<u>Number of USG-supported facilitated events geared toward strengthening understanding among conflict-affected groups</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>OP std</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>62</u>
<u>Number of men attending facilitated events that are geared toward strengthening understanding among conflict affected groups that were supported with USG assistance</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>OP std</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>Number of women attending facilitated events that are geared toward strengthening understanding among conflict affected groups that were supported with USG assistance</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>OP std</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>72</u>
<u>Number of men trained in conflict mitigation / resolution skills with USG assistance</u>	<u>Integer</u>	<u>OP cust</u>	<u>FY100</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>

Number of women
trained in conflict
mitigation / resolution
skills with USG
assistance

Integer

OP std

FY10

80

72

72