Civic Education in Palestine

Background

In 2005, PASSIA embarked on this new project feeling that it is imperative at the current critical stage in Palestinian history that people who are and will be shaping their future are equipped with relevant knowledge and experience. The leaders of tomorrow lay today the basis of civic life in the anticipated state and promote the practice of a rule-of-law regime; yet, it is evident that there is a huge lack of the basics of civics among Palestinians, including appropriate understandings of constitutional principles (rule of law, separation of powers, individual freedoms and rights), concepts and purposes of citizenship and governments, and political and legal processes created to make decisions, seek consensus, and resolve conflicts in a free society, and so on.

The tool to counter insufficient democratic socialization - i.e., the lack of democratic experience, limited knowledge about formal democratic structures and processes, weak values regarding political tolerance, trust in democratic institutions, and respect for the rule of law - is civic education, which, by imparting the necessary skills and knowledge, helps promoting support for democratic behaviors and values among ordinary citizens.

With this in mind, PASSIA launched the project, providing training courses in civics and governance for young professionals, with the aim to achieve a level of understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities among the citizens that is required for the maintenance and improvement of any constitutional democracy.

Program Activities

In a set of three five-days seminars, the PASSIA civic education project sought to develop and empower groups of approx. 20 young professionals each to deal more effectively with the tasks ahead by enhancing their civic knowledge, skills and norms.

PASSIA seminars are organized as follows:

(a) *Application and Selection of Participants.* Six to eight weeks before the actual training seminar, it was advertised in the local press. Application forms were available at PASSIA and candidates had two or three weeks to apply. A shortlist of applicants were then invited for interviews, conducted – in line with PASSIA's policy - by an external examiner. Based on the results of these interviews, the selection of candidates was made.

(b) *Preparatory Reading Period and Writing Assignment.* Upon selection, participants were required to state their and their employee's acceptance of the placement in writing (PASSIA has specifically developed a form for this). Once the form was returned signed to PASSIA, the participant was provided with preparatory reading material gathered by the PASSIA Project Team in coordination with trainers and lecturers, with the aim to familiarize him/herself with the basic course subjects. Each participant was also assigned a topic on which to prepare a paper for presentation and/or discussion during the seminar.

(c) *Intensive Training Seminar.* Trainees then attended a five-day training course in which they learned functional skills imparted by local and/or international experts. Where available or needed, additional study material was given and relevant case studies were examined. At the close of the seminar, participants received a second assignment, the completion of which formed an integral part of the overall course.

(d) *Conclusion.* PASSIA collected the seminar proceedings (papers given and other possible materials deemed useful), and is selecting and editing them for publication in book form at the close of the program. Certificates were awarded to participants who completed the program.

In 2005, PASSIA organized two such seminars, each of which imparted basics such as the meaning of constitutional democracy, types of government, features of the political system, and the ability to identify public issues and influence public policy decisions. In addition, each seminar focused on particular topics, one on *Civics, Government & Citizenship* and the other on *Civics, Constitution & Human Rights.*

During 2006, PASSIA planned, organized and implemented the third seminar, dealing with *Civics, Governance & Community Development:*

■ Seminar on *Civics, Governance & Community Development*

The course on *Civics, Governance & Community Development* was meant provide capacity development by improving the participants' understanding of basic skills and principles of developing and building a strong community as well as empowering people for effective civic engagement through emphasizing citizen power, participation and influence. The course thus aimed to equip citizens with the relevant knowledge and skills to participate in the decision-making processes that accompany and produce societal changes and community advancement.

The seminar was designed for participants who work in the governmental, private and NGO sectors and who would benefit from an opportunity to develop their civic education skills and knowledge and become more active and informed with regard to political processes and participation.

Following the selection of participants, the preparatory reading period commenced; each participant received a list of reading materials (assorted background articles) and the following writing assignment:

- *Discuss a successful community-based project that you know of or have been part of.*

- *Explain what – in your opinion - the key factors are/were that contributed to the success of the project?*

The actual seminar took place from 5-9 March 2006 and was followed by a second assignment, that had to be completed within four weeks.

Course program:

Day One:	Sunday, 5 March 2006

9:15-10:00   Welcoming Address/Opening Remarks
Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, *Head of PASSIA, Jerusalem*

10.00-11.15   Governance and Civil Society
Dr. Ali Jarbawi; Professor of Political Science, Birzeit University

11:15-11:30   Break

11:30-12:30   Role of Local Government
Dr. Ali Jarbawi

Dr. Ali Jarbawi

12:30-13:30   Lunch

13:30-15:30   Assessing community needs and assets (social and economic dimensions of the community, SWOT Analysis)
Luna Shamieh, *Lecturer, Birzeit University*

Day Two:	Monday, 6 March 2006

9:15-10:45   Priority setting and tactical planning (stakeholders and self-interests within a community)
Luna Shamieh

10:45-11:00   Break

11:00-12:30   Community-based Development Principles and Concepts / Citizen Power, Participation and Influence
Dr. Kenneth Ellison, *Senior Associate, Governance/ Institutional Development; ARD, Inc*

Dr. Kenneth Ellison

12:30-13:30   Lunch

13:30-15:30   Political empowerment of community-based organizations in development / Community interaction with local, regional, and national governments
Dr. Kenneth Ellison

Day Three: **7 March 2006**

9:15-10:45   Promoting Interest in Community Issues (media
relations and advocacy)
Rami Khouri, *Editor-at-Large, The Daily Star, Beirut*

10:45-11:00   Break

11:00-12:30   Getting Issues on the Public Agenda
Rami Khouri

12:30-13:30   Lunch

13:30-15:30   Exercises
Rami Khouri

Rami Khouri

Day Four: **8 March 2006**

9:15-10:45   Participants' Assignments

10:45-11:00   Break

11:00-12:30   Design, Management and Evaluation of
Community-based Projects
Luna Shamieh

12:30-13:30   Lunch

13:30-15:30   Design, Management and Evaluation of Community-
based Projects, contd.
Luna Shamieh

Luna Shamieh

Day Five: **9 March 2006**

9:15-10:45   Case Studies
Isam Akel, *Director, Planning and Democratic Governance, CHF International*

10:45-11:00   Break

11:00-12:30   Case Studies, contd.
Isam Akel

12:30-13:30   Lunch

13:30-15:00   Final Discussion and Wrap-up
Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi

Participants:

Abu Assab, Rawan (Jericho)
Public Relations, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Jericho

Al-Adarbeh, Mahmoud (Dahiet Al-Barid)
Counselor, Lutheran World Federation, Jerusalem

Azem, Ibrahim (Ramallah)
Administrative Clerk, Palestinian Legislative Council, Ramallah

Dakkak, Ihab (Jerusalem)
Instructor A, Community Service (CMSR) Coordinator, Faculty of Education, Bethlehem University, Bethlehem.

Darawsheh, Fazi' (Nablus)
Supervisor, Ministry of Education, Nablus.

Dweik, Jameel (Jerusalem)
General Manager, Al Razee Cultural and Social Association, Ar Ram

Al-Ghoul, Rana (Ramallah)
Architect, Al-Zaytouneh Engineering Office, Ramallah.

Ibrahim, Ra'ed (Tulkarem)
Head Master, Beit Leed Secondary Boys School, Tulkarem

Karajah, Mahmoud (Ramallah)
Field Coordinator, CHF International West Bank/Gaza, Ramallah

Khadra, Ibrahim (Gaza)
Media and Public Relations Officer, AFSC-Quaker Palestine Youth Program.

Khalaf, Nancy (Ramallah)
Technical Assistant, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Ramallah

Maqboul, Samah (Nablus)
Community Worker, Medical Relief Committees Union, Nablus

Mukhaimar, Samir (Gaza)
Social Worker, UNRWA, Gaza

Namrouti, Ghassan (Ramallah)
Chief Accountant, Engineers Association, Ramallah

Al-Natsha, Manar (Hebron)
BA, Journalism and Political Science, Birzeit University, Birzeit

Nofal, Saleh (Ramallah)
Interrogation Officer, Military Intelligence, Ramallah

Al-Qadi, Shireen (Hebron)
Lecturer, Polytechnic University, Hebron

Sa'adeh, Wafa (Ramallah)
Architect Al-Amal Engineering Office, Ramallah

Sahori, Suzan (Beit Sahour)
Field Coordinator, CHF International West Bank/Gaza, Beit Sahour

Saideh, Mohammed (Jericho)
Manager Assistant, Saideh Contracting Cooperation, Jericho

Saleem, Waleed (Ramallah)
Officer, Military Intelligence, Ramallah

El-Sammak, Haneen (Gaza)
Field Coordinator, CHF International West Bank/Gaza, Gaza

Tamimi, Tamara (Ramallah)
Management Coordinator, CHF International West Bank/Gaza, Ramallah.

At the close of the seminars, participants:

- had a better understanding of the meaning and functions of governance and local government;
- had gained a deeper understanding of community-based development principles, concepts, procedures and project management.