



“Saraya day is MY day!”

Community support and Palestinians’ struggle for survival in the Old City of Jerusalem

Research team:

Yoke Rabaia - van der Meulen

Suzan Mitwalli

Zeina Amro

Rita Giacaman

Corey Balsam

Claude Larochelle

**"ICPH support of the Al-Saraya Community Center Psychosocial and
Protection Programme for Children, Youth and their Families in the Old City of
Jerusalem"**

Final report

Institute of Community and Public Health

Birzeit University

Submitted to MAP

31 March 2014

Al-Saraya **Center for Community Services** is a non-profit organization situated in the Old City of Jerusalem. Inaugurated in 1991, Al-Saraya was first established in response to the difficult conditions brought forth by the First Intifada, with a focus on providing support to women and school-aged children. It is located in a quiet quarter of the Old City in a majestic building that was once the residence of a Turkish judge.

This report consists of the following parts:

- | | | |
|--|------|------|
| 1. Executive summary | p 3 | |
| 2. Methodology of the study | p 8 | |
| 3. Background research | | p 11 |
| 4. Qualitative and quantitative findings | p 15 | |
| 5. Recommendations | p 33 | |

Acknowledgments:

Special thanks go to Al-Saraya Center for Community Services director Hiyam Elliyan and her assistant Nida' Dweik for their unabated willingness to accommodate us in all parts of this study. We also thank the Al-Saraya volunteers and beneficiaries for their cooperation in both the quantitative and the qualitative parts of the study.

1. Executive summary

Introduction

Since the Israeli occupation in 1967, Palestinians in Jerusalem and particularly those living in the Old City, face legal, social, political and geographic challenges. Israel confiscates land and homes, establishes Jewish settlements, enforces discriminatory laws and regulations, and threatens the Palestinian identity of the city and its population.

Building on a long period of charitable informal initiatives in the 70s and 80s, Al-Saraya Center for Community Services was formally established in 1990, in the heart of the Old City. The energetic staff and volunteers devote their services to support the Palestinian Jerusalemite community through Al-Saraya's programs and projects, with the ultimate aim of preserving the Palestinian identity of the city and affecting positive change in the lives of its women, children and youth.

Objectives of the study

Al-Saraya Center for Community Services and the **Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH)**-Birzeit University have sought to develop a greater understanding of the challenges faced by this vulnerable yet enduring population and to explore the ways in which Al-Saraya Community Center does and can further support the population to resist and subsist.

Methodology

This study involved:

- Background research (academic, as well as grey and media reports), regarding:
 - Jerusalem context
 - Residency 'rights'
 - Population
 - Schooling
- A qualitative component, including:
 - Group interviews with staff, and volunteers of Al-Saraya
 - Participant observation (several of the programs Al-Saraya offer)
 - Focus groups with beneficiaries (1 group of women, 1 group of children)
 - Consultation and joint preparation of poster presentation of findings
- A quantitative component:
 - Survey of convenience sample of 81 women, investigating
 - Demographics
 - Living conditions
 - Children's school conditions

- Perceptions regarding Al-Saraya services
- Well-being; distress; and human insecurity
- Exposure to political violence

Limitations

The study was somewhat hampered by:

- Initial confusing over objectives, namely whether ICPH was to focus on one particular program of Al-Saraya or rather a broader focus on Al-Saraya's complete psychosocial programming
- The initial delay in securing a permit to enter Jerusalem for two of the ICPH research team members
- The small size of the convenience survey sample
- Problems in relation to the data collection

Findings

Challenges faced by the Palestinian population of Jerusalem and the Old City revolved around issues of:

- ❖ **Identity** (confusion about the identity, especially for children, and the effect on their *self esteem*)
 - Israel's policies to Judaize and de-Palestinianize the city
 - The resident status of Jerusalemites ('none citizens'), and the revocation of identity cards (ID) from Jerusalem residents
 - Negation of Palestinian identity due to Israeli control of Jerusalem school curricula
 - Separation of the Jerusalemite community from the rest of the Palestinian population due to the segregation and annexation wall
 - Imposing of the Hebrew language on the Palestinian community (weakening the Arabic language usage, especially among children)
- ❖ **Residency**
 - Threats of Jerusalem residency revocation
 - Challenges related to being married to a spouse with West Bank ID card
 - Difficulties obtaining permits for home and building renovations
 - Increasing rent rates and related taxes
 - Constant and increasing obstacles related to rent and construction? for Palestinians
 - High cost of living
- ❖ **Problems related to living space** (especially in the Old City)
 - Cramped and deteriorating housing
 - Lack of privacy
 - Lack of leisure and study space
- ❖ **Severe deterioration of the educational system and school facilities**
 - Multiple educational authorities: (Israeli) Jerusalem Municipality, Palestinian Authority, UNRWA, private, and semi-formal schools
 - Low quality of education and traditional teaching methods
 - Inappropriate curricula
 - Lack of specialized educational facilities (art spaces and classes, sports facilities, laboratories)

- Denial of permits for renovation of current schools (infrastructure and yards) and building of new ones
- Insufficient number and size of classrooms (crowdedness)
- Violence (teachers, students, Israeli army and settlers)

❖ **Israeli occupation violence**

- Israeli army and police
 - Nightly incursions
 - Detention (adults and children)
 - House arrests (mainly children)
 - Preventing Palestinians from free movement
- Israeli settlers
 - Harassment
 - Preventing Palestinians from free movement
 - Intimidation (adults and children)
- Weakening of Palestinian institutions:
 - Closures
 - Unfair taxes
 - Confiscation of buildings
 - The threat of takeover by settlers

Psychosocial Health

As a consequence of the combination of the above-mentioned challenges, Palestinian Jerusalemites experience :

- Lack of human security
- Social and psychological distress
- Low wellbeing

Survey results moreover illustrated that:

- Wellbeing was higher for those
 - Who owned their homes
 - Had more space in the home for comfort
 - Considered place for children’s homework as appropriate
- Distress was lower for those who:
 - Owned their homes
 - Considered place for children’s homework as appropriate
- Human insecurity was lower for those who:
 - Lived outside the Old city of Jerusalem
 - Owned their homes.

Ways in which Al-Saraya Community Center does and can further support the population to resist and subsist

In the absence of an effective Palestinian National Authority serving the population of Jerusalem, this study found Al-Saraya Center for Community Services to provide critical support to Palestinian families in East Jerusalem and the Old City, particularly to:

Women, through programs that aim at:

- Empowerment (educational, professional)
- Awareness raising (human rights, health, child raising, early marriage)
- Strengthening Palestinian identity
- Reinforcing life skills (communication, expression, problem solving)
- Psychosocial support provision

And children, through programs that aim at:

- Strengthening Palestinian identity
- Increasing their self confidence and self worth
- Reinforcing life skills (critical thinking, problem solving)
- Fostering talents and creativity through engagement in activities
- Extracurricular activity (within and outside of the schools) for academic development, social issues, improved expression

Recommendations:

Based on ICPH study findings and following consultation with the Al-Saraya director and her assistant, we recommend that financial and technical support may further enhance Al-Saraya Center for Community Support's capacity to serve Palestinian families in East Jerusalem and the Old City, in particular:

1. To support Al-Saraya in expanding advocacy to draw attention to the plight of Palestinians in Jerusalem and the Old City
2. To gain international confirmation of the right of Jerusalem Palestinians to speak their own language, and therefore the duty of the Israeli municipality to have Arabic-speaking officials, as well as bi-lingual forms in relation to all administrative issues pertaining to the illegal annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel
3. To develop more educational courses for women, especially courses that will help them support their children in their academic achievements
4. To set up a program that will provide counseling sessions form women dealing with parenting and/or marital problems
5. To organize short trips for the women to allow them some time out of the Old City as a way of presenting stress relief
6. To conduct a preparatory study for the development or adaptation of screening and diagnostic instruments for learning problems validated for the Palestinian context
7. To hire a consultant who can provide long-term periodic support to Al-Saraya senior staff to mentor them in the training, supervision and follow-up of the volunteers and junior staff working in the Al-Saraya psychosocial programs
8. To secure payment of fees incurred when utilizing schools buildings after school hours to help the children with homework
9. To further develop relations between the center and some of the Palestinian universities, especially in terms of strengthening the link between theory and practice: i.e. regarding student

- volunteering [at Al-Saraya] as a learning asset, and adapting courses such as community psychology, and social work to better prepare students for the work in the field
10. To help Al-Saraya volunteers disseminate the practical knowledge they have acquired by sharing their experiences with their peers at the university
 11. To investigate what kind of a program might work to motivate parents to be more involved with their children's school and extra-curricular learning activity, and how to develop such a program.
 12. To set up a sustainable system in order to improve Al-Saraya's communication with teachers in Jerusalem schools, especially in relation to the so-called 'problem children', who are enrolled in Al-Saraya's after school club
 13. To engage in a formative assessment of the after-school program, following its first year of functioning
 14. To train teachers in identifying and addressing social difficulties of their students
 15. To organize a mapping exercise which would identify the organizations that work in the same field or complement the work of - Al-Saraya Center.
 16. To initiate a networking mechanism so that gaps in services provided by the different centers can be addressed.
 17. To further expand the al- Saraya Center's extra-curricular/non-academic programs for children, e.g. the life skills aspect of the after-school club.

2. Methodology

Research questions:

What challenges do Palestinian Old City residents face? How does Al-Saraya Center for Community Services support the population? How can Al-Saraya Center further develop its psychosocial program?

Background research

In preparation for the qualitative and quantitative components of the research, the ICPH team carried out an extensive (academic, as well as grey and media reports), regarding:

- Jerusalem context
- Residency 'rights'
- Population
- Schooling

Qualitative component

Through a series of visits (that included group interviews, participant observation, and two focus group discussions) the ICPH team achieved an understanding of Al-Saraya center's work-processes and programmatic work, and collected the data necessary for the preparation of a context-appropriate psycho-social needs-assessment survey to be administered to Al Saraya beneficiaries at a later stage.

At the beginning of the research the ICPH team familiarized themselves with the academic and grey literature on the various problems facing Palestinians in Jerusalem, in particular the Old City, and began to establish a working relationship with Al-Saraya center through a preliminary meeting at Birzeit University and several telephone conversations. Our next step was an exploratory group interview with staff at Al-Saraya in which the team acquired a general understanding of Al-Saraya's history, context and programming. During this visit we also had the privilege of touring the center, and going to the afternoon club at the nearby al-Nahda B (??) school. Notes were compiled and discussed among ICPH team members immediately following this initial encounter.

A second group interview at the Al-Saraya Center was conducted by three ICPH staff who met the current and future coordinators of the after-school club project along with the director of the Al-Saraya center. This engagement was intended to develop a greater understanding of the Al-Saraya center's work and to build on information obtained from the previous meetings. The meeting was followed by participant observation of the after-school club at al-Nahda B school where ICPH staff spoke with, and observed interactions between, staff, volunteers and children. A series of in-depth discussions among ICPH team members were subsequently convened to determine what we learned and what information still needed to be gathered.

A third group interview at the Al-Saraya center aimed to fill any remaining gaps in knowledge regarding the center, and to answer any remaining inquiries.

A focus group discussion was then conducted at the Al-Saraya center with nine adult female beneficiaries of the center's programming. The discussion was co-facilitated by one ICPH team member and one Al-Saraya staff member (coordinator of the after-school club). Verbatim notes were taken by another ICPH team member. Participants all lived in the Old City and benefit to varying extents from Al-Saraya's programs and workshops.

Notes from the focus group discussions, the 3 meetings, and a few short phone calls with Al-Saraya staff were inputted into the qualitative data analysis software Atlas-ti and organized into the following codes (in alphabetical order): afterschool programme; behavioral problems; learning difficulties; consultants and training; family; housing; ID issues; ministry; other organizations; police/army; previous experience; programming; psychosocial; Saraya general; Saraya needs, challenges and shortcomings; schools; settlers; socio-economic; staff; studying; success stories; violence and drugs; vision and desires; volunteers; West Bank.

Reading, re-reading and interpretation of notes, transcripts and team discussions, resulted in an initial analysis, which was presented in the form of an abstract to the director of Al-Saraya. She endorsed most of the findings, but also presented valuable critique, which was incorporated in the final abstract submitted to and presented at the Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance 2014 Conference in Amman, Jordan.

Quantitative component

The main themes that emerged in the qualitative part of the research were further explored in a survey of 81 women beneficiaries of Saraya center. The survey was designed by ICPH with valuable input from Al-Saraya staff.

The final questionnaire included 9 sections:

- Demographic information relating to the respondent and her family,
- Socio-economic status of the family,
- Questions related to residence and comfort of respondent and family,
- Questions related to children's schools and activities,
- Women's relationship with the Saraya community center.
- WHO-5 wellbeing index questions,

- Questions related to distress
- Questions related to human insecurity
- Questions related to exposure to political violence.

In September 2013, the Institute of Community and Public Health conducted a training on how to administer the questionnaire attended by Al-Saraya Center volunteers (5) and supervisors (2).

The survey was piloted with 5 women and modifications to the survey were made accordingly.

Initially the questionnaire was administered by Al-Saraya center's volunteers, but because of time limitations and the unavailability of the volunteers, the staff at Al-Saraya center also took part in administering the questionnaire.

The sample was a convenience sample of direct beneficiaries of Al-Saraya center programs, some of which also had children who were beneficiaries of Al-Saraya's children programs.

The data collection process started in October 2013 and spanned over two months. Eighty one questionnaires were completed.

Data entry into SPSS was completed by ICPH staff.

Data was analysed using SPSS, and interpreted with input from Al-Saraya staff.

Limitations

The study was somewhat hampered by:

- Initial confusion over objectives, namely whether ICPH was to focus on one particular program of Al-Saraya or rather a broader focus on Al-Saraya's complete psychosocial programming
- The initial delay in securing a permit to enter Jerusalem for two of the ICPH research team members
- The small size of the convenience survey sample
- Problems in relation to the data collection

In terms of conducting academic studies and surveys to benefit the center and the programs they have or will have in the future, the design and administration of data collection should not constitute an additional burden on the staff of the center. It is recommended that data collection and administration must be organized by the body in charge of the investigation building on the insights and in coordination with the center.

3. Background research

Jerusalem context

Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 and subsequent annexation of Jerusalem has created a legal, social, political and geographic nightmare so peculiar and complex that it can be difficult even for well-informed experts to fully comprehend. Whether it is with respect to citizenship status; degrees of Israeli or Palestinian authority; or schooling; the details and changes seem endless.

The Palestinian Nakba of 1948 resulted in the partition of Jerusalem into East Jerusalem, under Jordanian control, and West Jerusalem, under the control of the newly established state of Israel. Only a few decades later, the 1967 War left Israel with control over the West Bank, including the eastern portion of Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

East Jerusalem was quickly distinguished by Israel from the remainder of the newly occupied Palestinian territory. Unlike the remainder of the territory, East Jerusalem, in addition to approximately 70,000km² within the surrounding area were annexed by Israel. This annexation has never been recognized by the international community.

Since 1967, measures have been taken by Israel to alter the character of Jerusalem, including the Old City, through policies and practices meant to blur the line between East and West Jerusalem and to 'unify' the two sides of the city under Israeli control. This has involved two simultaneous processes, which have been referred to as 'Judaization' and 'de-Palestinization'. The former has involved land confiscation, the establishment of Jewish settlements and settler enclaves throughout the East side of the city, and the recent construction of the Annexation Wall, which has cut off Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. The latter refers to the inverse of Judaization: the slow removal of Palestinian people, authority and identity from the city. This has involved, among other draconian policies, the denial of building permits to Palestinians, house demolitions, revocation of Jerusalem residency statuses, the prohibition on Palestinian Authority activity and the banning of the Palestinian flag.

Residency 'Rights'

Although most Palestinians within East Jerusalem are considered by Israel as 'permanent residents', regardless of how long they and their families have called Jerusalem their home, the permanency of this status is not a given. Palestinians with Jerusalem identity cards (IDs) are constantly under threat of having their residency rights revoked by Israeli authorities as though they were (unwanted) guests in their own homes and ancestral city.

The status of permanent resident was applied by the occupying power to all Palestinians included in the 1967 census of annexed East Jerusalem, except for a small number who took Israeli citizenship. Most Palestinians in East Jerusalem have rejected Israeli citizenship on account of the requirement to swear allegiance to the Israeli state, whose authority they oppose.

Jerusalem permanent residents benefit from a number of privileges in comparison with West Bank ID holders, including full freedom of movement, permission to work within Jerusalem and Israel, and access to social security benefits and Israeli state health care. But the stresses of living with the constant fear of losing one's house and residency often make living and staying in Jerusalem extremely difficult. Those who hold a Jerusalem identity card must continually prove to the occupying authority that their 'centre of life' lies within Jerusalem or within Israel's internationally-recognized borders, or else they risk losing their Jerusalem IDs. Such policies have resulted in the 'quiet deportation' of over 14,500 revocations since 1967 (PASSIA Diary 2013, 412).

Complications frequently arise with marriage and raising a family. Palestinians with Jerusalem IDs who want to marry Palestinians from the rest of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or abroad, are mandated by Israeli law to apply for family unification requests in order to live with their spouses in Jerusalem. This application process is extremely onerous and mostly futile considering that the applications are nearly always rejected; no justifications needed. Couples in which one spouse has a Jerusalem ID and the other a Palestinian West Bank ID have, as a result, been forced to live in increasingly overcrowded areas that fall within the Jerusalem municipality, but which lie on the other side of the Annexation Wall; namely in the Kufr Aqab neighbourhood.

Another complication relates with the registration of children. Children born in a Jerusalem or Israeli hospital to parents that both have Jerusalem permanent residency status should receive a Jerusalem ID card when they reach age 16. But this is not necessarily the case for those born 'abroad' (including elsewhere in the West Bank which is considered abroad) and/or for those born to parents of whom only one is a permanent resident. In the case of a child born in Jerusalem to a mother with a Jerusalem ID card and a father with a West Bank ID card, an application must be submitted which requires proof of continuous residence in East Jerusalem for the previous two years, and proof that the child has not lived or been registered elsewhere. Children born abroad depend on permission from the Israeli Ministry of Interior, which may or may not be granted. It has been estimated that there are as many as 10,000 unregistered children in East Jerusalem on account of these policies.¹

Population

¹ http://www.civicoalition-jerusalem.org/system/files/palestinians_-_residence_in_their_home_final.pdf

According to population projections by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) for the year 2013, there should be just over 400,000 Palestinians living in the Jerusalem governorate of the Palestinian Authority number.² Approximately two-thirds of this total resides in areas of Jerusalem annexed by Israel (J1) in 1967. The remaining third resides in portions of Jerusalem that were never fully annexed to Israel (J2) in the occupied West Bank.

Alternative figures drawn from the Israeli population registry suggest that as of December 31, 2012, there were 371, 844 Palestinians in East Jerusalem, comprising 39% of the entire city.³

Over 100,000 are estimated to be school-aged children 6-18 years (ACRI – Failed Grade, 4). An estimated 200,000 Jewish settlers live in over a dozen settlements and settler enclaves throughout the annexed area (B'tselem).

The population within the walls of the old city (0.9km²), where Saraya is located, amounted to approximately 40,000 at the end of 2011, including over 3000 Israeli settlers.⁴

Schooling

The abysmal situation of education for Palestinians in Jerusalem reflects the discriminatory treatment of Palestinians East Jerusalemites in general, and the complications that arise from having people with divergent rights and residence statuses live amongst each other in particular. There are, in all, five categories of schools attended by children within the Jerusalem municipality: (1) Israeli Jerusalem municipality schools; (2) 'recognized unofficial' schools (3) Waqf schools (4) private schools; (5) UNRWA schools. As of 2011-12, all of these schools have been forced to officially adopt textbooks and curriculum dictated by the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem, a move that has resulted in the practical erasure of any references to Palestinian identity and culture. Nevertheless, the majority (83% in 2010-11) of Palestinian 12th grade students in Jerusalem do not take the matriculation examinations of the Israeli Ministry of Education, but rather take the Palestinian *tawjihi*, which qualifies them for Palestinian universities but does not qualify them for Israeli ones. This considered along with other factors detailed below, it should come as no surprise that an estimated 40% of Palestinian children in Jerusalem drop out before 12th grade (ACRI 2012 from PASSIA).

Jerusalem municipality schools account for nearly half of Palestinian school-aged children in Jerusalem with a total of 42,474 (47%) accommodated in 54 schools and 86 kindergartens in 2011-12 (ACRI via PASSIA 2013, 425). Although they are under the same authority as schools serving Israeli citizens in Jerusalem, the discrepancies between schools serving citizens and Palestinians with Jerusalem ID are ubiquitously apparent. Jerusalem municipality schools in East Jerusalem are overcrowded, with an average of 31.7 students per high school class compared with 23.8 in West Jerusalem (ACRI via PASSIA 2013, 425), short over 1000 classrooms in 2012. Many also lack funds to cover basic expenses, such as water electricity, temperature control, and photocopying, in addition a general lack of resources and space for recreational activities.

² <http://pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/Rainbow/Documents/jerus.htm>

³ <http://www.acri.org.il/en/2013/05/07/ej-figures/>

⁴ http://www.jiis.org.il/upload/yearbook2013/shnaton_C1413.pdf

The second most significant category, in terms of enrollment, are 'recognized unofficial' schools (31%). The number of students enrolled in these institutions has increased in the past decade by 1400% from approximately 2,000 in 2001 to 28,280 in 2011 due in large part to the shortage of classrooms in Jerusalem municipality schools (ACRI, Failed Grade, 17). 70 such schools and 53 such kindergartens existed in the 2011-12 school year, which are run by private bodies but recognized by the Israeli Ministry of Education. These institutions are profit-driven and are allowed to charge parents, though much of their funding comes from the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem municipality.

The third category are those run under the auspices of a joint cooperation between the Jordanian *Waqf* Department and the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (14%). These schools offered free education to approximately 12,550 Palestinian students in 40 schools during the 2011-12 year (ACRI, Failed Grade 7). A central challenge faced by these institutions pertains to space. Discriminatory zoning and planning restrictions placed on Palestinians in East Jerusalem have meant that new construction or expansion is often prohibited. As a result, approximately half of these institutions are accommodated in rented apartments, which, in addition to their substandard conditions, are not tax exempt and therefore impose a high cost on the Waqf system. The Waqf has nevertheless refused to pay taxes (amounting to 90 million by 2010), and had engaged in construction without the requisite permits.⁵ The latter has led to the issuing of several demolition or sealing orders and fines, imposing even further costs on the already cash-strapped system.

The final two categories are private schools (6%), which served 5,576 students in 35 schools, and UNRWA schools (3%), which served 2,442 students in 8 schools.

⁵ http://www.ochaopt.org/jday/ocha_opt_jerusalem_report_2011_03_23_web_english_Chapter_5.pdf)

4. Qualitative and quantitative research findings

The main findings were sorted as follows:

- A. Burdens and needs of Palestinians living within Jerusalem and the Old City
 - a. Preservation of Palestinian identity
 - b. Housing
 - c. Living under occupation in Jerusalem
 - d. Schools and education
- B. Services offered by Saraya Community Center and implications for beneficiaries
 - a. Programs and approach
 - b. Importance for beneficiaries
- C. Challenges and needs
- D. The future

A. Burdens and needs of living within Jerusalem and the Old City

Preservation of Palestinian identity

“The Israelis try to make us think that we do not have a history – to highlight this in the work with the children and the women, who in the end educate their children – all the aspects related to Palestinian identity”

As a center located at the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem and through their work with Jerusalemite children, Al-Saraya center staff are in a unique position to observe how Palestinian identity is undermined by the Israeli occupation. The Al-Saraya director and program coordinator spoke about the difficulties they face when trying to address the confusion in the identity of children attending the center. They try to counter this problem through activities which in turn emphasize the Palestinian

identity. The center also aims to be a space for the celebration of national days and occasions, since Palestinian national events cannot be celebrated in the schools within Jerusalem. As the director of the center states:

“My dream is to see the children in the old city able to demand their rights... What [we] need is to make the Palestinians strong in their minds. In this way I will not be afraid even if occupation persists ... we will maintain our identity”

Housing

In the focus group discussion with women, participants spoke of the inadequate size of their homes in the old city, which often only consist of one or two rooms. One woman said they are five family members in a single room. Another said that they are seven including children aged 3-20. *“There is no privacy!”* exclaimed a focus group participant, whose son has to sleep in the same room along with her and her husband.

Dealing with confined and chaotic household environments, while at the same time trying to fulfil household responsibilities, can put a lot of strain on families, in particular on mothers. A participant in the focus group discussion with mothers described to us a relatively normal day: *“Yesterday all my children had exams, the kids started fighting, so I had to try and separate them. At the same time I needed to cook and clean and do laundry.”*

This pressure can become overwhelming, especially when, as one mother told us, there is *“no place to go relax.”* It is for this reason that one family is lucky to have second house in Hebron, where they have relatives: *“for the children to breathe.”* It must be mentioned that despite having a second house this family and other live in fear of having their Jerusalemite resident status revoked *“I’m always afraid of them [Israeli authorities] coming to check for our presence in the house when we are not there”*. The stresses of confinement for Jerusalem families and women especially was also mentioned and confirmed by Saraya center staff.

Table 1: Living conditions of Jerusalemite women inside and outside the Old City of Jerusalem			
Variable	In old city	Out of old city	Total
House status			
Owned	9	26	35
Normal rent	10	10	20
Old rent	21	2	23
Total	40	38	78

Satisfaction with home			
Yes very	10	16	26
Yes, medium	12	19	31
Yes slightly	5	4	9
Not at all	13	1	14
Total	40	40	80
Comfort with home space			
Yes very	10	10	20
Yes, medium	9	21	30
Yes slightly	4	3	7
Not at all	17	6	23
Total	40	40	80
Comfort with home environment			
Yes very	5	9	14
Yes, medium	17	17	34
Yes slightly	7	12	19
Not at all	7	0	7
Total	36	38	74

Another problem related to housing in the Old City is the lack of study space available for children, making it difficult, if not impossible, for them to concentrate on their studies. This often leads to children achieving poor results and eventually dropping-out from school altogether. *“Although she wanted to continue, she can’t study so she couldn’t continue,”* said one woman. *“We are really affected by this.”* Another woman mentioned that the only space for her children to study is at the al Aqsa mosque: *“Of course they study at al Aqsa”* she told us. *“Where else can she study? There is no space. God willing she succeeds.”*

Table 2: Some indicators of living and study space conditions for Jerusalemite children inside and outside the Old City of Jerusalem

Child friendly environment	In old city	Out of old city	Total
Yes very	3	5	8
Yes, medium	8	10	18
Yes slightly	9	6	15
Not at all	11	3	14
Total	31	24	55
Appropriateness of place of doing homework			
Yes very	3	9	12
Yes, medium	6	6	12
Yes slightly	7	5	12
Not at all	12	0	12
Total	28	20	48

In addition to being small, some of the mothers complained of the poor physical state of many of the houses of the Old City. They spoke of mould, deteriorating structures, and the desperate need for renovations. One mother even explained that part of her house collapsed on her causing a concussion.

Table 3: Needs for home modification of Jerusalemite women inside and outside the Old City of Jerusalem

Needs for home modification	In old city	Out of old city	Total
Nothing	9	16	25
Structural	6	8	14
Space limitation	9	8	17
Structural and space	16	4	20
Other	0	2	2

Total	40	38	76
-------	----	----	----

A staff member informed us that there is general consensus among organizations in the Old City on the need for renovations. The main problem, as she expressed, is that it is a long and tedious process, requiring a bureaucracy that is weighted against them. Any renovations require permits and assessments by archaeologists, the Jerusalem municipality and the police. Even then, applying for permits is often futile since they are so difficult to obtain. *“The Israelis don’t allow anything,”* said one woman. *“We need permits for everything... We can’t even get a permit to make a window in our house; not even the smallest one,”* she continued.

The other main problem that pertains to renovations is the cost. One mother told us that, although Gulf countries have donated to help with repairs, her house is not a priority. *“We save only to repair,”* she explained. The cost of renovations is on top of the generally high cost of living in the Old City. *“Everything is expensive,”* lamented one woman; *“it is so much less in the [rest of the] West Bank”*.

The high cost of living in the Old City impacts families in other ways as well. The responsibility of the father to provide for the family, for instance, poses a significant challenge to the father’s ability to involve himself in parenting. As one woman explained *“if the man works eight hours per day, half of the salary and more must go to utilities and such for the house and to the schools! This means that he usually needs another job and therefore can’t have a role with the family.”* The survey showed that of the 48 husbands who had full-time employment (10 had only part-time employment and 5 were unemployed) half worked in construction, a field of work that is often season related, allows rather insecure income and requires great physical effort.

Table 4: Types of work of the husbands of surveyed women (n=48)	
Construction related	24
Office administration	3
Medical related	2
Food related	5
Guard, cleaner	6
Shop owner	3
Other	5

Despite the bad living conditions in the Old City, residents continue living there as a result of the often even higher cost of living outside the Old City walls in Jerusalem. For many, living in the rest of the West Bank would be preferable, at least from a financial perspective. The problem is that if they do not maintain their physical presence in Jerusalem, families risk losing their Jerusalem IDs, and with that, their ability to move freely on either side of the Wall.

Living under occupation in Jerusalem

A number of the women’s focus group participants and their families have to deal with uncertain and tenuous residency statuses. A major constraint imposed on the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and their families by the Israeli occupation is related to the uncertain and tenuous situation they are forced into when married to Palestinians from the rest of the occupied West Bank. One woman told us that, even though she had a permit to live in Jerusalem while she awaited official family unification and Jerusalem residence status, she was detained by the Israeli army as she tried to cross a checkpoint to visit a relative.

Table 5: Respondents’ exposure to occupation violence (n=77)	
Detained once or more at checkpoint	27
Searched at a checkpoint	35
Interrogated by army and/or settlers	20
Exposed to tear gas	56
Exposed to sound bombs	45
Family unification problems	13
Forbidden to travel	5
Family members forbidden to travel	15

One woman spoke of an event in which the National Insurance Department of the Israeli Ministry of Interior raided her house at the middle of night to check if all members of her family, including her husband, who has West Bank ID, were living there. This is just one example of the various measures employed by the Israeli Ministry of interior to determine whether Palestinians are in Jerusalem without Israeli permission or if Jerusalemite Palestinian have their ‘center of life’ elsewhere. Another is by harassing ID-holders about the whereabouts of their friends and family on occasions when they are in contact with Israeli officials.

Surveillance is, moreover, a major characteristic of life for Palestinians in the Old City, regardless of ID statuses. *“They have cameras everywhere!”* exclaimed one of the women’s focus group discussion participants. A number of participants told us about the particularly invasive monitoring that they are subject to when trying to enter the Al-Asqa mosque. Those wanting to enter the mosque must leave their IDs with the Israeli police and have their pictures taken. *“They take your picture and do things!”* said one women, visibly upset by the subject. *“They even hit women; they don’t care!”* But she is resistant: *“I keep going as if I don’t hear him when he asks my name. Once I asked for his mother’s name!... We should not comply!”*

Table 6: Relation between Distress, human insecurity and wellbeing scales and living conditions of respondents

Distress		
	Low to medium	High
Satisfaction with home		
No	1	13
Yes	25	37
Total	26	50
Space in home for comfort		
No	5	18
Yes	21	32
Total	26	50
Appropriateness of place of doing homework		
No	0	12
Yes	14	22
Total	14	34
Home ownership		
Owned	17	16
Normal or old rent	8	33
Total	25	39
Wellbeing		
Place of residence	Low	High
Inside old city	24	13
Outside old city	15	25
Total	39	38
Space in home for comfort		
No	16	23
Yes	7	32
Total	23	55
Appropriateness of doing homework		
No	10	2
Yes	17	19
Total	27	21
Home ownership		
Owned	10	25
Normal or old rent	28	13
Total	38	38
Human insecurity		
	Low to	High

medium		
Space in home for comfort		
No	6	17
Yes	25	28
Total	31	45
Home ownership		
Owned	19	14
Normal or old rent	12	29
Total	31	43

Confrontational and uncomfortable encounters between Palestinians and Israeli police and settlers occur on a daily basis in the Old City. Many of the stories shared with us by focus group discussion participants do not even take place in public places, such as in front of the mosque, but rather in the private homes of Palestinian residents. One women’s family is surrounded by two settler families that are particularly intrusive and “*complain [to the police] about everything.*” “*I don’t dare open a window, because they will shine a flashlight on us to see inside[our home]*” she told us. In another instance, a house was raided by Israeli as a result of a noise complaint from a settler family. “*It felt like a war at my house,*” said the mother, whose son was arrested during the raid.

Table 7: Respondents experiences of suffocation due to the Israeli occupation inside and outside the old city of Jerusalem

Suffocation by the occupation	Inside the old city	Outside the old city	Total
Yes	29	36	65
No	8	3	11
Total	37	39	76

Many of the participants in the focus group discussions expressed a feeling of suffocation: “*There are arrests left and right!*” we were told. “*My children can’t breathe, they can’t play. We are always’ the terrorists’.*” Other forms of punishment and harassment include pepper spray (“for anything”), house

arrest, and being ordered to leave the Old City for a specified period of time. Regarding the latter, we heard of one case in which a women’s son was ordered to leave their home in the Old City for two weeks. The boy went to stay with his brother elsewhere in Jerusalem, which ended up causing tensions with his brother’s wife.

Education in the Old City of Jerusalem

The tone among women in the focus group discussion was of general dissatisfaction with the quality of schools that are accessible to them. They noted the need for new schools and expressed frustrations at the unwillingness of the Jerusalem municipality to grant permits for building on new sites or for renovation of existing infrastructure.

Women in the FGD spoke of *sulta* (Waqf) schools, but also *baladiyyeh* (Jerusalem municipality) and private schools. They told us mostly about the type of teaching their children receive and the way teachers treat their children.

Although women expressed sympathy for the plight of teachers in the *sulta* schools—who they explained are not paid sufficiently well and have few workers’ rights—widespread dissatisfaction was apparent. “*Most of the teachers are terrible,*” said one woman. “*There is no spirit for teaching*” said another. The same woman expressed concern about the implications of her son’s teacher telling his students that he regrets being a teacher. “*The Israelis give more money to garbage collectors,*” he told them.

According to women in the FGD, children are exposed to a high prevalence of violence by staff at their schools. We heard of several examples of this, including: a teacher who “*stepped on her child with her foot*”; and another who “*carried her child from the ears*”. In another instance, we were told of a child who was hit by his school principal and came home from school “*all bruised*”.

The women also complained that teachers at Palestinian Authority schools do not communicate with the parents enough, one woman told us that in her son’s school, they distributed an exam schedule and later they changed it without telling the parents. Another complaint was that they do not give enough homework, and that they discriminate between children . “*They stigmatize ‘problem children’*” said one mother. The phenomenon of teachers stigmatizing ‘problem children’ was confirmed by Saraya center staff and mentioned as one of the challenges they face when they try to cooperate with teachers, and in their work with children.

Table 7: Respondents satisfaction about schools dealing with students’ learning and behavioural problems

Satisfaction with schools attendance to learning problems	Number of respondents
Yes	19
Slightly or no	27

Total	46
Satisfaction with schools attendance to behavioural problems	Number of respondents
Yes	18
Slightly or no	27
Total	45

Saraya staff stated that violence between students at schools is also a serious problem. Although they told us that both verbal and physical abuse is prevalent in girls and boys schools, they noted that physical violence is more common among boys, which they attribute to poverty on the one hand and the reaffirmation of their masculinity on the other. Girls exhibit more verbal abuse and bullying than physical violence, especially in older grades.

The unwillingness of the Israeli authorities to grant building permits, coupled with a general lack of funds in Palestinian Authority schools, means that the students furthermore often suffer from cramped spaces and a lack of amenities such as labs and playground.

Israeli administrated municipality schools, on the contrary, are better funded and generally have more space, including playgrounds. More funds also translate into better salaries and more rights for the teachers. The quality of education at these schools was generally seen as better, but lacking in religious and political education.

While the municipality schools provide children with awareness about children’s rights, some women expressed reservation about the way in which this information is presented, as they felt that the schools incited the children against their parents.

Overall it was not clear which schools (Palestinian Authority or municipal) were better or worse in the Old City of Jerusalem. Clear, however, was the widespread dissatisfaction that exists and the need for more schools, better teachers, and less violence in the existing schools.

Children in the focus group discussions at Al-Saraya did not specifically mention clear or definitive differences between the Palestinian Authority and municipality schools, although they seemed to express more criticism of Palestinian Authority schools in relation to the lack of facilities (small yards, no school trips), and dissatisfaction with teachers (teaching and relations).

Mothers surveyed reported that children go Municipality schools, Palestinian Authority schools (only within the old city of Jerusalem), and private schools. There were no main trends in the questions comparing the three schools, except that overall there seemed to be somewhat more satisfaction with the private schools in comparison to municipality of Palestinian Authority schools.

C. Services provided by Al-Saraya Center and implications for women and children beneficiaries

Programs

Al- Saraya Center is currently operating on a new strategic plan as of spring 2013.⁶ Its programs focus on three types of beneficiaries: children (7-15 years), youth (18-22 years), and women (>25 years).

Al- Saraya Center provides a diverse range of programming for its beneficiaries, who mainly reside in the Old City of Jerusalem. These include academic-oriented interventions such as its illiteracy program for adult women and academic support services(Parallel education) , a children’s literature program, and an after-school club. The Center also offers non-academic programming such as an empowerment program (beauty care, personal skill development, awareness workshops) for adult women and vocational guidance, and open days, for children.

Program	Age	Number	Beneficiaries
Children's literature program	25-42	60	Women (indirect beneficiaries through their children)
Social/academic support program	25-42	20	
Women empowerment: Beautification and skin care training	16-42	22-30	Women (direct beneficiaries)
Women empowerment: Illiteracy program	16-42	15	Women (direct beneficiaries)
Women empowerment: Parallel education	16-42	15	Women (direct beneficiaries)
Women empowerment: Development of personal skills	16-42	52	Women (direct beneficiaries)

Women empowerment: Accessories course	16-42	15-20	Women (direct beneficiaries)
Women empowerment: Embroidery course	16-42	15-20	Women (direct beneficiaries)
Awareness workshops	16-42	150	Women (direct beneficiaries)
Children's literature- evening groups	8-15	90	Children
Children's literature- schools	8-15	180	Children
Awareness program: Vocational guidance	8-15	1000	Children
Awareness program: Awareness workshop	8-15	200	Children
Academic support program: Open days	8-15	600	Children
Academic support program: training in schools	8-15	70	Children
Academic support: Evening club	7-11	60	Children
Academic support program: Open groups	7-11	15	Children

Approach

Al-Saraya Center believes in the “importance of learning, comprehensive education and the need to bring about social change,” values that are evident in the Center’s approach to programming.

In their academic programs, Al-Saraya Center’s outreach relies mainly on communicating and cooperating with Palestinian Authority schools. As for their non-academic programs they rely mainly on community networks and acquaintances.

Over the years the center has developed long-standing relationships within the Old City of Jerusalem community – such as the women who have been beneficiaries of their workshops and programs for as many as ten years in some cases (woman from FGD).

Women:

Through the focus group discussion (FGD) conducted with women beneficiaries of Al-Saraya Center’s programming, we gained insight into the benefits they receive from their relationship with the Center as well as their needs and challenges that remain to be met. The women receive varied types of training courses (wool work, sewing, English, beauty care, etc), as the center designs their programs according to the needs and wants of the women they work with. One participant in the FGD stated that “whatever training we need, they [the Saraya Center] provides”. In addition, the women benefit from life skills they acquire from their relationships with the Center such as advice and skills in various aspects of their lives including parenting, communicating with schools and their children, and time management.

It is clear Al-Saraya Center is both able to provide long-term service to the women (some have attended since 1-3 years, other have attended for more than 4 years, as well as catering for new service beneficiaries, with almost half of the participants had attended the Saraya center less than a year.

Table 9: Respondents relationship with Al-Saraya	
Years attending Al-Saraya	
Less than 1 year	35
1-3 years	19
4 years or more	14
Total	68
How they learned about the center	
from relatives	21
From their children	7
Other centers	11
combination of sources	21
Total	60

Application of knowledge from Al-Saraya	
Self	13
Family	47
Combination	16
Total	76

The women joined Al-Saraya Center and its programs for a variety of reason, and almost all the participants had a combination of reasons for why they joined the center. The reasons were a mix of the following: filling free time, going out of the house, social relations, dealing with their children, getting more knowledge, learning vocational skill, and increasing income.

al- Saraya Center also serves as a space for the women of the Old City of Jerusalem in which they feel they have their own time (*“my day at Saraya is my own special day”*) where they can also relieve their stress, and enjoy an atmosphere of privacy and confidentiality. As one woman stated, *“What is nice about the women here is confidentiality! I take a course with the women but not always do I know all the women. I don’t speak about what I hear out of the centre!”*

Table 10: Other programs respondents would like to have	
Type of programs	
Educational courses	23
Handicrafts	8
Other	12
Total	43
Reason for new programs	
Benefit from courses especially for practical reasons *	13
Developing life skills	7
Better able to teach and take care of the children	4
Total	24

*To increase income, to be better able to interact with those working in Israeli hospitals and other public services

Children:

Most of the children that the center works with are those who have academic, behavioral and/or social difficulties. As mentioned above, these children participate various programs: the children’s literature program, the after-school club, vocational training and other awareness raising activities and open days.

Through a series of meetings with the staff of Al-Saraya Center and participant observation of the after-school club we learned about the various benefits and challenges that both the Center and the children acquire and face.

Overall, Al-Saraya Center staff are very committed to providing positive and engaged environment for the children of the Old City of Jerusalem. They foster this environment in all their programs through positive encouragement of the children, and avoiding judgments against them in relation to their social or academic difficulties, an approach that often presents a sharp contrast to how they are treated in schools from both their teachers and other students.

The children themselves see the staff and the volunteers that work with them as role models. In one case a girl participant in the after-school club had mentioned that she didn't want to continue her studies, that she'd rather become a stay-at-home mother, but after her participation in the club, she developed ambitions of becoming a teacher just like the volunteer who worked with her (success story shared by Al-Saraya staff member). The children had a good working relationship with Al-Saraya staff because they perceived them in a more positive light than their teachers at schools, as one of the girls from the focus group discussion stated *"The [Al-Saraya staff] are different from the [teachers at] school... they talk to us as if we are sisters."*

The positive learning environment that the academic programs at Al-Saraya Center are framed within also unlock potential skills that may not have been recognized in schools, such as one boy who was labeled a problem child by his teacher, but in fact was great in mathematics outside of the school context (success story shared by Al-Saraya staff member).

One of the issues that Al-Saraya Center tries to address is violence among children in the Old City, specifically in their schools, such as through a project called "An Environment Free of Violence" *بيئة خالية من العنف*. The school principals acknowledged a decrease in violence among the children, but not an environment free of violence.

Volunteers:

Al-Saraya Center began its recruitment of volunteers in a non-systematic way, and the volunteers came only on an occasional basis, such as for activities like open days for children. Currently the Center recruits volunteers from Palestinian universities and is working on having regular volunteers, who participate in trainings relevant to their area of volunteering (ex: how to use creative methods of teaching for the after-school club), regular meetings, and systematic evaluations by Saraya staff. This is part of the center's vision for reviving volunteerism in the community. The motivation behind the volunteer engagement with Al-Saraya Center stems from a sense of wanting to benefit the Jerusalem community and maintain its Palestinian identity, as one volunteer explained *"[I] got involved because I wanted to help the community... all my family tries to volunteer"* (participant observation – after-school club) providing the family as another motivation for volunteerism in the old city of Jerusalem.

Volunteering at Al-Saraya Center provides the youth volunteers with an opportunity to cultivate skills such as: designing activities (for after-school club students), bearing the responsibility of being a role model, time management and commitment.

The volunteers also benefit from the training from consultants (experts in fields of education, social work, counseling), their continued supervision, and debriefing sessions. As there are certain situations with the children, which need further follow-up and advice from more qualified personnel.

The relationship between Al-Saraya staff and the volunteers is characterized by friendship and respect, and commitment to the wellbeing and development of the children they work with.

As for the relationship between the volunteers and the children, we noticed in the participant observation at the after-school club that the volunteers were attentive and the children looked up and seemed close and attached to the volunteers.

C. Challenges and needs

Women:

The women we met in the FGD at Al-Saraya Center exhibited high satisfaction with the programs and services that the center provides. However, some spoke about their confinement within the old city: *"We don't go much out of the old city, it would be so nice to sometimes go on a trip with the people of the center!"*

Some also mentioned that a better command of Hebrew and English would help them in their daily lives, since they so often have to communicate with Israelis in relation to all kinds of administrative issues. However, in relation to teaching Hebrew, Al-Saraya Center would counter that suggestion with the need **to advocate for the right to Jerusalem Palestinians to speak their own language and thus the duty of the Israeli municipality to have Arabic-speaking officials, as well as bi-lingual forms in relation to all administrative issues.**

The women also mentioned that they would **like more educational courses especially in the form of advice or counseling sessions on how to deal with marital problems, as well as courses to help them in how to teach their children (skills, exercises, games...etc).** The center can design courses with the support of external trainers to attend to this need of the women.

Children:

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are particularly inhibited from succeeding, according to staff, because there are no contextualized tools for identifying these problems among Palestinian children in East Jerusalem. *"They want to detect learning difficulties,"* said one staff member, *"but they do not have the tools, and the tools they have do not apply [to our context]."* In general, however, Al-Saraya staff noted that underachievement at school cannot, for the most part, be attributed to personal learning difficulties or disabilities alone. Rather, they suggested that *"if most of the class does not have good marks...it is either due to social problems, or to the quality of the teachers and/or the curriculum."*

A study for the development of an instrument for the diagnosis of learning problems and the adaptation of instruments for the Palestinian context is needed, rather than the translated international or Israeli (Hebrew) tools that do not fit the Palestinian context and Arabic language.

The life skills curriculum was not still developed in a way accessible to children of all age groups, and those who volunteered in it still needed more in-depth training and mentoring. **The center needs funding to employ a consultant to give continuous support to the team in training, supervision as well as follow-up with the volunteers and Al-Saraya staff.**

Another challenge that Al-Saraya Center face is that center does not have enough space for helping the children and attend to their different needs. The staff suggested that they might **utilize schools buildings after school hours to help the children with homework. This would help in solving the problem of not having appropriate space to do homework, as well as improve the children's views of their schools not only as a place of formal teaching space, but also a space which they enjoy being at.** Further developing this idea would need financial support to cover the expenses of maintaining the schools, and the extra hours of work of the school staff, who might have to stay.

Volunteers:

While most of the volunteers are very motivated and excited about working in the Al-Saraya Center programs, it remains a challenge to bring them together for follow-up meetings and/or training sessions, as each one of them has a different university class schedule. There is ample room for the further development of a working relationship between the center and the volunteers' universities. The volunteer experience at Al-Saraya Center (and other community centers) could be explored as part of the curriculum of social work and community psychology, to allow the volunteers, the community centers, and the universities to gain maximum benefit from the experience. **Formalizing the relationship between the center and some of the universities, especially in courses such as community psychology, and social work would better prepare the students for engaging with the programs and the children at the center, as well as safeguard good supervision from the teachers at the universities.**

Parents:

Levels of communication with the parents of children enrolled Al-Saraya Center depend on the willingness of parents to follow up. According to Al-Saraya staff there are those who follow up regularly, both with the center and with their child's school, and those who do not follow on account of social, financial, and other hardships. **A brainstorming session or research can be done to explore ways to motivate such parents.**

Teachers and the Ministry of Education:

Al-Saraya Center works with Palestinian Authority schools only. Teachers within this system have to endure the challenges and restraints associated with the difficult financial situation of the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education, including unstable salaries due to frequent cuts in PA funding. Many also suffer while crossing Israeli checkpoints on a daily basis (if they do not live in Jerusalem), and those who live in Jerusalem must deal with the various challenges associated with living in Jerusalem, as detailed above.

Al-Saraya Center staff and volunteers cooperate, and follow-up with teachers, specifically those of children involved in their academic programs. They are aware that this poses an extra burden on the teachers, who are already struggling to cope with poor work and living conditions, but insist that maintaining even minimal communication is essential. **This communication becomes especially important regarding Saraya programme participants who are deemed 'problem children' and stigmatized by their teachers. A formative assessment of the after-school program is recommended to improve it.**

Some teachers continue to use violence in order to discipline children, posing an additional challenge to Al-Saraya Center in its efforts to reduce violence in the lives of the children they work with. It is for such reasons that **Al-Saraya Center aims and hopes to be able to train teachers, not only in new and innovative ways of teaching, but also and perhaps more importantly, by addressing their social difficulties.**

Yet even when certain teachers are motivated to attend trainings or workshops about teaching, the Ministry of Education usually does not allow trainings to be within working hours, and teachers usually cannot attend trainings after working hours due to familial and other commitments. Meanwhile, in the exceptional circumstances when teachers are able to attend trainings, they find it very difficult to challenge traditional ways of teaching and apply what they learned, due to the rigidity of the educational system imposed by the Ministry of Education.

Dealing with the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education (MoE) to cooperate on certain programs for the children (specifically the after-school club) has been arduous. For example, the Ministry has attempted to impose its employees on Al-Saraya Center projects (as consultants for the project), and exploit the funding that it receives. There was also confusion between Al-Saraya Center and MoE regarding the number of classrooms Al-Saraya Center can have access to for the after-school club.

One of the limitations of Al-Saraya Center's work currently is that they only work with Palestinian Authority schools, thereby neglecting the needs of children who attend schools managed by the Jerusalem municipality. Since Saraya does not formally cooperate with the municipality, on account of it being an arm of the Israeli occupation, the Center tries to find alternative ways to approach these children, for example through their parents, other relatives or non-school related venues.

Internal challenge - a high turnover of employees:

The rather high turn-over of employees in some of Al-Saraya's programs provides a challenge to continuity and sustainability especially in the programs with children, where the building of trust is an important component. **Having a consultant with good knowledge of how the center and the programs work will contribute to enhancing and facilitating the experience of the program coordinators.** Additionally, having this consultant will make transitions between old and new program coordinators easier and smoother. Training for the staff of Al-Saraya and their volunteers, should always include supervision and follow-up. Such **supervision and follow-up should be continuous throughout the duration of the program, and not just at the beginning, to secure sustainability.**

Other organizations:

Staff at Al-Saraya Center expressed that there is a lack of networking and awareness about what similar organizations are doing in the Old City and in Palestine as a whole. They suggested that **a mapping exercise could identify the organizations that work in the same field, and consequently a network could be developed in which the community centers in Jerusalem can meet on a regular basis. This would allow them to periodically inventorise what services are provided and to bridge gaps in services provision or fulfill unmet needs.**

D. The future

Al-Saraya Center makes continuous efforts to improve its programming and approach. In the course of our work with them we have learned that they have great ambitions for the future, even if in reality they face limitations in relation to financial resources and technical capacity, and in relation to the specific challenges due to the political situation of Jerusalem and the Old City.

One of the next steps that **Al-Saraya Center hopes to take is to include more extra-curricular/non-academic programs for children, such as the life skills aspect of the after-school club.**

Al-Saraya Center hopes to encourage motivated volunteers to disseminate the knowledge they have acquired by sharing their experiences with their peers at the university as a continuation of their community service work. The director of Al-Saraya Center considers advocacy a central priority, and sees that one of the first points of advocacy should be with the universities and their students. Since these students will be shaping the future of education in Palestine (as teachers, staff at the MoE, etc), the belief is that the earlier they work with them the better. It is recommended that regular workshops on how to disseminate what student volunteers learn in working with Al-Saraya Center, both in terms of skills and in terms of advocacy related to the situation of both the Palestinians in Jerusalem and the Old City especially through university channels.

The young people, who are now entering the field of education field can in the future affect and advocate for change in the policies and strategies of the MoE. Such suggested changes might involve specific trainings for teachers in educational and teaching skills, as well as a change to the selection criteria for teachers for the schools in the Jerusalem and the Old City. This should also be a part of the efforts to change the view of education and teaching as a field that students resort to only when they fail in other subjects or fields. The field should have teachers who have motivation and passion for their work.

The director of Al-Saraya Center has great ambitions, as she sees Al-Saraya Center as a platform and launching point for change in the Palestinian community. Her larger vision encompasses the whole of Palestine and the struggle against the occupation. In her opinion, “if we start by strengthening the minds of the children, and giving them the tools to demand their rights, stand firm against the occupation without fear, and maintain our Palestinian identity, then we can work towards persistence and resistance, and a strategy in the struggle for political justice”.

5. Recommendations

Based on ICPH study findings and following consultation with the Saraya director and her assistant, we recommend that financial and technical support may further enhance Al-Saraya Center for Community Support’s capacity to serve Palestinian families in East Jerusalem and the Old City, in particularly:

1. To support Al-Saraya in expanding advocacy to draw attention to the plight of Palestinians in Jerusalem and the Old City
2. To gain international confirmation of the right of Jerusalem Palestinians to speak their own language, and therefore the duty of the Israeli municipality to have Arabic-speaking officials, as well as bi-lingual forms in relation to all administrative issues pertaining to the illegal annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel
3. To develop more educational courses for women, especially courses that will help them support their children in their academic achievements
4. To set up a program that will provide counseling sessions form women dealing with with parenting and/or marital problems

5. To organize short trips for the women to allow them some time out of the Old City as a way of presenting stress relief
6. To conduct a preparatory study for the development or adaptation of screening and diagnostic instruments for learning problems validated for the Palestinian context
7. To hire a consultant who can provide long-term periodic support to - Al-Saraya senior staff to mentor them in the training, supervision and follow-up of the volunteers and junior staff working in the - Al-Saraya psychosocial programs
8. To secure payment of fees incurred when utilizing schools buildings after school hours to help the children with homework.
9. To further develop the relationship between the center and some of the Palestinian universities, especially in terms of strengthening the link between theory and practice: i.e. regarding student volunteering [at Al-Saraya] as a learning asset, and adapting courses such as community psychology, and social work to better prepare students for the work in the field.
10. To help Al-Saraya volunteers disseminate the practical knowledge they have acquired by sharing their experiences with their peers at the university
11. To investigate what kind of a program might work to motivate parents to be more involved with their children's school and extra-curricular learning activity, and how to develop such a program.
12. To set up a sustainable system in order to improve Al-Saraya's communication with teachers in Jerusalem schools, especially in relation to the so-called 'problem children', who are enrolled in Al-Saraya's after school club
13. To engage in a formative assessment of the after-school program, following its first year of functioning
14. To train teachers in identifying and addressing social difficulties of their students
15. To organize a mapping exercise which would identify the organizations that work in the same field or complement the work of Al-Saraya Center.
16. To initiate a networking mechanism so that gaps in services provided by the different centers can be addressed. work of these centers
17. To further expand the Al-Saraya Center's extra-curricular/non-academic programs for children, e.g. the life skills aspect of the after-school club.