

Cordaid



MA'AN
Development Center

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Theatre Day Productions

Palestinian
Women's

VOICES
and their
STORIES

Palestinian Women's
Voices and their Stories





Figure 1: Palestinian women from Gaza participating at the workshop that took place in November 2015.

Introduction

Only when the lived experience of women at the grassroots is effectively and significantly brought into security policy and practice we can hope for a sustainable peace and inclusive security for the entire community.

The following report presents a unique initiative called the Barometer of Local Women's Security, which was introduced in Gaza in November 2015. The "Barometer" has been designed by Cordaid's programme on Women's Leadership for Peace and Security, and has been implemented between October 2014 and December 2015 in partnership with a total of eight Palestinian local partners engaging Palestinian women across the region.

The Barometer provides insights not available through existing indices or statistics. Peace indices lack a gender lens, and gender indices lack a conflict and security perspective. The barometer fills this gap, and complements existing statistics with nuanced information from the ground. The Barometer uncovers security issues that would not have come to light through other means, and helps to ensure silenced voices are no longer ignored. A distinguishing feature of the Barometer is its focus on local women's voices; the Barometer enables local women to work together to identify the security issues, of greatest concern to them, in their daily lives. Through the Barometer, women can monitor these issues so that they can raise their collective voice, influence, and translate them into political will and actions that address the root causes of insecurity at the local, national and international levels.

In the following pages we will provide a detailed report on the process that took place in Gaza from November 14 until November 19, 2015.

Women Peace and Security Agenda

The United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, marked formal recognition at the highest institutional level of the importance of the roles of women in conflict. It reaffirmed "the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building," and stressed "the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security."

Therefore, gender equality and women's participation must be defined as inseparable from peace, security and development. It is then crucial to examine the deep-rooted obstacles to women's empowerment and participation in peace and security, linking those to the drivers of conflict, structural gender inequalities and the gendered dynamics of power operating within conflict and post-conflict settings.

Since the landmark resolution UNSCR 1325, feminist and human rights organizations began to prepare initiatives and practical plans to examine and tackle deep-rooted obstacles to gender equality and women's participation and implement the articles of this resolution in various areas of conflict around the world.

A Unique Initiative:

The Barometer of Local Women's Security

The Barometer of Local Women's Security has been developed by Cordaid's Women's Leadership for Peace and Security Program, together with partners in conflict-affected countries, based on the premise that sustainable peace can only be achieved if local women are meaningfully involved in peace-building, security and conflict resolution processes.

Women's perspectives need to be taken up in all stages of decision-making and represented in all spaces where decisions are taken that directly affect the lives of women so that sustainable peace and security can be achieved. In order to gain local women's perspectives, it is necessary to create the conditions to enable women's voices to be expressed, heard and acted upon.

When women work together to express their concerns, their voice is stronger, more credible and difficult to ignore. Using this collective voice, women can attract the attention of other stakeholders – the government, police, security forces, local leaders and others – and begin to collaborate to change the root causes of insecurity so that women and their communities can live more peacefully.

The Barometer can help international organizations and bodies to represent legitimately the concerns of local women, strengthening accountability to women who experience conflict and insecurity. It makes the linkages needed to create pathways to systemic change for the security of women and their communities.

Why local women?

“Women” are not a singular and unified social category. The experience of women in urban areas differs greatly to the experience of women in remote rural areas who have limited access to resources, services and information.

These women are not well represented in national women's organisations and other entities. They have few avenues to influence the decisions that affect their lives and their communities.

Yet it is often local women who suffer most acutely from insecurity, fragility and power disparities – and who will continue to suffer unless they have the opportunities, tools and capacities to make themselves heard. The barometer offers an empowering way to voice and document the safety concerns of women at the local level.

The focus of Cordaid's barometer of local Women's security is on giving local women a voice, turning this into a credible evidence base and connecting this with policy and decision-making at local, national and international level.

Key features of the Barometer:

- Collects information on issues that local women feel are important based on their daily experience. Women's perspective on security is often different to that of others.
- Local women themselves collect the information, creating new skills, tools and opportunities.
- Helps to break the silence of women about their security. It uncovers security issues that wouldn't have come to light through other means, and helps to ensure these silenced voices are no longer ignored.
- Data collection goes hand-in-hand with awareness raising. Often women are not aware of the rights and security they are entitled to.
- Conflict is often very isolating. The Barometer creates the opportunity for women to connect with each other, to support each other and to organise for action in their community and beyond.
- Takes the voices of individual women and gives them collective power. They use this collective power to make themselves heard as credible stakeholders. The Barometer opens doors for women to sit with stakeholders and make themselves heard.

Our Workshop in Gaza



With the objective of building capacities on skills that enable women in Gaza to reflect, increase awareness, communicate, care about themselves and their communities, enhance the perception of their surroundings, as well as to realize, capture and analyze present concerns, and envision the future, a group of 30 women met from 14 until 19 November, 2015.

This was the first Barometer workshop in Gaza. We aimed to bring women together to deal with the security and safety concerns of their daily life. It is about the change that they desire and that they are able to bring about. For this purpose, staff members from Ma'an Development Center (Ma'an) and Theatre Days Production (TDP), women participating at TDP's Story Telling Program, as well as local women from rural, urban, and refugee communities in the Gaza Strip came together to recognize trends and patterns that connect their individual experience to a collective one, find a common voice and strengthen resilience. All partners and participants are committed to play a role in the empowerment of Palestinian communities in Gaza.

Ma'an and TDP hosted the workshop. Lisette Gast from Perspective and Sabina Atzei from Cordaid facilitated the workshop in collaboration with six co-trainers from both hosting organizations.

The program of the workshop includes a mix of elements and facilitation techniques that ensure the active participation of women, encouraging them to stay present and attentive to themselves as well as others. This careful selection of methods ensures that the different working styles of a diverse group of participants is acknowledged and respected. The following major areas were addressed within the four sessions of the program:

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- **Day one – The Past:** Women acknowledge the past as individuals and connect their experience to their local community and the world. They share stories of life.
 - **Day two – The Present:** Women map their main safety concerns that affect the daily lives of women in Gaza today. They share stories of hope.
 - **Day three – The Future:** Women build a safe space to share their hopes, fears and worries about the future.
 - **Day four – Our Collective Voice:** Women analyze their own stories of life and hope followed by their own reflections.

Why we participate?

MA'AN Development Center aims at supporting community resiliency through economic and social empowerment, focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalized: children, women, and youth. The Barometer of Local Women's Security Workshop is a first-step tool that facilitates community empowerment. The second step is the Active Citizens' workshop, which enables participants to plan and design their actions and initiatives aiming to achieve the change they desire for themselves and their communities. The Barometer workshop can be conducted with men as well as women.

Theatre Days Productions aims to provide the foundation for a peaceful development of Palestine, where Human and Children's Rights are fully respected, by assisting Palestinian youth in building their capacity for creative expression. Having witnessed the significant role that women and girls play in all aspects of our artistic work and in Palestinian society in general, TDP believes it is important to recognize and support that role as a critical agent for promoting vitality and transformation in Palestinian society. TDP's Women Storytelling Program is one initiative recognizing the role of women and girls in culture and performing arts, empowering them to tell their story. The Barometer presents a further opportunity to support that approach.

Day One: *Focus on the Past*



Figure 2: Participating women individually mark personal milestones

Ground Rules: The workshop started with an introduction and mutual agreement on the ground rules for the next days. From the onset, women were encouraged to actively participate, while they were respected if they chose otherwise.

Timeline: The purpose of the first session is to gather the group's history, share their stories, and acknowledge their past. In this session, women connect their individual experiences to a collective experience in their community and the world. They also observe and analyse differences and communalities.

Each woman was invited to think about notable milestones or significant happenings since 1980 until today from three different perspectives: personal, our community and the world. Individually, each participant could write it down in a collective timeline at the wall:

Collective Experiences: Three different groups were asked to look into different parts of the timeline and reflect on the collective experiences and events from the past. They acknowledged commonalities while connecting the individual to the whole. In addition, a fourth

group was asked to reflect and tell the story of the timeline as a whole with all its different perspectives (personal, community, world).

Reflections from the participants

"My life is occupied with challenges and my own problems prevented me to pay attention to what is happening outside."

"I have been overwhelmed by intense emotions; this exercise forced me to remember things I don't want to remember."

"All of us talk about the war, and we just remembered some world events that influenced our life, we sank in our own problems. This prevents us to be involved with other problems."

"We need much more time to talk about our memories, it really affects our emotions."

“The timeline on Gaza and the one of on the World brought me down. I felt exhausted. I felt more energetic writing on the personal timeline. Especially, I do love talking about bright and happy events.”

“I found it was easier to write about my personal life than to write about the world events. First, I wrote about events that affected Gaza, then about my personal life, but I found that my personal life is crowded with stories. Really I feel lost.”

“We usually think of negative events. This affects me, and makes me feel sad.”

Each group divided among themselves four different roles, including: dialog facilitator, note taker, reporter, and timekeeper.

The personal timeline was filled with much more events in comparison with the other two. They were mostly positive memories: graduation from university, getting a job, getting married, giving a birth to a child, traveling and or coming back to Gaza after long years abroad. There was a painful memory – the loss of the close relative.

The local community (Gaza) timeline was overwhelmed with the tragic and painful event of the Gaza Strip history: start of Palestinian Authority rule in Gaza, several uprisings (Intifadas) against occupation, the military turn over and Hamas ruling of Gaza, frequent and devastating wars against Gaza, fleeing and immigration abroad.

On the world timeline, memory went back to the negative world events. Participants mentioned the Gulf war, wars against Gaza, war in Iraq and Libya, and the end of Mubarak regime in Egypt, September 11 attack on the twin towers in the USA, ISIS, and tragic events in Paris in November 2015.

Managing Emotions: Co-trainer Hanaa (TDP) introduced a technique that provides participants with a simple tool to manage and release extreme emotions, offering immediate self-care by using simple finger-holding techniques or keeping your energy by crossing your legs and uniting your hands. These techniques were very important for the next session, during which women shared and listened to each other’s stories.

Figure 3: Groups discussing timelines of the past



Collective Reflection of the Personal Timeline

"We are a group of women, who took the courage, together, to put our life story in a timeline from birth until now. Each one of us spoke about her graduation, engagement, marriage, and childbearing. By talking about our children we forgot to talk about our childhood. Some of us were hired, while others were fired, some were divorced and deprived from seeing their kids and some lost their parents, sons or houses. Other women were happy from having a new baby, reuniting with people they loved from Libya, Algeria or Saudi Arabia."

"We are getting older and older, some of our dreams became true, but unfortunately others failed to achieve their dreams, but we are still alive, full of energy, courage, and inspiration to draw our dreams, and continue our life."

"In spite of losing dear people, hope is still there, when one door closes, another opens, there are many things we may settle for in life like marriage, education or building a house."

Stories of Life: Participants were divided into pairs. Each participant chose a partner to share their personal stories with: "choose a person whom you FEEL you WANT to tell your own story..." Nobody was forced to tell a story. The group needed active listening skills to help their partners gain confidence and encourage them to tell their personal stories and share some insights. While telling their stories, participants tried to convey the detailed picture around them, by describing the environment and paying attention to sensory elements of the story: sound, light, smell, and colour, etc.

At the end of the exercise, the facilitator asked the participants about their feelings. Some of the comments and reflections of the first day are shared in the column beside. The women took the work seriously and noted their stories carefully.

Closing the day: In the closing round the facilitator asked the participants to describe their day in one word. Participants shared: *Happy, better, amazing day, nice, more active, tired, inspired, grateful, interesting, varies, hopeful, fantastic, pained.*

Feelings and Emotions:

"At the beginning, my partner felt shy, but I encouraged her to tell her story."

"Telling and listening is healing by itself, by sharing my story I was more comfortable, and through listening, I helped to release my partner's stress."

Reflection on day 1

"I went home and opened the Internet for the dates when important events happened in the world. I felt embarrassed because I could not remember any dates."

"It is the first time for me to join such exercises. I think it was a good opportunity to talk about myself and listen to others."

"For me, it was a nice day, I could release the negative emotions, but I hated remembering things that I don't like to remember."

"I felt exhausted talking about my story is something difficult, but I hope to have a promising future."

"I was really confused thinking how to start my story. Really, I didn't feel comfortable."



Figure 4: Women (in pairs) interviewing, listening, sharing and documenting their life stories

Day Two:

Focus on the Present



Figure 5: Mind Map of issues affecting our daily lives

Mind map of trends influencing our daily lives (brain storming): the purpose of this session is to create a shared picture of all the issues that influence our daily lives today. This is a brainstorming exercise that captures the different experiences and viewpoints of different people. There is no judgment or discussion around any of the contributions. By doing this exercise, we could get a glimpse of a larger picture, establish relationships between different issues, and discover specific trends that affect the whole system.

Co-trainer Ameera (Ma'an) facilitated this session. "Our mind map" presented the issues that affect the safety of women's daily lives. The group was asked to be specific and give real examples from their own lives. The trends were social, political, environmental, and cultural. Some of the trends were negative, while others were positive. Thanks to the diversity of the group, there were many different experiences and viewpoints.

Feelings and Emotions

The facilitator asked participants about their feelings after the mind-mapping exercise:

"I found that lots of the negative trends are actually decreasing, I think this is due to our ability to change."

"Despite of all oppressing and stressing matters, we still have examples of outstanding women that can change and continue."

"Now I fear for my daughter's future, how she will be accommodated in this society."

"We have to find ways to resolve or even help in finding a solution."

"Some felt hopeless, surprised, pained, or helpless."

"We have to find hope in the middle of those problems."

Trends from the Mind Map:

1. Bad socioeconomic situation: Unemployment among female graduates. Academic studies do not meet the real needs of the local market;
2. Increase of negative perception of women in the community;
3. Unfair employment criteria for women and corruption during selection of employees. Some women are selected because of their appearance rather than their experience and qualifications;
4. Gaza's women do not occupy key positions and local decision-making posts;
5. Continuous oppression for women in peaceful demonstrations and the suppression of their freedom of expression;
6. Domestic violence as a result of family members with drug addiction;
7. Sexual harassment as a phenomenon increased in Gaza;
8. Frequent childbearing affects the physical and psychological health of women;
9. Women's increased vulnerability to suffer from malnutrition. Women often prioritize the nutrition of their children and neglect their own needs;
10. Early marriage, with its related social and health problems, constitutes a major area of concern;
11. There was no agreement around the education trends of women/girls: some said that there are more young women in Gaza that complete school and get higher educations, others did not agree. It was mentioned that education of women is viewed more positively.
12. Continuous and long electricity cut-offs negatively affect the lives of Gaza's women;
13. More women in Gaza are aware of their rights;
14. Divorce cases increased due to the worsening political and economic situation. Divorced women lack independence, are often separated from their children (custody rights in favour of fathers) and face social stigma;
15. Women close to the buffer zone and access-restricted areas are exposed to risk and danger;
16. Denial of women's inheritance right. Women are deprived of their basic rights;
17. Local laws and personal status law do not protect women. Of special concern is the custody laws;
18. Nepotism and favouritism in the work place.
19. Lack of appropriate health and medical care for women. Especially, lack of cancer early-detection centres (breast cancer);
20. Young girls do not make decisions related to their own marriage. Parents decide for them.
21. Travelling is not allowed for women due the closure of Gaza's borders and restrictions imposed by community and social customs.
22. Femicide (so-called 'honor killings'), mainly by family members;
23. Many women live in extended families, causing many problems for them;
24. Exploitation of women with disabilities in order to get financial benefit from charities.
25. Decrease of cases of forced marriage within the extended family.
26. Spinsterhood is increasing.
27. The inability of women in Gaza to practice freely their hobbies like dancing, singing and playing sports.
28. Begging increased among young women, in addition to the increased involvement in stealing and other crimes.

"Individual women started to build trust and to form a group, finding a common voice." Lisette, facilitator.

Key trends impacting women's lives:

Participants were asked to identify the trends that they consider being of the highest importance, because of the impact they have on their lives. Each participant was asked to put seven stickers on the trends they chose. The following trends got the highest number of stickers (13-17):

- Unemployment among female graduates and lack of job opportunities
- Nepotism & favouritism in the work place and unfair employment criteria for women
- Divorce cases increased due to the worsening political and economic situation. Divorced women lack independence, are often separated from their children (custody rights in favour of fathers) and face social stigma;
- Increase of sexual harassment (this topic was hardly mentioned during the group discussions, but during the anonymous placement of stickers, it came out as a priority issue).
- Increase of negative perception of women in community



Figure 7: Women working and reflecting



Figure 6: Group discussion of trends

Stories of Hope: Co-trainer Maryam (TDP) facilitated this session. The group worked in random pairs. Each woman shared stories of hope: stories of a life event that gave them hope and strength. The facilitator reminded the group on how to be good storytellers and listeners and to ask for details and sensory elements to the story. Later on, two pairs joint each other, making groups of four. Each quartet discussed the stories of hope and selected one of the stories to share with the entire group.

- *“I live in a place connected mostly to old traditions and habits, and the story of hope reminded me of my responsibility to change those perceptions for my children.”*
- *“I felt stronger. I had a difficult life and still I believe that I remained a good and kind person. Difficulties made my internal beauty shine.”*
- *“I loved this activity. It gave me an opportunity to imagine hopeful scenarios; I have to be strong enough to achieve my objectives.”*
- *“This activity gave me hope. I’m confident now that I can achieve my goals.”*

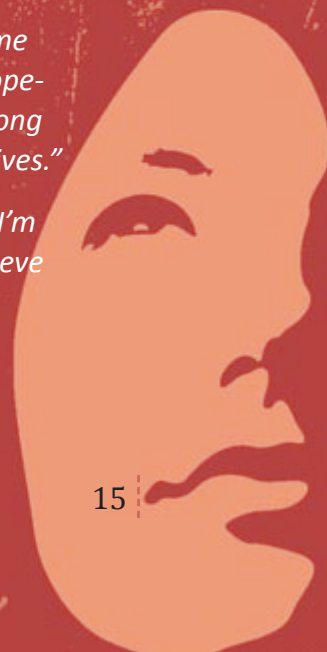




Figure 8:
Group discus-
sion

Shared Stories in the plenary:

Story 1: I live in an extended family. I don't like the culture that I live in. It is different than the culture of my family. I don't want my kids to be affected by this context. I tried to change this context and not to be subjected to those traditions. When they told me that our kids are different in their way of thinking, I felt proud; they are my hope to be different.

Story 2: All my family members studied English, different professions but in English and this was according to our father's desire. He forced my brothers and sister to choose this major. When I finished my secondary school, he also forced me to study an English language diploma of two year. But I decided to change this major without the knowledge of my father. I studied public relations. After my graduation I invited my father to a conference in international public relations, during which I got an official recognition for my work. My father was surprised at this moment. This situation gave me hope: how strong I am? I proved to my family that I am mature enough to decide and that I am able to change.

Story 3: I live in a room with my husband's family house: I am really tired from this life. I am always wearing the prayer dress. One day my sister in law hit my son. I decided to rebel on my status and asked my father in law to provide me with a separate apartment, far from my sister in law. He provided an apartment for my small family; then I painted the house, and changed the decoration. From that time on, I dress the praying dress only for praying, and really this is a story of hope for me.

Reflections

"Yes^{terday} and today are amazing. Today we tried to find hope even in the stories of pain."

"Today was different. It was the beginning of a new life."

"Today was deeper than yesterday. We are all happy. I see this in the faces of the group, there is a lot of harmony."

"I think we are here complementing and supporting each other."

"I suggest creating a group on Facebook, to share our experience, problems, and approaches."

"I learnt many things, and enjoyed a lot, but I have a problem in expressing my own feelings. I really relaxed today, and I hope to keep that feeling."

"Personally, I learnt from those two days. Talking is so important for me. When I speak, I am able to release all the pain and it makes me feel better."

"It is good to talk, and to find a good listener, who really supports you."

Day Three:

Focus on the Future

Imagining our desired future: The group was asked to imagine waking up and finding themselves in the year 2040. How women's life will be? What will their concerns and worries be in 2040? Participants were asked to share their visions of future expressing ourselves in a creative way – showing a theatre scene, singing, writing a poem etc. Many were anticipating the presentations with curiosity and fear:

“I am curious to know what will be my future in 2040, and I'm eager for that time. When I think about getting older, I feel afraid of being weak, and to see wrinkles appear in my face, but I will assume the shining picture of the future”.

Participants were divided into four groups of six women in each group. The facilitator explained that this exercise is about projecting a realistic future scenario. It is about what participants expect from their future and how they see the future of women in Gaza. The group was asked to write down its own observations, to reflect on them during the group's discussion, and to figure out what the main messages are.

Figure 9: Working in groups



Reflections

The first reflections illustrated the difficulty the participants had to see themselves in 25 years from now. Their comments are full of irony:

- *Future? I am beyond 50 years old. Is there still any future for me?*
- *I want to stay as I am. I do not want my appearance to change.*
- *Let's imagine ourselves old and ill. We will all need a doctor.*
- *I can't imagine myself old and wrinkled.*

Gradually, participants started to see themselves in 2040. They were looking at positive situations and feeling strong in 25 years time:

- *All this time, I'd like to learn how to drive. I think in 2040 I'll surely drive my own car.*
- *I see myself as a director of big company or an NGO. I will know English and my daughter will be a doctor. She is only ten years but she has already started to think about how she'll become a doctor and help our family.*
- *I'm pregnant now and in 2040 I see myself pregnant. I am almost 50 and I still can bring children.*
- *In 2040, I'll have my own house and will not need to live with our extended family and all those sisters-in-law.*



Figure 10: Sketches

Sketches of the future: Each group was asked to perform their play/sketch showing the life of women in Gaza in the year 2040. The three sketches were as follows:

Sketch 1:

A group of old ladies occasionally meet in a women café. They are surprised to know each other's latest news: Khitam has bought a luxury car and is planning to get married. Meriem is asking about a good lawyer, as she will get divorced. Afnan is more than 50 and she is pregnant. Najat is a director of an NGO. Some women had plastic surgery.

Sketch 2:

The scene starts with an old retired woman talking with her daughter, who is a lawyer, about her travel to participate in the International Legal Conference for the Support of Women's Rights in Afghanistan. Another woman wakes up early, takes a shower and goes to run at the street. Then she goes for her monthly medical checkup, with a female surgeon. In the third scene, the female surgeon has a meeting with a female Health Minister to discuss the agenda of the medical conference that will be held in Gaza.

Sketch 3:

Included the following aspects: The existence of nightclubs in Gaza. Women occupy high decision-making positions in the government. An old woman marries a young man. Unmarried women live freely without restrictions and stigma. Women can become actresses in Gaza. Travel is easy, the blockade has been lifted and the borders are open.

Sketch 4:

Rania opens a coffee shop for women only. It is on the 40th floor of a building in Gaza. She invites all her friends to have a cup of coffee at night. Randa always looks at the mirror looking for white hair. She often goes to the beauty center to take care of her skin. Mariam has a daughter who lives in Turkey. She is going to visit her either through Gaza's seaport or Al Quds Airport. She is planning to return on the same day. Samah is planning to go to her gym. Amira is the owner of a company, and she is very busy, because there are job interviews today to select new employees without bias.

Reflections

- *So nice, bright future, something new, fantastic, relaxed, happy, and interesting.*
- *These plays succeeded to make us happy.*
- *Bright future is waiting Gaza's women.*
- *I feel secure in 2040, we changed what we fear, but I think there is an exaggerated use of technology in 2040.*
- *This exercise widened our imagination, and helped us to go beyond the normal, I really laughed a lot.*
- *The plays reflected how women are eager to travel; it was a part of their dream.*

As the group discussion unfolded, the vision of a future for women not only encompassed women in Gaza, but also women in Palestine in general. The group believes that the future will be better for Palestinian women in Gaza and other regions as well. Some of the comments include:

- *In 2040, the electricity cut-offs are forgotten. Electricity will be available for 24 hours daily.*
- *There will be no more fuel shortage in Gaza.*
- *There will be no UNRWA because people will no longer need any aid and food parcels.*
- *Israeli occupation will be ended and people who left Gaza will come back.*
- *We all can go and see the land of our parents: Lid, Bir al-Saba' and Majdal. Ha! We'll be back to our Bedouin customs. We'll work to build our country.*
- *We do not need to be back to Bedouin roots, Bedouin customs restricts women's freedom.*
- *We'll finally have our airport and we'll be able to go abroad easily without any disgusting border checkpoints. By that time, I'll have travelled to Saudi Arabia at least three times.*
- *We'll have control over our sea so we can move freely. Our fishermen can fish wherever they want without any risk to be shot and we'll get access to our natural resources of gas hidden in the sea.*

- *The quality of life will be better; people will not have diseases and will not die until being very old. People will do periodic medical checks and have a family doctor responsible for their health.*
- *There will be no need to go to Egypt or Israel when you need treatment. The medical services in Gaza will be highly sophisticated.*

One participant summarized the discussion for this report as follows:

No occupation in 2040. The blockade on Gaza has been lifted. There is full freedom of movement. The quality of life is much better. Medical and health care is of high quality in Gaza.

The depictions of the future included a better perception and attitude towards women from the community. In the future, the law will protect women, there will be no restrictive traditions, and women will be able to do what they want:

- *I will not get married; Instead, I will be employed and respected in my community. However, I know that I will have to get married in the end.*
- *We'll be able to get married whenever we want because medicine will be advance and women will be able to bring children when they are over 40.*
- *You know what I imagine! It's the year 2040. I am going to the wedding party of my friend, wearing an oriental dancer dress and there, I dance and dance and dance and nobody judges me.*
- *Yes, the law is supportive of women's rights and nobody can prevent women from inheriting property. The law, religion and customs are supportive to women.*
- *Women have special places to meet, for example, cafes.*
- *Plastic surgery is affordable and available so if my husband thinks to get second wife, I'll turn into a super-beauty with the help of plastic surgery.*

Day Four:

Story Analysis

Messages: Participants were asked to reflect on the sketches and identify their main messages:

Group 1:

- Women have the right to get married and bring children even though they are old.
- Palestinians have a right for freedom. They have the right to have an airport in Gaza.
- Women should do regular medical checks.
- No electricity cut-offs in Gaza.
- Law protects women's inheritance right. Women can demand and divorce men.
- Women run their own businesses.

Group 2:

- Blockade has ended and borders are open.
- Women are more aware about women's health. Breast cancer is detected in early stages. Breast cancer and other diseases are diagnosed and treated in Gaza.

Group 3:

- Travelling is easy for people in Gaza and the blockade was ended.
- There is gender equality in the society; there is a tangible respect for both genders.
- Entertainment is available for women in Gaza.
- International conferences are held in the Gaza Strip.
- Women get all their rights.

Group 4:

- End of blockade and freedom of movement. International conferences are held in Gaza.
- Positive perceptions towards women in the community and with more gender equality.
- Society gives more space to women. Women take care of themselves.
- Fear from getting old and from husband to take a second wife.
- Legal rights for women are improved.
- Improvement in socioeconomic situation.

“So, what is a barometer?” One of the women asked. “It is a tool that measures the pressure of women. And to do that we need to have the voices of women themselves,” Another participant said. “The Barometer can help us develop a way to gather women’s stories. Doing that we can measure their daily safety”



Figure 11: Placing dots in flipcharts (analyzing our stories)

Analysis of the stories: The group was asked to analyse their own Stories of Life and Stories of Hope. The facilitator previously prepared a set of 10 evaluation questions to help analyse the stories (the list of questions are attached as annex #1). Each question was written in a flipchart and placed around the meeting hall. Each of the participants, individually, reflected back on their stories. The group was advised to remember the feelings that they connect to the stories and to think about the relationship between the stories and the past timeline and the present mindmap. Participants used orange dots for the Stories of Life and green dots for the Stories of Hope. Each participant was asked to mark her set of dots with a personal code. Each woman was asked to place her pair of dots (one orange and one green) in each of the flipcharts. In this exercise there is no right or wrong, and participants were advised to follow their feelings. Participants were then divided into groups to discuss and analyse the answers on the flipcharts. The exercises helped participants broaden their understanding of their shared context and difficult situation and were important to reach a stronger common voice.



Figure 12: Group reflection

Q.1: The tone of the voice of the Stories of Life is negative, while the tone of the Stories of Hope is positive.

Q.2: In the community stories like mine happen often -- rarely, the green and orange dots were distributed along the whole line, there was no clear pattern.

Q.3: Many Stories of Life were related to emotional violence, while many Stories of Hope were related to economic violence. We

observed a cluster of stories between both emotional and economic violence.

Q.4: Stories of Hope make most of us feel hopeful, while most Stories of Life make us feel upset.

Q.5: Stories of Hope make most of us feel connected, while Stories of Life make us feel somewhat isolated.

Q.6: Actors who had the most negative role in the stories of life: the armed forces, father, and husband received most dots. Only few dots are for the father-in-law, mother-in-law, INGO, and children. CBO, UN agency got zero dots.

Q.7: Mothers play supportive roles in most stories. Other players with a positive role: fathers, husbands, male relatives, female relatives, and friends. Children are a strong source of support in the Stories of Hope.

Q.8: We perceive ourselves as “powerful, but would not act” in the Stories of Life and “powerful and able to act” in the stories of Hope.

Q.9 & 10: Most participants are between 20-38 and have their own source of income.

Reflections

- *We usually ask others to evaluate us and analyse our stories, but in this workshop, I did that myself. It is a new experience that made me feel relaxed. It is good to know who supports me and who plays a negative or positive role in my story.*
- *It is a new experience to analyse our own stories and think how to solve our problems.*
- *This is a good technique: it gives us a possibility to analyse our own story. Different questions evoke different feelings.*

How could each organization use the Barometer?

Participants from both partner organizations were asked to sit in two separate groups to discuss how each organization can benefit from the Barometer initiative and approach.

Theatre Day Productions reflections:

- All the participants from TDP reflected about their personal benefit: four days of training brought them relief and gave them a feeling of power that they are able to change their lives after acknowledging the events of their past.
- The idea that women analyse their own stories helps to understand these stories deeper and to choose those which are very important to become part of our storytelling performances and forums. Self-analysis allows women to see their roles in their stories from a different perspective, discover their own strengths and understand the causes of their life problems better. The Barometer is where women find solidarity and it is what stimulates women to collectively look for solutions and ways to tackle their own problems.
- The magic of story sharing charged the women with new and positive energy and helped them see hope and find strength to remove the darkness of the past.
- TDP storytellers learnt some new techniques for immediate self-care. These are simple tools which help storytellers to listen to women or children without being negatively affected by extreme emotions when they have to deal with the massiveness of the stories of tragic and violent content.
- The training gave us an impulse to think how we can improve our monitoring procedures and better highlight the quality and impact of our artistic work. It gave us a pattern of how we can analyse gathered stories and organize the huge number of the stories putting them into categories according to women concerns and issues. We started thinking and discussing internally

how we can add the component of analysing stories to our monitoring procedures in order to go deeper and reach better and better quality and impact.

- Deeper reflection and re-thinking of what has happened in the Barometer training has challenged TDP to discuss fundamentally about the need and the ways to bring our artistic storytelling work on political platforms to share the picture of women safety and security.

Ma'an's reflections:

- The Barometer and storytelling will help to make women's voices heard
- Mind mapping is a good tool to collect data and define interventions for problem solving
- It is beneficial for the story teller to be able to regulate her/his emotions, make an analysis of her/his own story, and to know the actors who influence them.
- Performing acts can be helpful if encouraging women to tell and share their stories.

Cordaid's reflections:

I feel very privileged because during this Barometer workshop we have travelled a joint journey through the past, present, and future while hearing the personal stories of participants on life and hope.

It is very nice to see how the process is not only empowering, but also provides insights into daily realities. It is important that these stories define the priorities for policy and decision making at all levels. As I hear the stories, I am deeply touched by the strength, wisdom and resilience of the women from Gaza.

Sabina Atzei



Closing Session

- I wish to be strong as I am and my wedding goes smoothly, as I am currently planning it to be.
- I wish all our dreams would come true. Stay strong as you are.
- I have learnt a lot from this workshop, I love you all, and I wish if this workshop would never end.
- I am happy that I joined this workshop, and met nice people like you.
- I know the past is difficult, but I'm quite sure that a shining future is waiting for us.
- My tears don't mean that I am weak. I also cry when I am happy.
- When I heard the stories of others, I found that my story is less complex than others. I'm happy to have met you, and hope to keep in touch in the future.
- I wish we could meet again.
- This workshop gave me a push to make a change. I'm really inspired by the facilitator and participants.
- You gave me strength; you gave me hope that there is something in this life.
- Thank you all for this opportunity, which will improve my daily life and thanks for the love you gave.
- I feel a heavy responsibility on my shoulders: What is the next step, how could we make initiatives that could help solve some of the problems?
- I feel proud of you all. I'm sure that we will be able to raise a good generation.
- I see that most women are strong despite of their problems.
- I will apply the approach we learnt in my work, but I would like to know strategies for the next steps.

Reflections on the workshop:

First Day:

- Regarding the personal timeline, I did my best to write positive events, but in the Gaza and world timelines, we didn't find happy events. They had one common theme: wars.
- I have learnt how to be a good listener, and how to regulate my feelings and protect myself from negative energies.

Second Day:

- Talking on matters that affect the daily life of women in Gaza is something important to make new initiatives and bring ideas to resolve all those problems.
- I liked the Stories of Hope, because they gave us a push to move forward in life. They differ from the Stories of Life in that the second caused us a lot of pain.

Third Day:

- I usually don't think about the future, because I am afraid from it. I didn't feel comfortable when thinking about the year 2040, but I liked how other women expressed their ideas & hopes through a play.
- I hope we will take a step away from oppressing traditions, give birth to a new generation who will get rid of all women problems, and have a better future.



ANNEX 1: Story Evaluation form

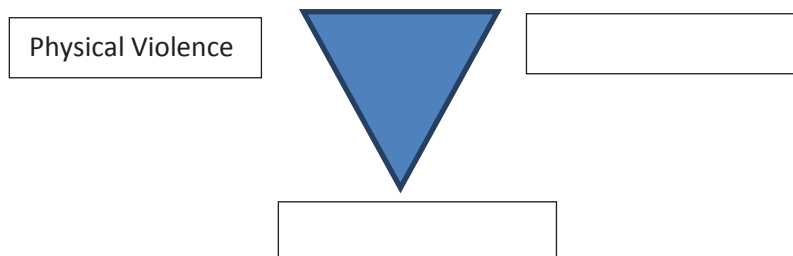
1. The tone of the voice of my story is:

Positive _____ Negative

2. A story like mine happens in the community:

Often _____ Rarely

3. My story connects mostly to:



4. My story makes me feel

Hopeful _____ Upset

5. My story makes me feel:

Connected _____ Isolated

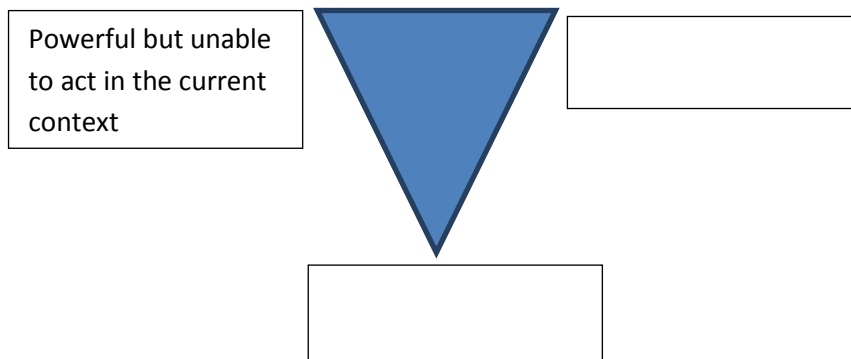
6. Which actor played the most negative role in your story, please choose only one option:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Father | <input type="checkbox"/> | CBO |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mother | <input type="checkbox"/> | NGO |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Child | <input type="checkbox"/> | International NGO's |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Grand father | <input type="checkbox"/> | UN agencies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Grand Mother | <input type="checkbox"/> | Armed forces |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Husband | <input type="checkbox"/> | Security actors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Father in law | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other, Please |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mother in law | | specify:..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sister or brother in law | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Friend | | |

7. Which actor was the most supportive in your story, please choose only one option:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Father | <input type="checkbox"/> | Female relative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mother | <input type="checkbox"/> | Male relative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Child | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Husband | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Father in law | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mother in law | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Friend | | |

8. I perceive myself as:



9. Age:



10. Do you have your own source of income?

- Yes
 No

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