

## *Gaza Focusing Project*



**Gaza Focusing Approach**

برنامج التركيز لتعزيز الصمود النفسي والاجتماعي

1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015

*Organised and facilitated by*  
Palestine Trauma Centre (Gaza & UK)



*Funded by*



Irish Quaker Faith in Action (IQFA) & Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW-UK)

## **Annual Report**

**May 2014-April 2015**

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### **General information:**

<b>Project's name</b>	<b>Gaza Focusing Project</b>
<b>Donor</b>	<b>Irish Quakers (Ireland) Palestine Trauma Centre (UK)</b>
<b>Project's duration</b>	<b>May2014-April2015</b>
<b>Duration covered in the report</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> May/2014 - 30<sup>th</sup> April/2015</b>
<b>Targeted areas</b>	<b>Gaza strip</b>
<b>Report writer</b>	<b>Ghadah Radwan (Project coordinator)</b>

### **1. Abstract:**

The project's work plan was designed for both group and single focusing sessions with families, children and adults. The ages of clients ranged from 6 to 65 years old. Sessions were held at different centres within targeted project areas during the 12 month project period. 1787 participants benefited from the project: 830 Females and 957 Males. During the July-August war, the work-team used Focusing techniques as Psychological First Aid. The total number of beneficiaries of the group focusing sessions for children and families at the harboring centres during the Israeli invasion on Gaza strip was 770 participants: 410 Males and 360 Females.

After the war, 280 school children (120 Females, 160 Males) from UNRWA schools benefited from the Focusing activities. In addition, 100 families (55 Females, 45 Males) had Focusing Group sessions. There were other group Focusing sessions for students and women and some individual Focusing sessions with children and adults.

The following techniques were used:

- listening to ourselves;
- quality of listening to others;
- the concept of distance and present time;
- partitioning skills;

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- verbal reflection skill;
- relaxation activities;
- safe place exercise;
- name-expression exercise;
- thoughts and feelings differentiation;
- expressing feelings by symbols ;
- teddy bear exercise with children

Using pre and post assessments (Altawil, 2008), it was found that an improvement was made in 60 out of 62 cases, a success rate of 85%. Observing the participants during this period, we found notable improvements in the participants' daily routine, and their ability to understand themselves and others. This strongly suggested that the project's aims had been fulfilled, especially with regard to mothers within families. This is important because they are the supporting spine of the family.

### **2. Main goal of the project:**

Contribute to enabling the participants to develop their skills in using the focusing techniques with their selves, and help in developing their ability to dealing with their children, and family members by adopting the focusing program techniques.

### **3. Action plan for the period May/2014 to April/2015:**

- preparing and developing the focusing sessions manual throughout the project
- two sessions were added to the manual; the cards, and the edge of feelings
- The activities were delivered through associations, harboring centers, hospitals, and schools
- Delivering single follow-up focusing activities through the center, and the houses
- Three new facilitators joined the focusing team – Sept 2014
- Training for new facilitators – Sept 14 – April 15
- Dr. Mohammed Altaweel - the professional supervisor - trained the focal group on the first and second levels of the manual

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- Ongoing Supervision by the professional supervisor
- Mr. David Harold -Chairman of PTC/UK- visited the focusing sessions with women at the Women's activity center – April 2015
- the coordinator started filming a video about the focusing journey in Gaza – March 2015
- focusing sessions between the project coordinator and the focusing trainer Mrs. Merry Jenings – March 2015 onwards
- Purchasing a laptop, and a printer for the focusing project

### **4. Delivering activities:**

#### **4.1. Preparing and developing the focusing session's manuals.**

##### **1. Preparing and developing the focusing manual for trainees.**

The professional supervisor -Dr. Mohammed Altaweel- prepared and developed the focusing manual for trainees, in which included the first and the second level of the focusing sessions, and the worked through activities with the trainees. He also trained the team on two levels of focusing sessions throughout regular meetings and trainings conducted weekly via skype.

##### **2. Preparing and developing the focusing manual for adult beneficiaries:**

The focusing project coordinator prepared a manual for the focusing sessions for adult beneficiaries under supervision of Dr.Mohamed Altawil, the focusing trainers; Jerry Conway, Merry Jenings, and René Veuglers. The manual included twelve sessions along with other supporting activities, and evaluation forms. In addition two new sessions were developed; using NVC feelings and needs cards and sensing for the 'Edge' in Focusing. The manual is still under continuous revision and improvement based on feedback from participants.

##### **The Manual contents:**

An introduction which describes the focusing project and its goals followed by an overview of the Focusing session's. The manual also describes how the Program will be delivered along with the Pre-Post assessment questionnaires.

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### **Sessions content**

**First session:** program identification, consent form, building trust, and listening to ourselves skill

**Second session:** quality of good listening to others.

**Third session:** distance at present time and partitioning skill (presence language), and verbal reflection skill.

**Fourth session:** Safe place exercise.

**Fifth session:** name expression, thoughts and feelings differentiation, and drawing of feelings.

**Sixth session:** Psychological resilience exercise.

**Seventh session:** feelings expression through symbols and images.

**Eighth session:** children feelings expression through teddy bear.

**Ninth session:** needs and feelings expression through play cards game.

**Tenth session:** trust and emotions.

**Eleventh session:** feelings expression through Quran, Hadith, proverbs cards.

**Twelfth session:** deep feelings expression through the edge of feelings session.

#### **4.2. Delivering group focusing sessions:**

The facilitator Ghada executed group focusing sessions as outlined in the focusing manual, which consisted of twelve sessions that varied in duration from one hour to one and a half hours, with (826) Female participants, and (957) Male participants, with ages that vary from (8 to 65). Those sessions were conducted at the Centre, houses, and partner associations while we targeted Alnaser area, Beach camp area, Alshejaya area, and Kamal Odwan's area in northern Gaza.

#### **4.3. Delivering single focusing sessions:**

The facilitator Ghada executed single focusing sessions which consisted of twelve sessions that varied in duration from one hour to one and a half hours, with four Female participants with ages that varied from (8 to 65). Those sessions were conducted at the Centre, houses, and partner associations while we targeted Alnaser area, Beach camp area, Alshejaya area, and Kamal Odwan's area in northern Gaza.

#### **Sessions execution mechanism:**

The focusing program was delivered to individuals, groups, and families using the following procedures:

1. The participants signed a consent form to the project activities, while explaining the center's wish to photograph sessions and publishing the outcomes.

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2. The facilitator applied the focusing program using a pre assessment questionnaire before the sessions commence, and a post assessment questionnaire after the sessions end.
3. The facilitator used the pre-post assessment for every session.
4. A number of participants were transferred to receive specialized therapeutic sessions at the Centre's therapeutic unit.

#### **Results of the sessions:**

- ❖ Assessment forms were filled in by all the participants of the single and group sessions that were coordinated through associations, while the remaining participants did not fill in the assessment forms because they benefited from the focusing project during the emergency period throughout the war on Gaza 2014.
- ❖ The written and verbal assessment results showed that the participants in the focusing sessions' activities and focusing exercises, who were numbered (1787) participants; (830) Females, and (957) Males, were directly benefited by reinforcing their psychosocial resilience during crises. Success signs were clearly visible in acquiring the focusing techniques, which will be shown in the success stories mentioned later in this report, since a number of them managed their emotions successfully, and accepted the difficult feelings accompanying their deep buried memories.
- ❖ New participants indirectly benefited by the focusing sessions, since the direct beneficiaries transformed their experience to their surrounding community.
- ❖ Results have shown that the workers in PTC/Gaza clearly benefited by working with the cases, which was visible in their ability to care for themselves and in reinforcing their resilience especially during the war on Gaza 2014.

#### **4.4. Hiring three volunteers in the focusing team.**

Three volunteers were hired in the focusing team in a part time reward paying bases. The new team started working in 1st September 2014.

Volunteers names: (Noha Abukarsh, Hadeel Budeir, and Iman Matar).

#### **4.5. The project coordinator training the new volunteers and focusing facilitators to the focusing manual for beneficiaries:**

The project coordinator provided training for the new facilitators of the focusing project in October 2015; also the new facilitators participated in the group sessions to benefit from the practical field training.

#### **4.6. the professional supervisor training of the focal group on the first and second levels of the focusing manual for trainees:**

Dr. Mohammed Altaweel – professional supervisor- provided a training to the focal group in the first and second level of the focusing manual for trainees, multiple sessions were executed including various exercises that the supervisor explained and executed with the group.

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### 4.7. David Harold's – Chairman of the PTC/UK – visit to the focusing sessions:

Mr. David Harold -Chairman of PTC/UK- visited a focusing session with women, which was executed by the project coordinator at the Women's activity center in 12/4/2015, Mr. David gave his many thanks to the team for their efforts in the field, and he listened to the women's special opinions about how they have acquired the focusing technique and used it in their daily life.

### 4.8. Starting to film a video about the focusing journey in Gaza:

The project coordinator and her team started filming a video about the focusing journey in Gaza.

### 4.9. Purchasing new necessities for the focusing project:

A new laptop, printer, and camera were purchased for the project.

### 4.10. Beneficiaries:

No.	Activity	Category	Beneficiaries		Total	geographic location
			Females	Males		
.1	single follow-up focusing sessions in the center	children 12 years	2	0	2	Palestine trauma Centre for victims welfare -Alnasser
.2	single follow-up focusing sessions in the houses	adults 55 years	2	0	2	cases houses - Beach camp
.3	Group focusing sessions	&Graduates specialists -18 22years	29	0	29	Working women association- Alnasser
.4	Group focusing sessions	Mothers -35 60years	25	0	25	Women activity center-Beach camp
.5	Group focusing sessions	Mothers -35 60years	27	0	27	Palestinian liberation organization's public committee
.6	Group focusing sessions	Elderly males-60 90years		22	22	Beit jdodna elderly club
.7	Group focusing activities after the war	Families	55	45	100	women health center-Jabalia- Alshalihah

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.8	group focusing activities at the harboring centers & hospitals during the war on Gaza for the displaced families	Families & children	410	360	770	harboring centers at UNRWA schools, public schools, and hospitals
.9	group focusing activities for children at UNRWA schools with the rapid intervention team at the start of the school year	children 5-13 years	120	160	280	UNRWA schools in Gaza
.10	group focusing activities at Salah Aldein school in cooperation with family therapy team, and Friday of joy team	children 5-13 years	0	200	200	Salah Aldein school
.11	three sessions by the new facilitators on 2-11/10/2015 to UCAS students, the sessions included (Teddy bear exercise, safe place, and psychological resilience exercise)	adults 18-20 years	10	0	10	Palestine trauma Centre for victims welfare -Alnasser
.12	focusing activities at the right to live association for children with Downs Syndrome on 10/3/2015 in cooperation with the family therapy team and Friday of joy team	children 5-13 years	100	100	200	The right to live association

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.13	focusing activities at Atfaluna for deaf children association on 4/6/2015 in cooperation with the family therapy team and Friday of joy team	children 5-13 years	50	70	120	Atfaluna for deaf children association
<b>Total number of beneficiaries</b>		children , mothers, and families	830	957	1787	number of centers

#### **5. Coordinating and connecting with local associations:**

- ❖ Group focusing sessions were coordinated with the working women’s association. A group focusing session was delivered to university graduates in 23/6/2014, and group focusing sessions with psychologists on 26/6/2014.
- ❖ A single case was transferred to receive more specialized single follow-up sessions in coordination with the working women’s association because it was difficult for them to come to the center.
- ❖ Coordination was made with the general union of Palestinian women, but the management preferred to start the focusing sessions with the beneficiaries later due to the emergency plan they have adopted after the war on Gaza.
- ❖ Coordination was made with the university graduates association to start new focusing sessions, but the management also preferred to start the sessions with the beneficiaries later due to the emergency plan they have adopted after the war on Gaza.
- ❖ Coordination was made with the UNRWA, and the hospitals to execute focusing activities inside of the harboring centers during the Israeli invasion on Gaza Strip, and also to deliver entertainment activities inside schools at the beginning of the school year after the war.
- ❖ Group focusing sessions were coordinated with the women’s activity center- Beach camp.
- ❖ Group focusing sessions were coordinated with the Palestinian liberation organization’s public committee- Beach camp.
- ❖ Group entertaining activities were coordinated with women’s health center – Jabalia for the families who were damaged from the war.
- ❖ An entertaining trip was made for the center’s employees and volunteers in coordination with the UNRWA club after their hard work at the harboring centers, and hospitals during the war on Gaza.
- ❖ Coordination was made with Alwafaa association for the elderly to execute group focusing sessions, but it was deferred because of the privacy and sensitivity of the elderly category due to the chronic diseases, and mental retardation of some of them.
- ❖ Group focusing sessions were executed in coordination with Alwidad association for communal rehabilitation for the elderly from Beit-Jdodna club.

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- ❖ Coordination was made with the communication and postal services ministry to get their consent on using enlarged postal stamps on cards for activities among the sessions, and for using it in the published administrative report.
- ❖ Coordination and field visits were made with the Arab front and the university graduates association to execute new group sessions with new participants.
- ❖ Coordination with Rawasi Arts Center was made to get their consent on using some of the Palestinian artist's paintings in the focusing activities with participants
- ❖ Coordination was made with Abdullah Alhorani's center for studies and Decode association to get information and learn from their expertise in the documentary films documentation.
- ❖ Coordination was made with Alnahda library to print images and requirements for the focusing sessions.

### **5. difficulties and how to overcome them:**

- ❖ Difficulty of coordination for sessions in May due to the children exams. We overcame this difficulty by taking advantage of this month in preparing the session's manual.
- ❖ Difficulty in coordinating for sessions at the beginning of June, because our partner associations postponed their activities to after Ramadan. We overcame this by coordinating with a new partner (Working women) for single sessions.
- ❖ Presence of a mentally retarded person. We overcame this by extending the length of the activities and simplifying the exercises.
- ❖ Difficulty of increasing the focusing sessions at the harboring centers during the Israeli invasion on Gaza strip because of the destruction of the project coordinator family's house as a result of the repeated bombing at Alsousi mosque, which is located right opposite to the family's house. We overcame this with the help of friends, family, and colleagues from the rapid invasion team to psychologically withstand the ordeal.
- ❖ Difficulty in completing the focusing sessions with the psychologists at the working women's association after the Israeli invasion on Gaza strip, because of the emergency plan they have adopted after the war. We overcame this by postponing completing the sessions to next September, and coordinating with new partner associations.
- ❖ Difficulty in completing the focusing sessions after the Israeli invasion on Gaza strip with some families because they were displaced from their houses.

### **7. Recommendations and suggestions :**

#### **7.1. On the working staff level:**

Perform a comprehensive assessment of the previous stage, and work on how to deal with the coming stages while training the staff to enhance working in the focusing project.

#### **7.2. On the activities provided to the targeted beneficiaries level:**

Try providing intensive focusing sessions to new groups to find out the best way; daily intensive focusing or weekly sessions on different periods.

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### **8. Importance and benefits of the focusing sessions to the beneficiaries:**

Through the comments of the beneficiaries and the observation of the coordinator, the results of the verbal assessment have shown the magnificent effect of the focusing session's exercises on the beneficiaries, the extent to which they can find the location of their pain after attending these sessions, and how they have acquired the ability to reduce the painful feelings and partitioning them, and then initiate the dialogue to reach their inner peace with those feelings. They have also showed their ability to transfer their expertise of the focusing sessions to share the central exercises they have learned in the focusing sessions with their families, that was shown in one of the beneficiaries comments during the focusing sessions, that she had created an energetic atmosphere within the family, and that the children were waiting her return from the focusing session to share what she had just learned in the focusing session. The participants benefited from the focusing sessions which were executed with them at the associations, and harboring centers during the Israeli invasion on Gaza strip, this success appears clearly throughout the success stories, some of them are shown as follows:

- ❖ **Success story (H.S):** I used to take calming medications for nerves, but after the focusing sessions, I was able to control my nerves and reactions, and I stopped the medications. For that, I am so grateful to the focusing sessions.
- ❖ **Success story (A.H):** I suffered repeated fainting due to life difficulties, but after the focusing sessions, I got able to control my reactions, when in feel nervous or sad, I have learned how to control these emotions and partition the pain, I have learned how to reflect my reaction by doing movement activities that helped me to do so, including the tapping exercise, and the deep breathing, I can control myself now.
- ❖ **Success story (J.B):** After the focusing sessions, I learned to keep myself busy with useful things instead of beating myself up by remembering the past.
- ❖ **Success story (A.N):** I am 72 years old, I have learned things in the focusing sessions that I have never seen in my life, I suffer from chest pain because of lung infections, but the focusing sessions helped me control the pain with the help of the tapping, and the deep breathing exercises.

Other responses and opinions were observed through the daily session's assessment as follows:

- **N.K:** I felt dominance and control in communicating with my feelings.
- **E.M:** I used to have fears of participating in the psychological support sessions in general, but now I have regained my trust in my ability to complete the sessions and go deep in discovering my feelings and dialogue with them.
- **Single case:** at the beginning of the relaxation and the journey to discover my feelings, I felt suffocated in my neck, like if there were someone choking me with his hand, but when I have tried to communicate with my feelings, I have started to locate where exactly I feel suffocated, and I dialogued with them, so I have regained my faith in my feelings and myself on my ability to contain the suffocation easily.

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- **A.T:** before the sessions, I used to neglect my feelings, but now I became more interested in my feelings, and for the first time I had the courage to touch the fear inside of me, and when I have applied the distance, and the verbal reflection exercises, I felt that the fear is getting smaller and smaller, and maybe in the near future it will fade away.
- **A case from the harboring center:** the tapping exercise made me feel physically relieved, and I started applying it with my children repeatedly.
- **An injured child at Alshifa central hospital in Gaza:** I have great fears after the bombing of my family's house, and this is the first time I feel reassurance after the event.
- **A.H from the women's activity center:** the safe place exercise evoked the presence of my dead husband and son, I always hope to see them in my dreams, but that does not happen, today in this exercise I have seen them in reality.
- **H.S from the Palestinian liberation organization's public committee:** we don't have a house to shelter us; we keep moving between rental houses, in the safe place exercise, I have imagined that I am living in a house that gathers me and my children without the fear that threatens our safety and stability.
- **T.H from the Palestinian liberation organization's public committee:** in the focusing exercises, I recalled my life in the past, every moment I have spent during these exercises of distance and listening to ourselves made me recall my joy, pain, and memories of the past, the present, and even the future, these sessions have taken me back for years, during the safe place session, I have recalled moments I have lived with my father 45 years ago, when he used to make breakfast for me and my brothers before going to school.
- **R.A:** by the end of every focusing session, I drew a new key to a life with feelings of hope that the good is soon to come, I give my thanks to everyone in the program, the facilitator Ghada Radwan, Palestine trauma Centre, and myself for the inner peace I found in my life.
- **E.N:** I am 75 years old now, the focusing sessions took me back 69 years ago, and through the focusing sessions I found out that I can solve my problems all by myself, it motivated me. (If you want a thing to get well done, do it yourself).
- **D.K:** I feel amazed, the focusing sessions brought me back memories that I have lived through with my mother 65 years ago.