

Half-year report for the project: “Empowering Family Resilience in Gaza”

(Family and Community Therapy Project: FCTP)



1st June - 31st December 2014

Funded by INTERPAL-London

Implemented by Palestine Trauma Centre (PTC-Gaza)

Supervised by PTC-UK



1. Summary

Funded largely by INTERPAL (London) and partially by (PTC-UK) for the period 1st June to the 31st December 2014, this project consists of two parts: first, psychosocial responses during the war against Gaza known as Operation Protective Edge; second, implementing psychosocial activities after the war.

At the start of the war, an Emergency and Rapid Response (ERR) team was formed and voluntarily operated in the middle area governorates of Gaza. This team consisted of 21 members led by one of the PTC staff. This team provided Psychological First Aid at the sheltering centers like hospitals, schools, mosques and churches. The number of the beneficiaries during the period was 11,435 people, 10,407 of whom were children and 1,028 of them adults.

After the end of the war, the Family and Community Therapy (FCT) team started working with displaced families when they returned to their partially destroyed houses. The team screened the families who needed immediate psychological services. Psycho-social intervention operated with the whole family in the presence of a psychologist, social worker, children's animator and a psychiatrist. Activities with the beneficiary group varied in aim; some of them depended on concentration, and the others depended on therapy techniques such as Mind and Body Therapy, Focusing Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (C.B.T).

38 families with 312 people (152 females and 160 males) benefited from the activities during the time of war. In addition to that, purposeful social, psycho-educational and psychological support activities took place in some partner institutions (NGOs) and in some schools where structured games were organized. These included skipping, kangaroo jumping, sack races and movement to music. Talent competitions were organised for the children by members of the team. Psycho-education meetings were held in some institutions in Gaza City and in northern Gaza to support martyrs' wives and old people. The purpose of these meetings was to explore responses to psychological trauma and discuss how to deal with children whose behavior had been affected by war. The concept of Psychological First Aid was shared with parents. The opinions of the beneficiaries were completely positive. They appreciated all the efforts by animators and the work team in general and especially INTERPAL who had supported and funded these activities. Moreover, implementing the activities enhanced the skills of the work team and made them gain confidence in dealing with hard situations. All this raised the profile of PTC and enhanced its estimation in society, motivating people to visit the center to enjoy its services despite their fears of the stigma that can be attached to therapy. The number of beneficiaries from these particular psychological support activities is about 6,120 people, their ages ranging between 5 and 65 years.

The total number of the beneficiaries from the INTERPAL's grant during the last six months is 17,867. These people benefited from psycho-social first aid, psychological and social support, therapeutic meetings and psycho-educational meetings. The groups of beneficiaries are men, women, children, the young, the old and people with special needs (audio and physical disability and autism).

2. The general aim of the project

To reinforce Palestinian family resilience after the war and to help it overcome the psychological and social traumas through integrated family and community therapy programmes based on individual and group therapy methods.

3. The special aims of the project

- To reduce the social and psychological stress in traumatized Palestinian families
- To help reinforce the social and psychological resilience of Palestinian families in remote areas
- To help traumatized Palestinian families acquire the skills of appropriate and positive behavior during and after times of crisis.

4. The project vision:-

The project aims to help traumatized Palestinian families all over the Gaza Strip by training the family to acquire adaptation skills; it also aims to reinforce social and psychological resilience in order to enable them to rebuild their lives positively and effectively.

5. Work plan for the report period

No	Activities	July 2014				August 2014				September 2014				October 2014				November 2014				December 2014			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1	Working during the period of war in Gaza.																								
2	Forming the work team professionally and signing contracts with PTC team member.																								
3	Updating the data base belonging to the registers of the traumatized families because of the last war.																								
4	Updating the files and the documents of the project to allow the team to start working with them.																								
5	Dividing the team into two groups so as to cover all the areas in Gaza City. The team consists of a psychiatrist, doctor, psychologist, animator and social worker.																								
6	Implementing a field screening to identify severely traumatized cases who suffer from social, psychological and health problems and need immediate therapeutic intervention. This is done by contacting them by phone, field visits or coordination with some institutions (NGOs) which work on the ground and in the sheltering centers.																								
7	Intervening with traumatized families through a strategy that depends on individual and group therapy and focusing on improving the social and psychological functions not only for a single member of the family but also for the whole family in addition to using the techniques of drama therapy, play therapy and mind/body therapy.																								
8	Presenting therapy services to 38 families who were exposed to severe traumas after the third war on Gaza (July-August 2014).																								
9	Documenting and registering all the cases with whom the team worked.																								
10	Implementing 238 sessions of psychological support, evaluation and therapy with 38 traumatized families.																								
11	Evaluating and assessing the families who were exposed to traumas and hard situations after the war.(Diagnostic and summative evaluation.)																								
12	Implementing regular meetings to evaluate difficulties and improvements in the traumatized cases and the work in general.																								

6. Implemented activities

6.1 Period of War against Gaza

The bombardment of Gaza started on 8th July 2014 and the war ended on 26th August 2014. As soon as it started, the Emergency and Rapid Response ERR team of 6 specialists and a number of volunteers worked in sheltering centers such as UNRWA and governmental schools, mosques and churches. The team also visited war casualties at Shifa Hospital and provided psychological first aid and support to them. The team in the middle area governorate consisted of 15 specialists and animators who used recreational activities to calm and support displaced people in the sheltering centers. They also provided psychological first aid to the injured people in Al-Aqsa Hospital and distributed presents to injured children as a result of generous gifts from INTERPAL. The number of the beneficiaries during this period was 11,435 people. 10,407 of them were children, and the other 1028 were adults.

After the end of the war, in order to complete the work of the FCT project, 8 members of the ERR team were selected according to their competence and ability to bear the work pressure during the war. These 8 members were an accountant, project coordinator, two psychologists, psychiatrist, social worker, media animator and logistics worker. The next step was to implement field screening and coordinate with some local institutions which worked in the field of psychological and social support in Gaza and with the families who returned to their uninhabitable houses. The third step was to equip the team with a uniform, a camera, toys, sacks, balloons, hoops and the parachute.

6.2 The work team formation

The FCT work-team was selected by supervisors in both Gaza and the UK. One person in the UK is the technical supervisor from PTC-UK, the rest of the team is from Gaza: project coordinator in Gaza, psychiatrist, accountant, project coordinator, psychological specialist, social worker, media coordinator and logistic worker. This team was divided into two groups each comprising a psychiatrist, psychological specialist, a social worker and an animator.

6.3 Coordination with institutions

The teams coordinated with UNRWA and the Ministry of Education in Gaza to implement some recreational activities after the war. They also coordinated with some of the civil society institutions in Gaza which work in the field of psychological support, such as Palestine Tomorrow School which belongs to Noor Al-Maarefeh Society and Tamkeen Institution in Al-Nusirat camp, Women Health Institution in Jabalia , Al-Noor Society in the east of Gaza, Gaza Community Mental Health Program and Al-Amal Society for Autism. In addition to that, PTC shared the transferring net which belongs to Handicap International which includes three-partner institutions from all over Gaza to transfer traumatized cases who needed psychological and social support. PTC also

coordinated with Save the Children Network which belongs to UNICEF and attended its monthly meetings in UNDP. PTC sent them all updates of the team's work every week on Wednesdays. The work team contacted and visited the INTERPAL office in Gaza to coordinate the provision of some services to needy families.

6.4 Work Mechanism

6.4.1 Mechanism of team's work with traumatized cases

The five-member team was divided into two groups 2 females and 3 males so as to cover all areas in Gaza City. The team consisted of a psychiatrist accompanied by a psycho-social specialist and an animator. The team's psychological and social interventions included visiting the family, conducting a diagnostic psychological evaluation, therapeutic play activities and conducting a summative psychological evaluation. Later, a follow-up evaluation of the family was done.

The time allocated and the type of work done with the family depended on each family's needs: it could be three months or it could extend to six months according to how the members of the family responded to intervention. The number of the beneficiaries until the time of writing this report is 38 families, which covers 312 adults and children. 152 of them are females and 160 are males. These severely traumatized families received 238 therapeutic sessions according to the above mechanism.

6.4.2 Implemented techniques

The team uses several techniques and activities when working with the family such as Focusing, drama exercises, Mind / Body work and movement therapy. Other psychological exercises included Narrative Therapy, Play Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (C.B.T).

6.4.3 Referral System

The center coordinated with some working institutions to receive referral cases to be followed up within the Family and Community Therapy (FCT) project. In addition to the work with the war affected families in the sheltering centers, follow-up visits were made when they returned to their homes. PTC co-operated with GCMHP and Future Palestine Association to receive traumatized families through PTC-Gaza's referral system. Some traumatized cases were found due to field screening by PTC's team and they are being followed-up within the FCT project. This table shows the names of the associations who referred cases to PTC-Gaza.

Institution name	Address	Total	Cases complaints	Gender
GCMHP	West of Gaza	2	General anxiety disorder, sleeping disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).	2 males
Future Palestine association	Gaza City	2	Involuntary urination and poor school performance	2 males
Field screening	All places in Gaza Strip	34	Overwhelming fear, nightmares, sleep disorder, introversion, anxiety and tension.	20 females 14 males

6.4.4 Recreational activities and educational meetings

Since the end of the war on 26th August to the end of 2014, the Family and Community Therapy (FCT) work team have organised many purposeful recreational activities in different places such as UNRWA schools, private schools and civil society institutions. These activities aimed to alleviate suffering and bring the community together to support orphans, injured old people and people with special needs. The total number of the beneficiaries of these activities is 6120, their ages ranging from 3-50 years. The vast majority of them are children, women and old people. Activities included movement exercises, races, talent shows, friendly competitions and other games which encouraged children, parents and others to participate as a mutually supporting group. In addition, the team held some workshops at PTC-Gaza, which were attended by widows and martyrs' wives.

These workshops were based on the following theme: "By love, but not violence, we build life." They explored ways of dealing with traumatized children. The team also held an educational meeting with old people in Beit-Lahia to the north of Gaza in Hai Al-Salateen Association. The following table shows the details of the activities in pictures. (See appendix (1): pictures gallery)

Day	Date	Address	Total	Client's feedback
Saturday	13/9/014	Al-Shalehat Resort In cooperation with Women Health Association	6,000 people	Ayham(11 yrs) , "I cheered up today. May God help my cousin, who was injured in the war, to come and play with us." Um-Hala (32 yrs), "It's great to come here with our children after the war to make them feel there is still life."
Working at UNRWA schools				
Sunday	14/9/014	Al Daraj Elementary School	1800 students	Sohad (10 yrs) , "Your activities are very nice and the games we played are very joyful, thank you"
Monday	15/9/014	Hashem Elementary School	800 students	Teacher Insherah (40 yrs) , "Thanks for coordination with UNRWA to conduct this activity which we need as well as students."
Tuesday	16/9/014	Al-Shejaia School (A)	500 students	Hamada (8 yrs) , "I haven't been happy because of war. My cousin was killed in the war. But today I laughed a lot."
Wednesday	17/9/014	Gaza Boys School (A)	1000 students	Khilil (11 yrs) , "I'm very happy because the UN let you cheer us up and play with us. Before today, I was fed up, sad and bored".
Thursday	18/9/014	Asma School	1000 student	Samar (12 yrs) , "All the games are very nice, I liked the section with the clown very much. I laughed and played today."
Saturday	20/9/014	Noor Almarefeh associatin	60 children	Specialist Ahmed (26 yrs) , "It's a pleasure to cooperate with PTC; this is the third time during this hard situation after the war. Thanks for coming."
Sunday	28/9/014	Al Shati prep school	100 students	Somood (14 yrs) , "The thing I liked most was sitting on the parachute. I hope you will always come here to let us entertain ourselves."
Thursday	23/10/014	PTC in cooperation with Noor Al-Marefeh Association (Al-Nusierat comp).	25 widows and mothers	Coordinator Ibtisal (22 yrs) , " I'd like to thank PTC for holding this workshop. The mothers could express their feelings. I hope there will be more cooperation with your center Um-Mohamed (34 yrs), "I benefited greatly. I hope there will be monthly meetings. I've got problems with my kids".
Monday	3/11/014	Tamkeen Association Al-Nusirat camp	120 children	Sama (10 yrs) , "I played with my friend and jumped. I had fun." Coordinator: Mona (33 yrs) , " This is the first cooperation between us. I hope there will be an integrated programme by PTC to implement with children from the Association".
Monday	10/11/014	PTC with (GCMHP)	25 widows and mothers	Um-Atta (45 yrs) , "I felt I benefited a lot, but I need more." Um Mohamed (30 yrs),"Frankly, I was able

				to relax and relieve my sadness. Since the martyrdom of my husband I've been feeling that I'm not alive"
Monday	8/12/014	Al-Amal Association for Autism	25children	Manager: Zainab (44 yrs) , "We're glad to have you with us. I hope the level of coordination will increase." Teacher: Sojood (27 yrs) , "It's a good activity although there is no response from the children at this stage."
Tuesday	16/12/014	Al-Salateen Association for Social Development, Beit-Lahia	40 old men	Abu-Ahmad (65 yrs) , "Oh, It's most entertaining company. You're the youth of the future. I ask God to grant you and us success."
Monday	22/12/014	Wesal Association-Gaza	25 children	Animator Alaa (23 yrs) , " I enjoyed working with your center. I felt that the children reacted positively." Huda (8 yrs) , "The most beautiful moment was when we carried the parachute and walked under it."
Total number of beneficiaries is 6,120 people				

6.4.5 Work team professional development

Dr Mohamed Altawil (from PTC-UK), who is the technical supervisor, regularly evaluates the Family and Community Therapy Project, which aims to empower family resilience. He supervises the work team by holding weekly meetings via Skype and e-mail in order to be updated on every aspect of the project. He advises the work team on how to overcome any obstacles or difficulties. Moreover, he trains them on new therapy techniques to be used with families, such as Focusing, C.B.T. and drama therapy. The following are comments by the work team on their professional development, follow-up sessions and training with the project technical supervisor.

-From **Samer Awad (social worker)**, " I always wait for the days of training impatiently because they really benefit me."

- From **Ahmad Altawil (the media coordinator)**, "The communicative meetings are very important. They make us feel that the supervisor really cares about us."

-From **Sabreen Mousa (psychologist)**, " These meetings provide brain-storming and feed-back opportunities."

-From **Jabr Thabit (psychologist and drama specialist)**, "These meetings are vital for us. They help us to release pressure and strengthen our capacity to be able to carry on with our job working with many severely traumatized cases".

-From **Rasha Quandeel (project coordinator)**, " In my opinion, these regular meetings adjust the work and motivate the team to develop skills."

7. Impact of the project

7.1 At the families' level

Because of the massive destruction caused by the war on Gaza and the savage battering endured by the population, there is an urgent need to provide all kinds of continuous support for the affected families. Social and psychological support will go some way to enable them to regain mental stability.

Through working with these families, it was obvious that they benefited greatly from our activities like the psychological first aid and recreational activities in sheltering centers. In addition, there were 312 therapeutic and activation sessions of Family Therapy. These sessions varied from being diagnostic and summative to offering immediate psychological intervention in the form of therapy and follow-up support. They helped relieve the stress of daily life and helped people acquire positive skills to enable them to deal with traumatic situations. 38 families benefited from these sessions. This is equivalent to 312 beneficiaries: 152 females and 160 males.

-The **old man Abu Raif (67 yrs)**: "Really, we would like to thank you for your great efforts. We are in desperate need of PTC's activities for releasing our strong feelings and expressing our sadness, especially after war."

-The **old woman Aum Tafkeer (71 yrs)**: " I feel that there is benefit although I feel as if I haven't been able to pay attention to anything since the martyrdom of my two sons. '

7.2 At the local society level

Gazan society lacks access to such therapy. An increasing number of visitors who desperately need help are taking advantage of the free services at PTC-Gaza. Also, many schools, sheltering centers and the community associations have referred traumatized cases to PTC-Gaza. 38 families benefited from the activities of the Family and Community Therapy Project. It is generally felt by ordinary people and NGOs that PTC's team has been effective in relieving family stress and building individual resilience in the Gaza Strip.

Mohammed Alsoltan (Manager of the Hai Alsalateen Association): "Our society in Gaza is in urgent need of the services we are receiving from PTC-Gaza. Go ahead! May God grant you success"

7.3 At the level of project work team

Working in the Family and Community Therapy Project (FCTP), the team gained many skills and much experience in dealing with traumatised cases and intervening with families. New therapy techniques, especially Focusing, have been developed successfully throughout the team and with clients. The experience of running street activities has led to the development of street theatre for a mixture of therapeutic and recreational outcomes. The work-team rapidly developed their skills to recognize psychological disorders in families, and the crisis has given them much experience in selecting appropriate coping strategies. They have also strengthened their ability to carry the heavy workload involved in dealing with severely traumatized people. By operating as a mutually supportive team, they maintain their own psychological health. They also share their skills and experiences with other projects in the centre, thus enhancing the general provision of psychological support for neglected children.

7.4 At the level of PTC-Gaza

The implementation of this project was greatly extended because of the war on Gaza. The trauma centre became extremely busy because of the urgent needs of families affected by bombardment, displacement and fear. As this report has already shown, the Family Therapy Project has been endorsed by families, relief organisations and local communities. Many families now wish to be included in the project and many different associations and schools have visited PTC-Gaza. PTC(UK) has received many enquiries in the UK because people have heard about the project. Delegations from the USA, Canada, Italy, Spain, UK and Ireland have visited the centre in the last five months in order to learn more about the activities of PTC-Gaza and the ways they support resilience and reduce the bad effects of trauma. Therefore, we can proudly say:

- The centre has got a complete team of animators, specialists, professionals and trainers who are able to deal with traumatized families through using Family Therapy techniques. Also, the centre managed to coordinate and network through contact with various institutions in the Gaza strip where psychological support is their main focus.
- The centre has become a well-known institution working in the field of psychological support.
- The centre is able to improve and to develop through providing psychological services to all groups of people in Gaza.

8- Institutions and international media visits to the centre

Many civil society institutions, national and international mass media have visited PTC-Gaza during the last month to be acquainted with the activities and the services the centre provides to the Palestinian society, and to know about its role in helping displaced people during the third war against Gaza. Cooperation between the center and these institutions was discussed regarding any

psychological support projects in the near future. The centre offered film-shows to display its activities during the war in 2014.

Visits to the center increased after initiating the project of family empowerment and resilience. Thus, it is possible to say that the project increased the number of local and national and international visitors to the centre.

The table below lists the institutions and the dates of their visits followed by documenting photos.

Table (3): list of visits from local, national and international institutions to the centre

Visitor name	Institution name	Place of work	Date of visit
Ibtisal Daya	Al-Noor Association	East of Gaza	23/10/014
Qussay Ahmad	GCMHP	West of Gaza	10/11/014
Valery & Mohdamed Rajab	International Mediterranean Radio	Gaza town	17/11/014
Dr Anna & Nagham	MDM	West of Gaza	18/11/014
Elana & Lion	Spanish press	Gaza town	30/11/014
Rasha Abu Zayed	Rasha Art Atilier	Gaza town	7/12/014
Zainab & Sojood	Al-Amal Association for Autism	Gaza	8/12/014
M. Soltan	Hai Al-Salateen Association	Beit Lahia	9/12/014
Ibrahim Khater	Rowad for Youth Association	Khanyounis	15/12/014
Neveen Halawa	Utopia	Gaza town	29/12/014

9. Attending the external meetings, conferences and workshops

The project coordinator (Rasha Quandeel) asked the team to accept the invitations of various institutions to attend their meetings, conferences and workshops in order to introduce the ideas of the centre and to acquaint these institutions with the activities and services the centre provides. They distributed brochures, leaflets and DVDs about the Family and Community Therapy Project to make them have a clear idea about the project and the essential role of the INTERPAL in supporting and funding this project.

The next table shows the name of the institutions which the team visited and the dates of visits.

Institution name	Date of visit
UNICEF	Last Sunday of every month
Handicap International	First Sunday of every month
GCMHP	1-4/9/014
WHO	4-6/11/014
Interior Ministry	12/11/014
Women's Affairs Center	29/12/014
Maan Development Center	29/12/014
Ministry of Education	30/12/014

10. Difficulties and how to overcome them

10.1 The ongoing power cuts

Because of the crippling blockade imposed on Gaza, we all suffer a lot from regular cuts in the electricity supply which interrupts work on the project. To overcome this obstacle, we use the generator despite the expensiveness of the fuel.

10.2 Fuel crisis in Gaza and the disruption to public transport, along with increasing transport costs

Because of the siege imposed on Gaza for more than eight years, there has been an ongoing fuel crisis. As a result, the working taxis are rare and in certain situations it costs fortune to get to some remote areas. This problem has not been solved yet.

11- Recommendations

1- *Extending the Family and Community Therapy Project to be more regular and increasing the work-team in order to help more needy traumatized families in Gaza.* Gaza lacks everything essential to maintain basic living. Increasing numbers of families visit the center for advice or help because of problems or conflicts within the family which derive from the behavior of traumatized children or the stress and frustration of the parents. There is an urgent need to extend Family Therapy support.

2- *Expanding work areas to include all areas in Gaza in addition to securing everything needed to facilitate the team's capacity to travel to these areas.*

3- *Designing a training manual about Family Therapy to help the team and others to apply the activities with families.*

INTERPAL on-going grant effects on centre services:-

-Developing the centre website in Arabic as a first stage and in English as a second according to the current requirements.

-Designing a Facebook page for the center in order to spread the project's ideas.

-Developing Skype Video-Conference in the ICT hall which was funded by INTERPAL in 2008. These services have been updated to be used for professional training and follow-up work by PTC-UK specialists.

-Keep contacting the donor institutions in the Gaza strip.

-Reinforcing work and partnerships with community associations at the level of referring the needy cases from partner associations such as Future Palestine Association, Al-Noor Charitable Association and GCMHP to the centre in order to work together and avoid any duplication in the services with the traumatized cases and areas in Gaza Strip.

- The center could receive the war traumatized cases whether voluntarily or through the centre's regular field screening or referred by governmental Ministries or other institutions in civil society.

-There have been many visits by national and international institutions and media to the centre in order to become acquainted with PTC's activities and the Family and Community Therapy Project (FCTP) and to know how traumatized children receive services in the centre.

- The FCTP sustained the continuous employment of psychological specialists, social workers and managerial employees at the centre and made it noticeably more efficient and active. This continuity greatly improved professional and managerial performance and gave the mental health workers more long term stability than had been the case in earlier years.

-The INTERPAL grant made the center strong despite the challenges and kept valuable staff loyal to PTC. The sustained security meant that more project work could be planned and developed. Last year's grant from INTERPAL saved the centre from closure and meant that any extra funds could now be used to increase the quality of care provision from PTC.

-PTC-Gaza represented by its board of directors, founders' body, the voluntary team and the work-team in the FCTP would like to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to INTERPAL in London for continuing to support PTC-Gaza through PTC-UK.

We hope that INTERPAL maintains these bonds of partnership so that the centre continues to provide therapeutic services which help towards the resilience and empowerment of the Palestinian people in the face of so much suffering.

Appendix

No	Appendix title
App.1	Activities and pictures gallery
App.2	Success stories (4 stories)
App.3	Financial report summary
App.4	News-Letter 16.08.2014 (after the war)

Issued by PTC-Gaza: Project Coordinator (Rasha Qundeel)

Reviewed by PTCUK: Mohamed Altawil, David Harrold, Denis Hawes

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