

# *Women's Empowerment Project*

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## **About the Women's Empowerment Project (WEP):**

The Women's Empowerment Project (WEP) forms part of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme. The ultimate goal of the WEP, is to improve the quality of life of women victims of violence, their families and community, through strengthening of local rehabilitation, education and training facilities. The ongoing deterioration of the socio-economic and political situation in the Gaza Strip has led to an increase in violence, specially against women and children. This also led to an increased demand by women for the WEP services. The WEP has responded by expanding its range of viable services. At the present time the WEP offers facilities allowing for women to be trained in vocational and income generating skills, while at the same time providing psychological and legal counseling, and education in self development, women's health, social and legal issues. The WEP has three center, in Gaza, Rafah and Beach Camp. The further plans include the replication of these centers in the middle camps area due to their present lack of services.

Using a Training of Trainers approach will help to develop a pool of female community leaders, working as educators and mentors within the community.

Currently, training courses are being developed for women who were unable to complete their secondary schooling, and networks are being established with local policewomen to cooperate in a training course which will increase their skills and awareness in dealing with vulnerable sectors of the community.

Since its establishment, the project has focused on the community approach. Workshops, public meetings and support groups are organized beside lectures from within or outside

the center. The project philosophy and believes that a woman school not be considered just as separate unit, but should be dealt with the family as a whole.

Being conscious of the importance of gender awareness within the framework of training of trainers and education, the project also realized that this issue is not exclusive to women, so efforts will be made to regularly monitor the impact of these courses on male members of families, and by extension, the broader community.

In 1997 the WEP established a resource unit and started to collect information in order to establish a data base concerning violence against women in the community. As the involvement of women in the development process is essential, these information collected by the resource center will be helpful in designing future research.

**Shadia El Sarraj**

***Director of Women's Empowerment Project***

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