

# *Women's Empowerment Project*

## *Stories of Success*

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According to needs assessment surveys conducted by the Community Development Leaders in both Beach camp and Rafah areas, the economical problem was the first to be identified by women.

The WEP main goal is to empower women victims through education and work by providing different services both to them or to their family members.



● Fifi, 24-year-old, single, secondary school graduate. She was born into a large family of 2 brothers, and 4 sisters. Nobody gave her any attention. The oldest brother was the main power source and control in the family. He controlled everyone including Fifi herself, by beatings and insults. Fifi tried to commit suicide several times not only because of that brother but also because of her other educated sisters insults . They succeeded to have

higher education while she was forced to leave school because of her mother's illness. Even she was forced to leave her fiancee after 3 years of engagement. On 1 July 1997, Fifi joined the WEP. Among the services provided to her were, vocational training, psycho-social counseling, family counseling, legal and health education.

After finishing her training at the project, Fifi started a small project which included flower arrangement, ceramics and glass painting. She is working now towards marketing her products by herself.

● Sawsan, 34-year-old, widow, secondary school graduate. She has three children. After 2 years at the Islamic University she was forced to leave because of economical reasons. Later she found work and met a man who became her husband and who was killed during the Intifada by Palestinian activists. After this his family threw her and her children out of house, but by the help of some people and police she returned back to their home. They only gave her a small room at the entrance of the house. Sawsan Joined the WEP on 1 July 1997 and finished her training on 31 December 1997. Among the services provided to Sawsan at the WEP were vocational training, psycho-social counseling, health and legal education.

Sawsan started a small knitting business and began marketing her products by herself.

● Nuha, 35-year-old, married and has 8 children. Nuha was forced to marry her cousin who has polio which made him unable to work. Her problems started prior to her marriage. She lived with her family in Egypt where her father was wanted because of accusations against him of killing somebody. The father escaped to Jordan and the mother returned back to Gaza with her five children, one of whom was Nuha. After marriage her mother left Gaza with her children to Iraq while her father stayed in Jordan because of fears of revenge. Nuha lost her family economical and emotional support. She joined the WEP on 1 July 1997 and finished her training at the end of December 1997. Her project is crystal and pottery decoration. She markets her products by herself.

● Aida, 22-year-old, Married, she has a 3-year- child. After she finished her preparatory education she was forced to marry her cousin. Her suffering started the first day of marriage. She lived with his big family in a tiny room. They used her like a servant and if she refused to obey she was beaten and insulted by her husband. Once he hit her with a stick and caused a problem with her eyes.

Her husband does not work because he suffers from a skin disease.

Aida joined the WEP on 1 January 1997 and finished her training on 30 June 1997. Among the services provided to Aida at the WEP were vocational training, psychosocial counseling, health and legal education.

Her project is knitting and ceramics. Her husband markets her products.

● Kareema, 42-year-old, married, secondary school graduate. Kareema was one of the women activist during the Intifada. She joined the Palestinian Women's Union and was arrested for 6 months. She participated in different political activities and was injured 6 times by rubber bullets. Despite her family rejection to political participation, Kareema continued.

Kareema married at the age of 35 and has no children.

On 1 January 1996, Kareema joined the WEP and finished her training at the end of June 1996. Among the services provided at the WEP, Kareema received vocational training, psychosocial counseling, health and legal education and child care providers training.

Her project is establishing a child care in the area where she is living .

● Suad, 44-year-old, widow. She has 9 children. She was born into a poor family. Her father died when she was 4 years old and later on her mother remarried and she became neglected.

When Suad finished her preparatory education, her family organized her marriage. She lived a happy life with her husband who was killed by the IDF during the Intifada.

Suad joined the WEP on 1 January 1997 and finished her training at the end of June 1997. At the end of her training a sewing machine was given to her as a grant as well as advanced training course in fashion design. Services to her provided by WEP were psychosocial counseling sessions, health and legal education.

● Ebtisam, 30-year-old, single. She has a diploma in social science but she did not succeed in finding a work and was not encouraged by her family to do so because her parents are old and sick and they need somebody to look after them. Although her brothers are married and living in other houses they still control her and her young sister.

Ebtisam joined the WEP in January 1997 and finished her training by June 1997. At the end of her

training she received a sewing machine as a grant and started her project at home. At the same time she was selected to train women prisoners as part of the rehabilitation programme.

● Ferial, 22-year-old, divorce, a secondary school graduate. Ferial was born into a poor family from El Nusierat refugee camp. After finishing her secondary school education she was forced to marry her cousin. She tried to commit suicide many times, and was beaten severely by her family to force her to marry. After few months of marriage Ferial's psychological problems started and was divorced. After her divorce her family treated her badly.

Ferial joined the WEP at the beginning of 1997 and finished her training by the end of June 1997. The services provided by the WEP were vocational training, psycho-social counseling, health and legal education.

Ferial project is glass painting, pottery decoration and she is responsible for marketing her products.

● Nisrin, 20-year-old, single, secondary school graduate. Ten years ago her father left his wife and his 8 children to marry another woman. After the death of Nisrin's mother they found themselves alone without even food. They live in a garage without a kitchen or even bathroom. Nisrin joined the WEP at the beginning of 1997 and finished her training in June 1997. She received a sewing machine as a grant and started her own business at home. Later on she joined the child care providers training course organized by WEP and she works now at Rafah project kindergarten.

● Ebtisam, 35-year-old, widow. She has 4 children. Ebtisam was born into a poor family. Her father used to beat her and her other 8 sisters and brothers severely. When Ebtisam finished her preparatory school education she was forced to marry a man who was 20 years older. Ebtisam was his second wife. She moved with him to Saudi Arabia where her suffering continued. Her husband died since 6 years and she returned back home with her children.

Ebtisam joined the WEP at the beginning of July 1997 and finished her training at the end of 1997. Her project is a hair dressing and beauty salon in a small area of her home.

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