

ANNUAL REPORT *2018*



INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMITTEE (ICCI)
IN ISRAEL - NAZARETH



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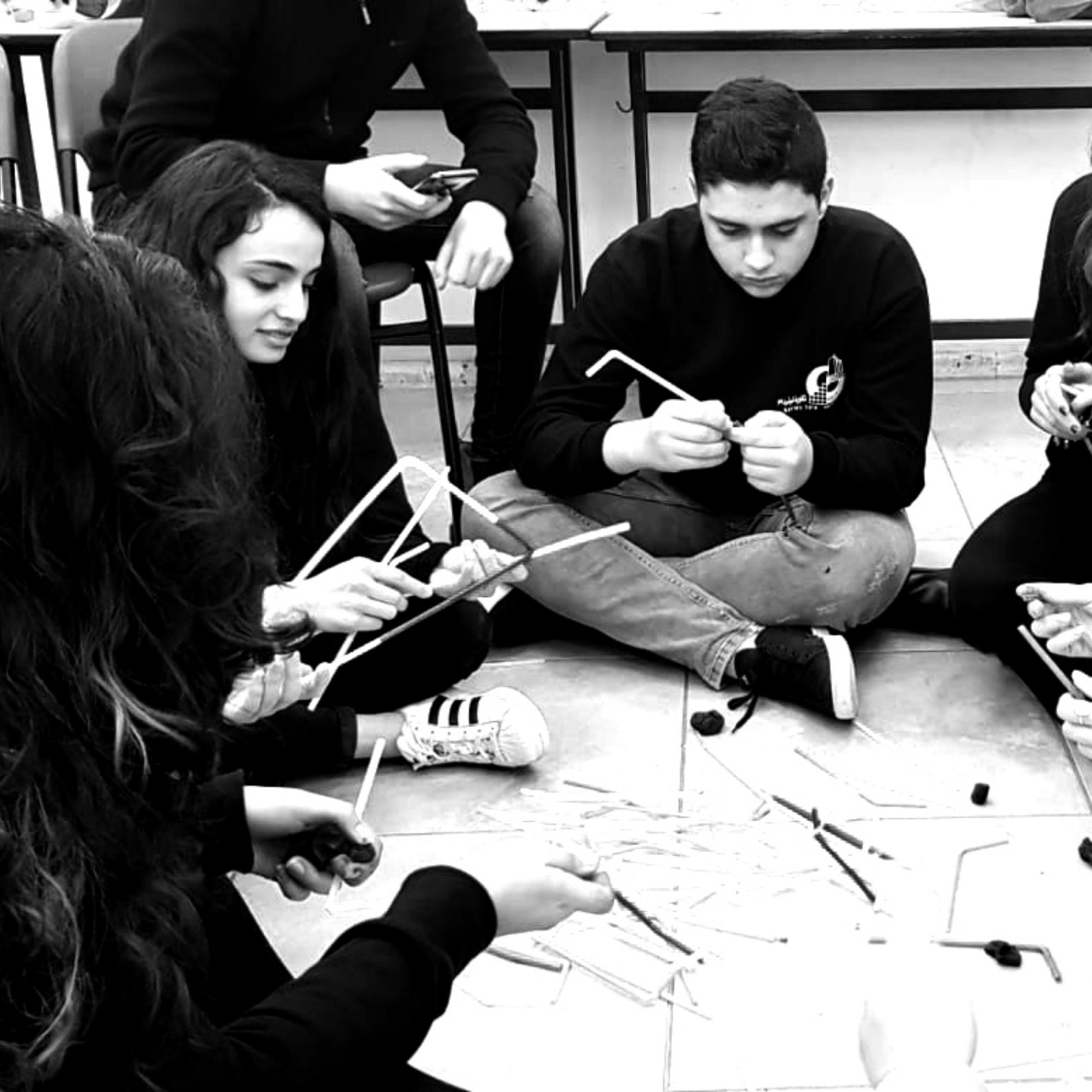
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DEAR

Friends

of the International Christian Committee in Israel (ICCI), we are very happy to have this opportunity to share with you a summary of our work during 2018 in this report! While we have enjoyed reaching new goals, partnerships and achievements, we have also learned a lot from the challenges that we faced and from the reflections that we did throughout the year. It is only through the hard work of our staff, support of our partners and cooperation of our target communities that we have reached the targets that we have set since beginning of the year.

While the ICCI aligns itself with the strategic direction of the Department Service of Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) which focuses on five main strategic priorities including health, economic development, relief response and improving internal systems and structures. ICCI however focusses on the empowerment component more than any of the other priorities.

During 2018, ICCI has worked in five localities under more than nine projects and initiatives across the Galilee; participants from several areas in Galilee were part of the projects which included: Interfaith and getting to know the others, micro loans for education and businesses improvement, cross boundary dialogue, youth leadership, and young women empowerment program. Enjoy the reading.

Hussam Elias
Executive Director ICCI

Farah Geraisy
Chairperson & Delegate



CONTEXT
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they might be equal citizens of the state. This inequality is also evident in the fact that only a fraction of government budgets allocated funds for the maintenance and building of infrastructure in Palestinian towns in Israel. The policy of under-development is evident in the case of the “unrecognized villages” too. About 100,000 people live in these villages, mostly in the Negev and in the North of Israel, which officially do not exist. This means that even the most basic services are not made available to their inhabitants such as running water, health services, sanitation, electricity, safe roads, adequate education facilities or postal and other communication services. The segregated life style of Israelis and Palestinians in Israel substantially contributes to maintaining and aggravating the depicted situation of inequality. The cornerstone of separation is that of residential communities and schools: 90% of Israel’s Arabic citizens live in fully Arab inhabited villages and towns. On an institutional level, the dual run schooling system cements the segregation, starting with separated education from the kindergarten throughout. As a consequence, Jewish and Arabic children grow up in “different worlds” and know each other mainly through the (negative) information that is available within their own community or via the media. The prevailing stereotypes and negative images within both groups and the segregated communities provide no opportunities to dismantle them through direct, positive contact.

The Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People which was adopted in July by the Knesset, and which was criticized worldwide and locally, affected negatively the feeling of the Palestinians inside Israel, of the chance that

According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics last data, the Palestinian-Arab population in 2017 was estimated at 1,800,000, representing about 20% of the country's population. 1,500,000 Moslems, 140,000 Druze, and less than 130,000 Arab Christians. The majority of these non-Jews identify themselves as by nationality as Palestinians, and Israeli by citizenship. Many have family ties to Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, as well as to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

Palestinians living in Israel largely perceive themselves as 'second rank' citizens with less rights than other residents of the country, a perception that was confirmed by a survey by the University of Haifa in 2014. Looking at relations and coexistence between Jews and Palestinians living in Israel, the survey revealed that 48% of Israel's Palestinian citizens are dissatisfied with their lives in the Jewish state, compared to 35% in 2003; the number of Palestinians who are not willing to befriend Jews has doubled and, perhaps most seriously, 62% of Israeli Palestinians fear "transfer" (forced migration or, as it has been called, "ethnic cleansing"), compared to just 6% who expressed that fear in 2003. It was also noted that 40% of the respondents expressed their distrust of Israel's judiciary system while almost 41% supported a Palestinian boycott of Knesset elections.

Another poll devoted to the views of Jewish youth, conducted by the Institute of Studies, Magar Mouhot in the same year, found that 50% of young Jews surveyed believe that Arabs (Palestinians) should not have the same rights as Jews in Israel; 56% said that Arabs must be prevented from running for the Knesset and 48% reject any notion of evacuating the [illegal] settlements and outposts in the occupied West Bank. Such extremism is more prominent among young ultra-orthodox Jews, with 82% demanding that Arab-Palestinian citizens should not be granted equal rights and 82% opposing the election of Arab-Palestinians to the Knesset; 56% say that their fellow citizens who are Palestinians should not be allowed to vote in Israel's national democratic elections.

Arab Christians are about 8% of the Arab population of the country (125,000-120,000), but less than 2% of the total population. The feeling of marginality, and a developing tendency to exclude themselves from both Jews and Moslems, this feeling facilitates their tendency to immigrate. The Palestinian Minority within Israel faces political and economic discrimination. 80% of Arab Palestinians residents live in communities that are ranked within the lowest three socio-economic clusters. They face land confiscation and possess less than 3% from the lands. Surveys show more negative attitudes towards the Palestinian minority, and at the same time increasing negative attitudes towards the state by the Palestinian population. Within Arab Local

Authorities and in mixed cities inequality is reflected in terms of: Infrastructure, and lack of industrial zones, growing gap in terms of tuition subsidies given to Palestinian school students compared to Israeli students, social services, housing/house demolitions and lack of youth frameworks.

The rate of unemployment comes up to more than 20% in several Arab localities, and it can reach up to 35%. Academic Palestinian women suffer the most with the rate among them going up to 30%. Palestinian employees' income in general is half the income of an Israeli employee.

Between 150,000 – 250,000 Palestinians had been displaced from their homes to other locations after the establishment of the state. Israel refused to allow internally displaced Palestinians to return to their homes and villages. 40 unrecognized villages mainly in the south (Negev desert) in which the state refuses to provide with a planning structure and place under municipal jurisdiction. The government uses a variety of measures to pressure Bedouins into relocating to government-planned urban centers that disregard their lifestyle and needs. Whole communities have been issued demolition orders; others are forced to continue living in unrecognized villages that are denied basic services and infrastructure, such as electricity and running water.

PROGRAMS
AND

Projects



ECONOMIC *Empowerment*

In 2018, ICCI implemented nine different projects and initiatives across the different geographical targeted areas reaching more than six hundred fifty beneficiaries most of whom are young men and women. ICCI focuses strongly on serving the young population residing in Nazareth and mixed villages and cities across the Galilee. This year we were able to work with people mainly from Nazareth, Acre, Meelya, Deir-Hanna, Reineh and other localities.

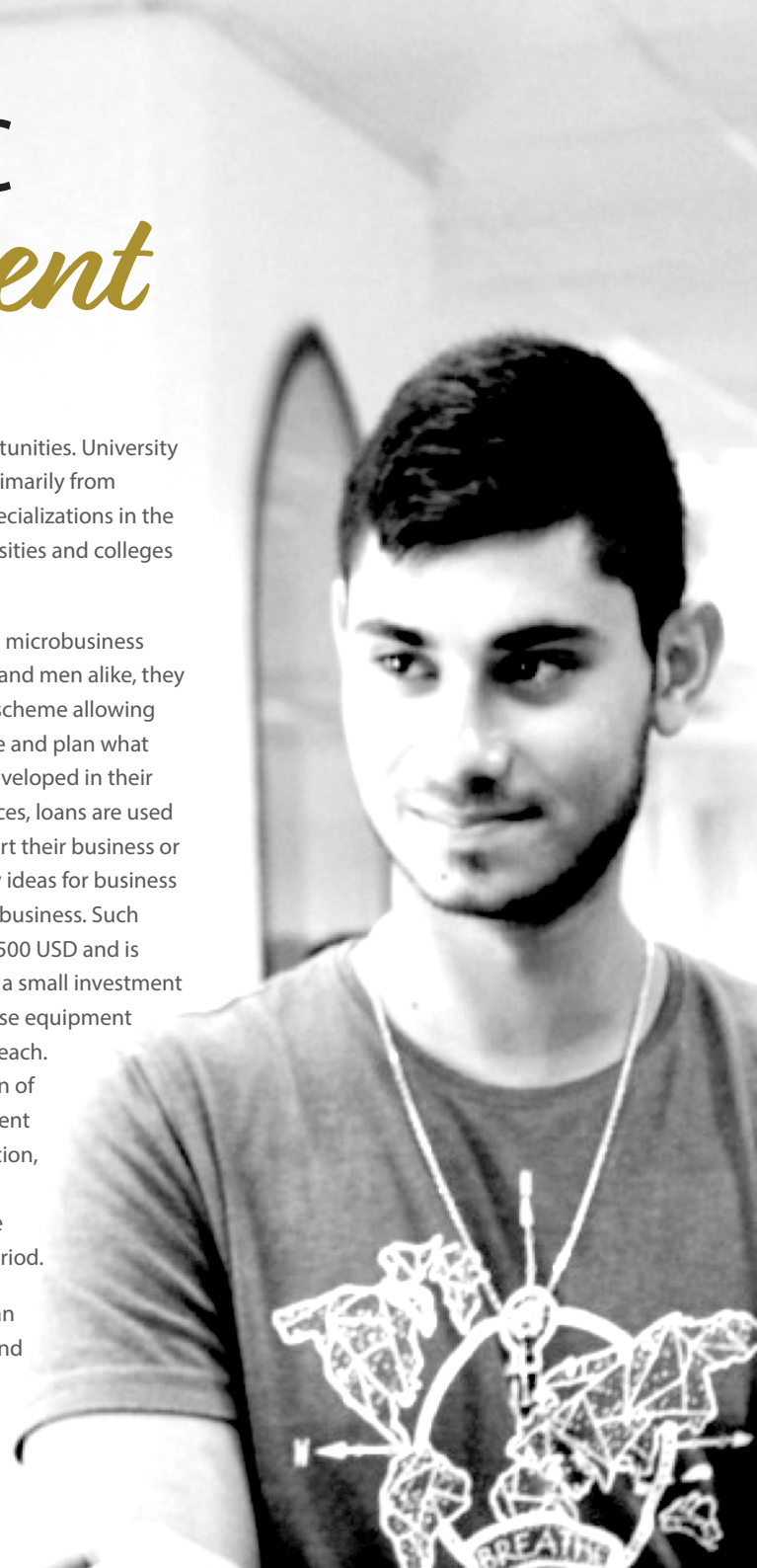
Under the economic empowerment initiatives, the micro loans program continued its outreach in Nazareth and surrounding areas allowing students as well as small business owners to benefit from small micro loans to be used for developing their own business or cover their university tuition fees

Through this program, students can get the micro loans up to four times during their education journey which make up approximately 30% of their total tuition fees. ICCI schedules repayment with a grace period of one year after graduation from the university. This allows the graduates to

seek employment opportunities. University students in 2018 were primarily from Galilee with different specializations in the faculties of Israeli universities and colleges across the country.

As for the small and microbusiness owners, women and men alike, they are provided a different scheme allowing them to properly prepare and plan what they would like to see developed in their business. In some instances, loans are used for rehabilitation to restart their business or even for developing new ideas for business owners to advance their business. Such microloan averages at 2,500 USD and is provided for one time as a small investment allowing them to purchase equipment and to expand their outreach. Following the completion of their business development idea and its implementation, ICCI works with them to repay the loan within the following 12 months period.

This year more than 80 students and business owners have received microloans.



ORGANIZATIONAL *Development*

ICCI is on a journey as an organization that aims at providing the best service to the target beneficiaries; it is also a learning organization that strives to strengthen its internal controls and systems as one way to improve its services. The microloans program now has a clear manual that includes policies and procedure that should be followed by the staff as a result of continued cooperation between staff.

This year ICCI continued to invest in improving its networking capacities with likeminded civil society organizations and partners- accompanying friends and ICCI partners to the different program to show case the current programs and think together of ways to improve them. Furthermore, ICCI has also developed a new fundraising strategy as one way to proactively seek local funding opportunities that had identified priorities and mapped different partners. It has also a list of new and innovative ideas that are hoped to expand its work to serve the population. ICCI is also working towards developing and implementing an M&E system that is expected to closely monitor the progress and changes in program implementation and results.

INTER*faith*

ICCI finds itself in a unique situation being in the Galilee and among ethnic and religious communities where it can play a very important role at strengthening relations among these communities. Every year, ICCI looks for unique ways to find frameworks of bringing people from different religions to learn about each other, and to be more aware of their religious-cultural identities and to find commonalities and respect their differences.

Special activities were organized for high school teachers including arranging for visits to the Holy Sites of the different religions of the country. This helps the teachers in finding similarities and in seeing how the difference can be worked out to the benefit of all; Jews, Muslims, Druze and Christians. The theme for this year was visiting the Holy Sites to get to know better the others' cultural heritage, where more than 60 teachers most - of them women participated in the visits. Following the visits, the teachers met with a religious leader, each from a different community, in order to discuss in depth the significance of the Holy Sites visited and to discuss what these visits meant to them personally and how they could relate their experiences to their students back at school.

"It has been an exciting opportunity of learning primarily because the information acquired throughout the course has enriched greatly the way we address different topics as educators in religion, history and archaeology. Between fun and academics, the course combined all components needed to help process what we have learned especially about the other and how I see myself in such perspective. I now look forward to take all that I have learned and implement it in the school where I teach."

BUILDING BRIDGES *through Dialogue*

This component of the ICCI work focuses on a program bringing both Arabs and Israeli Jews living in the Galilee to have a conversation together. ICCI sees itself as an important catalyst and a facilitator for an encounter platform where Arabs and Israeli Jews can come together and build bridges.

This year the project staff focused on developing a scheme to plan and implement four encounters within schools on awareness of the uniqueness of the religious-cultural background of the other students. Four separate preparatory meetings took place before each multi-cultural encounter as well as eight annual preparatory meetings for the leading teachers of both schools with the program facilitators. At least four preparatory and evaluative meetings took place annually between the Jewish and Arab facilitators. This year 70 students participated in the Israeli-Arab binational dialogue encounters.

In 2018, a special annual two-days conference was conducted, on the new "Nation State Law". About 160 Jewish-Arab participants attended including parliamentarians, social change organizations, politicians, religious leaders and others. More than half of the participants were women. During this conference a survey about the impact of the new basic law on Palestinian citizens of Israel, which was conducted in cooperation with the university of Haifa, was presented. During the conference topics included issues related to Palestinian – Israeli relations, peace, equality, and future vision towards a more pluralist society. The conference presenters made a set of recommendations and have given the participants an opportunity to voice their concerns and needs that will be further raised by Knesset Members with the government.



YOUTH *Leadership*

“During our field trip which is an important part of the leadership training program, we have learned many things; we had the chance to meet people from other places, backgrounds, and religions. The leadership training itself has helped us to look at the bright side of things and aspire towards the best and aim high to reach our dreams and goals and not to be affected by the negativity around us.”

“As a first-time attendee of the leadership program, this has been a very intriguing experience because it has helped me understand better people with different backgrounds, their cultures and heritage. I hope that this program will continue in order to get to know each other better to strengthen our relationships with each other to see the human in each other and challenge ourselves as individuals and groups”

For the eighth consecutive year, ICCI has been working on a Youth leadership program targeting middle and high school students in Nazareth and Miilya of the upper Galilee. The program focuses on providing young men and women life-skills and leadership skills to students at the Notre Dame School in Miilya. Following the developed curriculum, more than sixty students participated in the program; the participants were then able to put in practice what they have learned theoretically and practically.

In 2018 a special trip was made by the youth leadership project participants to a community in the Negev where they were able to visit the community, learn about their situation and spend time with the children. Staying overnight, the young men and women felt that by becoming aware of the conditions of life of Bedouin children by getting in touch with them and listening first hand to their stories in their unrecognized villages, the students can help them to become more aware of their safety and well being in the difficult environments.

In addition, in partnership with the Catenians Foundation a one-day conference was organized for young people of Nazareth where more than 96 of youth participated to discuss challenges facing Arab Christians youth in Israel. Topics of the conference included challenges of identity and feelings of marginalization as well as ways to become more involved in the community and society. The participants even heard life stories from people who stood up against all odds to become successful. The conference was concluded with a light lunch for all participants.

YOUNG WOMEN *Empowerment*

In a small center facing the Mediterranean Sea a special program is conducted by ICCI focusing improving life skills especially for girls at risk. The program was established in 2006 providing young women the space where they could come together every day. Each year almost 100 girls most of whom teenagers at risk are becoming dropouts from schools are welcomed to the center. The place is open and staffed for all girls in the community five days a week. The gatherings are divided each according to different age groups giving the opportunity for these young girls to share with each other the challenges of the day and the successes. All girls, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are also welcome to the open day where most of the extracurricular activities are conducted; some activities undertaken in 2018 included field trips and fun days, group discussions.

The situation in Acre continues to be challenging for its Arab dwellers, especially young girls. Project staff spends time with the girls providing them with private and group counseling sessions, extracurricular activities, special awareness sessions. "This center is a safe haven for many of our girls; at such a sensitive age girls, more than boys become under a bigger risk of dropping out from school. Our aim is not only to keep them from dropping out from school but to also help them go back and graduate from school and see a brighter future where they can become productive members of society" said Merry, Counselor and Project manager.



FATIMAS *Story*

Fatima is a -13year-old girl form Acre. She lives in a small apartment with her mother four younger brothers; Her mother does not work, and her father does not pay child support to the mother since they were divorced 3 years ago. Fatima, her mother and siblings all moved to Akko after having lived in Nazareth for a few years but preferred to move to Akko after the divorce. Despite the family's difficult economic situation, they are managing through special programs that focuses mostly on providing them with the basic needs.

“I love Akko so much that I do not like to move to another place. I have many friends! I learned about the ICCI program in the city from my friends and classmates almost two years ago. I have been attending the activities since then and love drawing a lot and I always get colors, papers...” said Fatima

Fatima comes to the center to get support and help to meet friends at least twice a week. She also enjoys developing her drawing hobby and meet new girls. She gets help in homework and learn how to be healthy and eat healthy. Most of all she loves being on a field trip to learn about new places.

“When Fatima came to the center she was almost always crying, distant from the group and avoiding talking to others- when asked why, she answered that she was sad and felt that she was less than the other girls. Look at her now with a lot of counseling and spending time with her you can clearly see the transformation process: she now has more friends, she speaks up without fear and with much confidence and when needed she has learned how to ask for help. I am so proud of her.” Mery, Center’s Counselor.



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