

Association Najdeh

Advocacy Project

Activities Report January – December 2007

Introduction

Association Najdeh launched the Advocacy project in 2007 based on its vision¹, mission² and in parallel with its objectives. The Advocacy project aims at winning the support of civil society in Lebanon and abroad in order to influence policies and spending, and bring social change. It is to be noted that several staff members already had undergone five specialized ToT sessions and conducted 2 researches as part of the Palestinian Women's Regional Training, Research, and Advocacy Program³. Najdeh's Advocacy project will benefit from the knowledge and skills of its trained staff that will also be training other staff. The program strategy is based at:

- Identifying the people we need to influence and planning the best ways of communication in order to convince them of the positive change that would result from our advocacy activities
- Building a persuasive case
- Lobbying civil society
- Organizing networks and coalitions to create a groundswell of support that can influence decision-makers
- Working with media to help communicate the message

Activities in 2007

With the overall aim of promoting Palestinian rights, the Advocacy project's activities in 2007 focused at:

The Right to Work campaign for Palestinians in Lebanon

This campaign was postponed due to the July-August war in 2006 then it was reactivated to be postponing again in 2007 due to the military clashes in Nahr El Bared camp, northern Lebanon. In 2007 Najdeh reactivated the campaign's activities again in collaboration with other 45 NGOs in Lebanon and number of NGOs outside the country.

A memo was drafted regarding the Lebanese labor law suggesting lifting the existing conditions restricting the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon from obtaining work permits outside the camps. This memo was submitted to the Lebanese Parliament. The process has been carried out in consultation with the refugee communities, Lebanese parliament members, and Lebanese and international NGOs. At the same time, awareness-raising workshops on the

¹ A civil society where social justice and gender equality are predominating, and where Palestinian refugees are enjoying their human rights.

² Empowering the community in general and the women and children in particular to enable them of enhancing their role in developing the community economically, socially and politically as well as advocating and lobbying to promote women and children rights.

³ PWRTRAP was a four-year (2004-2006) regional Palestinian women's project funded by Education Action International –UK (www.education-action.org) with 5 Palestinian leading women's organizations from West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon & Jordan. The overall goal of the project is to increase Palestinian women's capacities to research issues pertinent to their lives and advocate for change in their organizations, influence policy at local & national levels and increase community awareness, and enhance the quality of their programs in order to participate fully in all spheres of life and enjoy equal right to Palestinian men.

rights of refugees have been organized in four villages southern Lebanon. Common demonstrations on this issue have been carried out mostly in the Palestinian camps.

Also, during the reporting period, the campaign's team started preparing for the survey on "The Impact of Palestinian Refugees Contribution to the Lebanese Economy". The survey's questionnaire was drafted, discussed and approved. Work teams was chosen and assigned in every region and each team consists of a social worker, and 4 to 5 researchers. Besides, 2 focus groups will be conducted with 20 Palestinian workers in each. The survey's advisor and the economic consultant will conduct the survey's data analysis. The campaign's leaflet is prepared and will be printed and distributed in May 2008.

The Right of Return Campaign

1. The Bridging Memories Project

Najdeh has continued its participation in and contribution to the Right of Return campaign through the implementation of a joint project "Bridging Memories". This project collects oral history from elder Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon about incidents related to Al Nakba - the Arab/Israeli war in 1948 that resulted in establishing the state of Israel and in the internal and external displacement of around a million Palestinians from their villages and towns.

Najdeh is carrying out this project in cooperation with its partners who in their turn are cooperating with Zochrot⁴. This project aims at increasing attention in Europe to the Palestinian refugees' right of return, in cooperation with the European NGOs platforms' activities during the 60th commemoration of the Nakba/the establishment of the Israeli state.

Work team was formed through a meeting conducted in January whereby the aims and plan of the project were discussed and drafted covering the year 2007. The team consists of 2 members responsible for research, 2 members responsible for photography, 1 technical supervisor and 1 administrative supervisor. The team in cooperation with a delegate from CCFD photographed and interviewed 22 elder refugees from "Ras El Ahmar" village that was evacuated in 1948 and all its inhabitants became refugees and currently resident at Ein El Helweh camp. The interviews are the material that would be used on the campaign Najdeh would launch in 2008. The advocacy team started working on the booklet, and drafts have been done in coordination with Palestinian writers and specialists. The booklet's drafts were developed to include six chapters (before 48, the forced emigration, refugees, Palestine the land and identity, the burned land, right of return). The videotapes of the interviews were collected and are being edited. A Lebanese-Palestinian committee was formed to follow-up the work of the right of return campaign.

2. Commemoration of Al Nakba Day 15 May

In May 2007 many activities has been planned and conducted in all regions at the occasion of the Nakba in May 2007, with the participation and attendance of members of Palestinian and Lebanese communities and civil society (NGOs, Unions, Parties, etc.). The Palestinian elderly played a great role in the related activities sharing their memories and what they have witnessed in May 1948 with others. Beside the elderly corners, the activities included heritage and art exhibitions, children activities, traditional food corners, folkdance events, petition signing in support of the right of return. The local and regional media covered those activities.

⁴ www.zochrot.org

3. Land Day 30 March

This year, the activities related to the Land Day were only organized in Sidon, south Lebanon. The activities aimed at enhancing the Palestinian heritage and history especially for the new generations. The activities also included honoring 70 elder Palestinian refugees of whom some were interviewed by Najdeh's Advocacy team.

NBC IDPs

The Advocacy team paid attention to monitoring and protection of NBC displaced refugees' human rights through sequins of meetings in coordination with:

- The International Red Cross to follow-up the conditions of the displaced refugee from NBC who were arrested.
- Several Human Rights organizations providing case studies, data and participating at joint press conferences and sit-ins.
- The Danish Refugee Council, following-up the conditions of the non-IDPs refugees in order to provide them with relief (that was not granted for them as they are not registered at UNRWA or the Lebanese authorities).

In addition, Najdeh facilitated journalists and local, regional and international NGOs and delegates field visits to the displaced gatherings and/or the NBC as well as organizing interviews with the displaced and the returnees.

It is needless to say that advocacy work is always related to political and security situations in addition to the public mood. The clashes in Nahr El Bared camp shifted the Palestinian refugees and thus Najdeh's priorities towards emergency and relief work. As for the Lebanese political and public mood it was also affected negatively by the incidents of the north not to mention the already unstable situation in a whole which all affected its priorities.