



The Civic Forum Institute

## **CFI Annual Report – 2012**

### **Introduction**

Through 2012 Civic Forum Institute has continued to work to re-establish itself as one of the leading civil society organisations in Palestine, following the reduction in the on the ground activities over the last few years. The response to this has been overwhelming with reactions from donors, stakeholders and beneficiaries showing that CFI has been missed, and giving great hope for the organisation's future success and development.

Work through this year has focused on ensuring a small team of core staff are in place, securing initial funding and partnerships from which to build, and reviewing the organisational strategy to ensure that CFI's vision and mission are still relevant and are closely aligned with the needs of beneficiaries to build democracy in Palestine. In all three of these areas excellent progress has been made, with two ongoing projects, a newly received donation, many projects and partnerships in the pipeline awaiting decisions and an outline strategic plan for the next five years near completion, and the prospects for CFI in 2013 are very positive.

CFI would like to thank all its beneficiaries, volunteers, partners and supporters, past and present, for their ongoing commitment to the organisation and its work.

### **Key Developments through 2012**

#### **Projects & Activities:**

##### **Right to Access Campaign:**

This campaign implemented in collaboration with the organisation In His Steps: Pathways of Peace (IHS), and explored the issues of access facing people with physical disabilities. CFI and IHS visited many towns and villages through the Southern and Central West Bank, and distributed around 200 wheelchairs (supplied by IHS) to people in need of them. Hand in hand with this, discussions were held around the rights of people with physical disabilities, particularly the right to access, and leaflets were distributed at all meetings and events, to inform people about these rights, and how to fight for them.

Following this series of meetings a central event was held in Bethlehem in March 2012, bringing together all the wheelchair recipients, with other interested and involved parties, to call for better access to all municipal buildings in the town. Campaigners congregated outside the Municipality and called for improved access to public transport, highlighting the bus station as a key target. A meeting was held with PADICO, the company who built the bus station, and this resulted in a promise to make the needed adjustments to the building including the installation of ramps.

The campaign also received wide media coverage, including Al Quds, Ma'an News Agency, Alif and PNN.

*'Accessibility is a necessity to guarantee full participation and equal opportunities for people with disabilities in public life and day to day activities. This campaign is a foundation from which to build and implement larger-scale activities in this regard'.*

Ziad Amro, Disability Rights Activist and Participant in the Right to Access Campaign.

### **Improving the Quality of Political Coverage and Expanding Media Space Ahead of the 2013 Palestinian Elections:**

Early in 2012, CFI were approached by the UK organisation Electoral Reform International Services (ERIS), to be their local partner on a UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office funded project, *Improving the Quality of Political Coverage and Expanding Media Space Ahead of the 2013 Palestinian Elections*. The central objective of the project is to 'improve political reporting, promote vigorous media scrutiny of the authorities and expand 'media space' in the Occupied Palestinian Territories prior to the 2013 Elections' through four key activities; development of a Code of Conduct for election reporting, review of media laws and recommendations for reform, training for journalists and media figures and media monitoring both at the start of the project, and in the lead up to the 2013 elections. The project was originally scheduled to run between June 2012 and February 2013 (the initial planned election date).

The implementation of the project actually began in August, with a scoping visit from ERIS Programme Manager, Grace Favrel. This visit included a number of meetings with media figures, NGOs and other relevant bodies, as well as project planning sessions with CFI. Following this, the project activities began at the end of September with Tim Neale, a British media expert, visiting Palestine for ten days. During this period he worked closely with CFI media consultant, Maher Awadeh to develop a general overview of the media reporting of political events in Palestine (through TV, radio and print media), to inform the development of the project. In addition, a series of meetings were held with senior media figures to introduce the Code of Conduct component, and lay the groundwork for the ongoing activities.

On 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November, a two-day workshop was held in Ramallah, attended by approximately twenty senior media figures representing a range of TV, radio and print media outlets, as well as the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate in the West Bank and a number of high level representatives from Gaza. Facilitated by Tim Neale, the workshop's objective was to support the attendees to develop their own Code of Conduct for election reporting, using international models and best practice as a guideline. Central to the workshop was the issue of ownership, ensuring that the resulting Code was implementable in the local context, accepted by those present, and had the potential to be rolled out and accepted by the wider media community.

Since the workshop CFI have circulated the finalised code to begin the process of seeking further commitment to it, as well as beginning the planning for the follow-up activities. These will include a signing ceremony and advocacy campaign to promote the Code and its implications to the media and the public, as well as training to support journalists in implementing and upholding the Code through their reporting.

*'Agreement was reached easily on many issues, but some stimulated extensive debate before we all agreed. These issues included; the right of political parties to buy media time and space, which affected private and state media houses differently, and how to deal with the issue of incumbent parties or candidates in ensuring fair and equal reporting and coverage.*

*At the end of the workshop, however, we were all satisfied with the results and signed a commitment to abide by the Code, and to promote it amongst our colleagues.'*

A participant in the Code of Conduct workshop in November, speaking about his experience.

### **Building the Capacity of Women Holding Local Council Seats:**

On 19<sup>th</sup> December, CFI signed an agreement with the British Consulate in Jerusalem to implement a six-month project providing training and support to around 400 women elected to Palestinian Municipal and Local Councils in the elections held in October 2012. This signing, held at CFI's offices in Ramallah, marked the renewal of cooperation between the two organisations in this area of work, following a similar project implemented following to 2006 local elections, and CFI Director Muhammed Diab and Consul General, Sir Vincent Fean spoke about their hopes for the project and the ongoing collaboration.

In the period between the project approval in November and the signing, CFI began work on the project, including meeting key stakeholders including representatives from the Ministry of Local Government and the Central Elections Commission, planning for meetings to introduce the project to the beneficiaries, analysing the election results and developing existing materials focused on key training topics such as communication skills, networking and local government practices.

*'There was a lot of pressure on us from the community, the families and even fellow council members. The trainers discussed these pressures with me, and gave me advice on dealing with them. Frankly, without this support I would have resigned'*

A participant and female council member from CFI's 2006 project, explaining its importance and impact.

### **Islamic Solidarity Fund:**

In December, CFI signed an agreement with the Islamic Solidarity Fund for a small grant to support the development of the organisation's work in Jerusalem. Plans are currently under development to finalise the allocation of these funds.

## **Organizational Development:**

### **Staffing:**

Following the return of Muhammed Diab and Juliana Tams to CFI in 2011, the organization has continued to move forward. 2012 saw the expansion of the core team to include a Development Officer, Project Manager and Trainee Accountant, as well as increased participation in the ongoing activities from the previous team of Coordinators in all areas of the country.

### **Governance:**

In line with Palestinian law, CFI is governed by a General Assembly of its membership (currently around 30 members) which in turn elects a Board of Directors (of 7 members), which in turn appoints the Senior Management Team. The Board of Directors are appointed for three years, and the current Board's mandate concluded in 2012. Due to the fact that some members had already served two terms, and others chose not to stand for re-election for personal reasons, the entire Board was changed at the elections.

The seven members were elected in August 2012, and immediately elected their officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer etc) and the two members to be responsible for internal control (as per Palestinian law). Suleiman Mashriqi was elected as the Chair, due to his active participation in the General Assembly, and his professional experience and credibility within the community and the sector.

**Funding, Finance and Administration:**

In addition to successful funding bids to the British Consulate and Islamic Solidarity Fund, and the partnership with ERIS, CFI has submitted project proposals to a range of funding bodies, including the National Endowment for Democracy, MEPI, the US Consulate, Swedish International Development Agency, UN Democracy Fund, Swedish Individual Relief and the EU. As part of this proposal development the organisation has built new and enhanced existing partnerships with different organisations and individuals, including ASHTAR Theatre, Government Ministries, media bodies and local and international institutions and companies, including AECOM and local NGOs.

**Strategic Planning:**

As part of the revival and re-launch of the organisation, CFI is taking the opportunity to review its strategic direction, and is undertaking a strategic planning process. This process is designed to challenge existing assumptions about the democratic needs of the Palestinian people, and the vision for the future, to ensure that CFI's projects and programmes meet the needs of the people and the country, and that the activities implemented are feeding into a wider development and are achieving a sustainable impact.

Under the guidance of a Consultant, Kate Hargreaves, CFI have brought together the Board of Directors, supporters, stakeholders and beneficiaries, individually and in groups to discuss and debate CFI's strengths and weaknesses and how to improve and build on its past successes for the future. This development will continue through the beginning of 2013, with the strategic plan expected to be completed by the end of the first quarter of the year.

**Civic Forum Institute Worldwide:**

Following the registration of Civic Forum Institute Worldwide (CFIW) in the USA in August 2011, work has continued on the development of this sister entity. Since the resignation of the original Chair due to ill health, the Board of Trustees has been headed Nisreen Khalaf, a Palestinian American from Virginia.

In October, James Warren, CFIW's legal advisor visited Palestine and spent three days touring the country, meeting key figures including Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, and CFI funders, stakeholders and beneficiaries. As his visit coincided with a visit by Nisreen Khalaf, time was also spent discussing the development and direction of CFIW and following the visit, a strategic plan was produced, outlining how the organisation will operate both independently and in collaboration with CFI, and the key milestones for 2013.

## Successes and Achievements

*'We strongly encourage the participation of Palestinian women in local and national elections and the wider democratic political process here in the Palestinian Territories. I am proud that the British Consulate in Jerusalem is funding this highly significant initiative which will enable talented Palestinian female leaders to compete equally and successfully in fair and democratic elections at all levels, including the Palestine Legislative Council.'*

Sir Vincent Fean, British Consul General, speaking about the recently launched project supporting female local council members.

### Key Achievements of 2012:

- Three new funding and partnership agreements signed
- Over \$150,000 of new funding secured
- Discussing CFI's future agenda with Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad
- Bringing together around 30 of CFI's supporters and beneficiaries for an in-depth and productive debate about the organisation's future
- Supporting media figures from the West Bank and Gaza to develop a Palestinian owned Code of Conduct to guide election reporting
- Eight interns have volunteered to support the mission and work of CFI
- Awareness raised through the Right to Access Campaign about the importance of disabled access to public buildings
- Seven new members elected to the Board of Directors

*'The workshop and the experience of drafting the Code showed great professionalism from both the organisers and the journalists. This is an important step towards ensuring journalism in Palestine is objective, free and independent, and can operate on an international stage.'*

A Journalist who attended the Code of Conduct workshop in November, speaking about the results.

## Outlook for 2013

Work will continue on all of CFI's ongoing projects, and the planned activities include:

### **Improving the Quality of Political Coverage and Expanding Media Space Ahead of the 2013 Palestinian Elections:**

- Signing Ceremony for the Media Code of Conduct, with the attendance of senior media and governmental figures
- Advocacy campaign targeting the media and the general public, through press coverage, discussion forums etc
- Training for journalists to support them in implementing and upholding the principles of the Code of Conduct

### **Building the Capacity of Women Holding Local Council Seats:**

- Seven introductory meetings (covering participants from throughout the West Bank) presenting CFI, the project and to carry out specific needs assessment for the newly elected women
- Approximately twenty training courses for council women from all West Bank Districts, involving around 400 beneficiaries
- Networking events to encourage the beneficiaries to collaborate and share skills, knowledge and experience
- Seeking additional support to extend and further develop this important project beyond the scope of its current funding

### **Islamic Solidarity Fund:**

- Develop detailed plan for working in East Jerusalem, likely to include one-to-one meetings, focus groups, research and needs assessment to lay the foundations to leverage additional funding

In addition to these ongoing activities, the outlook for 2013 includes:

- The completion of the strategic planning process resulting in a clear direction for the organisation's development, and a detailed plan for the next twelve months
- The launch of new projects resulting from successful funding applications (target two-three)
- Strengthening CFI's local networks of funders and partners
- Development and implementation of locally funded projects focused on the Palestinian elections (planned for 2013)
- Review of CFI's image and online presence, including website, social media and brochure
- Consolidating CFI's past successes and developing a promotional report of the organisation's work to date
- Increasing CFI's participation in NGO (and other) networks and consortiums in Palestine to optimise opportunities and impact
- Strengthen organisational capacity through optimising staff training and development opportunities
- Supporting the development of CFIW to facilitate the raising of funds for CFI activities

For further information about CFI's ongoing work, please contact:

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