



International Center for Conciliation

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Summary of Partnership: ICfC and Ossim Shalom (OS)

In March 2010, ICfC developed a partnership with the Israeli NGO Ossim Shalom (OS), Social Workers for Peace and Social Welfare. Owing to its widespread presence throughout Israel – it employs some 1,600 Arab and Jewish social workers – OS brings extensive local connections to the partnership and has allowed ICfC to scale up significantly its national presence. In May of 2010, 26 OS social workers were trained by ICfC's international trainers in Historical Conciliation methodology. Shortly after, these new facilitators led a series of conciliation workshops in four communities in Haifa, Yaffo, and Beersheba, which completed successfully by the end of 2010. Within the next year, ICfC and OS hope to work in six more mixed neighborhoods of Arabs and Jews in Israel.

As a nonpartisan Arab and Jewish Israeli NGO, OS is at the forefront of improving the lives, strengthening the ties, and increasing the participation of all of Israel's citizens, including its minority members. It views Israel's incredible diversity as an asset, rather than an obstacle, and orients its professionals towards projects that enable Israel to balance and realize its liberal, democratic, and pluralistic legacies. OS calls for using the basic tool of social work – dialogue – as a means to help resolve conflicts between Israeli Arabs and Jews. Acting in a highly diverse social environment, OS, mirroring ICfC's philosophy, believes that bridging gaps between Jews and Arabs within Israel, as well as between Israelis and Palestinians, is essential to the peace process and to the advancement of welfare in Israel and in the region.

In order to build enduring peace in the region through its Historical Conciliation methodology, ICfC acknowledged early on that it needed to create a partnership with a local NGO in order to most effectively foster trust and catalyze joint projects between conflict-prone groups. We believe that this joint initiative can act as a catalyst in making it possible to create a larger peace in the region. The protracted conflict between Jews and Arabs evokes often overwhelming despair on all sides, so even community level success through a new approach such as that employed by ICfC and OS leads to hope, optimism, and greater risk-taking for peace throughout the region. Building this infrastructure for a culture of peace from the bottom up is what has been missing and is so necessary for the top-down diplomatic approaches of states and international agencies to be effective in creating regional peace.

Ossim Shalom Staff:

Naomi Sheffer, head Ossim Shalom's Steering Committee and member of OS's Board of Directors, is an acclaimed Israeli social worker and peace activist. Mrs. Sheffer holds a B.S.W degree (1961) and an M.A. (Summa Cum Laude) in Public Administration (1975) from Hebrew University. Mrs. Sheffer has attended advanced academic courses at Oxford University and University of Madison, Wisconsin. Among other fields, she is specializing in Supervision, Public Policy, Conflict Resolution, Mediation and Co - facilitation of Conflict Groups. For many years she has held senior posts, leading programs and projects in the field of social welfare. With Israel Amir, the professional supervisor of the joint ICfC-OS project, she has developed and implemented Ossim Shalom's professional models of conflict resolution. Mrs. Sheffer was a senior official in the Israeli Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, directing the nation-wide reorganization of Israel's Municipal Social Services and later directed the state's Women Empowerment Services.

Orna Romanov is the General Director of Ossim Shalom and has been active in the organization since 2000. She graduated Hebrew University with a B.A. in International Relations, and completed her M.A in 2009 in Non-Profit Management. She has gained most of her experience in the business sector and decided to switch and work in the social sector out her fundamental concern for Israeli society. During her studies, Mrs. Romanov initiated "round table" meetings of diverse social organizations in the Pisgat Zeev neighborhood in Jerusalem in order to foster collaboration. Mrs. Romanov is also constantly active in other associations for social change in Israel.

Oded Adomi Leshem, coordinator and administrator for Ossim Shalom, is a Tel-Aviv based peace activist and prominent filmmaker. His documentary "Voices from El-Sayed" about the unrecognized Bedouin village of "El-Sayed" has been praised internationally, winning prizes around the world. Mr. Leshem is a graduate of the Sam Spiegel Film School and holds a B.A in Education from the Institute of Democratic Education in Hakibutzim Seminar in Tel Aviv. He is dedicated to political and social change in his region and is also active in "Humans without Borders", a humanitarian NGO working in the Palestinian Territories.

Ossim Shalom/ICfC Senior Advisor

Kher Albaz, senior advisor of the ICfC-OS project, received his B.A. in Social work from Ben Gurion University in 1987, an M.A. in Social Planning and Policy from WLU in Ontario, Canada in 1990, and an MBA as well as several certifications in senior management, mediation and group facilitation from the University of Haifa in 2006. Mr. Albaz is a highly trained and experienced social worker, and has a rich experience in mediation and group facilitation, working with a wide range of groups mainly concerning cultural sensitivity and Jewish/ Arab issues. Mr. Albaz is currently the Director of Social Services for the Negev Bedouin community (Segev Shalom) and is involved in many development projects for this community. Mr. Albaz also serves as a board member of several national and local organizations including the Abraham Fund and Social Workers for Peace. The Bedouin community is central to Mr. Albaz's life, and he is a well known leader in his community. Mr. Albaz was appointed as a member to several government policy development committees.

Past Projects of Ossim Shalom:

1. *Training Arab and Jewish social workers as agents of change:*

Ossim Shalom initiates workshops for Jewish and Arab social workers with the aim to develop skilled cadres of professionals who are able to establish grassroots democratic leadership in their diverse communities, thus developing tolerance and reducing biases.

2. *Facilitators' course:*

Ossim Shalom trains veterans of the above program as professional facilitators who work with groups in conflict in highly diverse social environments. The course has gained academic recognition in the Advanced Studies Program at Bar Ilan University School of Social Work. For this project, Ossim Shalom has received the Israeli Parliament Chairperson's Award in 2000 "For the Promotion of Dialogue, Tolerance and Coexistence between Jews and Arabs".

3. *Building mutual professional leadership – joint project with Palestinian Social Workers:*

This project of Palestinian (non Israeli) and Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Arab social workers was aimed to develop mutual professional leadership. The project included regional workshops in the West Bank and Gaza, where Israeli and Palestinian social workers learned about each others personal and professional environment.

4. *Professional collaboration between Hebrew University (Israel) and Al-Quds University (Palestinian Authority) Schools of Social Work:*

The program was a one-year extra-curricular seminar bringing together Jewish and Arab students, as well as faculty members, from both Schools of Social Work to teach and learn about the 'other'. This collaboration is a rare opportunity for participants from both sides to have an open dialogue on personal and professional levels. The project was initiated and planned by Ossim Shalom and conducted by Jewish and Arab facilitators. For this unique seminar Ossim Shalom won the Jerusalem Fund Award for "the Promotion of Tolerance and Democratic Values" in 2003.

5. *Post-Trauma workshops:*

One post trauma workshop was a mutual learning and training program in post-trauma treatment held for Palestinian participants from Gaza, Israeli students, and professional social workers. This training aimed to develop profound knowledge and skills in post-trauma treatment. Another post-trauma workshop was implemented in the north of the country in response to the 2006 Lebanese War and the great tensions both Jewish and Arab citizens of the north have experienced due to the fighting.

6. *Arab community empowerment:*

As a result of OS's continuous activities it was clear that there's a lack of community volunteering networks in the Arab communities in Israel. They thus developed culturally-sensitive programs to meet the needs of these communities. The main purposes of these programmes are to bring community social services in Arab localities to the level of those offered in Jewish localities and to bring together activists with particular skills that will form the nucleus of a volunteer network.

7. *Training of Arab and Jewish policemen in community policing and human rights and combating stereotypes in highly diverse communities:*

OS trained Jewish and Arab community policemen positioned in Bedouin communities who have unique cultural and behavioral patterns, as well as in highly diverse Jewish. The program was aimed to develop understanding, patience and tolerance while dealing with people of different cultures in order to diminish unnecessary clashes between the police and the local population.

8. *Dialogue groups:*

Ossim Shalom members maintain a number of regional long-term dialogue groups with mixed Jewish-Arab participants from the organization. These dialogue groups are extremely important in times of violent conflict and local war. When the diversity within the organisation is growing our members use these dialogues to reduce tension.

9. *Collaboration with the Jerusalem Cinematheque:*

For over 15 years Ossim Shalom has been conducting a unique cinema program in the renowned Jerusalem Cinematheque where films that deal with social issues are accompanied by lectures given by renowned experts, usually from the academia. These activities are open to the general public as well and are held in other cities as well.

10. *Annual conference:*

Ossim Shalom is conducting annual conferences that are dealing with professional dilemmas connected to the social diversities and cleavages in Israel's society including the outcomes of the deterioration of the Israeli welfare state.