



*The Eritrean Community Women's Center in South Tel Aviv works in partnership with Release Eritrea. The center is a grassroots initiative developed to offer Eritrean women in Israel access to much-needed support.*

## Weekly Activities

### *The Eritrean Forum on Domestic Abuse*

Since the January 2013, a new group has formed that is based from the Eritrean Women's Center. This is a group of both men and women who have formed in response to rising levels of domestic abuse within the Eritrean Community. This open group is lead by the

center's director Zebib Sultan and is made up of a number of community leaders. By discussing the issue, the group hopes to develop culturally appropriate and effective solutions to a profound and complex issue. The group meets every week and plans to develop a discourse on the issue of domestic abuse within the

community in order to effectively apply useful solutions to the issue. The forum is now developing a booklet guide in Tigrinya which will discuss domestic abuse as well as detail Israeli policy on domestic abuse within the context of refugees in Israel.

### *Coffee Ceremonies*

Once a month the Eritrean Women's Center hosts a coffee evening. These evening events allow women to come to the center to enjoy food and coffee together. The coffee and food are both prepared by women from the group. During our last coffee evening, Sister Aziza and Dr Habte were the guests and they both lead a discussion on domestic abuse within the community.



### Dr. Habte, Health Q&A

Every week, Dr. Habte, a respected Eritrean physician living in Tel Aviv, comes to the women's center to run a health Q&A session with a number of women. At these sessions, women are able to come with questions and health issues on all topics including nutrition, pregnancy, and childcare. Women look forward to these weekly sessions and many plan questions in advance. These sessions have also enabled us to learn about what issues are most important to Eritrean women so that the Center can develop future programming accordingly. We thank Release Eritrea for supporting this important initiative.



## Weekly Activities

### English and Hebrew Classes

Weekly Hebrew and English classes continue to take place at the center. The language classes are run by volunteers and aim to empower Eritrean women through language skills. Many of the women have commented that language skills are incredibly important in allowing them to settle and feel more comfortable in Israel. Currently, over 40 women take either English or Hebrew at the Center.

### Family Planning Program

Since December 2012, the Eritrean Women's Center has started working with couples from the community and with doctors in Tel Aviv to offer married Eritrean women access to guidance on family planning. This program co-ordinates between men, women, NGO's and private doctors in order to ensure that women access safe and appropriate family planning services.

We have also formed a coalition with several organizations including Open Door, the Israel AIDS Taskforce, African Refugee Development Center and the Refugee Clinic to develop a course on family planning. The staff of the Center has been recruiting women activists who are interested in taking this course. Following their

graduation, these women will act as community health workers and will work on both prevention and outreach aspects as related to family planning.

Working in the same coalition, we hope to soon address additional health issues such as pregnancy and psychosocial support.



### Nursery

The children's nursery continues to play a central part in the functioning of the women's center. Eighteen children are enrolled in the nursery that continues to develop in providing quality care for the children of Eritrean refugees. The nursery acts as a flagship project by being a model for other nurseries working with refugee children. Parents continue to pay subsidized prices for the nursery and women or couples in need are able to use the nursery for less or even no money for a limited time.

Unfortunately many of the nurseries in the Tel Aviv area that are available to refugees are of an incredibly low standard. Therefore we are developing a comprehensive program to maintain a high standard of childcare. Two Israeli volunteers visit the nursery once a week to teach caregivers how to care for the children as well as how to organize the space and the day of the children.



### Art Classes

Since the end of January 2013, Noga, a volunteer from Jerusalem, has been teaching different forms of art and design once a week. The group is learning to use different materials to produce items such as bags, scarves and small purses. These meetings are an opportunity to make use of many different kinds of materials as well as experiment with design. A group of 8 women attend the class once a week. This class is especially exciting as it is a pilot project for further programming in the future which might establish a more formal vocational impact. Therefore, as part of this pilot, we plan to sell some of the products produced within the course in order to contribute to fundraising for the center.

*International Women's Day 2013*

We are currently planning a fundraising event in honor of International Women's Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March. This event will be an opportunity to showcase the activities and events taking place at the women's center. Men and women from the community will be coming as well as members of Israeli organizations in Tel Aviv.

*Pastoral Care*

The director of the center holds regular sessions with women about various religious topics. Using movies on religious themes as well as religious literature, Zebib leads important discussions with the women from a religious perspective. Zebib remains in touch with both the Orthodox and Pentecostal Church to ensure that women of all denominations feel welcome and at home at the Women's Center.

*Zebib Sultan*

Zebib runs the women's center and acts as one of the nursery staff. Due to lack of other options, Zebib still spends many hours working in the nursery in order to supplement her own income from the the subsidized payments of the mothers in the nursery. This means that Zebib is unable to focus all of her energies on the women's center as she is tired from working in the nursery during the day. We do have funding for a few hours of work each week, and the activities presented here are a result of these efforts.

***"I have met many wonderful women here and continue to be inspired by the work at this Center!" - Solyana***

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