



### **Helping children affected by conflict in the Middle East**

From March 2 to 4, 2008, One to One Children's Fund hosted a profile- and fundraising visit to London for its partners in CHERISH, a joint Israeli-Palestinian programme to build resilience among children on both sides affected by war and political violence.

We are pleased to report the visit by Dr Danny Brom of the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma at Herzog Hospital, Jerusalem, and Professor Mohammad Shaheen, Dean of Public Health at Al-Quds University in Ramallah, raised nearly £40,000 to support a pilot programme of screening and treatment in primary schools, two Israeli and one Palestinian.

Dr Brom and Professor Shaheen spoke at a Muslim-Jewish arts festival at the Tricycle theatre, addressed psychiatrists, therapists and trauma experts at the Tavistock Centre, attended a dinner for donors and met MPs, peers and ministers in the UK parliament.

Their repeated message was that only through listening and recognising the other can a process of healing take place between those suffering trauma, distress and injury on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"I'm becoming much more understanding of the human side of the other side, because of the children. Our work is having this kind of impact on me personally, " Mohammad Shaheen told members of parliament. "My agenda as a Palestinian is for my Israeli colleagues to see how political violence is affecting the lives of the Palestinians, and I'm interested in seeing how it impacts on the other side."

The CHERISH programme (Child Rehabilitation for Safety and Hope) aims to build resilience to allow both Israelis and Palestinians to cope with everyday life even under the conditions of armed conflict. "When they are in trouble, boys become wilder and may have more symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)," said Danny Brom. "Girls become silent and may have fewer symptoms. But boys' academic performance suffers more." He told psychologists: "Our work is creating the feeling of safety to allow children to develop normally."

"We need to develop the concept of "psychosocial defence". It's no longer true that the only defence is military defence. When people are afraid they stop functioning. This is a threat to the economy. How do you cope with fear and stay functional?"



Professor Mohammad Shaheen, Dr Jenny Altschuler, Dr Danny Brom  
at lecture at Tavistock Centre, London, March 2008.