



United Nations Population Fund

Newsletter

Editorial

Twenty Years Serving the Palestinian people

By: Hafeedh Chekir, UNFPA Representative

This fourth issue of the UNFPA newsletter coincides with the 20th anniversary of UNFPA action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Following its first ten years of project-based work, UNFPA began implementing an action programme in 1996 that sought to respond to Palestinian needs in the area of population and development. It also launched an emergency assistance programme that supported efforts by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and other national institutions to maintain their services and respond to the emerging needs of the population. UNFPA completed two programme cycles during this period.

UNFPA notes significant achievements over its twenty years of work in the OPT. It has contributed to the development of reproductive health strategies, upgraded the provision of services, contributed to building an information system based on the 1997 census, proposed different population scenarios to be used as planning tools, and helped to build the capacity of PA institutions and civil society.

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Planning with partners ... building together a better future:

UNFPA Country Programme Action Plan 2006-2009

Based on the country situation analysis prepared by a national group of experts, UNFPA conducted an extensive planning exercise in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Planning and other governmental and NGO partners in order to develop the UNFPA Country Programme Action Plan for the third programme cycle 2006-2009 with priorities for the three main components: reproductive health, population and development, and gender.

The Country Programme Action Plan contributes to the overarching goal of the Palestinian Midterm Development Plan (MTDP): **"To address poverty in a sustainable way, to reduce unemployment and to build social capital and functioning state institutions."**

More specifically, the three major components of the programme action plan and their intended outcomes are described below:

I. Reproductive Health:

Output 1: Improved accessibility to integrated, comprehensive, high-quality reproductive health services in 10 service delivery points in villages with restricted mobility, 39 Ministry of Health primary health-care service delivery points, three women's centres, and six hospitals.

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Interview with Minister of Planning Ghassan Khatib

Millennium Development Goals - A Target for Palestinian Development

Q – The Palestinian Authority (PA) has adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a target for the Palestinian development process. What achievements have been made so far towards the realization of MDGs?

A – The PA is one of the 191 world countries that signed the Millennium Declaration immediately after its adoption. Additionally, the Council of Ministers has made another gesture indicating the PA's commitment towards MDGs by deciding to adopt these goals as a reference point for the Palestinian long-term development vision and the Midterm Development Plan (MDTP). An inter-ministerial committee was formed to work on the localization of MDGs in order to conform to the Palestinian social and economic context and to develop appropriate indicators to monitor progress toward them.

The extent of progress towards MDGs in the OPT is varied. Achievements made in the period 1995-2000 stopped and some were reversed due to the Israeli destructive measures and policies that followed the outbreak of the al-

Aqsa Intifada. The MDG progress report has demonstrated a combination of successes and failures. Obviously, the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian lands, that deprives the Palestinians of their right to self-determination and independent statehood and prevents them from controlling their natural and human resources, represents a major obstacle towards achieving MDGs. Therefore, the establishment of a Palestinian state that is capable of developing its human resources, protecting its population and controlling its natural resources is a prerequisite for achieving these goals.

The goal of ensuring basic education by 2015 is likely to be achieved and also, but to a lesser degree, goals related to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and reducing child mortality. However, it is unlikely that eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and ensuring environmental sustainability can be achieved by 2015 in view of the ongoing Israeli occupation and control over Palestinian potential and natural resources. Indicators have yet to be developed to monitor the progress toward goals related to improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

Achieving MDGs requires a long-term process of consultation and partnership between all development stakeholders, where all efforts and available resources meet in a synergistic way.

The establishment of Palestinian statehood would be the catalyst for this process.

Q – How do you view the integration of population dynamics in the MTDP, particularly in poverty eradication programs?

A – People are the essence and purpose of the development process. The MTDP aims at upgrading the human and social capital as a prerequisite for improving the productive and competitive capacity of the population in all aspects, particularly aspects requiring high cognitive inputs.

Population concerns remain a priority for Palestinian planners and policymakers. The MTDP integrates population concerns, while bearing in mind that there are major challenges to development efforts in the OPT: a natural population growth that is among the highest in the region and in the world, elevated poverty and employment rates, and limited



women's participation in the development process. At the same time, the relatively young Palestinian population possesses a high human capacity that, if well managed, can provide a significant impetus for development. This requires enabling young people to participate in the development process through appropriate training and qualification. We should be prepared to make the best use of expected population changes. These are linked to the increased proportion of people of productive age at the expense of other age groups, leading the way towards a demographic window of opportunity for social investment (a 'demographic gift'). On the other hand, proper preparation for this window would be essential in order to make use of such a 'gift' and to ensure that it would not become a demographic curse. This would involve ensuring an environment that was conducive for investment, and job creation, training and development of productive skills for youth, as well as promoting transparency and other necessary conditions.

The MTDP aims at addressing poverty in a sustainable manner by providing a framework that would shift PA efforts and donor contributions from emergency relief toward socio-economic development. This approach is coupled with efforts to ensure women's involvement in the

development process, greater economic growth in order to increase national and per capita income, and social protection through fair distribution of resources, compensation for the unemployed and care for poor and marginalized groups.

Q – What about the health sector in general and particularly reproductive health?

A – The health sector is one of the priorities of MTDP. The development of Palestinian health sector is a national-level strategy for sustainable human development due to the significance of this sector in upgrading the human capital.

Reproductive health services are a major programmatic intervention in the health sector within the MTDP, which will aim at improving and promoting the comprehensive mainstreaming of reproductive health within primary health care programmes, as well as developing sexual and reproductive health programmes for youth.

In spite of the PA responsibility for ensuring the provision of basic services, including health services, to all citizens, still there is a need to revitalize coordination and cooperation between the main stakeholders in this sector, including the public, UNRWA, private and NGO sectors.

UNFPA Project Proposals for the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) of 2006

For the fourth consecutive year, UN agencies and humanitarian international agencies have developed a consolidated appeal process for 2006 in response to the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinians and have appealed to donors for funding. The need for yet another appeal stems from the largely unchanged humanitarian situation. Poverty rates increased in 2005 compared to 2004 largely because the quality of work is lower and household coping mechanisms are more at risk.

The consolidated appeal proposes emergency response projects in six sectors: health (including psycho-social support), education, food security (including agriculture), emergency job creation and cash assistance, water and sanitation, and coordination and support services. UNFPA has chosen to intervene in the health and psychosocial sector. UNFPA will focus in 2006 on a select number (5) of projects so that it can target its interventions and improve the quality of implementation.

For its emergency programme, UNFPA insists on programmes that build on the programmatic

efforts of ensuring universal access to reproductive health care by emphasizing appropriate emergency obstetric care and outreach to isolated communities. UNFPA project proposals for the CAP in 2006 are summarized below:

- Strengthening reproductive health services in the OPT by improving reproductive health commodity security and strengthening logistics management.
- Strengthening RH care in marginal areas. This project will be implemented in partnership with the Palestinian Medical Relief Society.
- Psychosocial support for Palestinian female teachers in the West Bank to cope with the emergency situation and provide quality education to students to help girls stay in school. Project partners are the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) and NGOs.
- Provision of psychosocial and reproductive health clinical support to women in poor areas in Gaza Strip aimed at reducing the consequences of violence. Project partners are the Red Crescent Society for the Gaza Strip and the Culture and Free Thought Association.
- Combating drugs and HIV/AIDS among Palestinian young people in Jerusalem city and suburbs. This project will be implemented in partnership with MOEHE and NGOs.

Palestine marks the launching of the UNFPA report

The State of World Population 2005



On October 15, 2005, along with all world nations, Palestine marked the launching of the UNFPA annual report: **The State of World Population 2005, *The Promise of Equality: Gender Equity, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals.***

In the year 2000, the nations of the world came together to forge the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), sketching out a bold plan to halve extreme poverty by 2015. This unprecedented global initiative holds great promise. During the next decade: Hundreds of millions of people can be released from the grip of poverty. The lives of 30 million children and 2 million mothers can be spared. The spread of AIDS can be reversed. Millions of young people can play a larger role in their country's development and create a better world for themselves and future generations.

The 2005 **State of World Population** report stresses that gender equality and reproductive health are indispensable to the realization of this promise.

It is a simple message but a powerful one: Gender equality reduces poverty, and saves and improves lives.

The report explores the degree to which the global community has fulfilled pledges made to the world's most impoverished and marginalized peoples. It tracks progress, exposes shortfalls and examines the links between poverty, gender equality, human rights, reproductive health, conflict, and violence against women and girls.

In the OPT, the UNFPA, Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) organized a press conference to mark the launching of the report. Zahira Kamal, Minister of Women's Affairs, spoke at the conference about the Palestinian situation, stressing that the "gender gaps in human development indicators of education and economic and political empowerment are hindering the achievement of comprehensive development."

PCBS President Luay Shabaneh noted that the OPT is still in need for an integrated and comprehensive population policy that takes into account the specific Palestinian conditions. The policy should focus on children, youth, elderly people and persons with special needs, in addition to women's empowerment and increased attention to rural areas.

At the end of the press conference, UNFPA representative Hafedh Chekir explained that in the OPT the situation of women is better than in many other Arab countries in spite of the additional challenges Palestinian women are confronting due to the political situation. However, Mr. Chekir stressed the need for increased efforts to promote gender equality.

Planning with partners... building together a better future (continued from page 1)

Output 2: Increased accessibility of reproductive and sexual health information and counselling services for young people, with a special focus on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and STIs.

II. Population and Development:

Output 1: Increased national capacity to integrate population, gender and reproductive health into development and emergency planning processes.

Output 2: Enhanced national capacity to generate and utilize disaggregated data.

III. Gender:

Output 1: Enhanced capacities of the Government and civil society organizations to empower women in community-building in six localities.

Output 2: Enhanced technical and organizational capacities of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and civil society organizations to institutionalize gender principles and human rights.

Partnership with MOH – Focusing on Reproductive Health

Developing a referral system for reproductive health:

Through joint efforts of the Palestinian MOH and UNFPA, the final draft of a referral system for reproductive health was recently completed. The system includes referral policies, strategies and referral forms between the different levels of primary health care (4 PHC levels) to hospitals and vice versa. The new system gives special focus to feedback and to monitoring of referred cases.

A national team from the MOH directorates – Women's Health and Development, PHC, and Hospital Management, including Gaza and West Bank – worked on developing materials for the system, and conducting peer reviews. The UNFPA-Jerusalem office and the CST team in Amman provided guidance, technical assistance and feedback.

Currently, a 4-day pilot training course on the use of the system is being conducted in Nablus and Gaza for all staff working in the provision of reproductive health services, both at PHC and hospital level. A total of 5 workshops have been conducted so far. NGOs were invited to participate in the training at the PHC level. Feedback, comments and suggestions raised during the workshops were documented and discussed among a group of experts, and the manual was modified accordingly. The final version of the manual and forms are ready for printing and distribution.

Guidelines and Protocols for Obstetric and Newborn Care:

UNFPA assisted MOH in the development of hospital-based Obstetric Care and Newborn Care Guidelines and Protocols.

The protocols were developed by a national team of authors and reviewed by a national review team, with the technical assistance of an expert from Belgium, who assisted in the final presentation of the protocols.

In early 2006, MOH will launch the new manuals and adopt them as a reference for obstetric and newborn services. Five

attending RH clinics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Results of the study will be published shortly and a conference is planned to discuss the results.

The main achievements of the project were highlighted in a documentary film recently produced by UNFPA.

A possible extension of the project will aim at activating



hospitals have been selected (3 in West Bank and 2 in Gaza) to pilot the manuals. On-the-job training of health providers is scheduled to take place in 2006.

A Success Story-Combating HIV/AIDS in OPT:

MOH and the Palestinian Medical Relief Society have completed a 20-month project concerning the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the occupied Palestinian territory with support from UNFPA and OPEC Fund. The project dealt with improving the national surveillance system, building the capacity of health providers to manage HIV/AIDS and STIs and conducting awareness campaigns targeting the Palestinian society at large, with a special focus on youth and adolescents.

The project included a study on the prevalence of STI in women

the National AIDS Committee, initiated more than 12 years ago but without the support necessary to carry out its expected role. A proposal has been developed for activating the committee and building the capacity of its members to oversee the AIDS situation in Palestine.

Rehabilitation of MOH central clinic in Jenin:

UNFPA is supporting the rehabilitation and re-equipment of a central MOH clinic in Jenin town to provide comprehensive RH services, including family planning, counselling, well-baby clinics, screening for cervical cancer, and STI prevention and management.

The project is implemented in cooperation with UNDP, which supported the restoration of the clinic building and will follow up building maintenance issues.

Documentary video:

Strengthening Emergency Obstetric Care in the OPT

A documentary video highlights the activities and achievements of a project funded by ECHO and implemented by the Palestinian MOH, Palestinian Medical Relief Society, Palestinian Red Crescent Society and International Centre for Migration and Health.

Within this project, 193 health providers were trained and provided with obstetric kits to assist in home deliveries in emergencies.

The project targeted 100 localities — 30 in Gaza and 70 in the West Bank — that are among the most affected by the Wall and most isolated from reproductive health services.

As Dr. Sana Shadid of the UNFPA country office stated, "This project introduced a new concept of community midwifery to Palestine. Midwives are now trained to assist women delivering at home in normal childbirth and without need for modern instruments."

Community support teams, composed of women in the targeted localities, were established and received special training by the project partner, the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS).

Mayyada, a woman volunteer from Habla, Tulkarem district, talked about her experience in this project and how the women volunteers organized health prevention activities in their village. Proudly, she explained how she was able to detect a health problem in a local pregnant woman and refer her for more specialized care. Her timely intervention proved to be a life-saving measure for this mother.

The video was produced by the Department of Journalism in An-Najah National University through another UNFPA-funded project, "Population Communication."



Heads of Family Counselling Departments Receive Training on Reproductive Health and Domestic Violence

The Departments of Family Counselling and Reconciliation in Shari'a courts were established by a Presidential Decree in December 2003 with the objective to assist in family reconciliation and provide counselling to married couples to help them solve family disputes. As part of capacity building, a training course for the staff of these departments was organized by joint efforts between the Office of Chief Judge, MOH Directorate of Health Education and Promotion and UNFPA.

A 4-day training course was carried out in 2005 in Ramallah involving 31 participants, mainly heads of the Departments of Family Counselling and Reconciliation. Most of the participants held an undergraduate degree in Islamic Law (Shari'a).

Issues addressed in the training course were selected based on an assessment of participants' needs and aimed at assisting them to provide better family counselling, understand the concept of reproductive health, accept reproductive health rights as part of human rights and appreciate the link between gender issues and human development. The training also focused on the issue of domestic violence and its impact on the family and society and the role of individuals and the society at large in helping victims of domestic violence.

A graduation ceremony was organized at the end of the course attended by Dr. Shaher Ishtayeh, the General Director of Health Education and Promotion in MOH, Dr. Hafeedh Chekir, UNFPA Representative in OPT, Sheikh Tayseer Tamimi, Chief Justice of Palestine, as well as PLC members, religious leaders and media reporters.

"This training is envisaged to help reduce familial and social conflicts and preserve the strong social fabric of the Palestinian society," said Dr. Ishtayeh. "In the MOH, we believe in the important role of religious leaders and other decision-makers in achieving a positive behaviour change and look forward to maintaining cooperation with them."

Combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Palestine



A Baseline Study

Establishing Protocols for Preventing Habitual Abortion

UNFPA is funding a study conducted by the Jerusalem-based Makassed Hospital's Molecular Genetics Laboratory on hereditary thrombophilia and its effect on the prevalence of habitual abortion (> 3 consecutive abortions).

It is estimated that 1-3% of women of reproductive age suffer habitual abortion. These patients are usually managed with a non-systematic approach, and are prescribed a variety of treatments of unproven benefit or are subjected to unnecessary surgical interventions.

Hereditary thrombophilia is a blood-clotting disorder that is considered to be a strong risk factor for several adverse pregnancy outcomes, including thromboembolism – the leading cause of maternal mortality in developed countries. The most common risk factors for thrombosis are genetically determined. Several studies suggest that the prevalence of some types of inherited thrombophilias may be higher in the Arab population.

This study tests 250 women (125 patients and a control sample of 125 women) for hereditary thrombophilia and its relation to habitual abortion. Based on the results, a national screening protocol will be developed in cooperation with the MOH, and treatment recommendations will be discussed and referral procedures established for centralized lab tests at Makassed Hospital.

As a result of the Gender, Peace and Security Initiative funded by the Technical Support Division of UNFPA HQ and implemented by The Palestinian Initiative for Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH) in partnership with the Forum for Combating Violence against Women, concerted efforts are being made to put the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) on the agenda of national policy-makers. A number of recent efforts have made advances in this regard, the most notable of which are a case study on GBV in Palestine, participation in an international conference in Bucharest and ongoing consensus-building activities.

1. A Case Study on GBV in Palestine:

The case study was an extensive review of available research and information in addition to analysis of a questionnaire administered to governmental and civil society organizations working in the field of GBV. The study revealed not only the level of GBV in Palestine, but also the network of institutions coordinating to provide vital services to survivors of GBV. The study further provides recommendations to policymakers and advocates at the national, regional, and international levels for alleviating GBV and addressing the wider challenges of gender-based violence in Palestine given the current political and socio-economic situation. Despite the vast amount of information collected and analyzed, the case study remains limited due to the lack of reliable, up-to-date statistics and the reliance on anecdotal evidence.

2. The Bucharest Workshop:

The case study was one of five prepared on gender-based violence in conflict and post conflict situations presented at an international workshop on "Women, Peace and Security" held in Bucharest, Romania, in October 2005. Representatives from MIFTAH and UNFPA office in the OPT participated in this workshop, which discussed the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (see box below) which was passed in October 2000. Resolution 1325 has two main themes: women's participation in conflict prevention and peace processes, and the protection of women in conflict-affected situations.

The Palestinian participation in this workshop provided global exposure for the issues in Palestine as well as a platform for better networking with NGOs internationally. →



Talking about Women, Peace and Security: Bucharest Workshop on UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Five years ago, largely at the urging of women's groups and developing countries, the UN Security Council passed its landmark Resolution 1325, the first international agreement to specifically recognize the impact of armed conflict on women and their role as builders of peace. A UNFPA-sponsored workshop (Reassessing Institutional Support for Security Council Resolution 1325, 17- 20 October 2005, Bucharest, Romania) brought together UNFPA staff, partners and international experts to discuss ways to narrow the gap between the provisions of this legal instrument and the reality on the ground.

Participants came to this workshop from some of the most desperate and ravaged places on earth – Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Liberia, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, East Timor, Haiti, Sudan, Kosovo.

"The nature of war has changed," said Elizabeth Rehn, a UN independent expert and the keynote speaker at the workshop. "Violence against civilians, especially women,

has become a tool of war. Eighty per cent of victims are civilians."

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was a response that was instigated by women for women. The seeds for it were sown ten years ago at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Five years later, in the Beijing+5 review in 2000, 60 organizations brought the issue to the table. Back and forth consultations reached out to some 300 women's groups around the world.

Key provisions of the resolution are captured by "three P's": protection of the human rights of women and girls during times of conflict, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, and equal participation of women in peace building and reconstruction.

But in spite of the well-crafted resolution, the emissaries from the front lines of conflicts reported that the situation on the ground remains grim five years after the resolution was adopted. Participants agreed that the UN has not done enough to implement the resolution.

The 3-day workshop addressed how to move beyond words on paper through sharing of

experiences and methodologies. "UNFPA and other UN agencies, as well as national and international partners have all learned a great deal from efforts to mobilize protection and support for women during and after armed conflicts. But lessons learned are squandered if not effectively translated into standard practice," said Sahir Abdul-Hadi, from UNFPA's Women, Peace and Security Initiative and the organizer of the workshop.

3. A lexicon on GBV:

Organizations working on GBV issues agree that there is a lack of common terminology for defining types of violence that are prevalent in the Palestinian society. In order to help reach a consensus among the multi-sectoral actors working on these issues, the Forum for Combating Violence against Women, in partnership with MIFTAH, decided to produce a lexicon containing a commonly accepted set of terminology and definitions that would be used as a reference point for activists, service providers, and policy makers. The benefits of creating such a lexicon go well beyond providing an operating framework for the members of the Forum. Ultimately, the goal is to develop a common vocabulary related to GBV to be used by all stakeholders working in the field.

The Forum for Combating Violence against Women (Al Muntada)

This forum of NGOs was created in 2000 in order to raise awareness within the Palestinian society of the serious social problem of violence against women. The objectives of the Forum are multiple:

- To enhance cooperation and networking among Palestinian NGOs working on issues of violence against women;
- To strengthen NGO influence over laws, policies, and legislative issues related to violence against women;

- To enhance awareness within the Palestinian society on the negative impact of violence against women and how it hinders women's participation in public life; and
 - To help build the capacity of local NGOs working in this field, including knowledge, information, vision, strategies, tools, and good governance.
- NGO members of the Forum engage in a variety of joint activities, including exchanging information, issuing collective statements, organizing and conducting lobbying campaigns, holding workshops and conferences, conducting media campaigns, and networking and advocacy at the local and international level.

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Since the outbreak of the current Intifada, UNFPA has adopted a strategy of combining the developmental programmes with an emergency aid programme. In the emergency programme, UNFPA has provided basic supplies and reproductive health commodities to clinics and hospitals and offered training to service providers in emergency obstetrics. In addition, UNFPA has continuously advocated in all international and regional arenas for the ending of the siege imposed on the Palestinian people and for ensuring that Palestinians have access to primary health care, education and other basic humanitarian services.

In spite of the many achievements, much still needs to be done.

UNFPA will continue to use its valuable experience and strong partnership with Palestinian institutions to work toward the achievement of sustainable development of the Palestinian society within the Palestinian Midterm Development Plan (MTDP) and as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This will be the basis for the third programme cycle 2006-2009.

MDGs include eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development. MDGs include another goal of extreme importance for achieving the above seven goals, which is to promote gender equality and empower women.

Ensuring women and youth access to education, reproductive health and economic opportunities is a threefold intervention of strategic importance for achieving MDGs. The elimination of violence against women is another important factor. Investment in these areas would have an immediate outcome that would also yield long-term results benefiting future generations.

In planning for its third programme cycle, UNFPA adopted the principle of effective

partnership. Different national sectors have been involved in setting out the priorities in the areas of population and development, reproductive health and gender equality. These priorities were based on the country situation analysis carried out by a specialized national team in cooperation with a national steering committee composed of various line ministries, NGOs and local universities and chaired by the Ministry of Health (MOH). In addition, a number of consultative meetings and workshops with the partners helped to identify activities for the programme cycle.

In drafting its programme of action for the next four years, UNFPA employed the following strategies:

- Building on the achievements made during the two previous cycles;
- Providing strategic support at the programme and policy level in the areas of population and development, reproductive health, gender equality and women's empowerment;
- Maintaining a balance between emergency and development needs of the population by using a rights-based approach, ensuring long-term sustainability of activities within the MTDP and linking emergency relief activities with development to promote the process of Palestinian state-building;
- Addressing Palestinian youth as a main element in development. With appropriate investment in their development, young people can actively contribute and become an important asset rather than a responsibility for society.

Throughout the past twenty years, UNFPA has based its development and emergency programmes and projects on the needs of the Palestinian society. Achievements made by UNFPA in the OPT would have not been possible without donor contributions. Therefore, we would like to extend our appreciation to all donors and partners, whether they are governmental institutions, NGOs or international agencies, for their important role in assisting UNFPA to effect positive change in the lives of many Palestinians.



Empowering women Members of Local Councils

The increased participation of Palestinian women in the public sphere has been reflected in the ongoing elections to municipal councils in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Women were ensured a minimum presence in local councils through a quota agreement of not less than two women per local council. Although this position was a compromise after the women's lobby lost the battle to obtain a quota for women in the Palestinian Legislative Council, there has been a sizeable increase in the number of women among the candidates to local councils and more women have been elected to their local governments.

Since many of these women are assuming such responsibility for the first time, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA), in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government (MOLG) and support by UNFPA, has launched a special program aimed at empowering women members of the local councils in a number of Palestinian districts. The program seeks to help these women to develop their personal and managerial skills and access necessary information related to laws and legislation related to their work in the local councils as well as to encourage women to participate in political life, ultimately at higher levels of political representation.

This program took place over a period of six months between June and December 2005. The participating districts are Hebron, Jenin, Toubas, Jerusalem suburbs, Jericho, and Gaza. As part of this program, three training workshops were organized in 2005 for 46 participants. Each group received 60 training hours over a period of 10 training days.

The training planned for women members of local councils in Gaza was postponed in view of the conditions accompanying the Israeli disengagement from Gaza and the resulting situation of political uncertainty. Training in Gaza was rescheduled to take place during November 2005.

Issues addressed in the training included:

- gender awareness;
- personal skills, such as self-esteem, decision-making, communication and negotiation skills;
- social skills;
- managerial skills, such as planning, project design and budgeting; and
- local government rules and regulations.

In September 2005, during follow up sessions held with the participating members, many expressed the positive effect of the training on their performance and self-esteem.

Haifa – from Zababdeh: The training provided us with information and skills that helped me take the initiative. I am now more aware of my abilities.

Dr. Maqbuleh: It was essential for us to become aware of the laws as this helps protect us. The training also helped us better manage our work.

Umm Ahmad: The training helped me know my rights and duties. It helped me to acquire the skills of group work, most importantly how to delegate responsibility and share the burden with others.

The presence of women in local government posts is a major step towards institutionalizing women's role in community participation, which in turn will ensure women's increased participation in development. This includes women in the poorer and more marginalized sectors who have not had a voice traditionally and who will look towards the women council members to provide them with the opportunity to be heard. As a woman from a village in Jenin district expressed, "We (community women) all now feel that we can voice our opinion in the community more clearly. Having strong and skilled women council members will help all women feel empowered."

The youth project "Fatayat and Fityan" concludes

June 2005 signalled the end of a four-year project known as "Fatayat and Fityan", Improving Adolescent Lives in the Palestinian Society.

This project has been a collective effort between UNFPA and UNICEF and funded by the United Nations Foundation (UNF). Local partners involved in the implementation included: MOH Health Promotion and Education Directorate, Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association, and different media institutions. The project was designed to respond to the increased needs of adolescents, with each organization focusing its support on its respective areas of strength. The project goal was to employ innovative strategies for promoting equitable development and participation of adolescent girls and boys.

Major achievements of the project:

- **The Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE)** worked on integrating sexual and reproductive health (SRH) concepts in the 9th and 10th grade school curriculum. This is a major achievement for this project and is unique in the Arab world. In support of this achievement, MOEHE also developed a teacher's guide and provided teachers with relevant training.
- **The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)** worked to incorporate SRH in school-based psychosocial counselling. To this end, WCLAC worked with other partners to develop a training manual on adolescent health for school counsellors and teachers. Based on this manual, WCLAC was successful in introducing SRH counselling concepts in 272 schools and forming a national core group of trainers consisting of 40 school counsellors from MOEHE.
- The Health Promotion and Education Directorate at the **Ministry of Health** worked to mobilize decision-makers' support towards improving adolescent health at the national level through advocacy activities with members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and other decision-makers, training journalists and mass media specialists on adolescent issues, producing mass media materials, such as newspaper inserts, TV and radio programs, and a short documentary entitled "Sex Education for Adolescents."
- In 2003, **the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)**, together with UNFPA



and UNICEF, conducted the largest and most ambitious survey on Palestinian youth, with the objective of developing a set of core national indicators to regularly monitor trends in the situation of adolescent girls and boys in OPT. About 4,300 young males and females, aged 10-24 years were interviewed in this survey. (For more information about the survey results, see the UNFPA newsletter – Summer 2004.)

- **The Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA)** worked on sensitizing caretakers to adolescent reproductive health needs by establishing youth fora to lobby for adolescent sexual and reproductive rights. In order to ensure sustainability for this activity, some of these fora are now integrated into PFPPA's Youth and Family Development Centres in Gaza and Hebron.

At the end of the project in June 2005 UNFPA and UNICEF conducted a comprehensive evaluation for each agency component, as well as the impact of the project as a whole. Carried out by a group of local experts, the evaluation identified achievements and lessons learned, as well as constraints. The results were shared with all other actors interested in programming for and with adolescents in the OPT.

UNFPA support for this project will continue during the third programme cycle 2006-2009; adolescent sexual and reproductive health needs was identified interventions in the situation analysis carried out early this year as one of the main priorities for UNFPA future.

UNFPA distributes \$850,000 of emergency medical supplies to health institutions

UNFPA provided US \$850,000 in medical supplies to major health institutions in mid 2005, as part of its emergency programme begun at the outbreak of the current Intifada. The institutions were the Palestinian Ministry of Health, UNRWA, Palestinian Medical Relief Society, Union of Health Work Committees, Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Family Planning and Protection Association in Jerusalem and Nablus, and Makassed Charitable Hospital. The supplies included antibiotics, obstetric medications, iron and vitamin supplements, medications for the treatment of STDs, and disposable medical supplies for mammography and screening of cervical cancer.

UNFPA also distributed 210 obstetric kits to medical teams from the MOH and health NGOs who had received training in emergency obstetric care.



In Gaza, UNFPA worked with other members of the UN community to provide support to Gaza residents, and particularly to the MOH, throughout the disengagement period. The UNFPA support was in the form of in-kind donations of RH commodities and basic equipment, including safe delivery kits, as well as deployment of trained staff in the field of emergency obstetric care and provision of psycho-social counselling to the communities under strict closures and siege during that period. The list of additional commodities and equipment is estimated at US \$200,000.

On another note, the UNFPA office in Gaza extended support to the efforts of a local NGO – Gaza Immediate Voluntary Relief Efforts (GIVE) – to assist targeted schoolchildren in poor and marginalized areas of the Gaza Strip by donating 100 schoolbags to be distributed to 4 schools. According to Osama Abueita, Programme Coordinator, UNFPA Gaza Liaison Office: “The lists of needy children receiving this symbolic donation were prepared by the Ministry of Education together with school administrators. UNFPA looks at this step as a starting point for future cooperation with local institutions in responding to the needs of poor and marginalized population groups.”



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