

## A message from the director

Following a year of intensive preparations and launching of major grants programs and NGO sector development activities, NDC is now able to contribute to sustaining the life and livelihoods of Palestinian people through a well-established mechanism that improves the quality and sustainability of NGO social service delivery. NDC has so far committed all the grant-making funds available from the World Bank, and most of the funds available from the French Development Agency. In total, US\$ 11 million have been awarded in grants to 130 NGOs working in various sectors and locations in Palestine.

What has been outstandingly clear is NDC's ability to take yet another step on its road to promoting good governance in the NGO sector. NDC facilitated the establishment and the work of the Code of Conduct Coalition comprised of the umbrella networks and unions of Palestinian NGOs. The Coalition implemented a series of discussions with more than 200 NGOs, which resulted in the ratification of the first Palestine NGO Code of Conduct. Early this year, more than 400 NGOs have voluntarily signed to the Code. The Code has been established on the basis of Palestinian diversity and democratic principles, and entails the objective of Palestinian NGOs with the level of aspiration for values, good governance, community development and freedom for Palestinians. It sets up the pace for NGOs to be responsive to the challenges facing democratic change. Today, the number of NGOs signing this code is increasing steadily. NDC is also launching a program of technical assistance to about 100 NGOs which will involve both coaching and training NGOs to help raise their compliance with the principles of the Code.

More towards promoting good governance and human rights, NDC has the honor of being selected by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) representing Switzerland, and on behalf of three other donor countries namely Denmark, Netherlands and Sweden to establish and manage a new Human Rights and Good Governance (HR/GG) Secretariat in the West Bank and Gaza for an indicative total amount of about USD 6 million over the course of 18 months as a first phase.

It is a well-known fact that the NGO community in Palestine is influential and highly active, and such an active sector needs to have access to a high-quality venue for dissemination of information, sharing knowledge and for networking effectively. With the continuous work on Masader, our NGO portal ([www.masader.ps](http://www.masader.ps)), NDC provides a platform of information exchange for the NGO sector, helping NGOs to grow in stature and influence. Masader has been recently upgraded to provide better services that range from providing data on the NGO sector, e-learning, sharing of publications and studies, and providing NGOs with information about funding opportunities.

The center has also taken great strides in upgrading its current Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. Our M&E system helps NDC monitor its work and assess how effective its programs have been in achieving the desired objectives, goals and impacts. It also helps NDC to better report in a systematic way to its donors, and provides an opportunity for generating lessons learned, therefore providing information to improve NDC's strategies, programs and activities. As part of the M&E system, NDC has also introduced the score card system, and has tested it so far with a number of NGOs during this first quarter of the year.

These achievements reflect NDC's ability to assume the challenge. Yet NDC is not working independently. Thanks to the joint efforts of the board of directors, staff, beneficiary NGOs and NDC donors, who have all shown sincere commitment and dedication in their day-to-day activities in the West Bank and Gaza, providing technical insights of highest standards into NDC's operations.

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## More Than 400 NGOs Sign the Palestinian NGO Code of

The tremendous efforts the NDC team and the Code of Conduct Coalition in preparing and finalizing the Palestinian NGO Code of Conduct, were culminated in the Code of Conduct Conference held by NDC on February 28, 2008. The Conference served to officially present, ratify, and sign the Code of Conduct by the attending NGOs. The Palestinian Code of Conduct (which is based on the Code of Ethics developed during the implementation of Phase II of the Palestinian NGO Project) is the standard for the ethical and professional practices within the framework of the functioning of NGOs. Hence, the Code is premised around twelve guiding principles; Compliance with Covenants and Laws, Priorities of Development, Participation, Networking and Coordination, Transparency, Accountability, Equality and Inclusiveness, Good Governance, Prevent Conflict of Interest, Influence and Effectiveness, NGO's Integrity, and Dispute Resolution.

Over 400 NGOs from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, representing a wide range of sectors, attended the ceremony and signed the Code of Conduct. In doing so they volunteered themselves to adopting the principles

which the Code embodies. To adopt the Code of Conduct is to consider national liberation, through the commitment to social, economic and political development priorities above one's own agenda; it's to commit oneself to enhancing organizational practices towards standards of the Code, and to efficiently and effectively respond to the needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

The conference was held at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Al Bireh and at the Commodore Hotel in Gaza. Communication was facilitated between the West Bank and the Gaza participants through video-conference. During the event, Members of the Code of Conduct Coalition (comprised of the four NGO Umbrella Networks and Unions, the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), the Palestinian National Institute of NGOs (PNIN), the Palestinian General Union of Charitable Societies, and the General Palestinian Union for NGOs in Gaza) stressed upon the importance of signing the Code. Coalition members expressed that the Code seeks to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment responsive to the challenges faced by democratic change and perpetuating self-determination, both on a societal and personal level. The



*Participants at the Code of Conduct Signing Ceremony, the Red Crescent Building – Al Bireh*

members likewise articulated their appreciation for the great efforts made by all in drafting, building consensus, and legitimizing the Palestine NGO Code of Conduct.

This was indeed a collective effort. In its role as the Coalition's secretariat, NDC played an instrumental part in the overall process of facilitating the birth of the Code of Conduct; including the Code finalization, ratification and the introduction of technical assistance programs (coaching and training) to assist the NGOs to become in compliance with the Code.

In addition to the efforts made by NDC, the Code of Conduct Coalition engaged over 200 NGOs in the process of building consensus and developing a draft Code and the Coalition for Integrity and Transparency (AMAN) revised the final draft. In the end, the Code is a living document which is continuously evolving and being adopted by the Palestinian NGO sector.

## NDC Selected to Serve as Human Rights and Good Governance NGO Secretariat

The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) (on behalf of Switzerland and 3 other donor countries, namely Denmark, Netherlands and Sweden), selected NDC to establish and manage a Human Rights and Good Governance NGO Secretariat in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As Secretariat, NDC will serve as the program management unit responsible for channeling pooled donor funding, supporting coordinated initiatives and joint capacity building initiatives, and strengthening policy dialogue for NGOs that are working to promote and protect Human Rights/ Good Governance in West Bank and Gaza Strip. Over the course of its 18 months of operations (as a first phase), the Secretariat will direct around USD 6 million towards the above mentioned ends. NDC is currently carrying out the preliminary operations for the establishment of the Secretariat, namely; needed recruitment, revision of documents and formats, and logistical and administrative preparation. The Secretariat is expected to be fully launched by July 1st, 2008.

## NDC General Assembly Approves the 2008 Annual Budget for Around USD 9.5 million



*Mr. Zahi Khouri, NDC Chairman, (left) and Dr. Ismail El Zabri, Member of the General Assembly (right) during the 2nd General Assembly meeting.*

NDC held its 2nd General Assembly meeting on April 19th, 2008. All 21 members, representing NGOs' networks and unions, civil society, academia and the private sector were in attendance. Also, representatives from the Palestinian Ministry of Interior, namely Mrs. Fadwa Al-Sha'er (General Director of General Administration of NGOs ) and Iyad Jabareen (Legal Advisor) in the ministry attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the NDC General Assembly approved the NDC's action plan and budget for the year 2008. NDC is planning to disburse an estimated USD 9.5 million over this year. The majority of the planned budget comes from the World Bank and the French Agency for Development (AFD) funded programs in the amounts of USD 4.914 million and USD 4.144 million respectively, with a generous contribution from the Welfare Association.

Moreover, the meeting served to discuss and endorse the NDC 2007 Annual Report, the Board Committees' reports and the 2007 financial report, as well as, to approve the selection of the auditor for the years 2007-2009, Talal Abu- Ghazaleh & Co.

## Interview with Ms. Mesky Brhane, PNGO III Task Team Leader- World Bank

*The World Bank has provided USD 10 million for alleviating the living conditions of the most poor and marginalized Palestinians.*



*Ms. Mesky Brhane, PNGO III Task Team Leader – World Bank*

*Q: For how long have you been working in the development sector, in general, and with the World Bank, in particular?*

A: I started working in the development sector in 2001, when I worked on a USAID project in Mali which aimed at developing young women's leadership skills by placing them in an internship program with NGOs. They gained experience in project management, community mobilization, needs identification, etc. During this experience, I also worked with different groups within the community such as youth and women (groups often excluded from decision making) and worked towards enhancing their relationship with locally elected representatives.

In 2002 I joined the World Bank as a Social Development Specialist working on development projects for Middle Eastern and North African countries. Afterwards, I was assigned the responsibility of being the Task Team Leader for the Palestinian NGO III Project (PNGO III) and moved to Jerusalem in May 2007.

*Q: What is the relationship between the World Bank and the NGO Development Center (NDC)?*

A: Our relationship is a partnership, working together to build a viable Palestinian Civil Society responsive to local needs. I highly value the relationship between NDC and the World Bank. NDC has the skills and experience to manage development projects within the NGO sector. The Palestinian NGO Code of Conduct spearheaded by NDC, is a significant achievement. It is the first of its kind in the Middle East and was selected by the World Bank as a Best Practice Example of actions for Good Governance and Anticorruption.

*Q: As a Task Team Leader for PNGO III, what are your major responsibilities?*

A: I work closely with NDC on the institutional level and provide guidance to achieve good implementation progress. PNGO III has clear objectives and indicators which need to be monitored so that we achieve them. In addition, I also play an advisory role when the project faces challenges.

*Q: What is the difference between PNGO I, II and III?*

A: PNGO III builds on the experiences and achievements of PNGO I & II. In designing PNGO III, together with NDC, we were careful to distinguish between the roles and types of projects implemented by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and those implemented by NGOs. We focused only in those areas where there are gaps in services (such as specialized health services, early childhood education, eldercare etc). We also introduced a pilot for promoting collaboration between NGOs and municipalities, in partnership with the Municipal Development and Lending Fund. A third area of innovation is the introduction of Monitoring and Evaluation System that focuses on measuring impacts, rather than outputs. NDC is now piloting participatory monitoring and evaluation which allows beneficiaries to evaluate services provided by NGOs to ensure accountability. Globally, this is a rather new approach and NDC is at the forefront of this effort. In short, the M&E system enables NDC, as well as, beneficiaries to evaluate the quality of the services provided by NGOs. The objective of the M&E is to test what works and what does not, as to ultimately enhance the responsiveness of existing and prospective services.

*Q: What are the successes achieved from the implementation of the PNGO I&II?*

A: The biggest triumph is bringing NGO Networks and Unions together in making common decisions in a very transparent manner based on clear criteria. This led to a second success, the establishment of a Palestinian Institution (NDC) that provides funding and technical assistance to the NGO sector. Most importantly is that decision regarding selecting NGOs for funding is a Palestinian decision.

*Q: Why did the World Bank decide to fund a third phase of the Palestinian NGO Project?*

A: The World Bank decided to fund a third phase, since the PNGO projects proved to work on a grass roots level and are able to reach the poor and marginalized communities in Palestine .

*Q: What are your expectations from the implementation of PNGO III?*

A: In regards to the grants provided by NDC, I expect to see NGOs provide quality services to the community and be responsive to local needs. As for the capacity building NDC provides, I expect that NGOs who receive capacity building services become more capable to manage their projects and learn to mobilize funds as to ensure their institutional sustainability.

*Q: How does NDC fit into the World Bank's development strategy in Palestine?*

A: The World Bank's main development strategy is poverty alleviation and social protection. Along these lines, NDC strives to provide services and assistance to the most poor and marginalized communities in Palestine.

*Q: How does the World Bank perceive NDC in the development arena?*

A: NDC has a major role to play in the development of the Palestinian NGO sector. I perceive NDC as a main partner to NGOs, a resource center, and a provider of assistance in the form of capacity building and funding to NGOs.

## NGOs Sign Partnership Grants with Municipalities

NDC is leading the way in a pioneering program which aims to address the community priorities of impoverished governorates in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, through forging partnerships between local municipalities and NGOs. The NGO-Local Government Partnership Granting Scheme affords municipalities the opportunity to undertake needed small rehabilitation/construction projects which enable and support their partner NGO's programming activities; thus of mutual benefit to both partners, as well, as the community serviced. Community priorities being addressed by the NGO-Local Government Partnership Grants range from early childhood development and adult learning to the establishment of water irrigation systems.

Beit Awwa Municipality in partnership with Beit Awwa Charitable Society are among the beneficiaries of the NGO-Local Government Partnership Grants. Beit Awwa is a poor and marginalized village located north of Hebron, with around 8,500 inhabitants. The village is immensely affected by the barrier wall and suffers from high rates of unemployment and illiteracy, especially among its women. Beit Awwa Charitable Society is the only organization in the village providing services to the community.

In an effort to decrease unemployment levels and improve the financial and social conditions of the village's women (and in turn the families they support), the Beit Awwa, municipality and Beit Awwa Charitable Society's have partnered to build a women's center and offer such services as vocational training in sewing. The municipality has taken on the responsibility of the construction works of the building and the NGO will design and implement the centers' activities and programs. The total grant amount awarded is USD 100,000 (USD70,000 and USD 30,000 for the municipality and the NGO respectively). Once completed, the women's center and its activities are anticipated to benefit over 600 women.



*Mr. Ghassan Kasabreh, NDC Director, (middle) during the NGO-Local Government Partnership GIAs Signing Ceremony*

## **NDC Board Approves 31 Job Creation Projects for a Total Amount of Euro 3,043,967**

Since the beginning of the second Intifada in 2001, the political and economic situation for Palestinians, particularly those residing in areas marginalized by the barrier wall and those in Gaza, has severely deteriorated, causing higher levels of unemployment and poverty. Many Palestinians have lost their jobs and ability to earn a living due to the imposed closure on border crossings, and the consequent obstruction to the mobility of people and goods. Moreover, the recent events in Gaza have served to elevate the living situation of the Palestinians in Gaza to a state of crisis needing urgent intervention from the international community and funding agencies.

The Job Creation Project in the West Bank and Gaza Strip funded by the French Agency for Development (AFD) in the amount of Euro 6 million and managed by NDC was designed in response to the above mentioned economic situation. The project aims to alleviate the financial burdens of the most poor and marginalized Palestinian families by financing temporary employment generation projects through the development of NGO-operated community

assets. The severe shortage in construction materials in Gaza (as a result of the recent events), however, has urged NDC to change its intervention in Gaza from construction projects to agricultural projects.

After the completion of the assessment and selection process, 29 projects in Jerusalem and the West Bank (for a total amount of EURO 2,833,967) and 2 agricultural projects in Gaza (for a total amount of EURO 210,000) were approved by the NDC board in its March 15, 2008 meeting. The total amount allocated by NDC to agricultural projects in Gaza is EURO 2,080,000. Towards mobilizing the remainder of the funds, the NDC team has prepared application forms and guidelines for the said projects and sent out invitation letters to around 60 agricultural NGOs in Gaza on March 27, 2008.

## **NDC is Testing the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Tools with NGOs**

NDC believes that through empowering local communities and increasing their participation in local development, NGOs can in turn improve their service delivery. Such involves NDC being fully aware of the results achieved by its funded projects and the actual benefits felt by the Palestinian community. Towards attaining such ends, NDC is developing and applying participatory monitoring and evaluation methods. One of the tools currently developed is the "Community Scorecard", which allows NDC to identify and track the perceptions of the end-beneficiaries of its various grants. The Community Scorecard is an integral element of the overall scheme involved in assessing outputs and longer term social change and impact. In a scorecard meeting,

beneficiaries of NGO services develop their own quality criteria of how to gauge success in a particular project with the help of NDC facilitators. On a broader level, NDC is likewise motivated by the greater social implications and improvements to the service delivery of the Palestinian NGO sector which involves community/beneficiary feedback.

### **Example: A Community Scorecard Meeting**

After having conducted four test sessions with different grantees (from NDC's Empowerment Grant Scheme) NDC learned to enhance NGOs' ownership in the process of conducting community scorecard sessions and

integrating the feedback received into the operations of the NGOs. NDC decided to identify 'trainers' from within the grantee NGOs. A trainer within PARC (NDC Mentoring Grant recipient) was identified to hold community sessions. A full community Scorecard session (with farmers, their families, all CBOs and the local Ministry of Agriculture) was held on April 30th in one of the sub grantees' villages to collect baseline data. Baseline data is comprised of an initial scoring by beneficiaries of their perception regarding the current status of a given service. Scoring on the criteria (developed by the end beneficiaries) will be repeated every three months with the same beneficiaries, as to allow for tracking satisfaction

over the course of time. Beneficiaries are likewise asked to offer suggestions for improving the current project in regards to its fulfillment of its expected outcome.

The same process will be applied to at least two more Mentoring grantees during May 2008. Other grantees also likewise will be invited to learn from these processes. Through further promoting such participatory approaches among its grantees, NDC hopes to enable NGOs to decrease the gap between the local Palestinian community and themselves, as well as to develop more responsive projects and services.



*One of the participants at the Community Scorecard meetings*