



PRESS RELEASE

UNDP/PAPP and France Cater for mental health needs in the occupied Palestinian territory

Nablus, April 18, 2007 – His Excellency Alain Remy, Consul General of France, Mr. Philippe Lecrinier, Director of AFD, Dr. Anan Al Masri, Deputy Minister of Health, and Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, UNDP Special Representative, will sign today in Nablus a financial agreement to launch a mental health project, with a grant worth €2,740,000 from the French Development Agency (AFD).

The principle aim of the project is to improve the mental health system in West Bank and Gaza by building the capacity of the staff, providing and improving mental health care services. The project implemented by UNDP/PAPP will include the rehabilitation and construction of three mental health clinics in Jenin, Hebron and Nablus and one documentation centre in Ramallah; the training for the rehabilitated centers' staff members and the general practitioners and nurses in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; and finally the funding of two researches addressing children's severe psychiatric disorders and family violence exerted towards children.

This project is complementary to the € 1,800,000 project signed between the French Consulate and UNRWA in September 2006 for the mental health care services in the refugee camps. Mr. Philippe Lecrinier emphasized that the health sector is among the top priorities for AFD intervention in the oPt.

Recognizing the significance and influence of mental health in people's lives, the Special Representative of UNDP/PAPP, Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen stated: "This grant will help relieve the negative psychological effects inflicted on Palestinian children and their families in the West Bank and Gaza." "The support is well balanced for it provides both infrastructure & capacity building support for an important intervention in a sector that over the past years has not received the attention required.

Thousands of Palestinians suffer from trauma, stress and numerous other mental health problems. Whether through exposure to violence, or being subject to curfews, trauma and stress related problems are increasingly occurring at a young age. Over 30% of Gaza's adult population suffers from an acute form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), requiring immediate intervention and treatment. The prevalence of the PTSD among children is particularly alarming.

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