



PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Health, UNDP/PAPP and France Cater for mental health needs in the Jenin District

Jenin, June 02, 2009 – Palestinian Ministry of Health, the French Development Agency and UNDP marked today the completion of the Jenin Mental Health Clinic.

The centre is part of a € 2,740,000 grant from the French Development Agency (AFD) with an aim to improve the mental health system in the occupied Palestinian territory. The project, implemented by UNDP/PAPP, included the construction and furnishing of a 320 square meter mental health clinic in Jenin as well as the training of staff members, general practitioners and nurses about mental illness. The clinic is expected to provide services to over a quarter of a million people in the Jenin district and help inform other medical practitioners and community members about mental health issues.

The inauguration was attended by Mr. Qadourah Musa, Governor of Jenin, Mr. Etienne Viard, Director of AFD Middle East Department, Mr. Philippe Lecrinier, Director of AFD in Jerusalem, Dr. Anan Al Masri, Deputy Minister of Health, and Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, UNDP Special Representative. The ceremony also included cutting the ribbon and a tour around the centre.

Mr. Philippe Lecrinier, Director of AFD underlined the fruitful cooperation between the French Development Agency, Ministry of Health and UNDP. He emphasized that the health sector is among the top priorities for AFD interventions in the oPt, and more so mental health, especially at these difficult times.

“The project is inline with the Ministry of Health’s strategic approach, which plans for increasing the number of mental health care facilities throughout the West Bank and Gaza, especially in areas where there has been a considerable increase in the number of cases recorded” said Dr. Anan Al Masri, Deputy Minister of Health..

Recognizing the significance and influence of mental health in people’s lives, the Special Representative of UNDP/PAPP, Mr. Jens Toyberg-Frandzen stated: “While mental illness can occur anywhere in the world, the stresses of living under occupation and coping with economic difficulty can make matters worse.” “This project is just one part of a US\$4.3 million programme to improve mental health care throughout the occupied Palestinian territory”.

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. The prevalence of post traumatic stress disorder among children is particularly alarming. According to a recent phone survey conducted by UNDP in Gaza in 2009, 28 percent of the households polled identified emotional and psychological aid as a top priority.

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