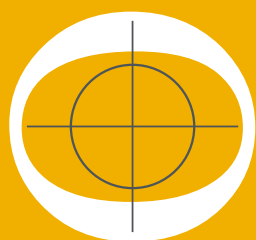
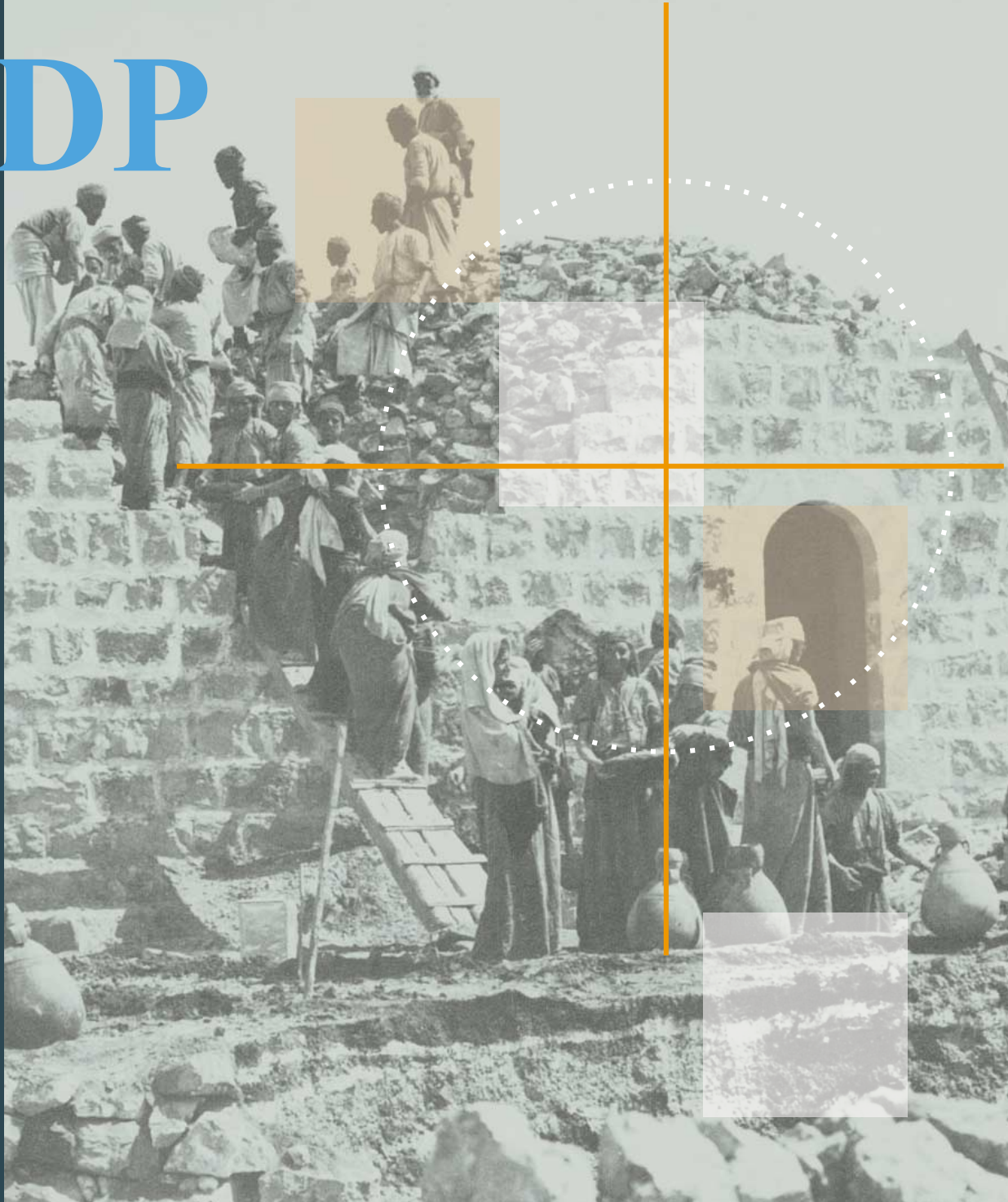


UNDP

Programme of Assistance
to the Palestinian People

S U C



International Year of **Volunteers 2001**

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September 2000
Volume 6.3

United Nations Volunteers in the Palestinian Territories

The concept community volunteer work, "owneh", is part of Palestinian rural culture. An internationalized version of volunteerism was introduced in 1994, when the UNV programme brought international and national volunteers from various backgrounds and a wide range of disciplines together to address the process of "healing the wounds of conflict" and "building the bridges of prosperity and peace". Over 360 volunteers have joined the efforts in rebuilding the communities that are in great need of rehabilitation. UNDP/PAPP and the Palestinian people will mark the year 2001 with a public campaign to rekindle the spirit of volunteerism.



In November 1997, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers. To prepare for the year, the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) has been designated as international focal point. With its main objectives of increased recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteering, the International Year of Volunteers 2001 (IYV) provides a unique opportunity to highlight the achievements of the millions of volunteers worldwide and to encourage more people globally to engage in volunteer activity.

Fifty-second session

Agenda item 12

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

International Year of Volunteers, 2001

The General Assembly,
Welcoming the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council contained in its
resolution 1997/44 of 22 July 1997,
Decides to take the action called for in that resolution, inter alia, proclaiming 2001 the
International Year of Volunteers.
50th plenary meeting
20 November 1997

1. Proclaims 2001 the International Year of Volunteers;
2. Invites Governments, the United Nations system and intergovernmental, volunteer and non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations to collaborate and identify ways and means of enhancing the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteer service in the preparations for and observance of the Year;
3. Designates the United Nations Volunteers programme, without prejudice to existing priorities, as the focal point for preparations, implementation and follow-up of the Year in close collaboration with other organizations of the United Nations system, and encourages the United Nations Volunteers to continue the process of close collaboration and partnership with Governments and;
4. Invites policy-making organs and the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to consider, in the context of their substantive mandates, the principles and objectives of the Year, making special efforts through new and existing programs during the period 1998-2001 and to pursue follow-up action to the Year for the benefit of all countries and peoples;
5. Appeals to Member States, as well as all other participants in the observance of the Year, to highlight 2001 as a special occasion benefiting the peoples of the world in their quest for a better life for all, based on the voluntary commitment of individuals and groups to make available their time and share their resources and skills in the interest of those less advantaged;
6. Calls for a concerted promotional and information campaign on behalf of the Year at the national, regional and international levels, with the strong participation of the mass media;
7. Requests the Secretary-General to take specific measures, within existing resources and with support from voluntary resources, through all the communications media at his disposal, in particular within the mandate of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, to give widespread publicity to the preparations for and observance of the Year and to disseminate information on the subject.

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UNVs are working to alleviate the conditions of the Palestinians that have lived with deprivation for decades. They give support and hope to future generations.

For more information about the United Nations Volunteer Programme or the TOKTEN Programme contact UNDP/PAPP at:

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Throughout modern history Palestinian non-governmental organizations have played a prominent role in the development process of the country. Many existing NGOs were established to serve civil society in the absence of a national government and thus the NGO community has extensive experience in identifying and addressing the needs of society.

In recognition of this crucial and unique historical role that NGOs have, the Palestinian National Authority established the Ministry of Non-Governmental Affairs. As set forth in Presidential Decree No. 4 1999, the Ministry's main role is to coordinate and consolidate the work of national and international NGOs with the various governmental bodies in order to integrate their work into the national development plan and prevent unnecessary duplication. Another important goal of the Ministry is to revive and promote voluntary work in the West Bank and Gaza.

The history of voluntary work in Palestinian society goes back to the concept of "Owneh," the community assistance given to fellow villagers who need help collecting the harvest, picking olives or building a house. Volunteer groups activities took on a developmental dimension in the 1970's when

volunteer groups evolved into specialized medical, agricultural, educational and women's committees. During the Intifada, which fostered an unprecedented level of social solidarity and community self-reliance, volunteerism surpassed all previous levels of participation by the public in civil society.

With the participation of all those who are interested, we have produced a national plan of action for voluntary work in Palestine. In coordination with the Ministry of Local Government, one person has been appointed in every municipality to act as a focal point for voluntary work initiated in the district. In cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and the presidents of the Palestinian universities, voluntary work is now a graduation requirement for all the undergraduate students. Five district voluntary work committees (with ten more soon to be ready) have been established through the National Voluntary Work Council, the supreme representative for voluntary work in Palestine, headed by H.E. President Yasser Arafat. Each committee consists of 40 members from ministries, municipalities, universities, women's unions, and youth organizations.

The Ministry organizes conferences, workshops, and voluntary festivals on the theoretical and

A Legacy of Volunteerism

Hassan Asfour
Minister of
Non-Governmental Affairs
Palestinian Authority



The History of volunteer work in Palestinian society goes back to the concept of "owneh", the community assistance given to fellow villagers who need help in collecting the harvest.

practical aspects of volunteerism. The Ministry also organizes specialized youth leadership courses, particularly in institutions of higher education. We are establishing an archive of voluntary work in Palestine, in the belief that the cumulative Palestinian experience is a reference for others and ourselves. In addition, we are working on establishing a database for voluntary work in Palestine that will facilitate work of volunteers.

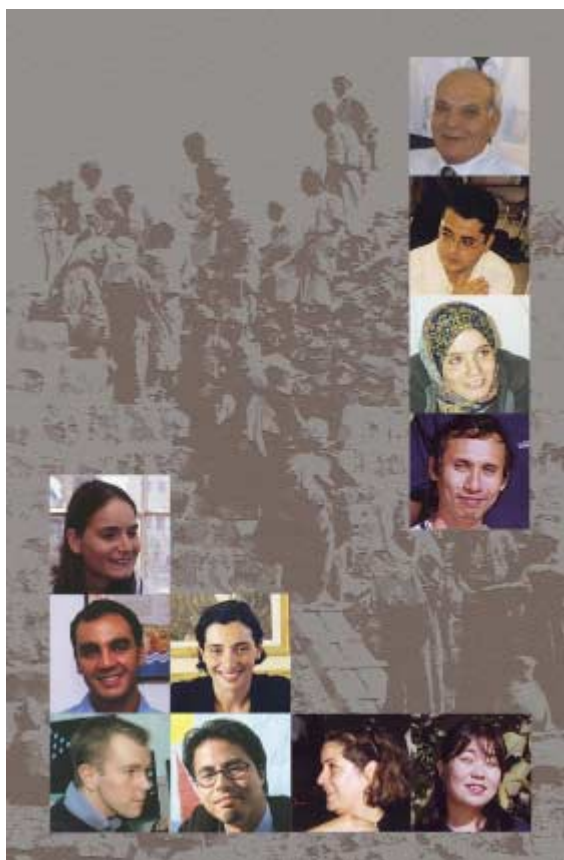
Finally, we are looking forwards to the International Year of Volunteerism, 2001, when we will establish the national volunteer committee in cooperation with the UNDP as well as governmental and international organizations and NGOs. We deeply appreciate and thank UNDP for their continuous support of our work. We believe that voluntary work will remain a corner stone of our national development.



The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) was created by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1970 and works through UNDP's country offices around the world. Since its inception, UNV has taken a "hands on" approach. The volunteers have built links, bridged gaps and forged bonds. Defined as a non-profit, non-wage and non-career action that individuals carry out for the well being of their neighbours, community or society at large, volunteerism is the wave of the future.

The Year 2001 has been designated as the International Year of Volunteers (IYV 2001). During IYV 2001, the United Nations will try to reinvigorate the notion of volunteerism. To prepare for the year, the UNV programme has been designated as international focal point. With its main objectives of increased recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism, the IYV 2001 provides a unique opportunity to highlight the achievements of millions of volunteers worldwide and to encourage more people globally to engage in volunteer activity.

UNVs are service providers that bring inspiration



United Nations Volunteers: International Year of Volunteers 2001

and change to any community that they join. Seventy per cent of all UNVs are citizens of developing countries, while 30 per cent come from the industrialized world. Since 1971, more than 20,000 UNVs from some 150 nations have worked in 140 countries. There are currently about 4,000 qualified and experienced women and men serving in developing countries. Thirty nine per cent are in Africa, 25 per cent in Asia and the Pacific; the remainder are in the Arab States, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and with newer programs in Central and Eastern Europe.

UNVs work in technical, economic and social fields, under four main headings: technical cooperation with skills-short governments; community-based initiatives for self-reliance; humanitarian relief and

rehabilitation; and in support of human rights, electoral and peace-building processes. Governments usually manage the programs within which UNV specialists serve and often there is technical input and supervision from one of the UN system's specialized agencies.

Part of UNV's resources come from country and regional funds provided by its parent body, UNDP. Other significant sources include the regular programme budgets of UN agencies, contributions from host governments, special purpose grants by donor governments, and the UNV Special Voluntary Fund. Contributions to UNV's General Fund and the Special Voluntary Fund reach \$16 million annually.



The Ministry of Non-Governmental Affairs has been instrumental in changing important legislation related to the role of volunteers in higher education in the Palestinian Territories.

Beginning in the year 2001 all university graduates from the Palestinian Territories will be required to complete 120 hours of community service in volunteerism in order to graduate.

In addition to supporting the Ministry in the areas of capacity building and institutional infrastructure, UNDP/PAPP has also provided two national volunteers and one TOKTEN ("Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals") volunteer for the coming year. The volunteers, including a web-master and a public relations expert, will promote and help plan volunteerism related activities and capacity building over the coming 18 months.

The Ministry is UNDP/PAPP's counterpart for IYV 2001 volunteer activities in the Palestinian Territories and Minister of Non-Governmental Affairs, Dr. Hassan Asfour, has taken it upon himself to lobby the Palestinian Authority to support volunteerism.

A Partner In Gaza

The Palestinian counterpart for the TOKTEN Programme in the Palestinian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, which is responsible for approving and monitoring volunteer

UNDP/PAPP's Palestinian Partners

activities in the area, is Mr. Mohammad Naja, Coordinator and Information Manager.

He believes that the TOKTEN programme has given a new angle to the "globalization" trend. "There is a kind of global humanization as a result of these programmes," he told FOCUS. "International volunteers are introduced to new cultures through volunteerism."

The UNDP/PAPP "facilitates this flow of human exchange and has allowed Palestinians to become part of the Human/Global Village," he said in describing the UNDP's support and efforts in assisting the Palestinian people.

"The exchange of knowledge and experience," says Naja, "has allowed the TOKTEN programme to be a truly human experience".

"SHAREK"



Sharek (participate)

"Sharek", meaning participate, is a unique, community based youth participation and development programme implemented by UNDP/PAPP in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It aims to give young people, aged from 14 to 20 the opportunity to identify, plan, implement, evaluate and sustain their own development initiatives.

The six national UNVs working with "Sharek" help foster the participatory philosophy that young people are subjects, rather than objects, of their own development.

UNDP/PAPP and the Government of Switzerland initiated "Sharek" in order to empower young people to fully participate and contribute to the development of Palestinian society. At present, some 74 % of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are under 29 years of age.

By integrating youth into civil society and promoting their active participation in the social, cultural, and economic life of their communities, the programme hopes to pave the road to more sustainable development in the Palestinian Territories.

The Arts and Crafts Village in Gaza City, which French - Algerian UNV Maria Mohammadi has been running since its inception in the summer of 1998, is an innovative project which promotes culture and tourism and has given a new outlet to the rich handicrafts industries that are indigenous to the coastal city.

Although Ms. Mohammadi is about to have her first child, and the 40 + C° temperature of Gaza in the summer is not conducive to productivity, neither condition deters her from pursuing her goals. As one of the founders of the fully UNDP/PAPP financed cultural and tourist venture, Mohammadi is determined that now, two years after its opening, it continues to play a central role in Gaza's cultural life, and is a definite stop for every visitor and tourist visiting Gaza. The Municipality of Gaza is responsible for the Village administration and activities, and thus it benefits from municipal infrastructure and human resources.

The Arts and Crafts Village is one of the success stories of cooperation between international donors and local authorities. Mohammadi explains: "The Village has developed into a hub for local craftspeople and a meeting place for young people and many Gaza students," Mohammadi says of the mud-built conglomeration of rooms built around a flowery

A Hub by the Sea

courtyard. "Initially this project, which was financed by the UNDP/PAPP and implemented by the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), was meant to introduce alternative low-cost housing to Gazans."

The multi-purpose project became a venue for local artisans to display and sell their wares. Among the traditional crafts that the village promotes are pottery, rug and carpet making, copper work, weaving and bamboo furniture. Artists from the Palestinian Territories, Mexico, France, Syria and Japan have exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Village Gallery. Mohammadi, who has decided to continue living in Gaza along with her architect husband, says that, "Some 80-100 people come to the village on an average day. Tourists have become a common sight, especially on Saturdays."

Approximately \$ 250,000 was spent on building and refurbishing the Arts and Crafts Village, which guarantees the livelihood of several dozen families.

Profiles

Since UNV and TOKTEN volunteers first started coming to the Palestinian Territories, the relationship between the Palestinian Authority and UNDP/PAPP strengthened. The volunteers have not only provided useful manpower, but also have acted as advisors to the UNDP about on-going projects. As a result of their direct input, UNDP has often been able to have better insight into the needs of the different Palestinian beneficiaries with whom they made partnerships. Thus worthwhile projects were initiated. Some UNDP/PAPP supported projects which volunteers are assigned to are featured here.



Maria Mohammadi in her office at the Arts and Crafts Village in Gaza

Other than four shops selling its crafts, the village contains an art exhibition hall and a traditional Arab café, where young people and artists meet regularly. The art library, which is part of the Gallery, has received contributions from the Shooman Foundation and artist Marwan Qasab Bachi, and has given young people a unique opportunity to access art and literature in a relaxed cultural setting.

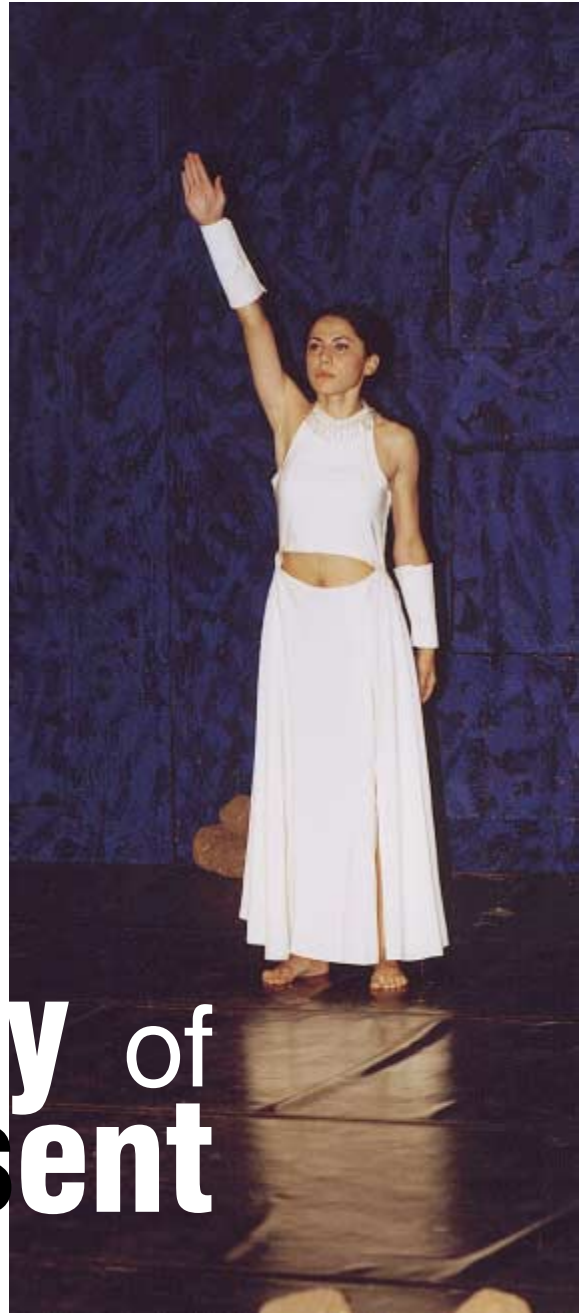


f Soil and Crimson is a new theatre production resulting from the fruitful cooperation of Palestinian, Jordanian and Tunisian talent. The play is composed of a series of sketches reflecting our present and our past, the continuum of life and its circumstances, values and obstructions.

The three partners or "players" are Ashtar, a Ramallah based theatre group, Mirat Media Productions of Amman and El-Teatro, a Tunis based theatre group, which met at the Carthage Theatre Days in November 1999. At the time the three discussed the possibility of a joint production based on Canaanite mythologies. TOKTEN volunteer and director of Mirat, Sawsan Darwazeh stressed, "during our research we discovered that what is important is the present, and without linking the past to our present, we are missing the point". With this approach in mind, the partners developed a production based on Canaanite mythologies, which relate to mythologies of the present.

"The past and present," says Darwazeh "were intertwined to give a context to the discussion of the main actress, who opens the play with a monologue in which she speaks of her relationship with her city, the Canaanite Ur Salem. We move to the present with the 1936 discovery of Ukarit texts and

Mythology of the Present



A scene from "Of Soil And Crimson"

archeological finds in Ras Shamra in northern Syria. With these discoveries the past is uncovered and eventually the common themes of land, water and freedom are echoed in the realities of the present. The mythologies of Canaan thus become the mythology of the Palestinians in the year 2000."

Improving the skills of young Palestinian actors was one of the major achievements of the tri-partite project.

The actors come from all over the West Bank and include performers from Jordan and Haifa. "We integrated their reactions to each other and their environment and injected it into representations of mythology of the present," says Darwazeh. "One said, 'I feel choked', while another said, 'I feel afraid' when they first got here, and we included these reactions in the text - because they are the reality in which we live and thus they are the mythology of our present."

Much of the text of the play is based on Canaanite mythology and was given the "heart beat" of the present by scriptwriter Nasser Omar (Jordan) and Tawfiq Jibali (Tunis). Another TOKTEN volunteer, Nasser Soumi, was the artistic consultant, designing and creating the wardrobe and stage décor in accordance with Canaanite designs.



Director of the play and TOKTEN volunteer, Sawsan Darwazeh

Benedetta Steri has been coming to the Arab world since the late 1980's, working at archeological sites and becoming familiar with the architectural history of the Levant. As a UNV, Ms. Steri has been able to put her training as an architect specialized in restoration and conservation to good use.

Working with National UNV Jihad Kfafi at the Qasr Hisham (Hisham Palace) site in Jericho, Steri has been given the responsibility of documenting and measuring this historic treasure. In coordination and with the guidance of expertise from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which is carrying out a larger plan to conserve Qasr Hisham, Steri is learning about the specifically Palestinian issues involved in the up-keep of historical sites.

The Florence born architect says she is grateful for the opportunity to be able to help develop standards in the field of conservation and restoration of historical sites in the Palestinian areas. Having worked as a volunteer in neighboring Jordan, Steri realizes how hard it is for developing countries to give historical sites



International UNV Benedetta Steri



National UNV Jihad Kfafi at Qasr Hisham

As a UNV who will be in the country for one year, Steri has already learned about the difficulties of "just living" in the Palestinian Territories. "Nobody at home realizes what is really happening here. For me, it was just one ride in a service-taxi and I realized what the situation was about. I have learned so much."

Steri worked for almost ten summers as an intern in Jordan at the archeological sites of Madaba and Um Rassas. She feels that working in the region makes it easier to connect history and methodology.

Measuring the Treasures

the attention they require. "It is very hard for countries which have so many other priorities to look at the issue of preserving historical sites," says Steri.

Since June 2000, Steri has met many Palestinians who are trained to care for historical sites in the field of conservation and restoration, "but" she says, "they need exposure to different schools of thought and methodologies".

Coming from a country which has long specialized in the upkeep of its own historic monuments and sites, Steri says conservation must be integrated into the overall development plan for the Palestinian Territories. "Tourism is of primary importance to the Palestinian people, and they should be encouraged to visit their own historical sites. Tourism makes conservation and restoration an economic necessity."



The remains of civilization at Qasr Hisham (Hisham Palace)



Since December 1999, Terumi Shikata, a physiotherapist from Japan, has been working as a UNV with Palestinians in the West Bank cities of Nablus and Jericho, providing her much needed skills.

"It is a physically tiring job," explains Shikata, as she sits at the kitchen table, in her two-bedroom apartment in Ramallah with her husband Alex Danker. "Three times a week I go to Nablus which is an hour and a quarter drive from my home and three times a week I go to Jericho which is the same distance," she says sipping her coffee.

Shikata explains that in some parts of the Palestinian Territories physical therapy is still a novel concept. "In Nablus, most people still don't know about the physiotherapy center, so I don't have too many patients. The availability of the treatment needs to be advertised better," she



Terumi Shikato and her husband Alex Danker

Helping Those in Pain

says of the city where she treats an average of four patients a day.

In Jericho, her work is part of a community based outreach program, which allows Shikata to visit people in their homes. "In Jericho, because I visit people at home, a more personal relationship has developed between myself, the patients and very often their families. I treat about 4-6 patients a day. Because I go to them and I do not have to wait for them to come to me, it works better than in Nablus."

Shikata says that most of the patients requiring physiotherapy suffer from cerebral palsy or strokes, while a few are orthopedic patients or victims of conflict.

Shikata's husband drives her to and from work everyday. As a UNV spouse he cannot gain employment, and since he is confined to a wheelchair, cannot move around freely in a society that is not yet equipped sufficiently for the physically impaired. "I do a lot of reading and Terumi and I are taking both Arabic and English lessons about six days a week, so we are very busy," he explained.

The Engine Room

The Administration Unit of the UNDP/PAPP office makes an important contribution to the UNV and TOKTEN programmes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In order to enable the volunteers to work at full capacity, the complicated organizational details of living and working in a foreign environment are taken care of for them by this efficient Unit. Consisting of about 32 staff members in the West Bank and Gaza offices, UNDP/PAPP administrative staff work in general administration, human resources, automation, travel and finance.

The Finance Unit of the UNDP/PAPP prepares payments for the volunteers and takes care of other financial matters. The Automation Unit facilitates online communication between headquarters in New York, PAPP Jerusalem and PAPP Gaza, as well as UNDP projects throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Travel Unit takes care of travel authorizations, visas and other administrative details that are essential for UNVs and TOKTEN volunteers.

Without the support of the Administration Unit the volunteers would have considerably less time to devote to their work in the Palestinian Territories.





certainly one of the most high profile and visible development projects financed by the UNDP/PAPP has been new construction at the Gaza International Airport, which has received approximately five million dollars in financial aid from the UNDP since 1996.

At present the South Wing of the airport is being built through the generosity of the Government of Japan and with the help of UNDP/PAPP engineering consultants and financial aid.

Beyond supporting the building of the physical infrastructure of the only Palestinian airport, UNDP/PAPP is contributing to the development of human resources that is essential for the Airport to operate.

On October 6, 1997 Mohammed Abu Saad became the first UNDP/PAPP TOKTEN consultant to join the Gaza International Airport staff. With almost 40 years of experience with the Jordanian Civil Aviation behind him, he took on the role of General Manager of Air Traffic Systems and Navigation.

"When I first came, it was shocking, there was nothing, zero infrastructure" said Abu Saad, who was recently recruited as a TOKTEN consultant for a second time. "There was lots of trained personnel here before 1967. When the Arab Airport of Kalandia was occupied, all the staff moved to other countries. Now we have

An Airlift of Human Resources

none of the Kalandia personnel left." Soon after Abu Saad was hired, UNDP/PAPP recruited air traffic controllers, Noaman Hamzeh, Saleh Hamdan, Kamal Taher, Mahmoud Abu Sbeih, Khalil Nazzal, as well as air navigator, Ahmad Shobag, aeronautical information services expert, Mohammed Al Jamal and flight safety expert, Saleh Ibrahim as TOKTEN consultants brought from Jordan to help train and set up the systems management at the airport.

"George Matte was brought in to handle operations at Palestinian Airlines," adds Abu Saad when remembering the airlift of human resources brought to Gaza through the TOKTEN programme, which was backed with major funding from Japan.

Abu Saad and his colleagues started on three-month contracts to write the basic manuals on regulations and the organizational charts related to civil aviation



A Palestinian airways flight about to take off at Gaza Airport



TOKTEN Volunteer Mohammad Abu Saad and his crew in the tower control room at Gaza Airport

and air traffic control. "We actually wrote the books," said Abu Saad, pointing out that each individual airport requires tailor made manuals to suite its layout and environment. "Maneuvering, vehicle and personnel regulations were all written by us," he said.

One of the main obstacles with training air traffic controllers is that in this discipline experience is crucial. "You can't just train 10 young people for 6 months and let them handle an airport, it takes years," points out Abu Saad.

One of the unique aspects of the TOKTEN experience with the Airport project is that all the expatriate volunteers stayed on. "It is so rewarding that through TOKTEN we were able to bring in such highly qualified and loyal talent," says the UNDP TOKTEN Programme Management Officer.



The development of Information Technology (IT) in the Palestinian Territories now and in the future is at the top of the Palestinian Authority (PA) agenda. Realizing that the existence and survival of a future state will depend on the ability to shape its activities on the ground and in cyberspace, the PA, through its Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) is developing an ambitious IT portfolio.

As an integral part of MOPIC, the Government Computer Center (GCC) is responsible for planning and streamlining technological advancements for the PA through generous financial support from Japan. UNDP/PAPP supports the GCC in the areas of technology, infrastructure and capacity building.

To date, seven TOKTEN Volunteers have also been involved in establishing, building, sustaining and promoting the GCC.

Currently head of the GCC and senior technology advisor to MOPIC, Dr. Ghassan Qadah is a TOKTEN consultant, as are



The hub of the GCC in Al-Bireh

eWay Towards Statehood

Fuad Hallak, and Hussam Husseini, assistant coordinators for the Euro-Mediterranean Information Society Initiative (EUMEDIS) project.

"The TOKTEN programme has provided me with the stepping stone to pursue a career with MOPIC as the Chief Technology Advisor and Supervisor-general to the Government Computer Center, where I led the technological campaign to move the Palestinian entity into the 3rd millennium," Dr. Qadah told FOCUS.



Global Volunteers for the UN Information Technology Initiative

In his recent Millennium Report, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed the importance for developing countries to keep pace with the information revolution and proposed the creation of a global volunteer programme aimed at bridging the digital divide between the industrialized and the developing world.

The intention of the initiative, the United Nations Information Technology Service, or UNITEs, is to create a worldwide programme for information technology volunteers. They will work with their developing country partners to strengthen capacities for applying information and communications technologies (ICT) to human development, in particular in areas such as health, education, environment and small and micro- enterprises.

UNITEs will work through a broad coalition of institutions from both the southern and the northern hemisphere, including governments, civil society, the private sector, development agencies and academia. The programme seeks to foster the participation of developing country nationals as volunteers to the greatest possible extent. This includes creating the possibility for national volunteers to work in their own countries.

UNITEs is to be at the core of the rapidly expanding activities in the United Nations on the developmental use of ICT. The initiative highlights the role given to ICT - savvy volunteers in responding to the important challenge of extending the benefits of the information revolution to all people everywhere.

A Port and a Development Plan

In preparing themselves for the year 2001, the Palestinians are in the process of building the first Palestinian Seaport, which is expected to bring great economic growth and prosperity. Parallel to the seaport activities, work on the Palestinian Development Plan (PDP), which has been on-going since 1994, is now taking on an accelerated pace. Full scale planning for the people and their future is more important than ever, and with this in mind the UNDP/PAPP has given more human resource assistance to the PDP planning unit through its volunteer programmes.



Gaza was once the most important Palestinian port city. In the 21st century it will have that role once again.

Building a Port

The Palestinian Seaports Authority began to build the first Palestinian port off the coast of the Gaza Strip this summer. In order to assist in making this very important economic endeavor a success, UNDP/PAPP has already committed itself to assisting the project with funding and human resources.

As part of UNV, three National UNVs have been recruited to help make the port an operational and well-run hub of imports and exports.

The seaport is seen as a necessity for the economic development of the Palestinian Territories, which seek independence and self-determination of their economic future.

Currently the majority of trade in the Palestinian Territories is controlled by Israel. By having their own seaport, the Palestinians will become less dependent on others and more equipped to conduct their own trade. The existence of the port is expected to give the Palestinians the opportunity to develop trade relations with the rest of the Arab World, as well as allow them to benefit directly from free-trade agreements with other countries outside the region.

The Palestinian Seaports Authority will have a 25-months period (after commencement of building) to staff and equip the port before it becomes fully operational. At this early stage, plans for the long-term development of the seaport are being given a high priority by the Seaports Authority. It intends to address the use and maintenance of port facilities, technological developments and the environmental preservation of the areas adjacent to the port.

Palestinian Development Plan

The PDP Unit is part of MOPIC, and is located in Gaza. It has the responsibility of coordinating the efforts of PA ministries and institutions in producing realistic and prioritized development programs and projects with realistic goals and strategies.

For the past three years UNDP/PAPP has supported the PDP Unit by providing it with the means to increase participation, disseminate information and build capacity for development planning in the Palestinian Territories.

Thirteen National UNVs have been committed to the PDP.

In the fields of planning, public relations and information technology, UNDP/PAPP has identified suitable volunteers to give the PDP unit the expertise to make planning and implementation by the PDP Unit successful.



TOKEN volunteers have helped to establish, and now administer, PALESTA (Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Abroad), a UNDP/PAPP backed project for the Palestinian Authority.

PALESTA is an internet-based network to facilitate contributions by Palestinians in the diaspora to build the Palestinian economy. The network consists of a database of expatriate scientists, engineers and other professionals, and provides a mechanism for secure internet discussions for participants, who share their technical knowledge and experience in addressing questions important to the development of the Palestinian economy. The PALESTA Network will build upon and feed into the UNDP's TOKTEN programme as a continuing form of technical assistance.

The importance of PALESTA becomes apparent when the following is considered:

- 1) Less than 30% of the world's Palestinians reside in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- 2) Many of the Palestinian professionals in the Diaspora, for one reason or another, cannot

Stars from the Diaspora

visit the Palestinian Territories. PALESTA is the best, and sometimes only, option for tapping into their expertise for the development of the Palestinian people.

- 3) Palestinian professionals residing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have not always been able to keep abreast of the latest developments in their fields of expertise.

The main objectives that PALESTA strives to achieve are:

- 1) To keep expatriates informed about developments and programs at home in the areas of science and technology, among



Before their diaspora, Palestinians, especially those from the countryside, had a tradition of volunteering their time for the well-being of their communities



Many Palestinian scientists, almost all of them now in the diaspora, have joined PALESTA to make their contribution to the technological and scientific build-up of Palestinian society as it rebuilds itself.

other fields, so that they will be prepared to contribute when their presence is needed in the Palestinian Territories.

- 2) To involve expatriate scientists and technologists in serious discussions aimed at resolving problems related to Palestinian socio-economic development.
- 3) To obtain the assistance of these expatriates in identifying and initiating new projects that will contribute to aspects of economic development and industrial growth.
- 4) To identify candidates for specific missions under one of the technical assistance modalities, such as the UNDP's TOKTEN program or UNV.
- 5) To increase contact among concerned Palestinians scattered in the diaspora and explore opportunities for mutual cooperation.

The database is public and searchable by anyone; categorization is by profession, country of residence, academic background, and keyword relating to expertise, affiliation, and work sector. After searching the database, the user can directly contact members of the database via email, without the name and the email address of the recipient being revealed. The email recipient may choose whether to reveal his or her name in the reply.

In the summer of 1999 a vibrant Palestinian NGO, *Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy* (MEND), launched an educational pilot project called *Choose a Future*, aimed at empowering schoolgirls aged 14 to 16.

Choose a Future was designed by MEND to give schoolgirls a choice about shaping their future, by giving them the knowledge, skills and support to make informed decisions at critical junctures in their lives. These young girls, in turn, are expected to become role models to others, conveying the message that choices are available to girls in Palestinian society, should they seek them. The project has included active participation of 10 international and national UNVs.

"MEND has been extremely lucky to receive funding from UNV for the *Choose a Future* project. It is not easy for a new and small NGO, however dynamic, to find funding and support for projects like *Choose a Future*," says Lucy Nusseibeh, Director of MEND.

What distinguishes *Choose a Future* is that it is an experimental project that is breaking ground with both convention and tradition. "MEND was fortunate that UNV had the vision to appreciate the value and the potential of *Choose a Future*," says Ms. Nusseibeh referring to the many priorities that Palestinian society has at this critical stage of its development.

Choosing a Future with UNVs

The UNVs who work with the *Choose a Future* project work in the field of human rights, computer science, health, gender, a participatory video project, and conflict resolution with the girls. The pilot project gave an opportunity to 150 schoolgirls in seven schools located in rural Jericho and Ramallah to benefit from *Choose a Future*.

"This project, which combines gender awareness and empowerment with high-tech training in video and computers, can serve as a model for wide-scale gender initiatives with school girls, and also as a model for encouraging the spirit of volunteerism, via the commitment of the staff and via the summer projects of the girls," adds Nusseibeh.

Although projects promoting gender sensitivity and



Computer literacy is one of the main attractions in the *Chose a Future* Project

equality are being supported here, projects related to women's and young girls' development are not always given the same weight as other development programmes, say volunteers working with MEND. In the case of *Choose a Future* this trend was not only reversed, but new standards and priorities were introduced. "Since the staff of *Choose a Future* are all UNVs, they provide a constant example of the strengths of volunteerism to the teachers and the girls they are working with through the commitment they have to their work," Nusseibeh concluded.

The project is implemented with the Ministry of Education and is supported by UNV and the Government of Japan through UNDP/PAPP.



UN international and national volunteers brainstorm to develop a strategy for MEND



By far one of the most special TOKTEN consultants in the Palestinian Territories is Ms. Yusra Abu Ajamieh. As chief librarian and information science specialist, she was a main pillar at the Abdul Hameed Shooman

Public Library in Amman, Jordan for the better part of her 30-year tenure at the innovative institution. So when she was called upon to help organize, set up and integrate the three public libraries in Gaza early in 2000, she jumped at the opportunity. "I knew that much work was needed here," she says, "but I did not realize just how much until I arrived in Gaza".

The child of refugees from the 1948 war, Abu Ajamieh grew up in Amman, where she worked while pursuing studies in Arabic language and library documentation and information science. Subsequently she continued to update her skills by taking courses in the US and Europe. She was one of the main driving forces behind the establishment of the Shooman Library and as such gained a reputation amongst her peers throughout the Arab world.

Bridging the Gap by Reading



Literacy and access to information is one of the main tools for development in the Palestinian Territories.

"We work on several tracks here in Gaza," says Abu Ajamieh during a coffee break in her office at the Gaza Public Library. "The first track is actually establishing a cohesive, integrated system for the three main libraries. The second track is training personnel, who may already have some education in the field, but who need to be trained in more up-to-date and state-of-the-art techniques of information documentation and library science. The third track is to train people who are just coming into the field of library science. The fourth and in many ways most challenging task is simply to teach people to read. We are doing everything we can to encourage parents to read and we have even established a reading room for very young children and their mothers in the library - so they can learn to read as part of their 'play time'.



TOKTEN Volunteer Yusra Abu Ajamieh organizes the libraries during the day and teaches in the evenings

Abu Ajamieh has earned the gratitude of the many people whom she has agreed to teach in database entry and documentation in the public institutions of the Palestinian Authority after her official working hours, often teaching in offices until late at night.

The Gaza Public Library is already home to some 20,000 volumes of books but other books, magazines, periodicals and CD's are donated on a regular basis by several Arab and international institutions and on an individual basis. UNDP/PAPP has assisted the establishment and growth of the Gaza Public Library network.

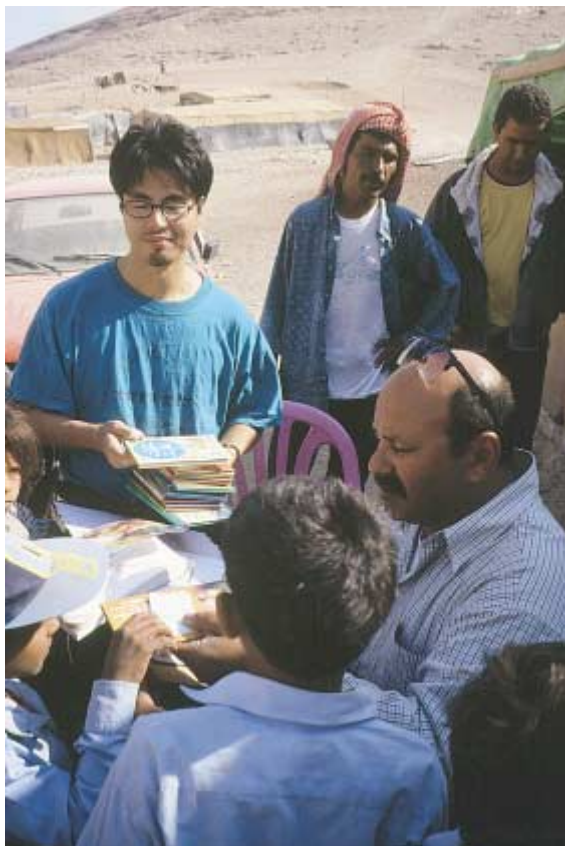


Maki Sato is a UNV from Japan. Since January 1999 he has endeavoured to introduce projects promoting a public consciousness of coexistence and peace in the Palestinian communities in which he has worked. His messages have been basic and his approach innovative.

He promotes these concepts through three main sub-projects: libraries, peace related events and workshops and cultural exchanges between Japanese and Palestinian educators and children.

He has opened libraries in some of the most vulnerable Palestinian communities. One of the libraries is the Library on the Donkey project, which was started in November 1999, and gives children in difficult conditions and in the most isolated of Bedouin communities access to books. In addition to lending books to Bedouin children, Sato organised field trips to other Arab communities that have been settled or urbanised to introduce the children to communities different from their own. One such field trip took them to the Samaritan community in Nablus.

Sato encourages children to read works about historic figures associated with change and peace such as Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King. He probes children's relationships with the environment and



Maki Sato, a UNV from Japan hands out books to Bedouin children as part of his Library on the Donkey project.

Lessons for a Culture of Coexistence

animals as well as their ability to recognize the rights of minorities in their own communities.

Mr. Sato uses Japanese culture and themes to teach tolerance and a culture of peace. In a series of events and workshops he focused on the Japanese children's experience of pacifism, the effects of atomic bombs used against Japan and teachings related to the "paper crane," which for the Japanese is a symbol of peace and hope.

Three workshops were organised to teach about friendship and coexistence between people and cats. The cat was used as a tool to introduce the concept of coexistence between the children and something or someone the children had previously feared or for which they felt disdain.

Sato held several environmental workshops to expose children to the importance of caring for their

environment and respecting nature. Children from schools in the West Bank visited nature reserves in both the Palestinian Territories and Israel.

One of the activities of cultural exchange was a joint musical performance by a Japanese jazz pianist and a Palestinian singer in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Another was the documentation, both through writings and films, of stories about survival in Japan after WWII. Yet another project relating to cultural exchange involved a group of nine Japanese volunteers who came to the Palestinian Territories to get a first hand look at conditions. After extensive field trips they returned to Japan and have started a public awareness campaign, which includes a web site.



Bedouin children with new books



Grant Chamberlain first came to visit an uncle working for the United Nations in the Palestinian Territories in the spring of 1998. By September he was back and working as a UNV music instructor in Ramallah.

Mr. Chamberlain, a native of Australia, obtained a post at the Palestinian National Conservatory of Music as a saxophone and clarinet teacher. The Conservatory stresses Arabic music and musical ensembles, but also wants to give students the possibility to learn other musical styles. Chamberlain was one of several foreign teachers who helped establish children's "wind" ensembles. "The Conservatory started ten years ago with some 30-49 students. Now there are 230 just in the Ramallah branch," he says, pointing out that there is a vast increase in the interest of students in music.

"I have thirty students that I teach from the Ramallah, East Jerusalem and Bethlehem branches of the conservatory." Since students take classes mostly after school, Chamberlain's day begins at 2:30 in the afternoon. "Children here are very keen to learn, they have been denied so many opportunities in the past, that now they jump at the chance to learn and improve their skills - this is very rewarding for a teacher," he says of his students.

Tones from Down Under

Chamberlain believes that wind ensembles will always represent the minority of the ensembles sought after by Palestinian music students, but finds that nevertheless there is a demand. "Right now we have five children's ensembles and they are doing very well. I am hoping that some of the future teachers are now among these ensembles," he says, indicating that "clearly there is a demand for western music".

Chamberlain also spends time on Friday afternoons with Maki Sato as part of the library project at a refugee camp, where most of the students are learning how to play a recorder (flute). "We decided to charge a symbolic fee for these children, since they can't really afford lessons - it is more of an education service that we are contributing", Chamberlain says of his work with Sato and his students.

"The importance of playing as part of an ensemble is very significant for children," he says. "It is important that children learn to work and play in groups and in



UNV Grant Chamberlain

harmony. It is essential to learn how to be part of a group." Playing musical instruments, he says, "gives children self confidence and discipline, and students that play musical instruments tend to do better at school than kids that don't."

"I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to teach such wonderful students through UNV. UNDP/PAPP has also supported several of the events that the conservatory carries out, and all I can say is that it's wonderful that the UN is supporting Palestinian development and growth in all its dimensions."



Chamberlain teaches one of his students how to read musical notes

Human Rights are a sensitive subject to deal with in any country. What is even more sensitive a subject in traditional cultures such as the Palestinian one, is the issue of women's and children's rights. But issues of difficulty do not appear to bother UNV Youssef El Barodi.

Now in his second year as Child and Women's Rights Coordinator for UNICEF, El Barodi, a jurist, is doing his best to address the absence of certain rights in the existing Palestinian legal system.

"We are now working to put Palestinian legislation in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child," says El Barodi. "The very first law officially protecting children's rights is about to be passed by the Palestinian legislature," he adds, stressing that UNICEF played a major role in lobbying for and supporting the new legislation, both technically and financially.

As a Belgian of Moroccan descent, El Barodi has had advantages over other International UNVs. "Knowing or understanding the culture and the language allows you to have a head

Rights for All

start when coming to a new society, you already know the alphabet of the place," he says.

"Because the Palestinian population is so young, (52 % is under the age of 18), there are plenty of possibilities for change," he stresses. "Streamlining human rights issues pertaining to women and children, ranging from the right to education to the right to participate without discrimination, among other issues, is a good way to start change. Introducing gender sensitivity into the legal system, the education system and other pantheons of a society helps to redirect attitudes and build a more cohesive and constructive society," he says.

"There is so much to do. A UNV contract of two years is really just enough time to make some concrete achievements. It takes several months to get to know a place, and it is really only after



Streamlining human rights issues pertaining to the rights of women and children in particular is what El-Barodi seeks to accomplish.

that that one becomes effective," he says of the time allotment given to UNVs at their postings.

Being a male has not made his job in stressing women and children's rights more difficult in Palestinian society. "Being a male speaking on behalf of women's rights helped me when trying to communicate with decision makers, most of whom are men ... it helped me get the message across that Palestinian society can and should benefit from the contributions of all its citizens—men and women alike."

El Barodi indicated that he has learned much



International UNV and lawyer Youssef El-Barodi, works to introduce new laws into the Palestinian legal system

about the Palestinian legal system as well as societal and cultural norms specific to the Palestinian society. "United Nations organizations and specifically UNICEF can have a huge impact in a society such as the Palestinian one, where you have so many young people." Change in youth participation, changes in educational curriculum, and child protection laws are but some of the issues addressed thanks to UNICEF intervention.

"Thanks to UNV, I have gotten an opportunity to be of service to this community, and thanks to UNICEF and UNDP/PAPP I have been able to work in this extremely important field of development," he says of his stay in the Palestinian Territories.



UNV in the Palestinian Territories is unique in both the range of participants and the scope of work involved. Beginning in 1994, the programme brought international and national volunteers from various

backgrounds and a wide range of disciplines together to address the process of "healing the wounds of conflict and building the bridges of prosperity and peace".

UNVs have come to the area to serve the ever growing needs of the Palestinian people. They have served in fields as varied as mental health and veterinary medicine. Some of the UNVs in the Palestinian Territories are involved in sports and music training while others are specialized in bio-diversity and nature conservation.

Since the inception of the UNDP/PAPP in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, over 140 UNVs have joined the efforts to rebuild the communities that are in great need of rehabilitation. Currently 21 international and 17 national UNVs are working in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Eight more national UNVs are soon scheduled to arrive.

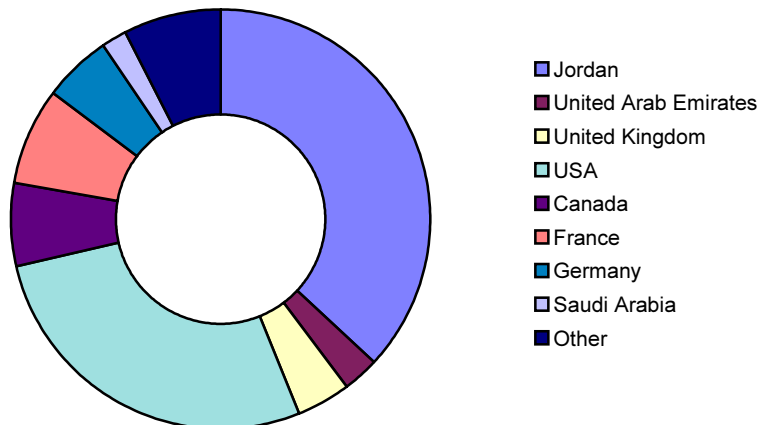
International UNVs from Australia, Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, Spain and Sweden currently work in 21 different projects in the Palestinian Territories.

The UNVs have introduced a special sense of civic responsibility to their co-workers and to young people in particular. Although civic participation in community projects and events was widespread in times past, it has been in decline since the Palestinian Authority absorbed much of the public responsibility for development and reconstruction of the society.

With the year 2001 designated as the International Year of Volunteers (IYV), and the trend of incorporating IT concepts into development plans, volunteerism in the Palestinian areas has come to an important crossroads. By building institutions that are IT friendly, the Palestinian Territories will be fertile ground for UNVs who are willing to come to the West Bank and Gaza and who want to share their knowledge and experience "online".

United Nations Volunteers in the Palestinian Territories

Distribution of Consultants by Country of Residence



United Nations Volunteers in the Palestinian Territories

International Volunteers

Name	Nation of Origin	Beneficiary Institution
Grant Chamberlain	Australia	Conservatory of Music
Youssef Barodi	Belgium	United Nations International Children's Fund
Tom Van Loon	Belgium	Ministry of Agriculture
Katrien Meersman	Belgium	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
Bojo Pinek	France	Palestinian Red Crescent Society
Maria Mohammedi	France	Arts & Crafts Village
Vincent Schneegans	France	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Amina Hamshari	France	Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy
Gabriela Elroy	Sweden	Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy
Laura Fragiocomo	Italy	Health Development, Information & Policy Institute
Fabrizio Chiarini	Italy	United Nations Development Programme
Stefania Fantuz	Italy	United Nations Development Programme
Benedetta Steri	Italy	Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities
Maki Sato	Japan	American Near East Refugee Aid
Terumi Shikata	Japan	Palestinian Red Crescent Society
Eliana Salto	Spain	Palestinian Center for Human Rights
Miguel Murado	Spain	Bethlehem 2000 Project
Montserrat Casanovas	Spain	United Nations Educational, Scientific, & Cultural Organization
Pablo Alcocer Vera	Spain	World Health Organization
Renata Capella	Spain	LAW - The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment

National Volunteers

Name	Discipline	Beneficiary Institution
Munjid Marwan Blaibleh	Management Information Sp.	Ministry of Agriculture
Suheir Mohammed	Veterinarian	Ministry of Agriculture
Said Abdelaziz Abu Ghazza	Youth Coordinator Middle Area	Through UNDP/PAPP Projects
Yazdan El Imawi	Youth Coordinator Khan Younis	Through UNDP/PAPP Projects
Sami Abu Sultan	Youth Coordinator Rafah	Through UNDP/PAPP Projects
Khaldoun Abu Ayyash	Youth Coordinator Hebron Sharek	Through UNDP/PAPP Projects
Mohammad Arouki	Youth Project Coordinator	Through UNDP/PAPP Projects
Khaled Ali Hussein	Youth Project Coordinator	Through UNDP/PAPP Projects
Maher Freijat	Regional Coord. Jericho	Through UNDP/PAPP Projects
Feda Shafi	Regional Coordinator	Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy
Mary Abu Rakbeh	Admin & Financial Assistant	Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy
Sohair Farraj	Video Specialist	Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy
Saadeldin Halawani	Human Rights Specialist	Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy
Fatmeh Bothmeh	Health Specialist	Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy
Jihad Kfafi	Cultural Heritage Specialist	UNESCO/UNV Joint Project
Tarek Abu Haj	Researcher	Wild Life Society/ UNDP Project
Ibrahim Odeh	Educator	Wild Life Society/ UNDP Project
Jamil Ijha	Project Assistant	Wild Life Society/ UNDP Project
Mahar Shihabi	IYV Specialist	Ministry of Non-Governmental Affairs
Moataz Tammous	Information Management and System Specialist	Palestinian Development Programme
Ghassan Qishawi	Development Management Specialist	Palestinian Development Programme
Ziad Obeid	Project Management Specialist	Palestinian Development Programme
Hanan E-Debari	Technical Assistance Specialist	Palestinian Development Programme
Hassan Nasser	Information Technology Specialist	Palestinian Development Programme
Fawwaz Khaled Al-Alami	Project Management Specialist	Palestinian Development Programme
Said Aboesa	Port Development Planning Specialist	Seaports Authority
Ibrahim El-Aff	Operations Specialist	Seaports Authority
Ala' Ismail Shaheen	Site Engineer	UNDP/PAPP
Hadeel Adel Budeiri	Site Engineer	UNDP/PAPP
Sa'ed Halaseh	Technical Specialist	UNV/UNDP



TOKTEN was established by UNDP in 1977. UNDP/PAPP introduced the programme to the Palestinian Territories in 1995 with initial funding from the Governments of France and Norway. Since 1996, the programme

has flourished in the Palestinian Territories with the generosity of the Government of Japan, which has contributed to date funds approaching US \$4 million.

The programme seeks to bring the knowledge, expertise and experience of expatriates back home. As a result of the brain drain experienced in so many regions in the developing world, its benefits include a repatriation of knowledge and know-how. And, since unique social, economic and cultural considerations are of concern in development projects, the utilization of expatriate volunteers also provides a modality to better negotiate these complexities.

TOKTEN volunteers are professionals with track records of academic achievement and lengthy experience in their fields of specialization. They tend to be highly motivated and bring with them a special interest to help develop their countries

returning expertise to the area.

Based on development priorities identified by the Palestinian Authority, UNDP/PAPP, through TOKTEN, has helped to identify and recruit counterparts to assist in rebuilding Palestinian society. The TOKTEN programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has also been integrated into the Palestinian Development Plan for the years 2000-2003. While the job of rebuilding grows, additional expertise will be needed to help in the development process.

As a result of the unique cooperation between UNDP/PAPP and the Palestinian Authority, TOKTEN has prioritized developmental needs and areas in which very limited or no expertise is available. With its updated databanks, the TOKTEN programme has served as an important building block for the development process in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The TOKTEN Programme in the Palestinian Territories

of origin.

Palestinian expatriate professionals have served in advisory and planning positions in various Palestinian Authority ministries and other Palestinian institutions. TOKTEN volunteers customarily serve for terms of 3-6 months. Since the programme began, 22% of the over 220 TOKTEN volunteers have decided to make the Palestinian Territories their home again, another sign of TOKTEN's success in

International Volunteers to West Bank and Gaza

