



Speech
FOR UNDP/PAPP Deputy Special Representative

Speaking event:	Launching of DEEP's Islamic Microfinance Component
Date and time:	Thursday, 28.08.2008; 11:00 – 13:00
Venue:	Grand Park Hotel
Participants/	Minister of Social Affairs Dr. Mahmud al-Habbash, Minister of Planning and Labour Dr. Samir Abdullah, Islamic Development Bank representative Mr. Mazen Sonnokrot, MFI representatives
Length of speech:	5 minutes
Context of speech:	opening remarks, no question and answer session
Draft prepared by:	Communications Unit
Draft cleared by:	Special Representative a.i.

Excellencies,
Representatives of the IDB,
Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here today on behalf of UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People to launch the Islamic Microfinance component of the DEEP programme. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome your Excellencies, and the representatives of our partner organizations who have been making the difference on the ground.

The Poverty statistics for 2008 reveal that approximately 58% of Palestinians live under the poverty line, with about half of them living in extreme poverty. These are horrific numbers. They mean that more than two million Palestinians live in daily hardship.

I am certain that I speak for all of us here when I say that we must do our utmost to change this ugly reality. The DEEP programme is one way of empowering 12,000 Palestinian families escape from the claws of poverty.

The microfinance component of DEEP is foreseen to be an effective and powerful tool for alleviating poverty because of the heavy involvement of civil society institutions in directing support to would-be entrepreneurs, and in order to realize this component's full potential, our partner MFI's and the PA have been provided with an intensive professional training programme on Islamic microfinance.

DEEP's involvement in the Microfinance industry falls under the objective of contributing to an inclusive financial sector for the poor, focusing on expanding the outreach of microfinance and contributing to MFI's efforts to achieve sustainability.



The use of Islamic microfinance offers diverse financial products that meet the demands of poor Palestinian Families. Through this component, we will be able to facilitate the initiation of a project or just strengthen the partnership with the poor throughout a project life cycle.

With the Islamic Microfinance component also comes marketing the products and relieving the poor from financial burdens relating to late payments.

Therefore, the power of microfinance is far-reaching. It underpins the Millennium Development Goals and contributes to better Palestinian healthcare, children's education and nutrition, and women's empowerment.

DEEP is not only unique in design, and it is not merely development. It is empowerment of the Palestinian people, and for that matter, the most vulnerable members of the society.

We do not only help poor people establish small business and grow strong roots. We nourish capable, resourceful Palestinians who are starving for an opportunity.

For building a stable, peaceful Palestinian society, we must find ways to provide opportunities for people to live decent lives. The creation of opportunities for the majority of the people, the poor, is at the heart of the work that we at UNDP/PAPP have dedicated ourselves to during the past 30 years.

By offering poor people respect, responsibility, and a fighting chance, they will do far more for themselves than we can ever do for them

For providing this unique opportunity to the 12,000 Palestinian families, I want to thank our donor the Islamic Development Bank for its gracious grant, the Ministries of Social Affairs and Labour and Planning, as well as our partners in the field for their commitment and vision.

This conference marks an important milestone in a journey that began two years ago. We can all be proud that we are genuinely addressing the roots of poverty so that it becomes something of the past and that our reward will be to witness the poor families released from the poverty trap and attain sustainable livelihoods.

Thank you all for your commitment