

SPEECH
FOR Jens Toyberg-Frandzen
UNDP/PAPP Special Representative

Inauguration of School for the Blind, Beit Jala
15/10/2009

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to be here to open this school. I am pleased that it will provide modern facilities for around 100 pupils and give them greater opportunity for a productive life that might have been the case before.

A major element of our development work is focusing on harnessing the potential of parts of society which have hitherto been neglected whether they be women, the poor or the disabled.

Many blind people have contributed to the world through music. But blind people have excelled in many areas such as politics like the British cabinet minister David Blunket and literature such as the Greek poet Homer. Lack of sight does not mean lack of vision.

Societies cannot afford to ignore the talents of any of its component parts. But in order to gain the benefits of those talents, it needs to invest in harvesting them.

This \$660,000 school provides will hopefully provide the right environment for education and preparing for life after school.

Modern technology makes it much easier for the non-seeing to integrate with the seeing in the work place whether through Braille keyboards or voice recognition software.

In Nablus, UNDP with the help of the Young Men's Christian Association helped one young blind man with training and equipment get a job with Nablus council in its complaints department.

UNDP's work in development in Palestine covers many areas. Ours projects have ranged from re-habilitating the centre of Bethlehem to preparing for elections. But of the thousands of projects we have completed, some of the most important are the 360 educational facilities we have built or extended.

I am, once again, delighted to be add another one to that list. I would like to thank everyone who has helped make this project a success and wish the National Society for the Visually Handicapped best wishes for the future management of the school.

Thank you