

# FOCUS

QALQILYA & TULKAREM

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## Guest Column

# Mr. Jamal Shobaki

## Palestinian Authority Minister of Local Government

The Ministry of Local Government has long had a partnership with the UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP). Despite the immense challenges facing the Palestinian people, such as the construction by the Israeli government of a "security wall" separating parts of the northern West Bank from Israel that is resulting in the isolation of many communities, I am confident that this partnership will assist us in rising up to the difficult tasks ahead.

This issue of FOCUS features a sample of UNDP's projects in the districts of Qalqilya and Tulkarem, the area most drastically affected by the wall. Whether it is the building of new municipal buildings as in the village of Zawiya or renovating and enhancing old ones, the UNDP's effort is having a direct impact on local governance. One only needs to consider the convenience that the residents of Ras Atiya and Ras Attira enjoy having had their houses connected to the main water network. Also, having an emergency clinic in the city of Qalqilya, where none existed before not only demonstrates the UNDP's commitment to improving the health of 40,000 residents of the area, but also its openness to support non-governmental organizations in their drive to improve local governance.

Another milestone in the partnership between PAPP and the Ministry has been the Local Rural Development Programme (LRDP), which has fulfilled our vision of focusing on rural communities that have witnessed years of neglect. The results of LRDP, which were featured in the September 2001 issue of FOCUS, are seen in the countless successful projects that have brought electricity, water networks, roads, schools, garbage collection provisions, and most importantly agricultural development in more than 220 villages and towns across the West Bank and Gaza. All of



these tangible achievements could not have been attained without the dedication of the staff of the Ministry, UNDP and the donor community. Here, particular tribute has to be paid to the European Commission (EC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the

governments of Japan and the Netherlands, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development for their support.

In spite of achievements, however, there is a sense of despair at the further isolation of Palestinian towns and villages—the real impediment to Palestinian development. Particularly upsetting is the construction by Israel of 147 km wall which is encircling many villages and towns, especially in the Qalqilia and Tulkarem districts, confiscating thousands of dunums of some the best agricultural land and threatening the viability of a future Palestinian state by appropriating some of the West Bank's best water resources (over 25%).

While the ramifications of this wall have not been fully realized or aggregated, it has already begun to fragment, isolate and impoverish many villages and towns in the Qalqilia and Tulkarem districts. In Qalqilia city alone, over 500 farmers have lost land, depriving their families of their only source of income.

The situation in these districts is alarming and we look to the international community to overcome the enormous new impediment to Palestinian development. The various local municipalities and village councils as well as the international community will rise up to the task to find prescriptions reducing this acute economic and social pain.

# QALQILYA: Supporting a Municipality Under Pressure

Mayor Marouf Zahran has his office in the municipality building in the heart of the city of Qalqilya. UNDP, with US \$150,000 from the Government of Japan, recently completed a project to renovate a new third floor for the building adding a new meeting room and facility for community events.

The city of Qalqilya is one of the closest cities in the West Bank to the Israeli border. It has thus borne the brunt of the impact of agricultural land confiscation for the building of a new “security wall” by Israel. Qalqilya also feels great economic pressures by the isolation of the local economy from Israel. When the wall is completed there will only be one entrance into and out of the city. The wall takes different forms in different places: in some sections, an 8 meter concrete barrier with army watchtowers along the way. In other places it will be a combination of trenches and electrified fences, monitored from army control rooms. Over the past year, the stress of the work of Mayor Zahran has increased as the community feels greater pressure, and looks to him and his municipality team for support, advice and leadership.

Twelve kilometers from Tel Aviv and the Mediterranean coast, most construction workers and laborers from Qalqilya had been employed in Israel for years. The sudden closure for Palestinian workers following the beginning of the uprising has caused untold financial hardship among ordinary families. As in Jayyous village (see story on page 8), people have had to fall back on the income they could make from their own land. Qalqilya is situated on some of the most fertile ground in the West Bank owing to its underground water aquifers. Before the closure, fruit and vegetables from the Qalqilya area were sold, not only across Palestinian and Israeli towns and cities, but exported abroad. As Nidal Jalood from the municipality put simply, “Here we have no social security. The land was our social security”.

The building of the wall has hit the people of Qalqilya, and all the surrounding villagers, hard. According to the municipality, about 50% of the farmland has been taken along with many key wells. (Palestinians do not have permission to build new wells). It is not only the land on which the wall is literally built that is being confiscated, but also ‘buffer zones’ of many meters on either side. The wall is now completed on the west side of Qalqilya,





*A farmer who lost some of his land*

and is beginning on the east. “We were promised that farmers would have special permission to get access to their land, but so far this has failed to materialize”, said Mayor Zahran. Some farmers have been attacked with dogs, or shot at when they tried to enter.

Omar is one such farmer. His land is now divided by an 8 meter high wall with army watchtowers at regular intervals. He and his ancestors before him have been cultivating this land for decades, tending sheep and growing a variety of crops from beans to olives and figs. Now Omar cannot reach his land on the other side, and risks the dangers of army snipers in the watchtowers if he goes too close to the wall on the Qalqilya side. “What are we supposed to do now?” he desperately asks. Ibrahim is another farmer who has been cut off from seven-and-a-half dunums of productive land leaving him only one dunum. An electric wire fence also been recently installed. As guava, oranges and citrus fruit farmer, trees that need to be watered regularly, so if he cannot reach his land he will lose everything.

The population of the Qalqilya governorate is 90,000, and the people of the 32 villages surrounding the city rely on Qalqilya for their main services. The villages have now been divided by fences into three area, preventing villagers from visiting each other, or coming for medical services into Qalqilya city. As bulldozers were digging the trenches for the latest stretch of the barrier, families

from the villages were taking the limited opportunity to cross into Qalqilya through one remaining open field, including staggering over a muddy trench. “They are doing us a favor today,” said one man from Ras Atira without smiling, “they have opened the gate for the bulldozer, so they are letting us walk through. I usually have walk several extra kilometers to get in”. At his side, his wife was struggling with a crying sick baby. They were on their way to a hospital, but they cannot bring their car from the village.

Within Qalqilya city itself, Mayor Zahran has a population of 41,600 to serve. Once there were many joint Israeli-Palestinian enterprises that have now closed down. Around 600 shops and businesses from the city have been shut due to business lost from both Israelis and Palestinians who formerly bought excellent produce at good market prices. As poverty in the city rises, the Mayor estimates that around 3,000 citizens have left due to the economic hardship.

Many international organizations are now examining ways of alleviating those new hardships brought on by the unstable political climate. The Local Aid Coordination Committee recently commissioned a thorough study to assess the economic impact of “the wall”, and the UNDP is designing a comprehensive emergency plan to help alleviate the hardships. This effort sends a clear signal to the people of Qalqilya that they are not alone.



## Emergency Care

The life of a Palestinian doctor is often not easy. Dr. Bassem Hashem studied in Romania in the early 1980s, and returned to put his training into practice and serve the people in his home town of Qalqilya. Like many Palestinian medical personnel, he has had to brave military assault to reach patients, but his current main concern is the lack of medical infrastructure and investment to serve the needs of the population.

Four years ago, Dr. Hashem started a new general practice clinic, but he has not had the capacity to meet the growing demand of the people of Qalqilya. "We have only one hospital here in Qalqilya, the UNWRA hospital, for a population of over 40,000 in the city alone," explained Dr. Hashem. "We do not have any other government or private hospital to serve the city".

Residents of Qalqilya requiring even basic specialized care have to travel the 35 kilometers to

the hospital in Nablus. "I was unable, for example, to treat cardiac patients here in Qalqilya. I had to send them a distance which was hazardous and involved at least four checkpoints, even if they managed to make it through". There have been tragic cases of seriously ill patients dying at checkpoints, in vain attempts to reach appropriate facilities. If the treatment were available in Qalqilya, such journeys would no longer be needed. Mr. Zuhair Hilal, of the municipality council and a teacher in Qalqilya, confirms the community need for the clinic. "With the building of the security wall, there is only one way out of the town. The situation here is becoming desperate".

Villages in the governorate are even more deprived. A further 50,000 people live in the villages around the city, but closures and the wall's construction mean that many, even in villages as close as two kilometers away, cannot reach the nearest city.

In addition to standard medical problems, the poor health of the community has been increased by pressures of the closure. "Stress caused by the situation results in both physical and psychological problems," said the doctor. He has seen many cases of nervous breakdowns, or domestic strife which reflects the psychological problems of his patients. "We have many worried parents reporting that children wet the bed as a result of their fears in the current situation". Qalqilya does not have any specialized pediatric facility to deal specifically with childhood illness.

It was in response to this dire medical situation that Dr. Hashem, and a medical NGO, the Union of Health Work Committees (UHWC), applied to UNDP to support the building of a new clinic. Funded with US\$180,000 from the German Development Bank (KfW) as of the spring of 2003, the clinic requires just a few finishing touches. The ground floor is set to be an emergency ward, while the upstairs will provide for general practice and clinics for longer-term care.

Dr. Hashem and his team seek to provide the best service possible to the people of Qalqilya. "We want to have a 24 hour emergency room, x-ray, ultrasound and cardiac diagnosis facilities". The facility will continue with basic general medicine, and hopes to employ eight doctors fulltime. The management however, will be contracting work to specialists on a part-time basis: cardiac consultants, ophthalmologists, dermatologists and other specialists. This way the people of Qalqilya will be able to book appointments for specialist care without having to travel the treacherous roads to Nablus. The hope is that the clinic will be able to serve around 120 patients a day.

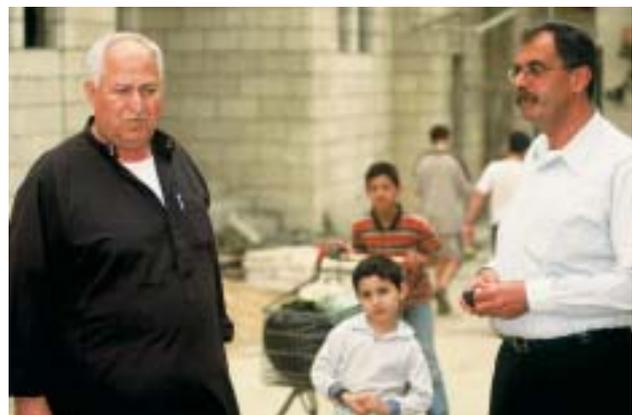
And the people of the outlying villages have not been forgotten. Dr. Hashem hopes to equip and run a mobile clinic which will be able to reach the villages, so that individual patients will not have to struggle to get to Qalqilya city, or worse still, to go without essential medical care.

A goal of UNDP/PAPP is to strengthen civil society in the process of building physical infrastructure, and working to empower Palestinian NGOs. UHWC was founded in the Gaza Strip and West Bank in 1985 by a group of Palestinian doctors and health professionals, united by the desire to develop an improved health infrastructure. As a grassroots, non-profit organization, UHWC is particularly

concerned with addressing the deprived sectors of the community, which sadly are expanding in number in the current situation. It is also important to note that such NGOs are working to revitalize the concept of community, self-support and a spirit of voluntarism to help stabilize the community in difficult circumstances. NGOs such as UHWC have been working hard with minimum resources to provide adequate services to the Palestinian people in a time of crisis.

An added benefit of the project was the number of jobs created for residents. Mr. Saed Shanti is the building contractor responsible for building the clinic. He employed approximately 900 previously unemployed workers in total, and the project helped his own contracting business, which has been devastated by the closure. "I have only 20% of the business that I had before, when I was able to work across the borders". One of the key difficulties he faces is acquiring materials, not just from Israel, but also from another Palestinian locations. Like his workers, Mr. Shanti now has an expanded family of fourteen to support, as a result of unemployed relatives who used to be wage earners.

Fawzi Ghani, a construction worker putting the finishing touches on the roof of the clinic, has seven family members to support, and has been unemployed for over two years. The project has given him three months work, and as he is happy to be earning wages again. This reflects a commitment to contracting projects out to local contractors, like Shanti, who demonstrate a commitment to workers' interests. And of course Mr. Ghani and his family not only benefit from the income of the project. Everyone living in the area will have access to the new clinic, a very welcome addition to the neighborhood.





*The children of Jayyous enjoying their new classrooms*

## New Classrooms for Jayyous

Mayor Faris Salim of the village of Jayyous looked around the dingy old room that used to be his classroom. With crumbling walls, little sunlight and poor air ventilation, the classroom is no longer fit to be used for the new generation. Mayor Salim studied in this room back in 1948. But now, the children of Jayyous no longer have to use these rooms. The primary school has two brand new classrooms as well as a large meeting hall and room that can be used either as a computer or science laboratory with the financial support of the Canadian government and the Al-Aqsa fund.

The favorite subject of Ahmad Abdulqader, a seven year-old boy, is math. "I don't mind studying in these new rooms" he said with a smile. In order for children to get the full benefits of study, it is essential that learning is done in a comfortable and non-crowded environment. The population of Jayyous has multiplied since the original school was built over 60 years ago. "There used to be 22 in a class; we have reached up to 42 today", explained the Principal, Abdullah Khatib. A third of the village is under the age of 16, and this figure is likely to rise in the coming years.

A well-lit, pleasant environment and added space were not the only concerns for Jayyous school children. There were safety concerns as well; the old school building was built in 1942, and teachers and local engineers were afraid that the roof would literally cave in.

The children of Jayyous were not the only beneficiaries of the primary school. The people of the village are facing the loss of what the municipality estimates as 75% of their farmland as a result of the "security wall". Their land was the only source of income for many of those who had lost jobs in Israel, so job creation was also a part of the UNDP school project.

It took approximately four and a half months to build the classrooms, employing 30 people from the village. A minimum of seven people were employed each day. Talk to the workers and the municipality members and you find out exactly how important such a construction project was with the crisis currently facing the 3,000 villagers of Jayyous.

Eyad Kaddumi, a carpenter, and his team of three worked together on building the classrooms. This was the first work he has had in the two years of closure. Like other construction workers and skilled laborers in Jayyous, he used to work in Israel. After it became impossible for

Palestinians to obtain work permits, he has remained unemployed. "This is not only a material achievement for us," he says, "it is a moral achievement". All the workers involved, as well as the municipality members, actually attended the school themselves, and their own children will also go to the school. Thus being able to work on such a project was, in Eyad's own words, a "great opportunity" to contribute to the life of the village.

Like other projects, this one sought to maximize the involvement of the community at every stage, from planning, organization, acquiring materials and hiring labor. At every stage the local community took part, rather than workers from outside being retained and simply 'handing over' the new classrooms. "This is the kind of project that we prefer", said Mayor Salim. "We really value working with institutions that respect the needs of the community, and give us the ability to control what the results. That is extremely important, particularly at this time when so much is beyond our control". To build the rooms, the project employed a direct hire, labor intensive scheme in order to maximize job creation. "With direct hire, the workers of Jayyous benefit, and we are involved with shaping the school for our community".

"People who worked on this project were skilled labourers in very bad situations. Most had been out of work for extended periods, and were unable to support their families" explained Mayor Salim. Some of the workers had been trying to support their children's university costs without an income.

"The project not only has a financial value for us" said construction supervisor Hamad Hassan Salim, "but provided us with encouragement and strength in these troubled days. This project demonstrated that people abroad are prepared to support us". Hamad, himself, knows only too well how difficult times are. He has lost 600 dunums of farmland, confiscated to create the "security wall".

Despair at the loss of land is not just nostalgia for times past, lives depend on it. "When you lose your land, you lose your sanity, it makes you crazy" says Mayor Salim. The Mayor himself is not exempt from the suffering: of 400 olive trees he once owned he has about 40 left. He has five sons and two daughters, 18 in his extended family. "How can I support them now?" As Mayor he has the job of cutting off the electricity of those who cannot afford the bills. Recently he had the heart-rending task of canceling the electricity for his own daughter because she and her husband could not pay.

UNDP's school project in Jayyous attempts to alleviate some of the suffering, both financial and moral. The village is hoping to find funding for four new classrooms to develop further the educational potential of the school. Abdullah Hassanein, a pupil in 1944, is now a teacher of geography and Arabic. "If the kids are happy, I am happy, and that makes learning and teaching a much easier job!" The smiles on the faces of the 7 year old boys in the new classroom demonstrated the truth of his words.



*Hard at work in the new school*

## HOUSING: The Heart of the Community

Beautiful arches stand out on the new municipality building on the edge of Al-Zawiyeh village. No longer is the municipality housed in a rented storeroom inside the village, and each employee now has his own office space. "People can take us seriously at last!" laughed Talib Rabab, the Mayor.

The construction began at the end of September 2002, thanks to a grant of \$100,000 from the German Development Bank (KfW). The 5,500 people of Al-Zawiyeh now have a new building which will not only be used as a home for the municipality, but will provide facilities for many different kinds of community activities. "We are

whatever purpose they need. But of course, the primary task for the new building is to house the team that runs Al-Zawiyeh municipality.

Al-Zawiyeh, like all other Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Gaza, has had to face difficult changes over the past three years. The rest of the West Bank is fairly inaccessible to its villagers now, so the community has had to become a self-supporting unit. In terms of community services, and addressing local needs, there is no central civil administration to carry out the mundane but important tasks of administering the town, as well as addressing more pressing issues, such as



determined to raise funds so we can use this modern facility for educational, cultural and social activities," explained Mayor Rabab. The residents hope that they can use the facility for a number of activities, such as a sports club or a library.

Such projects will require further fundraising and organization, but as soon as the new building is open and furnished there are plenty of activities that will begin immediately. At the moment, Al-Zawiyeh's women's association is meeting in local homes. Now the members will have a more suitable venue for their activities. Other groups in the village will be able to hire the rooms for

devastating widespread unemployment.

"In the past the community looked to the mukhtar (the respected community leader) for decision making," said Mayor Rabab. "Now as a municipality we have to fulfill that task". An important goal is to build administrative capacity for local municipalities coping with the current crisis. As in the case of Al-Zawiyeh, this involves not only training for staff but also providing infrastructure, which is lacking. The physical structure of the new municipality helps the municipal team carry out its growing list of responsibilities. In the past villagers had to go to the larger town of Salfit to register

births or to acquire licenses for construction. Now the municipality of the village has the capacity to do that. Computerized records can be kept in the village, and a new building rather than a rented storeroom makes that task easier.

The new building is a sign not only to the local community, but also to others that the Al-Zawiyeh municipality has the capacity to carry out development work within the community. "We are hoping that this will help us to attract other projects and to show that we are professional and capable of completing a task that we set out to do". explains the Mayor. With a youthful population with high educational levels, one of the primary goals of future project work is to provide better educational facilities as access to the outside becomes more difficult. The municipality also hopes to be housing the first public library in its building

Local workers provided the labor required for the new construction in Al-Zawiyeh. The project also utilized local building materials to maximize the benefit to the economy of the village.

Painter Bahjat Shokair is supporting nine members of his family. One of his brothers was seriously injured and the family needs all the money that they can get to pay for essential medical treatment in the US. But even in such dire personal circumstances, the value to the community does not go unnoticed; "I feel like I gave a general service to the community, to help develop my own village".

Electrician Ziad Shokair is a graduate in electrical maintenance and he now has his own children to support in university. He described many ways in which the project brought benefits to the local community. "Firstly of course, I cannot underestimate the value of this project to my family

financially. Times are extremely hard. Secondly this was an educational opportunity for us, as the plans were initially presented in English and we all learned new terminology and skills in this way, which could benefit us in the future." A central point that all the workers brought up, was the contribution that the building of the municipality made to the spirit and life of the community. "We felt as part of one family, working together as a team, on this project," said Shokair.

For plasterer Adel Abdul Qanous, after seven years of employment in Israel followed by several years' unemployment, this is the first time he has worked in his own village. "This project is not only of financial benefit to me and my team of four workers, but it is giving us hope. It feels good to work in my own village. I feel like I really achieved something. I even feel like I could do this for free, under the diligent supervision of our excellent mayor of course!" he laughed. His salary certainly comes at a crucial time for Qanous, who is supporting an extended family of 20, all of whom are without work.

Working in their own village gives a sense of pride to many who have only worked on the projects of others in Israel in the past. And of course it is easier to travel to work in your own village. It is about 15 kilometers to the city of Qalqilya. But as one laborer said dryly, "Now with the closures, it is about 100km, if it is possible to go at all".

"Providing us with a new building gives us a sense of dignity, and helps us to earn the respect of the community" said Mayor Rabab. Talking with the workers on this project, it is clear that the mayor and the municipality had already won the respect of the community, and the new building will help ease their task of providing even better facilities for Al-Zawiyeh village for the future.



*The new municipality building*



*Mayor Rabab in his new office*



## WATER: Spirit of Life

For those who just need to turn on the tap, it is easy to take water for granted. It is difficult to imagine what life would be like without it. But the villagers of Ras Atira and Ras Attiya, could tell you exactly what it is like, and just how important improved access to piped water is to their lives.

Until quite recently, Ras Atira had an existing network of pipes to the village, but no piped water to the houses. Every day, families would have to go to wells to take water for their household needs. Engineers warned that the 40-year-old pipe network was spreading disease. The entire network required modernization and houses connections. The neighboring village of Ras Attiya, which without an existing network to start with, needed to be linked to the new pipeline.

Unfortunately access to clean water is a problem that is not limited to these two villages; it affects thousands of Palestinian families. In Gaza, the problem is not so much access, but poor water quality. In the West Bank however, despite the abundance of natural sources, it is usually access that is a concern, a problem magnified by the military closures.

Abdel Wahed Abdullah, now proudly points out the new water meter in the front yard of his home. One of 1,500 people in the village during March 2003, he and his family have finally been able to have running water in their home. The meter permits him to monitor how much water he and his family are using. The Wahed home is just one of 212 houses in the village connected to the new network. All along the street, the homes have blue pipes on the front wall, indicating the home connections.

The real test to see the difference home connections make is to go into one of the homes and meet the people who really need the water in

the house: the women Hanadee Marabe looks up from the table where she and her sisters and sister-in-law are rolling stuffed vine leaves, a traditional Palestinian dish. "What can I say?" she smiles, "having access to water makes a difference to everything!" "Running water enables the women to prepare the food, do the washing up, wash the clothes, the house and bath the children. And of course, now there is fresh drinking water on tap. The list is endless".

According to the Israeli non-governmental organization, Btselem, the average Palestinian consumes only 65 percent of the USAID/World Health Organization recommended 100 liters of water per day. With the Palestinian population increasing and the entire region suffering from water shortages, there are indications that this already inadequate consumption figure will decrease. Some 160 West Bank localities remain unconnected to water networks, and development of infrastructure has progressed very slowly since the military closures began. It is in this light, that

the work in Ras Atira and Ras Attiya villages can be seen to be such an improvement.

As in other projects, emphasis was placed on generating the maximum employment possible. A \$120,000 donation for the two sister villages from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), permitted the employment of Palestinian workers, many of whom who had been unemployed since September 2000. Othman and Zaki Shawanee were working with the rest of the team filling in the trench under the hot sun, the final stages of the 2 kilometer pipe between the two villages. Both men previously worked in Israel until the closure, and have been unemployed ever since.

Zaki has eight family members to support and the salary earned from this work is essential to him. Living in the village of Ras Atira, the fruits of his labor will also benefit his family and neighbors. As he puts it so succinctly, 'Water is quite simply the spirit of life'.

*The generator demonstrates the new water meters installed in every house in the village*



# Keeping the Water Flowing in Tulkarm City

Tulkarm, in the north of the West Bank, was one of the Palestinian cities to come under Palestinian Authority jurisdiction in 1995. A city of 43,000 people, situated close to the Green Line marking the Israeli border, it has been badly affected by the military closure of the past three years.

An interesting fact about the governorate of Tulkarm is that it has the highest production of honey in the West Bank! It was also home to several local industries; textiles, stone quarries, chemical factories and other small industries. The local economy has been extensively damaged as a result of the closure on towns and borders, as it is impossible to fulfill the necessary import and

people of Tulkarm city do not have to worry about their supply of drinking and household water, even in times of military curfew. In a city that is facing so many problems, not having to worry about water is a weight off the mind.

Before building of the vast new water container, a water shortage often hit the city in summer. The oldest water tank is over 30 years old, and was badly in need of renovation. The UNDP project rehabilitated the old tank, a circular elevated design, and then built a second entirely new tank, a circular ground level design. Water is pumped from the two main water wells on the western side of Tulkarm and then flows to the surrounding houses, serving



export needs to support such businesses. As with other Palestinian cities, a large proportion of the income of the population came from working as semi-skilled and skilled laborers in Israel, and this income and financial support has been decimated by the military closure.

The bulk of the city is situated on an open plain, with a UNDP funded water reservoir carefully situated in the one high spot in the town. Close to a new hospital, the containers mean that the

around 25 000 people. New piping was put in to ensure the system worked efficiently and safely.

The people of Tulkarm face the problems of military curfew like other West Bank cities. Infrastructure has been damaged by tank invasion; paving, street lighting, road surfaces etc. Some wells were seized on the northern side of the city. But thanks to the new water infrastructure in place, one thing citizens of Tulkarm do not have to worry about is a water shortage.



## Fit for a Bride

A new floor for the community center also provides a beautiful new hall for the people of Nur Al Shams refugee camp. A low cost venue for weddings is just one of the many community services that this center offers to the people of Nur Al Shams and beyond. The center can host any event from conferences to community theatre, from sports to social festivities. As the FOCUS team paid a visit, the center was preparing for a festival for around five hundred children from all around the Tulkarem district the following day. The celebration would be a day for cultural and educational activities, including of course, the famous dabke, Palestinian folk dancing.

Life in Nur Al Shams refugee camp has never been easy, and the closure, curfew and military actions of recent years have made everyday living even

harder. Three kilometers east of Tulkarem, the camp is home to around 8,000 refugees, homeless since 1948. "The huge numbers of unemployed young people here in the camp need a place to go, a place to vent their frustrations creatively" explained Taha Irani, the director of the center. Irani and accountant Jamal Sleit are part of the team trying to address those issues at the heart of the camp. Such a community center is not something that can be taken for granted.

"Here at the center we are trying to work to decrease the anxiety and growing frustration among young people". For children coming to the center, to see military jeeps, hear shooting and to be trapped in their houses for hours is an everyday occurrence. For older youth, the fear of a future without employment looms. It is a common





*The new spacious community hall*

sight in Palestinian villages, towns and refugee camps just to see people, young and old, sitting outside their houses, kicking their toes in the dust. Widespread unemployment not only brings financial desperation, but a sense of inner despair and frustration. What can you do with no money, and no recreational facilities to spend it on even if you had it?

At the center, the activities are supervised by a nine member board, democratically elected by over 700 members of the camp. Youth leaders are allocated to three different age groups, a) under twelve years b) thirteen to sixteen, and c) older teenagers, in order to organize a program appropriate to the specific needs of each age group. Activities range from sports to social to educational.

The beneficiaries of this project are not just the young people, nor only the camp residents. "We are not just offering services for the refugee camp," Irani says. "You won't have seen a better center than this anywhere else, so we want to share it with the wider community". He proudly explained as an example of its reputation, that Italian humanitarian NGO CESVI, selected the Nur Al Shams community center for a conference, chosen out of all facilities available in the West Bank.

The renovation and new building, carried out in coordination with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), started in October last year, and at 98% finished it is just receiving the final touches. Funded by the German Development Bank (KfW), it is part of a wider UNDP implemented project, which combines employment generation with infrastructure development. Around 38 workers per week were employed on the project, bringing money to many times that number.

The ping-pong sound of table tennis echoes around the newly renovated ground floor hall. In the new second floor upstairs, an elegant seat is perched on the dais ready for a bridal couple to take their place. The brightness and colors of the room make it the perfect setting for a wedding, the trauma of life outside temporarily forgotten. A Palestinian wedding has a significance not only for the couple but for the whole family, yet in times of hardship it has become increasingly hard for families to be able to afford a venue for such an important celebration. The new hall has solved this problem for the community, as it offers a beautiful room to hire for a fraction of the price charged by a private venue. And holding a wedding in this beautiful room is by no means the poorer option.

# Keeping the Water Flowing in Deir Al Ghusun

Ziad stands outside his mirror and glass shop at the gateway to Deir Al Ghusun village and watches goldfish swimming in a fish tank. On a nearby hill high above him is a new water reservoir, which means that his family.....and the goldfish.....enjoy a steady supply of fresh water.

Deir Al Ghusun is a village of 15,000 people north of Tulkarm. Before the water reservoir was built, the village was cut off from a supply of water every few days. The old water tank, built in 1978, was in need of repair and not capable of serving the whole village. People would travel for hours to obtain water in times of closure. The village is cut off from Tulkarm, and people would often have to rely on donkey carts to transport small containers of water to their homes. UNDP first rehabilitated the old reservoir, and then built a second entirely new one. Water is pumped from the village's two main water wells into the reservoir and then flows to the surrounding houses. New piping was installed to ensure the system worked efficiently and safely.

The reservoir and water pipe system was funded by the German Development Bank (KfW), with

a donation of \$155,000. The work was completed in the spring of 2003 and its beneficiaries were not only the people of the village who now have a steady supply of water, but also laborers who received employment. In total, this three month employment generating project provided 740 local workers some modest income.

Situated only two kilometers from the West Bank border (the Green Line), the people of Deir Al Ghusun have been adversely affected by the building of the security wall. According to the municipality, approximately 7,000 dunums of fertile land have been confiscated in the latest shaping of the boundaries. "We do not know what the future holds or how people can get enough work to support even the basic needs of their families", says resident Ibrahim, standing outside Ziad's shop. "We used to be a thriving and busy community," he says shaking his head sadly and looking at the empty entrance of the village in front of him. It goes without saying that any employment like that created by the building of the water reservoir, would be of benefit in hard times for the residents.





*The separation wall dividing Qalqilya's agricultural land*

## Assessment: Damages to Agriculture since the Beginning of the Intifada

An extensive and up-to-date study conducted by the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, details the damage caused by the current conflict to Palestinian agriculture during the period between 28th September 2000 and 31st March 2003. A summary of these damages follows:

- The Central Emergency Committee of the Ministry reports the destruction of 268 farming storage facilities; 134 chicken farms, 6,890 bee hives; 8,491 dunums of field crops; 25,545 dunums of fruits and tree lands; and 20,585 dunums of covered (green houses) and uncovered vegetable farmlands. The number of trees uprooted during this period is approximately 83,000 including olive trees, citrus trees, banana trees, grape trees and several other types.
- As for water facilities, the Ministry reports the destruction of 217 water wells, 800 water cisterns and storage tanks, and over 348,305 meters of central water pipelines.
- According to the Ministry, the total cost of damages incurred in agriculture is approximately US \$925.8 million.
- This destruction has affected 8,508 farmers and their families.

# Profile: The Districts of Jenin, Qalqilia and Tulkarem and the “Separation Wall”

- In summer 2002, the Government of Israel began construction of a separation barrier “The Wall”, which is made up of a complex series of walls, barriers, trenches, and fences – within the western border of the occupied West Bank. This wall does not follow the Green Line separating Israel from the West Bank, and has encircled and isolated many cities and villages.
- As a report assessing the economic impact of this separation fence issued by the World Bank attests, this measure will not only have a severe impact on Palestinian agriculture, but is in fact contrary to the peace agreements between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. As the report indicates, the 1995 Interim Agreement states that neither party will “change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations” (Chapter 5, Article XXXI, paragraph 7) and that “the integrity and status” of the West Bank and Gaza Strip territory “will be preserved during the interim period” (Chapter 2, Article XI, paragraph 1 and Chapter 5, Article XXXI, paragraph 8).
- Agriculture occupies much of the land in these three governorates, at a rate greater than twice that in the West Bank overall (where just under 25 percent of the total land is devoted to agriculture). Thirty-seven percent of all the agricultural land in the West Bank is found in the Jenin, Tulkarm, and Qalqiliya governorates alone.
- As these lands are particularly fertile, the three districts constituted the fruit and vegetable basket of the West Bank. In 2000, the three governorates produced \$220 million in agricultural output, or 45 percent of total agricultural production in the West Bank. Per square kilometer of agricultural land, the three governorates produced \$430,000 in output – an output value per square kilometer 41 percent greater than that of the other West Bank governorates.
- The report estimated that direct damage to the agricultural sector in these communities from the barrier construction up to the present includes the destruction of some 83,000 olive and other fruit trees, 615 dunums of irrigated land (including greenhouses), 37 km of water networks and 15 km of agricultural roads. In addition, a total of 238,350 dunums of land (238.3 sq km) are being isolated between the Green Line and the Wall, 57 percent of which is cultivated, mostly with olive trees and field crops.
- Overall, the Palestinian Authority fears that the wall will isolate, fragment, and, in many cases, impoverish those affected by its construction.
- The “footprint” of the first phase of construction has been estimated at 11,500 dunums (2875 acres, or 11.5 sq. km). When completed, this first phase of the Wall will cut across roads and water networks and will form a barrier between Palestinians on each side and their agricultural lands, water wells, urban markets and public services. The impact of the Wall on agriculture is of particular concern because of its predominance in the economies of the governorates of Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqiliya, through which Phase One construction is progressing. The Wall could severely constrain the delivery of basic social services and commercial exchange, especially the movement of agricultural products.

