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NETHAM نظام
Rule of Law Program - Justice and Enforcement

West Bank and Gaza

NETHAM

Rule of Law Program

Justice and Enforcement

DFD-I-01-04-00173-00

Implemented by DPK Consulting

Ninth Quarterly Report
October 1 - December 31, 2007

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Netham implemented a series of important activities this quarter that are expected to have a profound impact on reform as well as strengthening of the Palestinian justice sector. Among these activities was the establishment of the first Palestinian Judicial Training Institute (PJI) which will serve as an institute based at the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) responsible for training and enhancing the skills of over 500 judges, Public Prosecution members, and court administrators giving them the judicial and legal training that has been identified as necessary to conduct their duties more efficiently.

Another key activity carried out this quarter focused on improving the judiciary's public services and particularly the Notary Public (NP) Offices due to the Notary's importance to the public as one of the most publicly accessed departments in the judicial system which at the same time is in need of dire improvement in order to better serve the public. Netham built on accomplishments undertaken last quarter with the Ramallah NP offices which were completely renovated and upgraded and this quarter attention focused on implementation of the second pilot location for development, the Nablus Notary Public Offices. This assistance included complete renovation of the Notary department with furniture and equipment for the offices and the public waiting area, developing an automatic numbered queuing system, a well-organized, modernized archiving room, and providing the public with clear signs and instructions on processes and procedures.

Culmination of weeks of work on the PJI and the Nablus Notary resulted in the launching of these two events on the same date-- November 14th with high profile public events attended by various Palestinian and U.S. Government officials. The PJI ribbon-cutting ceremony was attended by Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad; Minister of Justice, Ali Khashan; Chief Justice, Issa Abu Sharar; Attorney General, Ahmad Mghani; and the USAID Mission Director, Howard Sumka. Later in the day, the Nablus Notary Public event took place with the U.S. Consul General, USAID Mission Director, Prime Minister and Chief Justice attending. Both events received substantial press coverage in the local press and on Arab satellite news channels and provided a boost to the public's perception of the judiciary with the Prime Minister and other officials quoted in the press as stating that these initiatives have taken place in order to better serve the Palestinian public and address judicial reform.

Behind the scenes, Netham's work on these events contributed to an atmosphere of coordination and cooperation between judicial institutions that had rarely come to agreement previously on major issues concerning judicial development. Building on this positive will for better cooperation and coordination between key justice sector leaders, Netham sponsored a three-day retreat in mid-November with the Minister of Justice, Chief Justice, and Attorney General that took place after a series of preparatory meetings were conducted to foster good will and cooperation among the leading judicial institutions who had historically been at odds. The retreat was significant not only due to the length of time and commitment each party devoted to addressing issues of concern but for the first time the three leaders were in agreement on the need to make changes for the sake of judicial reform and improving the image of the judiciary. By defining and addressing areas of agreement and potential areas of disagreement and improvement, this retreat produced clear recommendations for improving relations among all the stakeholders and contributed to creating harmonious relationships which has been clearly evident in the weeks subsequent to the event. As an outcome of the meeting, the stakeholders agreed on concrete steps to develop the Justice Sector Strategic Plan and to adopt regular methods of communication (see sector on strategic planning below for further details).

Some of the project's other key initiatives during this reporting period addressed capacity building of the justice sector institutions and developing the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC),

Public Prosecution (PP), and Ministry of Justices' (MOJ) Strategic Plans for the years 2008-2010 which was a Ministry of Planning requirement in order to incorporate these plans into the Palestinian Authority's National Strategic Plan for 2008-2010. As all of these institutions do not have a planning department or strategic planning specialists, Netham was asked to play a leading role in helping develop strategic plans for each of the SJC, MOJ, and PP. Making an effort to further address the need for judicial strategic planning, Netham worked with the Ministry of Justice to establish a Planning Department at the Ministry that would take the lead in formulating and adopting strategic planning for the judicial sector.

Progress and achievement in these Netham program areas can be considered significant as they have shown solid, tangible results in priority areas defined by the Palestinian justice sector. In addition, the project was able to accomplish these and other key project activities despite being minimally staffed this quarter. As a result of contributing to the accomplishment of these key initiatives the project maintained positive and constructive working relations with judicial counterparts, particularly the Minister of Justice and the Chief Justice who have come to view this USAID assistance program as playing an integral role in judicial strengthening and development .

Finally, a revised project workplan, budget, and staffing plan were submitted to USAID this quarter and Netham received USAID approval of the workplan. In addition, in early December, Cara Stern, the Deputy Director of the USAID Democracy and Governance Office was appointed as a CTO for the project.

2. ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

SPECIFIC PROJECT ACTIVITIES

This section provides information on project activities, progress, and challenges regarding the key project activities described in Netham's workplan.

PROFESSIONALIZING THE FORMAL JUSTICE SECTOR THROUGH ASSISTANCE TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, SUPREME JUDICIAL COUNCIL, COURT ADMINISTRATORS AND OTHER BODIES

SUPPORTING JUSTICE SECTOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL JUSTICE SECTOR PLANNING FOR THE YEARS 2008-2010

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) National Plan for Reform and Development 2008-2010 is a national strategic plan that identifies the needs and goals of each PA institution and ministry. The Ministry of Planning (MOP) is the body responsible for formulation and finalization of these plans and has spearheaded efforts by bringing in a team of experts to develop criteria of necessary information each institution should provide regarding strategic plans. In turn, this information will assist in developing each institutions individual plan/s before they are incorporated into the PA's national document.

A component of this National Plan includes the justice sector plans. Last quarter Netham began working with judicial counterparts including the Ministry of Justice, Supreme Judicial Council, and Public Prosecution on drafting and finalizing their plans before they are submitted to the Ministry of Planning (MOP). Preparation of these plans included, per MOP criteria, defining human resource needs, strategic goals and objectives, and financial planning. The project worked closely with the each of the justice sector institutions and held a series of meetings with staff of the MOP in order to assist the judiciary in filling out and submitting necessary forms, data and information required by the MOP.

As part of this development, Netham staff worked on a daily basis for several weeks with each of the MOJ, SJC, and PP to assist in defining and building consensus of strategic goals. Coordination meetings were held with each of the Minister of Justice, Chief Justice and Attorney General to discuss institutionalizing strategic capacities and defining objectives and budgets for 2008-2010. These plans were then submitted to the MOP by the scheduled deadline of October 18, 2007. Shortly after this deadline, the Ministry of Planning approached Netham in order to assist the MOP in revising information gathered which will assist in establishing a compiled National Strategic Plan for the Reform and Development of the Justice Sector in Palestine to serve for the years 2008-2010.

As a follow-up step, Netham has incorporated all the individual justice sector plans into a unified document that reflects the justice sector vision and plans for 2008-2010. This consolidated draft of the Justice Sector development plan was submitted to the Minister of Justice to proceed in finalizing and adoption by justice sector institutions.

SUPPORTING COORDINATION AMONG JUSTICE SECTOR INSTITUTIONS

Building on the intensive efforts and achievements Netham gained working with the justice sector since project activities resumed in July and in pursued of one of the project's goals to create consensus and harmony among justice sector stakeholders including the Supreme Judicial Council, Ministry of Justice, and Attorney General Office, Netham sponsored a three- day meeting (retreat) that included the Chief Justice, Minister of Justice, and Attorney General. Dr. Azmi Shuaibi, Head of AMAN, the Coalition for Accountability and Integrity and the Netham's Chief of Party served as facilitators for the retreat whose purpose was to assess the current status of the various justice sector institutions, and identify common agreed upon understandings, methods of cooperation and coordination, and needs and requirements for the future.

As a first step, individual bilateral meetings were held between each of the stakeholders with Dr. Shuaibi and Netham's COP and later collective meetings were held with all participants to explore obstacles, and challenges facing each of the justice sector institutions from each institution's point of view.

The milestones in the area of common agreed upon understandings include the understanding that there is a good opportunity to move forward in the development of the justice sector institutions, given the President and Prime Minister's support for rule of law, which has created a positive atmosphere to enforce the independence of judges and Public Prosecution members. In order to building on this support, they agreed on the providing judges and prosecution members with adequate training despite the shortage of resources and the commitment to work together to prevent any interference in the judiciary's work that might affect their independence. They also agreed to address institutional development and providing their institutions with needed logistical support and human resources to upgrade their capacities. Furthermore, they recognized the role of the Ministry of Justice in coordination between the Judicial and Executive Authorities.

Emphasizing the need for more and better coordination and communication among institutions, they agreed to activate the Supreme Judicial Council and called on the necessity of convening periodic meetings for the council, in addition to holding periodic bilateral and collective monthly meetings. In the short period that has taken place since this retreat was held, it is apparent that the stakeholders are taking their recommendations seriously which is evident in regular communications between the institutions and the fact that many recommendations became incorporated into the justice sector strategic plans.

ESTABLISHMENT OF MOJ PLANNING UNIT

As defining and developing strategic goals has been a priority identified by the justice sector institutions, this quarter Netham worked closely with the Ministry of Justice and specifically the Minister of Justice to support the establishment of a Planning Unit at the Ministry that would lead the planning process for the entire justice sector.

Taking the first step to establishing the Planning Unit, Netham working with the MOJ, began head-hunting efforts to recruit a candidate to lead this department. After interviewing several potential candidates with strategic planning experience, a suitable person was identified that received the MOJ's approval. With USAID approval, the project began working with the Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI Project) to fund the placement of this position and possibly another supporting staff position for a one-year period. The OTI Project will also provide the Unit with the necessary furniture and equipment. In addition, the Ministry is working with other donor programs to provide additional staff positions for this department.

ENGAGING AND BUILDING CAPACITY OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

ESTABLISHMENT OF A JUDICIAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Working with the justice sector stakeholders, Netham provided support in establishing the Palestinian Judicial Institute (PJI) including developing the legal framework for the Judicial Institute (the PJI Law) and renovating, furnishing, and equipping the Institute. The PJI, which is located at the Ministry of Justice aims at providing legal and judicial training services in order to enhance the capacities and skills of over 500 judges, Public Prosecution members, and administrators of courts. In addition, the institute will provide preparatory legal training in order to develop the skills of newly-appointed judicial personnel.

The Palestinian Judicial Institute was officially inaugurated on November 14th in Ramallah during a ribbon-cutting ceremony with a pack crowd of approximately 250 guests including the Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad; Minister of Justice, Ali Khashan; Chief Justice, Issa Abu Sharar; Attorney General, Ahmad Mghani; and the USAID Mission Director, Howard Sumka. Invited guests also included various PA Ministers, high level judges, judicial specialists, and civil society representatives, among others. The event was covered extensively in the Palestinian as well as Arab media. Netham staff worked hand-in-hand with the MOJ on all ceremony preparations including design and printing invitations cards, creating banners for the event, designing the official PJI logo, invitation lists, and other printed materials and the ceremony agenda.

In the weeks leading to the inauguration, Netham equipped and furnished the PJI and renovated the site from an old parking garage into a modern institute which includes reception areas for judges and legal staff, PJI staff offices, training and lecture labs, and a kitchen. Netham's IT staff received the PJI equipment and installed and tested it including the PC's, the LCD projectors, printers, the UPS's and other equipment. Netham also assisted the IT Manager at the MOJ to correctly set-up the wireless network at the PJI. Furniture and equipment for the PJI was procured through support from USAID's Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI) Project.

Aside from support of creating and equipping the PJI site, Netham also played an instrumental role in developing the basic legal framework of the PJI, which is a law that would regulate the Institute's function and management. A draft law was prepared and proposed to the various stakeholders including the Ministry of Justice, and Supreme Judicial Council in early October. After a series of modifications based on the judiciary's feedback, Netham finalized the draft law in December 2007. This law was submitted to the PA cabinet by the Minister of Justice for approval and promulgation. The law should be approved early next quarter.

Simultaneous to work on the legal framework, Netham staff and a project consultant assisted the MOJ in developing the PJI's organizational structure and identifying the various steps necessary to begin operations of the PJI. Taking into account the limited administrative and financial resources of the MOJ, Netham provided an interim organizational structure with basic functions, and key staff positions that should be in place with the beginning of operations. Technical assistance was provided to the MOJ in this regard identifying areas of support among donor projects supporting the judicial training in Palestine in an attempt to avoid potential overlap and to help the MOJ design its strategic vision for the PJI.

ENHANCING MOJ PUBLIC SERVICES

CARRYING OUT INITIAL STUDY OF CRIMINAL REGISTRY

Recognizing that important work is needed to upgrade and automate the PA's Criminal Registry System in order to provide better services to the public, this quarter Netham, working hand-in-hand with the MOJ hired a short-term consultant to provide technical assistance to the MOJ in defining the processes related to the Criminal Registry (CR) System to help define potential areas of improvement. The CR is a system that was designed to regulate the criminal and security records system. The public often accesses this registry when requesting certificates of "good conduct" which are required in a number of cases including applications for international visas or requesting travel permits, or even filing for job interviews, among other cases. Netham set out to study the system in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, authenticity of information and reviewing the process in terms of time allocated in order to accelerate processing of services to the public. The MOJ has identified enhancement of the current CR system as a priority due to the public's persistent complaints regarding inconsistent procedures, and the lengthy processing in granting "good conduct" and "unsentenced" certificates.

Netham's consultant completed a report on the CR that included a description of the current status of the system (description of processes) and addressing the system's major problems. As a follow-up to this report, a brainstorming session was scheduled on December 12 in Ramallah in order to solicit feedback. Invitees included a small group of employees whose work involves accessing and working on this system including representatives from the Ministry of Interior, a Judicial Police representative, legal consultants from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice and representatives and legal consultants of the Independent Commission for Citizens Rights. In addition to these staff representatives, on the leadership level, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Media, and the Attorney General took part in the session as well.

As a result of this brainstorming session, participants concluded with a number of agreements including:

1. The system should be re-developed to provide better services to the public (priority number 1).
2. System should remove any redundancies in the processes.
3. Defining jurisdictions and authorities should take place based on the re-designed processes.
4. Creation of a suitable legal framework and defining required legislation.
5. Unify the procedures among the different working apparatuses in this area.
6. Arrange for an additional meeting among the participants for further discussion on the system requirements with more technical staff that uses the system.
7. Conclude the report and produce action plan with an estimated cost and required human resources.

Based on this feedback and recommendations, Netham finalized the Criminal Registry report and it was delivered to the Minister of Justice who with Netham support is preparing for the next

phase of the system development which includes upgrading the processes and procedures and building agreement among stakeholders for its full adoption and implementation. The Minister of Justice, who is considered as the legitimate reference for the process development, is currently seeking to sign a Memorandum of Understanding among the stakeholders, to be issued under the auspicious of the Palestinian Cabinet in order to assure smooth integration of the system and facilitate its adoption by the targeted apparatuses. The CR report will be submitted in English to USAID early next quarter.

UPGRADING THE CAPACITY OF THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COUNCIL (SJC) AND COURTS

IMPROVING THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL CAPACITIES OF THE SJC

As administrative and financial reform of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) has been recognized as a priority area by the Chief Justice, this quarter Netham provided two consultants, one an administrative expert and the other a financial expert consultant to the SJC to support strengthening the financial and administrative capacity of the institution.

By the end of the quarter the administrative consultant completed an assessment report of the current administrative system and practices that included human resource systems and practices, communications, files and archives, correspondence management, and quality functions. The assessment addressed key aspects of technology requirements, human resource requirements and training needs. The consultant also provided the SJC with clear recommendations and a development plan on administrative issues.

On the other hand, Netham's financial consultant for the SJC also completed an assessment report of the current financial system and practices that included accounting systems and practices, revenue management, purchasing and fixed assets management, payroll analysis, and financial planning. The assessment addressed key aspects of technology requirements in terms of software and hardware, human resource requirements for the financial department, and infrastructure requirements. Along with the assessment report, the consultant submitted concrete recommendations for the SJC and a development plan on financial issues.

In the process of developing these reports, the consultants met with the Chief Justice, department heads and other key staff to solicit feedback. The assessment report findings conclude that there is strong will from the Chief Justice and to develop and upgrade the SJC's departments, as well as noticeable employee buy-in to improve the administrative and financial capacities of the SJC. However, there is shortage in the number of qualified employees at the institution. Some of these employees lack the proper training and there is a clear absence of training programs. Both consultants also noted unclear criteria for promotions; weakness in internal and external communications; and no clear duties and responsibilities among employees in addition to unclear reporting requirements. These assessments reports will be submitted to USAID in English early next quarter.

SUPPORT AND BUILD CAPACITY OF THE NOTARY PUBLIC

Notary Public offices are available in most Palestinian courts and serve as the most publicly utilized offices in the judicial system. Due to their wide range of services, almost all Palestinians have had an occasion to visit a Notary office—either to process a deed including land, car or property registration or to notarize a series of official documents. These offices are frequently packed with dozens and sometimes hundreds of citizens who have had to endure time-wasting chaotic queues and unclear documentation requirements, leaving citizens with repeat visits to the Notary offices before finalizing a simply procedure. Due to the department's importance to the

public, Netham worked with the Supreme Judicial Council on assisting and developing the NP sites in Ramallah and Nablus—two of the most served sites in the West Bank. This assistance included complete renovation of the notary offices, developing a modernized queuing system, a well-organized archiving room, creating a public waiting area, and providing informational material on the policies and processes. Systems and procedures were also unified across all Notary offices. Previously each Notary office was implementing its own procedures.

While upgrading of the Ramallah Notary was implemented last quarter, this quarter attention shifted to Nablus. After several weeks of intensive efforts to renovate and upgrade the Nablus Notary Public (NP) Department, the new department was inaugurated during a ribbon cutting ceremony on November 14 with the Prime Minister, Chief Justice, U.S. Consul General and USAID Mission Director attending. This event received substantial press and television coverage on local as well as various Arab satellite channels.

Leading up to the inauguration, the Netham team conducted daily visits to the site, making all the necessary communication with vendors and contractors delivering services and equipment. The Nablus NP Department was renovated with new waiting area seats, curtains, wooden counters, archiving shelves, computers and a server, and an LCD to show continuous processing instructions to the public. The NP office previously did not have a public seating area, nor counter areas for staff leading to unorganized queues and furthermore little privacy in processing deeds. Netham supervised each step of the implementation of construction work and assisted six data entry interns and the NP staff in data entry and organization of archiving files in order to facilitate the smooth retrieval of documents for the public as well as the department. Netham also closely supervised the delivery of all equipment, including the queuing system, ensuring its proper functioning, and training staff its use. Notary Public equipment and furniture were procured through the USAID-funded Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI Project).

While the overall image of these two Notary Offices has been altered as a result of this renovation work, the most visible changes to the public are perhaps the queuing system which created for the first time a clearly understood numbering system for serving the public as opposed to the confusing system that was in place earlier which inadvertently raised questions as the order of serving customers and alleged staff “favoritism” in serving clients.

In order to measure the public’s perception of these changes, Netham commissioned a study to measure the satisfaction of lawyers and members of the public with the services provided in the Notary Public Department prior to as well as post improvements. The study reflected a major increase in high satisfaction with services received, regardless of the type of service. The percentage in those reporting “high satisfaction” increased from 18.4% pre-improvements to 55.2% post-improvements. In addition 45.1% were moderately satisfied (pre) as opposed to 35.0% post-improvements.

Also this quarter, Netham received approval for the extension of the short-term data entry intern contracts for another six months. These interns are assisting in carrying out electronic and manual data filing at NP locations.

With two Notary Public sites upgraded to date, Netham is working with the Chief Justice to select the third site. To that end, Netham and the Chief Justice conducted a site visit to Jenin where a meeting was held with engineers of the Jenin Courthouse, which is under construction and discussed the design of the Notary Public space ensuring that it is adequate to serve the public’s needs. Netham provided the engineers with an overview of the Notary Public work and the office space needs in order to upgrade the services provided to the public by this department.

WIDE AREA NETWORK (WAN) AND TIME ATTENDANCE SYSTEM

This quarter, Netham began working with the SJC on efforts to provide connectivity to all 14 Supreme Judicial Council and court sites throughout the West Bank by establishing a Wide Area Network (WAN) and the time attendance (clocking) system. Creation of the WAN would allow the courts and the SJC to exchange information such as e-mails and court files; enable court notifications to be electronically transferred from and to the concerned court in addition to allowing exchange of financial and administrative information between the courts and the SJC. The time attendance system would allow for the first time electronic clocking of attendance of all SJC and court employees and the systematic exchange of time attendance from each court to the Administration Department in Ramallah.

With the Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI Project) identified and approved to provide support for these initiatives, several meetings were held between Netham and the OTI to provide them with the specifications for the procurement of the two systems.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF COURT ADMINISTRATORS, CLERKS, AND OTHER COURT STAFF

In accordance with the project's third annual work plan objectives regarding the initiation of a developmental plan at two selected pilot courts, Netham carried out a site visit to the Tulkarem Court to assess the court's suitability for launching the development activity and at the Tulkarem Court as the first pilot location. The project team held a meeting with the court's Chief Judge to discuss the status of the court and assess its needed facilities to improve the performance and service delivery to the public.

The proposed assistance focuses on enhancing the skills of court personnel to enable them to improve their service delivery, along with renovation and re-engineering of the courts' workflow processes and procedures to assist in improving court procedures and renew citizens' confidence in the system. However, later this site was not selected due to the fact that the premises are an unsuitable court site and the SJC could move to another location in the future. Netham will work with the Chief Justice to select another site next quarter.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF THE PUBLIC PROSECUTION (PP) SERVICES

In early November Netham hired a consultant to provide assistance to the Public Prosecution in developing a needs assessment, training plan, working with the PP on manuals, and enforcement. The consultancy began by holding a series of meetings with the Attorney General, his assistants, and heads of prosecution.

Public Prosecution Training Plan

Netham met with the Attorney General and developed a training plan for the Public Prosecution that takes into consideration the needs of prosecutors which falls under the project's SOW of building the capacity and enhancing the efficiency of the Attorney General and Public Prosecution.

Three sets of questionnaires were developed to assess the needs of the AG and PP. The first questionnaire aimed at identifying the continuous education and training needs of the PP members; the second questionnaire aimed at defining the human resources, equipment and furniture needs of the PP and was only distributed to the heads of prosecutions. This questionnaire was structured to assess the needs in terms of human resources and equipment of each Public Prosecution. The third questionnaire focused on identifying the PP training needs from the Attorney General's Assistants and Heads of Public Prosecution point of view.

These questionnaires were distributed during a workshop that took place on November 10 in Ramallah. All the Public Prosecution Members in the West Bank attended. Netham's consultant presented the questionnaires, and gave a brief on the importance of developing a training plan based on the real needs of the PP. Following the workshop, Netham held a meeting with a statistics expert to provide analysis of the results of the questionnaires and submitted a request to USAID to hire the statistician. At the end of the quarter Netham was awaiting approval to proceed.

At the same workshop, 17 newly – appointed Public Prosecution Assistants, took the oath of office and were sworn to the bench before the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, in the presence of the Prime Minister and the Chief Justice. The newly appointed Assistants will serve in the various West Bank Public Prosecution Offices. During the ceremony the Prime Minister declared that the Palestinian government is aware of the PP needs in regards to human resources and capacities in order to be able to function properly. He also stated that the government will put all its efforts in establishing a judicial system that is capable to deal with the needs of the country. This event received good press coverage on local television and the daily Palestinian newspapers.

Public Prosecution Practice Manuals

Netham also focused attention on the legal, administrative and financial manuals developed during the previous DPK Rule of Law project in the West Bank and Gaza, and addressed the need to revise these manuals. The AG formed a special committee to review the manuals, in order to re-publish them taking into consideration any amendments that might be necessary due to new laws and regulations.

The manuals include the Code of Ethics, Homicide Crime Investigation, and the Trial Advocacy Manual. These manuals have been under review by the committee established in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza committee meetings are taking place at Netham's Gaza office. The project has submitted a request to USAID to hire an expatriate PP consultant who will work with Public Prosecution staff to finalize these manuals and conduct training on their content.

STRENGTHENING THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS AND COURT DECISIONS

Several site visits were carried out this quarter to the Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarem Courts, one of these visits was in the company of the Chief Justice and was conducted to identify the needs of the two courts in terms of needed equipment and furniture, and assess potential areas of assistance that can be provided to assist the two courts, including the Enforcement Departments.

Nablus Criminal Enforcement

To achieve the project's third annual work plan objective that calls for strengthening the enforcement of laws and court decisions, and based on its meetings with the Attorney General and the Chief Justice, Netham submitted a request to USAID for approval to hire six data entry interns for the duration of six months to assist with data entry and records labeling, and automating the workload of the Nablus Civil Enforcement Department at the court, and the Criminal Enforcement Department at the Nablus PP office. This will be a pilot initiative that can be implemented and duplicated in other locations. Information gained from data entry of information will assist in providing analysis of factors leading court decisions to be un-enforced.

SUPPORT PUBLIC OUTREACH, NETWORKING, AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT ON RULE OF LAW ISSUES

PUBLIC OUTREACH CAMPAIGNS

Netham prepared a concept paper this quarter on the implementation of a public outreach campaign that proposes that as follow-up to the adoption of the Justice Sector National Plan which is founded on the principle of cooperation between the key justice sector entities that a public outreach campaign be implemented under the name “Justice Day.” This campaign would be adopted by the three key stakeholders, including the MOJ, SJC, and PP and would highlight key concepts in the Justice Sector National Plan including emphasizing citizen’s rights to a fair trial, and protection of citizen’s basic rights. This concept has been initially discussed with the Minister of Justice and he is enthusiastic about undertaking this effort.

Implementation of this plan calls on the three stakeholders to adopt a date, possibly March 17 and proclaim this date as Justice Day. On this date a series of activities would be implemented highlighting the concept of justice and the judiciary through newspaper, TV, and radio advertisements and public service announcement, in addition to interviews. Also, in coordination and approval of the Ministry of Education, visits by judicial officials could take place to schools across the West Bank to provide simple, and easy to understand information on the judiciary, rule of law, and judicial process. Civil society organizations might also participate in the campaign. A meeting was also held with USAID’s Aswatona Project to discuss potential collaboration.

At the end of the quarter a meeting was held with the USAID CTO to discuss this campaign. Based on feedback, some changes will be made to the concept paper. Implementation of this activity is expected to begin early next quarter, pending USAID approval.

NETHAM’S PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Netham prepared and printed this quarter a project newsletter that covers success stories including work on the Ramallah Notary Public and establishment of the Palestinian Judicial Institute, in addition to contributing articles from the Chief Justice and Minister of Justice as well as other judiciary news and information.

The project printed 1000 copies of the Arabic newsletter and 500 copies of an English version. The newsletter was distributed at Nablus Notary opening, as well as the Palestinian Judicial Institute inauguration in Ramallah. Additional copies will be distributed through Netham’s offices and at other justice sector events in the coming weeks.

PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

ANNUAL WORKPLAN

Netham submitted to a revised project work plan, staffing plan, and proposed budget to USAID on November 20 for approval. The project workplan was approved by USAID.

COORDINATION MEETING WITH THE OTI PROJECT

The Netham team held a meeting with the USAID – funded Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI Project) to discuss some of the obstacles faced by the two projects while implementing the development of the Nablus Notary Public, and the establishment of the Palestinian Judicial Institute activities. The meeting resulted in better defining mechanisms of coordination and cooperation between the two projects to avoid any potential obstacles when implementing joint initiatives.

MEETING WITH AUDITING TEAM

An entrance meeting was held on December 13, 2007 with USAID, Netham, and the auditing firm of Pricewaterhouse Coopers who will be conducting an audit of the project for the period of October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007. Field work on this audit will begin the first week of January.

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS) TRAINING

Netham took part in two USAID-organized GIS training sessions. The first session that was conducted on December 10, 2007, at the AMIDEAST Offices in Ramallah and the second was held in Tel Aviv on December 17, 2007.

3. SUMMARY OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES NEXT QUARTER

- Assist in developing the administrative and financial system at the SJC and follow-up on consultant report recommendations.
- Assist in conducting the SJC's Human Resource System.
- Follow-up on implementation of the Justice Sector National Plan with the Planning Unit at the MOJ.
- Carry out MOJ needs assessment.
- Continue assistance to Judicial Training Institute on the organizational structure and ICT capacity.
- Conduct follow-up of Criminal Registry report and conducting system analysis and design.
- Set-up the WAN and clocking system at the SJC and courts.
- Identify the needs of court administrators to assist in enhancing and building capacities of Administrators, Processors, Clerks, NP Officers, and Enforcement Officers.
- Continue the automation of workload at the Nablus and Ramallah Notary Public Departments.
- Continue working with the AG and PP to improve services provided to the public.
- Work with AG and PP Members to assist them in the establishment of the new Anti-Corruption Department.
- Working with the AG and PP members on reviewing the operational manuals and conduct training on them.
- Initiate the automation of the workload at the Criminal Enforcement Department at the PP.
- Initiate the automation of the workload at the Civil Enforcement Department at the courts.
- Conduct public outreach campaign on the judiciary.