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CHF International / West Bank and Gaza

## Empowering Palestinian Local Authorities (EPLA)

### 1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Report

30 September 2005- 31 December 2005

Cooperative Agreement # 294-A-00-05-00242-00

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*EPLA Signing Ceremony – CHF Country Director, Lana Abu Hijleh and Minister of LG, Dr. Khaled Al-Kawasmi*

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 29 September, 2005, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), signed Cooperative Agreement No. # 294-A-00-05-00242-00 awarding CHF International (CHF) the sum of \$21,000,000 to implement the **Empowering Palestinian Local Authorities (EPLA)** program in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The overall goal of the EPLA program is: **“to develop an enabling environment and operational framework for an effective, empowered and democratic local governance system in the WBG,”** in support of USAID’s vision of a sovereign, independent, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and dignity with Israel. Related to this goal, the overarching challenge is how to enable a functional, balanced and constructive relationship between the emerging Palestinian state and its sub-units which is premised upon – and captures the power of – local autonomy, democratic processes, transparency, and shared resources. Inherent in this goal is the necessity of both national and local perspectives to arrive at a consensus vision of how Palestinian governance will be structured for the long term.

USAID requested the EPLA team to prioritize LGUs that would give municipal elections on December 15, 2005 and in April/May 2006. In order to approve of such Rapid Response activities, USAID requested that CHF defer the Annual Implementation Plan and submit a Start-Up Work Plan for the first four months of the Program along with a separate Plan for the Indicative Expected Program Results.

The first quarterly report covers EPLA activities from the date of award, September 30, to December 31, 2005. During this period EPLA was officially launched, the program became established and rapid start-up activities began. This report covers activities as outlined in the 4-month Start-Up Workplan which was submitted to USAID on November 2, 2005 and activities that led to the initial results that were presented in the Indicative Expected Results Plan which was submitted to USAID on October 17, 2005.

The official launch of EPLA took place through an official Signing Ceremony on December 12, 2005 at the Grand Park hotel in Ramallah and was covered live on Al-Jazeera Television. The event was broadcasted for approximately 30 minutes and USAID was made highly visible through banners and logo placement. Over one hundred representatives from government ministries, the donor community, NGO's and the media were in attendance, including the Minister of Local Government, Dr. Khaled Al-Kawasmī. The launch, which was followed by a reception, was viewed as extremely successful.

The EPLA team conducted a workshop from December 13-14, 2005 on EPLA program goals and implementation in order to start-up the coordination and cooperation between MoLG and EPLA staff. The 2-day workshop was a huge success with all MoLG and EPLA team members jointly and actively participating in an event that was described by MoLG staff as a 'new and great experience'.

The EPLA team conducted meetings with the municipalities on the matters of site selections, community consultations, designs, and tendering processes. Selected ground breaking ceremonies for Rapid Response Activities took place for targeted LGUs which had not yet undergone elections. EPLA posters and calendars were distributed in seven cities.

Difficulties encountered included delays in establishing the EPLA office due to delayed construction and in obtaining appropriate waivers for the procurement of office furniture, computers and other equipment. The EPLA office was officially opened on January 15, 2005. Another significant obstacle that was encountered was the relay in travel of EPLA staff due to Israeli checkpoints. Travel of EPLA staff could only be facilitated through the use of yellow plated cars.

## 2.0 PROJECT ELEMENTS

### 2.1 Goals and Objectives:

#### Overall Goal:

The overall goal of the EPLA program is: **“to develop an enabling environment and operational framework for an effective, empowered and democratic local governance system in the WBG,”** in support of USAID’s vision of a sovereign, independent, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and dignity with Israel.

#### Objectives and Key Results:

**Objective 1:** Contribute to ongoing efforts to develop and articulate a Palestinian **vision, policies, an institutional framework and legal structures** for democratic local governance.

Under the National Component, the EPLA Team will:

- Strengthen the enabling environment for local democracy and develop a shared vision for decentralization through review, analysis and drafting of legislative and policy instruments and activities to address reform issues for a minimum of 12 laws, regulations and/or strategic review topics;
- Improve capacity of the MoLG, MoF and other ministries to manage decentralized operations through sponsorship of a minimum of four events on fiscal decentralization policies and review of strategic activities for the MoLG; and
- Improve consultation and planning processes between PA central and local authorities through facilitation of joint capacity building activities, and at least six coordination events each year.

**Objective 2:** Improve the **institutional capacity** of Palestinian **LGUs and regional units** such as JCSPD to more effectively and in a participatory manner: assess and prioritize needs; deliver and manage infrastructure and basic services; and implement integrated strategic planning processes.

Under the Local Component, the EPLA Team will:

- Improve democratic local governance through participation of community stakeholders (40% of whom are women) in LGU/JCSPD activities serving 130 communities;
- Enhance and improve the flow of information between community stakeholders and LGUs/JCSPD by facilitating over 160 program-wide monthly formal and informal meetings;
- Strengthen LGU/JCSPD strategic planning processes through development of 40 Strategic Development Frameworks and Action Plans and a 50% increase in private sector interventions in target communities and regional sites;
- Increase local and regional capacity to deliver services through implementation of over 120 infrastructure and service delivery projects benefiting 900,000 citizens; and
- Improve local and regional government management, financial and administrative structures through trainings and technical assistance for over 340 government employees at the local and regional levels.

#### 4-Month Start-up Work Plan:

##### **Assumptions:**

There are several assumptions made by the EPLA Team inherent within the Rapid Response Plan and in the planned start-up activities for the Core Program Areas and for Logistics and Administration.

- Decision makers in the Ministry of Local Government will accept that EPLA is the reliable partner in establishing participatory and transparent governance as a tool for efficient service delivery; and meetings will be smoothly arranged.
- Developing partnerships and working relations with Municipalities necessary for the implementation of the Rapid Response Plan and start up activities for the core program areas will progress relatively quickly and without complication.
- There will be no prolonged closures or armed activity in the project areas that will prevent EPLA staff, trainers, or contractors from traveling and reaching LGU buildings, work sites and training centers.
- Ongoing restrictions of movement in the West Bank and between the West Bank and Gaza (WBG) can seriously hamper the implementation of activities. Flexibility is required to adapt to the continuously changing program environment.
- Willingness and ability to financially contribute to sustainable public services will remain above critical levels.
- Sufficient numbers of local private companies will rapidly respond to EPLA calls for tenders; and vetting procedures will be rapidly completed.
- US source and origin commodities will be available for purchase; or USAID waivers will be obtained quickly.
- Donor funded programs will work in a joint and constructive manner towards a unified democratic governance model throughout WBG.

##### **Rapid Response Activities:**

- Selection of Beneficiary Communities
- Fast-track Projects
- Signing MOUs
- Small-scale Construction and Supply Projects in Selected Communities
- Labor Intensive Municipal Infrastructure Improvements
- Reactivation of Municipal Contacts
- Coordination with OTI

##### **EPLA Long-term Activities:**

- National:
  - First Policy Reform Prioritization Workshop
  - EPLA Team Policy Reform Candidates
  - Formalize Operational Relationship for Coordinating with MoLG
  - Document LGU Infrastructure Management Capacity-Building Needs
  - Identify Capacity-Building Needs of MoLG Projects Office Staff
  - Hold Meetings with the Director General of Reform (MoLG) and Minister MoLG
  - Request Governance Documents from MoLG and MoF
  - Meet with Key Personnel of other PA Ministries

- Local Level Institutional Capacity Building:
  - Finalize Selection Criteria and Initiate Application Process
  - Review and Adapt Methodologies and Tools
  - Regional Meetings with MoLG District Offices

### 3.0 EPLA ACHIEVEMENTS – QUARTER 1

#### 3.1 Administrative and Logistical Start-Up

##### Staffing and Office Establishment:

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005, all key personnel were informed that EPLA had been awarded to CHF. The COP, Henri Disselkoen arrived at CHF's CRO to begin implementation. The Planning & Democratic Governance Specialist began in Gaza on October 1, 2005. EPLA's Senior Technical Advisor, Dr. Kenn Ellison arrived on 15 October, 2005. Recruitment for all other positions began immediately utilizing a competitive process and continued through December whereby all senior team members had been identified and hired. Job descriptions for the two ARD positions were prepared in December and are expected to be filled in February.

Contract negotiations were finalized with landlords for EPLA offices in Gaza and Ramallah during the period of October 1-15, 2005. Tenders for equipment were completed, offers evaluated and suppliers identified in November. Difficulties encountered included delays in establishing the Ramallah EPLA office due to obtaining appropriate waivers for the procurement of office furniture, computers and other equipment. The EPLA office in Ramallah was officially opened on January 15, 2005. EPLA's Gaza office was opened shortly after. Contract negotiations for the Bethlehem office were concluded in November. The Nablus office was still under selection per December 31 (lease contract was signed in January 2006). The EPLA bank account was opened on October 23, 2005.

##### EPLA Launch:



FPI A Launch Signing Ceremony Ramallah December 12 2005 Above: Minister of Local Government – Dr. Khaled Al-Dawasmi and FPI A CTO –

The official EPLA Launch Signing Ceremony took place on December 12, 2005 where official MOUs were signed between USAID, CHF, the MoLG and selected municipalities. 85 representatives from relevant Ministries, municipalities, the Donor community, the NGO community and the media were in attendance. USAID and the MoLG signed an MOU to show their commitment to creating an enabling environment for democratic governance and their desire to build the capacity of the national and local levels to be able to govern in a more decentralized and effective manner. CHF signed an MOU with the MoLG to implement the EPLA program. CHF also signed an MOU with Jenin and Nablus municipalities for the Rapid Response activities, including community outreach. Many representatives from Gaza were not able to travel to the West Bank, therefore a second ceremony in Gaza will be organized shortly. This highly successful event was covered live for approx. 30 minutes on Al-Jazeera (a copy of the DVD has been included in the hard copy sent to USAID and CHF HQ).



EPLA Launch Signing Ceremony, Ramallah – December 12, 2005. Above, CHF Country Director – Lana Abu-Hijleh, Minister of LG – Dr. Khaled Kawasmi, and EPLA CTO – Samah Khoury.

### Visits:

In early December 2005, EPLA's COP – Henri Disselkoen, CHF WBG's County Director – Lana Abu Hijleh, visited CHF HQ in Silver Spring. Productive meetings were held with senior and program management, regional directors, business development managers and finance and administration managers. These meetings were viewed as essential to ensure awareness and targeted support of EPLA's activities.

CHF International's Chairman of the Board, Mr. Don McCreary, visited the West Bank from 4-7 December 2005. Despite being unable to visit Gaza due to Erez crossing restrictions, the visit was successful in promoting CHF's activities and particularly the new EPLA program including meetings with Ministers and community members.

### Expected Results, 4-Month Workplan and AIP:

CHF submitted the Expected Program Results (EPR) to USAID on October 17, 2005. The 4-month Workplan was submitted on November 2, 2005. The AIP is under preparation. Throughout the

preparation process, the EPLA team has remained in regular communication with USAID regarding program direction and the ever-evolving situation on the ground including the impact of both the recent municipal and parliamentary elections. The EPLA team was advised to keep the AIP as flexible as possible to be able to effectively adapt to new situations while still working towards achieving its objectives.

#### Coordination with EPLA Partners:

First meetings were held with Dr. Rami Abdelhadi, Director of CEP and ARD's OTI staff on 24 October, 2005. Throughout this quarter contracts were signed with CEP and ARD and cooperation and contacts have remained strong. EPLA's third partner BISAN, was undergoing a reorganization process therefore cooperation has yet to be further outlined.

#### Meetings with USAID:

The EPLA teams maintains frequent contact with its CTO, holds meetings with the Head of DG as required and has occasional meetings with the USAID Mission Director.

On October 7, 2005, a meeting was held with USAID's Head of Democracy and Governance (DG), Peter Wiebler, EPLA's CTO, Samah Khoury, CHF's Country Director and EPLA's COP. USAID suggested that EPLA focus on Rapid Response activities to work with LGU management and with communities that had not yet gone through municipal elections – even if the population size of the target cities was above the allowable average. It was agreed that EPLA would submit a Rapid Start-Up Work Plan covering the first four months (October-January) before the AIP would be submitted.

On October 26, 2005, an initial meeting to prepare for the memoranda of understanding between USAID and MoLG, as well as between CHF and MoLG, was held between USAID, EPLA and EPLA Team Partners. Those attending included USAID Mission Director – Jim Bever, Director of D&G – Peter Wiebler, EPLA CTO – Samah Khoury, Minister of LG – Dr. Khaled Al-Qawasmi, Director General of Reform – Mr. Abdel Kareem Sider, Director General of Projects – Mr. Hani Kayed, Advisor to the Minister – Ms. Samah Hamad and the EPLA team (CHF, ARD and CEP representatives).

Other significant meetings and specific contacts with USAID are as follows:

- Oct. 26, 2005 – USAID organized a workshop and partners meeting.
- Oct. 27, 2005 – EPLA's CTO sent the VAT exemption to the EPLA team.
- Dec. 14, 2005 – EPLA's CTO participated in EPLA-MoLG workshop.
- Dec. 16, 2005 – EPLA received USAID's waiver for source and origin for equipment and furniture, granted as of December 15.

#### Coordination with MoLG:

An introductory meeting with the MoLG took place on October 26, 2005 as described above. On Oct. 27, 2005 the MoLG provided a list of 7 LGUs that urgently needed highly visible infrastructure projects (all were for road paving) with a total value of approx. \$1 million. Visits were made to these sites throughout November and December. In coordination with all stakeholders, including USAID, some alternative municipalities were selected. One MoLG Districts office was added to supervise the implementation of projects in a cluster, as well as some localities in the North West Bank where CHF works with WFP. The types of projects changed from purely road paving to LGU projects with more community involvement for roads or other public infrastructure. (See Section 3.2 for more details).

## 3.2 Rapid Response Plan Activities

### Selection of Beneficiary Communities:

Following receipt of a list of 7 potential LGU's from the MoLG, the EPLA team contacted the municipalities to check urgency, visibility, support of the community and alternatives. EPLA's findings did not support the entire list of activities and as a result, EPLA coordinated with USAID to propose an alternative list. Site visits were made throughout November and a subsequent plan that included an additional 60 LGUs that may be used in the development of the AIP.

The EPLA Team is continuing the coordination with these LGUs in which Rapid Response activities have started or prepared: Jenin, Nablus, El Bireh, Hebron, Khan Younis, Qarara, Um Nasser, and small municipalities and village councils in the governorates of Jenin and Nablus: Beit Fourik, Zeita, Sabastia,



Jenin Rapid Response Activity – Road Repair

Jamma'een, Kufr Ra'l, Al-Yamoun, Marka, Sierees. In addition, the EPLA Team is coordinating with the MoLG's District's Office in Bethlehem Governorate the Rapid Response Activities in a cluster of five LGUs: Beit Sahur, Beit Jala, Bethlehem, Douha, and A'bayyat. In coordination with USAID, EPLA has worked on selecting 30 LGUs and 10 JCSPDs, as well as potential alternatives, as part of the AIP preparation. Over 60 LGUs have been visited and profiles prepared.



EPLA Team Meeting with Beit Sahour Mayor

In mid-December, the USAID CTO and three EPLA team members visited Beit Sahour municipality. They met with the municipal representatives, visited potential project sites, and discussed a high

investment income generating municipal project. Community consultations were held in Jenin, Nablus, Qarara, and Um Nasser. In Jenin, a workshop was held with stake holders and representatives from the neighborhood (City Center) in the presence of the Deputy-Minister. In Qarara, the ex-mayor (who stepped down to lead a Fatah campaign during the elections) and other officials organized a ceremony to celebrate the USAID funded rehabilitation of a neglected neighborhood where USAID recently financed the construction of a school under the PINE program (implemented by CHF's LIBERTY Team). In Um Nasser, community consultations were held by the EPLA Team. It was decided to propose to WFP to allocate 200 work-for-food program laborers who could conduct a rapid litter cleaning and collection program throughout the town in anticipation of the EPLA solid waste collection scheme. A meeting with the Hebron municipality was canceled due to Israeli imposed travel restrictions, these meetings were rescheduled for January 2006.

Tender evaluations were completed for Nablus, Qarara, Um Nasser, and the northern villages in Jenin and Nablus Governorate. Two award letters were signed for contractors in Qarara; purchase of materials and goods started in the northern Jenin and Nablus villages, as well as in Beit Sahour and Beit Jala.

Coordination continues with USAID, MoLG and some municipalities for fast track activities as well as core program issues. In December, the EPLA team completed mobilization and activities for the fast track project including design and tender documents. In total, CHF is working on 32 rapid response activities; in addition there is one planned rapid response activity Hebron project that was rescheduled because of travel restriction and the Ramallah activities were suspended because there were no appropriate projects that could be started before the municipal election in December. The El-Bireh activities were stalled due to municipal reorganization. The 33 activities are listed in Annex A.

#### Signing-MOUs:

MOUs have been signed between USAID and the MoLG, CHF and Jenin, CHF and Nablus municipalities. These have been attached as Annex B, C, and D respectively.

### **3.3 EPLA Long-term Activities**

#### *3.3.1 National Level*

#### First Policy Reform Prioritization Workshop:



EPLA Joint Planning Workshop, Ramallah – December 13-14, 2005.



A two-day workshop was held from December 13-14, 2005 at the Grand Park Hotel in Ramallah. Participants included representatives from EPLA, CHF, ARD, CEP and MoLG. The aim of the workshop was to develop strategy and implementation goals. The workshop was facilitated by Gary Forbes, who previously led the WB/G Decentralization Dialogue Workshops for ARD under the pre-Intifada project in this sector. The workshop was very well received, particularly by MoLG participants who viewed the exercise as a true effort to include them from the outset and allow them to contribute to the overall strategy. Sixteen EPLA team members, nine MoLG representatives, and the USAID CTO discussed the objectives for the three year program, as well as the required steps for the first year's implementation schedule.

The workshop not only brought the implementation partners together to reach consensus on the direction and objectives of the EPLA program, it also initiated the formulation of the Annual Implementation Plan that will be submitted to USAID around 1 February, 2006. The workshop was a huge success in terms of partnership building and the common conclusion that the EPLA objectives are 'doable' in this unique partnership where both the MoLG reps and the EPLA Team members consider each other as the 'Go To' to build the enabling environment for democratic governance.

### 3.3.2 Local Level Institutional Capacity Building

The EPLA Team visited over 60 LGUs to make profiles for possible future cooperation.

## 3.4 Visibility Activities



EPLA Visibility – Billboard in Gaza

EPLA distributed EPLA posters to all main cities of the WBG. The emphasis was placed on the role of citizens in the proper functioning of the LGUs. The publicity campaign shifted to the second phase in December after the contractor's designs were approved by CHF and USAID. Additionally 10,000 calendars with a similar message were printed and distributed in December as a build up to the municipal elections held on December 15, 2005.

EPLA's launch and Signing Ceremony received extensive television and print media coverage locally and regionally with the highlight being live coverage on Al-Jazeera. (Please see copy of DVD).

#### 4.0 DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

- The delay in receiving the waiver to procure office equipment delayed the ability to open the Program office in Ramallah by one month.
- Travel restrictions continue to hamper some program activities. Travel to Gaza by Palestinian staff was not possible.

#### 5.0 FINANCIAL

The financial reports are sent separately to USAID.