



Initiative to Enhance Civic Education Programs in Palestinian Schools Concludes



High Judicial Council Holds First Court Administration Conference



Inauguration of the Judicial Media Center



Renovation of the Qalqilya Courthouse



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

NETHAM RULE OF LAW PROJECT NEWSLETTER, VOL. 1 NO.6

Interview with Chief Justice, Farid Al-Jallad



Chief Justice, Farid Al-Jallad

Q. What are the future plans of the High Judicial Council?

A. Since the development of the judiciary strategic plan for the years 2008-2010 the High Judicial Council (HJC) has been working on implementing its plans in harmony with the strategic objectives as set by the strategy. Among these objectives are working on the protection of human rights and basic freedoms, achievement of rule of law, dissemination of legal information and facilitating public access to this information as well as the creation of an appropriate environment for litigation.

In this context, the judiciary will continue its efforts to achieve its objectives hoping that the High Judicial Council during the coming three years will construct special court compounds in Ramallah, Hebron and Tulkarem districts. The Judiciary will also be working to enhance the monitoring, supervision and management frameworks including the enhancement of the Judicial Inspection Department and provide it with the necessary resources for work. The HJC is giving priority to court administration and will work on enhancing court effectiveness in disposing cases and will ensure the enforcement of its decisions. Among other objectives the HJC will be working on developing and upgrading the court systems, developing a proper work environment in the courts, enhance its resources and upgrade staff qualifications through mechanisms set by the HJC strategy.

Q. How do you see the courts performance, and what is your opinion on what is said concerning the late disposition of cases before courts?

A. The problem of case backlog before the courts is noticeably decreasing; cases filed before the courts are being disposed of within a reasonable time. The historical accumulation of cases is also decreasing to a very large extent due to the efforts being made by the HJC. The annual report prepared by the Technical Office supports this information indicating that the first quarter of this year witnessed an increase in the disposition of cases with a percentage reaching 65% of the total filed cases. Indicators also show that there will be greater progress in this regard during the coming months of this year. The backlog of cases is more acute in the criminal cases rather than the civil cases as criminal cases are delayed for reasons that relate to external factors, such as the absence of witnesses or the difficulties regarding bringing defendants to the courts as well as many other difficulties. Nevertheless, the HJC continues to search for solutions in response to this problem and the statistics show the progress in this regard.

Among the biggest factors that will help with decreasing the work load in the future is a decision regarding traffic fines as they constituted a great load of the courts. According to the new procedures, traffic fines will be paid directly in the accredited banks without the need for a court decision as has been the practice. In another positive development, the number of conciliation court judges will be increased and others will be promoted to first instance and appeal court rank which will positively impact court performance.

Q. What do you think of the judicial training achievements and the Inspection Department?

A. There is no doubt that the Inspection Department has assumed the responsibility to upgrade the judiciary's performance, raise its capacity, and ensure its impartiality. The Judicial Inspection Department has developed an intensive program for judicial inspections and performed surprise inspections in conciliation, first instance and appeal courts. The intention behind these inspections is to follow up on the implementation of inspector feedback that was raised during their inspection visits and to discover to what extent the honorable judges and staff are dedicated to the proper application of the regulations and legal rules, each in their area of competence. The inspection visits also aim to explore the commitment of staff and judges to facilitate services provided to the public. The Inspection Department also performed many inspection visits, on a periodic basis, over courts according to a scheduled program to look at judges and staff attendance, their time management and performance.

Meanwhile the Training Department carried out many

Interview with the Deputy Minister of Justice Khalil Karaja Alrifaii

Khalil Karaja Alrifaii was appointed Deputy Minister of Justice in January 2010

Q. From your position as a Deputy Minister of Justice, how do you see prospects for cooperation with the Judicial Authority and efforts to maintain its independence?

A. The Ministry of Justice is first the protector of the independence of judges. This principle should not keep the judiciary away from public life in Palestine. That is why we look forward to real cooperation that is based on the law and the higher interest to achieve the government's document, "Palestine: Ending the Occupation and Establishment of the State." It is important that everyone know that no one can deny the other, and we have no other way but cooperation and integration.

Q. Do you foresee the Ministry of Justice as capable of leading a promising role in the justice sector programs taking into consideration its current status? And how do you evaluate its current status in this regard?

A. The presence of a number of projects and good ideas that exist in the Ministry, in addition to young staff, that is smart and full of enthusiasm to work and develop, there is a promising possibility to build the internal capacity of the Ministry to enable its role as an effective actor in the justice sector. After the Ministry began the process of advancement in a variety of areas, it is important to continue rebuilding its structure and support it with good staff to enable its role as an effective actor. Overall, I can say that we are working to enhance our ability to lead the justice sector to serve the independence of the judiciary and to raise the level of legal work in Palestine with the help of a number of specialists and with the support of the Netham Project in addition to civil society institutions. We expect to complete these efforts during the coming period.

Q. How would you see the role of the Deputy Minister of Justice in supporting the Ministry activities and in improving the efficiency of work within the Ministry?

A. The Deputy Minister is supervising the executive body of the Ministry of Justice, and this is a big responsibility. To do so, I conduct intensive coordination and consultation with the Minister of Justice to enhance the role of the Ministry and to motivate the staff to develop their ability in the service of the objectives to be achieved. In addition, I am a member of the High Judicial Council, and work to enhance the relationship between the Executive and the Judiciary, and I am working on the organization of the relationship between the two authorities to achieve integration,



Deputy Minister of Justice Khalil Karaja Alrifaii

cooperation and independence of judges and all of this within an institutional approach rather than individual initiatives.

Q. What are the programs and activities that are your priority at the current stage?

A. Mainly to develop the capacity of MOJ staff, and reformulation of the mechanisms of work in order to restore its identity to be a pioneer in the field of strengthening the Justice Sector. I believe that the institutionalization of work at the Ministry and its departments is not an easy job, but there is a strong will towards this end. We are also working on the development of all matters of justice and strengthening public services and the role of the Ministry in the area of human rights, developing departments at the Ministry and the Palestinian Judicial Institute (PJI), "Diwan alfatwa" and the National Justice Record and to implement the justice sector framework.

The programs that should be the focus of our work are as follows:

- Enhancing the justice services to be provided in all the Palestinian districts following the example of the Justice Record services.
- Establishing centers for Alternative Dispute Resolutions.
- Activating the role of the Executive Authority in the legislative process.
- Supporting the proper application of the rule of law principles especially on issues that concern the protection of human rights and enabling complaints by citizens as well as the inspection of reform and rehabilitation centers.
- Finally, I would like to say that the Ministry of Justice is arranging for a pioneer workshop that would serve to reformulate the Ministry's role and identity. This would help the Ministry develop its services and improve its capacity to contribute to the implementation of the government plan "Palestine: Ending Occupation and Establishing the State" and helping meanwhile to translate this plan into outputs that can be accessed through measurable indicators.

Ministry of Justice Expands Justice Records Services to Hebron



USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka, Minister of Justice Ali Khashan, Acting Governor of the Hebron district and the Mayor of Hebron during the opening ceremony of the Justice Records Office in Hebron

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ), with Netham's assistance, opened the Justice Records Office in Hebron. The opening ceremony took place on May 5, 2010 with the presence of the USAID Mission Director, the Acting Governor of the Hebron district, the Mayor of Hebron, and the Minister of Justice.

Minister of Justice Ali Khashan noted that the opening of the Justice Records Hebron Office comes as part of the Ministry's plan to reach all Palestinian territories and to provide citizens with professional services in all districts. He stated, "We will start today with Hebron, and we are ready and well prepared soon to start in Nablus in order to serve the West Bank's

south governorates." The Hebron governorate serves a population of approximately 700,000 citizens. All speakers at the event thanked USAID for its support to the judiciary and the Palestinian Authority.

Following the ribbon cutting, Minister Khashan issued the first non-conviction certificate to the Hebron Mayor and announced the commencement of services. The Justice Record – Hebron office will assist in serving citizens who reside in Hebron and the southern districts of the West Bank. Prior to opening of this office, citizens would have to travel almost 2 hours to come to Ramallah in order to have their non-conviction certificates issued.

First Court Administration Conference

High Judicial Council Holds First Court Administration Conference with USAID Support

Under the patronage of Chief Justice, Farid Jallad, the First Court Administration Conference was held in Bethlehem May 20-22 addressing "The Role of the Court Administration Department in Enhancing the Judiciary's Efficiency." Over 180 court administrators attending from across the West Bank. The opening ceremony was held with the participation of the Chief Justice, and USAID Mission Director, Howard Sumka. Both Jallad and Sumka commended the efforts of the new Court Administration Department which is playing a leading role in shaping and modernizing Palestinian court operations in order to develop clearer guidelines for court staff and judges, and ultimately offer better court services to the public.

During conference opening remarks, the Chief Justice noted that due to the efforts of court



USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka is recognized with a plaque of appreciation by Chief Justice Farid Jallad

administrators, case disposition increased in a percentage of 65% this year in comparison with 2009. The USAID Mission Director commented that enhancing the Palestinian justice sector is one of the key priorities to building the Palestinian state, and that the USAID is working in partnership with the High Judicial Council to strengthen the judicial system. At the conclusion of the opening ceremony, 80 court administrators were awarded certificates of appreciation.

Conference sessions focused on the Court Administration Department in terms of its authorities, duties and its role in the High Judicial Council as well as the role and responsibilities of key court figures including the Chief Diwan, and Chief Judge. Attendees also participated in role-playing sessions conducted to illustrate the ideal internal auditing procedures within the Enforcement Department. Two papers were also presented introducing the Quality Assurance Unit its function, importance, and addressing the difference between Quality Assurance and Judicial Inspection in addition to explaining the Monitoring and Evaluation System including internal auditing procedures and check lists. At the end of the conference, the participants were divided into three groups under the Court Administration Department team leadership and the head of the Personnel Division to discuss the activation of the Quality Assurance Unit. A concluding statement was drafted that included the conference results and recommendations.

During the Court Administration Conference both USAID and Netham were recognized with plaques of appreciation by the High Judicial Council for their continual support in developing and enhancing the Palestinian judiciary.



Chief Justice, USAID Mission Director, and the CAD Director award certificates of appreciation to court administrators

The Judicial Media Center

USAID-funded Netham Rule of Law Project Hosts the Inauguration Ceremony of the Judicial Media Center

On January 27, 2010 the Palestinian Chief Justice Farid Al-Jallad, USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka, the Director of the High Judicial Council (HJC) Media and Public Relations Department Majed Al-Arouri along with USAID Netham's Chief of Party Nabil Isifan attended the inauguration and ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly renovated HJC Judicial Media Center. Attendees also included HJC High Court Judges as well as the local media in addition to intern reporters from Netham grantee AMIN-Internews. The Civil Society Organization AMIN was awarded a grant from Netham valued at \$75,000, and the project aims at assisting in the creation of better cooperation between local media and judicial institutions and creating a group of reporters who are specialized in covering the judiciary. The project also aims to increase public awareness of rule of law and the judicial system in Palestine.

In his opening speech the Chief Justice thanked USAID and the Netham Rule of Law Project for all the assistance provided to the High Judicial Council departments and courts. He also stressed the importance of establishing the Judicial Media Center which will allow the media more accessible coverage of the judiciary and bring transparency and accountability of courts proceedings and judgments. In his opening remarks USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka expressed honor for participating

in the inauguration of the Judicial Media Center and spoke of the assistance that USAID is providing to Palestinians. The Mission Director also stressed the importance of establishing an independent Palestinian State through achieving three pillars including a strong economic sector, security, and rule of law. He highlighted the importance of establishing a Judicial Media Center in order to convey judicial information to the public and to ensure transparency which will enhance public trust in the judiciary.

The Director of the HJC Media and Public Relation Department Majed Al-Arouri noted the difficulties in establishing the Media and Public Relation Department since Palestine doesn't have a judicial media culture. But now with the assistance of Netham establishing both the HJC Media and Public Relation Department and the Judicial Media Center, a culture that understands the use of the media has become a reality. He also added that the center is a platform to ensure accurate judicial reporting and transparency of the courts.

The effort of upgrading and renovating the HJC Judicial Media Center was made possible by USAID-Netham Rule of Law Project. In addition to renovation work, Netham provided the Judicial Media Center with sofas, chairs, LCD TV and a satellite system. The High Judicial Council contributed computer tables and chairs.



Chief Justice Farid Jallad and USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka during ribbon cutting of the inauguration of the Judicial Media Center

USAID's Netham Rule of Law Project Supports the Renovation of the Qalqilya Courthouse

On March 18, 2010 Netham supported the inauguration of the newly renovated Qalqilya Courthouse with the attendance of over 250 officials. The Chief Justice, USAID Mission Director, Attorney General, Minister of Justice and Qalqilya Governor as well as court staff and judges, members of security services and the public took part in the ribbon cutting ceremony that kicked off the event.

In his opening speech Chief Justice Farid Al-Jallad stated that the reform of the judicial system is proceeding according to its strategic plan, pointing out that the justice sector institutions represented by the High Judicial Council, the Ministry of Justice and the Public Prosecution should work together in a complementary manner to support the judiciary and safeguard its independence and respect. The Chief Justice went on to emphasize that the High Judicial Council was looking forward to employing more judges, and recruiting competent administrative staff to meet all the needs of the departments as well as increasing cooperation with donor countries.

In his remarks, Qalqilya Governor Rabeeh Al-Khandaqji noted that the Palestinian Authority achievements have been significant particularly in the judicial sector which he stated "is at the heart of the stability of Palestinian society."

Governor Al-Khandaqji stressed that the public's trust in the judiciary has increased significantly even in cases of disputes with the Authority, judging by the volume of cases being heard in the courts. He also pointed out the positive role the Palestinian Civil Police has played in reinforcing this trust and hoped that the police's performance could be further developed.



Chief Justice Farid Jallad and USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka during ribbon cutting ceremony of the newly renovated Qalqilya courthouse

USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka emphasized that the American Government is committed to giving the Palestinian Judiciary special priority, pointing out the many improvements in the justice sector completed throughout the West Bank with USAID assistance.

For his part Attorney General Ahmad Al-Mghani, emphasized that the renovation of the Qalqilya Courthouse is just one of the many significant achievements of the High Judicial Council. He asserted the importance of cooperation and the complementary relationship with the High Judicial Council, the Palestinian Bar Association and the security sector which he described as the real support working to achieve justice. Al-Mghani also thanked all donors who contributed towards supporting the Palestinian Judiciary.

Minister of Justice Ali Khashan noted that the time has come to draw a new road map for justice and a better future between all justice sector institutions. The Minister pointed out the launching of the 'The Justice of the Future' program as well as 'The Justice Everywhere' program aiming at establishing court-compounds that will provide services to the public, which would also include an electronic link among the justice sector facilities aiming to resolve all logistical obstacles that have impeded development for some time. Khashan announced that the implementation of these programs has begun so that the future has already started and will continue to go on.

The event concluded with a tour of the court departments which were renovated through USAID's Netham Project. Netham assisted in renovating and upgrading the Notary Public, Civil Judgment and Notification Departments as well as the Central Archiving area in the Qalqilya Courthouse. This event was covered extensively on Wattan TV and Palestine TV, as well as by the local Palestinian newspapers and news agencies.



Chief Justice Farid Jallad during the opening ceremony of the Qalqilya Courthouse

Netham Sponsors Training of 7 First Instance Court Judges in Amman, Jordan



Chief Justice is recognized with a plaque of appreciation by the Director of the Jordanian Judicial Institute Judge Mansour Al Hadeed

In the framework of supporting the capacity of the High Judicial Council (HJC) in providing continuing education for judges, the USAID-funded Netham Project along with the HJC supported a Civil Case Management Training which took place in Amman Jordan. Seven First Instance Court judges traveled to Amman, Jordan on March 19, 2010 to take part in a two-week "Training of Trainers" program on Civil Case Management which was conducted at the Jordanian Judicial Institute by Jordanian judicial experts. The training was carried out by two Jordanian judges who addressed civil case management, civil procedures, notification procedures and management techniques.

During the training, participants were welcomed by the Jordanian Minister of Justice who assured them of the Kingdom's commitment in assisting the Palestinian Judiciary. The aim of the training was to enable the judges to improve efficiency, increase capacity, reduce case backlog and reduce case adjudication time in an effort to render quality justice in a timely manner without delays for litigants.

During the training the Chief Justice, the Director of the Palestinian Judicial Institute (PJI), Netham's Chief of Party and the Chief Court Administrator in the West Bank traveled to Amman, Jordan in order to participate in the graduation ceremony for the seven Palestinian judges who completed the two-week training. The seven First Instance Judges took part in the graduation ceremony and received graduation certificates for completing the training. During the ceremony the Chief Justice noted "the training provided an opportunity for the HJC and the PJI to build a mutual understanding and support regarding the training of Palestinian judges and was an opportunity to establish better cooperation which will allow the HJC and the PJI to build positive relations for the benefit of institutionalizing judicial training activities." In addition the training constituted an opportunity for the judiciary to reinforce its relationship with the Jordanian counterparts for future training possibilities.

Judge Imad Muswada who took part in the training program noted, "this specialized training course in Civil Case

Management has special importance since it enabled the Palestinian judges to learn from the Jordanian judicial experience which has a stable legal and judicial system. The lectures received from the Jordanian Judges succeeded in aiding the Palestinian judges with new scientific and judicial methods in understanding and analyzing legal texts enabling the judges to make court decisions based on the legal interruption of the law."

Judge Fadel Najajrah added "the training was of great benefit as many concepts were explained allowing us, the judges, to work together in changing the procedures followed in our courtrooms." He further stated, "the training provided an in-depth analytical way of explaining the legal texts which will lead us to unify the action of judges' procedures in West Bank courts."

Overall the Palestinian judges expressed their gratitude and thanked the Jordanian Judicial Institute and USAID for all the support and effort provided to conduct a successful training program and requested the continuation of this remarkable support. The judges stated their commitment to the training and expressed their respect for the quality of trainers and training management. The judges went on to state the training has strengthened their legal knowledge and expertise, while exposing them to new dimensions of critical thinking.

Following the training in Amman, Jordan, the same seven judges took part in a three-day Training of Trainers program that aimed to create capable judges that can serve as trainers in Civil Case Management who will in turn, train judges from various West Bank courts. A continuous training plan on civil case management procedures will be developed through the Training Department at the HJC in coordination with the Palestinian Judicial Institute.

Phase III of Court Administrators and Staff Training



Chief Justice Farid Jallad, Head of the Court Administration Department Judge Izat Al Ramini, USAID Democracy Specialist Jill Gulliksen, and Netham Chief of Party Nabil Isifan

Building the capacity of High Judicial Council (HJC) staff is a goal that the USAID-funded Netham Rule of Law Project has strived to achieve throughout the life of the project. To help attain this goal, Netham developed a training plan which aimed to strengthen court administrator's skills in management, planning, and quality assurance as well as enhancing communication skills in order to improve overall professional performance. The training also targeted teaching court administrators how to work professionally with the public in addition to introducing and training staff on new unified procedures so as to enable more efficient management of court cases and processes.

The Phase III Training Plan included training on Uniform Notification Procedures, Monitoring and Evaluation Skills, Communication and Customer Relations Skills, Personnel Management, and Unified Procedures for HJC court staff. The training targeted over individual 300 trainees throughout the West Bank and assisted in increasing the capacity of staff in the First Instance and Conciliation Courts, Notary Public, Civil Judgment, and Notification Departments.

Chief Justice, Farid Jallad launched the first session of the Phase III Training Plan for Court Administrators in Ramallah which addressed communication and customer relations skills for 45 Notification Department staff. In his opening speech the Chief Justice reiterated the importance of processing cases in front of the courts in order to decrease litigation time which will lead to an increase in public confidence of the Palestinian Judiciary. The Chief Justice also thanked USAID and Netham for its

continued support to the HJC and its institutions which is strengthening rule of law in Palestine.

The first session which took place on December 12, 2009 targeted 45 Notification Processors and aimed to increase the processors' ability to communicate with the courts' internal and external customers, thus enhancing services to the public. Notification Processors are responsible for delivering all court notices. The second training session was conducted on December 19, 2009 and targeted 44 Notifications Processors. The third, fourth and fifth sessions were held on 9, 16, 23 January 2010, at the Palestinian Judicial Institute (PJI) and focused on the practical training of the unified procedures in courts. Prior to developing these uniform procedures each court was operating with their systems and procedures confusing the public, litigants, and lawyers. The training targeted 80 employees of the First Instance, Conciliation Courts as well as the Notary Public Officers and Civil Judgment Officers. The sixth and seventh training sessions were held on January 30th and February 13th 2010, at the Palestinian Judicial Institute and focused on theoretical and practical training skills in management, planning and concepts of quality assurance that targeted a group of 50 Chief Clerks, Notary Public Officers, and Civil Judgment Officers in all the West Bank courts.

The last training sessions were held on February 20th and 27th 2010, and focused on training the processors on the unified procedures of the Notification Department. The training targeted 90 processors from courts across the West Bank. The HJC has noted that improving staff skills through this training has contributed to an enhancement in the quality of court services and better public services.

USAID Assists in Improving the Court's Civil Judgment Departments and Helps Courts Discover Budget Surplus

In 2008, the USAID-funded Netham Rule of Law Project piloted a program to help identify accumulated financial deposits at the Civil Judgment Departments in Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, Hebron, Bethlehem, Tulkarem, and Qalqilia. Each year, in the Civil Judgment Departments, hundreds of thousands of dollars in civil fines are paid at West Bank courts by litigants and deposited into bank accounts administered by the Civil Judgment Departments. These deposits may have been made in custody cases, in losses by companies in civil suites or a number of other cases. However, these departments often lack the necessary tools to monitor and administer the deposits, which can compromise transparency, cause delays in processing - and leave thousands of dollars unaccounted for. To tackle this pressing issue and encourage greater transparency, Netham provided technical assistance to the Civil Judgment Departments, which has helped to reshape the system and identify a budget surplus within the departments.

In order to strengthen the judgment of civil court decisions, Netham, in cooperation with the High Judicial Council (HJC) and the Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, Hebron, Bethlehem, Tulkarem, and Qalqilia Civil Judgment Departments, began identifying the accumulated financial deposits by reviewing the judgments of civil and criminal case files. In addition procedures were put in place to help with identifying the financial deposits being made which included a database for recording the amounts of deposits in each case file, allocating the bank account balances of each department, entering the information on the database by well trained Netham supported interns, performing auditing, conducting financial reconciliations, and finally analyzing the results. These procedures have revealed a surplus of \$460,000 that can be transferred to the public treasury from the Ramallah Civil



Report on administrative and financial deposits

Judgment Department. In Nablus and Jenin the result revealed \$180,000 which is surplus that can be transferred to the public treasury, in Hebron and Bethlehem the surplus revealed approximately \$ 45,000, and in Tulkarem and Qalqilia the surplus revealed approximately \$72,000.

Strengthening the mechanism of identifying accumulated financial deposits in each Civil Judgment Departments has been a goal of the Netham project. Developing this comprehensive system has brought transparency and accountability to the Civil Judgment Departments in addition to building the confidence of the public who pursue civil and criminal cases.

Initiative to Enhance Civic Education Programs in Palestinian Schools Concludes



USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka receiving a plaque of appreciation from Minister of Education Lamis Alami

The USAID-funded Netham Rule of Law Project developed a Civic Education Initiative to assist in improving and enhancing the way civic education is being taught in Palestinian schools in order to promote rule of law awareness to Palestinian youth. The Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented the program with direct cooperation from Netham. The civic education initiative began in January 2009 and concluded in February 2010.

At the close of this activity, a comprehensive review and evaluation report of Palestinian civic education text books for the grades 1-9 was conducted. The Review and Evaluation Report which was published by Netham details the findings and recommendations for improving and enhancing the civic education curriculum and programs which the MOE will use in reforming teaching methodologies of civic education. Netham also worked extensively with the Ministry of Education to develop and publish the Civic Education Reference Manual. The manual addresses civic education concepts, and other important topics such

as citizenship and the constitution as well as interactive exercises in teaching civic education in the classrooms. The Civic Education Reference Manual was used as a guide in the "Training of Trainers" session conducted for 43 civic education teachers who in turn trained 75 teachers throughout the West Bank. The aim of the training is to build the capacity of the teachers to teach civic education concepts that will be used in classrooms enabling students to learn civic education in a more interactive and interesting manner.

In addition Netham conducted the first ever Rule of Law Awareness Award and Creative Writing Competition Award.



Civic Education Reference Manual

The Rule of Law Awareness Award recognized five schools and four teachers for their exemplary efforts to raise awareness and promote rule of law in their communities. The Creative Writing Competition awarded fifty winners who submitted creative writing pieces, including short stories and plays focused on rule of law in the community,

democracy, and civic education.

Netham completed the Civic Education Initiative by conducting a closeout ceremony on February 11, 2010. Netham along with the Minister of Education and Higher Education Ms. Lamis Al Alami hosted the Civic Education closeout ceremony in Ramallah. Guests included the USAID Administrator's Special Assistant for the Middle East Mr. George Laudato, USAID Mission Director Dr. Howard Sumka, Chief Justice Farid Al Jallad, and officials representing judicial, legal, and educational sectors as well as the donor community, civil society organizations and media agencies.

During the ceremony, the Minister thanked all those who contributed to the success of this initiative especially MOE staff, Netham's Rule of Law Project and USAID. The Chief Justice in his speech stressed the importance of respecting rule of law and the positive impact it leaves on Palestinian society. He added that the High Judicial Council believes in the importance of enhancing civic

education which in turn enhances the citizen's knowledge of their rights and obligations. USAID Middle East Assistant Mr. George Laudato spoke of the positive role the Ministry of Education and Higher Education is playing in spreading and strengthening modern democratic concepts through enhancing civic education programs offered in Palestinian Schools.

At the end of the ceremony training certificates were awarded to 43 teachers who took part in the "Training of Trainers" session and appreciation certificates for five MOE trainers who co-trained during the training of trainer's course. In addition four MOE departments who worked closely with Netham in implementing the Civic Education Initiative were awarded laptops to enable them to continue their efforts in enhancing civic education. The ceremony concluded with the Minister of Education and Higher Education presenting a plaque of appreciation to USAID.



Chief Justice Farid Jallad in a speech during the Initiative's closeout ceremony

Educating Women of their Legal Rights



Women participating in awareness workshops

The Center for Women's Legal Research and Consulting (CWLRC) is an independent Palestinian civil society organization based in Gaza that focuses on educating Palestinian women on legal and social issues in order to help them attain equality, justice and democracy in Palestinian society.

In October 2009, CWLRC began implementing an eight-month grant agreement from the USAID-funded Netham Rule of Law Project. The grant focuses on the "Legal Protection of Vulnerable Women in the Gaza Strip." Through this grant, CWLRC has conducted intensive training for 12 young newly practicing lawyers-- among whom are 7 women. The 60-hour training aimed to empower the young lawyers with knowledge that will assist them in defending women's rights and specifically addressed gender, marriage, divorce, and inheritance issues in addition to Training of Trainers skills. This

group has in turn been actively engaged in conducting awareness workshops for women throughout the Gaza Strip.

CWLRC has also been engaged in conducting educational sessions for 155 law school students in order to increase their awareness of women's legal status in relation to international agreements and conventions. Additionally community meetings were held to introduce the project and assess women's needs in Gaza.

To help enhance and guide the lawyers' performance in the awareness workshops, CWLRC has published two legal publications on family law and international agreements. And, CWLRC has produced research papers drafted by young graduates on early marriage, divorce, the role of NGOs in supporting women, women in the labor force and the reality of women's legal education.

As part of the grant implementation plan, trained lawyers were involved in facilitating over 41 awareness workshops and led the discussions in these workshops which was intended to increase community awareness on women's legal status, women's rights in light of the current Palestinian domestic law and the international agreements mainly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Over 1700 citizens have participated in these workshops.

Rawia Basal, 27, a young lawyer who participated in various activities spoke about her experience: "It was my first time to leave home and engage in community activities after my graduation. My participation in the activities helped refine my personality and increased my knowledge of social issues generally and women's issues in particular. Being involved in this project has encouraged me to be more active with women's NGOs and I am now looking forward to participating in similar projects in the future."



Women participating in awareness workshops



Promoting Rule of Law Awareness among Children

A Netham grant to the National Society for Democracy and Law (NSDL) in Gaza addressing "Teaching School Students Rule of Law through Non-formal Activities" played a positive role in promoting the culture of rule of law to 160 school children ages 9-12 years as well as their families in the Gaza regions of Khan Younis and Rafah. Each NSDL Center in Rafah and Khan Younis was overseen by a coordinator and eight youth activators who received extensive training on how to teach children the concepts of rule of law through non-formal and interactive activities.

Through this grant, four days a week children took part in four creative and inspiring children's "corners" created by NSDL. The four corners addressed the themes of tolerance, entertainment and recreation, family dialogue, and supporting education. Students visited the four corners over a 104-day period.

Through the tolerance corner children participated in mock elections and became familiar with the election process and practices as well as understanding the role of a representative council, electoral campaigning and the voting process. NSDL activators noted that this experience enabled the children to truly understand and appreciate the democratic elections process. The voting process in the Khan Younis Center was repeated twice as two candidates received equal votes.

In the second corner focusing on "entertainment & recreation" children conducted several activities to highlight the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Women's Day. Activities included taking part in rule of law drawings, creative writing, songs, dancing and drama exercises.

One of the most influential corners was third corner addressing "family dialogue" where children initiated dialogue on a number of issues with their parents using the skills they learned during their participation in NSDL activities including the freedom to express their opinion and listening skills. During one of these sessions a young girl, Hanin Quttom, 11, from the Rafah Center was noted as having a difficult time concentrating. The center facilitators who received training under this grant discovered that Hanin was experiencing problems at home as she was responsible for all the housekeeping duties and caring of her younger brothers which negatively affected her confidence and school work.

Consequently, Hanin's mother was invited to the center in order to participate in the family dialogue corner. During the dialogue, which was attended by all children at the center, Hanin raised all her concerns regarding the burden of her household duties and addressed her problems with the help of other children who explained to her mother



Children participating in International Womens Day Activities

the Child Rights Convention. Hanin emotionally asked her mother about her right to education and her right to play. The mother broke down in tears and expressed her full understanding of her daughter's needs and promised she would work on alleviating these responsibilities and give her more time for study and play. Other parents took part in similar sessions.

The fourth corner focused on "supporting education" where the children receive educational support especially in English and math homework. This corner was particularly appreciated by school educators. One school principle sent a thank you letter to NSDL for the support they provide to children as one of the participants has notably improved his grades since his participation in the program. Families also expressed their gratitude to the center's coordinators and activators for positively assisting in improving their children's academic performance.

Overall, National Society for Democracy and Law demonstrated that teaching children their basic rights will empower and strengthen their self-esteem enabling them to serve as good citizens in the community. In addition NSDL was able to promote the concept of rule of law and teach children that understanding this concept will re-enforce a culture that respects the law.



Children participating in mock elections



Palestinian Children Learn About Rule of Law through Art and Drama



Chief Justice Farid Jallad, USAID Democracy Specialist Jill Gulliksen and Attorney General Ahmad Al-Mghani during ribbon cutting ceremony of the Young Artists Forum exhibition

An eight-month grant to Young Artists Forum (YAF) addressing "Conveying Law through Art" contributed to enhancing understanding of concepts of rule of law and public oversight, the right to a fair trial, equality and accountability before the law among children ages 12-15 in four under privileged areas in the Ramallah area including Al-Jalazoun Refugee Camp, Abu Shkheidem, Jifna and Qarawa Bani Zeid villages.

Ms. Iman Nijim, YAF's Executive Director stated that "this project is unique, as it is the first time where theory and practice are combined targeting such a sensitive age. We can notice the change, as children became more aware of their rights; they analyze, ask more questions and produce outstanding pieces."

The fine art trainer, Mr. Ayed Abu Arafah noted "During the workshops, I noticed that children use phrases related to their rights like 'It's my right to ...' which indicates an actual practice and understanding of the concepts learned that are attached to

images" he articulated.

One of the participants, Ayleen Qatameh commented: "I told my classmates about this program, and they wish they can attend too. I love nature, I usually draw flowers especially in the images related to the right to live in a clean environment" she added. Mr. Samer Kindah, one of the

site coordinators said that it was the first time that many children participated in extracurricular activities.

Another participant, Hassan Mohammad said: "I spent a joyful time and I also learned how to express my opinion and rights of movement, election and entertainment in addition to meeting new friends."

On May 10th, 2010 an opening ceremony was held at the Red Crescent Society where a display of 40 of the best art pieces produced by the students were exhibited in addition to a short drama presentation prepared by the children. The event was attended by His Excellency Chief Justice Farid Jallad, Attorney General Ahmad Mghani, USAID Democracy Specialist, Jill Gulliksen, civil society members, the press and other invited guests. The children's art work remained on display to the public at the Red Crescent Society from May 10th until May 12, 2010.



Art Piece from Exhibition

Palestinian Judges Express their Views on the Training of Trainers Program at the Jordanian Judicial Institute



Judge Imad Maswadeh

In light of my in depth observation of the performance of the Netham project, I must confirm that this project has played a key role in the supporting the Judiciary. Netham is committed to support the judiciary and has shown great awareness of the entire justice sector working environment. It is worth mentioning here the amazing progress made by the project in developing the Clerks Offices, Notary Public Offices, and Civil Judgment Departments in many courts which contributed to the creation of an ideal environment for the work and provided good services for the public. Official surveys support our position regarding the tangible progress achieved in court services as modernized by Netham project. Adding to that, Netham has been involved in facilitating and providing continuous training for the benefit of the supporting staff in courts which elevated the performance of this staff. My fellow judges share the same opinion. The training course offered to the judges had great impact on the performance of the judges in civil case management as well as the criminal case management, and the training material that was used in the training courses was of a great addition in enhancing the efficiency of judges. At the end of it, I really wish Netham and its remarkable team all the success to continue the support to the judiciary.



Judge Bashar Nimer

After concluding successfully the civil case management training in Jordan in March 2010 and gaining valuable information whether through the new methods we learned in legal analysis or other skills, it was necessary build up on this training by preparing the participants to acquire basic skills as trainers to enable them to transmit the knowledge to a vast number of First Instance and Conciliation Court judges. In my opinion and my fellow judges' opinion, Netham is considered as one of the best projects that served the Judicial Authority. The project provided distinguished support improved human resources and better public services. The project contributed to the development and modernization of the Notary Public Office in Ramallah and other locations as well as developing the notification system in Jenin court. All these interventions had a great impact on accelerating the disposing of cases before courts as the notifications system and the civil judgment departments in different courts have also been improved.



Judge Saed El Hamdallah

In continuation to the civil case management training that was held in Amman through Netham project, I can clearly see that the two training courses were of high quality whether in the subjects they addressed or the trainers who provided the trainings. The two training courses reflected the distinguished support provided by Netham in Palestine. I wouldn't be exaggerating if I say that the Netham project staff as well as its management are true supporters of the Palestinian judges and judiciary staff. We witnessed the upgrading of the Qalqilia Court following the renovation works conducted by Netham, and that included the Clerk's Offices, the Civil Judgment Departments and Notary Public Departments.



Judge Raed Assaf

The Training of Trainers program enabled me and the other judges to develop remarkable expertise in the field of communications and provided me with skills to transmit the knowledge I have acquired and to combine between theory and practice during trainings. The practical training provided us with methods of effective communication and presentation when training others. I believe that the training held in Amman, Jordan on civil case management was in need of a TOT training to enable us to transmit the expertise and knowledge we acquired. This training will allow us to pass on our experience to our colleagues in courts more efficiently.



Judge Bilal Abu Hantash

No Doubt that the training courses organized by the Netham project, whether in civil case management held in Amman Jordan, or the Training of Trainers held in Ramallah, has played an important role in fulfilling the needs of the participant judges. The selection of trainers played a role in the success of training courses and contributed to the fulfillment of its goals. I felt the great understanding and commitment of the Netham team, as well as the desire to provide every possible support to enhance the judiciary.

Netham's dedication can be read through the activities achieved in modernizing the Notary Public offices in Jenin, Ramallah, Qalqilia, the Civil Judgment Departments and many other activities that contributed to better service of the public

Judge Fadel Najajreh

Netham has played a pioneer role in following up the needs and requirements of the courts and fulfilling the goals of the judiciary in securing justice for citizens. Netham provided its support in an outstanding manner. Specifically, the Training of Trainers program constituted an opportunity for me personally to learn from the experiences of others and enabled me to perform as a good judge and a good trainer as well.



Judge Maher Zahaika

Through participating in the training courses organized by Netham project we fulfilled many needs especially on issues that concern the advancement of judges' capacities. The training also helped the participant to apply procedures in a unified form because the training materials that included practical applications stemmed out of actual problems that encounter judges in interpreting the procedures on a daily basis. Trainers were highly qualified in subjects they provided training in and always provided practical applications to enforce theory. The coordination and the facilitation of the training course reflected high professionalism of the organizers.



training activities including the continuous education program for first instance and conciliation judges that included important legal topics. We witness today unprecedented cooperation with the Palestinian Judicial Institute and we will continue to implement the training programs that were prepared by the training committee at the High Judicial Council for all judges given their different ranks. The training does not focus only on local issues but rather training activities are accomplished in cooperation with Arab judicial institutes such as Jordan and Yemen. The current training activities are responsive to our judicial needs and we have sufficient qualified resources that guarantee the continuation and implementation of planned training programs. We succeeded also to achieve joint coordination among all supporters of the judiciary to attain complementary efforts and to enhance our judicial capacities.

Q. What is your opinion regarding the Court Administration Department and the appointment of chief clerks to assist the judges in managing the courts?

A: Two and a half years ago, when the Palestinian Judicial Authority accomplished its strategy of work, it aimed principally to empower the Judicial Authority and improve and develop its financial and administrative performance. This was intended to parallel development with the technical performance of the Judiciary as well. The objective was clear and precise despite the fact that judiciary is originally designated to dispose litigations as the primary responsibility of this authority. Nevertheless, the administration of courts and the management of the Judicial Authority according to correct administrative and financial basis is considered a vital issue and therefore we gave it the appropriate attention since the adoption of the strategy.

There is no doubt that the Judicial Authority, according to its legal framework, articulates the establishment of judicial commissions consisting of both judges and staff who are considered as administrative staff and not judges. Those are supervised by the president of the court who is a judge. This combination reflects a logical interaction in the work between judges and other staff in the matter that encouraged the necessity to organize the relation between what is considered as technical judicial activities and administrative support. Therefore, this initiated the idea of establishing the Court Administration Department whose president is directly connected and under the authority of the High Judicial Council. The court administration is entitled to manage and supervise the technical and administrative divisions within the Judicial Authority drawing a clear line in the relationship between what is a technical and what is an administrative action. This has definitely created a positive environment in the courts where judges are now more involved with disposing cases rather than managing courts.

We are happy with the Judicial Authority accomplishments especially in the area of court administration, information technology and the recent upgrade of the court management software MIZAN 2 version.

Q. What do you think of the support provided by the Rule of Law – Netham Project in general?

A. The support provided by the Rule of Law Netham Project has definitely contributed to the development of the judiciary and successfully complemented other international donor efforts supporting the judiciary. The support has had a positive impact on the development of the Judicial Authority's performance in various aspects. We, at the High Judicial Council, are about to carry out an evaluation process to assess the impact of project support on the Judicial Authority and fulfilling the judiciary's objectives as well as examining best practices in utilizing the provided resources through this support.

The authors views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States

Agency for International Development

Contact Netham for more information at:

Tel: (02) 297 - 4516/7 Fax: (02) 297 - 2230 P.O. Box 4061

Email: netham@netham.net Al-Whaidi Building, Al-Nahda Street Ramallah

Netham is implemented by DPK Consulting, a division of ARD, Inc.