

# USAID/OTI West Bank and Gaza Field Report

June 2005

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## Program Description

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) program in the West Bank and Gaza, begun in June 2005, is designed to respond quickly and flexibly to priority Palestinian needs. The aim of the program is to promote good governance and youth empowerment.

OTI's objectives are to:

- Increase the ability of Palestinian national and local governments to respond to citizen needs.
- Increase the participation of youths in social, political and economic life.

OTI will provide in-kind grants to local Palestinian entities that:

- Support positive interaction and coordination among local government institutions, the central Palestinian Authority, local communities, and civil society organizations.
- Promote participatory decision-making at the community level.
- Engage Palestinian youths in activities that are constructive and improve their quality of life.
- Facilitate the flow of accurate information from multiple viewpoints.

Working with nongovernmental organizations, informal community groups, media entities, and national and local government officials whenever possible, OTI will identify and support critical initiatives that move the region along the continuum from conflict to peace. ARD Inc. will implement the \$10 million small-grants program and manage OTI offices in Ramallah, Hebron, Nablus, Gaza City and Jerusalem.

The OTI initiative will complement USAID's longer-term development objectives, with a special emphasis on work with youths and local government. The small-grants program will be closely coordinated with the Palestinian Authority. Small grants will range from \$10,000 to \$100,000 and will address the priority needs identified by local communities.

## Country Situation

**Israeli disengagement from Gaza and parts of the West Bank** – On June 6, 2004, Israel's cabinet approved a plan for disengagement from Palestinian areas in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. The Knesset endorsed the plan on Oct. 25, 2004. Attempts to delay disengagement have been overruled by Israel's highest courts and the disengagement is now scheduled to commence on Aug. 15, 2005. Negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian officials have been difficult, and many Israelis and Palestinians do not know what to expect during and after disengagement. Israelis opposed to the disengagement plan held several protests this month, including sporadic attempts to stop traffic on highways and block bulldozers from demolishing homes. One group supporting the settlers barricaded itself in a Gaza hotel for nearly 12 days. There are fears of mass violence and lawlessness with the advent of disengagement because many people worry that the Palestinian Authority currently lacks the capacity to control Gaza once Israeli soldiers and settlers finally depart.

**The security wall** – The Knesset has approved the quick completion of Israel's security wall through Jerusalem and has demanded it be finished by Sept. 1, 2005. When this section of wall is completed, about 55,000 Jerusalem Arabs from four Arab neighborhoods will find themselves on the Palestinian side of the fence, while 185,000 Arab residents of the city will remain on the Israeli side, as will the 30,000 Jewish residents of the nearby West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. The Palestinian Authority claims the wall is an attempt to unilaterally annex Palestinian land, and that it cuts off its citizens from schools, medical care and farmland. Israelis claim the wall has been successfully used to thwart Palestinian suicide bombers. The legal disputes regarding this barrier continue, and its

final demarcation remains unclear.

## USAID/OTI Highlights

### A. Grants Activity Summary

June marks the first month of OTI's West Bank and Gaza Initiative, being implemented with ARD.

Focus Area	Grants Cleared in June 2005	Estimated Budget for Cleared Grants June 2005	Total Grants Cleared Since June 2005	Total Grants Cleared Since June 2005
Civil Society Organization Support				
Youth Engagement	3	\$ 68,380	3	\$ 68,380
Community Impact Activities	2	\$ 34,900	2	\$ 34,900
Conflict Management				
Media				
Transparency/Good Governance	1	\$ 12,000	1	\$ 12,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>\$115,280</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>\$115,280</b>

### B. Indicators of Success

With the majority of ARD's staff already in place and with five field offices currently operational, OTI's engagement in the West Bank and Gaza is off to a very strong start.

### C. Program Appraisal

Based on years of experience in the West Bank and Gaza, ARD is well-positioned to run a fast-paced and quick-impact small-grants program. These grants will allow average Palestinians to experience an immediate positive impact as the Palestinian Authority takes control of Gaza and parts of the West Bank in the coming months. The challenge will be to target projects effectively and cooperate with Palestinian Authority officials most dedicated to ending the cycle of violence, while at the same time demonstrating concrete progress to Palestinian citizens.

### Next Steps/Immediate Priorities

In July, OTI West Bank and Gaza will:

- Continue to focus on grant opportunities to support a successful disengagement strategy for the people of Gaza.
- Make operational OTI's database in all five field offices.
- Coordinate with USAID's Democracy and Governance Division and the Youth Division on how OTI's grant activities can work with, and enhance, their long-term development goals.
- Continue developing a strategy that engages the Palestinian Authority fully in assisting Palestinians, and especially youths, at the community level.