

**The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy
MIFTAH**



EC NSA

Fostering Community Change in the OPT



Fostering Community Change in the occupied Palestinian territory

April 2010 – June 2011

Project Brief

(July 2010)

Background

More than seven years of escalated conflict in the West Bank and Gaza have led to a dramatic decline in Palestinian living standards and social conditions. Internal and external movement restrictions, limited control over natural resources, and reduced rates of employment and economic production are leading to the collapse of an already fragile economy, increased levels of poverty, and the gradual breakdown of social cohesion in communities in the oPt. These factors combined have together served to weaken the resilience of many Palestinians to respond to and engage in economic, social and political spheres. At the community level, the West Bank separation barrier construction and checkpoints are isolating thousands of people from their land, dividing communities and restricting access to essential services.

The capacity of Civil Society in marginalised regions of the West Bank to input into policy processes and affect change has been weakened at all levels by lack of organisational capacity, isolation from centralised political decision-makers and the scarcity of resources available to Non-State Actors (NSAs). In some cases individuals have taken the lead on community development initiatives however this has not resulted in consistent community development action.

Therefore Oxfam GB, UK, in partnership with MIFTAH, Pal Vision, Women Studies Centre and Ansar Centre, developed the project entitled “Fostering community change in oPt” based on situation analyses of six marginalized locations: four in the Jordan valley and two locations in Bethlehem area. The major problems that surfaced were the following:

1. Exclusion and disempowerment of young people and women within community and state decision-making processes
2. Weak CSO capacity into community and national development processes, as there are no formal mechanisms for consultation and dialogue between NSA and Local Government Units (LGUs)
3. Marginalized and fragmented populations are out of reach of mainstream services and resources and excluded from policy-making processes.

The project will facilitate the emergence of community-based participatory mechanisms for overseeing development projects, through representative committee structures of LGUs, CBOs, youth and women in the 6 identified communities. Awareness raising activities will be organised on citizen's rights, planning processes, identifying community development priorities, and developing community action plans. CBOs will be supported to facilitate open, democratic and participatory governance through providing funds for groups to take the lead on development projects they collectively identified. Community mobilisers will be encouraged to bridge, mediate and negotiate complementary roles between CBOs, LGUs and community members.

Main Goal

To strengthen the capacity of Palestinian civil society organisations, as a pre-condition for a more equitable, open and democratic society.

Objectives:

1. Empower communities in the oPt to actively participate in community development processes;
2. Raise awareness of Palestinian residence at local communities on Citizen Rights;
3. Improve the access to services in the West Bank through enhanced local governance;
4. Advocate among decision makers towards developing and providing policies that enhance local communities' development in the marginalized impoverished areas;
5. Empower the role of the LGU units through raising the stakeholders' capacities in participatory strategic planning and conflict resolution;
6. Promote effective networking among the Ministry of Local Governance, related ministries, civil society organizations and CBOs, to actively respond to the local communities' needs and demands.

Target group includes

Palestinians residing in the 6 targeted **communities in the West Bank**, which include the western villages of Bethlehem (Walajeh, Jaba'a,) and The Jordan Valley (Fasayel, Jeftlek, Zbedat, 'Oja), including

- Members of the LGUs
- CBOs (Community Based organizations)
- Youth and women sectors in the 6 target communities.

Activities

- **Formation/strengthening the mechanisms of community committees-comprising local government, CBOs, youth and women- for overseeing development projects**

These committees will be developed through a process of consultation with village councils, CBOs and other community leaders (religious, women and youth) at the beginning of the action and ideally comprise representatives from all of the above. The committees will be supported to develop a statute and clear terms of reference outlining the roles and responsibilities of the committee in serving the needs of community. The committees will serve varying purposes depending on the needs of the target community.

However, its general role will consist of an oversight body for community prioritisation of development projects, administrator of the Community Development Fund and a representative body for facilitating donor and government networking.

- **Workshops with youth and women to raise awareness on citizen's rights and planning processes**
- **Publication of a citizen's awareness guide to increase knowledge of rights and responsibilities in coordination with local government**
- **Training on Participatory Governance targeting CBOs and Community Committees within the six target communities**
- **Training on Participatory Planning targeting local government officials, LGUs staff and members of community committees**
- **Training on Conflict Resolution techniques targeting local government staff and community committees**
- **Media launch of Citizen's Awareness Guide**

Time Frame

The project's activities will be carried out over a period of 15 months that commenced in April 2010.