

## Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People

### A New Life for the Village of Sebastia

Mr. Jose' Maria Ferre', the Consul General of Spain, Dr. Hussein Al-Araj, Deputy Minister of Local Government, and Mr. Timothy Rothermel, the Special Representative of the UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) marked the completion of Sebastia Rehabilitation Project on Tuesday, April 15, 2003. In addition to laying the cornerstone for the Ibn Sina Health Clinic, benefiting 7 villages, the ceremony included a visit to the affected sites in Sebastia, and a road connecting the villages of Sebastia and Al-Naqoor, currently under construction. The event was attended by the local village mayors and village council members.

Thanks to generous funds from the Government of Spain, and UNDP/PAPP's strong partnership with the Ministry of Local government, and a deep commitment to local and rural development, the village of Sebastia was infused with a new sense of life through the completion of the Sebastia Rehabilitation Project. In addition to the rehabilitation of the village's main square, café, and the Roman Royal Tombs, the project carried-out the paving of 80% of the village's internal roads, especially those leading to the Archeological sites, and the construction of 350m of retaining walls.

"In these difficult times, when our people are facing a relentless military occupation and brutal closures, the timing of this project is crucial" said Dr. Hussein Al-Araj, Deputy Minister of Local and Rural Development. He exclaimed: "this project is not only important because of the special stature of this town, which houses some of most historic sites in the territories, but also because of its timing: it is a loud statement that life must go on."

Mr. Jose' Maria Ferre', the Counsul General of Spain, paid a special tribute to partnership formed between his government, the Ministry of Local and Rural Development, the local village councils and municipalities, and the UNDP. In his statement, Mr. Ferre stated that this strong partnership "allows the Spanish Government to fulfill its responsibilities to more than 20 cities and villages within the occupied Palestinian territories."

Assuring the audience that the UNDP will continue its local and rural development work with diligence and renewed vigor, Mr. Tim Rothermel commended the people of Sebastia and UNDP staff for all of their hard work in this very important historic town.

The Support to Local Authorities Project aims at strengthening the institutions of selected rural areas in the West Bank through the implementation of infrastructure projects. This phase (Phase III) of the project is mainly targeted at the north-west villages of the Nablus Governorate and includes three projects: The Sebastia Rehabilitation Project (US\$250,000), the Rehabilitation, Expansion, and Paving Project of the Sebastia – Al-Naqoor Road (US\$60,000), and The Ibn Sina Health Clinic Construction Project (US\$270,000), which will benefit a group of seven villages in the northwest of Nablus Governorate.

Since its inception in 1999, the Project has worked in three phases in over 20 villages in the Jenin, Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nablus and Ramallah districts and has disbursed close to \$1 million funded by the Spanish Agency for International Corporation.

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