

RECOMMENDATION 16

Canada should ensure that its humanitarian and development assistance activities in the Palestinian territories make the maximum contribution to meeting human needs priorities while promoting peaceful and pluralistic solutions to the conflict.

Canada has a long-standing commitment to regional stability and development in the Middle East. Canada recognizes the strong connection between stability and peace, poverty and the situation of the Palestinian refugees. Without stability and security, poverty cannot be reduced in a sustainable way, and a just solution to the problem of the refugees is fundamental to achieving a comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East. The continuing plight of the Palestinian refugees displaced by the Arab-Israeli conflict is among the most important and most complex issues to be addressed by the Middle East Peace Process.

The Government is responding to the immediate needs of Palestinian refugees in the region, but it also takes a longer-term view with projects oriented toward development. This includes building the capacity of local organizations and communities and investing in education.

A Family Reunification Project provided significant benefit to 149 Palestinian refugee families. Those families had been stranded on the Egyptian side of the newly drawn border following the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty (1979) and were separated from family members and the larger communities living in Rafah City in Gaza. The Government provided funding that enabled these families to build new houses in Rafah. The Government also facilitated the political and logistical negotiations that took place between the governments of Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinian Authority.

Working through UNRWA, the Government is also contributing to the upgrading of housing and infrastructure in the Neirab and Ein el-Tal refugee camps in Syria. The project will provide new or improved housing for 6,000 people and improved communal and commercial services for another 3,000 refugees.

Through Oxfam-Québec, the Government has helped communities in five refugee camps organize and build or revitalize community resources such as three libraries, a playground, and a women's centre, offering a variety of activities to children, youth, and women to promote creative expression, democratic practices, and understanding of self and the environment.

With the Government's support, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has assisted the municipality of Rafah in putting together a strategic plan for its long-term development with input from a wide variety of local groups. About half the population served by the municipality are refugees.

The Technical and Vocational Training Project for Palestinian women is developing two multipurpose centres in Gaza refugee camps (Jabalya and Nuseirat) to provide vocational training opportunities and social services for low-income and refugee women.

Through its scholarship fund for Palestinian women, the Government is helping refugee women