Conclusions and Recommendations – Toward Empowering Development

The 2004 Human Development Report analyzes the daily Palestinian reality and the roles of various external and internal factors in influencing (negatively and positively) the Palestinian political and development situation. This concluding chapter attempts to offer a realistic and practical vision—through a set of general and sector-specific recommendations—for what must be done in Palestine in order to emerge from the current state to achieve the goals of Palestinian society. These goals include freedom from all forms of tyranny and oppression by realizing the historical quest for independence and bringing about empowering development to rebuild society and enable the Palestinian people to take part in human civilization.
Introduction

The fragmented, disjointed geographical reality which Israel imposed on the Palestinian territories and then reinforced by building the Separation Wall has impacted Palestinian society at many levels. The lack of geographical contiguity has left its mark by weakening internal Palestinian affairs as well as Palestinian interaction with the outside world. It has also negatively affected the Palestinian social fabric of values, culture, and modes of conduct, which are not only linked to each other but also with collective Arab values and culture and the global human culture as well.

Internal and external causes precipitated these outcomes, together with structural flaws within institutions and uncoordinated development at all levels.

The internal causes consist of three main elements:

- **Lack of a holistic development vision**: There is a lack of clearly established and articulated Palestinian priorities within a comprehensive Palestinian development vision. Similarly, no effective coordination mechanism between the PNA and civil society organizations exists. The resulting administrative vacuum strengthened the donors' development agenda and political influence, and increased the dependence of civil society organizations on donor funding and expertise. The absence of the rule of law, procedural transparency, and democratic systems, as well as in the absence of a culture supporting rotation of power within PNA institutions and civil society organizations contributed to the degradation and dependence of civil society.

- **The concept of development leadership has not taken root**: The PNA took a relatively negative view of civil society organizations in the early years of their governance. Most civil society organizations wanted to establish an integrated and democratic relationship with the PNA and to strengthen the bridges of trust between them. However, centralized control systems did not allow for full cooperation between the two sides. Further, the PNA's vacillations in its position towards the protection of civil society organizations and their involvement in decision-making reduced performance levels on both sides.

- **Mixed performance levels from civil society organizations**: Much of the NGO community has an unhealthy level of dependence on foreign donors for development and service project funding and in general, has failed to place financial self-reliance on their list of organizational priorities. Neglect of the concepts of self-sufficiency and sustainability has resulted in a loss of political independence and allowed donors to take control of the direction of Palestinian development. Poor coordination and cooperation at every level of civil society, the lack of a strategic development vision from the PNA, and a general disregard of the need for civil society organizations to regularly and objectively critique their own activities – all these factors contribute to mediocre performance levels across the board within this sector.

The external causes also consist of three main elements:

- **Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories**: The occupation is the single most important factor for wasted empowerment opportunities within Palestinian society. It prevents any carefully structured and purposeful development of society's potential, and inhibits any chance to freely formulate a meaningful list of national priorities.

- **The role of the donors**: The donor nations, or any agencies that provide...
the Palestinians with in-kind assistance, training, and other types of aid have played opposing roles—one positive and one negative. The positive role is one in which they provide funding for Palestinian projects, especially in the areas of skill development and capacity building. The negative role shows in the poor coordination between donor development programs and policies at the macro level, in the limited sensitivity they display toward Palestinian priorities and political aspirations, and in attempts by some donors to impose their political agenda through funding. As a result, the relationship between Palestinian society and the donor community is totally out of balance, and the Palestinians are in the weaker position. The Palestinians are all but forced to accept unfair political conditions as a prerequisite for development support. In short, the lack of parity in the current relationship between the Palestinian and the donors has the potential to negate any positive achievements of the development program over the long-term.

- **The United Nations Relief and Works Agency:** UNRWA plays an important role in empowering the Palestinians, especially refugees. Since its establishment, it has provided important services at the quantitative level in the fields of education, health, life skills development and vocational training. However, its actions at the qualitative level have more or less fostered a culture of dependency. In addition, UNRWA’s own reliance on donations increases the vulnerability of Palestinian society. If donors fall short of their commitments to UNRWA’s budget, UNRWA will become paralyzed. Given the weakness of the PNA and the inability of civil society to

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**Box 6-1: The Empowerment Approach: Awareness and Active Practice (Praxis)**

Many institutions have adopted the concept of empowerment as a basis for their programs. However, in most cases, they focus too heavily on empowerment of the individual, and lose sight of the need to create a comprehensive and inclusive vision of empowerment in order to truly develop the society as a whole. Empowerment is a concept with both individual and collective dimensions, which not only involves community awareness and education, but also the development of the social, economic, cultural, and political structures rooted in the surrounding environment. Empowerment can only be achieved in the context of a full merger between awareness and practice within an environment conducive to growth. All development programs and projects—whether they are at the stage of planning, implementation, or evaluation must adhere to this fundamental truth – awareness alone is not sufficient. All awareness-raising programs must emphasize that the end result of the empowerment process is the actual transformation of social structures (the market, international institutions, the law, the family) in order to enable individuals to practice what they have been made aware of or been trained in. Palestinian civic education programs are criticized for lack of an in-depth understanding of the nature of the surrounding conditions and of the need to create priorities and practical mechanisms for development, and thus for having spent millions of dollars without achieving any tangible benefit for society.
Box 6-2: The Role of UNRWA for Palestinian Refugees: Aid or Empowerment?

UNRWA provides three main types of services to more than 4.1 million Palestinian refugees, 38 percent of whom live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These services are: educational programs (comprising 58 percent of UNRWA’s budget and 72 percent of UNRWA employees), health programs (comprising 18 percent of the budget and 15 percent of employees), and relief and social services programs (comprising 9 percent of the budget and which benefit only 6 percent of all of the refugees). Some secondary programs exist as well, such as provision of loans and rehabilitation of camp infrastructure.

Many questions and conflicting positions have arisen regarding UNRWA and its role and means of operation. Every involved party attempts to depict UNRWA and its role in empowering and rehabilitating refugees from the vantage point of its own agenda. The most important perspectives are summarized as follows:

The refugees: The refugees view UNRWA as being of utmost importance from two angles: first, it brings international recognition to the chronic nature of the refugee problem and the many stateless Palestinians in refuge, and, second, because of the assistance it provides them in the fields of health, education, social services, and rehabilitation.

The refugees are highly sensitive to any attempt to reduce UNRWA services or abolish UNRWA’s role, which they see as a move to bring an end to the refugee issue and negate the right of return, eventually paving the way for them to be forced to assimilate into their host countries. Empowering the refugees and improving their living conditions is an issue that usually carries negative connotations among most refugees, who see it as a guise to force them to give up the right of return in exchange for assimilation and financial compensation.

Israel: Israel has two conflicting perspectives of UNRWA. On one hand, it views UNRWA as a stabilizing force and thinks the agency can facilitate assimilation of refugees into their host communities by creating career and housing opportunities for them. On the other hand, Israel accuses UNRWA of inciting the Palestinian refugees to hostile behavior against Israeli forces and claims that UNRWA actually encourages Palestinian resistance efforts.

The Israelis also maintain that hatred of Israel is taught in UNRWA-funded schools, and that UNRWA school administrators do not require that the concepts of tolerance and understanding are made part of the curriculum. Israel would like to see UNRWA function as an institution created by the international community to serve its own interests; to abolish the refugees’ dreams of return by making them comfortable and content within the host countries.

The host nations: UNRWA is in the good graces of all of the nations hosting the refugees. These nations see the presence of UNRWA as a reflection of international recognition that the refugee problem is ongoing. They demand that UNRWA’s work continue until the refugee issues are resolved. Further, UNRWA bears the burden of providing basic services to the Palestinian refugees in these nations.

The international position: Most nations believe that UNRWA helps ensure stability in the Middle East region, especially given its role in the absence of a political resolution to the refugee issue. These nations see UNRWA’s work with the refugees as diffusing potentially explosive social and political crises. UNRWA’s prestige in this capacity correlates directly to the size of the donations that these nations give the agency annually. These nations believe that UNRWA is service-oriented and apolitical, even though the agency’s funding is nothing more than a reflection of international will, tied at its core to political considerations.
perform UNRWA's tasks, Palestinian society's vulnerability to humanitarian or political disaster is dangerously heightened.

**Section One: Empowerment, From Reaction to Action**

The Palestinian people strive to rid themselves of occupation, to strengthen their national fabric, and to firmly establish their presence on Palestinian land. They strive to rid themselves of occupation, to strengthen their national fabric, and to firmly establish their presence on Palestinian land, rebuilding the Palestinian nation and society on sound, humanitarian foundations. Within this context, empowerment means strengthening the internal abilities of Palestinian society to regain its sovereignty over Palestinian land and to function as a developing, cohesive community with a distinct national identity, set of values and culture.

In addition, empowerment means preparing for viable and sustained interaction between the Palestinian people and their geographical surrounds, as well as activating and developing all of the energies and resources stored in the heart of society—with its individuals, institutions, and positive values—in the interest of accomplishing its historical quest for self-determination and building an independent state.

To achieve this, empowerment must be transformed from a defensive activity to a proactive means of sustaining the collective Palestinian will, to promote continued internal capacity building and to finally end the occupation of Palestine. In this framework, the tasks of development of society and its institutions and above all else the Palestinian people are the central tasks of empowerment. In summary, the conditions of the occupation, geographical division, and cultural and social fragmentation make empowerment a critical matter in the present Palestinian situation as well as in the future.

To bring the comprehensive concept of empowerment to fruition requires vision, a wise and legitimate leadership, well-guided institutions, and determination. Toward this end, the report offers a number of interconnected recommendations, which consolidate the findings presented in its chapters. The recommendations all reflect the guiding theme of the report – empowerment. It must be perfectly clear at this stage that virtually every sector of Palestinian society will benefit from further discussions and elaboration of the findings and conclusions offered in the PHDR. This report calls on all of society’s institutions to be guided by the empowerment approach as they develop future programs and to integrate their work within the community to deepen the collective impact of their work.

**Section Two: Empowerment in Government Institutions - Summary and Recommendations**

**6-2-1 The Empowerment Assets of Government Institutions**

Much of the data, reports, and practical experience point to the critical importance of the role of institutions in many of the complex functions of society – especially those tied to the processes of development, empowerment, emancipation, and liberation. The importance of government institutions (i.e., PNA institutions in the Palestinian case) in terms of empowerment stems from their control over a number of material and moral empowering assets that are not controlled by other institutions in the society. These include:

The Palestinian people strive to rid themselves of occupation, to strengthen their national fabric, and to firmly establish their presence on Palestinian land.
In contrast to the weak empowerment performance of most official institutions in confronting the difficult circumstances besetting the Palestinian territories, there is an important example that offers crucial empowerment lessons and experience: the experience of the Al-Aqsa Intifada Emergency Committee in the Nablus governorate. The Committee pioneered new methods to confront occupation practices. Its work highlights the power of joint efforts and coordination of community activities, and it succeeded in raising general readiness levels within society to combat challenges imposed by the occupation. This experience is summarized as follows:

- In response to a call from a host of social, economic, and political bodies, the Emergency Committee was formed in October 2000. It brought together representatives of 17 institutions operating in the city, taking care to include national, NGO, and private sector institutions and not governmental ministries—in an attempt to avoid the imposition of bureaucracy and centralized decision-making on the committee’s work.

- The impetus for forming this committee, other than the escalation of aggressive Israeli action, was the citizen’s belief that existing community support mechanisms were inadequate and ineffective. Lack of funds, failure to objectively identify the needs of citizens and needy families and a collection of groups simultaneously trying to assume responsibility for the tasks of support and assistance resulted in a general state of confusion and redundancy of work.

- The Community Action Center was formed, from which a group of task committees emerged, including: the Committee on Children, the Committee on Women, the Committee for Boycotting Israeli Goods, the Media Committee, and the Grassroots (or Neighborhood) Committees. These committees provided support and compensation to affected citizens, bridged the gap in health care services, set up employment projects, and coordinated with the rest of the governorates to ensure integration and to set down priorities with regards to support.

- To achieve these goals, eight specialized branch committees were formed, including: the Emergency Committee for Relief and Assistance Provision, the Emergency Health Committee, the Committee on Buildings and Damage Assessment, the Emergency Committee for Employing and Supporting Workers, the Agricultural Committee, the Road and Street Committee, the Committee on Projects and Resource Development, the Financial Committee, and the Media Committee. All of these committees were formed so that membership included national, NGO, and private sector institutions relevant to the committee’s work. The committees operated with professional management structures and under the principle of dividing work according to area of specialty and expertise.

- In general, the Intifada Emergency Committee achieved important community-based successes by supporting citizens and strengthening their resolve, and by mitigating the impact of the Israeli aggression measures. The Nablus experience was exemplary and carries important lessons for the empowerment process. The Palestinian people can learn from this model for action to develop mechanisms for confronting the occupation, standing firmly, and act directly and effectively in response to citizen’s needs.
The most important lesson learned from analysis of the initiatives incorporated within this report (in addition to others that were not included) is that they form the core of the development process.

Box 6-3: 101 Points of Light (Lessons Learnt)

By highlighting individual and group initiatives, the report team accomplished the following interrelated goals:

- To encourage the leaders of initiatives to continue their creative, innovative, and determined efforts by praising the initiatives and publishing their stories in the PHDR.

- To re-galvanize society, including community members possessing initiative, by creating a sense of optimism and ending the isolation among those taking initiative, who, over recent years, came to feel that they were alone in their struggle to change conditions and take positive action on behalf of society.

- To affirm that the Palestinian people are a living, proactive, creative people, who will not stand paralyzed before tragedy, but rather will become active and proactive, creating and innovating in spite of hardships. By doing so, we affirm the universality of Palestinian society, and its central goal of ending the occupation. We recognize the humanitarian process of resistance, boldly undertaken by this society and its concern for the preservation of social, institutional and cultural life.

- The most important lesson learned from analysis of the initiatives incorporated within this report (in addition to others that were not included) is that they form the core of the development process. If the structural factors limiting their capacity to become integrated, community-based, independent, and interactive efforts were removed, Palestinians would have a real opportunity to build a modern, developed society. Bringing these initiatives together to form a collective effort requires a human development vision and new institutional mechanisms to aggregate and coordinate efforts toward realizing the goals of Palestinian society.

- Decision-makers and planners can greatly benefit from these individual and group initiatives in all corners of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Close examination of these initiatives affirms that the expertise of local society—its individuals and groups—is a rich, time-tested resource for the realization of our national objectives.

Close examination of these initiatives affirms that the expertise of local society its individuals and groups is a rich, time-tested resource for the realization of our national objectives.

- **Resources:** Government institutions control all types of material, human, and symbolic resources needed for formulating and implementing the desired empowerment policies.

- **Power:** The fact that government organizations possess both resources and legitimacy embodies them with power: the power to create and amend laws which establish the choices available to society and influence their systems of values and culture. This power can be used to include or exclude social groups in the processes of development, as well as to marginalize or discriminate. Government institutions also have wide latitude in their role to enhance the quality of governance, to promote participation and creativity, and...
to encourage the practices of transparency and accountability in society as a whole.

- **Role in liberation and state-building:** The processes of comprehensive and sustained empowerment in Palestine are difficult and complex and, given that the tasks of liberation and state-building are intertwined, all resources must be mobilized to achieve the goals of ending the occupation and building the Palestinian state.

- **The importance of the principles of democracy:** Linking the empowerment process to government institutions is an early investment in the creation of a democratic state. This linkage brings the institutions themselves in touch with social reality, thereby enabling them to become more effective agents of change. This, in turn, bolsters their legitimacy and permits them to safeguard the process of the democratic transformation of society into the future.

**6-2-1 Conclusions and Recommendations**

- Contextual factors associated with the role and performance of PNA institutions, whether related to the internal environment (such as the political system, socio-economic status, and prevailing culture) or the external environment (such as Israel’s influence, international political developments, and donor funding), significantly affect the ability of Palestinian institutions to empower society. Internal environmental factors that significantly impact the empowerment process and that should be seriously addressed include: the interconnectedness of the task of national liberation and community development and, the related challenge of identifying appropriate goals and mechanisms that serve both ends. Several negative aspects in the Palestinian institutional arena must also be addressed, such as the centralized approach to decision-making and initiative-taking, poor planning, weak systems of transparency and accountability, situational application of the law, individualism at the expense of the law, institutionalization, an emphasis on personal gains at the expense of the public interest, and discouragement of professionalism in Palestinian institutions.

- Major external elements include the near total vulnerability to Israel (especially economically) and the climate of the international community turning against the Palestinian liberation struggle, as well as increased reliance on external assistance, resulting in dependency and lost ability to carry out independent, purposeful, and resolute planning in response to the people’s desires and right to independence and a decent life.

- Undoubtedly, the course of the past four years has exposed many weaknesses, flaws, and internal shortcomings within PNA institutions. Conditions have laid bare the weaknesses inherent in the structures, performance, visions, goals, and strategies of a number of these institutions. These weaknesses are reflected negatively in their policies, plans, programs, initiatives, modes of interaction with the public, and ability to actively respond to challenges. They greatly limit empowerment potential at the national and community levels. Of course, the impact of the occupation makes it impossible for any institution, sector, or group to work alone. Therefore, mechanisms to harmonize the efforts of governmental sectors and grassroots initiatives must be created in order to integrate efforts to strengthen the collective ability to endure and to resist.

The fact that government organizations possess both resources and legitimacy embodies them with power.

Linking the empowerment process to government institutions is an early investment in the creation of a democratic state.

The impact of the occupation makes it impossible for any institution, sector, or group to work alone.

The private sector possesses many types of skills and expertise that could be of benefit in managing many of the economic projects and activities currently managed by the PNA.
The nature of relations between the PNA and its institutions must be examined, as well as the way in which it interacts with the private sector and NGO community. The role of these sectors must be reinforced and optimal use made of their capacities, potentials, and resources. Building a new relationship based on partnership and balance between these parties would spare the PNA and its institutions from having to provide some services that NGOs can provide, perhaps more effectively and at lower cost. Among these, for example, are health services (first aid services) provided by organizations in the health field. Moreover, the private sector possesses many types of skills and expertise that could be of benefit in managing many of the economic projects and activities currently managed by the PNA.

- The work of institutions must be coordinated at the sector level, so as to prevent repetition and redundancy in projects and activities. It is also necessary to strengthen regional coordination, especially between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while attending to the contextual specifics of each region with the goal of encouraging local initiative.

- Although political institutions have been able to preserve their existence (in national and symbolic terms), they not adequately and effectively met the challenges posed to them at the program and policy level. They offer no vision or strategy to manage the many aspects of resistance to Israeli occupation, nor have they provided guidance on how to build communities from within in an effective and productive manner. Rather than assume the initiative, they often merely react to developments, especially those developments connected to the Intifada and its local and external consequences, causing the public to lose trust in them. The lack of a clear relationship between the presidency, the prime ministership, and the security agencies, and between all of these institutions and the Legislative Council has reduced the public's trust in all of them. Thus, they struggle with a reduced capacity to develop and manage empowering policies, initiatives, and legislation needed to strengthen people's steadfastness on the land in the face of Israeli occupation policies while at the same time responding effectively to various community needs.

- Service delivery institutions, especially in the fields of health care, education, social affairs, and labor, have demonstrated greater success than others in terms of sustaining their services under the present circumstances. However, work is still needed to increase the number and types of services and to expand their coverage (horizontally and vertically) in order to reach all areas, social groups, fields, and levels.

- In the health care field, the number of centers, clinics, and specialized health units must be increased, and the quality of their services improved, with a focus on rural areas. More medical specialists in all fields are required, especially in those areas in which expertise is completely lacking. Primary and preventive health care services are also in need of attention.

- Educational institutions must be revamped, especially in terms of the quality of the knowledge provided and the skill level of its labor force, Results-oriented strategies include: developing employment offices and creating and activating training programs.
prepare society to confront the challenges of unemployment and poverty and the host of social problems that stem from these issues. A comprehensive national strategy must be created to combat unemployment, poverty and the resulting decline in the quality of life for all Palestinian citizens. The decline in the quality of life shows in decreased levels of health and education services, the chaos and disorder that result from a drop in security levels, and a growing sense of futility and alienation among wide sectors of people who have been marginalized for years. In order to achieve results on the ground, precise, regular, and comprehensive data must be provided with regard to areas of high unemployment and economic sectors that have high job creation potential in order to effectively allocate resources. Some results-oriented strategies include: developing employment offices; creating and activating training programs; promulgating and implementing the Palestinian Employment Fund Draft Law; and refocusing attention on the agricultural sector through land reform and improved agricultural services, as well as activating the role of agricultural lending institutions and banks in providing support to farmers.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, in particular, must give more attention to development institutions engaged in long-term, sustainable initiatives—and not merely by providing relief and temporary services. It must pay more attention to the weaker segments of the population, especially children, women, and the elderly, by responding to their needs, supporting them, and protecting them emotionally, socially, and legally. It is critical that the initiatives adopted be inclusive, balanced, and long-term, so as to make it more likely that they will truly mitigate the occupation’s negative effects on Palestinians’ lives at present and in the future.

Local councils must be supported and strengthened in order to help them to reinforce the public’s resolve and confidence at the local and national levels and to better serve their constituents within the community. Supportive measures for the local councils include: continuing to hold free and fair elections and ending the policy of political appointment of their leadership, bringing a halt to unjustified interference by the central authority in their affairs, expanding the powers and mandates of local councils, and providing the financial and technical support necessary for local development and progress.

Coordination and cooperation between local councils and other relevant institutions is crucial, as it makes it possible for the local councils to provide their services in a beneficial and effective manner (in terms of quality, expenditure, and modes of delivery). Although instances of coordination and cooperation can be found in between some local councils, it is generally absent or limited to delivery of certain services, and fails to address general goals, plans, strategies, or financial and administrative considerations. Cooperation and coordination at the local level is especially important for Palestinians if they are to conserve their resources and successfully counter the destructive measures of the Israeli occupation.

Finally, it is clear that the empowerment process will remain moribund unless political institutions conduct a comprehensive reassessment and review of the Intifada’s consequences and implications for the future. The second Intifada brought one era (i.e., the Oslo era) entirely to an end and has advanced the Palestinians into a new era. This new era requires understanding and creative management as Palestinians work to learn political lessons, increase their level of self-reliance, reduce dependency on

Development initiatives must pay more attention to the weaker segments of the population, especially children, women, and the elderly.

Palestinian government must continue to hold free and fair elections and end the policy of political appointment.

The Palestinian people must restore and rebuild their society from within on rational and participatory bases.
Israel and reliance on the donor countries, and restore and rebuild their society from within on rational and participatory bases, focusing on the legal and institutional aspects as well as social and economic issues.

**Section Three: Empowerment and Civil Society Summary and Recommendations**

Although Palestinian civil society organizations have made great progress in terms of experience, activities, and delivery of various services, they still have work to do in order to become fully empowered themselves, and to facilitate the empowerment of Palestinian society. At present, the extent to which they rely on donor funding suggests that this is a situation they will not be able to extricate themselves from any time soon. In fact, the concern is that the level of dependence will actually grow if action is not taken. In this regard, civil society organizations face two types of problems: contextual problems that prevent them from delivering services to their constituents, and problems related to their inability to critique their own performance levels and the failure to work together on joint actions for the common good.

Therefore, emphasis must be placed on the practices of democracy and development. As two major mechanisms of empowerment, democracy and development are issues of utmost concern within Palestinian society. Democracy and development bring with them collective and individual empowerment through increased involvement in decision-making and monitoring decision implementation, and accountability. According to this criterion, the current level of performance of the vast majority of both modern and traditional institutions remains below the necessary and expected level.

**The main recommendations in this regard are:**

- Return attention to and reactivate Palestinian Liberation Organization institutions, and build a national leadership capable of strengthening communication between the Palestinian people, reinforcing the fabric of society, and ending the current fragmentation.

- Create advocacy groups composed of public interest groups, trade unions, chambers of commerce and social services providers to improve the general performance of government, especially in the interest of strengthening the independence of the judiciary and adherence to the rule of law.

- Guide and reinforce plurality; expand the frameworks of democracy, accountability, and transparency; and involve civil society organizations in the decision-making process.

- Encourage political movements and parties to improve their performance and ground that performance in firm democratic practice, doing away with power centered on the individual and internal conflicts so as to transcend politics and rebuild and modernize society.

- Lobby the PNA to cooperate with civil society organizations and to assume the role of organizer in the modernization process.

- Promote, enhance, and create linkages in the relationships between different social institutions on two levels. The first level is the relationship between traditional community institutions and modern civil society organizations, where links between them should take the direction of dialectic interaction leading to soundly guided modernization. The second level relates to promoting networking and
coordination among civil society organizations themselves on sector, inter-sector, and geographic bases in order to promote their role in development and empowerment.

- Foster a smooth transition from the ways of the past to modernization without disrupting the functions of society. This requires formulating a suitable transition policy based on coordinating the roles of the PNA and civil society organizations in accordance with a development perspective created and monitored by official and civil society organizations.

- Intensify training geared toward building the capacity of PNA institutions and civil society organizations at three levels:
  - First, equip civil society organizations with advanced capabilities in modern management such as identifying vision; determining general goals; developing strategies, programs, and budgets; monitoring and conducting impact assessment; promoting the use of feedback in reviewing strategies and programs; reporting; decision making; accountability; and transparency.
  - Second, encourage participation in crafting and updating a flexible development vision (officially and by NGOs) and lobbying to direct the funding from various sources in favor of the development vision and development activities that support perseverance as an issue of survival and political necessity.
  - Third, lobby donors to obtain their recognition and firm support of the Palestinian development vision.

Create advocacy groups composed of public interest groups, trade unions, chambers of commerce and social services providers to improve the general performance of government.

Implementation of the PHDR recommendations would maximize the Palestinian people’s potential to benefit from this assistance as they continue their efforts to achieve comprehensive, sustainable human development.

The lack of planning and coordination in managing the assistance has given the donors a wide margin and significant flexibility in setting expenditure priorities.

International assistance has achieved a degree of success in empowering some poor and marginalized groups.

Section Four: Empowerment and International Funding – Summary and Recommendations

In view of the information presented in this report, it is possible to derive a number of conclusions on the degree to which international assistance helps to hasten the Palestinian development process in general, and to empower Palestinian individuals and society as a whole. In order to mobilize assistance for empowerment of the individual and development of Palestinian society, a set of recommendations was formulated, which, if implemented, would maximize the Palestinian people’s potential to benefit from this assistance as they continue their efforts to achieve comprehensive, sustainable human development.

- Available data on international assistance indicate that it has been largely influenced, in terms of quantity and quality, by the extent of progress made in the peace process. The main objective of the donor community is to fund the peace process and create the conditions for its success. This concept was recently confirmed by a 2004 World Bank report assessing the economic implications of the Israeli disengagement plan from Gaza. The questions remain: What if the peace process, based on the assumption of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in accordance with United Nations resolutions, is ended? What options are available to the donors and the Palestinians in this case?

- Despite the relatively large size of international assistance to the Palestinian people, poor coordination of the planning, management and implementation of the programs and projects funded by this assistance has weakened their impact on beneficiaries. Systems established by the PNA institutions responsible for fiscal oversight and program management of donor funds are haphazard and overlapping and lack clear priorities and conditions for the disbursement of funds. These institutions are also put...
A permanent coordination council for international aid must be established.

Suitable mechanisms must be created to insure incorporation of the proposed coordination council’s development plans within the PNA’s annual general budget.

in the position of having to compete with the NGO community for donor funding, despite the dissimilarities between their respective missions and mandates.

These conditions have resulted in the squandering of large amounts of donor resources, as projects with similar goals and target groups are undertaken simultaneously by more than one organization with the funds of separate donors, with clear examples of redundancy to be found in the fields of human rights, women’s empowerment, democracy and reform. Ample capacity and need exists within civil society organizations and PNA institutions at all levels for donor projects in hundreds of areas, with makes the duplication of effort and redundancy of project types all the more regrettable. The weakly managed donor programs also absorb a good percentage of already scarce Palestinian resources, in terms of human and financial capital, thus diverting those resources from domestic development initiatives. In fact, coordination between donor agencies is little better than coordination within the Palestinian establishment.

● The lack of planning and coordination in managing the assistance, along with the intense competition for funding among most official institutions and NGOs, has given the donors a wide margin and significant flexibility in setting expenditure priorities to best fit their political, economic, and social agendas (rather than the agendas of Palestinian institutions). In this regard, the pursuit of self-interest is as prevalent among the donors as it is among Palestinian institutions.

● In spite of some achievements, particularly in the development of infrastructure and provision of basic social services made possible through international assistance, such assistance has not mitigated the negative effects of the political and security situation. Moreover, the international assistance has not improved levels of self-reliance within Palestinian society, nor has it significantly increased opportunities for self-development. For no matter how much aid money is given, or how well the Palestinians succeed in managing that money, it will never achieve its true goals of individual and collective empowerment until the root cause of social distress is removed permanently — the Israeli occupation.

● In spite of some instances of expanded community participation in the management of some assistance programs and projects, the number of these examples remains limited and must be considered the exception rather than the rule.

● International assistance has achieved a degree of success in empowering some poor and marginalized groups, as evidenced in the microfinance programs targeting women and limited income families, the emergency relief programs, and job creation projects. Unfortunately, however, the needs of these groups have still not been fully met, as the vast majority remains mired in the cycles of unemployment and poverty. In addition, these programs are criticized for failing to establish links between immediate relief efforts and longer-term development programs that contribute to sustainable empowerment.

The main recommendations to strengthen the impact of international funding are:

● Institutionalize the coordination of donor aid management among official PNA institutions and civil society organizations. A permanent coordination council governed by a clear development strategy and headed by the Ministry of Planning would be a significant first step. It membership would be drawn from other ministries directly involved with foreign
Community participation must be promoted in formulating policies and preparing development and emergency plans.

Donors, the private sector and the NGO community. The task of this council would be to develop regular and emergency plans for the effective implementation of programs funded by international aid and to construct a database of all the projects and programs underway or under consideration to prevent duplication and to achieve economies of scale.

The Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning need to create suitable mechanisms to ensure incorporation of the proposed coordination council’s development plans within the PNA’s annual general budget in order to transform these plans into concrete action synchronized with the PNA’s general financial policies and development directions.

Box 6-4: Success Factors for Community Initiatives (Lessons Learnt)

Careful examination of the successful initiatives presented in this report, as well as others that were studied, demonstrates that there are success factors behind these pioneering experiences, especially the group initiatives among them. The most important of these factors include:

- There is a collective effort, a unified purpose, distance from individual and special interest agendas and independence from centralized control of the project and its funding. These characteristics serve to combine energies and to create a situation wherein the public embraces the initiative.

- All involved institutions are committed to participation and cooperation.

- There is coordination and integration between the various bodies active on the governorate level, thereby preventing duplication of effort or funding and facilitating the fundraising process.

- Partisan political representation is avoided, and the focus is on bringing the various sectors together, thereby contributing to greater public acceptance of the initiative and its activities.

- There is continuous follow-up and assessment of the projects and programs that are implemented, helping to correct mistakes and reinforce the positive aspects of the experience.

- Those carrying out the initiatives have credibility as well as the social, economic, and political backing to enable them to perform as effective leaders.

- All project activities are documented and archived, in order to create a body of institutional experience and to create professional systems of organization and management.

- Local funding is available to complement foreign aid, in order to invest the local community more completely in the project.

Among the most important lessons learned through these experiences are:

- The importance of coordination between the various sectors (official, NGO, public, and private);

- The importance of balance between institutionalized responsibility and grassroots initiative, achieved by utilizing available community resources and expanding public involvement;

- The importance of working in the context of decentralized mechanisms and procedures, giving those in the field the authority to adapt their work as conditions require in order to increase the preparedness level and thus the capacity to better counter occupation measures; and,

- The paramount importance of relying on internal abilities rather than external support so as to improve performance and increase community readiness to strengthen the resistance and shore up the community-building process.
International assistance comes with no long-term guarantees.

The Palestinians must draw upon the strength and potential of their society in order to force an Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian land.

Professional leadership must possess the means of guidance and control and will be entrusted with the responsibility for modernization, planning and follow-up.

The most important proposals of this report include reinforcement of the concept and status of social movements, which form linkages between the individual, the group and the institution.

- In terms of coordination, the donors must create their own body to coordinate among them so as to avoid duplication of funding. The donor coordination council will work in tandem and under the oversight of the Palestinian national coordination council to manage the foreign aid program.

- PNA institutions must create strategic work plans for the implementation of international assistance that connect relief to development. It may be beneficial in this context to focus on infrastructure projects and projects involving investment in education, as both form the foundations of Palestinian development over the long term. It is also recommended to direct investment toward the agricultural and handicraft industries that serve the local markets and which have significant potential in terms of job creation under the current political conditions.

- Promote community participation in formulating policies and preparing development and emergency plans by assigning a larger role to the local councils in the management of international assistance projects, and establishing support committees for local councils to carry out this task. It is also essential to create the tools necessary to ensure wider grassroots and public involvement in developing the PNA’s draft general budget prior to its ratification by the Legislative Council. Civil society organizations may play a large participatory role in this regard, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and the Legislative Council.

- There is a need to support the small and micro loan programs that target limited income groups and owners of small businesses who are unable to secure credit from traditional lending programs offered through the banks. Development experts agree that well-managed microfinance programs contribute greatly to the long-term empowerment of the individual and to the collective development of society, and not merely to short-term income improvement. Microfinance has the potential to play an important role in the expanding informal economy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, particularly given that the informal economy has the capacity to absorb a considerable amount of surplus labor—and especially unskilled labor—in the local market.

- Finally, it should be reiterated that international assistance comes with no long-term guarantees: donors can reduce or eliminate their contributions at their own discretion and with little warning. For this reason, international assistance must not be made an integral component of the Palestinian development strategy. Rather, it must be viewed as a valuable yet unreliable resource — to be optimized while available even as Palestinians work to end their dependence on it.

Report Conclusion: Conditions and Essential Components of Empowerment

Confronting problems resulting from Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories means preventing deterioration of the fabric of the Palestinian society, preserving its national aspirations, and ensuring its survival. The Israeli occupation focuses its efforts on the fragmentation of Palestinian land and disintegration of the Palestinian social and cultural fabric as a means of controlling Palestinians’ lives. Therefore, the confrontation imposed on Palestinians in terms of their social unity, values, and behavior is determined by two factors: Israel’s technical and military supremacy, and Palestinian resistance in the comprehensive meaning of the term. Since parity in terms of power is not attainable in the foreseeable future, the Palestinians must draw upon the strength and potential of their society in order to force an Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian land.
All of this requires an agreed upon development perspective that can guide the performance of all society’s institutions, as well as a resolute, persistent, and professional leadership possessing the means of guidance and control and which is entrusted with the responsibility for modernization, planning, and follow-up. They must act within a framework of a general national accord between official institutions and civil society organizations as well as within a human and national development vision that has a clear purpose and direction and can ensure effective utilization of all society’s resources. This may be achieved through dialogue between the PNA, a wide network of civil society organizations, and the private sector within the context of a strategy of integrated, complementary action. The major elements of empowerment, as well as the most important proposals of this report, include reinforcement of the concept and status of “social movements,” which forms the linkages between the individual, the group, and the institution. Social movements must engage with a shared vision that embraces political change, with its wide range of influence, and social change, stressing the need for participation by all segments of society on the basis of equal rights and strengthening of the capacities of groups such as women, youth, and children, who are still subjected to rights discrimination under the law and within the prevailing culture.

Due to the changes wrought within Palestinian institutions by the consequences of the Intifada, along with the multiple, interconnected development priorities these institutions share, it is not easy to establish a clear governing framework based on precise development and empowerment principles for them to follow. This fact notwithstanding, an effort must be made to define a clear institutional vision of development and empowerment. For defining the vision remains a fundamental prerequisite for its success, along with elaborating its goals and its strategies. The comprehensive Palestinian development vision must reflect the aspirations of the people and in corporate internal and external developments—thereby rendering that vision sound, legitimate, and sustainable. This clearly defined vision (along with its goals and strategies) would increase the effectiveness of the work of our national institutions, and ensure coordination of that work with Palestinian development priorities, reducing or eliminating all together the redundancy, failures and false starts that have plagued development efforts for decades.

In order for Palestinian institutions to embrace an empowerment vision—and thereby initiate and manage empowerment processes within the specifics of the Palestinian context, taking into consideration both the national liberation and human development dimensions—the following important considerations must be taken into account:

- Empowerment has two parallel dimensions, national liberation and human growth. The first requires mobilization of resources and capacities to reinforce people’s endurance and enable them to stand firm on their land, to resist fragmentation policies imposed by the Israeli occupation, to create effective means of resistance not viewed as terrorism by the world community, and to successfully and effectively manage political negotiations with Israel. The second dimension is the human dimension, which requires mobilization of resources to create a climate conducive to the free exercise of individuals’ potential and skills, encouraging a spirit of initiative among...
Empowerment should be seen as a cumulative and sustainable process. The Palestinian development vision must give expression to the concerns and aspirations of the public.

Palestine is a state of institutions that are democratic, effective, and strive to serve and empower the Palestinian people.

Palestine is a peace-loving state whose people strive for peaceful coexistence.

Palestine strives to achieve justice and fairness among all social sectors, and actively endeavors to achieve equality for women and other marginalized groups, such as youth, workers, children, and persons with disabilities.

them, and protecting their basic rights and freedoms. Institutions must be supported by a broad and well-organized public base in order to maximize solidarity and to protect their achievements in the areas of empowerment and resistance.

- The empowerment vision should emanate from recognition of the negative effects of the Israeli occupation, while also seriously addressing our own internal obstacles and challenges.
- Ensuring the political will and necessary resources to convert development-empowerment visions into clear, defined goals.
- Addressing empowerment as both a concept and a system of processes built on a professional foundation that does not tolerate disorganization, confusion, internal conflicts, factionalism, or pressure from the donor agencies.
- Ensuring that the development agenda is compatible with priorities of Palestinian society by involving society and all its different sectors, and especially the private and NGO sectors—in setting the agenda. The empowerment process is an effort built on the common will of everyday people and reflecting a harmony of purpose, born of active public dialogue. This goes along with attending once more to the development role of Palestinian individuals, viewing them as active partners in the empowerment process—intellectually and practically—rather than powerless and visionless recipients of aid.
- The clear and straightforward communication of development and empowerment visions should not be limited to the higher management levels, but should reach the intermediate and lower levels as well.
- Empowerment should be seen as a cumulative and sustainable process that brings together institutions and organizations from every sector rather than as a temporary, separate, and independent process.

Palestine and Hope for the Future

Recognizing the importance of the recommendations above, the real starting point for empowerment and development in the Palestinian territories rests in the Palestinian people’s realization of self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign state. If this supreme goal were achieved, Palestinian society could move forward in its embrace and implementation of the following key elements of a “development constitution”:

- Palestine is for all Palestinians everywhere.
- The Palestinians work together in the interest of the national and development endeavor, both individually and through their institutions.
- Palestine is a state of institutions that are democratic, effective, and strive to serve and empower the Palestinian people.
- Palestine is a state which embraces the rule of law and its institutions.
- Palestine is a peace-loving state whose people strive for peaceful coexistence and work diligently to achieve peace in the region and world.
- Palestine, as a state and as a society, respects human rights, strives to achieve justice and fairness among all social sectors, and actively endeavors to achieve equality for women and other marginalized groups, such as youth, workers, children, and persons with disabilities.
Palestine is a state that respects international conventions, including those related to peace, armed conflict, social development, population, the child, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

Palestine, as a state and as a society, respects individual rights and freedoms, including freedom of thought, expression, press, and publication.

Palestine, as a state and as a society, respects the environment and serves as a global model in this field, preserving the rights of future generations to enjoy plentiful resources.

Palestine is a state that recognizes modernization as the path to advanced levels of development and works to use information technology as a means to achieve development, social justice, and economic revival.

Palestine is a holy land for all religions and the Palestinians work to serve as a model of inclusiveness and peaceful human coexistence within their society.

Palestine, as a state and as a society, believes in tolerance and nonviolence, and it strives to benefit from historical experience to promote a culture of nonviolence in all parts of the world and its educational curricula reflect this priority.

Palestine, as a state and as a society, is concerned with culture, and it strives to preserve the positive aspects of the national heritage and to promote a universal, humanitarian culture by encouraging the arts, theatre, and literature.

Palestine has a strong civil society, which continues to promote participation, accountability, and true representation for the marginalized groups in society.

Palestine has a private sector that contributes significantly to economic and social development and assumes its national and development responsibilities.

The Palestinians have a well-guided, responsible, and sincere leadership that inspires all segments of the population; strengthens and supports society in all its endeavors; works with its constituents on the development of shared vision, policies, plans, and real solutions; unifies Palestinians around national goals; and helps coordinate existing development efforts as well as to initiate and encourage new efforts.

The dream of a state and society in which all citizens may live with dignity, cooperation, responsibility, love and peace is attainable once the obstacles to achieving it are removed. A serious look at the human reality affirms that people's dreams are shared. All people strive for justice, happiness, and security at the personal, family, and community level. It is necessary to combine efforts and spread a climate of optimism based on positive actions on the ground, so that the Palestinians, in cooperation with the international community, can build a state that serves as a model for development, justice, and peace.