

HEALTH AND EMERGENCY RELIEF

In 2003 the worsening economy and mobility restrictions threatened the health of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Many families could no longer afford meat or fresh fruits and vegetables. Some survived on two meals a day of bread and tea. As a result, 20 percent of women suffered from anemia and 20 percent of children five years of age or younger from acute or chronic malnutrition. Meanwhile, closures and checkpoints prevented pregnant women from reaching hospitals and created high food prices and shortages of medicine.

During the year UPA responded to shortages of medicine by redoubling its in-kind donations. We sent over \$202,000 worth of medicine and supplies to the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees to distribute to hospitals in the West Bank experiencing shortages due to roadblocks and checkpoints. We also sent over \$212,000 worth of medicines and supplies to the Women's Union Hospital in Nablus, which lacked medicine because of restrictions on transportation coming into the city. The shipment helped keep normal services up and running despite blockades and curfews.

Our in-kind program was part of a broader effort in 2003 to help guarantee basic medical services for the poor. To this end, we continued to assist Palestinian hospitals and clinics in providing free services to low-income Palestinians. And through our Emergency Employment Generation Program we invested in the basic infrastructure that makes such services possible. In particular, in response to the nutrition crisis, we helped four child and maternal health clinics improve and expand their facilities. We tell the story of one of these clinics below.

Ard al-Insan Society

Khan Younis Branch

Established in 1984, the Ard al-Insan Society runs five clinics across Gaza that diagnose and treat children for asthma, malnutrition, and nutrition-related diseases. The society also car-



ries out programs to educate women about women's health issues, breast-feeding, and child nutrition.

In 2003, through our Emergency Employment Generation Program, UPA awarded the society a grant to finish the interior of the first floor of the society's branch in Khan Younis. Thanks to contributions from the community and efficient procurement of raw materials, the society was able to not only finish the main floor but also build an additional story, completing an area twice that of the original plan at no additional cost.

The project helped the society improve its services and become more self-sufficient. The new waiting room allows mothers and children to rest inside instead of having to crowd outside at the entryway. And because it now owns its own building, the society no longer has to spend six thousand dollars annually for rent, but can use the money on its programs. Moreover, because the building includes a hall, the society can now raise revenue by renting the hall to other organizations and can have its own regular public meetings without having to worry about rental expenses.

Thanks to the new space, the society has increased its services by 84 percent over the previous year. New registered cases have risen from 812 in 2002 to 1,536 in 2003, a 90 percent increase; and follow-up visits have risen from 5,200 to 9,234, a 78 percent increase.

In creating jobs, the project was also successful. It generated 3,322 workdays in an area of the Gaza Strip where unemployment is 50 percent and over 60 percent of families live under the poverty line of two dollars a day.



Women's Union Hospital Nablus

The Arab Women's Union Society in Nablus established the Women's Union Hospital in 1970 to treat the city's poor. The hospital has seventy-five beds and provides surgery, internal medicine, intensive care, obstetrics and gynecology, and neonatal care. The hospital

planned to open a pediatric department in 2003, but had to postpone the project because of the closures and curfews imposed on the city.

Instead, the hospital devoted its resources to providing medical care and emergency services to the city's poorest residents. The hospital's main challenge in 2003, as a result of the siege of Nablus, was to secure the medicines and supplies necessary for its daily operations. Fortunately, during a year of shortages that threatened the hospital's capacity to operate, UPA was able to ship it an in-kind donation of medicines and supplies worth over two hundred thousand dollars.

Patient's Friends Society Al-Ahli Hospital

Hebron

Opened by the Patient's Friends Society in 1995, al-Ahli Hospital has grown to become the main hospital for about five hundred thousand inhabitants in Hebron and the southern West Bank. It has a capacity of 130 beds, but plans to expand to 304 beds. By offering advanced medical and surgical services free of charge to low-income people, the hospital has greatly improved health care in the city and surrounding villages.



Among the important services it provides is a laboratory department specializing in blood and tissue analysis. The lab serves the needs of al-Ahli hospital itself and of the many surrounding area hospitals and clinics, which send samples to it for analysis and request blood supplies from its blood bank. In 2003 UPA supported the important services of this lab by helping it purchase needed medical equipment and supplies.

Palestinian Red Crescent Society

Lebanon

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) of Lebanon was established in 1968 to provide

medical and social services to poor Palestinians living in refugee camps in Lebanon. In addition to offering general medical care, it treats cancer and heart disease. Because of decreases in United Nations funding for refugees since 1990, its services are needed now more than ever.

In 1997 the society opened a kidney dialysis department as part of its clinic in the city of Akka. The department treats low-income and destitute patients for free. In 2003, UPA awarded PRCS's Akka clinic a grant for equipment and supplies to operate its kidney dialysis department.

Union of Health Care Committees

Since its founding in 1985, the Union of Health Care Committees (UHCC) has grown to include twenty-one medical centers throughout the West Bank and Gaza that offer everything from specialized medical services to care and rehabilitation for the disabled. UHCC also operates seven primary health care clinics that provide free medical services to the poor. In cooperation with village councils, local youth associations, vocational centers, and women's institutions, these clinics regularly send out mobile medical teams to remote rural areas to treat the sick and disabled, children, the elderly, and pregnant women.



In 2003, in response to the closures across the northern West Bank that have cut off rural areas from urban centers, UHCC expanded its program of mobile health clinics in the Nablus area. UPA helped UHCC in this effort with a grant to purchase equipment for a mobile clinic specializing in antenatal and postnatal care for women.