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## Palestinian Health Sector Reform and Development Project “The Flagship Project”

### Health Sector Reforms Improve Healthcare Equity and Access for Palestinians

The Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) is implementing ambitious reforms, overcoming hurdles to ensure the sustainable development of a fragmented health sector dependent on donor funding and characterized by low public confidence. The MoH faces the challenge of meeting the health needs of isolated communities, fostering civic engagement in national health policy development, and countering the increased demand for costly referrals abroad due to the unavailability of specialized care.



The USAID-funded \$86 million Palestinian Health Sector Reform and Development Project (Flagship Project) is partnering with the MoH to introduce an integrated, multi-sectoral approach to health sector reform and quality improvement. The Flagship Project is providing technical and supportive assistance in the Ministry’s drive to invigorate the health system. Through technical assistance and capacity strengthening interventions in leadership, management, financial management, continuing health education, and health administration, health professionals at the MoH are helping to drive and manage the reform of the public health care system. To ensure a holistic approach, the Project is also targeting select non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and select educational and professional institutions. By engaging all stakeholders in this process, the Project is helping to harmonize all Palestinian health actors behind a unified vision, empowering communities to advocate for government health sector reform and improve transparency, accountability, and democratic processes.

The Flagship Project is integrating cross-cutting reform throughout the public health system, strengthening primary health care clinics, improving hospital referral systems, developing a national health information system, and engaging with communities and the private sector to expand health care access to the poor. To effectively respond to the needs of the Ministry and other health partners, the Project is concentrating its technical assistance along four strategic focus areas:

### Key Focus Areas

#### **Strengthening Institutional Capacity & Professional Development— *Investing in People***

A key dynamic of the Flagship Project was the fostering of ownership of the reform process— with the MoH partnering in the actual design of the project by conducting a self assessment and creating its own institutional development plan. The Project is helping the MoH and NGOs improve quality of health care services by strengthening their institutional capacity to implement management, administration, and clinical reforms. Through improved governance and management practices, the MoH and NGO health facilities are promoting accountability and transparency, and providing better integrated and comprehensive care. Palestinian health professionals are better trained and are following unified guidelines and protocols, and the Project is improving their skills to enable them to provide better quality of care. By developing systems for continuing education, relicensing of professionals, fellowships, and visiting professorships, the Project is providing Palestinians health professionals with opportunities to achieve international standards of care.



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### **Health Information System— *Promoting Development and Innovation***

The creation of a dynamic national health information system in the public health sector will serve as an essential mechanism for gathering accurate data and empowering decision makers with a tool for reform, ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in quality care. Upon activation, the first implementation phase of the HIS will benefit 53 percent of the West Bank population and will handle the medical records of 1.2 million people. The HIS will foster adherence to key reform concepts, including transparency, governance, efficiency, and overall improvement of quality care, with implementation planned during 2010.

### **Palestine Medical Complex—*A Regional State of the Art Health Care Model for Reform***

The key objective in developing the Palestine Medical Complex (PMC) is to help build support and confidence amongst Palestinians for their health system through a state of the art integrated hospital facility. The PMC is comprised around four specialized wings and a blood center, integrated into one seamless health delivery system. As a center for excellence, the PMC will provide highly specialized services to the Palestinian population not currently available in the public health sector—such as pediatric cardiovascular surgery and advanced diagnostic services. Additionally, the PMC will serve as a teaching medical facility linked to the MoH, providing residency programs for medical graduates, undergraduate training, and internship opportunities. Furthermore, the Complex will strengthen private sector involvement in health, and encourage trade and investment in health.

### **Integrated, Multi-Sectoral Approach—*Invigorating Public Health***

To strengthen the continuum of care and quality of services delivered by MoH primary, secondary, and emergency service providers, the Project is providing technical assistance, capacity strengthening, grants, equipment and commodities to improve quality of MoH and NGO health care services that meet international standards. The Flagship Project’s integrated and multi-sectoral approach emphasizes the support of health professionals as leaders of change within their institutions; mobilizes communities; and promotes quality improvement of services by equipping professionals with skills, tools, systems, equipment, and supportive supervision.

The Champion Community Initiative is gaining momentum for change at the grass-roots level, with newly developed community-clinic committees prioritizing local public health needs and influencing public health planning in the community. The community champions are now engaged in dialogue with the MoH, strengthening sustainable linkages between communities and PHC clinics. Additionally, the community champions are utilizing behavior change communications developed by the MoH and Flagship to address the rapid growth of non- communicable diseases among the Palestinian population.



To support the work in the above focus areas, the Project is procuring essential medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and supplies— improving access to and quality of health care. The Project is collaborating with donors to avoid duplication and to ensure maximum utilization of services. In one example, the Flagship Project’s procurement and delivery of a new mammography machine has enabled the MoH to re-launch its diagnostic services for women at risk of breast cancer in the south West Bank.