

# SUPPORT TO THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The British Embassy contributed an amount of US\$ 60,896 to a UNDP project entitled "Support to the Enhancement of the Role of Religious Leaders in Socio-Economic Development". The initial project budget was US\$ 104,000. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of religious leaders and institutes by introducing a new development approach in the priorities of religious institutes. Recognising the richness of Syrian culture and religious life, the project will integrate some new ideas and methods into the priorities of religious institutions in order to enhance the institution's role in socio-economic and human development, by

focusing on issues related to childhood, education, energy, environment preservation, and poverty reduction.

The project started in late 2005 and will last for 2 years. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Awqaf involving religious leaders in universities and religious centres and institutions.

An annual national symposium was held with the participation of a number of religious leaders and representatives of religious institutions and organisations. Presentations included a number of research topics concerning the most significant problems facing progress and development. In

addition, a number of workshops were conducted concerning the historical role of religious leaders in progress and the best ways to practically activate this role. Research forums are taking place with the aim to identify, analyse and diagnose the most important misunderstanding and improper behaviour in society, and to come up with ways of dealing with them and highlight the role of religious leaders in reducing and tackling these issues.

The British Embassy is delighted to have this opportunity to work with Syria and UNDP on issues of mutual importance.

United Nations  
Development Programme



Taken from a UNDP article  
by Dominique Marr.  
Photo credit Ahmad Sheikhani

**"The Quran demands us to use our mind, not just to depend on ancient traditions, and take new ideas and adapt them to the present. Through our preaching we can encourage people to use their minds to think", states Suad Tershan, a dentist assistant, who teaches in the Abu Bakr Asadiq mosque in tybee, a suburb of Damascus. Ms. Tershan wishes to motivate people through her teaching, to help them become a lively part of their community and contribute to the development of their society.**

**Religious leaders have been becoming more involved in the development process in recent years. At the World**

**Peace Summit (2000) religious leaders of all persuasions met to explore ways in which they could co-operate with the United Nations and work in partnership to reduce conflict, poverty and environmental degradation. Two years later, the World Council of Religious Leaders was established in Bangkok, a permanent body creating a community of world religions and aiming to inspire, and promote the practice of, the human values that are shared by all religious traditions.**

**It's mission is not only to resolve conflict but also to address social and environmental problems of global importance.**