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United Nations Development Programme/ Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People

Country: State of Palestine

Donor: The Government of Switzerland, represented by the Federal Department
of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) Acting Through the Swiss Agency for Development and
Cooperation (SDC)

Project: Path to Economic Recovery: Facilitating Decent Jobs in the Gaza Strip



PAL10 – 116580
Completion Report
April 2023

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List of Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASDC	Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children
B	Baseline
BC	Block Chain
BTI	Business and Technology Incubator
CDI	Capacity Development Initiative
CSCE	Community Service and Continuing Education Center
GIS	Geographical Information System
JCP	Job Creation Program
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LRU	Limb Reconstruction Unit
M/F	Men / Females
MoEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MoNE	Ministry of National Economy
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
MTIT	Ministry of Technology and Information Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PFI	Palestine Federation of Industries
P	Progress
PalTrade	Palestine Trade Center
PMD	Project Management for Development
PITA	The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PwD	Persons with Disabilities
R&D	Research and Development
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
T	Target
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UCASTI	University College of Applied Sciences Technical Incubator
UNDP/PAPP	United Nations Development Programme / Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People
WHO	World Health Organization

I. Report Summary

Title of the Project: Path to Economic Recovery: Facilitating Decent Jobs in the Gaza Strip

(1) Donor: The Government of Switzerland, represented by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) Acting through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

(2) Project start date: July 2019

(3) Project budget: CHF **4,950,000** - US\$ 5,107,800

(4) Revenue Received: CHF **4,950,000** - US\$ 5,237,760

(5) Executing Agency: United Nations Development Programme / Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP)

(6) Period covered by the report: 01 July 2019 – 30 September 2022

(7) UNDP focal point:

Victor Munteanu, Head of Gaza Office, UNDP/PAPP, victor.munteanu@undp.org

(8) Palestinian counterparts:

Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Economy, Gaza Municipalities, Job Creation Programme, Islamic University of Gaza / IRADA Programme, Business and Technology Incubator (BTI), University College of Applied Sciences Technology Incubator (UCASTI), Palestinian Federation of Industries (PFI), PalTrade, Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA) and Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children.

II. Executive Summary

The completion report covers the activities conducted under the different components of the “Path to Economic Recovery: Facilitating Decent Jobs in the Gaza Strip” project, supported by SDC from 01 July 2019 until 30 September 2022. The project was implemented in the Gaza Strip, facilitating greater access to decent productive jobs, where it benefited **2,808** Palestinian youth (**1,771** males and **1,037** females) through training and employment. The beneficiaries have actively engaged in economic empowerment activities and improved their employability opportunities.

During the reporting period, the project provided support to **1,216** young professionals (**834** male and **382** females), including access to short-term dignified job opportunities, particularly in public health, municipal services, and the private sector. This included the placement of **180** (**48%** females) fresh graduate engineers in **18** municipalities in the Gaza Strip to develop Gaza’s commercial map. This initiative facilitated the development of digital platforms for **37,504** private enterprises, connecting them to prospective customers and creating digital commercial maps for Gaza’s private sector. At the beginning of 2021, the State of Palestine started using postal codes, to ease the delivery of goods, support e-commerce and assert its sovereignty. In the Gaza Strip, UNDP implemented the postal code for 25 Municipalities covering all the buildings in the Gaza Strip. These efforts were completed with surveying and coding a total achievement of 100% (**203,393** buildings).

UNDP applied the 3X6 approach to link short-term with medium-term job opportunities, where **three** startups were successfully established and became fully operational. The project also supported the provision of better public health services in the Gaza Strip by placing **311** (**37%** Females) healthcare professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses, and lab technicians) in **17** health facilities, as well as sustaining and improving the operation of the Limb Reconstruction Unit (LRU) at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis for 22 months.

Overall, UNDP, jointly with the Ministry of Labor and the Palestinian Federation of Industries, deployed **725** workers (**25%** Females and **5%** Persons with Disabilities) for a 2–3 month job placement to support **403** industrial entities.

Specialized training courses were conducted for **495** beneficiaries (**44%** females), including **309** young professionals and **186** persons with disabilities, to enhance their skills and employment prospects. Following targeted vocational training and employment placements, UNDP held several competitions among the participants, selecting and supporting the **23** most promising startups.

The project has also encouraged **1,097** youth (**40%** Females) to actively engage in entrepreneurial activities by providing specialized training and offering opportunities to validate 281 ideas in the pre-incubation stage as part of the business and technology incubators promotion initiative. UNDP has explored innovative opportunities by piloting technology transfer models in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning, Blockchain, and E-Commerce. The project assisted youth beneficiaries in converting their

innovative ideas into promising start-up businesses, whereas young entrepreneurs engaged in extensive capacity-building during the incubation stage. Subsequently, **123** start-ups, **7** R&D, **ten** student projects and **40** prototypes have been supported to launch their works in fabrication, construction, services, education, health, green economy, and agriculture.

The capacities of **25 SMEs**, affected by the hostilities in May 2021 and COVID-19, were strengthened, through provision of financial and technical support, to recover, sustain, and grow their businesses.

Two thematic evaluations assessed the results achieved by implementing Programme outputs, concluding that, overall, the Programme succeeded in attaining its objectives and efficiently dealing with unexpected challenges that the Gaza Strip had faced over the past few years, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and May 2021 hostilities.

Upon the completion of activities, **100%** of the total SDC contribution, received under the project, was disbursed in conformity with the agreed budget. Furthermore, the completion report provides an overview of the achievement towards identified targets under each output, followed by project risks, lessons learned, conclusions, and a way forward based on the field observations. Additionally, the report provides snapshots of beneficiaries' success stories, showcasing the transformative effects of the project.

III. Background

The state of Gaza's economy is brought into sharp focus by the unemployment rate: 46.6%, as recorded in the third quarter of 2022 by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)¹. Youth unemployment is even higher at nearly 62% and the unemployed now stay out of work for longer periods, compared to recent years. New shocks to the economy, associated with salary cutbacks compounded the long-term de-industrialization of Gaza, caused by the successive conflicts and the blockade. The residents of the Gaza Strip have become dependent on governmental and UNRWA health services, as the health system became overstretched – particularly over the last two years due to the high number of casualties arising from the "Great March of Return." With opportunities shrinking within Gaza, health workers, mainly qualified doctors, have been leaving the strip, resulting in a further weakening of the health system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to large-scale emergencies across the globe. Within Palestine, a state of emergency was declared in March 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the authorities have taken protective measures to contain the virus. An outbreak of COVID-19 in the Gaza Strip not only strained the already deteriorated healthcare system but has also contributed to a further worsening of the economy.

A new wave of hostilities hit Gaza between 10-21 May 2021 and were the gravest since 2014. It claimed the lives of 261 Palestinians and left over 2,200 injured. In addition to the tragic human losses, the escalation caused serious damage to vital civilian infrastructure, including housing, health and education facilities, commercial establishments, and

¹ [The Labour Force Survey Press Results of the Labour Force Survey Third Quarter \(July – September, 2022\) Round.](#)

productive assets, as well as roads, electricity lines and sewage networks. According to the Infrastructure Damage Assessment, commissioned by UNDP following the May 2021 hostilities, the overall damage and reconstruction costs for critical infrastructure across different sectors reached US\$ 108,278,756, including the costs of Building Forward Better (BFB). These new reconstruction costs are further deepening the funding gap for Gaza, adding up to the impact of previous bouts of hostilities. Also, UNDP has conducted an economic impact assessment that focused on the latest hostilities' impact on the private sector across key sectors of Gaza's economy, namely manufacturing, trade (wholesale and retail), services, as well as on private ICT facilities. The analysis of the impact found that 2,254 facilities were affected (with a total loss of US\$ 32,353,951), which encompasses damages to infrastructure, machinery, equipment, and furniture, as well as losses of raw materials and goods., 52% belong to the trade sector, 34% to the services sector, and 14% to the manufacturing sector. In addition, the field assessment teams visited 164 affected private ICT facilities with the total related value of damages and losses amounting to US\$ 8,878,805.

Against this background, UNDP, jointly with local partners have implemented the Path to Economic Recovery: Facilitating Decent Jobs in the Gaza Strip project, funded by the SDC, to ensure Palestinians have greater access to decent productive jobs, to respond to the public health needs while supporting the livelihoods of Gazans during these times of crisis. UNDP's resilience approach links short-term dignified jobs to long-term sustainable employment. This has been implemented through a combination of short, medium, and long-term job creation initiatives, management support to existing enterprises, and incubation of new enterprises, all designed to stimulate the Gazan economy and lead to further employment creation. The Programme supported Palestinian aspirations of moving away from aid dependency, focusing on building skills and capacities that respond to people's expectations and market needs.

The proposed approach for implementation provided opportunities for skilling and employment of youth, particularly females and people with disabilities in the Gaza Strip, by using entrepreneurship, incubators, vocational training, and onsite intensive skills development.

IV. Expected Outputs and Key Activities:

The project contributed to economic recovery and facilitated decent jobs through the achievements of the following outputs:

- **Output 1: Gazans have greater access to short-term dignified job opportunities in private and public sectors.**

Sustaining the SME's capacities in the short term for maintaining local production (particularly in response to the COVID-19 crisis)

- Deployed skilled workers for a proper and cost-effective operation of industrial entities.
- Provided personal protective equipment to workers.
- Introduced and support precautionary measures for industrial entities.

Strengthen the health system to ensure the State of Palestine is prepared for and can respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

- Placed healthcare professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses, lab technicians) in health facilities for 6-10 months. Included placement at the Limb Reconstruction Unit (LRU).
- Provided personal protective equipment to healthcare professionals.
- Trained healthcare professionals to prepare for and respond to the health crisis.

Upgrading the Geographical Information System including developing the Postal Code for all the buildings in the Gaza Strip.

- Upgraded the geographical information system for Abasan Al Jadedda, and Om Al Nasr municipalities.
- Developed Gaza Commercial Map through upgrading Municipalities' database and data collection by professional engineers.
- Developed Gaza Commercial Map through upgrading Municipalities' database and data collection by professional engineers.
- Offered employment opportunities suitable for unemployed young graduates (40% females) with full employment from three to five months.

- **Output 2: Youth and PwDs have improved capacities in technical and vocational education and training.**

- Built the capacities of youth and PwDs to support their access to the labor market through trainings, on the job market skills development, and socioeconomic transformation.
- Developed a training curriculum around modules that promote transformational change and certain vocational skills to link them to the market.
- Offered on-the-job training opportunities for three months.
- Establishment of start-ups (through grants).

- **Output 3: Young entrepreneurs have greater access to medium- and long-term job opportunities.**

- Developed the business acumen to focus on market-driven solutions by identifying real needs and problems in both local and international markets and participating in local and international trade events.
- Expanded the incubator networks through designing collaboration programs with external partners, remoted joint investment days with external accelerators, and capacity building for local mentors by international experts.
- Upgraded the process of ideation through R&D and innovation, conducted studies with tech. transfer centers, supported entrepreneurs to develop prototypes, supported students' projects, incubation/acceleration opportunities for R&D projects, and developed an entrepreneur's E-Gate.
- Incubated and accelerated start-ups, which offered the opportunity for companies and entrepreneurs to obtain the necessary seed funding and support to successfully promote their ideas.

- **Output 4: SMEs have strengthened capacities in sustaining and growing their businesses in the market.**
 - Strengthened the capacities and sustainability for SMEs by providing partial in-kind support (raw materials and/or upgrading equipment, etc.)
 - Enhanced the abilities of the SMEs to grow in the market through offering non-financial services (technical assistance, such as market research, training, technical input, etc.)

Progress Review

On 20 June 2019 UNDP signed a third-party cost sharing agreement with the Government of Switzerland, represented by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, acting through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) with a total amount of CHF 3,000,000 for the implementation of the “Path to Economic Recovery: Facilitating Decent job for Gaza Strip” project. The fund was allocated to several key interventions including developing of Gaza Commercial Map through upgrading Municipalities’ database and data collection by deploying **85** professional engineers, building the capacities of **340** persons to support their access to the labor market through TVET, and supporting young entrepreneurs to have greater access to medium- and long-term job opportunities through establishing of **114** startups.

After the outbreak of COVID-19 in the state of Palestine, UNDP has asked for additional contributions to respond to the emergency. On 17 July 2020, SDC supported UNDP with an additional amount of CHF **1,950,000** raising the total SDC contribution to CHF **4,950,000**. The additional contribution aimed at strengthening COVID-19 preparedness and response by deploying **995** persons to support the Health and Industrial sectors and supported the speedy recovery of **25** MSMEs in the key economic sectors affected by COVID-19.

The project was implemented by UNDP, in Gaza, under a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). UNDP, as an implementing agency, through selected local partners, led all project management, coordination, monitoring, quality assurance, and fund-raising activities. The project was built on lessons learned from a number of related youth economic empowerment initiatives. Interventions were implemented through various partners, based on an assessment of their capacity on the ground, to ensure efficient use of all available economic empowerment tools.

During the project's inception phase, six technical steering committees were established and co-chaired by UNDP, along with representatives from the relevant governmental ministries, universities’ business incubators, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These joint committees provided an overall direction and strategic guidance for the implementation, including the approval of selection criteria for beneficiaries joining various project activities.

To deliver the project activities, UNDP signed twelve contractual agreements, with a total amount of US \$ 4,364,880, with the following partners (Table:1):

Table (1): Outputs and UNDP's Partners in the Implementation

Output no.	Activity result	UNDP's partners	Coordination / Advisory	UNDP Contracts with partners
Output 1: Gazans have greater access to short-term dignified job opportunities in private and public sectors.	Upgrading the Geographical Information System	Job Creation Program (JCP)	MoLG, MTIT, MoL, and 18 Municipalities	▪ Job Creation Program (US \$ 2,178,880) - one agreement with two amendments. ▪ Palestinian Federation Industries (US \$ 253,000) - two agreements. ▪ IRADA Center (US \$ 285,000) - two agreements. ▪ Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (US\$ 158,000) - two agreements.
	Strengthen the health system to ensure that the State of Palestine is prepared for and can respond to the COVID-19 crisis.	Job Creation Program (JCP)	WHO, MoH, and MoL	
	Sustaining the SMEs capacities in the short term for maintaining local production (particularly in response to the COVID-19 crisis)	Job Creation Program (JCP), Palestine Federation Industry (PFI)	MoL, Construction Industries sectors, Aluminum Industries, Wood Industries, Food Industries, Metal Industries, Chemical Industries, Textile Industries, and tourism sector	
Output 2: Youth and PwDs have improved capacities in technical and vocational education and training.	Promoting youth in the TVET enrolment	Job Creation Program (JCP)	MoL, Palestine Federation Industry (PFI), Community Service and Continuing Education Center (CSCE)	▪ University College of Applied Sciences Technical Incubator (US \$ 720,000), ▪ Business and Technology Incubator (US \$ 455,000),
	Empowering PwDs through TVET	IRADA Center, Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children	MoL, MoSD, PFI	
Output 3: Young entrepreneurs have greater access to medium- and long-term job opportunities.	Incubation and Acceleration of Start-ups	BTI, UCASTI, PITA	MoL, MoH, MoEHE, MoLG, Gaza Municipalities, PFI, Palestinian land Authorities, Private Sector, and international incubators.	▪ Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (US \$ 200,000), and ▪ Palestine Trade Center (US \$ 115,000).
Output 4: SMEs have strengthened capacities in sustaining and growing	Strengthened capacities of SMEs in sustaining and growing	PFI, PalTrade	MoNE, MoL	

To ensure outreach, targeting of young beneficiaries, and efficient communication about the ongoing project, UNDP, jointly with its implementing partners, has resorted to social networks, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, in addition to announcements on the MoL website. Announcements were developed in a manner that clarified the requirements to the target groups on how to benefit from the project activities, including the selection criteria.

To achieve the desired objective, UNDP has adopted the following approaches per each output:

Output (1): Gazans have greater access to short-term dignified job opportunities in private and public sectors.

Activities:

- UNDP, jointly with representatives from the concerned municipalities, ministries, and implementing partners (JCP Creation Programme and PFI) formed an interview panel to select from the list of potential candidates. The lists of the targeted beneficiaries have been nominated by the MoL, followed with a review by the selection panels. The selection was based on the vulnerability status and job qualifications/requirements.
- The selected candidates signed individual contracts (Emergency Job Contract) with the employing institution.
- Females represented around 40% of the beneficiaries in the Health and GIS activities and 25% of the target workers in the private sector benefiting from training and job opportunities.
- UNDP offered specialized training courses to the contracted graduates, based on the work's thematic area.
- A full coordination system was developed between the employers and the graduated youth before starting the apprenticeship opportunity, to ensure that the host employer will provide a suitable work environment that can enhance their practical experience.
- All the employed graduates signed an attendance sheet upon their arrival and departure.
- After the spread of COVID-19, full packages from Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) have been distributed for each project participant.
- The project implementing partner, the Palestinian Job Creation Programme, monitored the attendance sheet daily.
- UNDP conducted random site visits to assess, monitor implementation, and provide needed feedback and quality assurance on project progress.
- By the end of each month, the attendance list of the employed youth is prepared along with their dues according to the number of days attended.
- Every month, the implementing partners have been sending the list associated with the due amount per beneficiary to the bank. Then, after the beneficiaries receive the due amounts, the bank sends the recipients list to the implementing partners. UNDP has been reviewing all the bank lists and making sure that all the amounts allocated for beneficiaries were received as per the procedures approved by UNDP.

Selection criteria for *GIS* and *Health* sector

- The selected youth represented a vulnerable group that included, but is not limited to females, youth, and persons with disabilities.
- Around 40% of the beneficiaries were females, benefiting from training and job opportunities.
- The age of the beneficiary/employed youth was between 21 - 35 years.
- The selected young graduate was unemployed (neither public nor private sector).
- The selected young graduate was not benefit from similar support.
- Passed the technical interview.
- The graduates had at least a bachelor's degree from a recognized university.

Selection criteria for **workers in the private sector**

- The selected 725 workers (25% Females, 5% PwDs) have been recruited from vulnerable groups working in SMEs that were affected by COVID-19 within eight sub-sectors.
 - Food industry
 - Textile industry
 - Wood processing industry
 - Chemical industry
 - Construction industry
 - Metal industry
 - Tourism
 - Garment.
- The age of the beneficiaries/employed workers was between 20 - 60 years.
- The subsidized' salary is US \$300 per month (average 20 working days per month)
- The selected young graduate was unemployed (neither public nor private sector).
- Nomination within the following prioritizing criteria:
 - Those who had not benefited from a temporary employment opportunity.
 - Those who did not benefit from a similar project.
 - Those who did not have a commercial register.
 - Beneficiaries were selected through interviews that include representatives of PFI, and JCP.
 - Screening of workplace beneficiaries through the General Federation of Industries

Output (1) results:

➤ **Upgrading GIS systems to boost commercial activity.**

JCP under the supervision of UNDP has succeeded to engage 180 young graduates (48% females) for three to five months within 25 municipalities in the Gaza Strip. They worked

to develop Gaza's commercial maps and postal code, which contributed to enhancing their technical expertise in the area of GIS through offering them a set of technical courses including ARC MAP, GeoMedia Naming and Numbering and Postal coding. The project also supported the operation sustainability of the GIS departments, by providing necessary equipment and training of the new staff. The project has also developed six knowledge products and disseminated those to the municipalities.

These efforts provided an enabling environment to use digital tools for locating business enterprises, as well as connecting these enterprises to related commercial platforms. **89%** of the crafts, industries and health centers in the Gaza Strip were included in a pilot Android application ([Google Play الكود البريدي -قطاع غزة](#)). To date, around **37,504** business entities were included in the Gaza Strip municipalities database.

The State of Palestine launched in February 2021 the use of its own postal codes, a move at easing the delivery of parcels in the occupied territories, as well as asserting sovereignty. Due to the importance of the Postal Code and its impact on the digital economy, UNDP jointly with JCP, the Ministry of Technology and Information Technology (MTIT), the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), and the Gaza Strip Municipalities agreed to develop the Postal code for the Gaza Strip, based on the experience and available data collected in the GIS departments, complementing the efforts in the West Bank. The assigned graduate youth, in tandem with skilled municipal staff, successfully completed the assignment of Postal Code for 25 Municipalities across the Gaza Strip (203,393 buildings).



List of knowledge products developed under this activity:

1. Training Material for Naming and Numbering & developing the database of Municipalities
2. Field survey for crafts
3. Guide of Gaza Postal code
4. A memorandum on principles of using GIS
5. A memorandum on principles of using ArcMap
6. A memorandum on principles of using Geomedia Program



Fig. (1) Postal Code for the Gaza Strip ([Click here to see the interactive map](#))

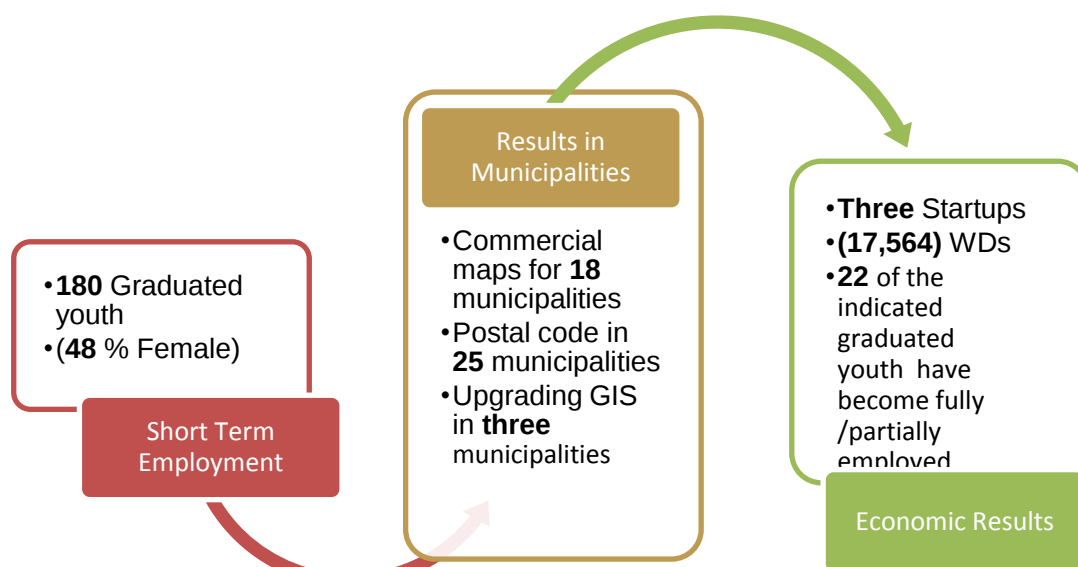


Fig. (2) GIS Results

➤ **Strengthening the health system through job placements.**

To strengthen the health system in the Gaza Strip and the efficiency to respond to COVID-19, UNDP and SDC have consulted with WHO and MoH to identify the needs. According to MoH, about 1200 health workers were needed to be additionally deployed to support the health sector. In response to COVID-19, in 2020, UNDP deployed about 1,081 health workers, funded by several donors (311 with support from SDC, 336 with support from Government of Norway and 434 with support from Government of Japan). The health workers had to register on the MoL platform and were selected by MoH, MoL and UNDP's partners through a competitive process, including interviews. Before signing the contracts

with the beneficiaries, UNDP used to send the list to MoL, UNRWA and NDC to verify and avoid any duplication.

The project placed **311 (37% Females)** healthcare professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses, and lab technicians) in **17** health facilities, including **80** professionals to support the operations of the Limb Reconstruction Unit (LRU) at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis.

During the employment period, the hired staff have been trained to deal with patients, increasing the level of service provided to the community, while increasing the level of employment. Such courses were developed and delivered by professional experts, recognized by MoH and WHO. Based on the field monitoring and follow-up, **78** out of **311** young graduates got full-time or part-time employment opportunities after ending the employment period supported via the project.

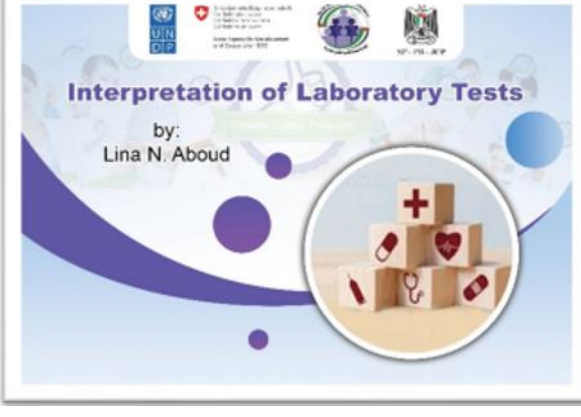
	
• Medical refresher course for male and female graduates • Oxygen therapy for covid-19 patients • BLS – ADULT Basic life support • Preparation of professional nurse • Basic Nursing Procedures • Advance Trauma Life Support • Advance Cardiovascular life Support • The art of communicating with the public, managing conflict & Preparative Management of Anticoagulants	• Intensive care for covid 19 patients • ECG+DC shock + Estimating Heart Rate from ECG • International Computer Driving License ICDL • Advanced Medical Terminology • Basic Life Support BLS • Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support ACLS • Basic Life Support BLS & Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support ACLS

Fig. (3) List of training courses offered to healthcare professionals

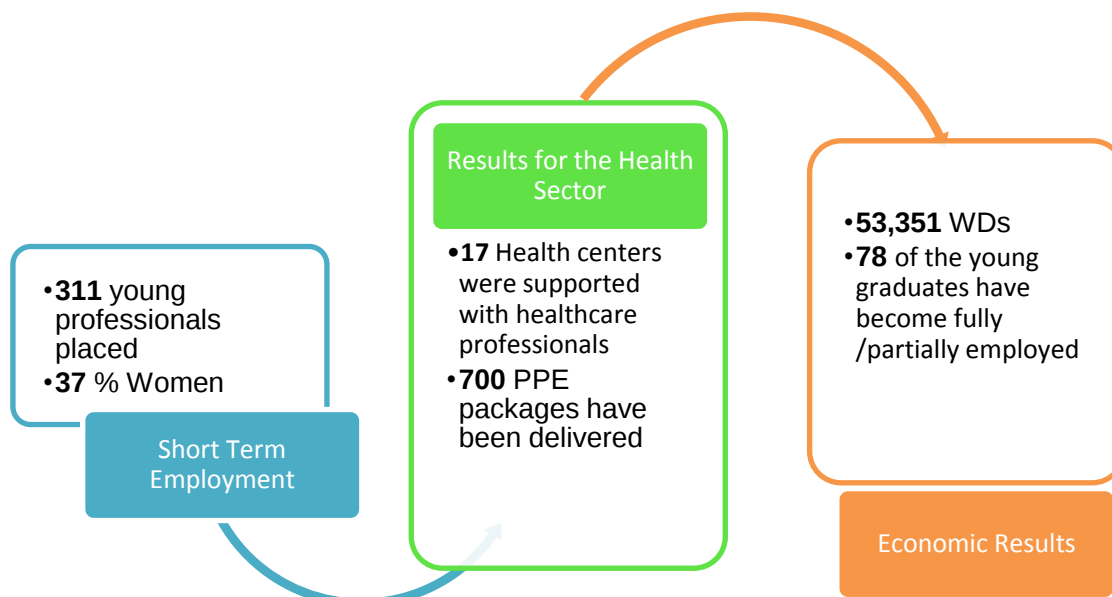


Fig. (4) Health Sector Results

➤ **Supporting MSMEs through short-term employment.**

To boost MSMEs' capacities to maintain the local production, UNDP, jointly with the Ministry of Labor and the Palestinian Federation of Industries worked to place **725** workers (**25%** Females and **5%** PwDs) to support **403** industrial entities. The project offered the beneficiaries two to three months' salary subsidies, as guaranteed employment during the COVID-19 outbreak.

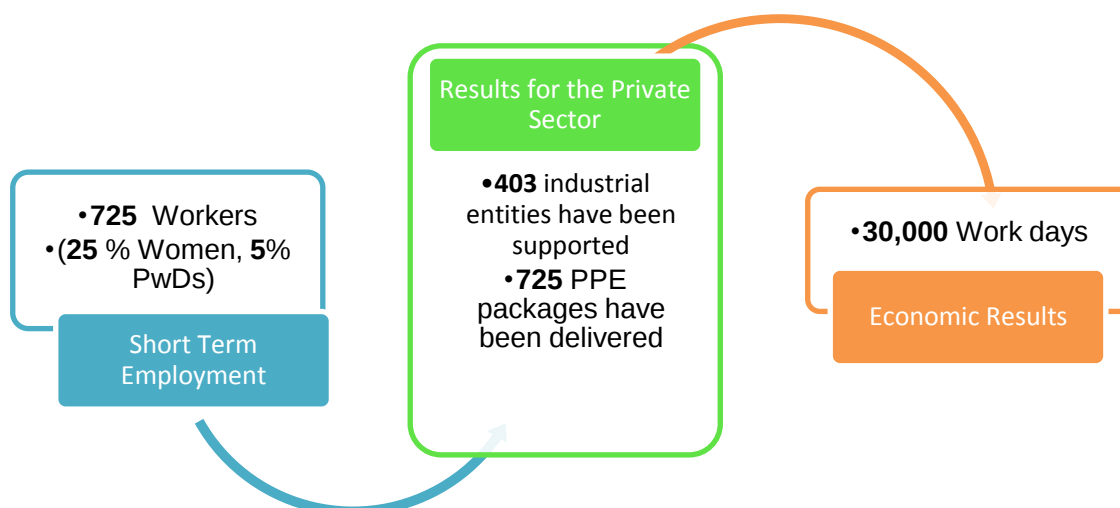


Fig. (5) Private Sector Results

➤ **Supporting start-ups for sustainable employment under output 1.**

UNDP has applied the 3X6 approach² for linking short-term assistance with sustainable jobs. The 3X6 is an innovative UNDP approach promoting sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable and crisis-affected groups. The 3x6 approach uses skills, resources, and local expertise to support crisis-affected people to become financially independent and thus able to contribute to local economic recovery and the transition from an emergency response to a sustainable development path. The approach consists of three steps (inclusion, ownership, and sustainability) with six phases (engagement, income generation, savings step, joint ventures, Investment, and accessing markets). The approach was applied in supporting **85** graduate youth, who engaged in the GIS activities. As a result, **11** beneficiaries (8 Females) have successfully launched **three** startups.

Output (2): Youth have improved capacities in technical and vocational education and training:

Activities:

➤ ***TVET for youth and PwDs:***

- Conducted a desk review and a focus group for validation of the gaps and the most promising sectors based on recent studies.
- Announced the registration where youth and PwDs were invited to update their information in the offices of the MoL.
- Selection of the best-qualified trainers based on interviews (40% Females).
- Developed content packages for training sessions.
- Conducted 3-day training sessions on a weekly basis over a period of six months.
- Three months of on-the-job training was offered for youth/ PwDs to increase their practical skills and provide financial incentives (\$250 monthly).
- UNDP conducted random site visits to follow up on the training process, assess and monitor implementation, and provide feedback and quality assurance to project activities.
- Offered specialized training on business plan development.
- Evaluation and selection of the most promising interventions (at least 2 persons per intervention).
- Supported the launch of 16 startups

Selection Criteria for youth in TVET:

- Demonstrated motivation to be part of the training Programme.
- Unemployed.
- Age 20-35 years.
- Able to pass the interview.
- Responsive to specific technical criteria recommended by the hosting private sectors.

² [3X6 UNDP approach](#)

Selection Criteria for Persons with Disabilities in TVET:

- Proven disability (physical disability, partial vision loss, partial hearing loss).
- Unemployed (neither in the private sector nor in a public institution).
- Age 18-35 years.
- Low income/below the poverty line.
- Not benefiting from any current temporary employment projects.
- Demonstrated motivation for the training.

Results:

UNDP, in partnership with JCP, IRADA, Atfaluna, PFI, and well-recognized TVET Centres worked together to identify opportunities in the private sector, by engaging sector representatives in determining market demand. The implemented approach assumed that, for anyone to build sustainable livelihoods, two conditions have to be fulfilled:

1. Opportunities in the market, either for self-employment if a certain good or service is demanded on the market, or for salaried employment if employers are looking for employees.
2. The necessary skills and competencies to access such existing market opportunities.

The implemented interventions aimed at developing the skills and capacities of the youth and PwDs to engage them in the market through technical and entrepreneurial skills development. They also strengthened social networks for PwDs, by lobbying meetings and advocacy campaigns through active media and social media networks.

UNDP, through IRADA, Atfaluna, and JCP provided support to **495** beneficiaries, including **309** young participants (**41%** females) and **186 PwDs** (**48%** females) in various vocational training courses in the following sectors:

Sector	Training Course
Textile Industry	Sewing & Fashion Design
	Automated/Computer-based fashion design
Metal works industries	Modern technologies in aluminum fabrication
Chemical Industry	The Art of Beauty & Skincare
	Cosmetics and skincare industry
Food Industry	ISO 22000:2018 Food Safety Management System
ICT	Digital Marketing
	Flutter Mobile Application Development
	PHP Development
Leather Industry	Leather & Shoe Design
Engineering Industry	Hydraulic and Industrial Control Systems
	Elevator Technology and Alternative Energy Systems
	Diagnostics and maintenance of modern car

A UNDP-led assessment identified that 81% of the targeted beneficiaries reported improvement in their technical and practical skills following the TVET courses they attended. The project participants were hosted by private enterprises for **three** months. During this time, they were able to practice their newly acquired skills and expand their networks.

Participating public institutions and private companies expressed their satisfaction with the competencies of the interns, according to the evaluation report (80%) of the private sector companies in the FGDs reported that the Programme is implemented in line with their demands to host the youth in their companies after completion the TVET opportunity. Business consultants were hired to support targeted youth at different stages, from developing their ideas to launching and managing their own businesses. A series of sessions and field visits were conducted to assess the business environment and the skills of the beneficiaries, to select the best business ideas, with a demonstrated potential on the market. With support from external experts, beneficiaries developed their business plans, and **23** startups were established. A follow-up assessment indicated that **199** beneficiaries (**40%** of the total number) have successfully joined the labor market in the same field in which they have been trained.



Fig. (6) TVET Results

Riham Al Reqeb, 21 years old from Khanyounis

Before joining the training, my family of 9 had insufficient income as it relied on the food packages from UNRWA. The difficult challenges I faced before joining Atfaluna’s training were that trainings were far from my home. Moreover, the training courses were extremely expensive, which stood in my way of acquiring skills. I was



completely lost, with no technical skills or direction. I have always desired to secure a job while studying at the university. I am very grateful that I joined this training that targeted disabled people. I gained excellent digital marketing and freelancing skills, which added great value to my professional skills and gave me a source of income. For the past 3 months, this income was a monthly stipend for me as a student. Besides, I learned how to communicate with clients from different countries in the Arab region and beyond with international clients to work on their projects. I couldn’t be more thankful

for this program that greatly changed met during the past 6 months.

Output 3: Young entrepreneurs have greater access to medium- and long-term job opportunities.

This output aimed to enhance the potential of innovative business models and technology transfer concepts, strengthening youth capacities to develop innovative ideas and technologies. These initiatives addressed existing needs and challenges in both public and private sectors.

This output targeted the following:

- Private sector to provide solutions for different challenges facing the local market,
- Academics, students, research centers, and universities to recommend different strategies to transfer technologies advancements and trends to the local market,
- Entrepreneurs from different fields to promote ideas that can be transformed into businesses and who have the ability and desire to build their own start-ups.

UNDP partnered with UCASTI (START Project) and BTI (10X project) in 2019. Both UCASTI and BTI supported UNDP in the implementation of the two components under this output, namely: market-driven innovation and incubation and acceleration startups. The enforced lockdown imposed by the spread of COVID-19 in March 2020 pushed towards adopting virtual trainings and consultations, significantly reducing the number of participants, compared with the face-to-face training. This has also led to the design of responsive interventions to combat the detrimental effects of COVID-19 and supporting the continuity of the basic services, for instance in the areas of E-health, E-learning, and digitization service to support the private sector.

After the May 2021 hostilities in Gaza, around 164 private ICT facilities incurred damages and losses, and seventy-two entities of the damaged enterprises were start-ups. Therefore, UNDP got approval from SDC to target 20 affected start-ups. Then, UNDP, jointly with PITA, designed an intervention to support these affected startups under the "GROW UP" project.

This output supported the universities' incubators to develop their capacities and, for the first time in the Gaza Strip, offered a wide range of services to entrepreneurs through the implementation of the following two components:

Component 1: Market-Driven Innovation.

- Developing a strong understanding of the local market ecosystem to focus on addressing existing demand and challenges through the following:
 - Training on the latest trends and best practices: FinTech; Blockchain (BC); E-Commerce; Internet of Things; Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data.
 - Promoting awareness about the selected trends via online Zoom sessions, Facebook posts, videos, and Webinars on topics related to hi-tech digital tools.

- Develop and design a booklet for the [sector challenges](#)
- Focus groups to introduce [BC & AI](#)
- Identifying and exploring networks and partnerships with local and international ecosystems, to support the incubation programs:
 - Collaboration and partnership with [OZAN](#), to promote international services for capacity development of Gaza's entrepreneurship ecosystem
 - Collaboration for acceleration projects in AI with ([COGNITRO AI](#)).
 - Developed a collaboration program with [DMZ](#) and sign an agreement to implement DMZ program.
 - Designing International training "[Remote Training Platform & Ecosystem Innovation](#)" on the most advanced toolset for platform & ecosystem innovation.
 - Capacity building for local mentors by international mentors ([remote joint coaching sessions and training courses](#)).
- Developing **the process of ideation** through R&D and innovation:
 - Intensive training programs on new trends, namely E-commerce, AI and Blockchain.
 - Supporting entrepreneurs to develop prototypes, by implementing promising students' projects, in partnership with universities, colleges and the private sector.
 - Deploy international consultancy to explore Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain technologies for sustainable development in the Gaza Strip.
 - Funding and incubation/ acceleration opportunities for start-ups, the private sector, and R&D projects based on selected new technologies.
 - Developing an entrepreneurs' E-Gate. (System analysis, programming, content creation)

Component 2: Incubation and Acceleration

- Sourcing online applications from potential beneficiaries.
- Conducting a communication campaign to promote the opportunities offered by the project.
- Initial review of applicants by reviewing applications and selecting the most feasible ideas.
- Outreach activities to promote the incubation approach: social media posts, videos, google forms, developing a landing page.
- Launch and manage Bootcamp.
- Coordinate the process of mentoring and developing prototypes for the incubated projects.
- Develop an Innovation Plan, Lean Canvas App, Visual identity, MVP Plan, MVP Budget.
- Evaluation and selection of most promising start-up teams for the incubation program.
- Support entrepreneurs (funding, access to modern technology and ICT infrastructure, training and trials).

- Manage the production process and system analysis of incubated projects.
- Follow-up the process of implementation of incubated projects.
- Review business model opportunities.

Results:

Component 1: Market Driven Innovation.

To develop a strong understanding of the local market ecosystem, in order to focus on solving real needs and problems, the project determined top 14 global trends, including Artificial Intelligence, Remote work, Voice Recognition Technology, Big Data, Internet of things, FinTech, 3D printing, Mobile apps etc.. After a set of workshops, questioners, and focus groups, six trends have been relevant to the Palestinian context as follows:

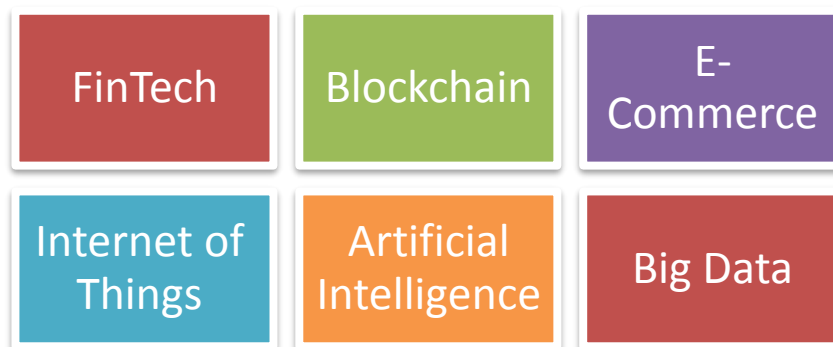


Fig. (7) The six relevant global trends

To enhance the role of incubators in addressing public and private sector challenges and attract young entrepreneurs towards innovative solutions based on market demand, the BTI through 10X project conducted 8 webinars, The following link included the summary report of each Webinar ([BTI Webinars - Reports - Google Drive](#)).

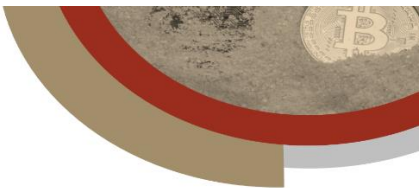
Two studies were published through UCASTI as a summary output where the first study is an assessment that provides overall guidance for the market challenges and the demand for innovation, while the second study tackled networking strategies and how Palestinian incubators could develop a relevant technology transfer model.

	
Fig. (8) Local Market Challenge (2021)	Fig. (9) Incubators Networking Strategy

UNDP worked with UCAST and BTI to initiate two technology transfer initiatives under the name of **Technovate** (with BTI) and **Merage** (with UCASTI). These two initiatives targeted potential young entrepreneurs, promoting an ideation process and the integration of emergent technologies to support the public and private sectors.

Three studies were developed for assessing the emerging technology trends (AI, Blockchain and FinTech) and their practical use. Such studies provided relevant recommendations for a targeted support to young entrepreneurs. Another study was developed and addressed the possibilities of using emerging technology innovation in the Gaza Strip Municipalities: An Entrepreneurial Approach.

	
Fig. (10) Blockchain Booklet	Fig. (11) Artificial Intelligence technology Booklet

 BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR FINTECH INNOVATIONS IN GAZA STRIP ASHRAF ALASTAL IghatBusiness Logos: UN Women, Swisscontact, BTI, IOX	 Publishing A Research Paper Entitled: "Emerging Technology Innovation in Gaza Strip Municipalities: An Entrepreneurial Approach" © 20 February 2021 □ General
Fig. (12) Building an Inclusive Regulatory Framework for Fintech Innovations in Gaza Strip	Fig. (13) Emerging Technology Innovation in Gaza Strip Municipalities: An Entrepreneurial Approach

Under the subcomponent of external visits (innovation & technology transfer centres, bootcamps, start-up shows, and related events) the following summarizes the achievements:

- Two from UCASTI staff were able to conduct a business and a networking tour in Italy, France and Turkey in Sep 2019. This networking tour helped UCASTI to design their technology transfer program based on the acquired know how and connection with external partners. During the same period, one of BTI staff conducted a networking tour in Spain and Netherlands and attended conferences, established connections with incubators, and reached centres, especially in Jordan and Algeria.

Mohammed Alnatour led one of the incubated startups who has a YouTube channel, supported through START STUDIO Initiatives, and was able to conduct a week external visit program to Dubai, from 19 June – 28 June 2022. Mr. Alnatour was able to meet public media content creators and a number of business contracts were signed between Mohammed and other parties in Dubai.	 Fig. (14) Mohammed Alnatour success story
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Fig. (15) Areej Selmey, Almanasa Alarabi's owner, pitching her idea to Dubai investors.



Fig. (16) four startups hosted in Cairo Fabrication Lab

By 2022 after lifting the restrictions on movement, resulting from COVID-19, both UCASTI and BTI resumed the suspended external visits and as a result of that 23 startups representatives (11 women/ 12 men) were able to travel one of the following places: Egypt, Dubai ,Turkey and Jordan. The participating startups were able to learn more about the visited markets and study the ability to expand their business to these markets.

Dina Khadra from Palmedia startup was supported to be able to conduct their market penetration program in Turkey. Palmedia was able to sign three business contracts (the total amount of the contracts is US\$ 20,000) with Turkish clients that aim to get Arabic media content from Palmedia. After this visit, the company was able to hire new media talent, to deliver the required services based on the signed agreements with the new clients. In addition, they launched their 1st media content training program for local innovators and media talent.



Fig. (17) Dina from Palmedia

Eight staff from both UCASTI and BTI conducted external visits to Switzerland, Netherlands, France, Egypt, Jordan, and Emirates. The impact of these visits was clearly reflected in the new projects designed by the incubators. The story of Mr. Hani Abuamer (Networking and R&D expert in UCASTI) is a clear example, as he was able to join one of the networking tours to the EU and Egypt. Hani was able to expand UCASTI support network with new partners from Switzerland, discussing the new opportunities for supporting the Palestinian innovators. Hani was able to establish connections between UCASTI and an internship program which was designed with the EPFL University, supporting researchers and students in artificial intelligence technologies. The new program aims to support 20 researchers and students, to be able to access internship activities in Swiss startups and research labs.

- To support efforts to introduce new digital technologies for the Palestinian context, UNDP, in partnership with UCASTI and BTI, provided advanced training courses to

161 entrepreneurs (50% Females) in the area of Blockchain, AI, and E-commerce through Technovate and Merage activities.

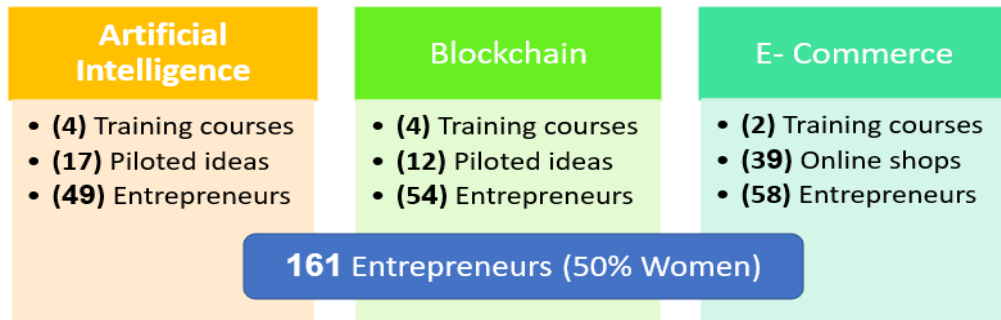
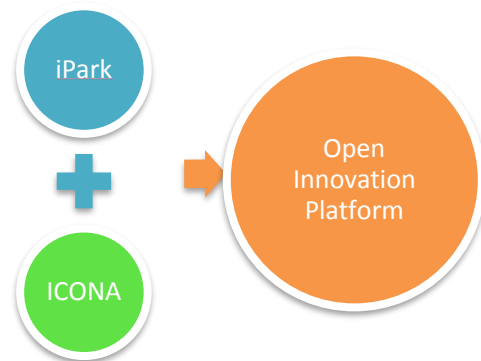


Fig. (18) Digital Transformation Results

To increase the level of mentoring provided to the entrepreneurs in Gaza, the project worked to increase the capacity of **88** local mentors, by offering new methodologies delivered by international mentors to deliver these training courses the training was designed based on remote joint coaching sessions, on the below topics:

- 1st training: Design thinking for 28 mentors and staff.
- 2nd training: Master class Platform Innovation and ecosystems for 15 mentors
- 3rd training: Technology Transfer and Industrial Digitalization Training approaches for 22 academic researchers.
- 4th training: Human Centered Design Training for 23 mentors, and researchers.

- Two platforms were initiated to enhance an innovation approach: [iPark.Land](#) is an open innovation platform that helps organizations solve their technology-related challenges by linking them to innovative solvers from around the world; [ICONA](#) Platform is a coworking space that connects entrepreneurs and researchers and challenge owners, based on design thinking methodology for accelerating innovation processes and transforming ideas into products and services of real value.



- To enhance entrepreneurship and prototype development among the undergraduates, **151** researchers and students from local universities were able to develop prototypes for **40** innovative ideas using different technologies like AI, BC, Fabrication, Biology, Machine learning, Recycling, etc. These prototypes targeted different sectors like Agriculture, Health, Education, Industry, ICT, Services, and Energy.
- To support the participation of students and develop their ideation into startups, UCASTI and BTI have organized an open call for initiatives across three national institutions of higher education (Islamic University, Al-Azhar University, and University College). 120 applications were received, of which 10 initiatives were selected in blockchain technology, GIS, Big Data, Virtual reality, AI, Machine

Learning.

- To shape new digital solutions, to be developed by the incubated projects, UNDP, in partnership with BTI and UCASTI, announced an open call for researchers. The scope of the call was to identify ideas that contribute to addressing pressing challenges, while enhancing the collaboration between academia, entrepreneurs, and the challenge owner (both public and private sector). As part of the R&D component, **seven pilot ideas** were supported: Bio-cement, Ocean Wave Energy Rig, Referral reports verification system based on blockchain technology, a secure electronic payment system based on blockchain technology, Gaza ventilator, and SMART ventilator.

Component 2: Incubation and Acceleration.

In order to engage young entrepreneurs in the incubation/acceleration works, 13 incubation/acceleration rounds were organized as presented in figure (19):



Fig. (19) Executed Incubation/Acceleration Rounds

The adopted incubation approach included: 1) Selection Process, 2) Pre-Incubation, and 3) Incubation, including seed funding. Each stage included many activities as described in the figure below.

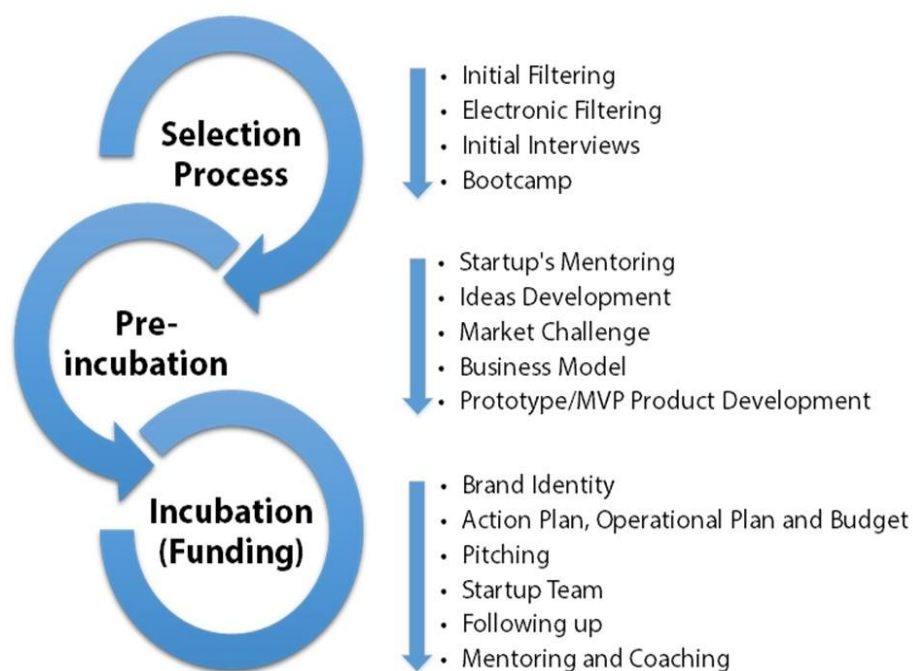


Fig. (20) Incubation Model

As a result of savings in the project budget and the approval from SDC to utilize this saving to support the startups affected by May 2021 hostilities, UNDP, jointly with PITA, designed the GROW UP initiative, to support these affected startups (Fig. 21) and offer the following:

- Supporting the affected Startups with the equipment and tools needed for recovering their businesses.
- Developing the business and management capabilities of these Startups to accelerate their growth by developing recovery plans and coaching.



Fig. (21) Affected startups recovery Model

The project offered opportunities to 281 ideas, presented by 1,097 entrepreneurs (40% Females) to develop their prototype and to benefited from one or more training courses as listed below.

- 89 Innovative ideas (56 UCASTI, and 33 BTI) were subsequently selected as part of a competitive process and received seed funding,
- 34 Startups affected from the hostilities in May 2021 were supported,
- 7 R&D projects supported (5 UCASTI and 2 BTI) and,
- 40 Prototype developed (30 UCASTI and 10 BTI).

The project supported the start-ups through capacity building in marketing, financial

management, as well as B2B activities, to seek and ensure opportunities for selling the developed services and products.



Samar, the owner of Al Aseel Apiaries in Gaza (one of the affected startups in May 2021). Samar was able to revive her business to produce healthy honey with zero calories with support offered by the Project.

Training courses offered during the incubation process:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Design thinking | 20. Bookkeeping & tax incentives |
| 2. Investment | 21. Raising Capital |
| 3. Marketing | 22. Social Media, Brand, & Marketing |
| 4. Product Market fit | 23. Founder Leadership |
| 5. Start-up Business Model Canvas | 24. From Bootcamp to Incubator |
| 6. MVP, MVS and market validation | 25. Business/Entrepreneurship |
| 7. Pitch Deck | 26. Products Photography, video footage
(Marketing Communication) |
| 8. Communication skills (Brand & Story
Telling) | 27. E-Commerce |
| 9. Market strategy | 28. Customer Relationships |
| 10. Fundraising and ownership | 29. Products Graphic Design |
| 11. From start-up to scale-up | 30. Digital Marketing / Management |
| 12. Pitch & Storytelling | 31. Digital Marketing Campaigns/ Ads/
Sales/ Business |
| 13. What's your North Star? | 32. Photography for YouTube |
| 14. Customer Discovery and ICP | 33. Video editing |
| 15. Get your legalities in order | 34. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) |
| 16. Building your MVP & Iteration | 35. Content writing |
| 17. Start-up Expenses & Budgeting | 36. Launching outsourcing start-ups |
| 18. Landing your first B2B sales | 37. Matchmaking and B2B. |
| 19. Your go to market strategy | 38. Commercialization. |

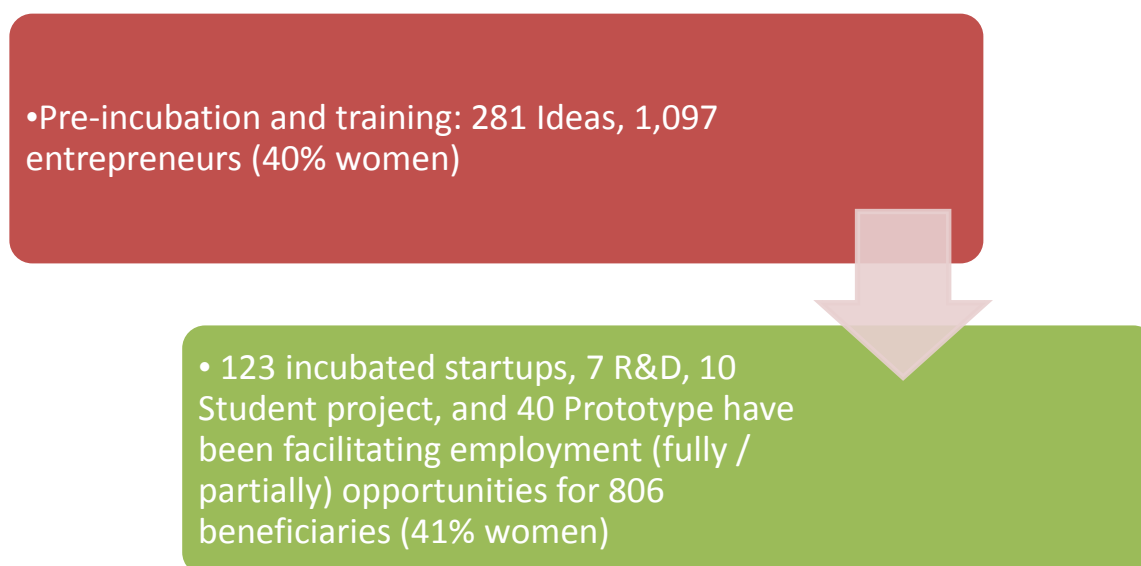


Fig. (22) Incubation Achievement

Output (4): SMEs have strengthened capacities in sustaining and growing their businesses in the market.

UNDP, in cooperation with PFI and PalTrade, designed this intervention to deliver recovery, technical, and market access assistance for 25 industrial MSMEs in the Gaza Strip for enabling them to overcome operational and marketing challenges resulting from both COVID-19 and May 2021 hostilities. This intervention supported the SMES in sustaining their business activities and supply chain through the following:

- Support the planning and restructuring activities of the enterprise, to be maintained during the pandemic and comply with environmental-health measures in the workplace, and other needed upgrades and digitalization modalities.
- Support the technology and digitalization, stimulating SMEs and enhancing business and market growth.
- Promoting industrial networking and market development collaboration nationally and regionally within relevant value chains.
- Upgrading the creative and technical capacities at the enterprise levels.
- Maintenance of machinery, equipment, and production lines that were partially damaged and repairable.
- Upgrading the production line to support productive capacity in terms of quality and/or quantity.
- Provision of service and/or technical assistance, if necessary, to resume or develop the business.

Targeted Group

Targeting 25 small and medium manufacturing/industrial establishments, that were adversely affected by COVID-19 pandemic, and associated restrictive measures, as well as

May 2021 hostilities. The garment/textile, furniture, food, and plastic were targeted because they cut across multiple sectors of the Gazan economy and due to the high likelihood of a positive market intervention as follows:

- Increase job creation,
- Bolster local trade with the West Bank,
- Empower young entrepreneurs,
- Reduce gender inequality,
- Further the development of a “green” economy,
- Enhance technology transfer, and
- Positively impact other economic sectors

Eligible applicants:

- Enterprises affected by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Priority was given to SMEs affected by May 2021 hostilities in Gaza. SMEs hiring a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 10 employees.
 - Must be a registered business
 - The enterprise should be the sole source of income for the owner
 - The enterprise did not receive substantial support from other organizations
- Applicants should have a plan on how to restore and grow their business in the coming six months
- Applicants must be committed to the following:
 - Social responsibility
 - Applying the COVID-19 response protective guidelines (protecting workers)

Figure number (23) shows the recovery model for the affected SMEs:

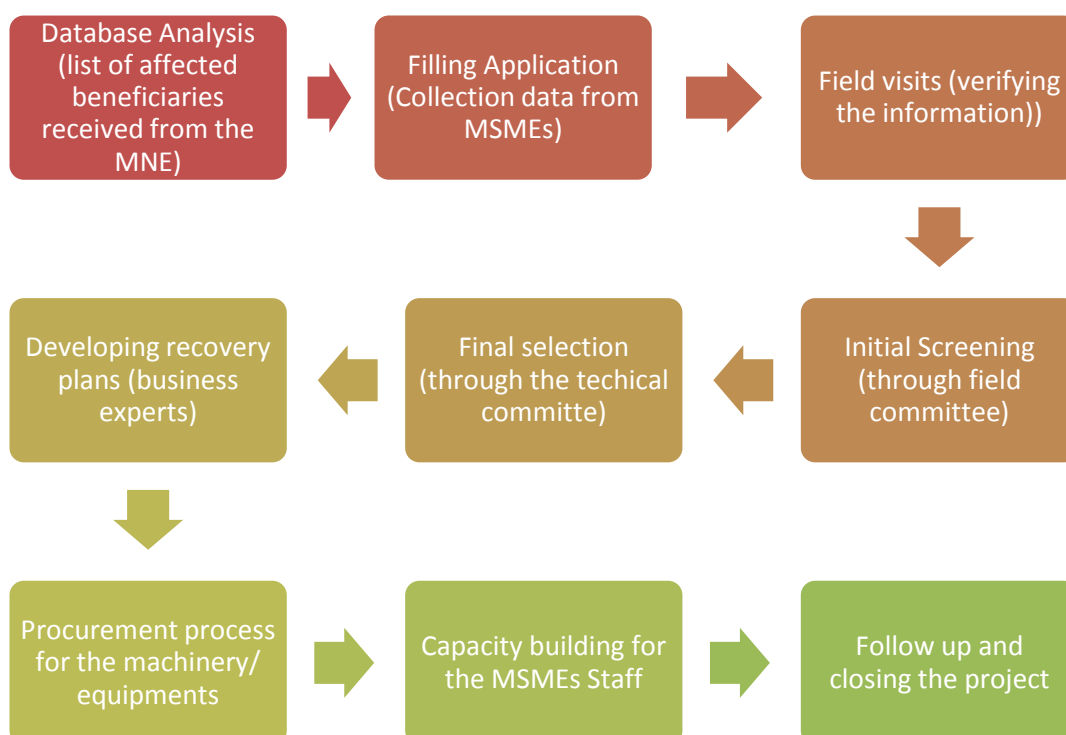


Fig. (23) Affected Industrial MSMEs Recovery Model

Results:

➤ **Strengthen capacities and sustainability of 25 SMEs by providing partial in-kind support**

The project supported 25 industrial SMEs affected by the hostilities in May 2021: seven garment factories, seven furniture workshops, four plastic factories, and seven food processing units. These 25 industrial SMEs have been employing 206 workers (10 Female). The supporting activities included:

- Development of recovery plans for the affected SMEs.
- Maintenance of machinery, equipment, and production lines that were partially damaged and repairable.

➤ **Enhancing the MSMEs' abilities to grow in the market through offering non-financial services**

- Four training courses were conducted for 25 MSME's to build and enhance the capabilities of companies through acquiring the companies' new skills that help them to develop and keep up with work in different fields. The training covered the following topics:
 - Digital marketing.
 - Sales.
 - Costing and pricing.
 - Quality management.
- The project supported the digitalization of SMEs through several interventions as follows:
 - Financial System Software: One software accounting program was installed for 19 SMEs and their staff were trained in using it. The SME's staff were trained in the following topics: accounts and accounting entries; items and stocks; accounting journals, receipt vouchers and payment vouchers, invoices, offers, orders, cheques, salaries, revenues and expenses, balance sheet, and accounting reports.
 - Supporting the digital infrastructure for 25 SMEs through supplying 25 laptops and printers.
- Promoted industrial networking and market development collaboration nationally and regionally with related and relevant value chains as follows:
 - UNDP in partnership with PalTrade and PFI organized field visits for 40 business owners from West Bank to Gaza Strip. They met with producers and manufacturers of industrial sectors in the Gaza Strip. They visited factories from different sectors, such as (Bashir Al Siksik Company and Partners, Al Majed for Clothes, Al Sawafiri Company for Furniture, Hanover Company for Food, and others) to learn about them and their products. These field visits contributed to the enhancement of business aggregation at the national level.
 - PFI and PalTrade organized business to business meeting between delegations of business owners from West Bank and Gaza Strip, attended by many private and public sector institutions as well as many

representatives of international institutions. The meeting aimed to build connections between suppliers and producers and increase the communication and networking between Gaza Strip and West Bank.

- Promoting the local product: UNDP jointly with PFI and PalTrade organized a National Products Bazaar, where 60 national industrial companies participated, 6 of them from the West Bank. These companies included many sectors in the field of food production, garment/textiles, aluminum, furniture, precious metals, chemical industries, paper industries, plastic industries, and others. The main objective of the Bazaar was to support national products and increase market shares which has an important role in increasing employment rates, improving production levels for national products, and supporting them to have marketing and exporting opportunities.

V. Project Risks and Issues:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the state of emergency declared by the authorities, UNDP faced unexpected challenges in the implementation of some initiatives due to:

- The enforced lockdown imposed by the authorities and the protective measures taken to contain the pandemic from March 2020 till September 2022 pushed towards adopting virtual trainings and meetings and reducing the number of participants to half in physical trainings, where possible, to maintain physical distancing. As a result, delays occurred in the implementation of the planned activities under outputs two and three. UNDP worked closely with implementing partners to explore innovative solutions to overcome these restrictions. The first virtual Gaza recovery Hackathon is an example of adaptation to the COVID-19 challenges in the Gaza Strip.
- Project stakeholders (IP's staff and beneficiaries) COVID-19 infection rate during the first wave and continued increase during the following waves affected the achievement of activities as per the originally planned schedule.
- Knowledge transfer activities for young entrepreneurs were designed to expose startups and entrepreneurs to international incubators and to benefit from specialized training on the latest trends. Under the new movement restrictions, UNDP was working closely with partners to reformulate the concept from external tour visits to remote training, coaching, and mentorship sessions. The setup of the new concept requires additional time and effort.

The May 2021 hostilities on the Gaza Strip have deepened the protracted economic crises and exacerbated the challenges faced by Gazan households. As a result of the emerging situation, UNDP has gotten approval from SDC for budget reallocation to perform the following activities:

- Develop the Postal Code for buildings in Gaza, supporting the visualization of the damages and their projection on satellite maps.
 - Support the service continuity for persons with disabilities inside the limb contraction by extending the contracts of thirty-six health staff for an additional ten months based on WHO requests.
 - The project supported the speedy recovery of MSMEs in the key economic sectors affected by COVID-19 and the last military escalation. Additionally, the project enhanced the resilience of these businesses, allowing them to recover and sustain related jobs, and adapt to future economic shocks with the provision of development, technical, and market access support while ensuring compliance with safety and health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
-
- On the other hand, the economic impact assessment conducted by UNDP following the May 2021 hostilities identified significant damages to the ICT sector. Seventy-two entities of the damaged enterprises were start-ups. The agreement with the SDC under output 3 (incubation and acceleration of start-ups) included activities to support start-up enterprises. Therefore, UNDP targeted 20 affected start-ups at US\$ 200,000 to support their resilience and future development.

Risk	Likelihood	Potential Impact	Team Response / Mitigation Measures	Risk Escalation (Yes/No)
Escalation of hostilities in Gaza Strip and a further divide between Ramallah and Gaza Strip	Likely	Jeopardize ability to implement the project activities, given the potential impact on the security of UNDP staff and cooperating partners	Suspension of the implemented activities, and coordination with UNDSS for evaluating the security situation on the ground besides negotiation with donors around required adjustments (if needed)	Yes
Introduction of a state of emergency in Palestine, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with authorities taking protective measures to contain the virus.	Highly likely	Suspension and delay in implementation of some program activities	Shift some activities to online: online training, virtual hackathons, and Zoom meetings. Besides, reschedule activities, considering all required protective measure.	Yes

VI. Conclusions, Lessons Learned, and Way Forward

Incubation and Acceleration Work

This economic empowerment tool aims at broadening the employment base by establishing new businesses for youth and connecting them with internal and external markets. Advancing and upgrading the internal and external environment positively reflected on the growth of these incubated startups. So, future work in this regard should focus on expanding networking internally and externally. It's recommended to invest more resources and efforts in advancing R&D components, especially in digital transformation, including E-Commerce, integration using AI and blockchain in the productive sectors. The

following main issues should be considered in the design of the upcoming Programme:

1. Establish the shared understanding of digitalization in Palestine
One of the important pre-requisites of digitalization is the clarity and shared vision of digitalization. This will be achieved through several initiatives to harmonize the concepts and set the priorities of digitalization for the Palestinian market, with a model of cooperation between the public, private and academic sectors in Palestine.
2. Need assessment and mapping of digitalization ecosystem in Palestine
An important step is to define the digitalization process in Palestine, highlighting the current achievements and gaps and provide suitable benchmarking to build the ecosystem. The assessment should propose a model for achieving the digitalization strategy by connecting the public, private and academic sectors.
3. Support for outsourcing companies
The outsourcing companies are based in Palestine with clients all around the world. These companies could be supported through: A) international certifications in the most needed technical topics and B) Capacity building Programmes in topics required to increase the level of work such as (Quality Assurance, International Standards, New fields / trends, etc.)
4. From Freelancers to Outsourcing companies
Benefiting from the lessons learned from the START MATCH and Go lance initiatives, upcoming project should contribute to supporting the networking among the individual freelancers to form outsourcing companies/teams. This will scale up their work and increase their revenue and will lead to employment of more people in the ICT field.
5. Commercialization of products for outsourcing companies
Having digital products is an important revenue stream for the outsourcing companies. Many of them cannot work on both producing their own products and offering services to clients due to the limited resources available. Providing the outsourcing companies with a new incubation model will assist them to have their own products and also knowledge on how to market these products online.
6. Networking and market penetration
Helping startups to reach new clients and markets, especially in Europe and the US. This requires capacity building and networking activities to introduce Palestinian startups and teams to the international markets.
7. Investment for startups
The startups in Palestine have good opportunities to scale-up and reach investment opportunities due to their borderless work. Focusing on the investment efforts for these startups through connecting them with potential investors will lead to grow their businesses.
8. Support entrepreneurship among skilled females
From results drawn for digitization-tailored initiatives to generate job opportunities for youth and mainly to raise the percentage of benefited females (Start cart, Start Match, and Go-Lance), it was noted that easing entrepreneurship constraints on skilled females

(matching the balance of work-life and home responsibilities) was a promising way to improve employment and to earn outcomes in the Palestinian context.

Vocational and Technical Training

Investment in TVET has showed a short path toward skills development among youth with increased opportunities, especially with new work permits for thousands of Gaza workers in Israel. As such, continued investment is needed in vocational and technical training, to increase specialized skills and respond to local employment demand, especially for the benefit of PWDs and young graduates, who are willing to join the productive sectors through short-term TVET courses. Further advocacy campaigns, promoting the skills and employment of youth, including PWDs, are highly recommended to ensure better community awareness and inclusivity.

Developing the GIS and Postal Code System

The positive impact of these technologies on municipalities' performance has been remarkable. GIS departments are established in each municipality for facilitating services in the one-stop-shop for citizens, equipped with thousands of updated electronic data, identifying unlicensed buildings, supporting the municipalities' financial sustainability, in addition to the planning support in establishing local economic units. Considering the successful pilot initiative, it is highly recommended to expand GIS and postal coding coverage, to include additional places in the Gaza strip.

Apprenticeship in the Health Sector

Apprenticeship schemes proved to be an effective mechanism towards meeting the needs of employers and graduates. Fresh graduates gained their first experience and developed their networking skills, while employers were able to rely on subsidized human resources. On the other hand, the health sector is willing to continue hosting the young graduates and improving the quality-of-service provision.

VII. Financial Report

Expected Outputs	Activities	Total Resources		
		Planned	Spent	Var%
		(US \$)	(US \$) *	
Output 1: Gazans have greater access to short-term dignified job opportunities in private and public sectors.	Upgrading the GIS, Commercial Map, and Postal Code for Gaza Municipalities (170 graduated youth and 2 Start-ups)	365,000	366,220	0%
	Place (306) Healthcare professionals (e.g. doctors, nurses, lab technicians) in health facilities	945,000	944,332	0%
	Deploy (725) skilled laborers for the industrial entities	550,000	549,448	0%
	Subtotal for output 1	1,860,000	1,860,000	0%
Output 2: Youth have improved capacities in technical and vocational education and training.	Promoting Enrolment TVET for Youth (340 youth with 17 Start-ups)	395,000	386,880	-2%
	Empowering 173 PwDs through TVET (6 Start-ups)	443,000	451,120	2%
	Subtotal for output 2	838,000	838,000	0%
Output 3: Young entrepreneurs have greater access to medium- and long-term job opportunities.	Business acumen developed	56,000	55,000	-2%
	Incubator Networks expand	126,500	122,000	-4%
	Process of ideations developed through R&D	222,500	218,000	-2%
	Incubation and Acceleration works (114 Start-ups, 40 prototypes & 8 R&D projects)	970,000	980,000	1%
	Subtotal for output 3	1,375,000	1,375,000	0%
Output 4: SMEs have strengthened capacities in sustaining and growing their businesses in the market.	(25) SMEs will strengthen their capacities in sustaining and growing their businesses in the market.	300,000	294,412	-2%
	Organizing a bazaar to promote the Palestinian-made products from 15 industrial sub-sectors.	35,000	29,119	-17%
	Subtotal for output 4	335,000	323,531	-3.42%
Operations and management cost	SDC Contribution (I) & SDC Contribution (II) for Anti-COVID 19	423,901	435,371.32	2.71%
	Subtotal for PIU	423,901	435,371.32	2.71%
Total of components		4,831,901	4,831,902.32	0%
** UNDP GMS 8%		386,552	386,550.99	0%
Levy 1%		19,307	19,307	0%

GRAND TOTAL	5,237,760	5,237,760	0%
***Received amount		5,237,760	
Disbursement rate		100.00%	

*N.B: * Financial figures have been generated from UNDP Account Activity Analysis (AAA) report*

***It is important to highlight that the financial figures in this report are temporary figures and may be corrected at a later stage due to exchange rate fluctuations, realized gain/loss, or any other possible corrections. UNDP/PAPP's financial system operates in such a manner that the financial system closes in early December of each year and that final expenditure reports reflecting the disbursements and GMS of the previous year are only published in March of the following year.*

****Total received including the exchange rate from CHF to US \$ up to date = US \$ 5,237,760*

VIII. Results Framework.

Indicated Output	Activities	Timeframe												Activities Status	Achievements {Baseline (B), Target (T), Progress (P)}	
		2019		2020				2021				2022				
		Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2			Q 3
Output 1 Gazans have greater access to short-term dignified job opportunities in the private and public sectors.	ActivityResult 1.1: Sustaining the MSMEs capacities in the short term for maintaining the local production ▪ Announcement for the target group to update their information on the Ministry of Labor portal ▪ Designing the rapid employment schemes and beneficiaries’ selection criteria, ensuring that it is gender-sensitive ▪ Identifying and recruiting rapid employment scheme beneficiaries, ensuring the participation of females ▪ Deploying labor beneficiaries in the private sector.														Completed	• No. Workers (M, F, and % PwDs) benefited from supporting the private sector initiatives. ○ No. of workers benefited from supporting the private sector initiatives B (0), T (500³), P (725) ○ % Females benefitting from supporting the private sector initiatives B (0), T (25%), P (25%) ○ % PwDs benefitting from supporting the private sector initiatives B (0), T (5%), P (5%) ○ No. of factories/companies benefited from job placement initiatives B (0), T (300), P (403) ○ No. of PPE provided to workers B (0), T (500), P (725) ○ No. of workdays generated B (0), T (300,000), P (300,000)

³ The final number of target laborers is increased after consultation with SDC based on the request of the private sector to increase the number of laborers and to decrease the duration of employment from three to two months.

	ActivityResult 1.2: Strengthen the health system to ensure that the State of Palestine is prepared for and can respond to the Covid 19 crisis ▪ Designing the rapid employment schemes and beneficiaries' selection criteria, ensuring that it is gender-sensitive ▪ Identifying and recruiting rapid employment scheme beneficiaries, ensuring the equal participation of females ▪ Recruit graduated young beneficiaries (females and men)				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Completed	• No. of graduated youth (M, W) benefited from supporting the health sector. ○ No. of graduated youth benefited from supporting the health sector B (0), T (306), P (311) ○ % Females benefitting from supporting the health sector B (0), T (40%), P (37%) ○ No. of health center benefited from job placement initiatives B (0), T (17), P (17) ○ No. of PPE provided to healthcare professionals B (0), T (306), P (311) ○ No. of workdays generated B (0), T (53,300), P (53,351)
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Output 2: Youth have improved capacities in technical and vocational education and training	Activity Result 2.1: Promoting youth in the TVET enrolment ▪ Vocational Training ○ Tailor-made training courses for youth in the most promising occupations ▪ Transition to Work ○ Three months on job training (per diem modality) ▪ Production Phase ○ Establishment of the start-up (Grants)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Completed	• No. of youth are targeted in the short-term TVET course B (0), T (200), P (309) • % Females benefitted from short-term TVET course B (0), T (40%), P (41%) • % of (M/F) recipients of capacity development initiative (CDI) reported improved skills B (existing status), T (80%), P (80%) • No. of workdays created B (0), T (15,000), P (15,000) No. of start-ups established B (0), T (10), P (13)
	Activity Result 2.2: Empowering PwDs through TVET ▪ Pre-incubation Phase ▪ Vocational Training • 5-6 months training round for PwDs in the most promising occupations ▪ Transition to Work • From 3 to 6 months on job training (per diem modality) ▪ Production Phase • Establishment of the start-up	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Completed	➢ No. of PwDs targeted in the short term TVET course B (0), T (176), P (186) ➢ % Females benefitted from short term TVET course B (0), T (40%), P (48%) ➢ % of (M/F) recipients of capacity development initiative (CDI) reported improved skills ² (existing status), T (80%), P (81%) ➢ No. of workdays created B (0), T (13,950), P (13,950) ➢ No. of start-ups established B (0), T (6), P (10)

Output 3: Young entrepreneurs have greater access to medium- and long-term job opportunities.	Activity Result: Young entrepreneurs have greater access ○ Developing of the business acumen to focus on market-driven solutions. ○ Expanding the incubator networks through designing collaboration program with external partners. ○ Upgrading the process of ideations through R&D and innovation. ○ Incubating and accelerating start-ups.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Completed	➤ No. of young entrepreneurs benefitted (M/W) from incubation activities B (0), T (820), P (1,097) • % Females benefitted from incubation activities B (0), T (40%), P (40%) ➤ No. of local market opportunities identified B (0), T (5), P (10) ➤ No. of studies with the R&D and Tech. B (0), T (4), P (4) ➤ No. of a prototype developed B (0), T (40), P (40) ➤ No. of student project developed B (0), T (8), P (10) ➤ No. of funded incubated start-ups for the R&D projects B (0), T (7), P (7) ➤ No. of start-ups under incubation B (0), T (114), P (123) ➤ No. of E-Gate developed B (0), T (2), P (2)
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Output 4: SMEs have strengthened capacities in sustaining and growing their businesses in the market.	Activity Result: Young entrepreneurs have greater access ○ Strengthen capacities and sustainability of 25 SMEs by providing partial in-kind support (raw materials and/or upgrading equipment, etc.) ○ Enhancing the SMEs abilities to grow in the market through offering the non-financial services (Technical assistance, such as market research, training, technical input etc)													Completed	➤ No. of SMEs supported finically activities B (0), T (25), P (25) ➤ No. of SMEs received non-finically activities B (0), T (25), P (25)
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IX. Photos and success stories.

Eco-Stone: An Innovative Approach to Turning Waste into Bricks



Mohammed Abu Shahla, Shaimaa Al Qassas and Ali Al Shawwf, three engineering students met at a local competition in Gaza and introduced their idea of turning waste into bricks. This next generation of building materials idea was then developed further to become their graduation thesis.

"It started when we met at the university competition in Gaza. We were exploring the possibilities of recycling and turning waste into environmentally friendly products. We started with organic waste, but it was difficult and beyond our abilities. We then decided to try waste glass. It was feasible and produced in large quantities in Gaza," Mohammed said.

The Gaza Strip produces 45 tons of glass waste on daily basis from the glass factories, food, and bottles. The possibility presented itself and the team saw the need and the opportunity to introduce stone cycling. They decided to work on the glass waste and process it to have a product that resembles the famed Jerusalem bricks that are used for external and internal construction and beautification.

Once the team started examining the How behind turning the idea from research into a product, they became aware of the START initiative that is implemented by UNDP as part of the Path to Economic Recovery and Empowerment: Facilitating Decent Jobs in the Gaza Strip project.

With funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and in partnership with the University College of Applied Sciences Technology Incubator (UCASTI), UNDP is supporting the establishment of start-ups. Since 2020, 300 young Palestinians from Gaza were trained through the START initiative and 64 start-ups were incubated including Eco-Stone. Around 30 start-ups are expected to benefit from incubation in 2022.



“With around US\$5,500, we were able to work on our first prototype, test its durability and enhance it to mitigate the risks and deficiencies. We first noticed that the product is not very flexible and there are some air gaps. The materials needed to solve it were not available in Gaza. To solve this, we had to manufacture an alternative component to solve it, and we successfully did. We also ensured that the bricks passed the sound and temperature insulation tests. This was certified by the UCAS lab and the respective authorities here,” Shaimaa explained.

The production of the brick itself was a challenging process for the team, especially in the Gaza Strip. Most of the raw materials used in manufacturing were not allowed to enter the Strip, thus the team had to create their version of those materials. The team also wanted to create bricks with a unique finish, to look both beautiful-appealing, sustainable, environmentally friendly, and feasible at the same time.

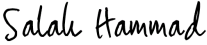
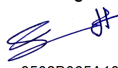
“We need an investment of around US\$ 15,000 to 20,000 to establish our production line. We believe that it is an investment opportunity that should not be missed. Our bricks are incredibly unique compared to other environmentally friendly ones. The standard flexibility rate is from four to six megapascal while in our brick it is from 10 to 12. For absorption, the standard rate is between two to five percent while our rate stands at three percent, and it is two thirds less in weight than the natural stone with 60 percent less cost. We believe that the future is all about a circular world and recycling waste is a key component. We hope that we, as youth, will be part of that change,” Mohammed concluded.

[Link to story on UNDP website](#)

[Link to Facebook Post](#)

Additional stories in Annex 1.

X. Report Authorization by UNDP/PAPP

Project Manager name and signature: Salah Hammad	DocuSigned by:  3C8A34302839451...
Programme Portfolio Manager name and signature: Hala Othman	DocuSigned by:  F04A3EB5DE2C43A...
Assistant Special Representative name and signature: Iman Al Hussein	DocuSigned by:  8502B065A10849E...
Approved by: Iman Al Hussein, Head of UNDP Gaza Office-OIC	
DocuSigned by:  8502B065A10849E...	

XI. Annex 1. Additional Success Stories

Leniar, The Success of Five Female Pioneers

A group of five female youth holding B.A. degrees in chemistry and pharmacy were enrolled in three Interlinked courses that contributed to boosting their skills and widening their horizons to break the circle of unemployment in the Gaza Strip.

The five youths received training in cosmetics science, testing the quality of cosmetics, ISO standards in producing cosmetics, and digital marketing skills as part



of the Youth Economic Programme in the Gaza Strip funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented by UNDP/PAPP.

The training that was provided over several months and concluded successfully equipped the participants with new skills and knowledge that paved their career life road in the production of cosmetics.

The team then applied for a competition to receive a grant to launch their business. Their application had a detailed plan for their cosmetics production, and it was essential to have a creative idea so that they can we win the grant.

Leniar was their first step toward their aim. They came up with an innovative idea to extract a natural cosmetics material from lentils to produce hair and skin care natural products. They have consulted experts in the field, and they managed to win the grant for being the best project idea.

The team was able to rent a location and equip it with a laboratory, equipment, and raw materials. "Now, we have samples of our products that gained the satisfaction of our customers. We still aim for more success and more creative ideas. With hard work, we can create an opportunity. "

Digital Marketing Supports Gaza Graduates

"After graduation, I worked in a media production company for a year, the salary was unsatisfying, however, I kept working to gain experience. After a while, I could not go on and I became unemployed like many youth in Gaza." Abdelhadi Farahat, a media graduate.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) the rate of unemployment among youth in the Gaza Strip Increased rapidly to become 69.9%.

In response, the Youth Economic Empowerment Programme in the Gaza Strip aims to empower youth including females by providing temporary job opportunities and TVET training to enhance their capabilities and skills.

"Fortunately, I was accepted at the Digital Marketing training which was the best opportunity where I found my passion. After finishing the training, I started sailing into the digital world as a marketer through various freelancing websites and social media". Abdelhadi continued.

"At first, I started managing social media accounts for some local companies and shops. then, I worked in digital marketing for the Advocates and Legal Consultants office in Britain, and other companies in the Gulf countries."

"The project was great support for me; I enhanced and promoted my skills and was able to generate income to afford myself and my family." Abdelhadi concluded.

Another 200 youths benefited from the Youth Economic Empowerment Programme, which is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Implemented by UNDP/PAPP through Job Creation Programme- the President Bureau.



The Pattern World, female-headed business in Gaza, model of success

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, this is what happened with us, it was hard but not impossible."

Says Lina Alhertani, 27 years old, one of the beneficiaries and the head manager of the fashion center (The Pattern World).

It's always fascinating to watch four young females with similar love and passion for fashion design striving for independence and success in their lives in Gaza and have the potential to compete in the international fashion market.



Lina Alhertani, Nariman Muhana, Miaser Haboosh, and Hanan Jarour met together at a Fashion Design via computer Programme training course in the Gaza City organized as part of the Youth Economic Empowerment programme funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented by UNDP/PAPP in partnership with the Job Creation Programme- The President Bureau.

The online training has been implemented for the first time in the Gaza Strip, as it hosts international trainers collaborating with an Italian Academy, targeting 34 youths 63% females.

"Fashion Design training via computer has increased my experience and expanded my knowledge to learn about other cultures and fashion techniques. I learned how to draw a full design and see my work before implementing it electronically, and I can sell it internationally outside the Gaza borders." Hanan Jarour said.

It is a challenge to open a new pioneer business when the Gaza hostilities have just ended with tremendous losses on the socioeconomic and the humanitarian sides, not forgetting the COVID-19 outbreak in Gaza, where many businesses were not able to survive this global crisis.

"Launching a new business in these hard situations is a real challenge for us. However, we aspire to implement our well-studied business plan, work remotely, and do our best to succeed; it will be hard at the beginning, but it won't be impossible. We are insisting on continuing together in the fashion design field, and we will always do our best to succeed." Miasser concluded.

“Work for your dream, nothing can stop you” Haya Qusa, A Story of Hope and Hard Work

The story starts with Haya Abu Qosa when she was only two years old. She was infected with meningitis. She was taken to the hospital. After a while, the mother noticed that she was no longer responding to any sounds around her. Then, they double checked to find out she become deaf.

Haya joined the Atfaluna Early Intervention Programme, a free Programme that offers deaf children and their parents a collection of educational, rehabilitative, protective services. There, her parents receive training through a series of intensive activities to guide their communication development with. “We started learning how to communicate with our child. “We learnt sign language, and we learnt how to accept happily our child without feeling shy,” her mother added.



Due to the early intervention and collaborative efforts from a team of, speech therapists, counselors, and teachers, Haya and Haya’s parents were equipped with the knowledge they needed to make sure both of their children could reach their full potential in life.

After graduating from the school, she joined the Disability Service Centre, a local educational centre where it offers a one-year-program exclusively for the students with hearing disabilities. Though she was exposed to academic learning, the academic experience was not sufficient for her to let her join the business market. “I graduated, and I looked for a job, but no one accepted me or believed in my talents.”

When Haya was informed about the “Graphic Design Course” from the Facebook advertisement, she jumped out and registered. Throughout the course, she learned how to design different designing applications including Photoshop and Illustrator, taking photos, and making animated videos.

“For me, graphic design is like art. I should be in full mood to produce such designs,” Haya told me while looking at the wall painting.

During the course sessions, Haya has been helped to create some accounts on different Freelancing applications including: Mostaq and khamsat .In addition, the course trainer helped in improving their social media presence on Facebook and Twitter.

Haya successfully worked on three different projects with different clients including one from Saudi Arabic. Though she enjoys working via the freelancing platforms, the ambitious graphic designer still prefers working via the offline contract.

She wishes she could join advanced courses of graphic designs. "I wanted to improve my skills in these graphic applications."

Haya has recently signed a contract with the GIZ, a German organization that handles the provision of international cooperation services for sustainable development, as photographer for (3) months within an action plan for the GIZ activities. Haya was given a camera from Atfaluna, and she immediately started responding to her supervisor. "I am super thrilled. I could not believe that I work now for INGO," Haya said with a giggle.

Haya is one of the participants in "Technical education and Vocation training opportunities for sustainable Socio-economic Opportunities for persons with hearing disability in the Gaza Strip" implemented by Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children with funds from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in partnership with UNDP/PAPP.

When Profession Meets Passion [Round Initiative]

"I am not afraid of failure anymore, as I deeply believe that I get closer to success and prosperity with every failure."

"We mastered audio voice-over and got to know most of the updated techniques. Thus, we gained job opportunities via freelancing platforms. However, our top goal was to open our own company."
Mushaira Al-Jaish



Mushaira, Aya, Isra'a, and Mariam are four passionate girls. They share the same passion for voice-over, multimedia, and seeking self-recognition. They graduated from different majors and met in the voice-over course that lasted for a year. The girls won their first job together, and they achieved great results. This splendid work created a joint professional relationship between them."

"We named our team PDVOT, which is the abbreviation of the Palestinian Dubbing and Voice-Over Team where we succeed and planning to continue with it.". Aya Abu Laban.,
For more: [watch the video](#)

Omqa -depth- store, a story of determination [START CART initiative]

"I faced several difficulties initially, especially in the shipping process between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Sometimes, some orders were spoiled. Nevertheless, I designed them again because I didn't want to lose the trust of my clients, which is one of my strengths in the market."



Wafaa Mesmeh, 25 year-old with a diploma in multimedia and a bachelor's in technology management. She owns "Omqa Store," which is created to sell professional designs, creative prints, and digital albums in Gaza and the West Bank.

"No gain without pain. I faced several difficulties initially, especially in the shipping process between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The transportation prices were high, and the orders took a long time to arrive. Sometimes, some orders were spoiled due to difficult shipping circumstances. However, I widened my relationships and got reasonable prices after a while. Nevertheless, I designed them again because I didn't want to lose the trust of my clients, which is one of my strengths in the market." Wafaa explained.

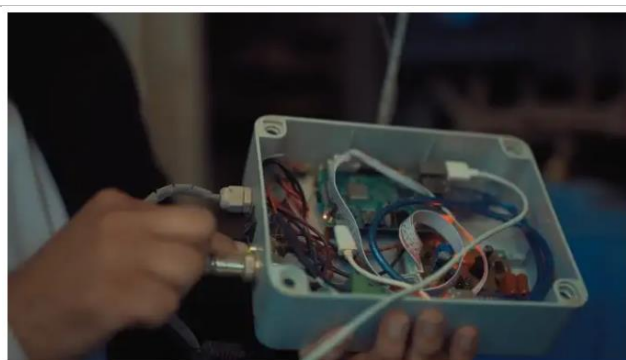
"Luckily, the UCAS incubator nominated me to participate in Fab Lab Egypt. This was a tremendous intellectual leap for me. I networked with amazing people in Egypt. I had a fantastic opportunity to meet an excellent team with premium tools like 3D printers, which weren't allowed to enter the Gaza Strip. We agreed to send them my designs, which they printed and sold in Egypt. I was highly thrilled to have a new production line in Egypt". For more, [watch the video](#).

Gaza Innovate: The Way to Utilize Artificial Intelligence [MERGE Initiative]

The UCAS Technology Incubator UCAS TI with funds from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and in partnership with UNDP/PAPP launched the MERGE Programme. It is dedicated to supporting the transfer of technology and scientific research efforts to be used in solving problems faced by the public and private sectors. Accordingly, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the municipalities of Gaza to encourage the knowledge transfer between the MERGE programme and the Gaza municipality.



Mohammed Bahr and his research team applied the device to wastewater pumping stations in the Zaytoun area in the Gaza Strip.



Bahr's AI device

The municipality suggested some challenges faced in the Gaza Strip, where some technology solutions can be made. The researcher's positive response was quick and assorted ideas and valid solutions to many problems the public sector suffers. One of these solutions was a study by Mr. Mohammed Bahr about the integration of Artificial Intelligence. He believes that artificial intelligence is a successful model that helps both public and private sectors solve existing problems by using the digitizing feature efficiently.

Mohammed Bahr has a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering and a Master's degree in Engineering Project Management from the Islamic University of Gaza. Mohammed's idea is an intelligent maintenance system, which is a predictive maintenance system in the areas of potential flooding, the system predicts the problem before it occurs with high accuracy. In other words, it foretells the defect 6 hours before its occurrence. This allows maintenance workers to discover the defect and fix it, which alleviates the number of resulting problems later. [Read the full story](#), [watch the video](#)

"I never imagined such an impact of the hackathon; it exceeded all my expectations." [START STUDIO initiative]

Mohammed Al-Natour, 25, graduated in Mechatronics Engineering at Al-Azhar University in 2020. He is a digital content creator and one of the winners of the Start Studio Hackathon supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in partnership with UNDP.



His secret behind the great success was focusing on what he truly loves. Since childhood, Mohammed was passionate about photography. At first, he practiced photography as just a hobby using his phone. But then, he did his best to enhance this skill by searching here and there. He put what he learns into reality during his university studies and didn't even stop at this only but began learning the basics of montage and filmmaking.

"I was deeply happy to be a part of this splendid experience. All the challenges my team and I faced in the hackathon encouraged us to go on and increased confidence in our abilities to reach the right path." Mohammed said.

Mohammed's channel was selected among the final winners. He added: "the incubator provided me with all the in-demand training courses in the digital content industry and e-marketing. They also provided me with the required equipment." Currently, Mohammed and his team can produce a video per week. Therefore, they were able to increase the channel's subscribers within a short period; their channel has 16.000 subscribers, and the number is increasing rapidly. "I never imagined such an impact of the hackathon; it exceeded all my expectations. I wish programmes of this kind to grow more and more. In the Gaza Strip, we need supporting programmes to provide professional help to the youth, improve them academically and vocationally, and put them on the right path." For more: [watch the video.](#)

