

Building Synergies under Capacity Building Activities

BACKGROUND

In oPt, the handicraft sector's prosperity and growth is generally proportional to the country's tourism levels. During the Intifada period, the sector was greatly affected by the reduction in the number of tourists, which forced many souvenir shops and handicrafts establishments to shut down and lay off workers.

There are 18 different varieties of handicrafts in the Palestinian territories. Olive wood is the dominant handicraft, representing 36% of handicraft market in 2003, while mother of pearl accounts for 10%. Around 19% of handicraft establishments are located in the Gaza Strip and 81% are located in the West Bank (BCCI, 2004).

The impact of handicrafts in the Palestinian economy is difficult to measure. Economic data on handicrafts are not compiled, instead lumped into the "manufacturing" section of industrial statistics.

PROCESS

A capacity building programme targeting young designers from the West Bank and Gaza was implemented, in which participants received training from a regional expert in handicraft production. The goal was to train participants to apply traditional methods and crafts to innovative purposes such as furniture, or home design and appliance. Marketing and management training was provided as well, and micro-credit loans were given to some trainees.

All selected trainees were unemployed architects and designers. After the capacity building programme and the small grants they received, new jobs were created and additional income was generated. Participants joined a "placement programme" through which 70 handicraft-producing women in remote areas received the innovation training as relayed by the initial trainees.



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The newly-created network of handicrafts producers and young designers were able to identify market opportunities that were previously inaccessible to them.

Outcomes The programme resulted in new, innovative crafts designs based on traditional skills, but suitable for modern markets. The initiative provided a creative space for handicraft producers to create pilot designs for famous companies, and also involved women from remote areas whose products have since been promoted by national galleries at local and regional levels. Through the initiative, the newly-created network of handicrafts producers and young designers were able to identify market opportunities that were previously inaccessible to them in an effort to establish sustainable livelihoods and stable employment. In fact, 7 young designers have since found employment through the new relationships they established. Following its success, the initiative was officially included in the Ministry of Culture's new policy and strategic plan.

Transfer of knowledge and change in culture



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BACKGROUND

Although oPt has a rich musical tradition, music education is not culturally accepted everywhere. Particularly in a conservative culture like Hebron, parents do not readily allow their children to practice music. Moreover, the conservative nature of the culture does not permit females to travel from one city to another. There is therefore a limited access to music education for all children in general, and a particularly decreased chance that females will have the opportunity to engage in a musical education.

The Edward Said Foundation provided technical and physical assistance to two institutions already working in Hebron: Dar Al-Tefel and France-Hebron Exchange. These institutions received institutional capacity building support on how to teach music, and also received musical instruments donations for their long-term use. When the implementation of the activities started, few participants were interested, and females were not allowed to participate. Further, most families did not accept the notion of mixed classes including both males and females in the same space.

PROCESS

In order to overcome these obstacles, all stakeholders, including partner institutions, children, and parents, were involved in designing and implementing the programme. Parents were invited to attend information sessions about the importance of musical education and were encouraged to allow their children to participate. The teachers who delivered the sessions came from Hebron, which helped promote the idea of the programme as an inclusive and locally-owned initiative.

Outcomes

The impact of the programme affected the community in several ways. Concretely, 92 students received musical training, which contributed to their skill set and education levels, and 2 institutional partners received capacity building and physical support. Several festivals took place in the region as a result of the programme, including the Al Yameen Festival, and a festival which showcased the Youth National Orchestra.

But a change in cultural beliefs was also accomplished. There is now a clear acceptance within the Hebron community of the importance of teaching music, and a general acceptance of mixed classes which include both males and females. Additionally, as part of the activities, females were invited to visit the Edward Said Foundation in Ramallah, making it the first time that these women travelled to the city.