



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ARAB STATES

Concept note

Skills Development and Job Creation to Support Reconstruction Efforts in Gaza

Duration: 36 months

Implementing Partners: UNRWA; Sharek Youth Forum

Estimated Budget: US\$4,000,000

Brief Description: The project will contribute to skills development, employment generation and social and economic recovery in the Gaza Strip. This will be achieved through the implementation of a skills development programme targeting students and youth, enabling them to participate in the reconstruction efforts in Gaza and thereby contributing to local economic recovery. The promotion of green jobs, within this promising sector, represents an integral part of this skills development initiative.

**Meeting on the ILO programme of technical cooperation
in the occupied Palestinian territory**

Geneva, 15 November 2010

I. Rationale and justification

The 2009 incursion and the continued tight closures on the Gaza Strip have had severe repercussions on the livelihoods, homes and infrastructure of thousands of Palestinians. The ban on the import of construction materials into Gaza is also severely hampering reconstruction efforts. As a result, thousands of men, women and children continue to live in broken shelters, under tents or in makeshift shelters. The unemployment rate (estimated at 38.7 percent in 2009) remains amongst the highest in the world and the population in Gaza continues to live in deep poverty (with an estimated 70 percent living below \$1 a day).¹ According to the Palestinian Authority, 4,036 housing units were destroyed and a further 11,514 were partially damaged during the conflict. Government buildings, water, energy and communications infrastructure, educational establishments and hospitals all sustained significant damage. Based on the mapping of vocational education and training in the oPt (ILO, 2009), the construction sector was identified as one of the most promising sectors, representing 21 percent of national GDP and involving 30 percent of private workers prior to the crisis. Today, the construction industry employs only 1% of the total labour force in Gaza (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Due to continued closures, the local construction industry cannot cope with the reconstruction challenges – a situation which is further exacerbated by the expanding gap between labour demand and supply, in view of the shortage in appropriate skills to address the reconstruction efforts.

Within the above context and to lay the groundwork for the reconstruction efforts for Gaza, the ILO analysed the main skills and management gaps in the construction sector and implemented a training programme targeting local contractors. The capacity building programme introduced an alternative technology for the construction and winterization of temporary shelters using compressed earth blocks without the use of cement or other standard materials. The success of this intervention led to the establishment of a strategic partnership with UNRWA with the aim of targeting, in the future, an increased number of beneficiaries and integrating the programme within UNRWA's curriculum. In addition, the ILO partnered with the Sharek Youth Forum (a national youth institution) and opened an entrepreneurship information centre which will provide counselling, technical assistance and financial support to young entrepreneurs and promote self-employment opportunities. These strategic partnerships served as key entry points for the ILO to support reconstruction efforts using innovative and sustainable techniques, advocating for the promotion of green jobs in view of the high potential in the construction sector.

II. Project development objective and outcomes

The project will contribute to *skills development in the construction sector, employment generation and social and economic recovery in the Gaza Strip*. This development objective will be achieved through the implementation of a skills development programme targeting old-age students and youth, enabling them to participate in the reconstruction efforts in Gaza and thereby contributing to local economic recovery. The promotion of green jobs, within this promising sector, represents an integral part of this skills development initiative.

Specifically, the project will focus on the following outcomes:

- a. Trained students and youth participate in the reconstruction of Gaza and contribute to local economic recovery.
- b. Reconstruction and recovery interventions will primarily target the creation of green jobs in view of the high potential in the construction sector.

¹ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Surveys, 2008-2009.

III. Project Strategy

The project will contribute to socio-economic development in Gaza by enhancing job opportunities of the various target groups to enter and sustain gainful employment/self-employment in the construction sector. Short- and medium-term targeted training interventions will be implemented to address the skills deficit and provide the technical assistance required in developing a skilled workforce for the construction sector.

The project relies on the development of a strong institutional knowledge base in developing and implementing modular employment-oriented skills training activities for jobs in the building and construction sector. Based on global and regional best practices, the development work will be supported through the dissemination of guidelines, manuals, educational and training material, supporting the capacity building of teachers, trainers and their organizations. The project will provide temporary jobs for successful trainees through on-the-job training and will therefore encourage an additional number of beneficiaries to join the programme. Strategic synergies will be established with key institutions involved in similar skills development programmes.

The project will also implement initiatives targeting the creation of green jobs, considering that construction is one of the most attractive sectors for green jobs: buildings are a major source of energy consumption and emissions in most countries and provide leeway for technical solutions that are economically viable for both retrofitting and new buildings. Building on the successful implementation of earth temporary shelters, the ILO will support local contractors to use additional green technologies in their reconstruction initiatives and will also support unemployed farmers and fishermen to rebuild earth economic infrastructure. The ILO will further support the start-up of green businesses particularly among female entrepreneurs and youth. This will be used as an advocacy tool to create a better understanding of the youth labour market in promoting green businesses.

Relevance

The proposed project will contribute to the national reconstruction efforts as a result of the 2009 conflict in Gaza. The innovative labour-intensive techniques that will be introduced take into consideration the skills deficits and the impact of the current ongoing blockade and the ban in the import of construction materials, goods and spare parts.

Project Partners

The project will establish sustainable partnerships with local and international institutions working in Gaza to ensure ownership of the initiatives following the project's implementation phase. UNRWA was identified as the main partner due to its unique position as the main service provider to Palestinian refugees in Gaza. The ILO will also cooperate with local public, private, and non-governmental institutes and organizations. In addition, the project will build a network with public and non-governmental training providers to introduce the latest methodologies and approaches in vocational training based on ILO's best practices. The network includes academic institutions, employers' organizations, trade unions, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Target Beneficiary Groups

The target groups benefiting from this proposed intervention include technical and vocational education and training (TVET) providers, 1,000 semi-skilled workers, 500 UNRWA students, 80 female engineers, 10 local contractors, 300 workers and foremen, 550 young entrepreneurs, and a selected number of farmers and fisherman. Ultimately, the capacity of UNRWA and local technical vocational providers will be strengthened to ensure that an increased number of beneficiaries are targeted following the completion of the project.

Sustainability plan

The sustainability is maintained through the integration of key elements of the skills development programme within the UNRWA TVET institutes and regular training programmes. In addition, the introduction of the green component of the proposed programme will be sustained through the adoption of appropriate green technologies by local private contractors and by the institutionalization of the youth green entrepreneurship information center by the Sharek Youth Forum. At the national level, the Ministries of Labour and Education and Higher Education will benefit from the model and the lessons learnt with a view to integrating the programme within the national curricula.

IV. Duration and Budget

The project will be implemented over a period of three years, with a target start date of January 2011. The overall budget of this project is estimated at a total budget of US\$4,000,000. A detailed budget breakdown can be made available on request.

For further information, please contact

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