

Paltel Group CSR

A Leading Model in Sustainable
Development

Courtesy of Paltel Group

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ince the year 2005, Paltel Group has adopted social responsibility as a strategy in its work and operations. The Group's social responsibility engagement reflects its core values of justice, development, equality, transparency, and sustainability. In order to

create rooted practices out of these values, the Group refers to the highest international standards of sustainable work and social responsibility. While working to achieve its social and developmental goals, the Group applies the experience it has accumulated over previous years and partners with different stakeholders to benefit from their experience. Additionally, the Group adopts the available international sustainable development references such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Convention on the Rights of the Child, The International Labour Organization Conventions on Decent Work, Environmental ISO 14001, and Information Security ISO 27001.

Paltel Group has been working within the framework of the SDGs under a memorandum of understanding, signed with UNDP in 2018, that aims to align the Group's social responsibility work with the SDGs and reports achievements against these goals. The Group plans its programs in line with the SDGs, focusing on the goals that target education, health, economic development, the fight against inequalities, environmental protection, and partnerships for development. In addition, Paltel Group has recently adopted



Paltel Group supports technology and education by investing in youth through the teaching of coding, design thinking, and problem-solving skills.

the Women's Empowerment Principles, signing a letter of commitment with UN Women on March 8, 2021, to mark International Women's Day. Furthermore, Paltel Group is a signatory of the UN Global Compact Initiative that targets leading companies and encourages them to commit to the highest environmental standards.

During the times of the COVID-19 pandemic, with all the hardship it has placed on humanity, Paltel Group has continued and even intensified its work to respond to Palestinian society's growing needs and support ongoing development programs in addition to providing internet connections to health centers and units that have provided emergency services to COVID patients. The Group continued to operate all its social programs in spite of all difficulties resulting from the emergence of the pandemic.

The program Code for Palestine (CfP) focuses on distinguished students with a passion for coding and computer science, and aims to encourage young people to find their way in the fields of computer science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The program builds critical and design thinking skills as a complement to coding skills and also targets the students'



■ One of the coding classes in Ramallah, September 2021.

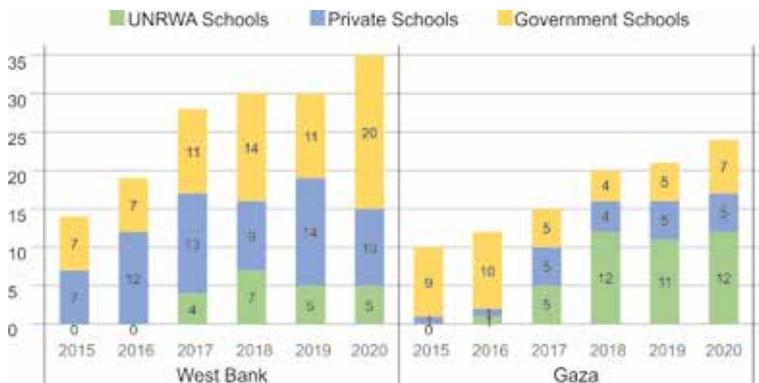
Program Process



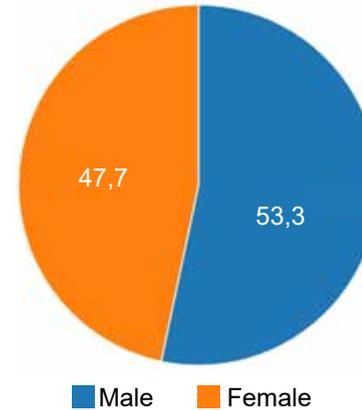
mathematical and problem-solving skills as core components of the program. Students are enrolled in the program for three years and trained by a group of students from Stanford University, keeping in mind that the annual summer camp is held in the West Bank and Gaza simultaneously, where students receive training on design thinking, project management, and entrepreneurship.

Besides learning design thinking and problem solving, the students attend intensive sessions in Python and Turtle in Year 1 and React Native (JavaScript, HTML, CSS, Git / GitHub, Firebase) in Year 2 and Year 3 through practical applications and massive open online course (MOOC) projects.

A total of 181 students had graduated from the program by the end of 2021, 87 percent of whom selected computer science and computer engineering as their field of study at the university; CfP Palestine is a key determiner in this selection. Additionally, 12 percent of the graduates obtained scholarships in reputable international Ivy League universities.



Graphic 1: Numbers of students from public, UNRWA, and private schools admitted into CfP by year.



Graphic 2: Distribution of students admitted into CfP by gender.

Instructors are senior students from Stanford University in the Silicon Valley (from the Department of Computer Science and the Design School) who volunteer to teach Palestinian students coding, design thinking, and problem solving. CfP has resulted in establishing Code.X, a nonprofit organization that was registered in the Silicon Valley by the first group of instructors who volunteered in CfP. In 2015, four CfP instructors came up with the Code.X idea to deploy the program in other countries, and they started with China and Albania.

Code for Palestine graduates may also become teacher assistants (TAs) in the program after their graduation and upon admission into universities where they study computer science. In 2021, a total of 45 TAs worked in the program drawn from the pool of previous CfP students.

Saifak Code program forms an extension of CfP, targeting students who did not get the chance to join CfP due to high competition on admission with the limited

“I learned how to think outside the box, how to be confident, how to be willing to take risks.”
Code for Palestine graduate, 2020.

“Code for Palestine was an incredible experience. I discovered it wasn’t enough to teach [students] a coding language; you also have to teach the right mindset. We want to build their ability to tackle tough, ambiguous, unsolved challenges.”

Jessie Duan, volunteer instructor, 2015 and 2020.

“The students are why I went back twice. I’ve kept in contact with many of them over the years, and it’s incredibly rewarding to see them grow and continue to nurture an interest in CS.”

Rory MacQueen, volunteer instructor 2015, 2016, 2017.



■ The Palestinian team preparing for an international problem-solving competition.

number of seats. Saifak Code is a three-week intensive summer camp that teaches 14-year-old participants coding and problem-solving skills. It is implemented in partnership with community-based organizations in all Palestinian governorates and run by professional university students who wish to transfer their coding skills to younger school students. A total of 754 students benefitted from this program in four cohorts between 2017 and 2021.

Paltel Group Foundation implements other coding programs for all age groups. Below are some examples.

■ A group of students attending a Saifak Code class, July 2021.



Hour of Code program aims to spread the culture of coding and technology in more than 180 countries around the world, targeting all individuals regardless of age and experience. Paltel Group carries out the campaign annually as part of a comprehensive global program presented through Code.org. In 2020, the Hour of Code campaign was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic by using virtual communication technologies. In December 2021, we began to implement the campaign after announcing the launch at <https://www.paltelfoundation.ps/>.



■ A Palestinian child participating in the Hour of Code campaign, December 2021

Code + Design Bootcamp is a six-month program for university students and graduates that begins with a four-week intensive bootcamp to cover a range of topics under the instruction of professionals from leading companies in Silicon Valley. Students go on to complete Udacity Nanodegrees in areas such as Android Development and Data Science. The program has run in three cohorts since 2017 and graduated 100 students in Android Development and Data Science tracks. The employment rate of graduates has reached 100 percent with proper employment conditions at local and international levels.

AbjadNet program aims to increase educational opportunities and decrease technology illiteracy in Palestine by developing the IT culture at Palestinian schools through the provision of the appropriate infrastructure that includes connecting the schools to the internet, working in full cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Education.



Graphic 3: Beneficiaries of programs implemented by Paltel Group in the field of education.

Various education programs continue to be supported by Paltel Group, including the technology and science scholarship program, as the group is fully aware that education constitutes a fundamental pillar in building Palestinian society and that Palestinian families spare no efforts to secure the resources necessary to educate their children. Paltel Group presents the scholarship program through technological communication to announce the scholarship competitions, receive applications, sort them through specialized committees, announce the scholarship winners, and dispense the funds on time.

By the end of 2021, a total of 6,653 scholarships had been given to students in various fields of study, in addition to 81 scholarships for orphaned students and 48 scholarships for students with disabilities.

Investing in people's health, given the shortage in available health services – especially in remote areas, as Palestinians are exposed to exceptional conditions while living under occupation – Paltel Group's social responsibility is continuously contributing to the Palestinian health sector, supporting health facilities with equipment or supporting medical procedures for people in need.

In various health-related fields, a total of 250 projects were implemented in Palestine, focusing on medical equipment. Most of the medical equipment projects targeted remote communities that suffer greatly from shortages in medical services, with targeted clinics belonging to local community organizations. The Group partners with hospitals, charitable clinics, and medical centers when implementing health projects and programs.

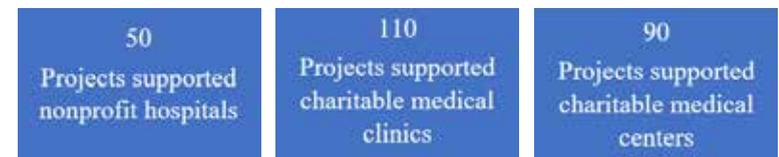
In addition, Paltel Group's social responsibility has supported a total of 351 cataract surgeries in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip for elderly people in need of such a procedure. Paltel Group made sure that these surgeries took place in the hospitals or health centers nearest to the patients in order to facilitate their access to this important medical procedure and reduce potential suffering due to traveling long distances.

Paltel Group in partnership with The Friends of Thalassemia Patients Association achieved a national goal by the end of 2013, making Palestine free of newborn thalassemia patients. This partnership also enabled the association to be honored as the best Arab awareness campaign working to limit thalassemia through the Sultan Bin Khalifa International Thalassemia Award.

In its efforts to support the Palestinian health sector, Paltel Group's social responsibility engagement funded hundreds of projects over the last 16 years, as outlined in Graphic 4.

“People used to travel 35 kilometers to see a doctor. Now, the clinic is within walking distance for all patients in town. This is the first time ever that we have a clinic in this town.”

■ Health: Completion of a molecular biology processing project in Hebron.



Graphic 4: Projects supported by Paltel Group in health-related services.

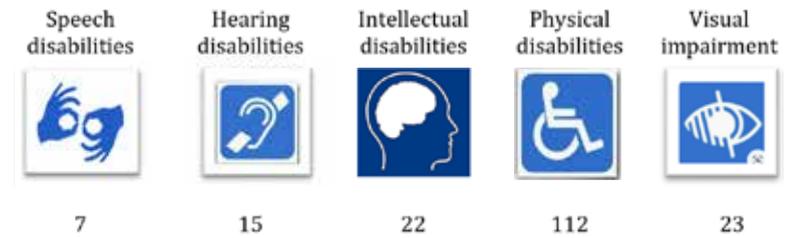
The most important, and most recent, health projects implemented by Paltel Group include making a contribution towards equipping the catheterization lab at Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah, thereby securing a new medical service that previously was not offered by the complex. Furthermore, the group equipped the microbiology lab at Hebron University that serves the local community with devices that improve operations and made it suitable to be used for educational purposes. Paltel Group also provided equipment for the Yasser Arafat Hospital in Salfit, a facility that is vital, as it targets Palestinians who live in Salfit Governorate surrounded by Israeli settlements built illegally on Palestinian land. Here, community organizations and citizens need strong backing through proper services. Moreover, Paltel Group has provided a panoramic CT scan device for Qabatya Medical Center, near Jenin, helping to save people's time and effort when needing to access this type of medical

service in the Jenin Governorate. The group has furthermore contributed to establishing charitable clinics in Al-Ezariyyeh – one of the most important and largest Jerusalem neighborhoods. Jerusalem neighborhoods have a very special importance, as they are far from services due to the geographical complications imposed by the Israeli occupation. In addition, Paltel Group has provided a Dexa Scan device for Al-Sahaba Medical Complex in the Gaza Strip, which helps citizens, especially the elderly, obtain proper checks in their residence area. Finally, it has provided CT Scan equipment for the Patients Friends Society in Jenin, where labs and CT scan centers tend to suffer from shortages in equipment as increasing numbers of patients are seeking these services.

■ Disabilities: Al-Amal Hospital for Rehabilitation, Nablus.



Through its programs that serve persons with disabilities, Paltel Group has remained committed throughout its corporate social responsibility journey over the past 16 years to backing associations that assist people with disabilities. It has provided various types of equipment and supported numerous services, including supplying necessary supportive materials as well as securing income-generating projects for persons with disabilities to allow them to enjoy economic independence and growth. During the past years, Paltel Group's social responsibility engagement has provided 179 projects for persons with disabilities, as outlined in Graphic 5. The projects that targeted associations that serve persons with disabilities considered their respective needs when prioritizing support, as summarized in Graphic 6.



Graphic 5: Projects implemented by Paltel Group to support charities, according to the type of disability (total 179).



Graphic 6: Projects implemented for persons with disabilities.

As Paltel Group presented 471 electric wheelchairs to persons with disabilities, most of the beneficiaries were able to improve their living situations and attend schools or universities or gain proper employment as a result. In the conditions of economic hardship in which persons with disabilities tend to live, obtaining an electric wheelchair means entering into a new life in which mobility becomes possible and persons can enjoy a more normal life.

With the Development and Social Partnership Program that operates under the slogan “Investing in Community,” Paltel Group’s social responsibility aims to support sustainable development projects for the community by working in cooperation with the community – in a strategic approach of partnering with other players for the benefit of the targeted communities. The aim of these partnership projects is to

“The first thing I thought of was hugging the chair before sitting on it. I started behaving like the head of a household because now I ask my children if they need me to bring them anything on my way back from work. Before having the chair, they used to ask me what they could get for me on their way back from school.”

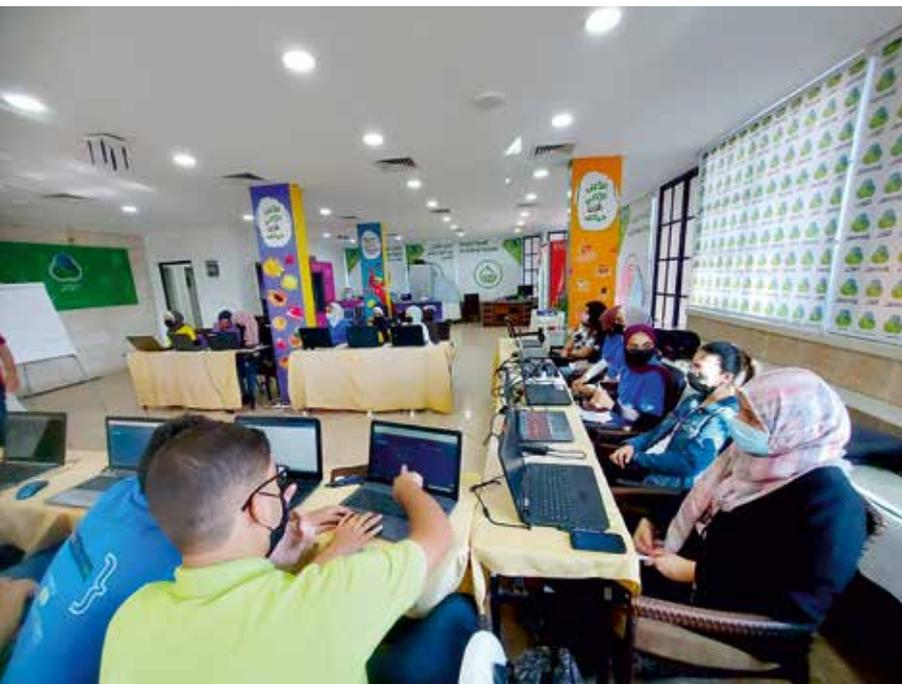
A wheelchair beneficiary

improve the living conditions of the Palestinians, especially in underserved communities, and to enhance the economic situation of these communities by improving the infrastructure and providing income-generating projects. As Paltel Group in its social responsibility projects is always committed to improving the economic conditions of youth and women, these partnerships tend to focus on these two important community groups.

These 979 developmental projects have been implemented since 2005

- 63 Public parks were implemented in marginalized areas.
- 24 Solar energy panels were installed for charitable institutions, lightening the financial burden on these associations and enabling them to use the saved money for development goals that serve their beneficiaries.
- 69 Income-generating halls were developed in charities operating in remote communities to facilitate community activities and help the charities generate revenues for the benefit of needy persons.
- 17 Municipal public service centers were implemented.
- 250 Health projects were implemented in various health-related fields.
- 32 Women’s empowerment projects were developed by implementing food processing projects for charitable organizations that helped secure jobs for around 300 women.
- 40 Nonprofit kindergartens were equipped, enabling them to host children, on the one hand, and secure proper jobs for employees, on the other.
- 121 Projects to support orphanages were implemented.
- 41 Projects to support homes for the elderly were implemented.
- 152 Development projects for universities ranged from equipping scientific and research labs to implementing playgrounds and auditoriums, supporting research and development, installing and outfitting activity halls and service facilities for students, and supporting clinics and health units.
- 170 Other projects were implemented in all sectors.

■ Students attending a summer camp in the Gaza Strip, July 2021.



Right to Decent Life Program aims to improve the economic conditions of families by securing their access to micro-projects that have the potential to continue and grow. These projects focus on enhancing household skills and experience and enable the families to capitalize on them. The program has served a total of 442 families in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, with an accumulated number of 2,254 beneficiaries in these families. Among the 442 projects that supported families, a total of 122 projects targeted families headed by women; 195 projects were implemented in the Gaza Strip and 247 projects in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Paltel Group’s Solar Energy Panels Initiative is a sustainable development program that targets nonprofit organizations and supports orphanages and



■ Women's Empowerment at the Arab Women's Union in Beit Sahour.

other associations. Seeking to help them cover part of their operational expenses, it reduces the burden of electricity bills by installing solar energy panels. The savings accumulated in electricity bills has reached 49 percent and the associations are able to use these funds for other vital development services. The annual savings for beneficiary associations exceeds the total sum of US\$182,405. Beneficiary institutions located in 24 different Palestinian localities produce 878,769 kilowatt/hour of clean energy through the electricity-generating solar panels they were provided with. In addition to the project's economic value, it forms a model of an environmentally friendly initiative.

Beneficiaries of the Solar Energy Panels Initiative

824	Orphans in orphanages
13	Orphanages
4	Municipalities
4	Associations dedicated to people with disabilities
1	Women's association
2	Health associations

Paltel Group's social responsibility is a corporate value and rooted culture that reflects the Group's commitment to responding to Palestinian society's needs. The Group continues to commit to this goal through well-planned programs based on the real needs of the Palestinian people. Social responsibility forms a main pillar in the Group's future structure and outlook.

For more details about social responsibility programs and initiatives, associations can submit a support request at www.paltelgroup.ps/#social-responsibility.

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■ Disabilities: Al-Amal Hospital for Rehabilitation, Nablus.