

Taawon

Combining Forces for Social Responsibility



By Luay Khoury



Approximately four decades ago, a group of Palestinian businessmen and intellectuals – including, the late Abdul Majeed Shuman, the late Haseeb Al-Sabbagh, the late Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan, and Munib

Al-Masri – launched the Welfare Association, now known as Taawon. This engagement came at a time when the Arab region was in the midst of a very difficult phase, and the Palestinian national project was facing the danger of being extinguished after the invasion of Lebanon, the siege of Beirut, and the expulsion of the Palestine Liberation Organization into exile in Tunis.

The goal of establishing Taawon was clear and simple, yet profound at the same time. The basic concept was based on the idea of merging the economic successes and thought leadership of Palestinians in the homeland and in the diaspora. This concept appealed to many Palestinians who joined Taawon over the years, and the new constituency worked in harmony and agreed to deploy its intellectual and financial resources to serve the Palestinian people, without becoming entangled in political conflicts, controversies, or jurisprudence. During the past four decades, Taawon has been able to build and maintain a healthy governance structure that forms the basis of its credibility among all stakeholders, including individual and institutional donors, as well as its beneficiaries and Palestinian society at large. With proper succession planning, Taawon has been able to implement best practices in running NGOs in an extremely delicate and politically volatile region. Taawon has also kept pace with numerous economic, technological, and social changes without losing sight of its vision: namely, that of the Palestinian people as citizens of an independent, free, and democratic Arab Palestine, living in dignity, prosperity, and self-fulfillment, with equitable access to opportunities to realize their full potential with distinction and creativity.

Furthermore, since its inception, Taawon has been keen to reach out to all segments of Palestinian society in terms of geography, age groups, gender, and social needs. Taawon's work has always been guided by the highest sense of national social responsibility, which has translated into the strategic goal of developing the capacities of Palestinian individuals, strengthening steadfastness, and preserving Palestinian identity. Its work is also based on a strategic planning framework that focuses on meeting the needs of its target groups while creating the necessary impact and social return on investment. Taawon's operations presently cover the sectors of education, cultural heritage preservation, community development, and the provision of emergency and humanitarian assistance as and when needed.



Taawon's financial contribution to Palestinians since its establishment stands today at around US\$850 million, making it the leading development institution in Palestine and the region.

Finally, it is worth noting that the rapid changes in the local, regional, and global landscapes require Taawon to enact the necessary institutional and structural changes that make it better equipped to deal with future challenges and risks while maximizing its impact and strengthening its commitment towards Palestine. Such changes



■ Wajid Program, early child development.



■ Taawon founders.

include redefining Taawon's role and adopting flagship programs that then can induce a ripple effect throughout the Palestinian socioeconomic ecosystem for greater impact. Flagship programs could cover more than one focus area under one theme. Regardless of the final destination of its current transformation journey, Taawon will continue to uphold and honor its mission: As a leading

nongovernmental Palestinian development organization, Taawon strives to make a distinguished contribution toward furthering the progress of Palestinians, preserving their heritage and identity, supporting their living culture, and building civil society. It aims to achieve these goals by methodically identifying the Palestinian people's needs and priorities and establishing the soundest mechanisms to maximize the benefits from the available funding resources.

■ Supporting women in the agricultural sector – Tamkeen Youth Empowerment Program – Taawon.



Luay Khoury is the chairman of the board of Taawon (Welfare Organization), a leading independent Palestinian nonprofit civil society organization, registered in Switzerland, with headquarters in Ramallah and offices in Geneva, London, Amman, Beirut, Jerusalem, and Gaza.

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■ Renovation of Al-Khalidi family residential courtyard in the Old City of Jerusalem in efforts to preserve Palestinian heritage.