



# Scaling Palestine's Tech Economy

Gaza Sky Geeks Leads the Way



By Alan  
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zone that is convenient to service Europe and the United States. Tech services do not need natural resources or capital investment. And the tech-services sector is highly inclusive for women and people with disabilities.

Most importantly, tech services immediately bring revenue into Palestine. Freelancers earn US\$600 to US\$1,500 monthly, depending on skill and experience. Remote employees earn annual salaries of US\$20,000 to US\$100,000. This is good for individuals. But freelancers increasingly compete with low-cost countries in Asia and Africa, and remote employment in overseas companies means that Palestine's best talent is unavailable for Palestinian companies.

Wider: Palestine needs to train thousands of young people annually. In 2022, Gaza Sky Geeks (GSG) delivered training to almost 5,000 participants (50 percent of them women) across Gaza, Jerusalem, and the West Bank. If just 2,500 of those participants earn US\$700 a month, they will bring US\$21 million annually into the Palestinian economy. (US\$700 is the average income of GSG's participants 12 months after graduation.) Imagine the impact on the Palestinian economy if tens of thousands of young Palestinians were trained each year!

Deeper: Those who have specialist skills do not compete for low-paying jobs. But it takes experience to become an expert. Hence, GSG

She Rises event for female freelancers. Gaza, September 2021.



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Everyone all know the challenges of building the Palestinian economy: restricted movement, the occupation, the blockade of Gaza... Under such conditions, tech-enabled economic growth is the most viable and sustainable opportunity. The internet enables Palestinian individuals and companies to avoid local restrictions by accessing overseas markets and bringing revenue into Palestine.

Markets want startup companies with innovative solutions and services that are better or cheaper than elsewhere. Worldwide, a small percentage of startup companies survive after 12 months, and a fraction are successful. Successful startups tend to have an innovative solution that captivates a market. Such innovation typically comes from world-class university research or deep knowledge from a world-leading industry, so it is understandable that currently there are few successful Palestinian startups, even if they are supported by investors, accelerators, and consultants.

Conversely, Palestine is well positioned to supply services such as coding, graphic design, translation, and accounting via the internet to overseas clients: Palestine's population of young, educated, un/underemployed is eager to learn high-value skills. English is well-spoken. Palestine is in a time



tries to place graduates into tech companies as interns to accelerate their experiential learning. Plus, GSG delivers a wide range of short training courses to help participants to specialize after completing foundational training.

Companies: Palestine needs companies to generate revenue from overseas markets to build a sustainable and strong economy. There are only a handful of Palestinian tech companies with over 100 employees. Palestine needs dozens of large tech companies and hundreds of smaller companies, each specializing in a high-value niche. To assist tech companies in Palestine, GSG accelerates eight startup companies annually. We support startups with proven products that are motivated to expand locally and regionally. GSG also partners with Palestinian tech-services companies to help them improve internal skills and access to overseas markets. For example, GSG assisted Creativity, a specialist e-marketing company in Gaza, in growing its team of experts. Creativity was founded in 2019 by two sisters, graduates of GSG, and now employs approximately 60 staff. GSG's train-to-hire program resulted in 20 additional employees joining Creativity. Similarly, GSG's Job Hunter program assisted Dash, a specialist tech-services company in Gaza, in improving its sales and marketing capabilities and winning more projects with overseas clients.

Palestine can replicate countries such as India, Vietnam, Ukraine, and Estonia that have thousands of tech-services companies, employing thousands of people. And as Palestinian employees become experts in an industry sector, they will create successful startups with compelling, innovative solutions.

Gaza Sky Geeks actively pursues partnerships with local and international companies to create internship and employment opportunities for its graduates while also generating projects for Palestinian tech businesses. GSG also seeks financial assistance. As a program of Mercy Corps, a global aid organization, Gaza Sky Geeks operates as a not-for-profit entity, relying solely on donations to fund its work. Partner with GSG now by contacting us at [info@gazaskygeeks.com](mailto:info@gazaskygeeks.com).

*Alan El-Kadhi has served as director of Gaza Sky Geeks, a program of Mercy Corps, since mid-2021. Alan had a successful UK tech startup, ran tech companies in the UK, USA, and Australia, and assisted the tech-startup sector in Australia and Vietnam.*

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