

Can Social Entrepreneurship Save Palestine?

Harnessing Social Entrepreneurship for
Economic and Social Development in
Palestine



By Lama
Amr

If you ask any Palestinian child about their dream, you will likely hear something that involves making Palestine a better place. As a Palestinian myself, my dream has always been to be an agent of change. But the challenges facing our people are significant – from high rates of unemployment to human rights violations, a poor educational system, and limited access to our natural resources such as land and water, among others.

Although there has been a significant increase in economic development aid to Palestine since 1993, we have not seen notable progress in addressing these challenges. One of the main reasons for this is that the projects implemented with this aid are not necessarily addressing the actual needs on the ground. Even if they have an impact, it is not sustainable and ends once the funding expires.

At BuildPalestine, we believe that social entrepreneurship can be the solution for Palestine. Social enterprises are businesses created to solve social or

environmental challenges and make a profit at the same time. They are effective, financially sustainable, and have a long-lasting impact. Because they are independent, they are not hindered by foreign agendas or funding restrictions, and as they grow, their impact grows with them. They interact with beneficiaries directly and constantly, which means that they are always responding



available otherwise. Since 2010, Sunbula has provided over US\$2 million in income to artisans and their families, and the organization actively contributes to preserving



Ideating at the BuildPalestine Social Innovation Bootcamp at Dar al-Kalima College.

to existing needs in an innovative, effective, and accessible way.

Sunbula's House of Palestinian Crafts, for example, is a fair-trade social enterprise in Jerusalem that supports hundreds of local Palestinian artisans and their families through income-generating opportunities. Through its store in Jerusalem and an online platform, it unlocks access to global marketing for local artisans, which is hardly

Palestinian heritage and culture through innovative products such as embroidery manuals that document all kinds of Palestinian stitches.

Another social enterprise, Flowless, a startup established in 2018, leverages cutting-edge technology to provide communities with sustainable and reliable access to water. Starting with a system to detect water leaks for utilities,

Baker Bozeyeh, the founder of Flowless water management solution company.

Sunbula, a fair trade organization in Jerusalem.



the company has expanded its solutions to include farmers, helping them optimize their operations with technology to reduce water consumption and increase energy conservation. Flowless has implemented multiple projects in Palestine and abroad, and since its launch, it has helped save 300,000 cubic meters of water and improved the water supply for over 23,000 people. Starting with three co-founders, the Flowless team has grown to 11 employees, all dedicated to making a positive impact in Palestine and beyond.

Social entrepreneurship can help Palestine gain economic strength, ensure high-quality education, encourage innovation, preserve its rich cultural heritage, and develop a mindset of environmental stewardship. By empowering and incubating agents of change who make an impact in our community and profit at the same time,

we can make a real difference through resilience and impactful businesses. At BuildPalestine, we offer three primary programs: The BuildPalestine Summit, which inspires community members to take action; the Social Innovation Bootcamp, which helps identify problems and develop innovative solutions; and the Fellowship program, which supports established social enterprises to enhance their business models and implement systematic methods for measuring and improving their impact.

If you wish to stay connected to a global network of people dedicated to social innovation in Palestine, I invite you to join our virtual community *Taht al-Zaytouna*, Under the Olive Tree, designed for people who are working on social impact projects for Palestine and for those looking to support them. You can subscribe by visiting our website at www.buildpalestine.com.

Let's build a thriving, resilient Palestine through investing in social entrepreneurship.

Lama Amr is the executive director of BuildPalestine. She holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Birzeit University and also co-directs the Founder Institute acceleration program in Palestine for tech startups. She possesses significant expertise in crowdfunding and in designing support programs for entrepreneurs in Palestine.

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