

Project Name: Gaza Sky Geeks

Organization(s): Gaza Sky Geeks (Mercy Corps)

Dates of Implementation: 2011 ongoing

Country: Palestine (West bank and Gaza)

Partner(s): Google for Startups, Founders and Coders, Ibtikar Fund, Stripe, Careem, Upwork

Funder(s): Google, Gov. of Netherlands, Gov. of Canada, Coca Cola Foundation, Bank of Palestine, PalTelGroup, Asfari Foundation, Vitol Foundation, Skoll Foundation, and others

Website: gazaskygeeks.com

Project description: Gaza Sky Geeks is a program that is aimed at addressing the problem of lacking of sustainable income generation opportunities in local economy for young, skilled and semi-skilled Palestinians. This program consists of four components: (1) A six-month coding education for web-developing; (2) Online freelancing education that helps youth to market their talent in global digital marketplace; (3) Start-up acceleration for pre-seed stage tech startups; (4) Community building. In all these four areas above, Gaza Sky Geeks focuses on closing digital gender disparity via activities supporting female involvement in tech and entrepreneurship.

Target Population: Skilled or semi-skilled young Palestinians with strong motivations but fail to find employment locally. Although this program does not have formal cutoffs or restrictions, due to the nature of intensive coding and freelancing positions, these youth may have graduated from the formal education systems (bachelor's degree typically).

Results to-Date and/or Target Results:

From its inception, Gaza Sky Geeks has already reached approximately 20,000 young people. By 2021, GSG expects to operate its core programming in major cities in the West Bank such as Nablus and Hebron.

Primary indicators include:

- Income generated
- Jobs secured online
- Revenue generated, and investment capital raised
- Community satisfaction / NPS scores
- Community volunteering rates
- Mentorship engagements conducted

All indicators are disaggregated by gender and some indicators by geography.

Interesting Features & Innovations:

-Pay-it-forward model ensures the sustainability of this project as some alumni of previous cohort are rehired back into the system as teacher and mentors.

-Expanding the reach beyond Gaza through community building activities that are conducted under the sub-brand called "Geek Labs".

-GSG can generate revenue through commercial outsourcing work and acting as a hiring agency for online talents.

-GSG enables youth to be employed or self-employed with high income: an entry level web developer in Gaza can earn \$10,000-12,000 per year, which is approximately 12 times per capita GDP in Gaza.