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**UNRWA'S GAZA GATEWAY: PROVIDING A NEW CHANCE FOR GAZA'S YOUTH**

[مشروع بوابة غزة في الأونروا: إتاحة فرصة جديدة للشباب في غزة](#)

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As part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing employment prospects for young Palestine refugees in Gaza, UNRWA is piloting a new social enterprise, the Gaza Gateway. The initiative is designed to help young IT (information technology) graduates gain work experience and employability training in an effort to create new opportunities within the devastated Gaza economy. "It is like a survival kit. It changes your life and gives you a chance," said Ahmed, a 27 year old recent graduate involved in the Gateway. Approximately 1,000 Gazans like Ahmed graduate with computer-related degrees in Gaza each year. However, in 2014, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) data estimated a 75.1 per cent unemployment rate for Computer Science graduates, making it the sector with the highest rate of unemployment amongst the specialties studied. Refugee unemployment in Gaza reached 45.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2014, the highest level ever reported in UNRWA's PCBS-based records. The IT industry in Gaza is essentially trapped in a negative cycle: graduates need training and experience to refine their employable skills, but without a stronger skills base, companies cannot grow sufficiently to generate employment. UNRWA's new initiative responds to this challenge by building a bridge from IT graduation to private sector employability, with a view to demonstrating that Gaza can deliver competitive commercial services.

The new social enterprise is also timely - offering a beacon of hope to young people in the early recovery period following the 50 days of hostilities in summer 2014. The Gaza Gateway team and program participants were personally affected by the hostilities and some lost homes, family and friends. The opportunity to work and focus on their future is welcomed by all of them. "I was looking for a job for three years and at some point I felt like my mind stopped thinking," recalls 26 year old Rose, who works as a teamleader for the Gateway. "It was frustrating. Gaza Gateway gives us energy to achieve things despite the difficult situation." The social enterprise leverages the short and medium-term IT needs of UNRWA into a permanent part of Gaza's employment infrastructure. Business and social aims are inextricable parts of a single solution: Gaza's first learning workplace. While working with the Gateway for approximately 12 months, graduates operate as Project Associates and spend regular time in structured skills training to develop an employable CV. "There is a lot of training included, it is not just work," comments Ahmed. And Rose adds: "Gaza Gateway is different because the main purpose is training in topics that are actually relevant for the market. This gives our careers a future."

During each Gaza Gateway project, the social enterprise will identify and work with Gaza IT firms interested in sub-contracting the project and the Project Associates who have become qualified to complete the work. The firms will gain commercial experience, and the Project Associates will move to private sector employment.

The Gaza Gateway is an UNRWA initiative that is being implemented with the support of a three-year US\$ 1.3 million contribution from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). Korea is an increasingly important UNRWA donor, making generous contributions to both the General Fund and emergency appeals. Korea's total contribution to UNRWA has increased from US\$ 61,000 in 2012 to US\$ 1.1 million in 2014. Recent support has been both crucial and timely – addressing the desperate needs of Palestine refugees living through crises.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, and microfinance. Financial support to UNRWA has not kept pace with an increased demand for services caused by growing numbers of registered refugees, expanding need, and deepening poverty. As a result, the Agency's General Fund (GF), supporting UNRWA's core activities and 97 per cent reliant on voluntary contributions, has begun each year with a large projected deficit. Currently the deficit stands at US\$ 81 million.

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