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Educational Center & Kindergarten for the Unlimited Friends Association

Al Zawayda, Gaza



No. of Beneficiaries: 1,450	Person Days of Employment: 3,441
Start Date: October 1, 2021	Completion Date: August 31, 2022
Local Contribution: \$196,130	USAID Contribution: \$461,800

BACKGROUND & CHALLENGES

Established in 2006, the Unlimited Friends Association (UFA) is a non-profit, charitable organization that helps about 1,450 Gazans living in the Al Zawayda area every year. They offer a variety of programs for the local community, such as after-school teaching, support for orphans, childhood recovery, relief services for vulnerable families, and more. They rely on institutional donors and nominal fees to function.

The association saw a great need for a kindergarten and educational center. While they had a lot of ideas for expanding and improving their services, they faced one major challenge. They did not have a their own proper facility to house all their services. They had survived by operating from five small rented rooms that were mainly used as a kindergarten. The organization was forced to provide the kindergarten services during the day and the educational classes in the evenings due to limited space. They were also paying \$5,000 a year in rent alone, which severely limited any development plans.

The UFA needed more space in a specialized facility. They had land, just up the street, but did not have the funds to construct a new facility.



HOW WE HELPED

Anera's PCID team immediately realized that the association needed a proper facility to offer and expand all its activities. And, if they had a building to call their own, they would not waste their limited funding on rent.

As a first step, UFA offered its 500 square meter piece of land as local contribution. On that land, Anera constructed a **two-story building, 350 square meters per floor**, to house all the services under one roof.

The ground floor houses the **new kindergarten** including **five classrooms** and an administration office. The second floor is made up of **four classrooms**, a **computer lab**, an administrative office and a reception area.

The classrooms will be put to very good use, hosting a wide-variety of educational classes, training sessions, workshops, meetings, etc., that often had to take place in the small five rented rooms that were used as the kindergarten. The computer lab will greatly enhance the educational services offered. UFA contributed **basic furniture** for the whole building, including desks, tables, chairs, and filing cabinets. The organization also installed new **playground equipment and planted 45 trees** and plants around the building.

The new building is **fully handicap-accessible**, with an elevator, ramp, and bathrooms for persons with disabilities.

IMPACT

Expanding Services, Helping More People

The new building location is in the heart of Zawayda, providing better access for people living nearby and expanding their social, educational and developmental services to a wider geographic area. The association has already seen an increase of people coming to register from different underprivileged villages, including Taban, Khaualda, Sawarha, and Elqoraan.

Saving Money

The association will **save \$5,000** a year on kindergarten rent. And they now have electricity generated through the newly installed **solar panels**. The **electric bill has decreased by 90%** saving more than \$1,000 annually. Electricity shortages are now a thing of the past. The association is using these savings to invest in running costs, hiring new staff, and improving their services and activities provided.

Generating Income

The kindergarten now generates additional income for the association in the form of small fees. Prior, the association had the capacity for 100 kindergarten children to enroll. With the additional space, the association now can take in an additional 55 children, meaning the school will be bringing in more money. This money generated will be put back into offering better and more services to the community.

Planning for the Future

UFA is now getting the optimum use from the new building by providing a much more appropriate and hygienic facility for its beneficiaries and staff. With a proper facility and an address to call their own, UFA can now work on building better relationships and exploring more avenues for growth and development. The only English center of its kind in the area, UFA is currently working on a more comprehensive English center for an increase in the quality and quantity of services provided.

Creating Employment

In an area where employment is scarce, this intervention has created **five new employment opportunities in the kindergarten**, including **three** teachers, psychologist, an administrative assistant and kindergarten manager. The association is also in the process of **hiring an additional six staff for the educational center**: four English teachers, a manager and an assistant.



The completion plaque was installed at the entrance of the new building.



(from the top, clockwise)
 A gate and wall protect the property.
 The completed building.
 45 plants and trees now grow on the grounds surrounding the building.
 The USAID/Anera plaque is installed near the front door.



New playground equipment,
 part of UFA's local contribution



Preschoolers enjoying the new playground.



Waiting area at the second floor of the building.



An administrative office.



English classes were provided during the summer camp.



Handicap-accessible bathroom.

ADDITIONAL ASPECTS OF NOTE

(all IBC code compliant)

Activities held at the UFA SINCE ITS OPENING

Since the association opened the newly constructed building, UFA has conducted a five-week summer camp, commencing with a fun day sponsored by Anera and USAID. UFA also organized a beach clean-up activity on International Youth Day,



Volunteers cleaned beaches and streets on International Youth Day



Distributed t-shirts and caps to 60 youth volunteers.



Each camper got a canvas bag with a puzzle, water bottle, wipes, toothbrush and toothpaste.



100 children attended the 5-week summer camp and fun day.



(left top, clockwise)
Ramp allows access to the building for all.
Solar panels provide energy to operate the building.
Fire extinguishers are on all floors.
An emergency exit allows for a quick evacuation.



An elevator was installed allowing the building to be accessible for all.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



“ Before, the situation was so black and bleak. And so when Anera and USAID came with this lifetime opportunity initiative, it’s like they hit the light switch on. The youth that engage with this USAID project offer a fresh perspective on things, and will help change the future for many. What could be more priceless?

Taher Abu Sowawen, social worker for autistic and special needs children



“ We now have this building, space and facilities to be doing much bigger things for those we serve. We provide people from very poor backgrounds with the tools needed to have a successful future by enhancing their skills and knowledge in areas they are weak in.

Hend Karayem, English Teacher



“ Our new center is so big and beautiful. It has so much space for us – and new kids – to learn, play and grow. Today was the first day of the only summer camp I’ve ever been to. We’re learning English. I can’t wait! Today’s fun day was great. My friends and I had so much fun. I hope the center does a summer camp every year.

Salma Abu Salim, a participant of the fun day



“ This activity is very important to me on so many levels. I never knew how bad littering is for our environment and our planet. After the day was over, I actually went home to do some research to learn more about ways to protect our planet. I also told my family about my day and what I learned. They don’t have much knowledge about it either.

Adam Alilu