

Stories of change

“ I am the founder and president of the Original Heritage Association for Women in Beit Jala. In this women-led cooperative we produce handcrafted embroidery textiles, beauty products made of olive oil and we have a kitchen where we prepare food products. My dream was to start this business to help other women make a living. We partnered with the YWCA to receive training and coaching, and it has helped me to develop personally to write proposals and strengthen the business plan. The Young Business Coach we got assigned from the YWCA is very approachable and supportive. In 2 years, we would like to improve all the services and products we already offer now ”

**Rose, 50,
Bethlehem**

“ Working with young women and building their confidence and self-esteem gives me a positive energy to do even more. It’s been a real turning point in my life. The women we work with have built their businesses with love and with passion, despite living under occupation and in a male-dominated society. With our help they can earn a decent living, assert their independence in their family and live with dignity. We’re not just getting people into work. We’re challenging stigma, stereotypes and discrimination ”

**Amerah, 24,
Young Business Coach**

Project dashboard: Empowering young women through business services and improved employment opportunities in rural areas of Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jericho

Goal

To provide mentoring and support for 80 Palestinian women to improve their businesses and strengthen the capacities of 12 Young Business Coaches in the West Bank, Palestine.

Implementing partners:



Funding Partners: Asfari Foundation
Austin Bailey Foundation
Y Care International

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Y Care International creates opportunities for vulnerable young people across the globe to change their lives for the better. Inspired by and faithful to our Christian values, we work with people of all faiths and none to build a more just world, free from poverty.



**Young Business
Coaches Supporting
Women-Led Enterprises
in the Occupied
Palestinian Territory**

From 2017 to 2018, Y Care International worked in partnership with YWCA Palestine to increase the economic and social independence of young women and women-led businesses in rural communities in Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jericho. Trained Young Business Coaches worked alongside women to build their confidence, skills and overall performance of their businesses.

The results

The Context

Young people living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories suffer from high rates of unemployment. Limited job opportunities, a mismatch between skills and job opportunities, lack of access to affordable finance and restrictions on movement due to the Israeli occupation compound this challenge. Young women are further disadvantaged due to prevailing cultural norms that often restrict their independence and mobility. A YWCA Palestine/Birzeit University study found that only 16% of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are able to join the formal labour market, either as business owners or employees. Y Care/YWCA Palestine research with women in target communities found that only 7% felt they had the right knowledge and skills to get a good job. 70% of respondents had not participated in any training activities to help them improve their businesses.

Training Young Business Coaches (YBCs)

Following on from a successful pilot, Y Care and YWCA Palestine ran a 12-month project to train 19 Young Business Coaches (YBCs, 15 female and 4 male) and match them with women working in small businesses and cooperatives across the West Bank. Through this project, we sought to demonstrate that training young business coaches is an effective way to increase productivity and income of the women they work with. Whilst also providing young coaches with new skills, confidence and networks to enhance their own livelihoods.

YBCs received theoretical and practical training in coaching techniques, marketing, business development, finance and bookkeeping. The 19 YBC graduates then provided training and coaching to 80 women working in 27 different cooperatives.

The young people trained as YBCs reported that they were more confident, independent, motivated and caring as a result of their work with women-led businesses. The project also contributed to more positive attitudes among young men and women toward cooperative working. Working with different types of associations helped to broaden YBCs' horizons and encouraged them to think about alternative employment choices, especially in relation to gender and environmental justice.

The project succeeded in improving the economic situation of the YBCs. 67% of YBCs stated that the skills, networks and relationships acquired through training have helped them to access new job opportunities. 83% of YBCs indicated an improvement in their financial situation.

The evaluation also identified a positive impact on indirect project participants, notably families of

YBCs. The professional development opportunity offered by the project enabled YBCs to use skills they acquired to help advise their families on household financial management. Parents of the young YBC participants also stated that their children have become more open-minded and social. More widely, the evaluation also found that the project contributed to a positive change in cultural norms and societal behaviour towards women's economic empowerment and participation.

Strengthening Women-Led Businesses

The positive impact of the approach on women-led initiatives was two-fold. Firstly, at the individual level, women entrepreneurs have increased their capacities, self-confidence, their ability to run businesses and to actively engage in society. Secondly, at initiative or cooperative level, where the project has helped women to develop and improve the quality and quantity of their production, facilitated their access to new markets, improved their overall management skills and expanded their networks. In turn, these improvements have led to an overall increase in income.

68% of women in cooperatives have reported an improved financial situation overall. This has had a positive impact on their families as they are now able to contribute to household spending. 77% of the women entrepreneurs stated that they have seen an increase in customers and income through increases in quality and quantity of their products.

The women involved in cooperatives who were supported by YBCs indicated that they have an increased sense of inner strength and self-confidence. Their fear and hesitation to be part of a cooperative has reduced. The project encouraged women to think of their role as active members of society. As one woman said "I feel more confident and empowered and I also have become more willing to do voluntary work for social benefit. I feel happy since I am able to help others."

The impact of the YBCs support to cooperatives has contributed to positive changes in business practices. Notably in the areas of managing accounts, calculating profit and control expenses and helping to open new channels of communication with other individuals, institutions, business owners and merchants. The cooperatives have become more organised and have increased their productivity. A president of a cooperative stated "I have developed my skills in many aspects including networking skills that lead to enhancing my relations with people and institutions. I also increased my ability to think creatively in developing future projects for women in the village."

What changed?

Our project in numbers



of women in cooperatives have reported increased income



What next?

The project contributed to positive changes in cultural norms and behaviour towards women and their role in the labour market. Young women playing a successful leadership role in the project helped to change attitudes about women's role amongst families and target communities. Learning from this work will help Y Care International and YWCA Palestine in designing and implementing new initiatives aimed at enhancing young women's social and economic empowerment.

YWCA Palestine plans to deliver a peer-to-peer education approach where university students in their final years are selected to work alongside

recently trained YBCs to enhance their skills and confidence and accompany them on field visits. YWCA Palestine also aims to establish a network of YBCs as part of their broader Economic Empowerment strategy.

To ensure sustainability of the Youth Business Coaches scheme, YWCA Palestine will increase efforts to build private sector partnerships to support YBCs and facilitate access to on-the-job training schemes. We aim to provide a platform where employers and employees come together to help tackle unemployment rates amongst young women in Palestine.