

PALESTINE

Dalia Association

History

There are approximately 10 million Palestinians around the world, but no Palestinian state. Continuing oppression and injustice deny Palestinians control over nearly all aspects of their lives. In fact, Palestinians in the Israeli occupied territory, the largest per capita recipients of international aid, do not even decide how international aid is used on their behalf.

Two years of intensive research with Palestinian civil society leaders, activists and professionals showed that the international aid system and the effects of dependency on international aid are undermining Palestinian self-determination and sustainable development. It is now clearer than ever – Palestinian civil society deserves to control its own resources so it can pursue a Palestinian-led social change and sustainable development agenda. Dalia Association was established to realize this objective.

Dalia Association is a new Palestinian community foundation that was founded by members of the Palestinian community from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Israel, and the Diaspora. We are diverse in terms of religion, gender, age, and politics, yet we are united by our commitment to mobilize, invest, and distribute resources according to local Palestinian priorities using community-based decision-making. Dalia Association was legally registered as a non-profit organization in Belgium in January 2007.

Dalia Association seeks to mobilize the resources within the Palestinian community worldwide and from friends in order to decrease dependence on international aid and reduce the negative effects of that dependence. We believe that all Palestinians can be donors, not just beneficiaries. Even Palestinians who have been pushed into poverty have capabilities that can benefit themselves and others. If each one of us puts in a dollar or contributes our talents and energy, the abundance of the community will become apparent.

The foundation is currently funded through in-kind contributions and volunteerism, with some start up expenses funded by the Sparkplug Foundation, New York and the WINGS Global Fund for Community Foundations. Board members also contribute annually. Special factors that affect our work are the post-Oslo interference of foreign governments (i.e. a highly politicized environment) and the post-9/11 anti-terrorism policies of many donors, banks, etc. We also face unique complications working under military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Current situation: Facts and figures

Geographic area served:	The West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian communities inside Israel.
Population size of service area:	About 5 million people.
Total sum of grants made in 2007:	We have not begun grant-making; only technical assistance.
Total number of grants made in 2007:	N/A
Total sum of the income/ donations in 2007:	About US \$35,000.
Single largest source of income in 2007:	WINGS Global Fund for Community Foundations.
Is there an endowment ? Yes/No.	Not yet.
If Yes, the size of the endowment:	N/A

Activities and impact

Example 1: Grantmaking: We worked extensively to develop grantmaking strategies that put decision-making in the hands of the people. Despite philanthropy’s good intentions, it is not easy to find actual mechanisms for community-based decision-making over resources, and even harder to develop mechanisms likely to work in the complex Palestinian social and political context.

We have decided to pilot three approaches. The first builds on the successes of the Central American Women’s Fund in Nicaragua. We will do grassroots outreach to encourage small women’s groups to apply. The application will be very simple. Applicants themselves will review all applications and choose eight, explaining why they believe these eight to be most worthy of funding. The eight selected groups will each send two representatives to a monthly meeting where they will give and get support and technical assistance. They will also get small, unrestricted grants of US \$3,000.

The second approach is an Arabic version of the Ashoka online Changemakers Competition. We will pose an important social question and, through grassroots outreach, encourage youth to submit their ideas online. Participants will comment on each other’s ideas. After the submission/comment period, there will be a chance for applicants to revise their ideas with the benefit of others’ comments. Then, the online community will vote for the ideas they think have the most potential to promote social change. Winners will receive cash prizes and extensive publicity. In-kind services may be offered if winners want to implement their ideas.

The last approach is an adaptation of a donor event developed by The Funding Network in London. We will host an open meeting in a village and have three to four pre-selected, community-based organizations present to the public about their activities. Assuming we have \$10,000 available to grant and 100 community members in attendance, each attendee will control \$100. They will distribute their money among the presenting organizations. This way, recipient organizations are accountable back to their neighbors/constituencies for how funds are used.

As of this writing, we have not yet implemented these grantmaking pilots, but we have “tested” the ideas extensively. People are extremely excited if somewhat skeptical. In a society that is highly dependent on international aid, the idea that we ourselves could decide how resources are used on our behalf is quite inspiring. Soon, we expect to show real impact.

Example 2: Linking: There is a huge gap between the procedures of donors and the ability of Palestinian community-based organizations to actually apply for and receive funding. As a result, only large NGOs with bilingual staff are generally able to access international funds. To fill this gap, we implemented a “linking” strategy to meet community-based organizations where they are, maintain long-term relationships with them, and link them with resources (funding, but also ideas, volunteers, expertise) that exist in the local, Diaspora or international communities.

It turned out to be much harder to “link” than we originally thought. In some cases, the gap is simply too wide. For example, some internationals want to be able to reach Palestinians at any time or place and are insensitive to the fact that mobile lines are unreliable, and Palestinians may not be able to reach their office landline when mobility is restricted by checkpoints. In some cases, we had to help Palestinian groups conceptualize an idea, write the proposal for them, and maintain all communications with the donor. This was too labor intensive; we could only provide that level of service to a few organizations. In several cases, we thought we had brokered a good agreement, but the donor backed out or changed the rules.

We currently have three proposals submitted to donors on behalf of community-based organizations and expect all to be funded. This will enable community groups that could not access funds to implement important projects; it also increases their understanding of the complexities of fundraising and builds their capacity in project planning. We also used “linking” to arrange for two Palestinian youth to participate in a training session about poverty in New York. We were able to facilitate U.S. visas for several youth from a refugee camp to exhibit their photography in the U.S. We were able to physically transport spare parts for Braille typewriters to a school for the blind. We were able to arrange for a women’s activist from a Palestinian village in Israel to provide technical assistance to a new women’s group in a West Bank refugee camp.

Overall, the impact of “linking” has been small in relation to our efforts. However, we have learned a great deal and anticipate that “linking” will grow into a permanent and important part of our program.

Operations and staffing

During its first year of operation the founding board president administered the Dalia Association without pay. For most of that time, another board member worked as a full-time volunteer. In May 2007, the founding board member resigned from the board and became the executive director, receiving a token stipend, and a new board president was chosen. In November 2007 (still in start-up phase) the first staff person was hired, paid with funds provided by the WINGS Global Fund for Community Foundations and by other donors. She does community outreach and assists with all aspects of organizational development, including website, board development, planning, etc.

Community foundation income

Income categories

Sparkplug (a family) Foundation:	\$9,000 unrestricted, start-up costs
WINGS Global Fund for Community Foundations:	\$15,000 organizational development grant (website, strategic planning, etc.)
WINGS Global Fund:	\$5,000 toolbox grant (including brochure, translations, etc)

WINGS Global Fund:	\$6,000 travel costs for COF Fall Conference in San Francisco and CFN Liverpool conference
Board contributions:	\$2,000 unrestricted
Other individual contributions:	\$500 unrestricted
In-kind (e.g., rent, IT, legal, staff time):	about \$44,000

Purposes

See Income categories above.

Permanent funds/Sustainability

Endowment building is part of our strategy, but we have not yet raised any endowment funds. We don't plan to launch an endowment campaign soon, but rather will "build as we go" in small increments. We also see mission-related income generation as an equally-important part of our sustainability strategy. We are pleased to have concluded a fiscal sponsorship agreement with Grassroots International in Boston that will facilitate fundraising in the United States.

Environment for philanthropy

Local attitudes

There are long, strong traditions of religious philanthropy among Muslims and Christians in Palestine. Both are traditionally aimed at relief of poverty, not social change. Islam has the concept of endowment (waqf), but assets are generally held as property not in cash. Some philanthropy is political, that is, given through factional organizations for relief or development activities. Traditionally, Palestinians are very generous to people they know, and remittances from the Diaspora are large, but because philanthropy is supposed to be private (according to Islam) and because trust for civil society institutions is low, institutional philanthropy is under-developed. There is also the fact that many Palestinians are poor, and as the largest per capita recipients of international aid, they perceive themselves as recipients, not donors.

Developing a culture of philanthropy at all levels and in all sectors of society is a high priority for our community foundation, as is re-inspiring volunteerism that characterized the Palestinian community before the Oslo era. We are beginning to devise ways for all Palestinians, all over the world, to become donors and to participate in decision-making about how collective funds are used for the social good.

Legal and tax environment

The area we cover includes territory that is legally part of Israel, and territory that is under Israeli military occupation; there is no Palestinian state. Israeli law is fairly advanced in terms of civil society, including tax incentives, but the law is not applied fairly to organizations run by Palestinian (non-Jewish) citizens of Israel. The occupied territory is divided into non-contiguous areas of Area A (under the security and civil jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority), Area B (under the security jurisdiction of Israel and the civil jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority) and Area C (under the security and civil jurisdiction of Israel). The Gaza Strip is non-contiguous to the West Bank, and it is considered by Israel to be under the control of an enemy power (Hamas). The West Bank is contiguous to Israel but a Wall divides the territory and Palestinians from the West Bank can't enter Israel without a permit, and Israeli citizens are forbidden to enter Area A. Jerusalem also has a separate status because it was annexed by Israel but this annexation is not recognized by international law. In the areas under the civil control of the Palestinian Authority, there is a Basic Law, including an NGO law that regulates NGOs, but there are no tax incentives (nor is there a

working tax collection system!). The lack of tax incentives is a problem, but not the worst we face. We have a unique opportunity to prepare ourselves to influence non-profit and tax legislation from the beginning, if and when there is a Palestinian state.

Changing attitudes and the national or regional environment

Transparency is key. We are now embarking on various outreach strategies to enable people to make small contributions, and we will report publicly how the funds are used. We are also promoting community control over grantmaking, that is, letting the grassroots decide themselves how funds are used. Over time, this should increase trust in institutions and promote philanthropy. We are also promoting ourselves to the Diaspora as a credible intermediary.

Current challenges and future developments

The challenges and future developments for the Dalia Association are covered in the Environment for philanthropy and Activities and impacts sections above. Additional information on philanthropy in Palestine is available in a recent study conducted by the Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement in the Arab World at the American University in Cairo:

<http://www.aucegypt.edu/ResearchatAUC/rc/gerhartcenter/Pages/Publications.aspx>

Meeting organizational support needs

We are members of the local Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA). Meetings and e-mails help us to know what international NGOs are doing in our area. We are members of Grantmakers without Borders, through whom we get advice, current news of relevance, and referrals to others in the network. Our executive director is a Synergos Senior Fellow (2008-2010) and we expect this to generate ideas, partnerships and funding. The WINGS Global Fund for Community Foundations has been a great source of moral support and advice.

International links

Nora Lester Murad presented on the unintended consequences of international aid at the annual conference of Grantmakers without Borders (June, 2006). She presented the research on which our concept paper is based at an international peace building conference run by HiPEC at Hiroshima University in Japan (March, 2007). Former board member Trees Zbidat represented Dalia Association at the Council on Foundations community foundations conference in San Francisco (September, 2007). Nora Lester Murad represented Dalia Association at the Community Foundation Network (UK) conference in Liverpool (September, 2007). Nora Lester Murad attended the First Regional Consultation on Arab Philanthropy sponsored by the Maktoum Foundation in Dubai, and she participated in the orientation for Synergos Senior Fellows in New York (February, 2008). All these have led to sustained relationships, sharing of advice; Synergos is expected to produce peer exchanges and collaboration.

Additional resources

Our concept paper, 2006 annual report and other documents are available under “Publications” on our website at www.Dalia.ps. The 2007 annual report will be available shortly. Interested parties can sign up to receive the electronic newsletter.

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