

100 PROJECTS FOR PEACE APPLICATION FOR KATHRYN WASSERMAN DAVIS

Mission:

Through micro-financing and creating networks of entrepreneurs, young Palestinian students, and civic organizations, we strive to tackle a deeply neglected socio-economic element of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by improving the social welfare of Palestinian women

Background information:

Over the past 10 years, the conflict between Israel and Palestine escalated, with an increasing military operations and force applied by both sides. Economically, Palestinians were significantly affected as indicated by drastic drops in the GDP per capita and rising poverty levels.

We strongly believe that any successful implementation of peace between Palestine and Israel would only be achieved by addressing the economic situation of Palestinians, and solving the economic problems the Palestinian population suffer from. Fighting poverty and producing an educated society are essential to eliminate the roots of hatred and extremism and to create harmony and coexistence.

It is through this distinct interpretation of what constitutes the conflict and our strong commitment for the ideals of education, peace, and responsible citizenship that we put forward this proposal with its two dimensions: the economic and the educational.

Objectives:

1. To provide 10-15 female entrepreneurs, primarily widows from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with microloans ranging from \$500 to \$750, depending on the needs of each individual business project.
2. To involve 20-30 University students in planning, organizing, and executing the business proposal through mentoring. We will inspire them to be more active and involved, as building a society starts from the roots, i.e. the youth.
3. Incentivize involvement of university business students by working with their universities so that project participants receive course credit.
4. Building a partnership between the parties above and ASALA, "a leading Microfinance institution active in providing loans to women."
5. Stimulate entrepreneurship through local partnerships and field work to give those who have economically suffered from the recent years of conflict, the chance and hope to rebuild their lives.

Methodology:

The project can be divided into three components. The three components will be working simultaneously:

a. The first dimension: Microfinance to underserved individuals

As mentioned earlier the initiative will adopt the method of Microfinance. **10 to 15** micro-loans will be provided for those who have been traditionally underserved by mainstream financial institutions to start or expand new profitable small-scale businesses. The businesses will be assessed and required to be able to repay the loan within 12 months. This will be achieved in cooperation with the Palestinian Business Women Association "ASALA," which has been active in providing loans to women since 1997. They have been involved in over 9,000 successful microloans to date.

b. The second dimension: Universities' active role

Twenty to thirty students - mainly Business and Economics majors - will be chosen by Birzeit University and Alnajah University, the two top universities in Palestine, to work with us and ASALA throughout the project. These students will be in charge of helping each woman entrepreneur in planning, organizing, and executing her project for the entire duration of each loan (1 year). By this they not only gain a valuable experience that will further educate them in their fields of study, but most importantly, they will be introduced to new and different ways of thinking. They will be encouraged to challenge themselves, to

engage in community service, and to better their society and become responsible citizens. They will be gaining academic credit towards their degrees in exchange for their contribution.

c. The third dimension: Building a sustainable partnership model

We strongly believe that improving social welfare cannot be accomplished by one demographic in a given society. Hence, we bring together different parties along with their best practices and skills in pursuit of a common goal. ASALA has extensive experience and professionalism in the field of microfinance, yet it lacks the human and monetary capital. Universities and their students have the knowledge and the human capital yet they lack opportunities to practically apply it within a real world setting. The women entrepreneurs have the skills and the ideas yet they lack the capital and business knowledge to execute it. We have been working closely with all three parties for over a year and believe that a connection between them would synchronize their model into a sustainable partnership that will continue to grow and help increasing numbers of Palestinian women rise out of poverty.

Sustainability:

This project is not a short term project in any way.

- Multiplier Effect: The money given out will be returned within 1 year. We will use this money to give further loans to other needy women.
- ASALA: Less than a historical 2% default rate on loans will assure that the money is in the right place.
- Organization: We envision this project as the core of a bigger and a greater effort to reach a greater audience in different settings. We have been endorsed by former president Clinton and will be presenting our model to the top 1000 student leaders in this coming “Clinton Global Initiative” conference this coming February. After the traveling phase of this project, we aim to improve our operations and work with more students to eventually establish an organization with the sole responsibility of micro-lending through our model.

Time:

The project will be executed during the summer of 2009.

Anticipated Outcomes:

1. A measurable increase in the monthly income of each of the Micro loan receivers by the fourth month of the loan, of at least 25%.
2. Creating a bond between the ASALA NGO and the university student body, where students help the organization as part of their community service and experience requirement.
3. The launch of an initiative/project by the group of students aimed at improving an aspect of their community.
4. Media coverage of the initiative to spread the idea and promote more initiative and additional projects.