

Taawon Strategic Directions 2023-2025...



...Towards Empowering the Palestinian Individual



To determine the **strategic directions** for empowering the Palestinian Individual for 2023-2025, Taawon conducted extensive desk research and reviewed global trends and resources on socio-economic development that are related to the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**) to understand the current socio-economic context in Palestine and recognize development opportunities.

Given Taawon's mission, and in line with the requirements of empowerment in today's world, the organization will focus its efforts and interventions on empowering Palestinian individuals from various categories, especially youth, by building their competencies and skills in diverse and complementary areas, to become adaptable, up-to-date, and effective individuals, thus contributing to making a positive impact on their community and its development.



Accordingly, five themes were identified as future strategic directions for Taawon to focus on holistically:



Strategic Direction No. 1: **Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

Background:

Due to the challenges and rapid changes in today's world on all levels, in addition to technological progress and the rise in digital economies and the increased dependence on technology in business and daily life of societies, entrepreneurship and an innovation mindset have become an important requirement. This is due to the up-to-date opportunities and solutions they offer in a flexible and quick way, which contributes to creating job opportunities, advancing economic progress in communities, and reducing unemployment rates. **Today, supporting the entrepreneurial mindset and advancing it is a core requirement to enable individuals to seize available opportunities and deal with challenges. It is also important to have an integrated ecosystem that focuses on fostering this mindset in a comprehensive and cumulative way in addition to providing a nurturing and supportive environment for this mindset.**

Long-term Goal:

Contribute to developing the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem in Palestine

Key Fact:

With less than 300 tech startups, limited early-stage funding, and no success stories yet (in terms of high valuations and exit deals), the startup ecosystem in Palestine is still fragmented, with limited connections to regional and international markets.

(Wamda – Does Palestine have startups that are ready for investment?)

Insights on Innovation & Entrepreneurship

The last twenty years in Palestine witnessed significant growth in enrollment in higher education, and there are thousands of PhD and Master's degree holders in various fields. Universities also increased their focus on entrepreneurial and innovative education, leading to an increase in entrepreneurship and startups, verified through several promising numbers and statistics indicating a high rate of education among youth in Palestine. **(Innovation and the Digital Economy in Palestine 2020)**

The innovation sector ecosystem in Palestine suffers from dispersion and irregularity due to numerous factors, and the legal environment also poses a major obstacle for many investors and entrepreneurs in Palestine. **(Innovation Center in Palestine 2020)**

R&D expenditures and the number of researchers in Palestine remain quite low, and weak links with industries hamper growth and lead to lost opportunities **(State of Palestine, Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals 2020)**

Despite several efforts on a national level to support innovation & entrepreneurship, its impact on economic development is unclear. **(Innovation & Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in the Palestinian Occupied Territories)**

Entrepreneurship is considered a solution for youth unemployment and a means for women's empowerment in the Arab World. **(UN Digital Library)**

There are fewer women entrepreneurs in Palestine partly due to the low number of women in entrepreneurship-related studies and in studies related to science, engineering, technology, mathematics (STEM) and business (compared to men). In addition, women have fewer opportunities to access credit than men. **(The World Bank - Enhancing Employment Opportunities for Palestinians 2020)**

Strategic Direction No. 2: The Future of Jobs – Upskilling and Reskilling

Background:

The changes we are witnessing today in the labor market and the future of jobs will lead to the eradication of certain jobs as we know them today and the creation of new jobs that we cannot predict that will require agile individuals capable of adapting and responding to these changes, equipped with knowledge and skills that enable them to thrive in today's world.

To bridge the gap created by this rapid change, **we must work to develop these skills and continue to enhance them; focus on identifying them and following up on them; and use methods and methodologies to build on and develop them to enable individuals to seize new opportunities in the labor market.**

Long-term Goal:

Contribute to enhancing skills and developing capabilities and competencies in line with the requirements of the future of jobs.

Key Facts:

Focusing on the technological skills and knowledge of individuals will be the ideal solution to keep pace with the rapid developments in the Arab region and around the world. It is important to develop the skills of workers and employees of the public and private sectors to be able to maintain their positions in the labor market and evolve in their careers. Economic growth and prosperity lies in empowering workers in digitization and renewable technologies across sectors.

(World Economic Forum report)

Insights on The Future of Jobs – Upskilling and Reskilling

There is a relative weakness in the educational ecosystem in Palestine and its lack of ability to prepare individuals who are well-qualified for future jobs and have the necessary skills acquired over years of study, bearing in mind that more than 3,000 Palestinian university students graduate every year from the Information Technology branch, but few of them get jobs in this field, as they lack the skills that meet the requirements of technology companies and their customers. (**Project for Youth & Employment in Palestine – Techstart 2020**).

Because of the gap in agile and adaptable skills, many employers report that the need to focus on reskilling or upskilling continues to grow. Respondents indicated that reskilling and upskilling affects, on average, 62% of their workforce, and that by 2025 this focus will increase to include an additional 11%. Despite the great importance of continuing to reskill and upskill, work on this aspect within all labor sectors is still weak, as only 42% of employees in general get opportunities at work to reskill and upskill. (**The Future of Jobs Survey, World Economic Forum 2020**).

The future of jobs is closely related first to innovation and emerging technology, and second to the development of employees' skills and competencies. It is expected that 80 million jobs will be replaced with smart machines and robots, and that many jobs will disappear due to automation. For example, but not limited to: jobs in data entry, retail, administrative assistants, and others. (**Jobs That Automation Will Replace or Eliminate by 2030 – Team International 2021**).

In Palestine, the lack of skills required by the job market is apparent in the overall unemployment rate, which is about 29% in all areas. And if we look at youth ages 15 to 24, the unemployment rate is at 42% in both Gaza and the West Bank, which places Palestine as the eighth country with the highest unemployment rate among youth in the world, indicating a major gap in the skills required today and the lack of continuous development of skills and competencies in the labor market, as required by the rapid change in our world today. (**Innovations of the United Nations Development Program in Eradicating Poverty in Palestine. 2020-borgenproject.org**).

The informal economy and informal labor force play an important role in the Palestinian labor market. Various sources (including the ILO and the World Bank) indicate that more than half of workers are employed unofficially. (**European Training Institute – Development of Education, Training and Employment in Palestine, 2021**).

Workers in various sectors, including employers, employees and graduates, confirm that the skills gap has become one of the biggest challenges today. Private sector companies confirm that they are facing an acute shortage of workers with the required technical and soft skills, and employers believe that their current employees do not have sufficient skills. Many companies indicate that they have had to hire people who do not meet the requirements of their jobs or have only 50% or less of the skills they need for their business, and they attribute this to a lack of these skills. (**AWRAD – Skills Gap and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory**).

Strategic Direction No. 3: Quality Education and Continuous Learning

Background:

Today, quality education and continuous learning in its diverse dimensions are essential in preparing empowered individuals who are keeping pace with their world and able to adapt to it in a way that opens horizons and focuses on developing competencies and skills. Students who will graduate twenty years from now have not entered school yet, so how can we prepare the next generation for jobs that have not yet been created, dealing with technologies that have not yet been invented, and solving problems that have not yet appeared? How can higher education systems offer specializations that are compatible with an undefined labor market?

The focus should be on **providing quality education opportunities for all and contributing to enhancing an education ecosystem able to prepare citizens that are capable, empowered and qualified to meet the requirements of the times in a way that serves their society and drives economic growth in their country.**

Long-term Goal:

Contribute to supporting quality education and continuous learning.

Key Fact:

The Human Capital Index (HCI) shows that children in the West Bank and Gaza complete 11.4 years of pre-primary, primary and secondary school by age 18. However, when years of schooling are adjusted for quality of learning, this is only equivalent to 7.5 years—a learning gap of 3.9 years.

(World Bank: Investing in Palestinian Children's Health and Education to Build Human Capital and Promote Growth 2018)

Insights on Quality Education and Continuous Learning

Technical and vocational education and training programs are often male-biased, due to generalized gender inequalities and pervasive stereotypes, which affect women's access and participation in certain professional fields. **(UNESCO Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training 2021-2026)**

The failure of the education system to prepare students for the 4th Industrial Revolution—where artificial intelligence and technology advancements will quickly replace traditional jobs—will increase unemployment among the youth. **(Birzeit University 2021)**

Higher education indicators show that approx. 60,000 Palestinian students enroll each year in higher education, and that only 22.5% of them are enrolled in fields related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), 44% are female students while 56% are male. **(World Bank 2019)**

SDG 4 on Quality Education also focuses on the need to increase scholarships for higher education that ensure that the largest possible number of students have access to educational opportunities, according to the text of sub-goal 4 (b) “significantly increase the number of scholarships available to developing countries on a global level ... This includes scholarships for vocational & technical training, information and technology, communications, engineering, technical and scientific programs in developed and developing countries, by 2020.” **(UNESCO 2016)**

The Human Capital Index (HCI) indicated that children born in the West Bank and Gaza today are less likely to contribute to the labor market as a productive force and are estimated to not exceed 58% when they reach the age of 18 if they have access to a full education and health services as they are available today. This percentage is higher than the average for the Middle East and North Africa region and middle-income countries but is still considered low if it continues at this pace. **(West Bank and Gaza Strip / Human Capital Index 2020)**

Strategic Direction No. 4: **Community Engagement**

Background:

The inclusion of young people, in particular, through community engagement is of great importance in empowering them, given that young people are the mirror of today's world and a reflection of its requirements and needs, and no change can be achieved without working with young people in a participatory manner. It plays a huge role in enhancing their development in many areas, especially if they are included at the level of planning, decision-making and responsibility. Community engagement among young people enhances their life skills, knowledge and values, and increases the motivation of individuals to bring about positive change. Therefore, work must be done to increase engagement among young people by **offering volunteer opportunities for them to actively participate in various fields and providing them with platforms to be part of identifying challenges in their community and coming up with solutions and implementing them, which increases their sense of responsibility and belonging.**

Long-term Goal:

Contribute to stimulating community engagement

Key Fact:

Youth and young adults comprise almost half the population and suffer from marginalization and exclusion from participation in public and political life. They also suffer from increased social pressures and a lack of equality in their social, economic and political life.

(United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) – Wellbeing of Youth in the Occupied Palestinian Territories 2021).

Insights on **Community Engagement**

For every community to benefit from the positivity of youth engagement in their society, we must look for opportunities to involve them in a comprehensive and collaborative way, to provide them with the space to work and contribute to the development of their community.

(Principles for Positive Youth Development – actforyouth)

Studies have shown that youth engagement in their community leads to higher academic performance and improved social and emotional well-being, as it helps them build valuable skills and networks that contribute to making them active representatives in their community. **(Youth.gov)**

Opportunities for young people to participate effectively and assume responsibility in Palestinian society are still limited, especially for girls who suffer from limited access to appropriate services.

(Adolescents Engagement in Palestine, UNICEF 2017)

Strategic Direction No. 5: Culture & Cultural Heritage

Background:

Today, culture in all its dimensions, outlooks and various fields that have emerged from it, as a result of global developments, has become a major focus in the social and economic development of any society, and a major factor for empowering its members, due to its contribution to enhancing innovative skills and creative thinking among individuals. It is crucial to enhance the cultural dimension that reflects the system of values, customs, beliefs and the collective narrative in all the different areas that make up the identity of any society and reflect its uniqueness. Culture and its connection to knowledge production and the various industries that emerged from it make it a major pillar for fostering creativity and innovation and a key driver for what is now called the creative economy which has become one of the fastest-growing sectors globally which contribute to job creation and entering global markets. It also paves the way for new ideas and renewable technologies, widening the circle of people involved in the production of art and culture.

This requires the **development of skills and competencies in the field of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) to seize the opportunities available in this field, and open new horizons and diversified work, and enhancing the cultural dimension in all areas, in order to prepare global citizens who are deeply rooted in their cultural identity while being open to the world and its diversity of cultures.**

Long-term Goal:

Contribute to enhancing culture and cultural heritage

Insights on Culture and Cultural Heritage

Cultural tourism is one of the most important growing economic sectors in the world today and constitutes a major source of tourism revenues in the world and is closely linked to culture, heritage and heritage places. According to the latest WTTC studies in 2019, cultural tourism accounted for 40% of total European tourism, generating 319 million jobs and more than €30 billion in revenue each year. **(Willie Electronic Library - The future of heritage preservation 2021)**

UNESCO has attached importance to the issue of cultural heritage and the need to preserve and renew it as a major theme in sustainable development because it is linked to social inclusion and the promotion of equality, in addition to the fact that culture renews economic opportunities and stimulates creativity, entrepreneurship and employment. Cultural services and goods strengthen local markets and contribute to the empowerment of all individuals of all categories. UNESCO also emphasized that the protection of architectural heritage promotes the development of national identity and enhances a sense of belonging. **(UNESCO)**

Culture plays a key role in the requirements of quality education for today's world, which is based on enhancing creative and innovative skills, creative thinking, and other aspects that cannot be enriched or developed without strengthening the cultural aspect of education. The **STEM** approach has been reinforced with the element of art to become **STEAM**, due to the importance of adding a dimension related to values in education for the generations of today and tomorrow. This approach focuses on the importance of including cultural skills and knowledge, multicultural dialogue, diversity, and tangible and intangible heritage in the educational curriculum. Activities related to culture (such as museums, libraries, theaters, and heritage sites) enrich the educational process, which prepares generations to open up to global and multicultural societies. **(Implementation of Culture within the Framework of the Sustainable Development Goals – Culture Action Europe)**

Cultural industries and their association with creativity and innovation play a major role in supporting productive activities and stimulating employment and economic growth. Artists and workers in the creative sector and their association with technology today greatly enrich many sectors and industries related to innovation and entrepreneurship. **(UNESCO)**

Cultural engagement enables inclusion among people regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnic origin, religion, and economic and social status. It is a driver of development that stimulates gender equality, freedom of expression, identity building, civic empowerment, and the promotion of economic growth. **(UNESCO)**

Focus areas for interventions

Community Engagement

- Providing platforms for dialogue among young people.
- Fostering a supportive environment for community engagement in Palestine.
- Providing opportunities for community engagement for young people.

Quality Education and Continuous Learning

- Mobilization towards a supportive educational ecosystem at all levels in Palestine.
- Empowering teachers and preparing them as a core element in the educational ecosystem.
- Providing learning opportunities that develop 21st-century skills for a generation of learners on all educational levels.
- Providing quality educational opportunities for all segments of society in higher education.
- Supporting the provision and enhancement of a school environment that employs technology and educational methodologies with an approach that integrates the science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) approach in education.

Culture and Cultural Heritage

- Developing innovative skills in the field of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs).
- Contributing to the preservation of archaeological and heritage sites.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship:

- Developing and strengthening the innovative and entrepreneurial mindset of children and youth of all age groups.
- Supporting the incubating environment for innovation and entrepreneurship in Palestine.
- Supporting entrepreneurial ideas and projects in their various stages.

The Future of Jobs (Upskilling and Reskilling)

- Developing 21st-century skills among Palestinian youth in different age groups and preparing them to enter the labor market.
- Refining and developing the skills of workers in the labor market.
- Supporting Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) that focuses on advanced technical and professional skills.
- Enhancing and developing digital skills for all age groups.
- Empowering workers in digitization and renewable technology in various fields and sectors.
- Support for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) majors.

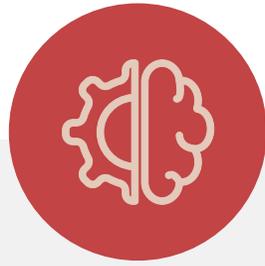


**Empowering
the Palestinian
Individual**

Types of interventions



PREPARATION



QUALIFICATION



**DEVELOPING SKILLS &
PRACTICES**



**CAPACITY
BUILDING**



**PROVIDING
OPPORTUNITIES &
OPENING HORIZONS**

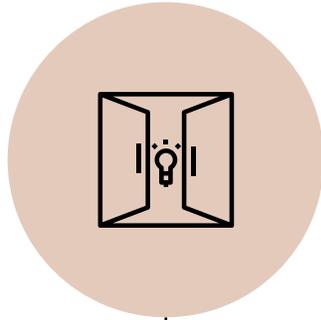


**MOBILIZING TOWARDS
SUPPORTIVE
ENVIRONMENTS**

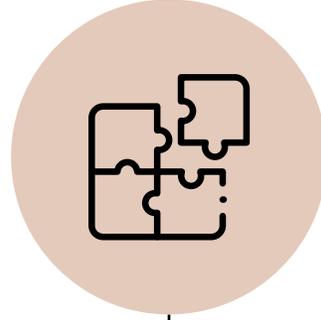


**SUPPORTING
CREATIVE
SOLUTIONS**

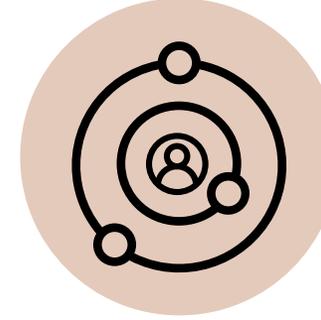
Interventions Outcomes



**CREATIVE
OPPORTUNITIES**



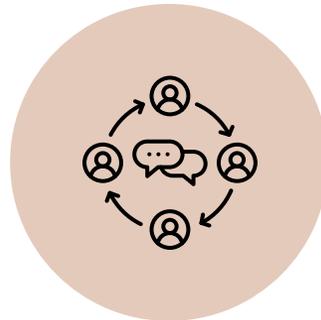
**INNOVATIVE
SOLUTIONS**



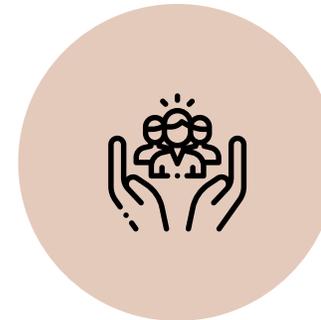
**ACTIVE
COMMUNITIES**



**INFLUENTIAL
INDIVIDUALS**



**PLATFORMS FOR
DIALOGUE**

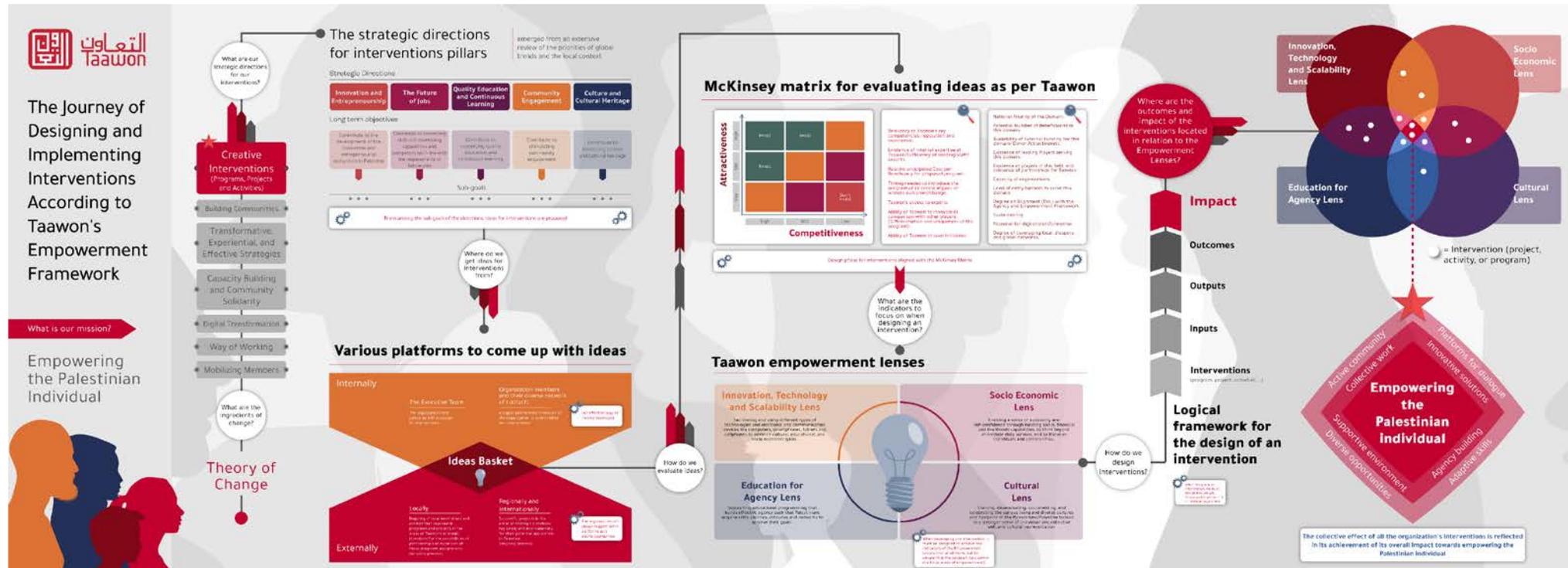


**SUPPORTIVE AND
NURTURING ENVIRONMENTS**

Intervention Outcomes

Taawon's working model will be aligned with its role, using a participatory approach in designing and implementing interventions with all partners, civil society institutions, funding agencies, donors, and specialized experts, and will be inspired by regional and international models in the organization's areas of focus to enhance diversity in attracting ideas for its interventions within the strategic directions. The work mechanism will be based on designing interventions and defining their outcomes in order to achieve the impact from Taawon's lens to empower the Palestinian individual.

[To view the infographic, click here](#)



Areas of change in how we work as an organization

Our Impact

We have defined our impact and the mechanism for measuring it.

Our strategic directions

Our strategic directions are inter-connected, rather than working in silos.

Our focus

We put Palestinian youth at the center of our work.

Members' role

Members' role will become integrated with the core of the organization's work and interventions that will amplify their giving back to Palestine in multiple areas.

Work Mechanism

Our work mechanism will focus on attracting various sectors to propose and implement our interventions.

Agile Management

We have adopted a lean management methodology based on attracting and utilizing talents in a variety of ways.

Technology's Strategic Role

We have focused on enhancing the strategic role of technology at all levels.

Communications

We have adopted renewable communication strategies to serve as a main pillar to highlight our role and enhance our impact.

Fundraising

We will focus on attracting and targeting funding that meets the objectives of our strategies.

Our hope is that by developing our work mechanism and strategic directions, defining the outcomes of our interventions, and working in partnership with all parties, this will enable us to perform our desired role as a catalyst that focuses on enhancing collective action and building communities of individuals that are leading change in a positive way toward empowering the Palestinian individual.