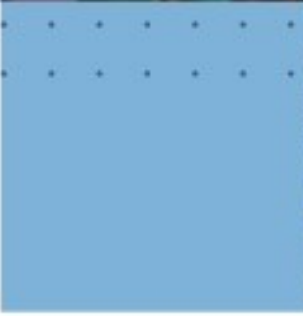
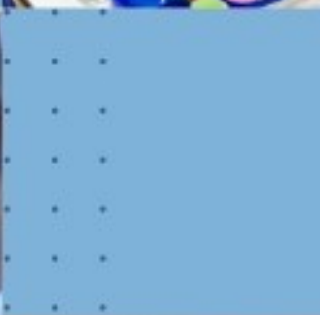
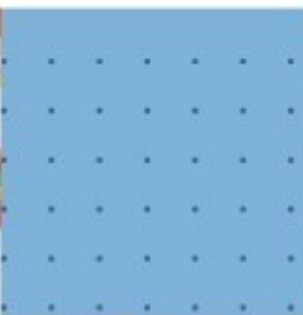


# Evaluation Report

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## "Support to Safe Spaces for Women, Youth and Children in Gaza Strip"

Supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC  
**Implemented by**  
Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA)  
Nawa for Culture and Arts Association (NAWA)

True Future-Rize for Consultancy and Advertising



**Evaluation Report***Support to Safe Spaces for Women, Youth and Children in Gaza Strip*

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**Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluation team. They do not represent those of implementing partners or their donors or any institutions referred to in the report.

## **Contents:**

ABBREVIATIONS	ii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Context	5
1.2 The Project	6
1.3 Project Objectives	6
1.4 Project Partners	6
1.5 Evaluation Objectives	7
2. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY	8
3. EVALUATION FINDINGS	10
3.1 Overall Evaluation	10
3.2 Relevance	10
3.3 Effectiveness	13
3.4 Efficiency	18
3.5 Impact	21
3.6 Sustainability	24
3.7 Institutional Capacity and Governance	25
4. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES	31
5. CONCLUSIONS	32
6. RECOMMENDATIONS	34
7. ANNEXES	37
Annex 1: Evaluation Terms of Reference	38
Annex 2: Documents Reviewed	45
Annex 3: List of People Interviewed	46

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BNFs</b>	Beneficiaries
<b>CDP</b>	Capacity Development Plan
<b>CFTA</b>	Culture and Free Thought Association
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>CSPM</b>	Conflict Sensitive Programme Management.
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>HRBA</b>	Human Rights-Based Approach
<b>INGOs</b>	International non-Governmental Organisations
<b>MEAL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
<b>MIS</b>	Management Information System
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NAWA</b>	NAWA Association for Culture and Arts (Deir Al-Balah)
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>oPt</b>	occupied Palestinian territory
<b>PCBS</b>	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
<b>PwDs</b>	Persons with Disabilities
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
<b>UNRWA</b>	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence Against Women and Girls
<b>WHC</b>	Women Health Centre

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is funding the "*Support to Safe Spaces for Women, Youth and Children in Gaza Strip*" project that is implemented by the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA) in KhanYounis and NAWA for Culture and Arts Association (NAWA) in the middle area. The project was initially planned for January 2019- December 2020, but due to the COVID-19 and the Gaza lockdown, it was extended till December 2021 with additional costs, so the total contribution is CHF 2'430'000.

There is enough evidence showing that the project design and implementation are relevant to the context and target groups' needs; it aligns with the national development plans, the partners' strategic plans and policies, and the Swiss Cooperation Programme Near East (2021-24). Furthermore, the partners adopted the noteworthy participatory approach in developing their strategies and interventions and their inclusive approach in extremely vulnerable geographical areas that pay particular attention to children, youth, women, and people with disabilities (PwDs). Particularly interesting is the innovative approach adopted by the partners focusing on 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, directing their efforts towards generating employment and income for youth, taking onboard youth ideas to enhance the service performance. All are signs of sensitivity towards the context and maturity of the institutions. However, there are still areas where partners can enhance and improve their institutions.

Most of the planned targets were achieved or exceeded. Beneficiaries (parents, children, women, and youth) of NAWA and CFTA were satisfied with the quality of services provided. As profiled by the beneficiaries, all activities were responsive to needs and effective. The selection criteria adopted by the partners are inclusive with no restrictions nor discrimination; children can subscribe and receive services according to their ages. The health services are provided to all women in the middle and southern part of the Gaza Strip. Partners invested efforts in building networks and platforms among CBOs and NGOs. A successful result of this effort is Wissal Network; it connects institutions specialised in service provision for women and PwDs. Both partners are engaging and practising environmentally friendly activities. Importance was given by the partners to non-violent approaches/ modalities of expression, encourages various forms of dialogue and playing positive roles engaging youth in neighbourhoods' committees and reconciliation committees with positive results.

The two organisations were flexible and agile, adapting their interventions to the changed circumstances due to the pandemic outbreak maintaining their capacity to provide service. In general, the impact was evaluated by the beneficiaries as remarkable.

### Learning

- Adopting community-based approaches and initiatives, voluntarism promotion, advocacy, and social accountability demonstrated effectiveness.
- The core funding as a funding modality is highly effective as it allows the institutions to develop and provides them with the flexibility to respond to changing environments. The partners' response to the COVID-19 emergency is clear evidence.
- Introducing freelancing training in NAWA and CFTA will likely impact youth employment. Therefore, continuation and diversification to facilitate TVET alike training are rather

important. Specific fund allocation - project funding modality - could be an appropriate tool to support partners to enhance this kind of engagement.

- Involvement of the youth to deliver some activities to other targeted groups, namely children, has the dual benefit for the development of the youth characters and experience as well as for the children as recipients.
- The partners' participatory approach for developing their strategies and the design for their interventions resulted in developing responsive action and enhancing community ownership.
- The quality of the partner's produced reports does not reflect the good achievements.
- Networking and partnership among CBOs, NGOs and official ministries enhance complementarities, efficiency, and effectiveness of the interventions and programmes. It can be as well a tool to improve performance and learning.
- The partners' inclusive approach with particular attention to PwDs resulted in being very attractive and, to some extent, effective.

### **Best Practices**

- Engaging the family members in some activities created a good impact at the level of the family relationships.
- Building the capacities of parents and children helped them be more interactive with the digital learning process.
- Regular updating of the organisations' manuals and policies enhanced their performance.
- Continuous capacity building of the partners' staff members improved their performance.
- Promoting environment-friendly practices among different community members through the performed scientific environmental research.
- Coordination and networking with NGOs, ministries and CBOs enhanced the outreach activities such as building the capacities of educators, community initiatives, and advocacy issues.
- Engaging voluntary youth in children's activities has improved their experience and attitudes. In addition, training and involving youth and children in advocacy have enhanced the leadership skills among children and youth.
- The partners' inclusive approach with particular attention to people with disabilities made them attractive for this vital segment of the society beyond their geographical areas.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

There is no doubt on the relevance of the CFTA and NAWA within their geographical areas and the interventions they are conducting. They are operating in extremely vulnerable areas, implementing needed and responsive interventions. The modalities of implementation are sound encompassing participatory approaches from the design to the evaluation. Supporting civil society organisations, especially in Gaza and particularly in the specific geographical areas and target groups, remain of utmost importance. At the same time seeking gradual mechanisms to achieve sustainability is equally important. Several findings and issues have been identified and presented in recommendations for the two partners and SDC. Key recommendations are:

**A. Strategic Level:**

- Proactively engage with partners through the Steering Committee, mainly at the strategic level, while ensuring the achievement of agreed-upon benchmarks.
- Knowing that both organisations are in the process of developing their strategies, it's somewhat relevant to cooperate, benefiting from the strength of each other.
- Encourage partners to cooperate and identify commonalities while developing their strategic plans; simultaneously, identify means to ensure that this is becoming a partners' practice and not a donor-driven approach.

**B. Governance level**

- Engage in a sound institutional development with specific and clear time-bound milestones and financial allocations, with a particular focus on internal processes, communication, update institutional structures and work modalities.
- Given the above, update the HR skills development plans to accommodate the needs and ensure the actualisation of the gained skills.

**Specific for NAWA:**

- Institutionalise the decision-making process and equip the senior management with the required skills
- More clarity is needed regarding NAWA's engagement in the KG.

**Specific for CFTA:**

- Institutionalise the promoted decentralised approach in the decision-making process.
- Reinforce the MEAL with needed resources, including human resources, thus improving reporting.
- Keep on working on cooperation and networking among CBOs and NGOs.
- Encourage volunteerism, providing remuneration and prioritising them during job openings.
- Enhance advertisements for any service provided through means other than papers.

**C. Activities level**

- Identify dynamics that encourage parents, especially males, to participate in project activities.
- Expand the non-formal education activities focusing on literacy and numeracy as well as 21st-Century skills.
- Engaging youth, pay more attention to specialised training that opens job opportunities.

**Specific for NAWA:**

- Expand beneficiary base to include youth; however, this needs to be done realistically without overloading the institution. In this, CFTA experience can turn to be useful.
- Improve outreach in the geographical focus using different means.
- Promotion of NAWA's activities among the parents of KGs children.

**Specific for CFTA:**

- Provide, when possible, work space for freelancers and provide contracting and contractual support.
- Keep on working on cooperation and networking among CBOs and NGOs.
- Refresh infrastructure and tools to improve people with disability inclusion.

**D. For SDC funding**

- Supporting civil society organisations, especially in Gaza and particularly in the specific geographical areas and target groups, remain of utmost importance; while seeking gradual mechanisms to achieve sustainability.
- Support partners institutional development with specific and clear milestones and budget lines. Particular attention is to be given to developing partners' internal processes, updating institutional structures, and developing human resources skills.
- Although SDC focus is youth engagement, it should not neglect the value of NAWA's work with children, allowing a natural evolution of NAWA's engagement to include youth.
- Support partners to identify dynamics that encourage male parents to participate in project activities.



## INTRODUCTION

### Context

The Gaza Strip is one of the most densely populated areas worldwide, with more than two million inhabitants. The Strip faces multi-layered challenges and unique constraints. The already dreadful humanitarian and development situation since 2007 has been aggravated by four-armed conflicts, the internal Palestinian divide, almost 14 years of Israeli imposed blockade<sup>1</sup>, and lately the COVID-19 Pandemic. The blockade is marked by substantial movement and access restrictions of people and goods. In addition, basic service provision is inadequate, including drinkable water, electricity, education, and health services.

One million children in the Gaza Strip have limited access to essential services, of whom 413,000 children (201,600 girls) have restricted access to safe and clean drinking water. Medical and psychosocial needs in the Gaza Strip are overwhelming the capacities of health and child protection service providers. Half a million individuals require education assistance in oPt, of whom are 489,000 children (234,516 girls), with 9,800 are persons with a disability.<sup>2</sup> The outbreak of COVID-19 hit the oPt, including Gaza, in three waves during 2020; the third was the harshest, resulting in a severe economic slowdown and described as the sharpest contractions in the economy<sup>3</sup>. Even before the Pandemic, the health sector faced substantial challenges. The pandemic has revealed its fragility in quickly deploying qualified human resources to prevent, detect, and respond to pandemics, affecting the health system to provide its regular service.

The Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment published in June 2021 shows that before the May 2021 conflict, the unemployment rate in Gaza has reached 48% in the first quarter of 2021; it is predicted to reach 50% during 2021 due to destroying businesses, the overall economic deterioration, and the blockade. This is the highest since the early 1990s. In addition, poverty rates were above 50% and have been pushed to 59.3% after the latest conflict, with nearly 80% of Palestinian households receive humanitarian assistance<sup>4</sup>. This worsens social conditions and degrades public services, thus exhausting coping strategies; several negative coping trends are being observed. Furthermore, the unsustainable situation, the de-development of the Strip, and the prevailing negative social and economic trends may lead to further radicalisation, thus contributing to regional instability.

The dire situation affects the whole population of the Strip and severely affects vulnerable communities and groups, especially children, girls, women, and persons with disabilities (PwDs). Moreover, the middle and the southern part of the Strip suffer from more conservatism, early

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent is the armed conflict that was erupted 10-21 May 2021, the most severe since 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Palestine Humanitarian Needs Overview <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/opt-humanitarian-needs-overview>

<sup>3</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/859981613598235681/pdf/Economic-Monitoring-Report-to-the-Ad-Hoc-Liaison-Committee.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/178021624889455367/pdf/Gaza-Rapid-Damage-and-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

marriages, and an increase in Gender-Based Violence, with a limited number of civil society organisations able to respond to the growing social needs.<sup>5</sup>

The Palestinian population in oPt has reached 5.2 million, of whom 2.1 million residing in Gaza, 49% are women. The oPt is a young society with around 38% of the population below 14 years old. In Gaza percentage is higher, constituting 41% (mid-2021)<sup>6</sup>. The statistics show that women head 11% of households. In 2020, women's participation in the labour force declined further, reaching only 16% compared to 18% in 2019. Furthermore, women's participation in decision-making is still limited, with only 5% in the Palestinian Central Council members, 11% of the Palestinian National Council members, 13% of the Council of Ministers, 11% as ambassadors, and one governor<sup>7</sup>.

## The Project

In 2018, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) decided to support the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA) in Khan Younis and NAWA for Culture and Arts Association (NAWA) in the middle area of the Gaza Strip. The project "*Support to Safe Spaces for Women, Youth and Children in Gaza Strip*" aims to provide quality educational and cultural services in safe learning environments for children, youth and women, including persons with disabilities. Furthermore, this contribution aims to enhance the inclusion of marginalised groups in local development and community-led initiatives and prevent the wider spreading of violent extremism and radicalisation. The project amounting to CHF 1'630'000 was initially planned for January 2019- December 2020, but due to the COVID-19 and the Gaza lockdown, it was extended till December 2021 with additional costs. Hence, the total contribution is CHF 2'430'000.

## Project Objectives

The **overall** project **goal** is: Empowered women and youth, including persons with disabilities, have an increased voice in local development processes and community-led initiatives in the area of impact of supported educational and cultural institutions. To achieve this goal, the project focuses on three **outcomes**:

- Youth and Women (M/F including persons with disabilities) are empowered to be active change-makers in their communities,
- Improved service delivery to targeted marginalised groups,
- Enhanced sharing of knowledge and best practices between CFTA and NAWA.

## Project Partners

### **NAWA for Culture and Arts Association (NAWA):**

NAWA is a non-profit organisation established in 2014 by a group of educated, motivated, and dedicated youth to empower their local community through culture, arts, non-formal education

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3924>,  
<https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3979>  
<https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3987>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4024>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3934>

and Psychosocial support. In addition, it offers its interventions for the Palestinian community at large.

**Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA):**

CFTA was established in 1991 as an independent, secular non-governmental development organisation that aspire to nurture new generations of Palestinians capable of giving, sharing, and taking responsibility for themselves and their communities. During emergencies, they also provide humanitarian assistance. CFTA is unique in its grassroots origins and orientation.

**Evaluation Objectives**

The ToR specified the evaluation's overall objective is to document and report on the achievement of results, intended and not-intended, of project activities as a part of organisational learning and SDC's accountability. Accordingly, the evaluation considered the OECD/DAC criteria<sup>8</sup> of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency (including costs effectiveness), impact, sustainability, and other project management dimensions such as risk management, institutional capacity and governance, and final performance. In addition, it considered the adaptation and measures taken by the project in response to COVID-19 related restrictions.

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<sup>8</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee - <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

## EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The team has followed a structured process consisting of a sequence of distinct and well-defined phases to provide evidence-based, credible, reliable, and valuable information. The team has adopted a collaborative and participatory approach to ensuring close engagement with the project team, key partners, and other key stakeholders. This evaluation was implemented through three distinct phases: The inception phase, data collection phase, and reporting, including analysis, findings, and recommendations.

**Phase I: Inception Phase:** a kick-off meeting and two introductory meetings were conducted at this phase. The kick-off meeting aimed to agree on the proposed work plan and to identify key objectives of the consultancy, the intended outputs, the scope of the assignment and agreed on sharing the available documents. The first introductory meeting was conducted with the CFTA executive director and MEAL coordinator to introduce the program interventions, approaches and work locations. The second introductory meeting was conducted with the NAWA executive director, projects manager, and MEAL team and aimed to introduce the program interventions, approaches and work locations. This phase also includes the collection of related documents (Annex 2: Documents Reviewed).

**Phase II: Data collection:** It is specified for conducting interviews, FGDs, surveys and collecting related data from primary and secondary sources. The data collection tools included:

Tool	Description
Desk review	The evaluation team collected and reviewed the program documents and other related documents presented in Annex 2.
Interviews	The structured interview was used to obtain more accurate information and explanations from the relevant persons. The evaluation team conducted two interviews with SDC and five interviews with CFTA and NAWA senior management. Unfortunately, the data collection phase took place immediately after the severe May 2021 armed conflict with Israel; most stakeholders in the middle and southern part of the Gaza Strip were busy with the consequences. Thus, it was impossible to arrange interviews with public and semi-public institutions' representatives such as the Ministry of Education, municipalities and UNRWA.
FGDs	It is the most effective tool to discuss one issue collectively and write down ideas and opinions around it. This tool was used with different participants from NAWA and CFTA staff as well as with one group of civil society organisations working on similar issues. 15 FGDs were conducted as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 FGD with NAWA centres coordinators</li> <li>• 1 FGD with the heads of department at NAWA</li> <li>• 1 FGD with CFTA managers of centres</li> <li>• 2 FGDs with youth</li> <li>• 2 FGDs with parents</li> <li>• 1 FGD with educators</li> <li>• 1 FGDs with NAWA animators</li> <li>• 1 FGD Wissal network members (9 representatives of CBOs &amp; NGOs)</li> <li>• 4 FGDs with children from different age groups</li> <li>• 1 FGD with women who benefited from WHC services</li> </ul>

Survey	<p>The evaluation team designed a google form questionnaire and shared it with BNFs.</p> <p>The survey included parents, children, youth, and WHC BNFs. The respondents were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 243 children (84 NAWA, 159 CFTA)</li> <li>- 115 Parents (20 NAWA, 95 CFTA)</li> <li>- 52 Youth (21 NAWA, 31 CFTA)</li> <li>- 66 women, WHC</li> </ul> <p>To reach the planned sample size, the evaluation team assigned enumerators to collect the data directly from children aged less than 12 using child-friendly tools.</p>
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**Phase III: Data Analysis and reporting:** the collected data was analysed, and the detailed study findings were prepared based on OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency (including costs effectiveness), impact, and sustainability, as well as other project management dimensions such as risk management, institutional capacity and governance, and final performance. Excel was used for quantitative data analysis.

The evaluation team has addressed the issues and questions described in the ToR, using participatory assessment techniques, including quantitative and qualitative interviews, and focus group discussions with staff, senior management, and beneficiaries (BNFs). It did consider the project's adaptation and measures in response to the changing environment, COVID-19 Pandemic in particular, with its wide-reaching consequences of achieving or not achieving intended objectives. It looked into how the project is being implemented, whether or not the assumed operational logic corresponds with actual operations and identifies immediate consequences of implementation till this point. It has determined which features are working well and which are not, identified possible risks to sustainability, and provided lessons learned.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

### Overall Evaluation:

Generally, the outcomes, outputs, and activities were satisfactory to a high degree with reference to DAC-OECD criteria; relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. In addition, the evaluation of each individual criterion was either satisfactory or highly satisfactory.

The following sections present the detailed findings concerning the five criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact.

### Relevance

**Strategic relevance:** There is enough evidence showing the project's relevance to the context and target groups' needs as **designed and implemented**. The project **fits with** the Palestinian 2017-2022 National Policy Agenda: Putting Citizens First. The policy emphasised that women, youth, and the disabled must be empowered to live and work in an environment free from discrimination. This is reflected in Priority #7 (Social Justice) that integrates a number of policy interventions, mainly; A) Escaping poverty (Social and economic empowerment policy and program addressing and benefiting vulnerable groups and the poor, and promoting social integration of excluded groups such as the disabled, youth, and women. B) Gender Equality and Women's empowerment (Eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls and Remove barriers that prevent the full participation of women in the community and economic development and public life). C) Our Youth-Our Future (Empower and equip Palestine's youth to participate meaningfully in public life and state-building, ensure that youth are provided with opportunities for a successful future, and place a particular focus on assisting disadvantaged youth). These policies were further detailed in the sector strategies, most notably the **Social Development Sector Strategy 2017-2022**. The project is **consistent** with its focus on reducing poverty, eliminating all forms of marginalisation and violence, social exclusion in the Palestinian society, and enhancing social cohesion. It is also **in line** with the **local governance strategy** that stresses the need to increase citizen participation of both sexes in the local government units' activities based on the duties and rights and the development of their transparency. The two SDC partners have provided services in geographical areas where the PA interventions are limited, and the de facto authority in Gaza does not offer real constant services. Finally, the project **fits with** the Sustainable development goals, especially SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

The project is **in line** with the Swiss Cooperation Programme Near East (2021–24). It fits with its **Local Governance portfolio** that seeks to enhance social inclusion at the local level and improve the provision of quality essential services for all. The project has provided platforms for different groups, especially children, youth, women, and persons with disabilities, **to actively participate** in their community and have their voices heard. Furthermore, engaging with children, youth, women, and persons with disabilities (PwDs) have enhanced the resilience of these groups and communities. From an equity perspective, this contributes to strengthening tolerance among the different groups, improving social cohesion, driving positive changes at the local level, and preventing radicalisation.

**Relevance to Partners' Strategies:** Due to the **shrinking space** for civil society, the project contributed to protecting social cohesion and containing the risks associated with society's potential fragmentation. Furthermore, the SDC partners, through administering the Wissal Network of 45 CSOs and CBOs, have helped create an environment where CSOs can take their legitimate role in Palestinian society as service providers and as advocates and watchdogs. Civil society plays an essential role in the absence of a functioning legislative council and other democratic structures. Therefore, the project contributes to an enabling environment for a healthy and inclusive civil society, enhancing public institutions' integrity, transparency, and accountability. This is the essence of the joint European Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2018-2020, of which Switzerland is a signatory; thus, the project is **in harmony with this roadmap**.

**Relevance to the targeted community needs:** As indicated in the context section, the two SDC partners operate in less served and highly vulnerable areas of the Strip, marked by the highest unemployment and disability rates (the middle and southern part). Figure 1 shows that nearly all the surveyed project parents, youth, and children confirmed not receiving similar services (100%, 99% and 83%, respectively) by any other organisation.

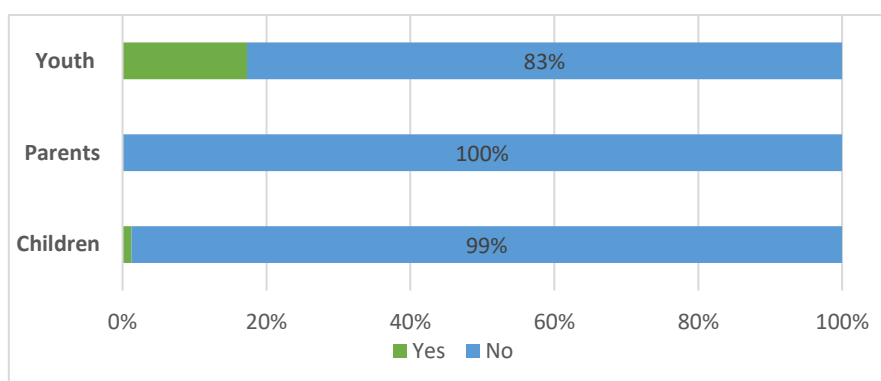


Figure 1: Persons who Receive Similar Services from Other Organisations

Discussions with the communities show that the two partners are locally well-rooted. In addition, the survey and focus group discussion (FGDs) clearly revealed that the implemented interventions were **relevant and responded to needs** as profiled by the beneficiaries (Figures 2 and 3).

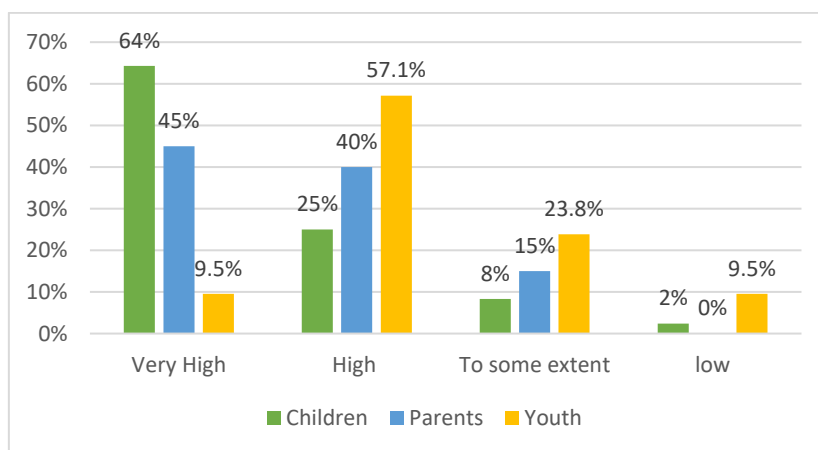


Figure 2: The Relevancy Level of the Provided Services by NAWA to the Targeted Groups Needs

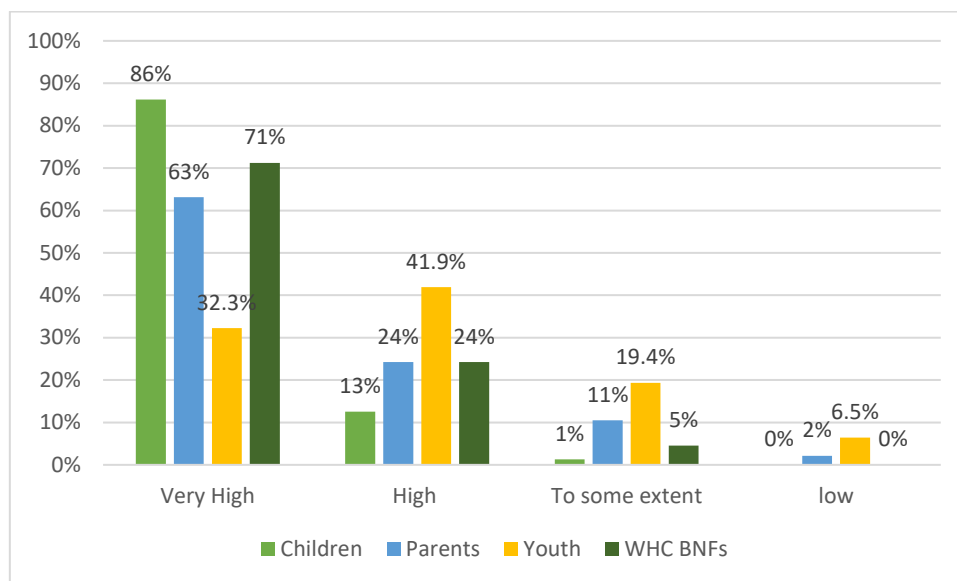


Figure 3: The Relevancy Level of the Provided Services by CFTA to the Targeted Groups Needs

*Female Parent-NAWA said that: "I always dreamed to have a place in Deir Al-Balah cared about promoting the child's personality and talent, and NAWA achieved this dream".*



The NAWA and CFTA beneficiaries reported not facing any specific challenges while participating in project activities. For example, figure 4 shows that about 93% and 96% of the BNFs of CFTA and NAWA respectively reported that they didn't face any challenges during service/activity delivery.

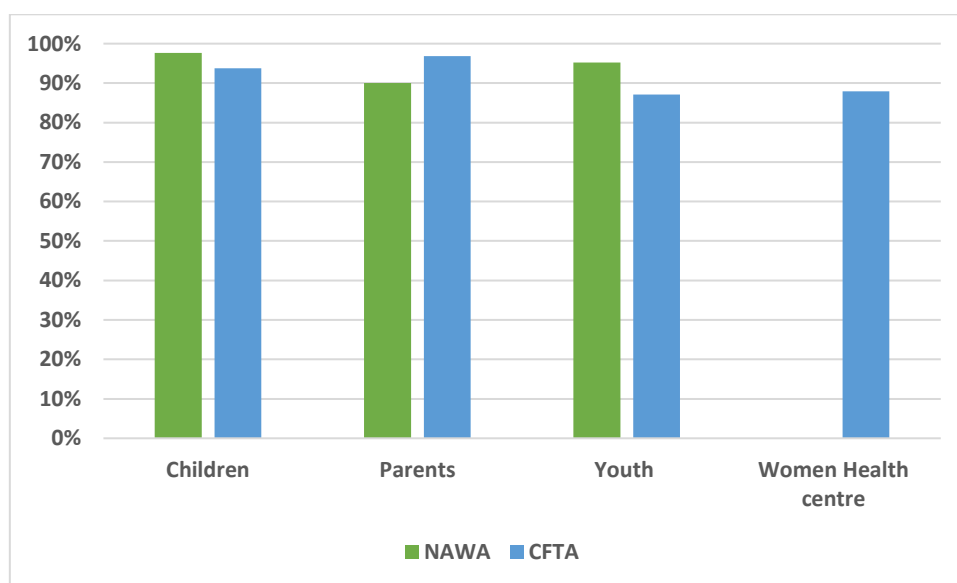


Figure 4: The Percentage of Persons who Didn't Face any Obstacles During the Service/ Activity Receiving



**Cooperation and sharing best practices between the two partners:** there was no real discussion on the scope of cooperation between the two partners at the project design stage. The discussion started in early 2018 and continued in 2019, but the pandemic outbreak has limited the space for cooperation among the partners. Nevertheless, the two organisations have shown willingness to improve the cooperation by finding commonalities and complementarities between them. Currently, the two are working on developing their strategic plans; this can be an opportunity for donors in their strategic dialogue with NAWA and CFTA to identify and pursue effective means of cooperation with clearly identified milestones over the years, allowing the two partners to preserve their identities. The implementation can be regularly monitored through the steering committee.

**Responsiveness and quality:** During the period in consideration, evidence reflect that the two partners provided quality services with integrated programmes for children, youth, and women through non-formal education, psychosocial support, artistic skills development, awareness on rights and domestic violence -Topics that are responsive to the needs and of a high priority for the new generation. Moreover, parents' involvement positively impacted creating awareness and consciousness for children's needs; it also contributed to breaking communication walls (creating dialogue, increasing confidence and building trust) between children and parents. In addition, partners facilitated community-led change, so the targeted beneficiaries are empowered, a bit more heard and started practising a more active role in their communities. This is clearly reflected in the CFTA work where the youth took the initiative, led different activities, worked with the local neighbourhood committees and social reconciliation committees.



*Male child-CFTA said that: "I was shy, unsociable person. CFTA interventions impacted on my personality and helped discovering my skill and promote it".*

Additionally, CFTA supported communities to establish fourteen Community Resilience Reinforcement Committees that actively hold social accountability sessions with their local councils (a critical innovation element in the implementation approach).

## Effectiveness

### Achievement of the Planned Target

**NAWA:** As noted from the annual operation report, most of the planned targets were achieved as planned or exceeded the plan; for instance, the intended target was to include 191 children with disabilities in NAWA's activities, but the actual was 407 children. However, some indicators were not achieved as planned due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. For example, the activities

that required social gatherings, including children visits from local schools, kindergartens, and CBO's to NAWA centres were not implemented. Moreover, delivering online courses was challenging for some groups, especially parents and children under six years old.

**CFTA:** the annual report and log frame confirmed that the indicators had been achieved. However, the reporting did not include a clear comparison between targets and achievements.

### **Beneficiaries' Satisfaction**

Generally, the BNFs of NAWA and CFTA (parents, children, women, and youth) were satisfied with the quality of services provided. As revealed by FGDs and the survey results, BNFs were highly satisfied with services delivered as the targeted areas of Khan Younis & Deir Al-Balah were marginalised and didn't receive similar services. Based on the survey results, all the surveyed children of NAWA and 96% of CFTA children are satisfied with the services provided; the FGD explained the high degree of satisfaction resulting from the facilitator's capacity in managing the activities effectively and efficiently.

Most of the interviewed parents were highly satisfied with the NAWA and CFTA role and performance. However, the engagement of male parents in the activities is still weak, as the general cultural trends. For NAWA, it takes their opinions and suggestions into account. For CFTA, parents consider the organisation a social incubator for their children, which has a remarkable impact on them. On the other hand, parents who have children in NAWA KG complained that it doesn't provide any content related to Islamic education, such as the Holy Quran. Moreover, parents stressed that there is no systematic channel of communication learning about NAWA's other activities.

### **Effectiveness of Activities**

NAWA and CFTA provide training programs and awareness sessions for children, youth, parents, and women in addition to their advocacy activities. Among others, the services provided have raised the level of children's knowledge through extracurricular activities, built skills and capacities of educators in schools and KGs, developed 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills for youth, advocated for increased volunteerism, and developed advocacy initiatives. The CFTA has widely targeted women with specific health services through its Women Health Centre (WHC) and enhanced the networking of women and PwDs CBOs and NGOs. NAWA provides KG services. The effectiveness of the interventions and activities are presented below:

#### **- Firstly: For the Children**

The FGDs with children emphasised appreciation of the received services and activities matching their interests. The children confirmed they were consulted about the required activities, and their opinions regarding the implemented activities were considered. For instance, CFTA collects suggestions and views through representatives of each club, while NAWA directly collects suggestions and views from BNFs. The survey results showed that BNFs engagement in the needs assessment and activity evaluations for NAWA were 57% and 86%, respectively, and for CFTA, 77% and 79%.

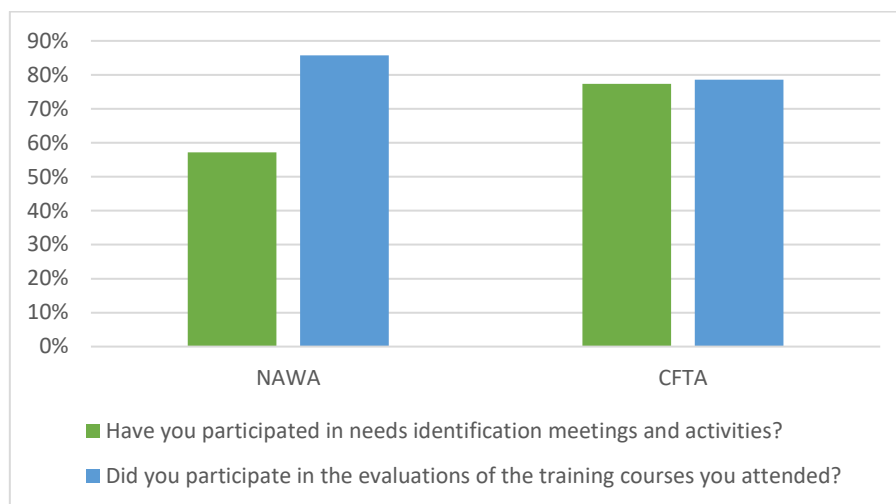


Figure 5: Percentage of Children who participated in the Needs Assessment and Evaluation

Figures 6 and 7 present the findings related to the quality of children's training in NAWA and CFTA. The absolute majority of BNFs children agreed or strongly agreed that the training scopes and content were sufficient to acquire the needed skills and knowledge; the training environment, activities, number of participants and timeframe were appropriate; and trainers/facilitators capacities helped to achieve its objectives.

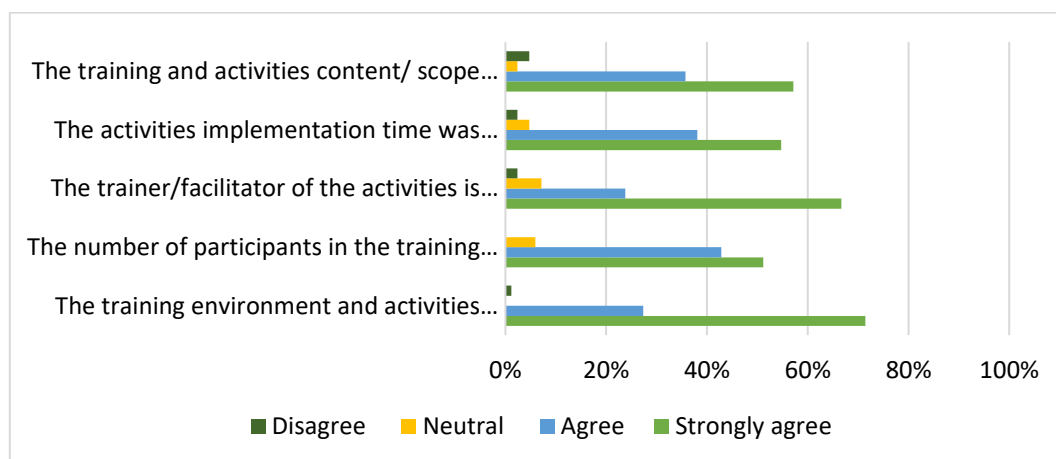


Figure 6: Quality of training in terms of Sufficiency, Time, Facilitator Ability, and Training Environment (NAWA)

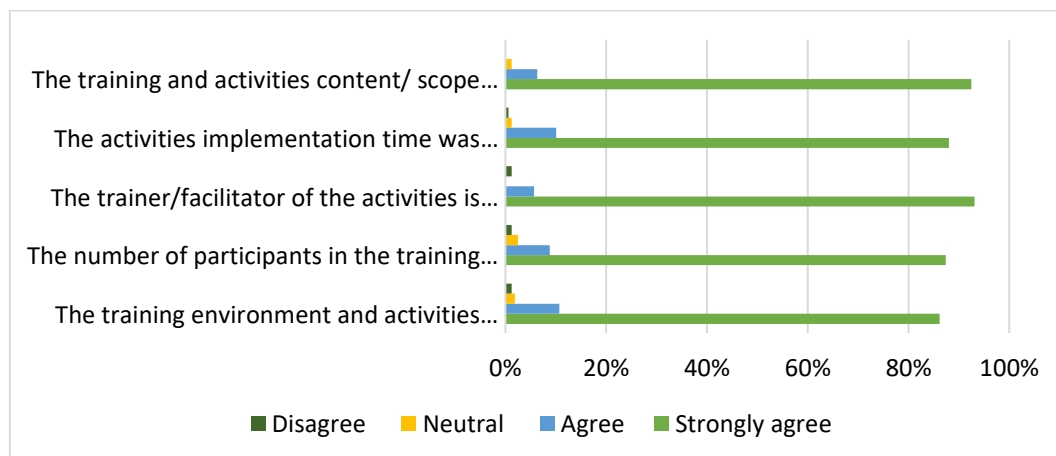


Figure 7: Quality of training in terms of Sufficiency, Time, Facilitator Ability, and Training Environment (CFTA)

### - Secondly: For the Parents

Parents FGD reflected that the activities were beneficial, especially females who were more engaged in the activities. Value-added was given to joint parents-children activities that further enhanced trust between them. They confirmed a performance improvement with time in the organisations delivering the activities. Parents in the survey confirmed that services provided in terms of timeframe and duration as well as content updates were appropriate; see below figure.

**Table 1: The Effectiveness of Delivered Services- Parents**

	NAWA		CFTA	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
The service was sufficient in terms of timeframe and duration	95%	5%	92.6%	7.4%
The delivered training content are updated (If the BNF received training).	100%	0%	80.2%	19.8%

### - Thirdly: For the Youth

Since its inception, NAWA's focus was on children; they started exploring opportunities for engaging youth during the last two years. Youth involvement is still limited as they need more time to allow internalisation of the process. However, experience shows that youth engagement would be a natural evolution of NAWA engagement with children. During the FGD, the involved youth highlighted that they could express their feelings and thoughts without restrictions, and their voice is heard within NAWA. On the other hand, CFTA has a wide youth targeting (for more than two decades) contributing to enhancing the capacities of the graduated unemployed youth through conducting training courses, implementing community initiatives, and providing opportunities to volunteers in the centres of CFTA. The surveyed youth confirmed that services provided in terms of timeframe and duration as well as content (updates) were appropriate; see the figure below.

**Table 2: The Effectiveness of Delivered Services- Youth<sup>9</sup>**

	NAWA		CFTA	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
The service was sufficient in terms of timeframe and duration	95%	5%	74%	26%
The delivered training content are updated (If the BNF received training).	90%	10%	77%	23%

### - Fourth: For the Women- CFTA

WHC provides a package of services for women such as maternity health care during and after the pregnancy, awareness-raising, psychological support, legal consultation, recreational activities, and vocational training, in addition to other services. The following are the main conclusions regarding the effectiveness of WHC services:

- The participants in FGD and 97% of surveyed women confirmed that the services had positive effects in terms of health and psychological situation.
- All the surveyed and interviewed women reported that the centre provided high-quality services.

<sup>9</sup> The figures are affected by the sample size whereas the CFTA sample is much wider.

- 88% of the surveyed women reported that they didn't face any obstacles during the service received, assuring that the centre staff was too cooperative.
- The centre depends mainly on the paper advertisements to announce any training, so some women didn't know about these pieces of training.
- WHC pays close attention to early detection of breast cancer and follows up, facilitating their access to the needed investigations or medications.

### **The Selection Criteria:**

There are **no restrictions** to join NAWA and CFTA **nor discriminatory approaches**; children can subscribe and receive services according to their ages. When applicable, the selection criteria rely on the training topic and age group as usually mentioned in the advertisement. Vulnerability is not an element of the selection criteria; this can be justified by the fact that poverty is widespread in this specific geographical area and Gaza in general. Moreover, it might have a negative impact on social cohesion and be perceived as a sort of discrimination.

In addition to the above, **NAWA**, thanks to its expertise, provides tailor-made training to KG educators in its geographical focus. The selection process of trainees is open for persons who have the potential to work in the KGs or other related fields.

While **CFTA** Cultural Centre provides a variety of training, including TVET. The selection process is multi-layered; it starts with preselection that considers age group specialisations and years of experience, then interviews that validate the qualifications and consider willingness and desire to volunteer. The **WHC** health services are provided to all women in the middle and southern part of the Gaza Strip. **Wissal Network** is a platform of CBOs and NGOs specialised in service provision for women and PwDs. It operates under the CFTA umbrella; organisations that provide services for the mentioned groups are eligible to become members.

### **Targeting Vulnerable communities**

The two organisations operate in the middle and southern part of the Gaza Strip, which generally suffer more than the rest of the Strip. It's more feasible that the partners' beneficiaries, especially the children and their parents, usually come from the adjacent neighbourhoods. CFTA, with its decades of operation, have targeted different communities and their centres spread over a wide geographical area, for example, the Nawar Centre is an extension of the Al-Shorouk and Al-Amal Centre, which targets children from 6 to 12 years old, but in a remote and poor neighbourhood. At the same time, the WHC operates in the middle area. On the other hand, NAWA centres are within the same geographical proximity in Deir Al Balah. NAWA's understanding of inclusion was mainly limited to disability. It did not broaden it to involve people with different socio-economic groups, thus deliberately outreaching and targeting beneficiaries from marginalised groups and localities.

If NAWA Scope provides the service for a large area, it would require an investment beyond their financial capacities. Some of the vulnerable areas would require more financial resources. It's unsustainable and economically not feasible for the KG to serve a large geographical location, as they need to ensure transportation for the children. This is not realistic; it's advisable to be more practical and limit it to a more restricted area while ensuring inclusion within this geographical area. The KG can be an income-generating initiative, although the costs are more than the

income. It requires costs and investments from a service and inclusion perspective, and investment return can be used to help provide other services. If considered a service, then SDC needs to make sure that its contribution is reflected in inclusion. Part of the revenues generated is injected to ensure inclusiveness- income equal expenses (non-profit approach). However, if considered an income-generating initiative, the profit goes to the other services provided by the organisation. It will be accepted if the KG is used as a model to train other KGs in the area.

### **Accessibility**

The existence of centres/branches of NAWA and CFTA improves access to more BNFs from different groups, especially children, although each centre has its own activities based on age group. Moreover, NAWA centres are close to each other, and there are no centres in or near the most vulnerable areas in Deir AL-Balah, such as Al-Mazraa. NAWA centres have adequate infrastructure and tools for PwDs, such as Brille Books and reading devices. Despite the two partner's focus on including PwDs, not all CFTA facilities are equipped with appropriate infrastructure for PwDs, as in one building that lacks an elevator.

### **Planning for the Interventions**

As reported by partners teams and BNFs, they use a participatory planning approach with the BNFs to develop its strategies and policies, based on which its interventions are developed. Thus, the projects and interventions adhere to strategic goals and beneficiaries needs. However, both partners, especially CFTA, are privileged with diverse donors who provide core funding and project funding, allowing certain flexibility and space for manoeuvring.

## **Efficiency**

### **Project planning and developing the strategic plan**

The core fund is issued based on the strategic plans of the partners. CFTA team confirmed that the planning process is performed based on a participatory approach at the community and organisation levels. CFTA conducted several interviews and FGDs with BNFs and the related stakeholders in order to identify their needs and priorities. The projects' ideas were generated from the strategic planning process outcomes and then translated into programs and projects. NAWA conducted several meetings with influencers, experts and children from Deir El Balah to develop the strategy and identify the priorities. An external facilitator led the strategic planning process. Due to Covid-19, CFTA and NAWA extended their strategic plan for one year, 2021. Currently, the two partners are working on updating their strategic plans.

Partners' commitment to the strategic plans is evident through the planned performed activities follow up. Minor deviations from the plans were reported, while new additions were made responding to the new situation and measures related to the Covid-19 crisis. The emergency was a "watershed moment" for them; however, both showed their capacity and flexibility to adapt to the emergency and redesign more appropriate interventions.

### **Community Engagement:**

NAWA and CFTA have built an effective community-based approach, as it consults the BNFs from different groups in the planning process as well as engages them in the implementation and evaluation processes.

NAWA engages the children and their parents in **environmental** activities to enhance their understanding of the necessity of keeping the environment clean, using the limited resources appropriately, and utilising recycled materials. Additionally, NAWA has started to target the youth in its activities and create a comfortable environment for them to express themselves as well as to discover and develop their skills.

CFTA has promoted community capacities, especially youth, that make them deal as change agents in their community. Thirteen community commissions were formed to help create safe spaces for the vulnerable groups in the marginalised areas. CFTA facilitated the role of the community commissions by connecting them with other organisations for the purposes of capacity building or conducting workshops.

CFTA introduced Survivor and Community-led Crise Response (SCLR) approach<sup>10</sup>. Several community-led initiatives were implemented as part of the SCLR approach, which impacted community solidarity and symbiosis. As reported by the managers of CFTA centres, the SCLR approach was successful at the local level.

### **Dealing with Covid-19 pandemic:**

The imposed emergency of covid-19 was not expected or listed in the two partners' risks list, just like all other organisations. However, this situation has forced the two organisations to redesign their activities and implementation methodologies.

The two organisations were flexible and agile, adapting their interventions quickly to the changed circumstances due to the pandemic outbreak by shifting to digital literacy with children, youth, and parents, especially communicating through social media platforms and Zoom. The beneficiaries highly needed this; parents who had limited digital knowledge found this experience very beneficial as it helped them better understand their children's activities during blended learning.

CFTA successfully overcome this emergency by building the capacities of parents and target groups in dealing with online technologies like Zoom, Messenger, and WhatsApp. In addition, building staff capacities on data protection, online work mechanisms, and digital security.

As mentioned in the 2020 NAWA annual report, NAWA reprioritised its activities with the Covid-19 crisis. Nevertheless, it succeeded in documenting the intangible heritage of the palm tree food processing, as (8) videos were produced out of meeting 24 women of Deir Al Balah. In addition, (2) videos were published on NAWA and UNESCO social media in November 2020. The local community responded amazingly to these videos, and most of them were proud of how NAWA presented their heritage. The rest of the videos are expected to be published in 2021. In

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<sup>10</sup> It is an approach aimed to support crisis-affected communities to lead and manage their own holistic, coordinated responses to emergencies in ways that improve immediate well-being, strengthen longer term resilience and accelerate transformational change.



addition, NAWA has provided a set of training courses that aimed to build the educators' capacities and increase their knowledge, understanding in different fields and skills related to distance learning, such as using Google classroom, thinking skills, psychosocial support, active learning, and online education.

## Funds Management

Unrestricted Grants for Non-profits, core funds, are essential for NGOs and could radically alter their strategies for the better. The flexibility of unrestricted grants paves the way for donors to make the best decisions according to their performance. Furthermore, the funds allow more space for stability and let the NGOs turn their attention to introducing innovative services and creating more efficient solutions for the communities. The reported observations in this regard in both organisations include:

Item	Observations
<b>Improving performance</b>	Providing financing gives security and stability that pushes institutions to focus on achievement and improve their performance. NAWA and CFTA reported this explicitly, and also implicitly this can be observed in their progress and performance. SDC supports improving both partners' financial systems and staff competencies and is directly involved in discussions with them. For example, NAWA financial manager appreciates SDC detailed comments as they were helpful and helped develop its financial management and report on the progress at the strategic level.
<b>M&amp;E</b>	The M&E systems, procedures, and departments were established as a direct output of the SDC core fund, which directly impacted progress and improved performance.
<b>Transparency and Accountability</b>	The availability of core funding is a key motive for the organisations to avoid corruption to ensure the highest levels of donors' satisfaction and other issues. In addition, the organisations strive to achieve the highest levels of compliance with transparency and accountability requirements.
<b>staff turnover</b>	The core fund supports organisations in shifting employee contracts from project-based to permanent, directly impacting their stability and performance. CFTA Staff complains that their salaries are comparably low according to local NGO rates. The turnover is high at NAWA; all staff contract is based on projects except director-general and financial manager who are core staff.
<b>Impact on the NGO</b>	The fund supports the two partners to be more empowered organisations.
<b>Impact on the partners</b>	The organisations developed closer and deeper partnerships and relations with other partners, stakeholders, and CSOs.

**Financial Resources & Cost-effectiveness:** The following are the main conclusions concerning the management of financial resources:

- For monitoring and evaluation purposes, NAWA and CFTA regularly conducted FGDs with the different groups of BNFs to address their needs and their feedback regarding the



implemented activities, in addition to field visits. However, the annual reports didn't balance qualitative and quantitative findings as the reporting process is fragmented. For example, NAWA annual report compares the actual and the planned targets, but it doesn't mention the findings of pre- and post-surveys; it separated them in the M&E report. The agreed budgets are characterised by completeness, logic, proper scheduling, and fairness.

- Funds were spent according to the budget as planned with no overspending, efficiently exploiting it to achieve the project objectives.

### **Time management/schedule of activities:**

As reported by CFTA and NAWA teams, there were no major delays reported as the management of each organisation was adaptive and helped redesign the activities to deal with the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown efficiently.

## **Impact**

The impact in its broader term was not assessed as Gaza was going from one crisis to another, and societal changes are hard to measure. However, at the project level, it has had notable impacts that are rated as highly satisfied. All the interventions were positively reflected on children, parents, youth, women and more broadly on the community as a whole.

**The following are the impacts that attributed to the NAWA and CFTA interventions:**

### **Children:**

Based on the FGDs, survey results, and observation, the interventions positively affected the children, mainly their characters. Parents have reported that the activities have contributed to the development of the personality of their children's where they have become more energetic and able to express themselves, the creative thinking courses have contributed to changing their thinking way and mentality, and they have become more willing to read and to learn. Children confirmed that the activities reinforced their characters and touched their interests and contributed to developing their talents.

The activities enhanced the relationships and interaction between children, as they became more open to listening to the opinions of each other, as well as enhanced their communications and leadership skills.



*Parent from NAWA said that: “There is a clear difference between my son’s personality and the personalities of other children, as my son discusses and opens dialogue in family gatherings”*

*Female child from Nowwar Center: “I was a shy girl, introverted personality and I was subjected to violence in the street and can’t able to defend, but after joining the center I became stronger and say my opinion without fear”.*

The supporting education and non-formal education interventions improved children's academic achievement, as revealed by the FGDs and survey results. As shown in the figure below, the vast majority of the surveyed children confirmed that the activities contributed to enhancing their social interaction, creativity, academic achievement, abilities, intelligence, and understanding to a high or moderate degree.

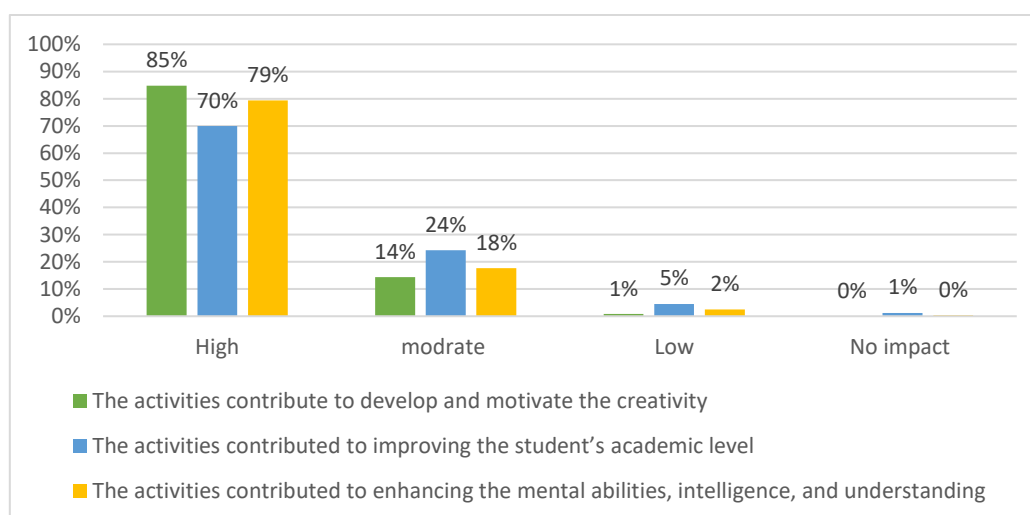


Figure 8: The Impact on the Children

## Youth:

NAWA and CFTA have successfully created an open space for the youth, including PwDs, to express themselves and discover their potentials. Moreover, they have promoted the idea of becoming productive persons in the community.

Community-led initiatives that were implemented by CFTA youth enhanced leadership skills and social responsibility. NAWA youth confirmed that the joint activities and initiatives with children enhanced their capacity to deal with children. Moreover, the interventions boosted youth self-esteem and confidence.

The interventions have improved a group of skills among the targeted youth: critical and creative thinking, negotiation, and persuading skills. In addition, the survey results revealed that the activities have contributed to develop and motivate creativity among the targeted youth; additionally, they enhanced their mental abilities (intelligence and **comprehension** skills) to a moderate or high degree, as shown in the table below.

Table 3: The Impact of Interventions on Youth

	High	Moderate	Low	No impact
The activities contribute to develop and motivate the creativity	62%	37%	0%	2%
The activities contributed to enhancing the mental abilities, intelligence, and understanding	60%	38%	2%	0%

The targeted youth have become more aware of the gender issues and rights of PwDs. It is expected that the delivered training courses by NAWA and CFTA in freelancing skills will impact youth employability and increase their opportunities to get better jobs.

*Male Youth- CFTA: "The training course of freelancing skills improves my skills in terms of negotiation skills with clients".*

CFTA gave the opportunity for youth to establish direct contact with CBOs, which in turn facilitated their coordination, involvement, and targeting.

## Parents

FGDs and survey results confirmed that the interventions directed to parents, especially women, positively impact the women themselves and their families. The reported impacts included:

- The joint family activities helped strengthen the family relationship as well as build the trust between the child and their parent.
- The implemented awareness sessions helped the parents to better understand and treat the needs of their children. As shown in table 3, 98% of the surveyed parents thought that the awareness sessions and activities positively affected their treatment practices.
- The parents' psychological support sessions contributed to improving their psychological condition, where 95% of the parents reported that the interventions have highly or moderately improved their psychological state. Additionally, the awareness session enhanced the parents' awareness of the children's treatment and Gender-Based Violence (GBV).
- The provided training through the COVID-19 outbreak about using digital tools helped them follow up the activities with their children as well as their online learning process.

**Table 4: The Impact of Interventions on Parents**

	High	moderate	Low	No impact
The awareness sessions and activities positively affected the parents' treatment of their children	77%	21%	1%	1%
The activities improved the psychological condition of parents	72%	23%	3%	2%
The activities, namely awareness sessions, contributed to raise the awareness level of parents	78%	20%	2%	0%

## Women

Targeting women in CFTA and NAWA activities allow them to be engaged in a new setting outside the home environment, which enhanced their psychological condition.

CFTA facilitated the access of GBV survivors to the required services, namely psychological, health and legal services. As revealed by the survey results, over 80% of the surveyed women who received legal support or awareness confirmed that they attained their legal rights.

Women who received handicrafts and making detergents training reported they have benefited from the training and started making handicrafts and detergents for their home needs.

The provided package of health services through WHC saves the treatment costs where the services are free or with nominal value.

**Educators and Teachers:**

Based on the FGD with the educators, they confirmed that the received training by NAWA enhanced their knowledge regarding the active learning techniques and supported their application in the learning process. Moreover, the educators became more capable of understanding children's needs as they received training in child mental health, child nutrition, and digital learning.

The benefits are not limited to the educators' work and impacted their behaviour with their children.

**NAWA and CFTA:**

The investment in developing the institutional capacities, manuals, policies, and human resources has impacted the partner organisations' performance. For example, developing the MEAL system contributed to facilitating the M&E tasks to a reasonable extent, but it still needs to build MEAL staff's capacities. Moreover, the learning and accountability process has improved.

## Sustainability

The following are the key observations concerning sustainability:

- SDC partners offer sustainable services and interventions such as capacity building programs, awareness workshops, and institutional development, creating sustainable impacts.
- The good reputation of SDC partners at the local and international level enhanced their funds' opportunities and has multiple funding sources that complement the received fund from SDC.
- The interventions that targeted the educators and teachers in the active learning techniques have considered the existing structures by targeting educators employed by MoE, KGs, and local CBOs who are already acting as service providers, ensuring the long-term sustainability and accessibility to large groups of the indirect BNFs.
- All the direct beneficiaries acknowledged that the interventions were helpful to them and to the indirect BNFs. Most have, in different ways, integrated the interventions in their daily practice and have become a part of the service system, especially in schools, Wissal network members and Kindergartens. Their support for the intervention was also evident from their requests to organise additional training and similar interventions for other groups.
- NAWA and CFTA created sustainable impacts at the awareness and knowledge level among the community members. In addition, the provided interventions promoted the BNFs to adopt the acquired concepts in their work as well as within their families.
- The continuity of the project activities for a more extended period will ensure the transfer of good behaviour and practices to the surroundings of family members and then to wider circles whenever the target group's contact with others increases.

- The implemented interventions can be sustained through constant and advanced development, raising more awareness through the local community.
- Enhancing the voluntary work culture and community-led initiatives promoted the sustainability of such activities and the opportunity to lead some activities by youth in the future.
- Providing core funding gives the partners a more significant opportunity and assurance for the sustainability of their work and interventions by securing the resources needed to implement the interventions and encouraging them to think in a broader framework and implement innovative initiatives.
- Some interventions enhanced environmental sustainability by introducing environmental-friendly practices among different community members. The implemented scientific environmental research such as investigating marine pollution, recycling practices, and saving environmental resources is an innovative initiative toward preserving and sustaining the environment.

### **Institutional Capacity and Governance**

Despite the Gaza situation where they move from one crisis to another with the prevailing humanitarian situation, the partners' implementation modality clearly shows developmental engagement modalities. This is partly due to the SDC core funding engagement that allows some degree of investments related to the organisation and the institutional work modalities.

The two organisations are legally registered; their internal guidelines and procedures align with common practices and standards. Both organisations are governed by a Board of Directors (BoD) and General Assembly (GA) with periodic elections of the BoD according to internal guidelines and procedures, in conformity with the local laws. For example, NAWA BoD was elected in July 2021 (9 members) for a period of three years; its guidelines were ratified during the GA meeting.

#### **Leadership Style:**

Overall, the management style adopted by the two organisations is more of a centralised management and decision-making style that generally prevails in the local context. While, according to CFTA management, they are promoting decentralised approaches in decision-making processes and the organisation of regular learning events promoting, therefore, participatory decision making. In NAWA, the centralised approach appeared more evident. Therefore, CFTA shall be encouraged to adopt an institutionalised decision process, while NAWA shall be encouraged to move in that direction equipping the senior management with required skills.

Manuals that govern the work of both organisations exist, including those that specify the roles and responsibilities of executive management, BoD, and GA. However, the effects of the personalities and strengths of NAWA's director and CFTA's deputy director are evident.

Although the staff never directly mentioned this, the strong and empowered character of the director-general of Nawa and the deputy of CFTA has reflected itself in the institution's focus. However, the availability of such a director is good for the newly established institution, but with

time, the team, mainly senior staff, should be more empowered and equipped to lead. Therefore, investing in developing the capacities of the staff, especially senior staff, is highly recommended. For such an organisation, a flat structure with minimal levels works better. It provides the needed flexibility, so the responsibilities of the senior staff are strengthened and with the necessary skills and authority to manage the activities.

Regardless of the institutional structure, the main question remains the decision-making process. To enhance ownership and enrich the institutional dynamics, it would be recommended to establish a senior management team. Additionally, the decision-making process should be institutionalised through documenting and signing the minutes of meetings.

NAWA's work modality looks like a modern young organisation that is closer to a private business modality<sup>11</sup> than to a humanitarian aid modality, which is good- and meets the needs of such vulnerable areas for developmental interventions.

CFTA is unique in allowing youth to generate highly vibrant and innovative ideas despite the long engagement. Moreover, they are good at accepting new ideas, although some of the senior management have been in the same position for decades. Yet there is some new blood, and they allow the youth to experiment and pilot ideas.

### **Human resources / capacity and performance**

Both SDC partners have an organisational structure. NAWA have 62 employees (69% females) and 11 volunteers (63% females). CFTA has 40 core staff employees, 53 project employees and 14 service contract employees, and 180 volunteers, where 78% are women with the inclusion of 5% PwDs.

The two SDC partners depend on their staff in implementing activities and focused on building team spirit among them. As a result, both have team-based structures that foster a culture encouraging self-motivation and boosting team spirit. In addition, they have invested in building their team's capacity to achieve their goals and objectives through the capacity-building component. This should ultimately positively affect the team member satisfaction and willingness to remain together where the outcomes are produced or influenced by the team. CFTA mostly has stable staffing but claims that staff dissatisfaction exists due to low salaries compared to similar NGOs. On the other hand, NAWA has a young team with some staff who internally rotates over a short period of time due to job openings and has a high turnover rate. It's understandable for young organisations to have a high internal rotation frequency. Nonetheless, in both cases, that entail some "institutional memory" risks; thus, NAWA should define a handover method that ensures proper documentation (handover note) and smooth transition (physical handover).

In addition, the CFTA learning curve is below expectations considering that they have more than three decades of operation. Some staff have been in their position for decades, especially senior management and some centres' heads. The deputy has the most influential role within the organisation; she is responsible for programs, advocacy, MEAL, and fundraising. Delegation of

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<sup>11</sup> Private sector modality in this specific case refers to introduction to innovative modalities of engagement, attention to finances, maximizing use of resources flexibility and attention to demand.



authority may positively impact institutional ownership and institutionalised modalities that enhance the institution's sustainability. Moreover, reporting did not reach the expected standards.

Nevertheless, the organisation is always innovative with new initiatives that usually come from the target groups, especially youth. They organise meetings with youth quarterly, annually, and on open days in the presence of project managers. In addition, once a year, the Cultural Centre organises a learning event with youth (Talaqi); as an outcome, they published the best 6-10 youth ideas. Only during the Pandemic period did the meetings periodicity decreased. Thus, the cultural centre is regarded as a very innovative centre elevated to social innovation lab.

Both partners have institutional capacity goals. The meetings, FGDs and documents showed that NAWA and CFTA invested in building the capacities of their key staff, trainees, and volunteers. The reports showed that both organisations developed their team's capabilities in 2019 and 2020 in technical issues, awareness, and mitigating the Covid-19 crisis. Both genders were targeted, as well as PwDs<sup>12</sup>.

For example, the second strategic goal of NAWA aimed to strengthen NAWA's institutional efficiency and financial sustainability. In this context, in 2020 and despite the Pandemic, 34 staff members received training, while in 2019, (53) Staff (65% of them are females) in addition to (7) volunteers and trainees attended training in the administrative, financial, technical, and technological fields.

CFTA annually addressed the training needs of its staff and Wissal Network members. Moreover, it developed an annual capacity building plan and checked its implementation compliance. It is working on building the capacities of its staff on data protection, online work mechanisms and digital security to deal with COVID-19 crises as it re-planned all activities according to the situation. Moreover, the capacities of CFTA staff and volunteers were enhanced in 2019 in budgeting analysis, community activation, SCLR approaches, and Community Organisation which intended to invest in community-led change by empowering communities and building on their available resources rather than depending on external support.

In 2020, CFTA continued its capacity-building activities for the WHC- Al Burij and Wissal Network (WN) to promote their staff and members' capacities in case management and health services provided to women victims and survivors of GBV. In this regard, 26 staff from the WHC and WN were trained on the case management pathways and how to deliver services during COVID-19 by considering the protection measurements.

### **Quality of Management Functions**

The SDC partners work according to a strategic plan; they are currently updating their strategic plan for the coming period. In addition to the strategic plan, both produce annual plans and annual budgets. They organise their resources accordingly by working with different

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<sup>12</sup> For example, 44 of CFTA staff and volunteers (8 out of them are PwDs) received training courses about the rights of PwD's, inclusive practices and inclusive games, 20 of CFTA staff were trained and oriented about the security and protection policies, and 350 persons of CFTA employees, volunteers and the beneficiary groups and member organisations of Wissal their awareness raised regarding the rights of PwDs was enhanced

departments and centres to assign budgets and staffing and clarify roles and responsibilities. The heads of the centres then lead the plan execution. Both organisations have a MEAL manual and tools to evaluate the execution effectiveness and make the necessary adjustments. CFTA is a large organisation with a MEAL coordinator only but no other competent staff to carry out the MEAL functions; the NAWA MEAL unit has three staff members, but with a manual that was just finalised and under testing. SDC should pay attention to how the MEAL is being implemented during the coming period.

### **MEAL System**

NAWA developed the first M&E manual in February 2018, updated it to become MEAL in the first quarter of 2021, and currently, it is under piloting. Although three assigned employees carry out MEAL tasks under the title of administrative assistant, not the title of MEAL officer, the position of MEAL officer is clearly mentioned in the organisational structure. The organisation explains it due to appointing the Admin Coordinator as Acting MEAL Officer after the recent resignation of the former coordinator.

For MEAL purposes, the staff collected and analysed the projects' data and outputs progress through tracking the attendance records, analysing the Pre-Post survey, directing observation, paying field visits, and conducting FGDs with different targeted groups. As a result, MEAL tools can sufficiently capture the project's results and impact; NAWA will develop its database later in 2021.

CFTA developed its first M&E manual ten years ago and updated it to become MEAL in 2018. Since then, one person is filling the MEAL coordinator position and reporting to the deputy, who is at the same time the program manager. However, the assigned employee carries out the MEAL tasks at the activities level, not the programs level. In contrast, the comprehensive CFTA activities and multiple centres required a more structured MEAL unit with competent staff and a clear description of the roles and responsibilities. The MEAL coordinator does not have time to provide quality assurance and carry out other MEAL functions. For example, project officers and Centres heads collect data but do not analyse them; sometimes, the data analysis is outsourced. The MEAL unit in both organisations should operate with a clear budget and freedom to perform their roles in quality assurance and help in practising learning and accountability.

For monitoring and evaluation purposes, NAWA and CFTA regularly conducted FGDs with the different groups of BNFs to address their needs and receive their feedback regarding the implemented activities and arrange field visits.

**CFTA:** Before the last strategic plan (2016-2020), the projects' coordinators were responsible for following up and monitoring the activities at the project level. There was no mechanism to follow up and monitor the interventions at the organisation level. Later and after developing the strategic plan (2016-2020), CFTA developed the MEAL manual and its supporting tools at the end of 2018 and recruited the MEAL Coordinator, partially systemising the monitoring and evaluation tasks.



- The MEAL Coordinator reviews the outputs and achievement in coordination with the CFTA centres' managers. Still, she is fully responsible for measuring the achievement at the level of the strategic outcomes.
- MEAL Coordinator prepares the MEAL plan in coordination with the other senior staff in the centres and then circulates for approval and follow up.
- CFTA conducts quarterly learning sessions with the centres' managers to discuss the achievement level and challenges and share the lessons learned and best practices regarding the learning process. Moreover, the managers of CFTA centres conduct discussion meetings every month.
- At the level of BNFs, the FGDs allow to share their experiences and discuss the suggestions. In addition, the CFTA Cultural Centre annually conducted (Talaqi Platform) that aim to present the most inspiring success stories. The platform gives the floor to the youth to present the best practices they followed in the community-led initiatives and other activities.
- From the consultant's point of view, monitoring and evaluation activities during the project implementation should be strengthened.

**NAWA:** as mentioned in the effectiveness section, the MEAL system is developed recently at NAWA, and currently, the MEAL team is under the coaching process.

- NAWA has developed a Project Tracking Tool (PTT) using MS Excel to track the achievement of planned activities and is filled by the centres' coordinators.
- Centres coordinators prepare monthly reports to document the activities' achievements.
- For the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, the MEAL team conducts regular field visits to the centres and leads FGDs with BNFs.
- For tracking the achievement of the strategic outcomes, the MEAL team developed the Strategic Tracking Tool (STT) using MS Excel.
- The MEAL team and projects officer are responsible for analysing the data, reviewing each centre's reports, and conducting regular meetings to discuss the achievement, challenges, and agreed-on the required amendments.

**Feedback and Complaints Mechanism:** NAWA has developed a feedback and complaint mechanism as a part of MEAL Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). CFTA has a written complaint policy that is part of the *Protection Procedures Manual for Rights Holders and Duty-bearers*, referred to in the administrative manual.

As reported by the BNFs in FGDs, they preferred to talk directly to the responsible person or facilitator for any complaint or suggestion. As a result, NAWA and CFTA used different channels to collect the BNFs feedback, suggestions, and complaints, including the distributed suggestion and complaints boxes inside NAWA and CFTA centres, WhatsApp groups, and conducting regular FGDs with BNFs. Consequently, the number of raised complaints from the surveyed BNFs is small, and both organisations efficiently handled their complaints.

### **Reporting System:**

SDC is flexible when it comes to reporting formats and encourages organisations to develop their own formats provided, they have all the main required elements required by SDC. Therefore, each organisation prepares its own report and submit it annually to the SDC.

Both organisations have a MEAL manual and templates and a sound MIS system that should ultimately produce good reporting; it was the first time for NAWA to report on the progress of the strategy implementation, and they adopted it quickly to reach the standards. However, CFTA reporting did not match the desired standards despite the many years of investment in terms of report structure, formatting, and tabulation and presentation of the data. The same is true for financial management; NAWA quickly adopts while CFTA still shows minor issues on the internal audit report despite having three bookkeepers, one financial manager, and one internal auditor.

- NAWA: their first report was below the standards as they never had a core funding donor and report on the strategy's progress, but it much improved its second report. As noted in the operational report of 2020, there is a good tracking for the project indicators which present the planned targets versus the actual ones.
- CFTA: their annual reports didn't reflect the achievement level of the program indicators. They did not properly present the qualitative and quantitative findings, and the reporting process looks like a fragmented process. As reported by the MEAL coordinator and managers of CFTA centres, the quality of produced reports has improved after introducing the MEAL and fundraising coordinator positions. On the other hand, the donors' requirements are many and varied, which sometimes leads the team to focus on meeting these requirements rather than focusing on the reporting itself.
- Organisations should adopt a standard reporting format linked to MEAL, introduced and accepted by core funding donors would help to improve the reporting quality. In addition, the report can be enhanced by adding success stories.
- Despite that, reporting responsibilities are divided into three levels: centres level projects level, and organisation<sup>13</sup>. As a result, the MEAL staff cannot report all issues, and there is a request to establish the MEAL unit with clear quality assurance tasks.

The reporting skills of the team have to be developed in terms of reporting structure, language, analytical skills, data tabulation and presentation, and graphical presentation skills.

**Partnership between NAWA and CFTA:**

The partnership among the two partners was ineffective and did not provide noticeable results on their performance. A more effective partnership should regularly share resources (such as guides, manuals, libraries, etc., making them available to the beneficiaries) and sharing lessons learned and best practices between the two institutions.

Youth inclusion should be part of the natural evolution that should not be pushed to accelerate it. Eventually, the children they worked with six years ago are now becoming youth who can lead some of these activities. It will be a normal evolution process that will not put the organisation under pressure to expand the beneficiary base, placing the organisation in a situation that can't meet expectations. They are committed to having youth, but it should be part of the evolution where the experience is also consolidated.

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<sup>13</sup> The three levels are: at the level of each center as the manager of the center follow up and monitor the progress that related to the outputs, at the level of project where the project coordinator monitors the progress of the project, and at the level of organisation and the MEAL, the coordinator is the responsible for tracking the achievement of strategic outcomes.

It is recommended to focus on the strong side of each institution, as Nawa benefits from the broad base of the CFTA's CBOs and their experience working with youth. In contrast, CFTA benefits from the modern approach of work and communication with institutions and children below six years old. This proposed partnership should pave the way to reach newly marginalized groups and provide services in innovative methodologies.

To ensure the partnership's success, the partners' representatives need to formulate its aspects, agree upon the goal and scope, then establish an initial framework for the proposed model of the partnership. This will avoid the imposing of a specific model by SDC on the two institutions. Furthermore, this approach will grant NAWA to introduce the target groups and integrate the services smoothly for youth groups, conspiring that NAWA is a newly established organisation compared with CFTA.

**Networking with relevant stakeholders:**

Through their different interventions, both partners reflect a high level of social responsibility and commitment and build a respectful and trustful relationship with local communities, community organisations, and related municipalities.

Both partners have successfully built a good relationship with the local community and governmental and non-governmental organisations based on trust and respect. Both have a good partnership with the Ministry of Education. For example, NAWA has good connections with the Ministry of Tourism who grant them the right to use the building of Al Khader library. Furthermore, the Deir Al Balah municipality offers them another facility for marginal renting costs. CFTA, on the other hand, has an excellent relationship with few different governmental institutions, such as the Ministries of Culture and Health. In addition, CFTA coordinates the Wissal network that works on women-related issues not only in the middle and southern parts but across the Gaza Strip by coordinating the work of 45 NGOs and CBOs.

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES**

### **Lessons Learned**

- Adopting community-based approaches such as the Survivor and Community-led Crises Response (SCLR), community-based initiatives, voluntarism promotion, advocacy, and social accountability demonstrated effectiveness.
- The core funding as a funding modality is highly effective as it allows the institutions to develop and provides them with the flexibility to respond to changing environments. The partners' response to the COVID-19 emergency is clear evidence.
- Introducing freelancing training in NAWA and CFTA will likely impact youth employment. Continuation and diversification to facilitate other innovative TVET alike training are essential. Specific fund allocation in a project funding modality could be an appropriate tool to support partners to enhance this kind of engagement. Post-training follow up with the beneficiaries shall allow the capturing of the impact and measure possible achievements.
- Involvement of the youth to deliver some activities to other targeted groups, namely children, has the dual benefit for the development of the youth characters and experience as well as for the children as recipients. Therefore, more youth involvement after receiving proper training is recommended.

- Participatory approach adopted by the partners to develop their strategies and the design for their interventions resulted very positive in terms of responsiveness and community ownership; therefore, this approach needs to be maintained and possibly adopted systematically in all processes.
- Quality of the partner's produced reports does not reflect the good achievements; therefore, partners are encouraged to improve reporting quality<sup>14</sup> by building on MEAL reports.
- Networking and partnership among CBOs, NGOs and official ministries enhance the interventions and programmes' complementarities, efficiency, and effectiveness; therefore, more investment in building partnerships, networks, and platforms will be strengthened. It can be as well a tool to improve performance and learning.
- The partners' inclusive approach with particular attention to PwDs resulted in very attractive and, to some extent, effective; therefore, this approach shall be continued and possibly enhanced.

### **Best Practices**

- Engaging the family members in some activities created a good impact at the level of the family relationships.
- Building the capacities of parents and children helped them be more interactive with the digital learning process.
- Regular updating of the organisations' manuals and policies enhanced their performance.
- Continuous capacity building of the partners' staff members improved their performance.
- Promoting environment-friendly practices among different community members through the performed scientific environmental research such as investigating marine pollution, recycling practices, and saving environmental resources.
- Coordination and networking with NGOs, ministries and CBOs enhanced the outreach activities such as building the capacities of educators, community initiatives, and advocacy issues.
- Engaging voluntary youth in children's activities has improved their experience and attitudes. In addition, training and involving youth and children in advocacy have enhanced the leadership skills among children and youth.
- The partners' inclusive approach with particular attention to PwDs made them attractive for this critical segment of the society beyond their geographical areas.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

There is no doubt on the relevance of the CFTA and NAWA within their geographical areas and the interventions they are conducting. Based on our evaluation, both partners have achieved the planned objectives, implementing sound intervention exceeding the targets in most cases. The intervention has been assessed as responsive to needs and efficiently implemented. However, they were flexible in adapting their intervention to the Pandemic restrictions that have delayed some of the activities and impeded the implementation of others, however, without affecting the achievement of the objectives.

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<sup>14</sup> Different formats can be used; a good source for programme/ progress reporting is (<https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Reporting.pdf>) or to report change (<https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Reporting-change.pdf>).

CFTA and NAWA are operating in extremely vulnerable areas, implementing needed and responsive interventions.

Both organisations adopt a participatory approach in developing their strategies and interventions.

Target groups are highly relevant where both focus on children and parents, youth, women and persons with disabilities.

The modalities of implementation are sound encompassing participatory approaches from the design to the evaluation.

Institutionally that is the most relevant component when it comes to core funding. However, several findings and issues have been identified and presented in recommendations for individual institutions and SDC. These recommendations encompass several topics relevant to institutional development, human resource skills development, MEAL decision making processes.

Supporting civil society organisations, especially in Gaza and particularly in the specific geographical areas and target groups, remain of utmost importance. At the same time seeking gradual mechanisms to achieve sustainability is equally important.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Strategic Level:

- Jointly with the partners, review the ToR for the Steering Committee, ensuring that it becomes the platform for providing support and guidance and a means of accountability concerning milestones and/ or benchmarks. A joint or frequent joint Steering Committee with the two partners and/ or joint policy dialogue sessions might help enhance coordination and learning.
- Benefiting from the opportunity of strategic development by the two partners:
  - ✓ Identify and build upon commonalities to strengthen the cooperation between the two partners beyond coordination towards building a partnership.
  - ✓ Identify modalities of mutual support that builds on the strength of each organisation.
  - ✓ Encourage the two organisations to adopt a peer review during this process.
- SDC should continue assisting partners in establishing partnership plans to become a partner-driven strategy rather than a donor-driven approach.

### B. Governance level

- Engage in a sound institutional development with specific and clear time-bound milestones and financial allocations with particular focus on:
  - ✓ Decision making, a chain of command, and communication processes.
  - ✓ In line with internal procedures, update the institutional structure to adapt to changes in engagements, work modalities, and outflowing needs with clear roles and responsibilities.
  - ✓ Given the above, update the HR development plans to accommodate properly needed skills development efforts and ensure the actualisation of the gained skills.

#### Specific for NAWA:

- Encourage moving toward institutionalising the decision making process and equipping the senior management with the required skills.
- More clarity is needed regarding NAWA's engagement in the KG. It can be seen in two different ways; either way, pursued, it needs to appear in NAWA's financial statement (as in the 2020 report):
  - ✓ Investment that ensures financial return that is then invested in NAWA's activities in support to the vulnerable.
  - ✓ Mixed approach where fees are paid by people who can afford it and subsidies provided to ensure inclusion of vulnerable (subsidies may come through fees collected and project funding).

#### Specific for CFTA:

- Encourage the management to institutionalise the promoted decentralised approach in the decision-making process.
- Reinforce the MEAL with needed resources, including human resources.
- Improve reporting with clear linkages to MEAL.

- Building the capacities of Wissal network members in the issues that related to digital media, strategic planning.
- Encourage volunteerism, providing remuneration and priorities during job openings.
- Enhance advertisements for any service, especially for women health services, through other means such as social media and radio.

**C. Activities level**

- Identify dynamics that encourage parents, especially males, to participate in project activities.
- Expand the activities to include sport and music activities for children and youth, including PwDs.
- Given the irregular scholastic year resulting from the Pandemic and the resulting restrictions, it would be valuable for the beneficiaries to expand the non-formal education activities focusing on literacy and numeracy in addition to the 21st-Century skills.
- Engaging youth to pay more attention to training or specialised training that opens job opportunities.

**Specific for NAWA:**

- Expand beneficiary base to include youth; however, this needs to be done realistically without overloading the institution. In this, CFTA experience can turn to be useful.
- Improve outreach in the geographical focus<sup>15</sup> using different means such as more awareness, establishing new centres (if resources allow), subsidies for transportation (when needed), organisation of ad-hoc events, etc.
- Promotion of NAWA's activities among the parents of KGs children.

**Specific for CFTA:**

- Provide, when possible, work space for freelancers and provide contracting and contractual support.
- Encourage cooperation among Wissal network members.
- Refresh infrastructure and tools to enable PwDs participation.

**D. For SDC funding**

- Support the institutional development<sup>16</sup> providing change management expertise with specific and clear milestones and budget lines:
  - ✓ The development and institutionalisation of partners' internal processes such as decision making, a chain of command, and communication.
  - ✓ The update of the institutional structure with clear roles and responsibilities.

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<sup>15</sup> Such as: Almoaskar, East of Salah Eldeen Street.

<sup>16</sup> Worth mentioning that institutional development has important implications on work modalities, attitudes, and business culture, all of which requires partnership approaches and long-term investments.

- ✓ The development and implementation of adequately needed skills development plans and identification of milestones reflecting the actualisation of the gained skills, especially for the senior management and MEAL.
- Supporting civil society organisations, especially in Gaza and particularly in the specific geographical areas and target groups, remain of utmost importance. At the same time seeking gradual mechanisms to achieve sustainability is equally important.
- Although SDC focus is youth engagement, it should not neglect the value of NAWA's work with children, allowing a natural evolution of NAWA's engagement to include youth. In this effort, CFTA can play a good role in terms of sharing knowledge and experience.
- Support partners to identify dynamics that encourage male parents to participate in project activities.



## **ANNEXES**

## Annex 1: Evaluation Terms of Reference

### 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For an independent evaluation of the project “Support to Safe Spaces for Women, Youth and Children in Gaza Strip”, SDC will recruit a mixed team (Gaza and West Bank or International). From 2019 – 2021, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) will support the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA) and NAWA for Culture and Arts Association in the Gaza Strip to provide quality educational and cultural services in safe learning environments for children, youth and women, including persons with disabilities. This contribution aims to enhance the inclusion of marginalized groups in local development and in community-led initiatives, and to prevent wider spreading of violent extremism and radicalization.

The primary target group In Khan Younis area (CFTA): 15’000 children, 2’000 youth, 12’000 women & parents. In Deir Al Balah area (NAWA): 7’560 children, 280 youths, 360 parents & women, 160 educators, including persons with disabilities. The intervention will also serve the communities, service providers and municipalities in the area of impact. The key outputs of the current phase are: Increasing knowledge through reading, writing, creativity and research (children), building skills and capacities of educators in schools and other institutions (teaching staff), develop skills including: life skills, arts, communications, media, human rights, advocacy through formal and informal/in-job training (children, youth and women), and help youth in identifying potential income generating and employment opportunities (youth).

The project implementation period is 01 January 2019 to 31 December 2021 with a total budget of USD 2.4 million. Funding has been provided by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. This commitment is to be debited to the Framework Credit of CHF 6.635 billion to finance the technical cooperation and financial assistance to developing countries according to the Federal Decree of 26 September 2016.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is responsible for the overall coordination with other federal authorities of development and cooperation as well as for humanitarian aid delivered by the Swiss Confederation.

Swiss international cooperation, which is an integral part of the Federal Council's foreign policy, aims to contribute to a world without poverty and in peace, for sustainable development. It fosters economic self-reliance and state autonomy, contributes to the improvement of production conditions, helps address environmental problems, and ensures better access to education and basic healthcare services.

The Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA) was established in 1991 as an independent, secular non-governmental development organisation which, in emergency situations, also provides humanitarian assistance. CFTA aspires to nurturing new generations of Palestinians capable of giving, sharing, and taking responsibility for themselves, one another, and their communities. For over 20 years, CFTA has worked in the middle and southern areas of the Gaza Strip to provide safe, supportive, interactive spaces and opportunities for members of our community to explore and experiment; to build knowledge and skills; to exchange ideas, experiences and expertise; and to connect and create with others.

NAWA for Culture and Arts Association (NAWA) is a non-profit, founded in 2014 by a group of young, passionate, dedicated and educated young Palestinians to help empower their local communities through culture and arts programs. NAWA serves the Palestinian community at large. NAWA is located in Deir Al Balah City, a central point in Gaza Strip, where it plans to serve thousands of Palestinian children who have limited access to cultural, recreational and psychosocial programs.

**Project information:**

The overall goal of the project is: Empowered women and youth, including persons with disabilities, have an increased voice in local development processes and community-led initiatives in the area of impact of supported educational and cultural institutions. To achieve this goal, the project focuses on four outcomes, namely:

- Youth and Women (M/F including persons with disabilities) are empowered to be active change makers in their communities,
- Improved service delivery to targeted marginalized groups,
- Enhanced sharing of knowledge and best practices between CFTA and NAWA.

The target is to reach at least 23'000 children, 2'300 youth, 12'500 women & parents including persons with disabilities through a multi-sectoral approach on empowering target groups in safe and protected learning environments. Project activities includes:

- Psychosocial support to alleviate the negative effects of the situation and increase resilience;
- Empowerment and capacity building to provide tools to the community to act as change agents;
- Education to improve academic achievement levels by extra-curricular activities and remedial classes using active learning strategies;
- Arts and culture by promoting the use of literature, music, fine arts and artistic products;
- Awareness-raising to enable target groups to design and implement advocacy actions and raising awareness about their causes and priorities within their communities.

**2. CONTRACT PURPOSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS**

The overall objective of the evaluation is to document and report on the achievement of results, intended and not-intended, of project activities as a part of organisational learning and SDC's accountability. The evaluation shall shed light on the following main dimensions of project management:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness and efficiency including costs effectiveness
- Impact

- Sustainability and risk management
- Institutional capacity and governance
- Final performance

These main aspects of PCM can be broken down to a few leading questions:

a. Evaluate;

- If the project was designed in a way that is relevant to the context and the needs of the target group?
- The beneficiaries have been able to overcome the situation and positively become change agents in their communities.
- The improvement of targeted persons' academic achievement, life skills and engagement with their communities.
- The quality of services provided by the two implementing partners and the models of engagement with beneficiaries.
- The level of sharing of knowledge and best practices between CFTA and NAWA.
- Cross-cutting issues like environment and gender equality have been taken into account for the project implementation.
- The effectiveness of team structures, the quality of management functions and leadership styles in both implementing partners, as well as the internal governance of the implementing partners.
- Results-frameworks and MEAL tools have sufficiently captured the impact and results of the project.
- Risks as described in the project risk matrix have been addressed.
- Evaluate the participation of women, girls and persons with disability in program activities and the quality of their participation.
- Conduct a beneficiary impact assessment for all targeted groups.
- To what extent they have implemented the recommendations of the previous external evaluations conducted an external evaluation team and to the extent that any recommendations have not been implemented, if those recommendations are still relevant to them and still requiring attention?

b. Provide constructive recommendations for future programming including;

- Assess the success in achieving their roles/functions
- Assess the success in achieving their stated goals and strategic objectives, in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, institutional capacity, sustainability and risk management;
- Assessment of different stakeholders' satisfaction from the programs and interventions implemented by them.
- The relevance and adequacy of the results-frameworks including its structure of outcomes and outputs and related indicators, target group numbers and MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) tools.
- Improvements needed for CFTA and NAWA accompaniment throughout the project cycle including for quality assurance, monitoring and capacity development.

- The integration of best practices and lessons learned in next strategies for both organisations.
- How COVID-19 crisis has affected implementing CFTA and NAWA plans and the lessons learnt/opportunities.

The team is expected to further develop in the inception report, relevant research methodologies and questions addressing the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and connectedness.

### 3. ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

Assumptions related to the viability of this evaluation and consultancy include:

- Targeted groups, staff of both organisations, managerial staff, other stakeholders are willing to be interviewed and answer questions or other data collection methods.
- The security situation in the Gaza Strip remains stable.

### 4. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The scope of services includes all aspects of an external evaluation from development and planning of research methodologies to data collection and analysis, and reporting on findings. The evaluation will be carried out in the Gaza Strip and will include visits to CFTA and NAWA head offices and their respective centres (11 in total). In addition, the team is expected to make interviews amongst primarily individuals assisted by the program in 2019-2021. It will cover project activities implemented by CFTA and NAWA during the period 01 January 2019 to the date of conducting the evaluation.

#### Evaluation principles

For the evaluation, the Team is expected to taking into account the following ethical considerations:

- Openness of information given, to the highest possible degree to all parties,
- Public access to the results when there are no special considerations against this,
- Broad participation of interested parties, reflecting representative samples of all target groups
- Reliability and independence,
- Confidentiality, safety, respect, non-discrimination.

#### Methodology:

The evaluation is expected to generate significant learning for CFTA, NAWA and SDC. Hence the Team is expected to develop an approach combining both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, relevant to the overarching purpose and research questions. Research methodologies may include desk reviews, key informant interviews, focus group

discussions, beneficiary satisfaction surveys, observations and case studies and should take into consideration the need for triangulating data. The Evaluation Team should have access to review the following documents for both partners: strategic plans, narrative and financial reports, annual action plans, log frames, results framework and budgets, evaluations of different activities and/or interventions, publications, and other materials produced by both partners, previous External Evaluation Reports, and Capacity Assessment Reports.

Key milestones and expected deliveries:

1. Inception report: This should include amongst others, the data collection and analysis methodologies, the selection and training of enumerators – if needed, tools proposed and the respective timeline to achieve the objectives stated above. It should include descriptions of equipment to be employed, check lists, questionnaires and reporting formats.
2. Progress report
3. Draft final report/Presentation: Before the final report is issued, the Team should issue a draft report and organize a presentation to SDC and partners' staff. The aim of this presentation is to receive feedback on findings and preliminary conclusions and recommendations.
4. Final report: The final report is to be submitted after feedback has been received and integrated into the draft report. The final report should be delivered in 4 hard copies and a soft copy on an USB stick. In addition, all datasets produced during the course of the consultancy, should be provided in an electronically readable manner. Please Final report's summary, key findings and recommendations should be produced in Arabic language

Core Tasks By date:

- Scoping meeting with SDC.
  - Detailed briefing on the partners' projects.
  - Meeting with CFTA and NAWA, SDC's partner organisation in Gaza.
  - Detailed briefing on the outcome related to SDC's quality assurance (including through skype).
  - Receive documentation on the projects and the outcome related to quality assurance.
  - Discuss way forward based on the methodology.
  - Desk Review: Review of project documentation including proposals, budgets, log frames and partner reports. Review NCA's quality assurance processes.
5. TIMING, LOGISTICS AND FACILITIES

The aim is to start the evaluation assignment on 01 May 2021 with the draft report submitted by 30 May 2021. Field work will take place in Gaza as described above under point 4: Scope of services.

During the assignment, the Team will report to the SDC Project Officers in Gaza and Jerusalem.

In addition, SDC Offices in Jerusalem and Gaza will provide logistical and coordination support.

The Team will be expected to make their own arrangements for accommodation, office facilities, and if necessary, translation from Arabic to English during the evaluation.

## 6. REPORTING

The final report is to be provided in English. It should contain at least the following sections (not exhaustive):

- Executive summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations (in English and Arabic);
- Introduction and context background to the evaluation;
- Description of the Methodology with Evaluation questions, methodologies and approach, scope, constraints, and limitations;
- Description of the project objectives evaluated;
- Data collection and analysis;
- Key findings and conclusions;
- Recommendations for future programming to be implemented by CFTA, NAWA and SDC including SDC's added value to the partners with respect to amongst others quality assurance and capacity development.

Annexes to be included are: The agreed Terms of Reference (ToR), work plan, data collection instruments and protocols, databases and references to sources of information for both qualitative and quantitative data.

The final report in English is to be delivered in 4 hard copies and a soft copy on an USB stick. In addition, all datasets produced during the course of the consultancy, should be provided in an electronically readable manner.

## 7. QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

The evaluation shall be conducted by a mixed team of consultants (Gaza and West Bank and or International) with proven experience in Human Rights, Local Governance, Participatory and Inclusive Approaches and Engagement with Women, Children and Youth in conflict affected areas. Experience with the Non-Governmental sector including relevant terminology and concepts for amongst others results-frameworks, accountability, quality assurance and cross cutting issues is expected. If a team, the ideal composition is one expert with international exposure, and one with in-depth knowledge about the Gaza Strip context, including of approaches related to protection, engagement and service provision to marginalized groups.

Specific competences:

- Demonstrated research skills and documented experience with evaluation of Local Governance, participation, engagement of marginalized groups' programs/projects including with various research methodologies including qualitative data collection and analysis on sensitive subjects.



- Good knowledge and experience in capacity development in fragile context.
- The lead shall have a minimum of seven years of experience in Protection, Safe Spaces programs including governance and community-based approaches.
- At least one team member with extensive knowledge about Human Rights-based programming and successful approaches for engaging marginalized groups in conflict zones.
- Demonstrated knowledge of cross-cutting issues like gender, good governance and accountability to beneficiaries.
- Solid understanding of results-based approaches and MEAL tools.
- Knowledge about the Gaza Strip context.
- Proficiency in written and oral English, and knowledge of Arabic is an advantage.
- Ability and willingness to travel to the field.

## 8. SELECTION PROCESS

The proposals will be evaluated and selected based on quality cost with a ratio of (40%) for Methodology, (30%) for experience and (30%) for financial proposal. The financial offer has to be presented as a detailed budget disclosing all relevant costs. The proposal should include as a minimum:

- A description of proposed evaluation/research methodologies including corresponding sampling techniques, target groups and sizes.
- A time plan for the evaluation in accordance with table in point 4 above. The firm's ability to perform the assignment at the appropriate time, based on the proposed methodology.
- A reference list of previous clients including a short description of similar assignments completed in the region as well as contact details of references.
- Copies of Curriculum Vitae (CVs) of the proposed Team members. The composition of the team should take into consideration the points described under particularly points 2, 4 and 7. It will be considered an advantage if the consultant team includes members from both genders.
- If the Team is a registered company, a copy of the registration shall be provided.
- A financial offer with a detailed breakdown of costs.

## 9. TO APPLY

Candidates interested in submitting a proposal should send their sets of applications in PDF format to the following email address: [gazawestbank.tender@eda.admin.ch](mailto:gazawestbank.tender@eda.admin.ch) no later than the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 by the latest 17:00 hours, the winner will be informed at the last week of April 2021.

The email must mention "Support to Safe Spaces for Women, Youth and Children in Gaza Strip" in the subject line. Clarifications and questions can be received by writing only until the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2021, it shall be sent to: [gazawestbank.tender@eda.admin.ch](mailto:gazawestbank.tender@eda.admin.ch). The answers to all questions will be shared with all applicants.

## **Annex 2: Documents Reviewed**

1. Original CP and Additional Credit CP
2. ProDoc CFTA, ProDoc NAWA, AddCrdt ProDoc CFTA, AddCrdt ProDoc NAWA
3. Logframe and Work Plan CFTA, Logframe and Work Plan NAWA, AddCrdt Logframe and Work Plan CFTA, AddCrdt Logframe and Work Plan NAWA
4. CFTA Strategic Plan 2016-2020, NAWA Strategic Plan 2018-2020
5. CFTA Annual Report 2019 and 2020, NAWA Annual Report 2019 and 2020
6. CFTA Internal Audit Report 2019 and 2020, NAWA Internal Audit Report 2019 and 2020
7. CFTA Coaching and Compliance Check- Capacity Building Activities 2020
8. CFTA Evaluation report 05.07.2015, CFTA Evaluation report 02.12.2018
9. CFTA policies and manuals: Admin manual, PESA, Internal Control, MEAL, Child Safeguarding Policy, HRBA, and Risk management policy and procedure
10. NAWA Strategy Output Tracking Jan-June 2019, NAWA CC Management report Jan 2019-June 2020, NAWA MEAL report July- December 2020
11. NAWA Drosos project Midterm Evaluation report April 2018, NAWA Children's Gate to the Future project Evaluation report April 2018
12. NAWA policies and manuals: General Policies Manual, Admin Manual, Child Protection Manual, and M&E and MEAL Manual