



The business of change

A preschool. A business that sells falafel sandwiches to a neighbourhood school. A hair salon. A new boutique that promotes traditional embroidery and mosaic work. A continuing education centre for students with special needs. A local enterprise that raises poultry and sells eggs.

What all these small business initiatives have in common is that they are run by Arab women in East Jerusalem, graduates of the “Empowerment through Entrepreneurship” (ETE) program. Now in its second of three years, the program aims to advance personal, economic, and social empowerment for its

participants, many of whom live in poverty.

Women in the 56-hour course network and receive instruction in the legal and financial aspects of business in the region. They can also qualify for financial assistance in order to implement their business plans.

When Arab women have the economic tools to help themselves and their children, everyone in East Jerusalem benefits, says local businessman Fuad Abu Hamed, chairman of the Al Quds Dialogue Center for Community and Culture Development, one of the project partners. Good relationships between the region’s Arab and Jewish

populations, he says, are much easier to achieve when both are economically secure. Participants, he says, “feel like they can change things. We give them hope for the future and for their children.”

Funded by Canada’s The Asper Foundation, the Jerusalem Foundation of Canada, and CFHU, ETE’s partners also include the Hebrew University, Anwar Alquds College, the Jerusalem Foundation (Israel), and MATI (the Jerusalem Business Development Center).

Gail Asper, Canadian philanthropist and president of The Asper Foundation, was inspired to launch the program in order to combat

Arab women’s high poverty rates and low workforce participation. She’s happy, she says, to facilitate a project that brings together Jews and Arabs for a common goal:

“The Asper Foundation is grateful to be working with CFHU and the Jerusalem Foundation Canada to create and support the Empowerment through Entrepreneurship program. Its name captures the objectives of the initiative, which are to enable Arab women to achieve success in small business endeavours so they can contribute more effectively to their families, communities, and Israeli society as a whole.”



Empowerment through Entrepreneurship: Arab women in East Jerusalem come together to network and discuss their business plans as part of a program to foster their economic independence and a more peaceful society.