



Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children

# Annual Report

2018



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## ❖ Scope About Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children:

**Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (ASDC)** is a local non-governmental organization, established in 1992 in Gaza City, in order to enable persons with hearing disability in the Gaza Strip to have their chance in life through education, rehabilitation, and job training and employment opportunities. From its establishment as a small school for persons with hearing disability serving 27 students, Atfaluna now serves more than 40,000 persons annually through a multitude of services and training programs implemented within an inclusive approach. These interventions aim at providing equal opportunities for persons with hearing disability in the society

ASDC is the main referral and resource center for hearing loss for most community-based rehabilitation centers, the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health, UNRWA and other non-governmental organizations in the Gaza Strip and is an active member of the Palestinian Network for non-governmental organizations and headed its rehabilitation sector for more than nine years. The organization employs more than 131 permanent staff members of which 40% are deaf and work hard to serve thousands of deaf children and adults and their family members through a host of services within the organization.

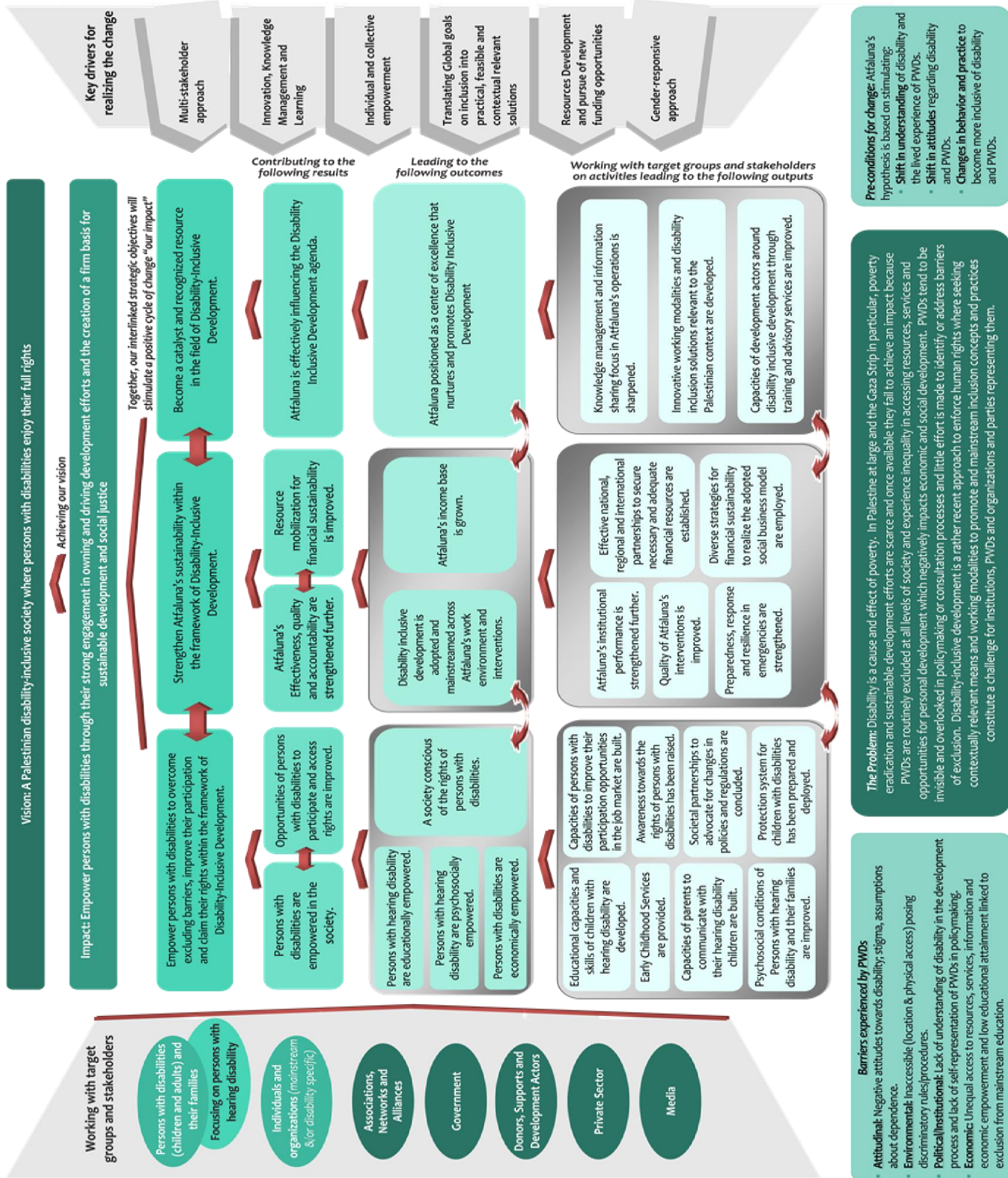
### **Vision:**

A Palestinian disability inclusive society where persons with disabilities enjoy their full rights.

### **Mission:**

Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children is a non-profit organization that endeavors to empower persons with hearing disability as well as persons with other disabilities in the Gaza Strip and improve their quality of life within a disability-inclusive development framework.





## ❖ Our Current Programs and Activities

- **Audiology and Speech Pathology** (hearing screening outreach, audio logical diagnosis, hearing aid fitting including ear-mold making and hearing aid repair, early intervention, speech/ language development).
- **Inclusive Education** (pre-School, kindergarten, preparatory school serving 300 children).
- **Inclusive Technical and Vocational Education and Training** (furniture making, sewing, embroidery, culinary arts, jeweler making, shoe making, photography, graphic design, hairdressing, etc.).
- **Inclusive Crafts Production** (carpentry and furniture making, embroidery, sewing, fabric and rug weaving, pottery making, shoe making, jeweler making).
- **Food Catering and Hall Rental.**
- **Advocacy, Lobbying, and Networking** for the rights of persons with disabilities.
- **Community Education and Awareness** (sign language training courses, job counseling, better parenting, deaf cultural and education events, literacy and numeracy training, child safeguarding, awareness materials, etc.).
- **Psychosocial (social work and counseling,** debriefing sessions, psychosocial material and guides, recreational activities, emergency response, etc.)

## ❖ Our Target Group

The Society provides its services to deaf and hearing-impaired children and adults and their families throughout the Gaza Strip, with special emphasis on persons living in rural and marginalized areas, regardless of age, race, gender and class. The Society also helps marginalized women throughout the Gaza Strip through humanitarian assistance, vocational training and income generation programs.

## ❖ Atfaluna Programs:

- **The Audiology and Speech Pathology Unit** is specialized in the early identification and intervention of all forms and degrees of hearing loss and hearing problems. The unit offers outreach hearing screening to thousands of persons on an annual basis, audio logical diagnosis, hearing aid fitting including ear mold making and hearing aid repair, early intervention and speech/ language development.
- **The Inclusive Education Program** at Atfaluna is divided into two main components:  
Inclusive Day Care which includes both nursery and kindergarten services to deaf and non-deaf children aged between 0 and 5 years of age.  
The **School** which offers **inclusive education** to deaf and non-deaf children from Grades 1 to 9.
- **The Inclusive Technical and Vocational Education and Training Unit** at Atfaluna continues to open its doors to the community through technical and vocational training courses. Both short- and long-term courses were implemented through the year. Persons with disabilities as well as non-disabled persons partook in the trainings bolstering inclusion and breaking barriers.
- **The Crafts Production Unit** at Atfaluna is a key component in reflecting Palestinian heritage and tradition to the world. The crafts produced by the deaf artisans at Atfaluna represent the high quality and professionalism of the deaf. **“Atfaluna Crafts”** is becoming increasingly popular for its unique embroidery items, pottery pieces and wooden craftsmanship.
- **The Food Catering and Hall Rental Unit** at ASDC is an income generating program which aims to support the empowerment of deaf persons in the Gaza Strip. Atfaluna offers 6 halls which accommodate up to 150 persons. Each hall can be prepared upon request with a number of services including laptop, LCD, flipchart, etc. The Society also offers a large range of refreshments and food catering services which include pastries, sandwiches and desserts. Throughout the year 2018 the ASDC halls were rented to a number of leading local and international organizations. Upon request the services offered included freshly produced cinnamon rolls, pastries and various sandwiches made by the deaf food producers at Atfaluna.

➤ **The Sign Language Program** at Atfaluna is a vital and ongoing program which aims at enhancing and spreading sign language in order to ease communication and integration of deaf persons within their households, and in the community as a whole. The program offers sign language training at beginners, intermediate and advanced levels to community members, local businesses, banks and other organizations. Moreover, professional sign language interpretation is conducted at police stations, court houses and hospitals to facilitate the proper communication of deaf persons with community members.

To achieve a Palestinian disability inclusive society where persons with disabilities enjoy their full rights ASDC continues to advocate and network on various levels. Although the year 2018 reflected a severely deteriorated and unsettled condition in the Gaza Strip however, ASDC continued its efforts to highlight the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities through strong community participation and joint networking.



## ❖ Atfaluna List of Projects 2018

Project Name	Donor	Project Period	Budget
Improving the Quality of Services Provided to Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip (2017-2018)	Islamic Fund	2018	USD 36,961
Improving the Vocational Education Environment in Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children for People with Disabilities.	Kuwait Fund	July 2017 – April 2018	310,016 USD
Building a Sustainable and Social Business Model	CBM Germany	January 2018 – December 2020	EUR 200,000
Inclusive Day Care Services for Deaf and Hearing Children	Mel Wolf Foundation	January 2018 – December 2018	USD 31,825
Provision of Hearing Aids for Profoundly and Severely Deaf Children in the Gaza Strip	Save the Children	May 2018 – August 2018	USD 31,043
Development Fund for Small Business of Youth with Disability in Gaza Strip	Human Appeal	July 2018 – December 2018	NIS 92,299.5
Improving the Psychosocial Resilience of Children with and without Disabilities in the Gaza Strip	BMZ	September 2018 – September 2021	EUR 100,00,00
Vocational Training and Job Creation Program for People with Disabilities in the Gaza Strip	UNDP	October 2018 – December 2019	USD 90,000
Economic Empowerment for Females with Mental Health Problems	WHO	October 2018 – December 2019	USD 24,000
Provision of Quality Services for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students in the Gaza Strip	Swiss Development Cooperation	September 2018 – September 2019	USD 50,000
Economic Empowerment for Females with Disabilities	GIZ	December 2018 – March 2019	EUR 30,400
Hearing Screening in UNRWA Schools	UNRWA	January 2018 – December 2018	USD 8,000



Project Name	Donor	Project Period	Budget
Speech Therapy Services	Islamic Relief	January 2018 – December 2018	USD 18,800
Supporting Special Deaf Education Classroom 1A	Humanit' Aide	September 2018 – August 2019	5214.90 USD
Supporting Special Deaf Education Classroom 4A	MECA- David Halaby	September 2018 – August 2019	USD 14,276
Supporting Special Deaf Education Classroom 4B	Church of Scotland	September 2018 – August 2019	GBP 3,986.45
Supporting Special Deaf Education Classroom 7A	Lady Fatemah Trust, UK	September 2018 – August 2019	USD 14,120
Supporting Special Deaf Education Classroom 7B	Lady Fatemah Trust, UK	September 2018 – August 2019	USD 14,390
LOPC Classroom Academic Year (2018/2019)	LOPC	September 2018 – August 2019	24,961 USD
Sanctuary Fund - Early Intervention	LOPC	January 2018 – December 2018	USD 9,966
Promoting a Child Safe Environment in the Gaza Strip through Enhancing Child Protection Response Mechanisms	PA.IS France	March 2018 – December 2018	USD 11,000
Provision of Early Detection and Intervention Services for Deaf Children (between 0 and 5 Years) and their Families in the Gaza Strip	PA.IS France	March 2018 – December 2018	USD 44,000
Supporting Special Deaf Education Classroom1B and 5A	CCP- Japan	September 2018 – August 2019	USD 30,000

The organisation through its programs and host of services is working towards achieving its key strategic objectives. The objectives which were built on the needs of the community and supported through a disability inclusive development framework which was created by professionals in the field were served through the organisation's programs.

**Strategic Objective 1: To empower persons with disabilities to overcome excluding barriers, improve their participation and claim their rights within the framework of Disability Inclusive Development**

**1.1 Persons with disabilities are empowered in the society**

**1.1.1 Persons with hearing disability are educationally empowered**

**1.1.1.1 Educational capacities and skills of children with hearing disability are developed**

- After implementing nineteen (19) organizational meetings with the disability sector within the Ministry of Education and other related parties twenty (20) children with hearing disabilities (10 females: 10 males) were included within public schools across the Gaza Strip. In line with the arrangements twenty-one (21) individual counseling sessions for parents of the deaf children were conducted to prepare them for their children's inclusive education change. Moreover, two non-disabled students were included in the Atfaluna School for the deaf.



- Provision of educational and psychological support for the students enrolled within the public schools by joining them in follow up lessons. Parents were also involved in their children's educational process by inviting them to attend awareness workshops and providing them with revision papers to support them in teaching their children during the end of year examinations. To increase awareness towards inclusive education among public school teachers and educational counselors regular follow up visits were conducted by ASDC staff.

- The Atfaluna School curriculums were developed to suit persons with disabilities after five specialized committees were formulated to evaluate public curriculums in light of an inclusive education approach. To support the change four (4) meetings were held with teachers and educational supervisors as well as fifteen (15) workshops with family members of the deaf students to identify and discuss arising problems during the educational process with their children.



- Building the social and educational skills of the Atfaluna School teachers by enrolling them in training in the fields of: Information technology, psychosocial support, protection, academic sign language, teaching methods and strategies.

- Development of educational and psychosocial programs for the Atfaluna students in line with the adopted inclusive education approach with the aim to improve the quality of education. A number of new teaching techniques were also introduced to the students including cartoons, origami, electronic library, science labs, auditory training.



- The Atfaluna inclusive library implemented more than thirty (30) inclusive activities among students with and without disabilities including educational, psychosocial and non-curriculum activities.

### 1.1.1.2 Early Childhood Services are provided

- Enrollment of 55 children within the Atfaluna nursery and kindergarten of which twenty-nine (29) were children with disabilities and twenty-six (26) non-disabled children. The kindergarten adopts the Ministry of Education curriculum while making inclusive education considerations for the varying abilities of the children.
- Participation of family members in inclusive education awareness sessions, communication and sign language training in addition to monthly meetings to follow up their children's educational process with the kindergarten management.
- Building the capacities of service providers within the kindergarten through 5 annual meetings with professionals in the field of inclusive education approach as well as several training courses in the field organized by the Ministry of Education.



### 1.1.1.3 Capacities of parents to communicate with their hearing-impaired children are built

- Two (2) meetings were held during the year with parents of deaf students enrolled in the Atfaluna School to establish a parent's council.
- Establishing a computerized school system accessible to all parents enrolled in the Atfaluna School.



## 1.1.2 Persons with hearing disability are psychosocially empowered

### 1.1.2.1 Psychosocial conditions of persons with hearing disability and their families are improved

- Two (2) inclusive days of activities were organized among children with and without disabilities in public schools during the academic year.
- Preparation and implementation of monthly psychosocial plans which include daily psychosocial interventions for the deaf students enrolled in the school in addition to individual and group psychosocial support activities for the students and their families, family counseling, and psychosocial relieving activities.
- Provision of family guidance sessions through one hundred and eighty (180) home visits, in addition to attendance of awareness sessions.
- Delivery of three (3) psychosocial support trainings for family members of deaf students as well as Atfaluna staff. The trainings gave participants the needed knowledge to provide psychosocial support to students and their families within an inclusive development approach.
- Implementing of three (3) training courses for family members in measurement tools and psychosocial support within an inclusive development approach



Provision of 1,850 individual and family psychosocial counseling sessions throughout the period.

### 1.1.3 Persons with disabilities are economically empowered

#### 1.1.3.1 Capacities of persons with disabilities to improve their participation opportunities in the job market are built

- Conducting ten (10) vocational training courses in the fields of culinary arts, sweets making, graphic design, hairdressing for women, carpentry, sewing, photography, embroidery, electronic marketing for a total of 107 youth with disabilities.
- Internship opportunities for 172 youth with disabilities and conducting of 175 follow up and monitoring visits.
- Implementing 500 job counseling sessions for youth with disabilities searching for work opportunities or hired through the various opportunities created via Atfaluna.
- Implementing life skills workshops for 650 youth with hearing disabilities

Awareness raising workshops for 150 employers, business owners and representatives of work unions to shed light on challenges faced by persons with disabilities and persuade employers to include youth with disabilities within the local labor market.



## 1.1.4 Persons with disabilities empowered to reach hearing services

### 1.1.4.1 Improvement in skills of children with language and speech problems

- A total of 450 speech and language therapy evaluation sessions were conducted to identify language problems among children. After the evaluations were completed a total of 388 children were enrolled in the speech and language therapy program at Atfaluna. During the period 9,200 sessions were concluded, 281 children graduated from the program with a 90% degree of improvement in their skills.



### 1.1.4.2 Raised level of community awareness towards early identification and intervention of children with hearing disabilities

- Implementing of fifteen (15) awareness sessions for family members of children identified with hearing, speech and language problems.
- Conducting of seven (7) awareness workshops for parents of children receiving services from the audiology and speech therapy units at Atfaluna bringing awareness towards identifying ear problems early identification, and treatment.
- Public school teachers attended eight (8) lectures about inclusive education approach.
- Approximately (120) individual awareness sessions were carried out for parents of children identified with hearing, speech and language problems.
- Community hearing screening for 12,100 children across the Gaza Strip of which (220) children were referred to ENT doctors, (144) children were referred to diagnostic testing at Atfaluna and (44) children underwent Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) testing with the ASDC Auditory Unit.





## 1.2 Opportunities of persons with disabilities to participate and access rights are improved

### 1.2.1 A society conscious of the rights of persons with disabilities

#### 1.2.1.1 Awareness towards the rights of persons with disabilities has been raised

- Conducting (144) hours of training for teachers and educational counselors towards inclusive approach and the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Implementation of (7) awareness workshops for (193) parents of deaf students included in public schools.
- Implementation of (14) awareness workshops for (428) students (225 females, 203 males) enrolled in public schools. The workshops focused on informing the students about disability principles, communicating using sign language and positive behaviors towards persons with disabilities.
- Carrying out (7) sign language courses for (140) persons from various sectors of the community aiming at raising awareness towards persons with disabilities and facilitating means of communication.
- Partnering with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and University College of Ability Development in implementing a sign language diploma and participating in lectures.
- Sign language interpretation for persons with hearing disabilities in courts, hospitals, and government services  
Conducting (20) awareness workshops for persons with disabilities informing them about their legal rights





### **1.2.1.2 Societal partnerships to advocate for changes in policies and regulations**

- Partnering with the Ministry of Education with the aim to facilitate coordination with government schools.
- Building partnerships with local organizations to sustain and strengthen relationships which serve the deaf community. The partnerships included: Tamer Institute for Community Education, Qattan Foundations, Al-Amal Institute for Orphans, NAWA for culture and arts association, SOS Children's Villages, Union of Health Work Committees-AL Assria Community Center, University College of Applied Sciences, Islamic University, Disabilities Representatives Bodies Network (DRBN), rehabilitation sector within the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO).

### **1.2.1.3 Protection system for children with disabilities has been prepared and setup**

- Preparing a comprehensive and implementable three-year child protection plan for children with disabilities.
- Forming a child protection committee and child protection intervention procedures.
- Preparing a guide and tools for the evaluation of risks within the school environment.
- Conducting (7) training workshops for (102) teaching staff (63 females: 39 males) within ASDC School and public schools which accommodated children with disabilities to raise awareness towards child protection and positive measures.
- Two (2) training courses in the field of child protection measures and interventions were carried out for (49) teachers (31 females: 18 males) working with children with disabilities.
- Conducting (6) child protection awareness workshops for 129 employees working in organizations serving children with disabilities.
- Developing a protection system for children with disabilities in coordination with effective members of local community organizations.
- Attendance of (40) children with disabilities in two life skills courses to enable them cognitively and rightfully.

- Implementing (50) group counseling sessions for (76) children with disabilities enrolled in the Atfaluna School and their family members and (70) individual counseling sessions. The sessions aimed at implementing the children with disabilities protection system.
- Preparing child protection and inclusive development awareness materials and distributing them to organizations working in the field.
- Conducting (6) awareness sessions in the topic of self-protection for 72 children with disabilities.
- Participation of (455) children with and without disabilities in inclusive entertainment and play activities.
- Organizing (5) open discussions with (103) representatives of local organizations to shed light on child protection matters and the important role the organizations should play in supporting child protection issues.
- Implementing (10) visits to local NGOs to raise their awareness towards child protection issues and encourage them to adopt it within their organizations. The visits were also an opportunity to demonstrate and share ASDC's experience in the field and showcase successes achieved with other organizations.

## Strategic Objective 2: To strengthen Atfaluna's sustainability within the framework of Disability Inclusive Development

### 2.1 Atfaluna's Effectiveness, quality and accountability are strengthened further

#### 2.1.1 Disability inclusive development is adopted and mainstreamed across Atfaluna's work environment and interventions

##### 2.1.1.1 Atfaluna's institutional performance is strengthened further

- Adaptation of ASDC facilities to accommodate persons with disabilities. Continuation of works will continue in year 2019.
- Capacity development of ASDC staff in inclusive development approach practices.
- Development of child protection policy and system within ASDC and training staff members in child protection intervention measures.
- ASDC initiated building a partnership with DVV International in an effort to establish a community center for adults based on an inclusive development approach.
- ASDC is a member of the referral network and rehabilitation sector of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO) and is a member of the education and health clusters within OCHA. By means of these memberships ASDC is able to follow up and interact with latest updates in the different fields especially the field of inclusive development.



### 2.1.1.2 Quality of Atfaluna's interventions is improved



- ASDC has adopted an inclusive development approach within its services and interventions. The nursery, kindergarten, vocational training unit, crafts production and outpatient clinics have reflected this approach within their services allowing for persons with and without disabilities to receive services equally. Curriculum modifications, teacher capacities and school facilities are being evaluated within the Atfaluna School to facilitate the enrolment of children without disabilities within the upcoming school year.
- In partnership with (5) organizations specialized in serving children, ASDC organized a number of inclusive non-curriculum events for approximately 1,000 children with and without disabilities. The days included library, psychosocial and play activities.
- During the year ASDC networked with a number of local and international organizations including UNICEF, Save the Children, GIZ, Ministry of Education Higher Education, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, in addition to local partners including Disabilities Representatives Bodies Network (DRBN) and local universities to implement and unify efforts towards adopting an inclusive development approach. The efforts began to be positively reflected in better understanding of the approach and in the unification and comprehensiveness of services



## 2.2 Resource mobilization for financial sustainability is improved

### 2.2.1 Atfaluna's income base is grown

#### 2.2.1.1 Diverse strategies for financial sustainability to realize the adopted social business model are employed

- Hiring a financial consultancy team to design a financial system for the income generating units within the organization and adapting financial procedures in line with the needs of the organization for self-funding.
- Hiring a production consultancy team to evaluate the Atfaluna Crafts production process and produce recommendations on how to reduce production costs.
- Hiring a marketing consultancy team to evaluate market needs and prices and present the organization with marketing plan and recommendations to increase sales.
- Organizing ASDC's annual bazaar for the year 2018, which lasted for three days, and accumulated sales of 24,487 USD.
- Announcing discounts ranging from 25% to 40% on the Atfaluna Crafts products in celebration of annual events including: Eid celebrations, Mother's Day, ASDC's 26<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Christmas.
- Participating in several crafts exhibitions organized by: Ministry of Women's Affairs, Sunbula Bazaar in Jerusalem, Christmas Market organized by the French Cultural Center with the aim to increase sales and community participation for Atfaluna.
- Implementing a 6 months project funded by Human Appeal which involved training youth with disabilities in furniture production and distribution of finished products to needy families from across the Gaza Strip.



## ❖ Atfaluna Achievements in its Adopted Inclusive Development Approach

Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children thrives to adopt an inclusive development approach which guarantees the inclusion of persons with disabilities within Society and enjoying their full education, civil, health, social and political rights as well as assisting them in reaching highest degrees of independence and self-achievement.

The organization has reflected this approach within its Strategic Plan for the years 2018-2020.

In line with the organization's strategy ASDC carried out several activities and events which support inclusive development and shed light on the needs and rights of persons with disabilities through strong and effective community participation and networking. This included:

- Announcing the advocacy campaign titled “**Inclusive University**” which aims at improving accessibility of persons with hearing disabilities to higher education by adapting educational services for the students with disabilities and increasing awareness of both students with hearing disabilities towards their rights and community awareness towards the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Participation of Atfaluna in UNICEF strategic plan discussion session.
- Participation of Atfaluna in the Disabilities Representatives Bodies Network advocacy strategy discussions.
- Conducting a comprehensive study regarding the adaptation of Palestinian universities and colleges to the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Discussions with the Deputy Minister of Education about the reality of education in Palestine which led to the formation of a specialized committee responsible mainly for the adaptation of higher education services. The committee was made up of: Representatives of the Ministry of Education, universities, colleges, civil society organisations and persons with disabilities.



- Participation in national and global events and activities including: World Disability Day, World Women’s Day, Arab Deaf Week, and participation of more than (150) youth with disabilities, as well as advocates of disability rights in the annual celebration of persons with hearing disabilities day which took place outside the Palestinian Legislative Council.
- Establishing a school-to-school initiative between the Atfaluna School and Dana School for girls, based in the US. The initiative allowed both schools to connect via video conference and exchange experiences and cultures.
- Participation of the ASDC Director in a policy paper titled “The future of inclusive education in Palestine – ASDC’s experience towards inclusive education for persons with disabilities” and was presented during the workshop “*The mental health of children in schools in the Gaza Strip*” organized by Gaza Mental Health Program.
- The ASDC Director was selected to be among the judging panel for Gaza for the Tawoon Award – Falak and Abdel Kareem Kamel El Shawa Award for community organisations.
- ASDC directed a workshop around persons with disabilities within the national political and sectoral agendas which were implemented by the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organisations Network (PNGO).



## ❖ Challenges

Every organization within the Palestinian Territories encounters different challenges to which it must overcome.

ASDC is among these organisations and was faced with the following challenges during the year:

- The instability within the Gaza Strip due to ongoing closures on borders, reduction in international funding opportunities and international isolation of the Gaza Strip.
- Shortage of vital raw materials within the crafts production units threatened the continuation of production due to border closures and restriction on entry of materials to the Gaza Strip.
- Inability of the majority of families enrolled within the Atfaluna programs to cover the transportation and educational needs of their children due to the severely deteriorated financial and economic conditions in the Gaza Strip.
- Shortage of knowledge among the Atfaluna school staff and other public-school teachers in inclusive education approach.
- Lack of knowledge among staff and teachers in public schools towards adopting child protection procedures and prolonged adoption of negative habits of teachers towards students.
- Lack of conviction among employers and business owners towards the abilities and skills of persons with disabilities and reluctance in employing them.



## ❖ Atfaluna Guests

Atfaluna opens its doors to both local, national and international guests throughout the years. It welcomes friends, supporters, donors and well-wishers. During the year 2018 Atfaluna had the privilege of greeting and giving a tour of Atfaluna to the following guests.



Mr. Alexander Gelo and Mr. Jaser Abu Mousa  
from Swiss Development Cooperation



Dr. Tafida Al Garbawi Taawon Association



Mr. Mohammed Shalalda From SOS Palestine



Mrs. Christa Wagmin and Mr. Nashon Muhalia  
from CBM- German



Mr. Aziz Husien with team from Save the Children



Delegation from UNICEF



Dr. Jean Calder from College of Ability  
Development



## There is no limit to expectations of an inclusive environment

Marwan is 12 years old, he has profound hearing loss.

The young boy has been able to exceed expectations of his abilities upon being among the first students with hearing disabilities to be enrolled in public schools in the Gaza Strip. This achievement came after ASDC adopted inclusive education development and ensued to make change.

Entering into this venture and leaving the environment where he felt safe and comfortable Marwan was nervous and scared. Not knowing if a school full of hearing children would accept him and welcome him regardless of his disability.



During the early days of enrolment Marwan depended greatly on concentrating intently on his teacher to grasp what was being taught. Sitting in the first row in class also gave him an advantage of asking for clarification and assistance when he needed. As the first term examinations approached the young boy grew nervous since he felt he would not be able to comprehend many of the terms used. It was then that his teacher guided the young boy through the various terms using sign language based on the training he had previously received. This additional support proved greatly beneficial to Marwan who spent long hours studying and completing worksheets.

The young boy's teacher expressed his happiness at Marwan's commitment towards his education. He was continuously curious to ask and learn new things which played an important part in easing communication between the young boy and his classmates who soon grew used to him and accepted his differences.

The school counselor also identified that initially Marwan's quietness made it an obstacle for him to make friends in class and keep up with his teacher's instructions, but within a short period Marwan learnt to better communicate with his classmates and teachers using his residual hearing and sign language abilities.

"This experience has helped me grow and learn, I very much enjoy being with my new classmates and teachers" happily expressed Marwan.

It is worth mentioning that Marwan was a student at Atfaluna School where he grew up and received his education since, he was six years of age. The young boy has been known for his good character and positive personality.

## Challenging our future....

Zakiya who is 23 years of age has been able to break barriers surrounding persons with disabilities limiting achieving their rights at finding equal job opportunities.

After graduating from the Islamic University with a diploma degree in Creative Information Technology the young girl pursued to find a job opportunity. The challenges and obstacles she faced during this period was overwhelming due to her inability to communicate using verbal language and the reluctance of employers to give her a chance.



After some time of unsuccessful job searching Zakiya decided to try another opportunity. Having the passion and skills to produce quality pastries at home the young woman decided to give it a try professionally. She enrolled in a culinary arts course at Atfaluna to further strengthen her cooking skills, having excelled during the training period she was enlisted in internship training where she was hired at a local restaurant.

*"I am so happy at receiving this opportunity, this is my first job and I am going to do my best to prove myself"* Zakiya expressed excitedly.

Within a short period Zakiya was building successful relationships with her colleagues and was working hard to prove her skills at work. Her costiveness and willingness to learn and help out in the work place proved that she was reliable. *"Zakiya has been a great addition to our team, she is full of energy and passion for her work. Within a short time, she has taught us to communicate with her using sign language which has actually not been difficult to learn. We are proud of her and have agreed to extend her work contract with us. We wish her the best of luck."* Stated Baha Abu Shaban her direct supervisor at the restaurant.



❖ **How to Contact Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children:**

We welcome your interaction and support to us via the following channels:



[www.atfaluna.net](http://www.atfaluna.net)



[Atfaluna@atfaluna.net](mailto:Atfaluna@atfaluna.net)



Telefaxes: (972-8) 2828495 - 2865468



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