



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

## About CFTA

The Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA) is a knowledge-based organisation, which has been working in Khan Younis and the middle camps of the Gaza Strip since 1991. CFTA's current work stems from a first initiative of its kind, the "Al Shruq Wal Amal" centre 1 for children, set up during the first Intifada. Today, CFTA is constituted of seven centres, which provide a wide range of services for children (ages 6 to 16), youth (ages 18 to 35) and women and men (16 and more) from the most vulnerable areas of Khan Younis and Middle Area Camps. CFTA runs seven community centres that are currently serving children, adolescents, youth and women in addition to the support to CBOs. The centres are:

- Shruq Wal Amal 1 established in 1991 for children at the age of 6 to 12 at Khan Younis block C
- Shruq Wal Amal 2 established in 2019 for children at the age of 6 to 12 at Al Buraq newly established neighbourhood west of Khan Younis camp
- Al Nowwar centre established in 2006 for children at the age of 6 to 12 at Al Batn Al Samin Area
- Bunat Al Ghad centre for adolescents which was established in 1993 at Hai Al Amal neighbourhood
- The Youth Cultural centre established in 1997 at Hai Al Amal neighbourhood
- The Women Health centre (WHC) established in 1995 at al Bureij camp
- And Wessal Network established in 2006 at al Buraq neighbourhood.

The location of CFTA's are in both al Bureij camp and Khan Younis. The outreach covers all middle camps areas and the southern areas of Gaza Strip

Through all its centres and programs, annually, CFTA works directly with 3200 individuals: 1400 children ( 700 boys and 700 girls between 6 and 16 years old), including 120 children with disabilities,

- 400 youth (180 men and 220 women, including 15 youth with disabilities,
- 1000 women and 300 men (ages 18+) including men and women with disabilities
- 200 services providers through Wessal Network, other networking and coordination with local CBOs, NGOs and other institutions.
- In addition to 200 community members who are engaged in the Community Resilience Enhancement Committees the local CRECs

In order for CFTA to maintain quality of services provision and engagement with the target groups, CFTA employs approximately 93 professional staff from both genders including persons with disabilities who are based at the 7 different centres and in the field. In addition, annually, CFTA provides job creation opportunities to more than 60 persons of both genders including persons with disabilities through its programs. Also, CFTA is engaged with more than 120 agents of change at all its centres. Some of whom started with CFTA as children in the 90s.

## Strategic framework 2022 to 2026

**Main Interventions:**

- Capacity building and skills development support
- Enhancing the educational achievement of Children in the south of Gaza Strip
- MHPSS interventions for children, teenagers, youth and women
- Providing full package of health support for women
- Protection, prevention and empowerment of women and girls
- Economic empowerment for youth and women
- Enhancing the role of women and youth at the decision-making level
- Enhancing the Community Resilience Committees (community level)
- Awareness for all target groups on human rights issues that focus on youth, women and children (led by the target groups) with special focus on International Law and UN Resolutions related to children, youth and women including persons with disabilities
- Mainstreaming disabilities and enhancing inclusion of marginalized groups at the organization and community level
- Preserving the Palestinian heritage and culture.
- Enhancing children, teenagers, youth and women led advocacy

#### **Vision**

CFTA aspires to a society where every Palestinian enjoys social justice and human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights treaties.

#### **Mission**

We contribute to empowering and strengthening the resilience of Palestinian society through dual participatory development and humanitarian interventions and programs based on the principles of social justice and the Human Rights Based Approach.

#### **Values**

- Accountability, integrity and transparency
- Respect for Palestinian identity, Palestinian rights and resilience
- Respect the principles of human rights including equity, equality, dignity, accountability, rule of law, transparency, tolerance, respect, non-discrimination
- Learning and Flexibility
- Creativity, proactive and innovation
- Protecting the environment

#### **Key drivers**

- Effectiveness and quality in our work
- Passion. We are passionate about our work and the meaningful impact on people and the society.
- Community driven. Survivors and community led responses based on the participatory HRBA
- Empowerment. We seek to inspire people, and communities to take action.
- Knowledge. We seek to empower people with knowledge by sharing information and ongoing awareness.

#### **CFTA approach**

CFTA applies participatory HRB approach on all its programs and centers. The principles and standards adopted by CFTA are derived from the international human rights treaties (especially CEDAW, CRC and CRPD and UNSC Res 1325). Diversity, age and inclusion are at the heart of CFTA's HRBA approach taking into consideration equity and equality for all. Our age, gender and culture responsiveness and diversity inclusion approach seek to ensure that all persons of concern are fully engaged and participating in making decisions that affect them, and that they are given the space and opportunities to enjoy their rights on an equal footing with others within the organization. CFTA mainstreams inclusion into all its programs and into all levels of CFTA's structure. The focus is on not only on people with disabilities, but also on other minority groups and vulnerable communities (social and culturally responsive approach). CFTA also includes the adaptation of the Survivor and Community Led Response (SCLR), which enables the targeted communities to design, plan and implement actions/interventions that aim to reduce negative impact and mitigate risks of crisis and respond to the humanitarian needs at the community level. SCLR build on available resources among target groups and within the community rather than looking at gaps.

As the humanitarian situation in Gaza Strip continues to deteriorate with no horizon for potential solutions in the near future. CFTA is working towards applying the dual Nexus approach (development/humanitarian). The Nexus approach seems ideal for Gaza context where humanitarian responses are expanding and developmental work is reduced. The articulation of the humanitarian standards and Nexus will support the full package of the strategic path for CFTA in a more systematic way that meets standards. CFTA will adopt the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) and its seven fundamental principles: Humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. The CHS will ensure that the ethics and core values are in the heart of CFTA's humanitarian work while working with the target groups during humanitarian crisis and emergencies.

#### **Contribution to 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national strategies :**

CFTA's strategy (2022 -2026) is committed and will contribute to Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 (SDGs 2030), especially the following SDGs: Good Health and Well Being (SDG3) which will be contributed to by the work of the WHC and the referrals by case management; Quality Education (SDG No. 4); by allowing children and youth to have access to the necessary knowledge for their well-being and development; Gender Equality (SDG No. 5), not only by targeting girls and boys equally for the different activities but also by giving girls and women, the chance to be involved in activities/topics where they have no place usually and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG No 16) through promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'.

In addition, CFTA will ensure that the SDGs main indicator: Leave No One Behind (LNOB) is fully respected and reported on.

At the national Strategies level and despite the fragmentations between the PA in Ramallah and the de-facto government in Gaza; CFTA's strategy will contribute to the

relevant national strategies available. In particular, it will contribute to the health, culture, education, social affairs, women and child protection national strategies.

### **Theory of Change (TOC) narrative**

The ToC was developed in participatory approach with staff, board, partners and target groups. It builds on the previous pathway of the last ToC with clear integration and accommodation of lessons learned and recommendations.

CFTA will be working towards building a society where every Palestinian is enabled to influence for positive change which responds to social justice and human rights. It will strengthen the sustainability of the organization, the institutional capacity and digitalization to better respond to the targeted communities within the participatory HRBA. This will be attained by the following four strategic goals to be targeted over the coming five years:

**The first strategic goal which will aim at** strengthening CFTA sustainability, institutional capacity and digitalization to better respond to community within the participatory HRBA. CFTA will contribute to better improve and update its protocols, internal policies, systems, procedures and the protected digitalization. The enhancement of the institution will be accompanied by providing the needed skills for its staff to be better equipped and responsive. In addition, the organization will enhance its income generation projects which are designed and implemented in line with its vision and mandate by women and youth who are enrolled at CFTA **(Result 1.1 and R1.2).**

**Secondly, CFTA will** enhance the resilience of its target groups by providing the knowledge, skills, and empowerment needed. This will be conveyed by the provision of holistic high quality multi- sectoral services including health, education, economic empowerment, culture, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) etc to children, youth and women including those with disabilities. The provision of needed services will enhance resilience among the target groups and therefore will facilitate for them to actively engage in influencing actions for positive change at their communities. CFTA will ensure that this process will be participatory, the target groups will be protected and inclusion will be promoted. CFTA will combine the dual NEXUS approach to be better responsive within the current context of Gaza and to ensure protection of sustainable development in the process. It is important to mention here that the enrolment of individuals at CFTA will be accumulative and for long period for each member. Children who starts at the children centers will continue with CFTA at the teenager and youth centers. **(R2.1, R2.2, R2.3).**

**Thirdly** CFTA will empower Community Resilience Enhancement Committees (CRECs), local activists' groups and CSOs to address social justice, community responses and human rights issues especially issues related to children, youth, women and disabilities. This will be achieved by providing full package of skills development and capacity building support, awareness raising and knowledge enrichment. CFTA will facilitate access to resources needed (material and financial resources when available and possible) to support their empowered actions for change. All interventions will be implemented in a participatory approach where the target groups could have full ownership over their actions and interventions. Accountability and transparency procedures will be developed with the target groups as well. **(Results 3.1, R3.2).**

**Finally,** CFTA will work **to** increase evident-base people and community led influencing and advocacy actions at the local and international level. This final goal will crown results harvested by the previous three goals at the long run. it will accumulate on the work done towards more localization and shifting powers within community and among agent of change. The different target groups will work collectively and will implement initiatives in favour of increased social justice and human rights. These will be community leaders, youth leaders and groups of people with common concerns who will prioritize their community and people's led influencing actions **(R4.1, R4.2)**

#### **Human Resources:**

CFTA is run today by a total of 108 professional full-time employees including two part time staff (39 core staff, 33 project contract and 38 staff on short term project service contract). 63% of them are women (include 2part time) and 36 service contract employees. 63% of the total number of staffs are women and 5% are staff with disabilities. The staff is highly motivated and receive ongoing technical and capacity building support by the organization on regular bases. At least 14 CFTA staff obtained their Masters (MA) degree, 35 with baccalaureate (BA) and 35 got technical long-term diploma relevant to their work at CFTA. CFTA is proud of the fact that 4 out of its current staff today used to be children, teenagers and youth enrolled at CFTA's program as part of its target groups two decades ago. CFTA will continue to provide skills development and facilitate learning opportunities for them in all relevant fields of programming, with special focus on devising processes to increase staff's and volunteer's ownership of the CFTA's participatory approach.

In addition, CFTA works with 300 interns and volunteers annually who receive both technical and experience while enrolling at CFTA. In addition to young under-graduates from different colleges and universities in Gaza who do Office Hours for their studies that include practical learning at CFTA's centers. The availability of volunteers and interns at CFTA supports the organization to respond better to the demands from the community and the local authorities for CFTA's services while maintaining high quality of work. Like most NGOs in the area, CFTA is understaffed compared to the growing needs of the community due to the deteriorated humanitarian situation and lack of developmental activities and interventions.

#### **Financial resources**

CFTA will continue to build on strengthening its partnerships at the local and international levels. Presently, CFTA is in partnership with 25 donors who are supporting all CFTA's programs either through earmarked agreements or through core funding to programs.

CFTA has clear fundraising strategy which is reviewed and updated annually. CFTA's donors and partners are varied from UN agencies to government and INGOs. As such, CFTA established strong partnerships with UN agencies like UNFPA, UN Women, UNDP as well as INGO like Oxfam, Rosa Luxemburg, Dan Church Aid (DCA), Campaign for the

Children of Palestine “CCP”, The Comité Catholique Contre la Faim et pour le Développement (CCFD-Terre Solidaire), Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz “HEKS”, the International Development and Relief Foundation “IDRF” and Menonite Central Committee “MCC”, Medico International, Christian Aid, Alianza por la Solidaridad (ApS), in addition to the funds received from governments such as the partnership with the French Government through the (AFD) support, the Swiss Cooperation, GIZ and the Japanese government.

Annually, CFTA increases its outreach to the donors as a strategic path to secure its income. Over the past 5 years CFTA managed to sign new partnerships agreements with new donors such as War Child, OCHA, UNDP/ Sawasya Program, DCA, RAWA, Action Aid, Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the Arab Reform Initiative. Any new partnership to be established should be inline with CFTA’s principles, vision and mission. For the current strategy, CFTA already signed 5 years and 3 years contracts with some of its strategic partners like Oxfam, MAP and CCFD. During the time of emergency and crises, CFTA’s appeals witnesses quick responses as well as demands from new actors who request from CFTA to contribute to the support of the community.

CFTA keeps mobilizing to secure funds from the local private sector like Bank of Palestine and Jawwal Company which comes as part of their social responsibilities principles especially towards the local initiatives facilitated by CFTA.

The quality, diversity, transparency and accountability of CFTA’s work have well positioned CFTA where it is very much appreciated and respected among the donors’ communities. Despite the access to movement challenges to reach Gaza by internationals, CFTA will continue to plan its Annual Partners Meeting where donors and partners could jointly discuss and have the chance to meet with the target groups.

In come generation projects are planned to be continued in order to support CFTA’s financial sustainability, however, this aspect is challenged by the deteriorated economic situation in Gaza.

### **Risk Analysis**

CFTA builds on its previous experience and consultation with stakeholders and target groups as a fundamental practice. Currently, the risks triggers are not only with the target groups interventions for change but as well with the way CFTA is operating as a progressive NGO in a conservative society and area under conflict. The risks can be summarized in six main areas (Legal, Security, Pandemic, Cultural and Operational). These risks have been analyzed thoroughly within the organization in a participatory approach with the different target groups and stakeholders. The process includes lessons learned generated and reflection sessions which helps the organization to come-up with mutually defined mitigation strategies thus enhancing ownership. It is important to point out that CFTA will be reviewing this risk analyses in regular bases given the operating context. Mitigation strategies and corrective measures in practices will constantly be identified and applied.

- **Legal:** unfortunately, in the last decades, the legal sector in the Gaza Strip witnessed deterioration that led to shrinking the civil society role. The internal division was one of the main reasons contributing to this fact. Conflicting decisions related to CSOs from both parties affected the work of NGOs and

- therefore CFTA. For example, changing the basic law and procedures of working regarding the work of NGOS, interfering in activities, requesting of preapproval and limiting freedom of expression were some of the elements that continues to be obstacles. CFTA mitigation strategy is in strengthening its accountability systems, financial cycles and documentation, transparency and being in debate and communication with the authority rather than a conflict and confrontation which proven to be the best way forward given the current circumstances.
- **Security:** being under occupation and blockade is one of the main constrains that faces CFTA's work. The instability of the situation and unpredictability of what could happen and to what level puts CFTA is a challenge especially to stargaze its work and confirm its plans. In order to mitigate that, CFTA have Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) which is prepared in participatory approach. The Emergency Preparedness Plan is updated in regular bases to mitigate different scenarios.
  - **The Pandemic:** As many other areas in the glob, Gaza Strip is exposed to the Covid 19 pandemic which have been impacting all aspects of life in Gaza Strip, hence CFTA. CFTA updated its EPP to include the pandemic and therefore scenarios of mitigations which included the use of protected and secured digitalization and online work, enhancing the awareness among the community members towards cutting the cycle of Corona spread and fighting Corona stigma.
  - **Cultural:** CFTA is a progressive NGO working with young energetic groups of both genders working for change. CFTA adopts a no-harm principle where issues of delicate GBV, child and women protection and girls participation are carefully dealt with. CFTA mitigation strategy is to insure confidentiality of sensitive cases. Also, CFTA future strategy is to continue its work towards attitude change which will be targeting community leaders to influence for positive change. Community members, school teachers, families and other actors will continue to be invited to CFTA's centers to witness the level of protection within the organization towards the target groups.
  - **Operational:** CFTA's work is on high demand and the request and demand for more services especially at times of emergency continued to increase. During the last strategy, CFTA expanded its work through the establishment of the fourth children center, however, CFTA is aware of its role and limitation and that it can't cover all services by itself. Therefore, CFTA is working to empower local CBOs through Wessal Network. it will enhance referrals to services among CBOs and NGOs which could support the accumulative results expected as well as responding to communities demands. CFTA will also enhance the resilience of the local communities to respond to their needs from within rather than by asking for external support.
- The closure of Gaza, limits prevents CFTA's target groups and staff to participate in regional and international events especially advocacy related events and exchange. CFTA mitigation plan is to increase online communication and platforms for more opportunities for joint work, exposure and sharing.



**Financial:** Unfortunately, the global economic situation is unstable and the exchange rate of currencies are fluctuating. This has major impact on CFTA's main budget which is seen clearly in the salaries and its reduced values.

Another financial risk is related to the increased support towards humanitarian short term funding rather than development and core funding. To counter these risks, CFTA will continue its fundraising process, by emphasizing the importance of core funding and long terms agreements with its partners and donors.