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SUCCESS STORY

USAID–Supported Business Incubator Helps Local Entrepreneurs Realize Their Goals

Aqaba Entrepreneurs Unleash their Potential



Physical premises are transformed into a modern business center.



AMBI Incubatee displays her palm leave products to H.E. Arch. Abu Gheida, Chief Commissioner of ASEZA.

The Aqaba Micro-Business Incubator (AMBI), funded by USAID through the Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED) Program and operated by the Noor al-Hussein Foundation, is the first of its kind in Aqaba. Since its soft opening in October 2008, AMBI is playing a productive role in promoting local entrepreneurship. During the launch in March 2009, H.E. Arch Husni Abu-Ghaida, Chief Commissioner of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA), expressed “ We are proud that this is the first Business Incubator in the Aqaba Governorate supporting entrepreneurs and micro businesses.”

AMBI offers two 11-day training programs conducted over three-week periods. The first program, entitled "How to Start Your Business," provides participants with skills to assess their individual potential, identify sound business ideas, evaluate feasibility, and prepare business plans. Over 40 local residents have participated in this training since November 2008. The second program, entitled “Skills to Improve Your Business,” is for existing micro-businesses and focuses on maintenance of financial records and marketing. To date, 13 trainees representing 11 businesses have participated in these training programs.

AMBI provides its graduates with physical space, utilities, and equipment, as well as regular business development training at reduced prices. AMBI has gotten off to a strong start with its first two new business projects employing 6 entrepreneurs. One project produces embroidered textiles and the other produces baskets and other items from palm tree leaves. With support from AMBI, these entrepreneurs have dramatically improved their production techniques and designs, and are confident in their abilities to manage their operations once they leave the incubator.

AMBI also provides Virtual Support to entrepreneurs who participated in the training programs but decided not to locate in the incubator. Results of this support have also been promising, as the beneficiaries, including four home-based businesses, have demonstrated strengthened accounting, organizational, and product presentation skills.

Besides being the first incubator in Aqaba, AMBI offers a unique approach to promoting entrepreneurship. Instead of offering one-size-fits-all training, AMBI offers tailored training, based on the needs of its individual beneficiaries. AMBI also promotes sustainability by requiring training participants to prepare their own feasibility studies and business plans to assure commitment to and control of their operations upon graduation from the various AMBI assistance programs.