



ESAF Voices from the Field

From Tennessee to Jerusalem: Investing in the Future



Photo by Nusei Abdullah, AED

"I'm tough. The students know that, but they appreciate it," says Dr. Haddad, right, with some of students at Al Quds University where he teaching for the semester.

ESAF is a three-year \$36 million program, funded by USAID, and designed to build a more inclusive financial sector in the West Bank and Gaza, for Palestinian households and enterprises. The program is implemented by AED in partnership with The William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan, Shorebank International, CHF International, CARE and Save the Children. ESAF is an Associate Award under USAID's FIELD-Support Leader with Associates cooperative agreement, which is managed by AED. www.microlinks.org/field



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"The best gift you can give that lasts forever is education."

Ask Professor Mahmoud Haddad why he is participating in a faculty exchange with Al Quds University, sponsored by USAID's ESAF program in Palestine, and that is what he will tell you. Born in the West Bank, Dr. Haddad has lived and worked in the US for 40 years, the last 20 of which he has spent as a Professor of Finance at the University of Tennessee.

In December 2009, Dr. Haddad started the ESAF exchange program administered by the William Davidson Institute, returning to the Middle East to work at Al Quds University in Abu Dis, East Jerusalem. Established in 1984, Al Quds has gradually grown and established its reputation in the region, but it continues to struggle in an environment of economic and political instability. With up to 40% unemployment in some regions, a third of students have difficulty making tuition payments, which is already being subsidized by the University and its donors. These financial hurdles have contributed to the University's inability to invest in its education programs. ESAF is supporting the development of Al Quds' finance department in order to improve the quality of tomorrow's finance professionals. This work complements ESAF's other program components which are working with retail financial institutions, regulators and training institutes to expand and enhance access to financial services across Palestine.

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Dr. Mahmoud El-jafri, Dean of the Institute of Business & Economics, works with Dr. Haddad, who has taught two courses at the University this semester and, as interim Chairman of the Finance program, has addressed some critical operational issues. "To upgrade knowledge, you must upgrade the way of teaching," admits Dr. El-jafri. "But in the West Bank it is difficult. I have no way to incentivize the faculty, and the students are suffering." Finance specialists hesitate to become teachers when opportunities in the private sector can offer better pay. "It is hard to find quality faculty and today only a third of students who join the University graduate."

Dr. Haddad's efforts have had some short-term dividends: "With Dr. Haddad's help and his experiences from working in universities in America, we have changed our curricula, the design of our courses, and the plan of study for the students. Now the students will be better prepared for the increasing difficulty in the courses." Dr. Haddad's has also helped Dr. El-jafri accelerate other initiatives, such as the opening of a second lab. And he is working with Dr Mohammed Bader, who spent the last semester at Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan and will take over the Chairmanship next semester.

While Dr. Haddad will return to his Tennessee this summer, he does not hesitate to point out the benefits of the exchange program for him, for the University and for the Palestinian people, and Dr. El-jafri says the changes have already resulted in an increase in demand from students wishing to transfer into the program from other programs and campuses.