



SUPPORTING PALESTINIAN REFUGEE WOMEN ARTISANS

BUSINESS ON THE FRONTLINES

Since 2017, Child's Cup Full and the University of Notre Dame's Meyer Business on the Frontlines Program have collaborated to make the dignity of work possible for women in the West Bank.



MENDOZA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS



A REASON TO PARTNER

Palestinian communities have suffered political upheaval resulting in discrimination and marginalization. This has created a difficult business environment and high rates of unemployment in the West Bank.

Palestinian women have been particularly negatively affected by limited economic opportunity as a result of living in austere conditions and oppression. Lack of freedom of movement, political unrest and other injustices are just some of the occurrences that have become part of daily life in the region.

Child's Cup Full is creating positive change for the future by focusing on women's empowerment. The organization is providing job training and employment options to change the landscape of economic opportunity for Palestinian women in the West Bank.

ABOUT

CHILD'S CUP FULL

Child's Cup Full (CCF) was established with a mission of employing disadvantaged Muslim and Christian women working side-by-side in the West Bank and creating lasting economic growth. This organization is shifting the current trajectory for their employees and contributing to the region's economic growth, both through providing employment opportunities but also buying exclusively from local small business suppliers rather than importing cheap components from elsewhere.

The founder of CCF, Dr. Janette Habashi, created two brands to support the missions of the organization. The first brand is Darzah, which makes handbags, shoes and home accessories, often incorporating a custom tateez embroidery

style that has been passed down through generations of Palestinian women. The second is Zeki Learning, which makes children's educational toys in English, Arabic and Spanish.

Both brands started with a focus on the U.S. market, primarily through direct to consumer e-commerce sales while also pursuing wholesale opportunities with educational institutions and major retailers. Both are also Fair Trade certified and often made of recycled or upcycled materials. Darzah and Zeki offer high-quality, hand-crafted products that stand out for their workmanship and distinctive designs in contrast to mass-produced items. They have a mission-driven story that identifies with U.S. consumers and a motivated, adaptive and resilient workforce.



Photos by Barbara Johnston

ABOUT

THE MEYER BUSINESS ON THE FRONTLINES PROGRAM

At the University of Notre Dame, the Meyer Business on the Frontlines Program (BOTFL) utilizes the dynamic skills of business to address issues including post-conflict rehabilitation, poverty, illicit economies, isolation and prejudice. MBA and other graduate students from across the University work directly with partners in the field on real-time projects with the ultimate goal of creating jobs and setting the conditions for economic growth.

Many BOTFL projects focus on social entrepreneurship, agriculture, infrastructure and

mining. Others have extended to micro-finance, youth unemployment, post-civil war reconciliation, health and nutrition, human trafficking and disaster preparedness. Since 2008, BOTFL teams have worked on more than 80 projects in 30 countries with more than 30 partners.

Through the years, BOTFL projects have created jobs and improved livelihoods for thousands of people around the world and have helped organizations to incorporate a business mindset into the service of their communities.

THE PARTNERSHIP



In 2014, Dr. Janette Habashi worked with student volunteers from the University of Oklahoma to launch what would become Child's Cup Full. As the organization sought to grow sales and hire more artisans, Dr. Habashi attended a fair trade show where she was introduced to a BOTFL alumna who made the connection to the program at Notre Dame.

In 2018, MBA students from BOTFL were able to help move the work of Darzah from early stages into a scalable business. For six months, Notre Dame MBA students conducted research and marketing efforts to help grow Darzah's revenue.

This partnership has continued ever since with a total of four BOTFL teams supporting Child's Cup Full's operations in the West Bank. It has also resulted in two University of Notre Dame Student International Business Council projects providing the opportunity for Notre Dame undergraduates to learn more about Palestine while contributing to the success of the organization.

THE PROJECTS

The Meyer Business on the Frontlines teams and Child’s Cup Full (CCF) have partnered on four projects to date that have sought to increase revenue and provide more job opportunities for disadvantaged Palestinian women. The projects have involved operations at CCF’s organizational level as well as with CCF’s Darzah and Zeki Learning brands.

	2018	2020	2021	2022
ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS	Darzah	Zeki Learning	Child’s Cup Full Impact Analysis	Darzah & Zeki Operations
KEY BUSINESS CHALLENGE	Market analysis and opportunity assessment of retail sales of Darzah’s shoe business	Market analysis and opportunity assessment of Zeki’s educational children’s toys	Financial and staffing analysis to measure the impact of CCF on both the artisans and the local community	Financial and operational analysis to increase CCF’s overall profitability

PALESTINIAN INSTABILITY – IMPACTS ON WOMEN

POLITICAL FORCES

- Women are mandated to hold **20% of seats in Parliament**.
- **Discriminatory practices** decrease the freedom of Palestinians.

INSTABILITY

- History of **retaliation and counter-retaliation** impacts safety.
- Lack of stability takes **physical and psychological toll**.

TRADITIONAL WOMEN ROLE

- The expected role of women in Palestine is to take care of the family, **decreasing their role in society**.



ACCESS

- Palestinian women are **divided by geography**, making **unified efforts difficult**.
- Transportation and **road accessibility** is **impacted by nationality**.

POVERTY

- Extremely **high unemployment rates for women** perpetuate issues.
- **Lack of economic opportunity** diminishes hope and limits aspirations.



THE PROCESS

Starting in 2017, the Meyer Business on the Frontlines Program and Child's Cup Full have worked together to create employment opportunities for Palestinian women and drive economic growth in the region.

The graduate student teams begin by researching and gathering information on markets and business models in December. Students leverage their own professional experiences as well as the Notre Dame network to deepen their knowledge in the project. In January, the team begins weekly calls with representatives from CCF to gain greater insight and knowledge on challenges and special considerations while continuing the research process.

In 2018, 2020 and 2022, teams visited CCF's operations in Palestine during the first two weeks

of March to learn from the women artisans and experience business operations firsthand. This immersion advances their understanding of how products are made and enables them to trace products through the complex process and supply chain. (In 2021, due to COVID travel restrictions, CCF founder Dr. Habashi instead traveled to the Notre Dame campus to meet with the team in person.) Subsequent to these in-person meetings, the student teams prepared final reports including pragmatic recommendations that CCF could implement to increase sales, better communicate its impact, and streamline operations.

In 2021, alumni who served on Team Palestine along with BOTFL instructors launched an advisory group to provide support to CCF in an ongoing basis.

DARZAH SHOES: A JOURNEY ALL AROUND THE WEST BANK



Producing one pair of Darzah shoes takes weeks, involving a complicated travel route in the West Bank alone. The process has a larger mission than operational efficiency, however, as Darzah seeks to support Palestinian women artisans and their local economy.

1. Designers in the U.S. partner with artisans in Palestine to design the shoe.
2. The new design is brought to life at CCF's Center in Zababdeh.
3. The Center and the shoemaker make several modifications until the design is perfected.
4. Artisans travel to Nablus and Jenin to gather materials and supplies.
5. In Hebron, artisans work with the shoemaker to select the leather for the shoe and produce a sample.
6. Once the sample is complete, embroidery begins in Zababdeh.
7. The lead artisan, Rahaf, travels to nine communities to deliver supplies and provide tatreez embroidery training to 28 women working in their homes in five villages, two refugee camps and two cities scattered throughout Palestine.
8. After the tatreez is complete, the embroidery is brought to a local courier in Jenin to deliver to the shoemaker in Hebron.
9. The shoemaker in Hebron picks up the tatreez from the delivery point and brings it to his workshop to be inserted into each shoe by hand, taking three days to finish one pair of shoes.
10. A network of CCF friends take completed shoes to Bethlehem where they are shipped to the United States.
11. Lastly, the shoes are shipped around the world from Darzah's shipping center in Texas.

After experiencing this process firsthand, BOTFL students were in awe of its complexity. Certainly, there could be easier approaches; however, this process results in employment for more Palestinians and a more beautiful product.

- ✕ CCF headquarters
- ✕ Key cities in the production process
- Additional villages, refugee camps and cities involved in the process



THE OUTCOMES



Photos by Barbara Johnston

DARZAH TEXTILES (2018)

In their first project together, CCF and BOTFL sought to improve Darzah's shoe business. As part of this project, the joint team mapped out all components of the supply chain for shoes.

After the BOTFL team's in-country visit, the team determined that supply was not the problem as initially thought; rather, the problem was insufficient demand. Darzah needed to expand sales by driving demand for "Handmade in Palestine" shoes and other Darzah products incorporating the art of tateez.

Among its recommendations, the BOTFL team suggested expanding sales channels to include large online retailers, department stores and boutiques; and taking the significant step of bringing the manufacturing of the shoes in-house using a phased-in approach to increase employment and training opportunities.

ZEKI LEARNING (2020)

The BOTFL team made recommendations that ranged from big to small to improve the Zeki Learning business. Some related to simple changes that increased operational efficiency by decreasing spending and waste for Zeki and Darzah. The primary recommendations involved implementing a brand strategy to shape business and marketing decisions, which laid the framework for direct-to-consumer sales in the U.S. and targeted outreach to tourist shops and private schools.

From its research, the BOTFL team discovered that Zeki's competitive advantage in the toy market was Arabic-themed educational toys. They provided CCF with guidance as to pursuing legal protection and obtaining copyrights for all CCF brands and products. They also provided a list of internal operations recommendations to optimize work in Palestine and assist in educating the organization's workforce in new skill sets.



CHILD'S CUP FULL (2021)

The team's primary focus was on building a financial analysis of CCF's operations in order to grow profitability that would fund the hiring of more women artisans, extending the impact of CCF in the West Bank. They made recommendations with two objectives: 1) to increase CCF sales so that it can increase production, and 2) to increase efficiency and organizational skill set to better manage operations and execute various strategic decisions.

To increase sales, recommendations included developing targeted advertising campaigns directed toward a smaller, high-interest customer base and to make changes in the CCF websites to emphasize impact and social cause, as well as to personalize the customer experience. To increase organizational efficiency, the team suggested creating an effective inventory management system to better determine which products are in high demand so as to maintain an optimal inventory level.

This project led to BOTFL's first joint project with the undergraduate SIBC group. The undergraduates identified wholesale outlets for both Darzah and Zeki, equipped with the BOTFL team's impact marketing materials.

DARZAH/ZEKI LEARNING (2022)

Analysis revealed that CCF's paid labor hours were sometimes going uncaptured by sales, most likely due to a constant influx of new product designs and slow-moving inventory. Reducing this gap through efficient production planning to minimize slow-moving inventory would free up liquidity and enhance profits for the organization. In addition, redirecting labor to more popular products recoup lost revenue due to misuse of labor hours.

The BOTFL team made six overarching recommendations to ensure that CCF captures maximum value from its operations and reallocated labor to the most profitable areas: Inventory tracking, production planning, limiting discounts on non-bulk sales, minimum pricing, reallocation of labor hours toward more profitable goods and reorganizing responsibilities to include increased human resources.

This analysis helped CCF to understand its high versus low margin products and better price products, especially for wholesalers. BOTFL then enlisted the support of SIBC to develop a pricing calculator and inventory management tools to be used in the ongoing business operations of Darzah and Zeki.

LOOKING FORWARD

The last few years of our partnership have demonstrated the possibilities that can come when excluded communities are simply given an opportunity to contribute. While the pandemic has disrupted supply chains and made travel more difficult, CCF and BOTFL have persevered to improve business operations and extend the impact of CCF.

Through this continuing partnership, CCF and BOTFL will work to create opportunities for the dignity of work for more women in the West Bank. Together, we seek new channels to tell their stories and share the insights that could support other communities facing challenges of prejudice and exclusion from global markets.



“Our partnership is like a blanket during winter, it keeps me warm. This partnership is so supportive and encouraging and I can always rely on Business on the Frontlines faculty, alumni, and students to figure out challenges and new opportunities. The passion and commitment toward CCF is priceless. I do not see you as a partner, rather part of our journey and who we are.”

DR. JANETTE HABASHI

Founder



“Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” We need no further evidence of this truth than our partnership with Child’s Cup Full. As our partnership evolves, we can see the trajectory shift for Palestinian women when given the opportunity for empowerment and the dignity of work.”

KELLY RUBEY

Professor



Photo by Barbara Johnston

“During my first visit to the West Bank, the women were hesitant to engage and to talk about their work and the impact CCF has on their lives. Five years later, CCF is a group of confident professionals who are highly respected in their community and beyond. I feel incredibly blessed to still be a part of the CCF and excited to see what will come for the organization and these incredible women over the next five years.”

ERIN WEHE

MBA '18, Chair, Advisory Board

“Working with CCF as a student was an eye-opening experience that I’m fortunate to continue post graduation. The women who comprise CCF are strong and innovative, working tirelessly to improve the lives of their families and communities. Building relationships with these women and seeing their individual and collective growth as professionals over the last few years truly showcases the power of the dignity of work. It’s a privilege to be a small part of the organization’s journey.”

MOLLY JERGENSON

JD '20, Advisory Board Member

“Classes at Mendoza provided incredible learning opportunities, but it was the experience on the ground that was truly formative. I was able to leverage what I had learned and apply it to something I believed in. I was able to build relationships and see the impacts of our team’s work. I don’t know what more you could ask for out of your education.”

TJ ROSETTI

MBA '20, Advisory Board Member

Learn more

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PROGRAM

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