



Conserving Agrobiodiversity through Women-Led Community Seed Banking and Local Knowledge Exchange

HEKS/EPER – Palestine | Gaza Strip, Palestine

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Bread for all.

What did you do, and why? (1/2)

The challenge

Severe seed shortage in Gaza: restrictions on bringing in seeds and inputs during the war, plus the destruction of the Qarara Baladi Seed Bank, threatened local varieties and the knowledge behind them.

1. Seed bank and farmers

Bank rebuilt in Deir al-Balah. Free seed for 100 small-scale farmers, who return half by area: seed for ½ dunam per dunam planted.

2. Women's home gardens

30 displaced women trained to grow, collect, dry and store seed in tent-side gardens, and keep the seed they produce.

3. Community seed network

40 leading women multiply seed on small plots, advise other women and farmers, and return seed to the bank.

Who: HEKS/EPER (support) · GUPAP (local partner: training, technical support) · Qarara Baladi Seed Bank · farmers and women





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What did you do, and why? (2/2)

Agrobiodiversity

Protecting and multiplying 30 traditional Baladi varieties and local genetic resources.

Seed sovereignty

A local system to produce, store and exchange seed, reducing dependence on external supply.

Sustainable practices

Locally adapted varieties re-planted and multiplied season after season.



Women and community

Displaced women and farmers move from beneficiaries to active partners in managing resources.

Knowledge exchange

Seed network, field schools and hands-on training pass local know-how across generations.

A more autonomous, diverse and resilient local food system, led by the community.

What changed, and why does it matter?

30	100	30	40	200
traditional Baladi seed varieties	small-scale farmers	displaced women trained	leading women in the seed network	home gardens

What makes it distinctive

A shift from one-off seed aid to a community-owned system: the 100 farmers return seed for half the area they planted, and a women's network passes on know-how.

Who benefited

100 small-scale farmers, 30 displaced women with home gardens, 40 network women, 200 home gardens, and the wider community, with better access to local seed.





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What made it work, and what did not?

What worked

- Urgent need for food: families keen to grow their own
- Free local seed in exchange for returning part of the harvest seed
- Small spaces were enough, even beside tents
- Local seed bank and technical partnership
- Training and a community network to share knowledge

Challenges faced

- Repeated displacement and insecurity limited access to land
- Water and suitable space were scarce
- Home gardens cover only part of food needs
- Seed multiplication needs time, expertise and storage
- Hunger can come before returning seed to the bank

What we would do differently

- Pair seed with tools and irrigation supplies
- More flexible design for displaced households
- More field visits and hands-on coaching
- Track seed distributed, produced and returned
- Upgrade bank storage and strengthen the network

What can others learn and apply?

THE KEY LEARNING

From distributing seed to producing, conserving and exchanging it as a community

Seed is free, part of the harvest seed returns to the bank, and farmers and women grow, save and share it.

What others can apply

- Set up or support community seed banks built on local varieties
- Treat farmers, women and families as seed producers, not only recipients
- Return part of the harvest seed to restock the bank
- Use small plots and home gardens for food and seed, especially in emergencies
- Invest in passing on traditional knowledge



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Thank you!

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