



# Sharek Youth Forum **THE VILLAGE LEARNING CENTER**



## THE YOUTH VILLAGE

Its location, at the heart of the Youth Village, is strategic as well as symbolic: this newly constructed learning space embodies and further develops Sharek's educational, environmental and social objectives, already manifested through the facilities and infrastructures in the rest of the Youth Village. Indeed, the VLC has further diffused the outreach and the impacts of the Youth Village, as its design has been carefully thought through with a focus on optimisation strategies for enhancing learning, creativity and active participation of young people. In this way, the VLC diverges from the traditional learning environments such as classrooms, and instead offers multifunctional facilities dedicated to the development of projects such as "Tamayyaz" and beyond.

## THE GRAND OPENING

On May 18th 2023, Sharek hosted the grand opening ceremony of the Village Learning Centre (VLC) in the Youth Village. Young volunteers, staff members and partners attended the ceremony, along with a delegation from the EU, the Egyptian Consul Mr. Saeed Al Helali, the General Director of Jazoor for Health and Social Development Dr. Umayyah Khamash and a group of representatives from the public sector.



# THE “TAMAYYAZ” PROJECT

Through its design, the VLC materialises the aims of the “Tamayyaz” project, whose title means “to excel”. More specifically, the facilities in the learning center are tools to empower youth, notably action-oriented, online, and face-to-face training tools. Ultimately, the goal is to improve participants’ employability by working on their professional and personal skills. This is essential as the development of these skills goes hand-in-hand with fostering civic engagement and advocacy, contributing to the resilience of the Palestinian identity.



## THE DESIGN

Following the guidelines of a number of partners such as universities and vocational training centers, the Village Learning Center has been constructed according to the needs of the students and to the aims of the project “Tamayyaz”, which ultimately reflect the core principles of Sharek. For this reason, outdoor and indoor spaces are intrinsically connected even within the learning center, as we believe that contact with nature is instrumental in youth’s education. In the same way, a corner of the room has been dedicated to creating a relaxing and comfortable space for the participants of the program who enjoy reading, while encouraging the rest to join them through a diverse range of reading material that satisfies everyone’s interest. They have access to books, audiobooks as

well as national and international articles, all of which aim at the development of interests and critical thinking beyond what is taught in academic settings. Alongside this, there are collaborative workrooms designed to encourage the discussion of such ideas and the participation of everyone, with the aim of creating a dynamic community of progressive thinkers. In addition, during people’s free time, participants have access to diversely-educational activities, such as in the “Gaming Zone”; through virtual reality, video games and riddles the participants are able to enjoy this space in other ways than only in its purely academic aspect. This progressive approach to education has been praised by the participants themselves, who have been benefitting from the number of functions that this facility offers.

# SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROJECT

What makes the Village Learning Center unique in its kind is its inclusion of a number of aspects of modern Palestinian society. Notably, the intergenerational need for advocacy and celebration of Palestinian land and history, as well as young people's employability and understanding of the dynamic economic market across Palestine. As a matter of fact, it has been long argued that the innovation required by the new and competitive job market can only be achieved through acknowledging the deep connection to the cultures and traditions of the Palestinian territory. It is for this reason that the VLC, along with other projects of Sharek, perfectly fits into the philosophy of sustainability so that people can benefit from it beyond the near future. Indeed, now that the VLC has been constructed, the costs of running the



programs have been brought to a minimum, especially considering our focus on renewable energy. This also allows youth coming from low-income families to not have to pay for participating in programs, while the fees for participants who have more economic means will be kept to a minimum. Therefore, the VLC will continue being used as an educational and creative space not only in the near future but

for the development of many other projects dedicated to Palestinian youth.

