



# Beit Wazan Football Field: Turning the White to Green



By Doha Al Wazany

Two years ago, this landscape was worth nothing,” says Samer Abu Shoumar, a member of the Beit Wazan Village Council as he points at the beautifully spread green space before his eyes. “This 300-square-meter space was only active for maybe a week every year.”

Samer is a science teacher. He was raised in Beit Wazan and knows no other place as home. “When we were growing up, we used to call this space Al-Bayader, the field where farmers stack then grind wheat. We hoped that one day we would be able to play soccer in a real soccer field, not having to endure our mothers’ unhappy faces as we returned home covered with dirt.”

Beit Wazan is a small village located approximately 4.5 kilometers to the west of Nablus City, with a population of less than 3,000, including those in the diaspora. Its location, along with the excellent relationship and bond that brings its people together in good times and bad have made the village council one of the most active in the governorate of Nablus.

In 2011, the village elected a council of young and faithful members. They had plans to develop the village, ensuring that it be not only

a pioneer in certain fields but also able to bring in new sources of income that would help the villagers realize their plans for development.

“We thought of this big white space and the opportunities it could present. We also thought about our children who would want to grow up without having to worry about causing distress to their mothers.” Abu Shoumar laughs as he says this.

There is only one football field in Nablus operated by the municipality. It is built according to international standards and is expensive to rent. In addition, the field is huge and not appropriate for a small village or company competitions that are based on the seven-a-side.

“When we worked on the feasibility study, we called it the Dream Project. The city is ready to embrace our idea but not the budget, which was nearly US\$ 200,000. Knowing that we have zero dollars, it was a challenge to pitch this idea to international donors and local businesspeople. For

example, we had no experience at all in proposal writing. Our knowledge of building a business case was also shallow. We had to admit that we were a group of amateurs.”

The council members, says Abu Shoumar, had to choose their battles smartly. They approached the Palestine Football Association led by General Jibril Rjoub and the Higher Council for Youth and Sports. “I have to admit that it was a miracle to list our project in the top-priority to-do list for both entities and be listed among the top ten most important projects to be implemented and financed by FIFA. We received over

Palestinian villages are in great need of spaces to respond to the various and growing needs of their people. The Beit Wazan Football Field project has become a model for sustainable long-term projects that respond to real needs.

US\$ 50,000 with one hit. Then we secured another immense amount through the contributions of the Wazanys,” referring to the people of Beit Wazan.

The 56-by-30-meter field will be developed in three phases. The first phase includes the complete redevelopment of the white field and the construction of a comprehensive premises with change rooms, washrooms, a meeting room, and multi-purpose spaces. It also includes seating space, which gives an excellent view of the field and the beautiful suburbs of the village. It is all covered with turf, consistent with FIFA international standards.

The field was officially inaugurated and open to public in the third quarter of 2014, after finalizing the first and second phases of the project. According

to the village council records, the field managed to attract the attention of other villages and was embraced as a leading project. It was also well received by local authorities, who started to book the space for their own needs.

“The minimal rental fees secure the operating costs and also generate some income for the village’s various community projects. The third phase includes finalizing the facades of the change rooms and fixing the audience view decks.”

Beit Wazan happily hosts at least three competitions every day on its green turf. Of course, priority goes to the Federation of People with Special Needs in Nablus and the Nablus orphanage as well.

“We are building a model here; setting the stage for a better tomorrow for our children and hoping that their green will become greener and bigger,” concludes Abu Shoumar.

*Doha Al Wazany was born and raised in the United Arab Emirates. She holds an MA in translation and interpretation from the American University of Sharjah (AUS). Doha is a public relations and digital communications strategist who has ten years of professional experience. She is passionate about Palestine, books, photography, and hiking.*

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*Every other day there's a new restaurant or coffee shop or bar or juice shop or fast food store or something opening up in Ramallah. They're nice, but we should probably invest in some useful things too – including sports facilities.*

**Karim Suboh, Ramallah**