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Saudi Arabia opens housing project in Gaza

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A Saudi delegation on Monday opened the biggest housing project in the Gaza Strip and pledged further funding to support Palestinian refugees.

Saudi Arabia financed the 752-home neighborhood in Rafah for families whose homes were destroyed by the Israeli army. It features four schools, a market, a mosque, a clinic and a community center.

The delegation, headed by vice-chairman of the Saudi Development Fund Yousef al-Bassam, pledged a further \$34 million to restore 7,000 homes and \$54 million to build 1,100 homes and six schools as part of a program by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The building of the Rafah neighborhood was overseen by UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

"This project was implemented in difficult situations, but with UNRWA's efforts, the project was successful in record time and with high quality. This project also employed more than 400 workers, increased incomes, and revitalized the work of contractors," al-Bassam said at the inauguration.

UNRWA's director of operations in Gaza, Robert Turner, thanked Saudi Arabia for funding the project and said the opening of the new neighborhood marked the end of a difficult period for thousands of refugees who had been living in mobile homes.

The project was launched in 2005 but was delayed for several years by Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip.

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