The Aqqaba Secondary Girls’ School, Tubas Governorate, is the first Palestinian “green” school based on Palestinian Green Building Guidelines (PGBG). The Palestinian Higher Green Building Council (PHGBC) and the Engineers Association-Jerusalem Center (EAJC) launched the national PGBG in 2013, and later promoted awareness of the guidelines through workshops and other activities as part of the USAID-funded Local Government and Infrastructure (LGI) program implemented by Global Communities. The guidelines were modeled in accordance with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) guidelines from the US, and the ESTIDAMA guidelines from the UAE, but were specifically tailored to the Palestinian environmental context. All three guidelines – LEED, ESTIDAMA, and PGBG – provide a clear rating system to achieve green building classification status. In the PGBG, there are specific prerequisites under the following six categories that projects must fulfill to be considered green: 1) Site Sustainability; 2) Indoor Environmental Quality; 3) Energy and Atmosphere; 4) Water Efficiency; 5) Materials and Resources; and 6) Innovation in Operations and Regional Priority.

Providing a safe and enhanced learning environment for Palestinian students is the main goal of LGI school projects. This school is one of 36 school projects built across the West Bank, including major school projects in Area C, under the LGI program. While LGI incorporated green elements to the extent possible in all of its infrastructure projects, the Aqqaba Secondary Girls’ School is the first designed and constructed in full
compliance for PHGBC certification. Initially designed with aspirations of “silver” certification, as the school project progressed, additional green elements were implemented so that the school could achieve “gold” certification.

The PHGBC will conduct its final evaluation of the school – and award certification based on that evaluation – after the school becomes operational. The $1.3 million project features the construction of a two-floor green school building and was completed in May 2016. Green elements include, but are not limited to, indoor environment quality (i.e. thermal controls and high frequency lighting), noise reduction, energy efficiency (i.e. use of renewable energy sources) and water efficiency (i.e. rain water harvesting, gray water recycling). Additionally, LGI adopted the Uniform Building Code (UBC 97) for seismic resistance to enhance school safety in case of an earthquake, and for use of the school as a shelter in other emergencies.

The two-level school will reduce the overcrowding faced by secondary female students that were attending classes at the primary school and enhance the educational environment by providing specialized rooms, such as computer and science labs, and a library. This academic year the school will host approximately 130 students but is designed for a capacity of up to 250 students.

Green schools contribute to making communities more sustainable, explore solutions to environmental problems, and serve as models of responsible action. Aqqaba Secondary Girls’ will provide a healthier learning environment for students, and the school has already begun to increase community awareness about environmental issues and will help raise future generations to better understand environmental risks and develop habits to protect the environment.