



## Supporting community resilience through livelihood opportunities for Libya's women and youth

MARCH 2022



Trainees in Adjabiya, practising blood pressure measurement during a first aid training

## Background

After years of protracted war across the country, Libya's economic recovery requires significant support and intervention at the national, regional, and local level. An assessment conducted by PCi in late 2020 on the impact of conflict, displacement and the COVID-19 pandemic in Libya found that economic recovery and specifically livelihoods have been increasingly threatened due to economic and political instability, leaving communities more vulnerable to shocks. In particular, the loss of livelihoods among young men is one of the incentives that leave them susceptible to militarisation and

radicalisation, as well as involvement in illicit activities such as trafficking and smuggling; among young women, the combined impact of the conflict and the pandemic has increased their risk of marginalisation and, in some instances, exposed them to higher levels of gender-based violence. A research project conducted by PCi in 2021 to better understand the impact of the conflict economy also highlighted that, while local communities cannot fully insulate themselves from national dynamics, the impact of the conflict economy can be mitigated through strengthening local cohesion and stability and developing local economic opportunities.

PCi has been working to address these challenges through the implementation of a livelihoods project. The interventions, launched in November 2021, targeted six cities in the East, West and South of the country: **Tobruq, Ajdabiya, Bani Walid, Obari, Zliten** and **Sebha**. The project was implemented through the Social Peace Partnerships (SPPs) that PCi has established and continues to support in these areas, which act as conflict management mechanisms by convening and facilitating dialogue among different community stakeholders to address local issues and tensions. The livelihoods project represented an opportunity for the SPPs to strengthen their relationships with multiple stakeholders across different sectors, while also expanding their reach to groups who do not usually have a strong involvement in civil society activities or peacebuilding initiatives. The project consisted of three components: livelihoods training courses focusing on vocational and professional skills; job fairs bringing together local businesses, employers, trainees, and other relevant authorities; targeted grants to support local entrepreneurs willing to develop or expand their business ideas. A total of 440 women and 474 men were trained through the project across the six target Municipalities



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## About the project

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The first component of the livelihoods project provided vocational and professional training workshops in over 15 subjects ranging from first aid and pharmacology to technological skills including mobile phone repair, computer skills and e-marketing. Other workshop topics included tailoring and sewing, accounting, and report writing. Some of the training courses also involved on-the-job training that allowed participants to gain practical experience. A set of specialised trainings for farmers to support them in developing their farming techniques was also conducted. Training sessions ranged from 20 to 40 hours over several days.

Following on from the vocational training, the second component of the project focused on organising local job fairs, which brought together job seekers who were trained in the workshops with private sector companies who were looking to employ new staff. A job fair was organised in Zliten in December 2021, bringing together 32 companies with a combined total of 63 job openings. Job fairs were also organised in Ajdabiya and in Tobruq in January 2022 by the local SPPs in partnership with the respective municipal councils.

The third component of the project is currently being rolled out and will provide grants for participants who have innovative ideas to launch or expand their own business. A call for SME and start-up proposals was launched in December 2021, and a total of 6 grants of up to LYD 60,000 will be awarded to fund entrepreneurial ideas by March 2022. The key aim of these grants is to build on the outcomes of the training sessions and provide opportunities for trainees to put their skills into practice.

## Trainings by area

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The project has been very positively received by the communities involved.

**There was high demand for the training sessions and the final number of participants exceeded trainee targets in most areas. The impact of the project also led to forging new partnerships with government agencies, including the local Labour Offices, Municipal Councils, Ajdabiya's Small and Medium Business Bureau, Sebha University's College of Agriculture, as well as private companies.**

These partnerships have contributed to the positive outcomes and long-term impact of the project, such as supporting the Sebha College of Agriculture to continue its work at a time when they were considering the closure of the college or strengthening the cooperation between the Zliten Municipality and private sector to potentially launch the job fair as an annual event. Partnerships with private sector businesses also led to positive outcomes, such as the Alghofran Holding Group (a private construction company) sponsoring the final ceremony of the trainings in Tobruq.

### Tobruq

In Tobruq, SPP members organised 12 different training sessions, of which 6 focused on professional development and the other 6 on vocational training. The training topics



Advanced computer skills training in Tobruq

include gift wrapping, catering, hairdressing, mobile phone repair, computer skills, pharmacology, reporting writing, electronic marketing, and pastry-making. These trainings were organised in partnership with the local municipal council. The trainings were so popular that additional sessions had to be organised, reaching a total of 180 people (100 women and 80 men) against an initial target of 145 trainees.

Boumatari, a project officer with PCI, explained:

*“The grants will help turn the project ideas of young people and women into reality, and these will in turn provide new opportunities and wider economic benefits to the town.”*

Many private companies in Tobruq have also requested the names of the most outstanding trainees to offer them existing job opportunities.

Fatima Hakeem, a pastry chef who gave a training to young women on how to make pastries and set up a business to sell them, commented:

*“We trained a total of 15 young women in the city. The training consisted of three levels: basic, intermediate, and advanced. The content included teaching them how*

**The livelihoods project represented an opportunity for the SPPs to strengthen their relationships with multiple stakeholders across different sectors, while also expanding their reach to groups who do not usually have a strong involvement in civil society activities or peacebuilding initiatives.**

Trainings on business planning also took place, as part of the grant process. Riyadh



Pastry chef training in Tobruq

*to make the pastries, conducting market research, and how to market themselves and their products. The trainees were very enthusiastic and active, and it's important to support young women to make their own income so that they can support themselves and become independent."*

One of the training participants, Baytallah Salem, has already started her own pastry business in Tobruq. She said:

*"The business aspect of the training was most beneficial to me, as there were so many skills I didn't even know about before starting the training. But the technical skills on pastry making were also very helpful."*

Hind Hakeem was a participant in the e-marketing course, where she learned how to produce marketing research and plans, and how to launch market campaigns via social media. She commented:

*"As soon as I graduated from the course, I got a job working for a local catering company, where I am responsible for their social media marketing strategy. It's thanks to the skills I learned from this training that I was able to be employed."*

Amin Muftah took part in a hairdressing course and is now planning to open his own barber shop. He said about his project:

*"This is thanks to the skills and encouragement I received from the training course, and support from PCi and the SPP in the form of barber equipment, which has encouraged me to pursue this career and continue developing my skills."*

A final ceremony was organised in Tobruq to mark the end of the training programme, sponsored by the Alghofran Holding Company. The graduation ceremony was attended by a total of 250 representatives from different stakeholders in the city, including various departments of the municipality, the Tobruq Culture Centre, the Labour Office and the Civil Society Commission, as well as a number of private businesses. The training certificates that were given to the participants were also recognised and accredited by the Human Resources Department of the Tobruq Municipality. Those who completed the courses were gifted with the equipment needed to support the next phase of their livelihood pursuit, such as mobile phone repair kits, barbering equipment, bakery equipment and sewing machines.

## Ajdabiya

In Ajdabiya, trainings covered subjects such as sewing and tailoring, English language skills, car repair diagnostics, pharmacology, media, accounting, and electronic information management. As in Tobruq, the popularity of the trainings led to additional courses being delivered. Sabah Abdulraheem was one of the sewing trainers in Ajdabiya, who explained:



Many private companies in Tobruq have requested the names of the most outstanding trainees to offer them existing job opportunities.



***“We specifically targeted women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to provide them with the skills they need to support their families. We reached a total of 15 women from different demographics, younger, older, divorced, widowed, married, or single.”***

Hatem Hilal is a language trainer from Ajdabiya who gave workshops on English language as an employable skill. He said:

***“English has become an essential skill that private companies seek in new employees, so it is useful to equip young people with English skills. During the training, we showed the participants that it is not a difficult skill to learn, and we encouraged them to be creative so they could enjoy the learning process.”***

Abdulrahman Muthafer, a trainee in the car diagnostics workshop, also shared his thoughts on the training:

***“It’s been really useful to learn a new skill, especially as in Libya’s current situation more and more people are turning to casual work and self-employment. It’s a great opportunity for me and other young people to increase our self-reliance.”***

Another popular training session was on video-making and montage. Mufath Areibi gave the 51-hour training programme (3 hours per day for 17 days) to a total of 15 trainees. He said:

***“It was important to make the training both theoretical and practical. Part of the training involved visiting workplaces such as the Ajdabiya Radio Station to see how the skills learned could be applied. So far, two young people have been offered a job in the radio station and two young women have also found employment in a media production company. Integrating young people into the local job market is important for the future of the city.”***

Zeidan Almoghrabi was one of the participants in the trainings and has a background in audio and sound-based media. He commented:

***“I didn’t have any skills in visual media, and this training has been really helpful in expanding my media work and learning that adding visual skills wasn’t too difficult. We were taught how to use Adobe Premiere (a montage program) and the basics of photography. I learned that you don’t need an expensive camera to take good photos as long as you know the basics.”***

150 people attended the final ceremony to mark the end of the training programme, including representatives from the Municipality, Social Affairs Office, SME Office, private businesses, and other key public figures in Ajdabiya. A total of 96 people completed the training programmes, and they were provided with equipment related to the training they received to support them on their career path. The certificates they received from the training course were also accredited by the Municipality.



Closing ceremony of the job fair in Zliten

**Bani Walid**

In Bani Walid training subjects included first aid, mobile phone repair, barista skills, gift wrapping and computer training, with demand again outstripping supply and creating the need for additional trainings. Belqais Mohammed, a medical student in Bani Walid who received first aid and nursing training, said:

*“The skills I gained in this training will be useful for me as a student and in my day-to-day life. We were taught how to measure blood sugar and blood pressure levels, how to draw blood, measuring temperature, and other first aid skills.”*

Hawa Ramadan is another first aid and nursing trainee, who added:

*“This training has been particularly helpful in learning how to provide*

*medical support to children and the elderly. The training is particularly beneficial for women and young people as it helps to provide new opportunities to gain employment.”*

Mohammed Abdullah, another trainee, added:

*“This training will open doors for me and equip young people with skills to enter the job market. It will also show that you must go out and look for these opportunities rather than wait for them to come to you.”*



First aid and nursing training in Bani Walid

## Zliten

In Zliten, the project saw the implementation of several technical and vocational training sessions as well as the launch of the job fair. Mohammed Muftah was trained on how to install, repair, clean and change parts of HVAC systems. He explained:

*“The training was great, and I feel like having these new skills will allow me to find a job faster and support myself.”*



In December 2021 a job fair was held in partnership with the Zliten Municipal Council. Six government agencies also participated, including the Labour Office, the Ministry of Economy and the Women’s Empowerment Office. 32 companies from a variety of sectors were invited to take part, including the medical, construction, technology, and manufacturing sectors. 63 job openings were listed as part of this process, to match job seekers with recruiting companies. A key component of the job fair was the opportunity for successful business leaders to share their stories to inspire the next generation of businesspeople.

Akram Wadi, a Project Officer with PCi, explained:

*“The aim of the job fair is to build on the results of the livelihoods training and bring together job seekers with companies who need new recruits. The fair was a success and we’re hoping it will become an annual event.”*

Khuloud Abusnaina, a member of the Municipal Council, commented:

*“Our focus in the Council today is to support the young people of Zliten. This job fair is an important step to bridge the gap between young people and the private sector, not just graduates but also young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. We’re working to increase the number of opportunities and connections between the municipality and private sector and create bonds of trust with all [community] groups.”*

Building on the success of the job fair, a mobile phone app was launched in partnership with the Zliten SPP, PCi and the Zliten Municipality. The app lists all available job openings in Zliten, including public sector jobs, and at the time of writing some vacancies have already been listed by companies. The app can be viewed at the link <https://zl10jobs.ly/>.





## Sebha

Instability in Sebha led to a delay in rolling out the full training program, but some training sessions were delivered. Wesal Nour-Eldin, the head of the Sebha Businesswomen's Union, and led training on business management for 60 women from across the city and displaced women from the town of Murzug, said:

*"The aim of our training was to support women in two ways: firstly, to develop a business start-up idea; secondly, to develop technical skills to develop these ideas. We gave them sessions on project management, how to calculate finances and manage profits, and how to apply and secure funding for projects. We're also planning to follow-up with the women pursuing their business ideas by offering them additional consultation and some financial support."*

## Ubari

Salem Gheryani, a human development trainer in Ubari, provided a training on entrepreneurship and project management, in partnership with the Humat Aldiyar organisation, a local CSO. He explained:

*"We gave a 20-hour session that targeted women in Ubari with the aim of supporting them to create their own businesses. The training covered topics such as the basics of entrepreneurship, how to conduct a feasibility study and how to write a successful project proposal."*

Abdulgader Riyana, the head of Humat Aldiyar, added:

*"We are trying to raise the capacity of women in Ubari in order to make their project ideas a reality and support their families. This will have a wider social benefit for the entire town."*



Najah Ali, one of the trainees, said:

***“The training was incredibly beneficial and introduced us to concepts such as marketing, project management and preparing feasibility studies to plan for the future of our projects. It’s given me the skills I need to develop my project to set up a sewing workshop.”***

For many in the South, agriculture continues to be the main source of livelihood, but the lack of investment towards this sector – coupled with the adverse effects of climate change – have impacted the productivity of Libyan farmers. The Sebha SPP and the Ubari SPP partnered with the Faculty of Agriculture from the University of Sebha to roll out a series of trainings targeting local farmers. These focused on new farming techniques and the use of different types of fertilisers, pesticides, and other products to be used in their crops to yield higher and healthier harvests. The trainings also included knowledge-sharing and practical skills development to improve the pruning of trees and shrubbery, and how farmers can produce strong seeds and use organic fertilisers.



Agricultural trainings in Ubari

## Impact on trainees

While the evaluation of the livelihood interventions is yet to be completed and some initiatives are still underway, some impact can already be evidenced.

**To date, the project has led to a number of participants obtaining employment within the first two months of the trainings, including in local radio stations, car repair shops and clinics. Small businesses are also being established in car repairs and catering, among other sectors.**

Building on initial results, women who received business development training in towns like Ubari will be provided with e-marketing support to showcase their products and maximise their business potential. Farmers in Ubari and Sebha will also receive follow-up mentoring and technical advice from trainers via WhatsApp groups.

Social media have also been utilised to increase the impact of the project. Additional training sessions on catering and tailoring were delivered through Facebook in Tobruq and Zliten. This allows to reach larger audiences and encourage both in-person and digital engagement with projects that enhance livelihood opportunities.

Overall, the project has shown the potential for livelihood initiatives targeting women and young people to have far-reaching benefits in Libya. They create development opportunities in smaller towns and among marginalised groups, thus strengthening community resilience to the impact of conflict and instability. They also foster institutional support and cooperation and strengthen relations between citizens, local authorities, and the private sector, which in turn reinforce the effectiveness of local mechanisms such as the SPPs in managing conflict and crises.