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CAPACITY BUILDING OF LOCAL BUSINESS WOMEN IN AQABA

Final Report

Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED II) Program

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DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development, AECOM International Development or the ACED II Program.

ACED II Program Frequently-Used Acronyms and Abbreviations

(Not all of the following will appear in every ACED II Program document)

ACED Program	Aqaba Community and Economic Development Program (USAID)
ASEZ	Aqaba Special Economic Zone
ASEZA	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IT	Information Technology
JD	Jordanian Dinar
LCDD	Local Community Development Directorate (ASEZA)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MOTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
NDA	Neighborhood Development Activity
NDC	Neighborhood Development Committee
NET	Neighborhood Enhancement Team
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RFP	Request for Proposal
RFQ	Request for Quotation
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threads
TOT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VTC	Vocational Training Center
WAEDAT	Women's Access to Entrepreneurial Development and Training

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED II) Program is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), benefiting the people and businesses of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZ), by further-enabling the business environment to more effectively attract entrepreneurs and investments.

One of the core objectives of the ACED II program is to support employment and income generating programs for small businesses in the ASEZ while paying particular attention to gender considerations. As part of this effort and as a result of the ACED II Gender Assessment, the ACED II Program provided managerial and technical training and equipment support to local business women in Aqaba.

The ACED II Program awarded a grant to a local training firm, WAEDAT, to conduct different customized business management training, technical support and capacity building programs to local business women. Upon completion of the training and capacity building activities the WAEDAT and ACED II team evaluated each of the business women's needs to identify trainings, tools and equipment necessary for their business development. With their business plans in place, ACED II's grant sponsored on-the-job training and the business women were granted the needed equipment related to their products development needs and assessment results.



CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Following discussions with local community leaders, ACED II identified common themes and worked with WAEDAT to create a customized training program to address the skills gap that business women in Aqaba face. A group of 24 women were nominated by their peers and then joined the two week training program in June 2014. Eighteen of the women completed the entire two week training. Among other topics, the women studied communication skills, human resources management, and product design.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING

The Business Communication Skills training program was conducted for a period of three days for the local business women from Aqaba. The training covered topics including business communication concepts and principles, communication cycle, factors enhancing communication, how to be a good communicator and how to overcome communication obstacles. The participants role-played their communication skills to improve the retention of the new concepts and theories.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Also as part of the capacity building trainings, the women attended an HR training. Participants were introduced to various topics including the importance of human resources; selection, recruitment, and evaluation processes; job description and



organizational structure; and training and skills development. This activity was conducted by a certified trainer in human resources management from WAEDAT.

MARKETING TRAINING

ACED II through the grant to WAEDAT also conducted marketing training courses to enhance and develop Aqaba's women-owned local businesses.

Marketing training included topics such as:

- What is marketing and marketing mix.
- Marketing benefits, setting priorities and business SWOT analysis.
- Market study.
- Products and services design to satisfy the consumer's needs.
- The differences between sales and marketing.
- How to successfully market products and services.

PACKAGING

WAEDAT's professional trainers also gave a two day practical packaging training. The training explored concepts such as the characteristics of packages, packaging problems, kinds of packaging, and materials and appropriately packaging different kinds of products.

PRODUCT DESIGN TRAINING

Finally, the two week training also looked at product design. Many handicrafts and foods items lack demandable products design and while easy to produce, are often not sold quickly at market. Recognizing this as a challenge, the trainers offered a one day product design course to study the meaning of colors and how they attract customers; how to choose the best design for products to become marketable; and how to use simple and low cost material while creating a quality product.



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Following the positive response the two-week course on capacity building initiatives, ACED II and WAEDAT offered a one-week training to the same eighteen women on business management in June 2014. Business management training is an essential need for every business woman looking for developing and expanding her business. WAEDAT, with their long experience in conducting training in business management, utilized practical exercises, role-playing and case studies to convey complex topics and skills.

Over a period of five days, the training focused on topics ranging from the basic business cycle; purchasing and value added; selling for profit; understanding the market and pricing. The training also analyzed strategy, teamwork, customers and competitors, selling by debt and risk management, planning and income management, and demand and offers. The comprehensive training also incorporated

techniques of negotiation and selling; fixed assets, variable assets, profit and net profit return; the breakeven point, cash flow, and promotion. Above all, the women learned how to prepare business plans.

FOCUS GROUPS AND SALES SKILLS TRAINING

Following the comprehensive capacity building and business management trainings, ACED II sponsored one-day focus group sessions for the business women specific to their sectors of work. The focus groups analyzed consumer bases, such as tourists (both local and international), people in senior levels in the private and public sector, dealers and resources providers. The focus groups included certain discussion questions to the consumers and to the business women in order to develop a product development plan, promotion plan and to become more effective in overcoming the challenges facing their businesses. Business women also presented their products to the consumers to receive feedback on the quality and finishing of their products. Finally, the instructors and peers reviewed each other business plans offering constructive advice.

TECHNICAL TRAINING

As a follow-up to the focus groups, ACED II sponsored a training through the WAEDAT grant for specialized technical assistance. Breaking the women into sector-specific groups, technical experts discussed methods of preparing the following topics for three days each:

1. Accessories, candles and Wax, and Drawing on glass
2. Handicrafts
3. Food processing (Pickles, Sweets and Jams)

Additionally, ACED II conducted a 20-day ceramic training course for the Disi Women Cooperative Society at the society ceramic workshop in Disi Village.

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

These trainings and focus group sessions also highlighted that many of the women lacked modern equipment to effectively produce quality work. Modern tools would enable the women to be able to expand their market target to match with new market demands. As a result, for the women who completed all of the trainings, (for a total of eighteen), ACED II sponsored the procurement of business-enhancing tools and equipment through the grant with WAEDAT.

DESKTOP AND LAPTOP COMPUTERS

Four participants of the business women received personal computers to use business systems like Microsoft Excel to monitor expenses and access social media platforms to promote their work.

INCOME GENERATION PROJECTS TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Eight local business women were eligible for receiving items including ovens, food processors, and delivery trays. These tools enabled them to develop and enhance their products quality and added value. The women signed contracts with the schools and private sector companies to provide catering services.

SEWING MACHINES

Eleven business women were eligible for receiving new sewing machines, which they use in their work during product development, quality improvements and finishing. These tools enabled them to modify and enhance their products quality and finishing.

Annex 2 contains samples of the equipment receiving documents signed by the professionals.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

WAEDAT created a dynamic interactive website to advertise all of the business women participants' work including their trade names, products, addresses, and products /services. Each woman was provided a page of their own where they can upload products, prices and promote their products and services. The link is: <http://aqaba-women.com/>.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

WAEDAT developed a one general high quality brochure to reflect the business women high quality products and services and the brochure included information about 18 business women in Aqaba with details on their names, trade names, kind of business, products /services, and contact to promote her products and services.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

In less than a two month period, the results of this training have been astounding:

- Cristina Joan Masannat of Cristina Handmade Soap is producing new items with increased sales of 35%. She opened doors into new markets in Amman and has improved the product quality and finishing.
- Da'ad Najeh Sultan of Die'et Jdodana Resturant made her operation work more efficient with an improved accounting and billing system, better customer relationships, and new products resulting in increased sales of 25%.
- Sarab Muneer Abu-Rayaleh of Sarab for Handicrafts introduced new products, and because of her enhanced capability to produce more high-quality products, she expanded her market and entered into new markets. She established new contracts with schools to make uniform and crochet products, increasing her sales by 20%.
- Entisar Rasheed Abu-Nigum of Entisar Abu-Nigum for Tapestries reports that she is renting and soon to open a new workshop with a variety of large, high quality products and has increased her sales by 10%.
- Hanan Naeem Al-ghaimat of Hanan Dghaimat for Colored Sand introduced new products (using wax with colored sand), improved the finishing and overall quality of her products, and entered into new markets resulting in increased sales by 25%.

The success of the training program with its comprehensive nature in a relatively limited timeframe is quickly summarized in the positive responses these women have received in their fields of practice. Their dedication and rapid implementation of the techniques they studied is a true testament to their commitment and the achievements at their businesses.