

Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD)



PROJECT NARRATIVE REPORT

VOCATIONAL CULINARY PROGRAM FOR CHEFS' DEVELOPMENT: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR PALESTINIAN YOUTH PROJECT

REPORTING PERIOD: 01.01.2020- 31 DECEMBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

Through PWWSD's lengthy experience empowering women and youth and their inclusive participation in the economy, and based on the feedback PWWSD received regarding a demand for culinary skills and training this project was created. This project is taking place in a context where job opportunities and thus economic autonomy are scarce, especially for Palestinian youth. As a result, Palestinian youth lack work experience and the crucial tools and skills that come with it. Aspiring chefs are no exception to these challenges. Furthermore, training facilities in Palestine and courses that teach different cooking techniques are hard to find at reasonable prices; this excludes women and men with a passion for cooking as a career, but without the means to afford it. To this end, PWWSD created the Vocational Culinary Program for chefs to bridge this gap. The program aimed at providing Palestinian youth with a passion for cooking with the culinary skills and capacities that would enable them to share their talents with their communities and to advance their careers and earn income.

In Palestine, a World Bank Group report found that the share of female employment in the commerce, hotels and restaurant sector in the West Bank and Gaza consistently remained at only about 10% or even lower from 2000-2015.¹ Consequently, young women and men with reduced means were selected to participate in the program, with the view of disrupting gender roles in the culinary world. While women are typically tasked with domestic cooking, usually it is predominately men who cook in restaurants and especially in higher ranking positions such as head

¹ Enhancing job opportunities for skilled women in the Palestinian territories
<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/977921537274068902/pdf/129981-WP-PUBLIC-Enhancing-Job-Opportunities-for-Skilled-Females-in-the-Palestinian-Territories-Final-Report.pdf>

chefs. Thus, expanding young women's presence in the professional culinary industry through providing mentoring opportunities would help end gender inequalities by supporting women to get a stronger foothold into the industry.

The project was also conceived as a means of Palestinian cultural preservation even as they interact with and learn from other cultural culinary traditions. Traditional cuisine is a form of cultural heritage that tell us about the history, climate, resources, religion, traditions of communities around the world. Trainees understood that through learning local cooking techniques, they get a deeper insight into how other cultures live and thus a deeper understanding of their own culture and what makes it unique.

Challenges did materialize during the course of project implementation. Within the project timeline, the State of Palestine declared a state of emergency, including a strict lock-down and home quarantine to contain the spread of Covid-19. At the time, all gathering were of course banned, and PWWSD had to look into online training; however, as PWWSD worked with under-capacitated aspiring chefs, many did not have home computers, strong enough internet connections, etc. Still, until the stay-at-home order was lifted, PWWSD worked with the participants most in need and with the chef trainer created home-based cooking assignments that still allowed them to develop specific culinary skills and techniques

Overall, the project's culinary training workshops, in conjunction with its business training sessions that teach participants how to better market their attained capacities and culinary projects, is so far quite promising; many of the participants have already been hired by restaurants, cafeterias etc. where they conducted their required volunteer training hours. This report will cover methods, approaches and activities that have supported achieving the project objectives, activities, challenges, and achievements, the analysis of which will allow PWWSD to improve the next stage of the project.

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

The **Overall Objective** of the project is: **"Advancing Palestinian youth economic opportunities through capacity building and practical job experience."**

The **Specific Objective** of the project is: **"Introducing Palestinian youth to international cuisine preparation in order to increase their economic opportunities and empowerment."**

Achievements per result indicator:

- **Expected Result 1:** The capacities and skills of Palestinian youth interested in the hospitality industry have been strengthened, increasing their economic and employment opportunities.

Achievements:

In order to achieve these results, the following **activities** were implemented:

Result 1

- 1.1. 18 trainees were selected based on potential to advance their career and past experience/education; selected trainees were then divided into two different culinary specialties;
 - 1.2. A 20-hour Italian cuisine workshop for 9 young people was conducted (5 female and 4 male);
 - 1.3. A 20-hour Levantine cuisine workshop for 9 young people was conducted (4 female and 5 male);
 - 1.4. A 3-hour culinary master class by guest chef on international cuisine for 18 young people (9 female and 9 male);
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- 1.5. A 25-hour training workshop on business management and marketing was conducted for the 18 trainees;
 - 1.6. International Cuisine Contest: trainees competed with their best dishes in a 1-day contest where the winner received a “Kitchen Small Appliances and Tools Kit” prize. At the end of the contest, a Closing Ceremony took place, awarding the trainees at the Vocational Culinary School for Chefs with Certificates of Completion stamped by the Ministry of Labour;
 - 1.7. Media and social media coverage for visibility and awareness on the Culinary School Program and the importance of youth economic empowerment and employment opportunities.
- **Result 2:** Palestinian youth interested in the hospitality industry have had practical culinary experience, enhancing their preparedness for the job market.
- 2.1. A 60-hour Internship Program: partnerships were built with restaurants, cafes and food establishments in the West Bank where the trainees had the chance to put into practice the skills and capacities acquired in the Culinary School program.

In general, the Vocational Culinary Programme for Young Chefs focused on two cuisine techniques during the first phase and plans were developed to continue doing so throughout each project phase, bringing specialized trainers to introduce trainees in the art of cooking. The first year, the focus was on Italian and Levantine cuisine, two in-demand cooking styles. In the following years, other cuisines will be introduced, including Spanish, Colombian, Indian, and/or Ethiopian cuisine.

The application forms for candidates that was developed by PWWSD requested potential participants for their basic information, including their educational background and work experience, with age and experience ultimately prioritized because of limited spots. Most notably, the application requested what those applying hope to gain from this programme; their answers were quite illuminating. Common themes of these responses included:

“A desire to gain more work experience and skills, a passion for food, and/or a desire for personal growth and development”.

Most inspiring were the reasons cited by the applicant who would go on to win the programme competition. This young applicant, who is a member of the food-based Beitillu cooperative in the Ramallah and Al-Bireh governorate, wrote that she wished to participate in the course because of:

“My passion for food and cooking and the desire for more experience, but also a desire to gain more self-confidence and support myself, earn more income for my family, and to become an active participant in my community”.

Ultimately, out of around 50 applicants, the final 18 were selected.

In January 2020, a project coordinator was appointed to manage the activities of the project and that to ensure the delivery of quality outputs. The project coordinator has experience in the vocational culinary business overseeing the work at PWWSD’s income-generating project where the cooking course also took place, the Zewadeh restaurant which provides full-time employment to multiple rural Palestinian women.

In February 2020, PWWSD team has developed a Terms of Reference (ToR) to select the most adequate Trainer of Chefs to deliver the planned trainings. An advertisement on www.jobs.ps was posted and PWWSD received 4 CVs. PWWSD invited the four candidates for interviews, and a Trainer of Chefs was selected by PWWSD selection committee based on the criteria set in the ToR (Annexed is the CV of the selected trainer of chefs). The selected

chef had extensive culinary training both in Palestine and Europe as well as extensive experience as a head chef. Notable places of employment include the Hilton Hotel and Notre Dame hotel in Jerusalem, and the MGM Grand Detroit.

In March 2020, PWWSD developed an outreach strategy to recruit participants most poised to benefit from this project's trainings, PWWSD selected members of women's cooperatives to train and to build their capacities in creating high-end food and in marketing. PWWSD began with social media advertisements (Annexed is an example in Arabic), but found more success in cold-calling cooperative members and introducing them to the goals and outcomes of the project. It is important to point out that PWWSD has worked with these cooperatives in different capacities and has helped them to develop some technical skills that have led to expanding cultural and community tourism in their areas which of course has expanded access to economic opportunities.

By September 2020, according to the progress report presented by the head chef trainer, 20 hours of intensive hands on Italian cuisine and another 20 hours on Levantine cuisine had been completed. The classes were reported to more than meet expectations; recipes were done from scratch using different cooking techniques.

The first Italian cuisine class included an overview of sanitation, hygiene and safety procedures before delving into the basics (such as tomato sauce), then dessert over 4 class sessions in total.



The Levantine cooking class followed a similar format, beginning with basics as eggplant tahini salad before advancing to classic dishes such as lamb tongue and kabsa before ending in dessert, also over the course of four classes.



The practical exams were made separately (One for the Italian course and one for the Levantine course). Both exams were administered on September 6th, 2020. Test-takers were graded out of a score of 100, with possible points assigned as the following:

- 20 points, sanitation
- 20, food smell
- 20, food texture, mouthfeel
- 20, food taste
- 20, food presentation

For the Italian exam, the average score was ~83.2% out of 100% among the three judges; for the Levantine exam, the average was ~80.6%.

Post-exams, programme participants then were required to volunteer for at least 60 hours in a relevant establishment or institution; popular choices included restaurants, bakeries, cafeterias, and school/university kitchens. Each participant was given a form to keep track of their hours which was signed by supervisors and signed and confirmed by PWWSD's Executive Secretary and Human Resources Official.

There was one winner from each group with grades marked by three judges, including the **guest chef** and the experienced chef trainer.



A 25-hour training workshop was dedicated to business/marketing strategies taught by PWWSD's in-house marketing specialist. Modules taught included the basics of advertising spots, digital and traditional marketing, canvassing, and finally on how to manage small projects and market their own projects/specialty dishes. The in-house marketing specialist spoke on how participants were excited to gain valuable marketing knowledge, largely for the first time, and their reflections indicated how valuable they found its inclusion in the course.



Programme participants also had the opportunity to receive a training on marketing and budgeting concepts from two Deelzat Company representatives, including its CEO. Deelzat is an e-commerce platform specifically geared towards Middle Eastern markets, particularly in Palestine where 90% of West Bank businesses have no online presence², incongruent with the exponentially increasing demand for online retail and other services. over two sessions, the objectives of the training were introducing participants to the most recent marketing strategies and to planning/budgeting. Sessions provided real examples for participants to work through as well as examples of short and long-term goals and targets and financial statements. Finally, participants were given the opportunity to pitch their ideas through presentations, going through the business model components.



Additionally, programme participants were able to meet with representatives from the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health. This meeting, over the course of 5 hours, provided participants with crucial information about the labour and health standards underpinning the restaurant and hospitality industries.



Finally, the annual competition was organized with an official competition facilitator; this year's winner, previously mentioned as having an inspiring application and whose previous experience was working in the food-based Beitillu cooperative in the Ramallah and Al-Bireh governorate, was contacted by local television, promoted all over social media and granted with gift certificates and a Kitchen Kit to continue pursuing her cooking career, including vouchers from Nassar Modern Aluminum Company. All participants who completed at least the minimum required training hours were presented with certificates stamped by the Ministry of Labour (Annexed).



PROJECT PHASE 1 OVERVIEW

TASK	% DONE	DURATION
Selection and induction of trainees	100%	1 st week
Italian cuisine workshop	100%	Weeks 2-3, 20 hours
Levantine cuisine workshop	100%	Weeks 4-5, 20 hours
Culinary masterclass (1 session)	100%	Week 6
Business management and marketing training (25 hours)	100%	Weeks 7-8
Contest and announcement of winner	100%	Weeks 9-10
Traditional and social media coverage	Ongoing	Weeks 2-12