

Empowering Youth, Building a Resilient Civil Society

The Lutheran World Federation Vocational Training Program



By Yousef Shalian

The current political and humanitarian context has strongly impacted Palestinian youth, decreasing their labor force participation rates to one-third and increasing their unemployment rates to around 40 percent during the last decade; these figures are worse for female youth. The graduates of the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) vocational training program (VTP), however, have shown significantly higher labor force participation rates (reaching two-and-a-half times the national figures) and higher employment rates (around double the national figures). These facts were revealed by impact assessments and annual tracer studies carried out with VTP graduates and focus groups.

As a longstanding project of the LWF Jerusalem Program, the VTP has provided vocational training to Palestinian youth since 1949. It began its activities on the grounds of the Augusta Victoria Hospital, originally offering young men a three-year training program in carpentry and metalwork. In 1964, the vocational training was moved from the LWF Mount of Olives Campus (where the LWF administrative offices remain) to a new and larger facility in Beit Hanina, a northern neighborhood of Jerusalem, where it continues to operate today under the name of Vocational Training Center (VTC). Trainees can enroll in the vocational tenth grade or move directly to



Carpentry department trainees receive practical training at the workshop in the VTC Beit Hanina. Carpentry is a profession in high demand.

the eleventh grade to specialize in one of the six professions that have been accredited by the Ministry of Education, namely auto mechanics, auto electrics, metalworks, carpentry, plumbing and central heating, or telecommunication. Alternatively, they can enroll in one-year culinary art or craftwork courses or take short courses in various fields accredited by the Ministry of Labor.

In 2000, the VTC became a coeducational institution and began training women in the profession of telecommunications. It has since trained and graduated nearly 1,000 women.

In 2004, the construction of the Israeli-built separation barrier between the West Bank and Jerusalem began. This prevented access to the VTC in Beit Hanina for many students who came from the West Bank. The LWF immediately addressed this issue by expanding

the program. In the fall of 2004, a new training center in the industrial zone of the West Bank city of Ramallah (VTCR) was added and began offering training in numerous vocations, including carpentry, auto mechanics, aluminum work, and electronics. The VTCR also focuses on apprentice training and on satellite outreach to small and isolated villages.

As the LWF is continually searching for ways to increase its outreach to women, in 2012 it opened three new departments: catering and craftwork departments at the VTC Beit Hanina and a second VTCR facility with a vocational secretary department, this one located in downtown Ramallah.

In 2021, the VTCR moved its operations from the industrial zone and downtown Ramallah to the newly renovated building that used to house the School of Hope in Ramallah, also adding two new one-year courses, one in electrical



Culinary art trainees with the chef trainer, Ameer, prepare appetizers to serve to a group of guests as part of the training.



A graduate of the LWF's telecommunication course works in a mobile maintenance shop where she has found employment.



The VTC's course in ceramics combines art, design, and marketing skills. The center opens its workshop to allow its self-employed female graduates to use the facility and equipment, providing technical support to help them produce goods ordered online by their customers.



A female student practices carpentry work as part of a vocational camp conducted by the VTC in Beit Hanina for public school students.

and solar systems installation and another in graphic design and printing.

Amal,* a graduate of the 70th cohort of the VTCR and a mother of three,

says, "I hold a bachelor's degree but have many responsibilities towards my young family. Therefore, I decided to take the new graphic design and printing course at the

VTCR in order to upgrade my skills and build my knowledge in this market-relevant vocation. My training was complemented by a training session in the labor market. I worked as an apprentice at a local newspaper and then was hired permanently."

In 2019, the LWF Jerusalem's vocational training program started a new project titled Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Technical and Vocational Education and Training (GRIT). Operating from the offices in Ramallah, GRIT is funded by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada and in partnership with Canadian Lutheran World Relief. The project's five-year duration period enables the program to provide training and awareness-raising among its students and the wider community to challenge negative perceptions and behaviors related to gender. So far, new market-relevant courses have been identified, and a curriculum has been developed. Through this project and in partnership with seven local TVET partners, women and girls, including those with disabilities, are enabled to find gainful employment and utilize their newly acquired skills.



The Lutheran World Federation, through its Jerusalem program, runs two centers that offer vocational training programs: the VTC in Beit Hanina and the VTCR in Ramallah. Between January and December 2021, these programs trained 949 youth (636 male and 313 female) and provided 2,000 students with career guidance services.

Yousef Shalian holds a bachelor's degree from Palestine Polytechnic University and a master's degree from Birzeit University. He has served as program director of the Lutheran World Federation's Vocational Training Program since 2010 and is the chairperson of the TVET League in Palestine that represents 16 nongovernmental, nonprofit TVET institutions that are located throughout the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

**The name has been changed.*

Graduation 2022.



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