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GIZ Gender Competition 2016

Application



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Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



## No business as usual – strengthen Yemeni Business Women in times of war

Support Business women in Yemen via diverse approaches in a high-conflict environment

### Applicant:

#### GIZ Private Sector Development Project Yemen (PN: 2011.2076.5)

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#### With kind support of

... Ms. Kristina Willebrand, GIZ Yemen Gender Focal Point, Dorina Derwanz and the very active **Gender Focal Point Group Yemen**

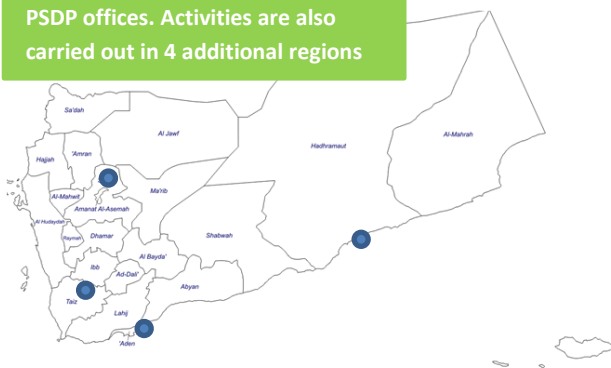
## Supporting Business Women in times of conflict and war

Supporting Businesswomen in a male-dominated business environment never is an easy task to do. With an open conflict breaking out in Yemen in March 2015, the task is even more challenging. On 25 March 2015, an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia launched air strikes against the Huthi armed group in Yemen, sparking a full-blown armed conflict. Since then, the conflict has spread and fighting has engulfed the entire country. Civilians are trapped in the middle, with lack of access to basic goods and little perspectives. Since March, every second Yemeni lost the job. Those, who are still employed, support up to 10 family members by one salary. Although the situation in Yemen is devastating, there are still some flickers of hope. Small positive changes still are possible and happening. The following presentation of the Private Sector Development Project (PSDP) in Yemen lines out, how to reach out to businesswomen in times of conflict (2013/14) and war (2015) by applying diversified approaches.

### Businesswomen's role and status in Yemen

Yemeni women have limited access to economic opportunities. According to World Bank data, before the war in 2015, just over 25% of Yemeni women were economically active; the majority of women who do work are employed in the agricultural sector. Lots of women in rural areas are excluded from the public sphere. Their movements are limited to private houses and fields. Cultural and traditional norms attribute women mainly to caring and reproductive tasks, such as raising children. Up to 70% of women in rural areas are illiterate. A national Strategy for Women's Development (2006-2015) was partly implemented, geared to increase women's participation in economic and educational activities. The start of the open conflict in March 2015 has put these efforts to a stop. Female entrepreneurs, as well as their male counterparts, are badly affected by the impacts of the ongoing war in the country on their businesses. Women and girls are the most vulnerable group in conflict-affected areas. With men, often being unemployed, fighting or dead, women struggle to protect and nourish themselves and their children.

PSDP offices. Activities are also carried out in 4 additional regions



**So, when setting up measures in Yemen, all these cultural patterns and framework conditions have to be taken into account. Projects have to be designed in a conflict- and culturally sensitive way, serving the different needs of different female target groups.**

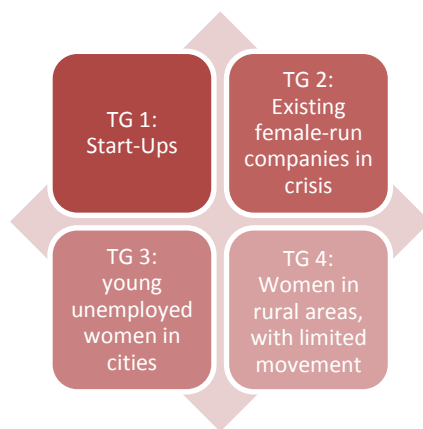
### The Initiative

The GIZ Private Sector Development Project (PSDP) (2013 –2017) is funded by BMZ. Due to the security situation in Yemen, no international

personnel were allowed to travel into the country since January 2014, not even for business trips. The project is thereby fully implemented in the *Business Continuity Management* modus, with national GIZ staff in the country having a crucial role and internationals supporting from abroad. The PSDP project focusses on creating employment for both men and women, especially in selected sectors, but also via improving Business Development Services. PSDP currently works in regions, which are either affected by the war, or more stable, though with presence of extremists. Besides the below outlined special projects for Businesswomen, the project also takes care, that women are adequately included in the huge range of other measures in different areas, such as solar energy, production of basic staple food, Biodiesel or rapid response measures. Also gender topics are included on a national base, e.g. when building capacities of partners such as ministries.

## Our female target groups and approaches

There is **not one single approach** to support Yemeni Businesswomen but **diversified approaches are required to meet the various needs of the different target groups.**



## How do we serve the different target groups?

**Target group 1: Start-Ups – Support Business women start-ups. Project: Lakki – For you, lady!**

Lakki: From August 2013 to December 2015, **190 women were trained on how to develop a business idea and to set-up their own business.** Additional to sessions on drafting business plans, finances, etc., the measure also includes **empowerment elements.** These are sessions, geared to support women to also get the positive back-up of their families, to overcome obstacles and to learn how to network. While till 2015 “Lakki”-For you, Lady! was carried out in 3 regions, in the current situation this measure is focusing only on Hadramaut, due to the fact, that only in this region opening start-ups still makes sense.

**Target group 2: Support existing companies in crisis to become more resilient in times of war**

Business women consultancy via social-media: **300 female business owners** (such as dentists, trade-owners, etc.) receive **consultancy on demand via social media, with the goal to stay in business in the current war times.** As the freedom of movement of women right now is limited (fighting, bad infrastructure, expensive petrol) business women are being supported by the use of WhatsApp. Six local female advisors provide consultancy to a network of almost 300 business women in Sana'a and six regions. All of these women had participated in programs of the GIZ partner SMEPS in the past, so the WhatsApp consultancy is an on-top-measure, guaranteeing the sustainability. *The project started in November 2015.*



Business Resilience project: Overall **200 male and female employers** are being supported to **keep up their business**, e.g. by drafting and implementing Business Continuity Management plans. This will lead to safeguard existing jobs. This project is **not a female-only project**, though **special groups for those businesswomen are added for those women, who cannot join mixed group**, due to cultural patterns.

**Target group 3: Qualify young unemployed women in three cities and help them to generate income**

Qualification and income-generation measures: There has been a wide range of **qualification courses** from 2013-2015 in the cities of Taiz, Aden and Mukalla for overall **1.330 young women** in areas such as: telecommunication/mobile phone maintenance, artisans, beautification, plumbing, sewing, food preparation, marketing, bookkeeping, qualification as travel agents, wedding photography, others. All measures were designed to provide young women with **demand-oriented skills and to increase their ability to generate income on an employed or self-employed basis**. This is done in close coordination with Yemeni private sector companies. Example: In Aden, travel agents in 2014 requested to train their own staff in one special new booking program. Instead of doing so, 25 young people were trained in the requested fields and travel agencies later on were eager to hire them additionally.

**Target group 4: create income opportunities for rural women with limited freedom of movement**

Supporting the basketry value-chain: The Yemeni lead marketing company in the sector was supported to exhibit and sell hand-made quality products at exhibitions in Germany. This **ensured income opportunities for 300 poor women in remote rural areas in Yemen**. The lead company Loloa'a, run by two dynamic Yemeni businesswomen, was chosen within an open tender process in 2013. Since then, Loloa'a was actively involved not only in marketing the goods but also in providing support to local women in 6 regions to improve the quality and design of products, as well as teaching illiterate rural women e.g. on how to measure sizes of baskets and to set prizes, guaranteeing quality standards, packaging and logistics. Other measures are e.g. teaching women how to repair fishing nets in homework.



**What has been achieved? Impact of the measures**

- Between June 2013 and March 2015 **190 women** in the areas of Aden, Taiz and Mukalla were supported within the project's measure "Lakki (For you, lady!)" for female start-ups. Out of those, **138 women opened up their own business**. Also marginalized women, such as handicapped and divorced women, could successfully establish their enterprises.
- **1.330 women** in three regions benefitted from qualification measures, geared to increase income and employability. **70% managed to increase their income afterwards**. Measures are organized in close cooperation with Yemeni private sector companies, to ensure demand-orientation and a smooth entry to the job market. In Mukalla, some qualification measures are matched by contributions of a "revolving fund" by local companies, geared to support unemployed Youth.
- Even in times of heavy fighting in 2015, the lead marketing and sales company in the basketry sector "Loloa'a Arts and Design", managed to exhibit high-quality Yemeni products (baskets) at the exhibition "Bazaar Berlin", and at the "Ambiente" in Frankfurt, with support of the project. Loloa'a also managed to export to the European market and has **served several foreign**

**customers even in war times. More than 300 women in rural areas in Yemen, producing the baskets at home, thereby could generate income.**

- Within the framework of **Public Private Dialogues on local level, important obstacles** for business women, such as problems in registering women-owned businesses, were **addressed**.
- The Chambers of Commerce in several regions were supported to establish BW Units. Today, these units are valuable implementation partners.
- **The GIZ Private Sector Development Project has received the national prize for “promoting businesswomen in Yemen 2014” by the Yemeni Businesswomen Union.**

Additionally, PSDP provides support to set-up sustainable structures for the promotion of business women. In times of crisis, PSDP further carries out measures, geared to improve women’s living conditions. Such as e.g. the introduction of biomass-cookers to the Yemeni market, as cooking gas is rarely available (in coordination with the Biodiversity Project Yemen). Also 30 female social workers for psycho-social support are trained.

## Success factors

GIZ PSDP is actively supporting women to keep up their economic activities in times of crisis. The project works with **trustful and qualified partners**, guaranteeing both **the acceptance of the female and male society**. Depending on the region of implementation in the country, some measures are either open for both sexes or only open to women. Parallel to activities with exclusively businesswomen, there are always also measures, targeting young men, so that the PSDP project is seen as beneficial for the whole society. The approaches are **driven by the Yemeni Private Sector** and **market-based**. In some project lines, such as the basketry value chain, **men have the function of enablers and door-openers**. Businesswomen in the country are not seen as one homogeneous group, but as **different target groups with different needs**. Besides a general close coordination with the Risk Management Office, the PSDP project has a **risk log** to identify and follow-up on potential risks. This also includes risks, which might occur because of carrying out measures for businesswomen. Example: In Aden, where it always was culturally accepted to offer gender-mixed courses, this is avoided right now, for not getting into the focus of extremists.



## Cooperation with partners and sustainability

The measures are carried out with different partners. One of the main partners is SMEPS (Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion Services), an Agency focusing on strengthening Micro-, Small- and Medium-Sized companies. Even in times of open conflict in Yemen, the cooperation is fully ongoing and fruitful. In 2014, the partner was supported by the project in establishing a Management Information system, which is also gender-sensitive. Other important partners are the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Business Women departments of the Chambers of Commerce in several regions, the Yemen Business Club, national and local NGOs and Private Sector companies. All partners, women and men alike, are fully behind the idea of empowering businesswomen. **To guarantee sustainability of measures in such a high-conflict environment is almost impossible, but the successes achieved have shown huge impact, and good news spreads fast. Giving women and men a glimmer of hope in dark times.**

Private Sector Development Project Yemen