



## **4.1.1 – Focus Group Discussion Report**

### **Palestine – Business Women Forum (BWF)**

#### **CLUSTER (C\_A.3.1\_0014)**

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## 1. Summary

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The Focus Group (FG) organised by BWF took place on 29 June 2022 in Ramallah, and brought together an assembly of Palestinian actors from the private sector, TVET institutions, education providers, public authorities, and academia, to utilize their knowledge and experiences. By engaging them in a discussion to give feedback on the trainee-oriented catalogue of new curricula suggested in the four Sustainable Economy sectors; Circular economy; Blue economy; Green Economy and Sustainable Agriculture targeted by CLUSTER project, namely Aquaponics, Hydroponics, Food Processing and Organic Farming and aid in the development of the curricula.

It contributed to spotting the gaps in the curriculum outline and proposing solutions that would make CLUSTER project in general and the suggested curricula more feasible for the Palestinian market and the NEETs.

The participants of the FG helped to shed the light on some main challenges that the CLUSTER project might face and might prevent it of achieving its main objective of enhancing the social inclusion of the NEETs and women in Palestine; and suggested possible solutions that can help mitigate and overcome those challenges.

The FG discussion and feedback, highlighted the potential of this curricula to work in Palestine, keeping in mind the threats and weakness of the curricula that need to be worked on in order to achieve the desired outcome and ensure the sustainability of the project.

In the following sections of this report, you will find more about those challenges, weaknesses, and threats. As well as what are the required steps that need to be taken to improve and adapt the curricula to match the needs of the Palestinian market.

## 2. Methodology

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The FG discussion started with an introduction of the participants and CLUSTER project team in Palestine, then followed by an introduction of the project's objectives, target area, parties involved, duration, and expected outcomes. The moderator then proceeded to ask the FG about the challenges the SEAs and Business Operators face in the process of enhancing the NEETS and women's employment and developing the Sustainable Economic sectors' employment, and what are the solutions and recommendations that they can give to tackle those challenges. After answering those questions, in the second half of the discussion the moderator continued with asking more specific questions regarding the project's curriculum outlines.



The questions used by the moderator during the discussion, were open-ended, one-dimensional, and conversational. Encouraging everyone to participate and give their opinion.

The moderator was interactive with the group, informative and was able to answer all questions asked by the FG regarding the project, the moderator was able to guide and keep the conversation on the right track.

An observer was part of the FG discussion, taking notes on the suggestions, feedback, questions, and concerns stated by the FG. In addition, the moderator was writing the key points of the discussion on the board to make sure that everyone kept track of the points mentioned and the direction of the discussion.

The FG participants were chosen based on the relevance of the work that their organizations do and their personal expertise on certain fields that the project is targeting. Therefore, their interactions were very high during the discussion session, and they have provided very helpful comments and feedback on the project. The data analysis methodology used for this report paper is the SWOT analysis, to help better understand the strengths, weaknesses that need improvement, opportunities of the curricula or that the curricula can create, and threats that would face the successful launching in the Palestinian context.

### 3. Participant demographics

The total number of the FG participants was 20 (7 females and 13 males). The participants have various backgrounds, of which are, agricultural engineering, food engineering, economics, human resources, capacity building and education.

Some of the participants represented the private sector, the public sector, and NGOs. Some of these institutions are Hebron Municipality, Polytechnic University Hebron, Galaxy Centre, Partners for Sustainable Development (PSD), Forsa Centre for training and development, BESCO, Action Against Hunger, Juhoud for community and rural development, Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG), SMART College, Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FPCCIA), Action Against Hunger, Hisham Hijjawi College of Technology, Ministry of Agriculture, AHAC, The House of Water and Environment (HWE), The Palestinian Employment Fund (PEF), Palestinian Agroecology Centre, ADS and SCME.

| No. | Full Name               | Role | Affiliation         |
|-----|-------------------------|------|---------------------|
| 1   | <b>Shadia Alshareef</b> | -    | Hebron Municipality |



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|    |                          |                                      |                        |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 2  | <b>Aref Herbawi</b>      | CECE Director                        | PPU                    |
| 3  | <b>Yasmin Mani</b>       | Observer                             | -                      |
| 4  | <b>Safaa Ayyad</b>       | CEO-Founder                          | FORAS                  |
| 5  | <b>Eiass Muhanna</b>     | Business Developer                   | Galaxy                 |
| 6  | <b>Majd Jammal</b>       | HR Officer                           | PSD                    |
| 7  | <b>Mughannam Ghannam</b> | Director                             | Juhoud                 |
| 8  | <b>Issa Beitouni</b>     | GM                                   | BESCO                  |
| 9  | <b>A.Tamimi</b>          | Director                             | PHG                    |
| 10 | <b>Nazeh Mardawi</b>     | Director                             | FPCCIA                 |
| 11 | <b>Athar Amli</b>        | Project Officer                      | Action Aid             |
| 12 | <b>Khitam Hamayel</b>    | Gender D.p Director                  | MOA                    |
| 13 | <b>Mohammed Hijazi</b>   | Business Developer                   | Action Against Hunger  |
| 14 | <b>Bashar Abu-Hwajj</b>  | Managing Director                    | AHAC                   |
| 15 | <b>Sawsan Alqudsi</b>    | Project Manager                      | HWE                    |
| 16 | <b>Ghada Hamayel</b>     | Project Manager                      | PEF                    |
| 17 | <b>Saad Dagher</b>       | Director                             | Palest.agroecol.center |
| 18 | <b>Izzat Zeidan</b>      | Programs Director                    | ADS                    |
| 19 | <b>Alaa Amro</b>         | SMART College -<br>Programme Manager | SCME                   |
| 20 | <b>Kayed Atawna</b>      | Communication Officer                | SCME                   |

## 4. Key findings

Starting off with the challenges that would stand in the face of the proper development of the sustainable economic sectors and enhancing the NEETs and women social inclusion through economic empowerment and more participating in and more effective participation in the labor market, the FG agreed on the following challenges:

- The mentality of people and their misconception on what vocational training and TVET institutions are and whom they are for. In addition, people do not believe in the effectiveness and the role of these institutions
- False expectations that the graduates have regarding what their entry job should be like (i.e., expecting to occupy higher position with minimum experience) this causes fresh graduates to face many difficulties in getting started with their career
- Having an education system that does not prepare individuals for the marketplace, instead it sends out people who only have theoretical knowledge and no technical knowledge
- Lack of awareness from parents and youth on the available and emerging job opportunities, this can come from the insufficient career guidance, and lack of promotion from educational institutions regarding the emerging and most needed specializations
- Lack of real communication and trust between educational institutions and private sectors
- The difficulty of reaching women without education and introducing these topics to them
- The unmatched demand and supply between graduates and job opportunities by geography and gender
- Low interest in agriculture among youth
- Lack of awareness and basic know-how in agriculture
- Lack of interest and motivation to acquire the needed technical experience through doing and being in the field that they can't otherwise get by sitting behind a desk
- Ensuring that there are job opportunities for the NEETs that will be trained in this program
- The challenges that organic agriculture faces are incorporating technology and the marketing of the organic produce
- Creating incentives for the private sector to be part of the circular economy



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- Occupation and the obstacles it put on people working in agriculture

The solution the FG proposed to address some of these issues is as follows:

- Building the internal motivation in high school graduates to learn about the emerging fields, raising awareness among parents, and providing proper career counseling to match the requirements of the job market
- For educational institution to provide proper introduction and proper promotion of new and emerging work fields
- Promoting home/small gardening as a profitable business or even as an extra source of income
- Equipping graduates with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, innovation skills along with other field specific technical skills
- Promoting mentoring and coaching mentality
- Raising awareness among the public on the topics of Sustainability, Green-economy, Blue economy and Circular economy
- Having an education system that opens up opportunities, through producing knowledge and practicing the existing knowledge.

Overall, the FG was very involved in the discussion and in sharing their thought and inputs on the challenges and solutions, that can aid the implementation of the program. In addition, the FG answered the questions related to the curriculum outline.

## 5. Conclusion or recommendations

The FG findings lead to the following conclusions, the program/ Curriculum can be applicable in the Palestinian market if combined with market need analysis and took into consideration to even apply deeper market research. Good communication and trust need to be built between the private sector and the TVET institutions to ensure the availability of jobs for the graduates of the training program. In order for the program to be sustainable and achieve the desired outcomes, the outline and the course materials need to be adjusted and enhanced by changing the terminology used to match the targeted group and adding more details and explanations in the elements of the outline. As well as incorporating the teaching of the essential employability skills, like soft skills, basic business skills, entrepreneurial and innovation skills. The practical training should take up to 70% of the training method and the theoretical teaching should take 30%, it would be more valuable to incorporate the learning by doing to ensure an engaging training that sticks with the trainees. For this program to reach the right target group, awareness should be raised among NEETs all over Palestine on the topics of the training and their



importance. These were the top points that all the participants from the different sectors agreed upon, to ensure the proper implementation and success of the program in the long term.

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