



Champions of Change:

Stories of Success and Impact from Libyan Women



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Empowering Women for a Resilient and Inclusive Libya

Achieving gender equality is globally acknowledged as crucial for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It transcends being merely a human rights issue and stands as a pivotal development and business concern. The 2030 Agenda envisions a world characterized by "universal respect for human rights and human dignity," where "every woman and girl enjoy full gender equality and all legal, social, and economic barriers to their empowerment have been dismantled."

Women's empowerment is at the heart of UNDP's development mission and is recognized as a global priority. UNDP firmly believes that sustainable human development cannot be fully achieved unless women and girls can contribute equally alongside men and boys in their communities. As a globally recognized standard for UNDP, gender equality and women's empowerment are integral to every aspect of its initiatives.

In Libya, the UNDP is committed to empowering women and girls, recognizing that this is a crucial investment in the overall progress of society. To achieve this, UNDP Libya incorporates women's empowerment strategies into all its activities and initiatives. With this comprehensive approach and the support of specialized tools and mechanisms, UNDP Libya aims to make a meaningful and transformative impact on women's empowerment in the country.

By promoting greater participation and leadership of women in the workforce, UNDP aims to strengthen the Libyan economy and enhance its resilience. Encouraging more women to assume decision-making roles helps create a political landscape that is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all citizens. Additionally, the UNDP's efforts to involve women in the security and justice sectors contribute to upholding the rule of law and fostering long-term peace in Libya. By advocating for equal opportunities for women to access justice, education, employment, and healthcare, the UNDP is working towards building a more prosperous, equitable, and stable Libyan society.

In the sphere of women's empowerment, we honour the rich legacy of courageous, pioneering Libyan women who have shaped the women's movement and Libyan history and culture. Figures such as Hamida Alanezi, Khadja Aljahmi, Zamia Albarwni and Aisha Alasfer, among many others, have paved the way for Libyan women to enter public service as lawyers, judges, police officers, doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, politicians, and more. Despite these accomplishments, there remains a significant journey ahead to fully realize the potential of women in shaping Libya's future. At UNDP Libya, we are committed to supporting all Libyan women and investing in their empowerment for a brighter future for Libya and for all Libyan women and men.



Sophie Kemkhadze

UNDP Resident
Representative



Khadija Elboaisi

Women Empowerment
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WOMEN RISING



UN
DP

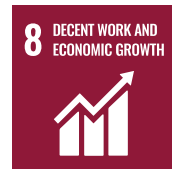
In this series, we celebrate the extraordinary resilience, achievements, and contributions to women's empowerment in Libya.

They are pillars of their communities, demonstrating unwavering strength and resourcefulness in the face of adversity.

Witness their inspiring stories of rising above challenges and forging a brighter future for themselves, their families, and their loved ones – inspiring us through it all.



Jamela's Journey



Beautifying the Libyan South with Her Fabrics

Jamela, a passionate **fashion designer** from Ubari, Libya, dreamt of empowering women through her craft. In 2018, she founded Al-Jameelah, a tailoring and training company, starting small with just two sewing machines and unwavering determination.

Overcoming financial hurdles and relying on her talent and resilience, Jamela grew her team and business. Al-Jameelah's unique designs, blending tradition with contemporary flair, not only created high-quality garments but also employment opportunities for women in Ubari.

Selected for the **UNDP's TEC+ program**, Jamela received the support and network needed to further propel her success. Today, Al-Jameelah envisions a factory employing over 50 women, aiming to become a leading fashion house in Libya and beyond.

Jamela's story is a testament to the power of ambition and hard work. She is an inspiration to women entrepreneurs everywhere, proving that even the toughest threads can be woven into beautiful tapestries of success.





NAJAH ALI
TRIPOLI

Najah's Story



Every Vote Counts

2012 Apprehension hung heavy in the air as the country braced for its first free elections in 60 years. In Ubari, the tension was no different. Najah, then only 25, feared that a lack of awareness could jeopardize the entire process. Compelled to act, she launched awareness campaigns, showing her townspeople the importance of their voices in choosing their government. It was then that Najah discovered her passion for pushing for inclusive elections.

Fast forward to 2019: Najah Azeem became an HNEC Ambassador, part of UNDP's program fostering electoral awareness. This network of civil activists works tirelessly to bring a deeper understanding of elections to their communities. They raise awareness in remote areas, demystifying the voting process and inspiring people to use their voices for a better future. The Commission vigorously supports the Ambassadors, empowering them to carry out their crucial work.

Today, With unwavering determination, Najah, Ubari's native daughter, continues advocating for inclusive elections. She strives to ensure that her oasis town, and indeed all of Libya, is an active participant in shaping its own future.

Youser's Journey



The Key to Climate and Community Solutions

A Climate Change Analyst at UNDP Libya, works in areas critical to our future—climate action and food security. Her journey highlights that advancing women's empowerment in Libya is not just a moral imperative but a key driver of meaningful progress in these fields.

“Throughout my experience, I've seen the vital role women play in driving climate solutions, especially in rural communities. From managing natural resources to leading climate adaptation efforts, women often bear the weight of their communities' resilience. However, they face significant barriers, such as limited access to education, resources, and decision-making platforms,” she says.

In her work, Youser is dedicated to promoting policies that address the needs of women and amplify their voices and leadership, particularly in agriculture and environmental management. Whether helping women farmers adopt sustainable practices or supporting local women's groups advocating for climate justice, she has witnessed the ripple effect of empowering women—improving food security, strengthening climate resilience, and fostering inclusive development. She concludes, “The intersection of women's inclusion, climate action, and food security is clear: when we empower women, we ensure the health and sustainability of our communities and our planet. My experiences, especially in Libya, continue to inspire me, and I remain committed to driving change that prioritizes women's empowerment as a cornerstone of building a better world for all.”



YOUSER BENALI

TRIPOLI

Photo © UNDP Libya

Emad's Journey



It's Not Just a Women's Issue.

In a conversation with Brigadier Emad Al Essawi, Associate for the Head of the Electoral Security and Protection Department at the Libyan Ministry of Interior, he emphasizes the damaging nature of online abuse, particularly its anonymity and the lasting impact on victims, stating, "Violence is violence, no matter the means."

Recognizing the significant role men play in both perpetrating and preventing violence, Brigadier Al Essawi stresses that "men have a greater responsibility to prevent and protect women from violence." He highlights the importance of acknowledging women's rights and the need for targeted outreach programs to educate men on these rights. Ultimately, he underscores the societal benefits of empowering women, asserting that "the ability of women to exercise their rights freely is a fundament of social justice – and social justice benefits men – and the society as a whole."



EMAD AI ESSAWI

TRIPOLI

Photo © UNDP Libya



Photo © UNDP Libya

First cohort of Ra'idat



A New Generation of Ra'idat Leading the Change

Launched in September 2023, the Ra'idat program equipped 30 young Libyan women with essential skills in communication, advocacy, and election knowledge. This year-long initiative, led by UNSMIL in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF, and UN Women, fosters inclusive leadership from diverse backgrounds through monthly in-person sessions and experienced mentorship.

The program underscores that democracy is about power belonging to all—not just men, the wealthy, or the most influential. It highlights that elections depend on the participation of everyone, including women. By unlocking the potential of young women in political engagement, the program empowers them to advocate for themselves and their communities.

"True success lies in the courage to try, the resilience to persevere, and the wisdom to learn from every setback. Instead of dwelling on past failures or fearing future obstacles, focus on your journey with determination and faith in your ability to achieve greatness. Keep striving, and success will inevitably follow." - Rabab Halab

Hawa's Story



Empowering Women Lawyers for Stronger Justice Systems

"Since I was little, I dreamt of becoming a lawyer and pleading before the judge" says Hawa,

One of the 56 entry-level female lawyers who participated in UNDP's August training program. This program, along with similar sessions held prior, equipped these aspiring legal professionals with essential skills to represent disadvantaged groups, especially women facing conflict-related gender-based violence.

UNDP recognizes the crucial role women lawyers play in advocating for vulnerable communities and promoting gender equality. Through comprehensive training sessions like these, the organization aims to equip entry-level female lawyers with vital legal advocacy skills and Promote gender-responsiveness within justice and security mechanisms.



HAWA AL-TARQI

TRIPOL

Photo © UNDP Libya

Mabrouka 's Journey



Ubari's Mabrouka Back to School

Education at the Ubari's University of Sebha was halted for 7 years due to the violence ravaging the oasis town in 2015-2020. Students of the Faculty of Literature and Sciences, like Mabrouka had to resort to online learning, but with poor internet connection, it was not a smooth transition, "The University was in poor condition and was unsuitable for studying. We were dependent on remote studying, but studying online presented its own challenges."

With support from the European Union-funded Baladiyah project, UNDP collaborated with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Local Government, rehabilitating the Faculty buildings in Ubari.

In January 2023, the university reopened its doors, welcoming back 400 students including Mabrouka, "The opportunity to learn in person has greatly enhanced our educational experience. Being physically present in the classroom creates a more engaging and interactive learning environment." she said.

The renewed university campus provides a long-due improvement of the educational environment, allowing students to engage with their lecturers in person and foster a deeper understanding of subjects.



Hanan's Journey



Advancing Human Rights Knowledge

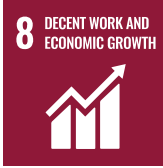
Hanan Yousef Ben-Oun has been practising law for 23 years, as one of the members of the Tripoli General Bar Association. When she graduated in 2000 from the University of Tripoli, she launched her career, she faced challenges as she was one of the few women lawyers practising this profession over two decades ago **“there was a lack of opportunity for women in and outside the courtroom”** she said.

While this remains an issue today, Hanan wasn't discouraged and continued to hone her skills and expertise. Recently, she participated in a UNDP training program on international human rights standards, This training added valuable tools to her arsenal, empowering her to tackle these critical issues and advocate for those most vulnerable.

HANAN YOUSEF BEN-OUN

TRIPOLI

Photo © UNDP Libya



Maharah: Empowering Women Through Code

Durrah's Journey

Durrah Abdelmoula Elhareshi, a young coder empowered by Maharah School's educational initiative. Through Maharah's guidance, Durrah discovered her passion for coding, delving into machine learning and ICT during high school. Despite initial doubts, she embraced the opportunities to learn and grow, ultimately leading her team, "Cloud," to victory at Maharah's Demo Day in Tripoli. Durrah's journey exemplifies the transformative power of education and opportunity, highlighting the importance of empowering women in tech for societal advancement.

Sokaina 's Journey

In Benghazi, we encountered Sokaina Kashbour, a 19-year-old software engineering student on a journey fueled by determination. Sokaina discovered her passion for programming at a young age, viewing it not just as a skill, but as an engaging puzzle to unravel. Her journey into IT deepened her conviction to use code for positive change, shaping the future with every line she writes. During Maharah's Demo Day in Benghazi, Sokaina and her team presented "Wejha," a mobile app designed to democratize digital skills, empowering young minds like hers to share knowledge and seize opportunities. Through Maharah, Sokaina honed her technical skills, expanding her horizons and clarifying her career path. On the role of women in tech, she asserts their historical significance, stating, "Women have always played a major role in tech, from coding to broader contributions, since its inception." With each keystroke, Sokaina and her peers are crafting their destinies, inspiring a new wave of technologists to dream, innovate, and overcome.

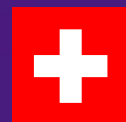
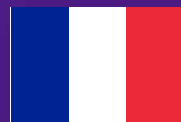


Sokaina

Durrah

Solid partnerships are the lifeblood of UNDP's success in Libya, whether with governments, local stakeholders, authorities, or organisations. We couldn't have done it alone, and this spirit of collaboration remains crucial for achieving sustainable development in the country.

Thank you to our partners for their continuous support, and cooperation



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2023-2025