

LISEC: Green Jobs in the Leather Sector



PIN Ethiopia, June, 2024



towards the eradication of poverty



The Leather Initiative for Sustainable Employment Creation (LISEC) is a four-year EU programme run under the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. LISEC focuses on Green job-creation in the leather sector. The objectives are to **strengthen social cohesion by supporting local economic and social development initiatives, especially for women and youth, and enhance industrial and labour relations in Modjo and its surrounding areas.**

LISEC is focused on three outcomes: Improved **skills** and access to decent and green (self) **employment opportunities** (Job creation and skills development); Improved capacities of tanneries and other leather actors through improved **manufacturing practices and waste management**; and improved **social cohesion** in Modjo and surrounding areas.

The project spans from 2021 to 2024 and was implemented in a consortium led by People in Need (PIN) in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Solidaridad.



The Project in Numbers:

TVET's

- **5 leather production departments** of polytechnic colleges in Modjo, Adama, Bishoftu, Dukem and Sebeta were supported in leather skills and knowledge development
- 80 sewing machines provided to TVET colleges
- **605 (208 M, 397 F)** young people **attended improved TVET short courses** and apprenticeships in leather production
- **3 short-term training manuals** (Curriculum and TTLMs) were developed for leather processing, footwear, and leather goods technology.
- Additionally, **1 short-term training manual** (curriculum and TTLMs) for tannery solid waste management was developed, validated, and disseminated by the Federal TVET Bureau in Addis Ababa.
- **1 new leather processing training programme for TVET colleges was launched** at Modjo TVET College
- **2,876 (1,889 F/987 M)** young people developed their business development capacities in a **Youth Leadership Programme**
- **23 young people were graduated in tannery solid waste management from Modjo TVET**

Employment and Businesses

- **42 new MSMEs established** in the leather sector
- **17 existing MSMEs** in the leather sector supported with training and material contributions
- **32 CSR community projects** supporting vulnerable members of the community formulated and approved
- **22 women's savings groups (VSLA)** and gender discussion groups were established with 517 members.
- **49% of women's saving-groups members reported greater economic independence**

Decent Working Conditions

- **4 tanneries improved their Occupational Health and Safety** regulations through materials and workers' safety trainings,
- **4 tanneries established grievance procedures**
- **6,334 personal protective equipment (PPE)** delivered to workers in 5 tanneries
- **10 tanneries trained on GBV** basics and prevention and gender-sensitive environment in the workplace, referral pathways and the management of GBV data
- **worker satisfaction level increased to 87%**



Trainees attending short courses

Environmental Improvements (Tanneries)

- **4 target tanneries improved solid waste management practices.** The tanneries have been sorting and reusing their crust and finished leather trimmings
- **4 tanneries (Modjo, Colba, Friendship and Ethiopia)** are in the process of **self-evaluation for LWG certification** supported by LLP/IRDC and UNIDO
- **4 tanneries** are in the process of adopting **chrome-free tanning**, which is a new green technology
- **3 processes transforming leather solid waste into new products identified and used** (glue production, protein hydrolysates, and desalting), which reduces the amount of waste and environmental impact
- **6 machines for transforming leather waste into new products** delivered to tanneries and the TVET College in Modjo



Visit of LISEC Project Activities – Business speech of participants to get a grant. Visit of 2 MSMEs in Adama.



LISEC at a Glance

Market-Driven Skills Development

LISEC provides market-driven skills development training for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The training equips MSMEs with the skills, knowledge, and machine support, leading to enhanced production and increased income. As a result, the targeted MSMEs became more efficient in manufacturing. They produced better-quality products, which led to a 22% increase in income and potential business expansion—including the possibility of hiring new staff.

“The machine support and training create motivation for me to do my job with strong enthusiasm, and I am working hard. Thanks to you, I have become successful.”

Yetimwork Mitiku
Business owner
Increased capital from 600,000 to 2.3 million Birr
From 28 to 58 employees
Adama

New Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

LISEC aims to generate new employment opportunities for youth and women in both environmentally friendly and traditional jobs within the leather value chain. Consequently, 1,051 new jobs were established, with 444 in leather-related factories or businesses and 607 in other sectors. Furthermore, 1,175 current employees in tanneries that implemented enhanced solid waste management practices were reclassified as having green jobs.



Leather product made under LISEC project

Introduced Solution for Digital Job Matching

The project introduced the Job Market Access Portal (JMAP). It equipped One-Stop Service Centres (OSSCs) with the skills and tools needed to manage a client information system and utilise JMAP. Previously, the Modjo OSSC relied entirely on a paper-based system, making the introduction of JMAP a significant improvement in their operations. The centres were upgraded, and JMAP was introduced to improve job matching for unemployed youth in Modjo. As a result, 31% of the youth who used the OSS services reported satisfaction with the service providers' capabilities.

“My friend and I, fuelled by the entrepreneurship lessons, dared to envision our own business. We submitted a proposal to the one-stop centre, the same place that had opened its doors to me during my training. The stars aligned—the centre, being an IRC-supported facility, offered guidance and resources. We now have our own shop; we do different kinds of printings on different materials like paper, t-shirts, and mugs. This shop isn't just a livelihood; it's a promise of future jobs, an echo of the opportunities I received. One day, I saw my name on the JMAP (job market access portal), not as an employee but as an employer, offering a helping hand to the next generation of hopeful youth. I also hope someday I will be able to provide a better life for my family.”

Meseret Huru
business owner
Mojo

Greener Tanneries

In Modjo, a study revealed the harmful effects of tannery waste on the ecosystem and local communities. In response, tanneries improved their waste management practices and partnered with local waste processing firms. Training on sustainable waste management was provided, and TVET institutions and government offices adopted a new curriculum. Specialised machines for transforming leather waste into valuable products. These machines included a machine for producing glue, desalting, and creating protein hydrolysates; they were delivered to both tanneries and TVET colleges.

As a result, three tanneries implemented proper waste management systems, and 58% of local residents reported an improved perception of the tanneries' operations.

Testing desalting machines at Colba tannery

“Through Solidaridad's training and support, I transformed from a struggling mother to a thriving entrepreneur in the tannery and leather production business. Overcoming adversity and poverty, I now inspire others to do the same.”

Yeabsira Asfaw | Short-term trainee in solid waste conversion
Modjo

Social and Economic Empowerment of Women

LISEC has generated positive impacts through investing in and empowering women. In Modjo and four other kebeles, 22 Village Saving and Lending Associations (VSLAs) were established, comprising a total of 517 members. The women in these VSLAs received training in financial management, marketing, business skills, and leadership. With a collective saving of 4 million ETB, driven by increased member interest, they invested in various business activities such as poultry production, sheep fattening, handicrafts, small restaurants, and the sale of Tella.

Seed money was also provided and deposited into the groups' bank accounts to support business expansion. The project significantly improved the social and economic conditions of nearly 517 women, enhancing their income and participation in community affairs through the skills they acquired.

“We used to save money at home, but whenever we need something we usually take it out and use it. That defeated the whole purpose of saving, and now I save 100 birr every week, and now I have more than 5 businesses.”

Betelehem Lume,
Sinke VSLA group member
Modjo



Yeabsira Asfaw – Graduate of the LISEC project



Glue production machines donated to 3 MSMEs



Leather product made under LISEC project





Strengthened Social Cohesion

The VSLA groups played a crucial role in enhancing local economic resilience and creating meaningful employment and sustainable business opportunities for their members. As these groups were predominantly owned and operated by women, they also strengthened both formal and informal networks among women.

“My first loan of 600 ETB was used for educational expenses. However, the real impact came in March 2022 when I received business and life skills training facilitated by this project. They gave me the tools to support my family and build trust within our community.”

Birtukan Tadele,
From Housewife to Entrepreneur
Gudina Boru VSLA member
Modjo

LISEC has sought to create awareness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and active involvement of stakeholders. We provided business owners, managers, and government officials with thorough training on CSR. The initiative formalised a CSR framework, delineating roles and responsibilities among stakeholders and establishing MoUs between four tanneries and the municipality. A unique logo and stamp were created to enhance brand recognition. This effort resulted in the support of 32 community projects through CSR initiatives.

“We occasionally supported individuals and communities as social support to improve our relationship with communities. But we found out it is not institutionalised, and the government or other entities do not recognise us. The impact was meagre and lacked visibility. Now, I have learned the importance of working together with the government and local communities to promote corporate social responsibilities and, of course, maximise recognition by all.”

A representative from tanneries after the multi-stakeholder workshop on CSR



Corporate Social Responsibility Stamp

Project innovations

What did the project learn? What adaptations were implemented?”

LWG Certification

- The Leather Working Group (LWG) audit certification evaluates tanneries’ environmental practices to promote responsible and transparent leather production globally.
- Engagement with LWG represents a significant step towards aligning with international leather industry standards, with UNIDO continuing facilitation beyond the project’s scope.

Extension of the Project to Other Locations in the Oromia Region Outside Modjo

- Although Modjo is recognized as a significant leather industrial hub in Ethiopia, it has been challenging to attract sufficient youth interested in the leather sector and to find enough existing MSMEs within Modjo alone. As a result, the consortium opted to expand its geographic scope beyond Modjo to include nearby cities in Oromia, such as **Adama, Bishoftu, Dukem, and Sebeta**. This expansion allowed for a broader reach to engage more youth and women in the surrounding areas of Modjo with opportunities for skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship.

Transformation of waste into valuable and saleable products

- As a result of a feasibility study on transforming leather solid waste into valuable items and the preparation of a manual detailing the production of three viable products, the project introduced three new products: glue, protein hydrolysates extracted from chrome-bearing solid waste, and salt recovery.
- These processes required specialised expertise and specific machinery, which are scarce in Ethiopia. Six machines were delivered to three tanneries and a TVET institution in Modjo.
- **This initiative reduces not only environmental impact by repurposing leather waste but also creates new jobs in secondary production and supports the local industry by producing essential materials locally. These efforts highlight strides towards a circular economy within the leather industry.**

New training for leather processing introduced in TVET Modjo

- In an attempt to institutionalise the processes of transforming leather waste into new products, a new programme, prepared in cooperation with the LLPIRDSC institute on **leather processing**, was introduced in TVET College Modjo.

- The graduates can work either as employees in tanneries or as entrepreneurs. The leather processing programme is the only one in Ethiopia. It is strategically located in Modjo, where there is a high concentration of tanneries.

Chrome-free tanning

- **New technology was introduced to reduce the amount of harmful chemicals in tannery waste.** This can be an inspiration for other tanneries, as most of the leather in Ethiopia (almost 90%) is tanned with chrome.

Improving awareness and reducing GBV

- Beyond directly supporting survivors, the project invested in strengthening local service providers’ capacity to respond to GBV. This included training sessions equipping local staff with skills in case management, referral pathways, and GBV data management.

Labour Market Information System - JMAP

- New Job Market Access Portal (JMAP) was a newly developed application for registering job seekers and employers. Although the application itself worked well, it was challenging to bring the system into regular use.
- The Job Creation Office and tanneries will continue to fund the cost of internet fees to sustain the Modjo jobs online platform. Oromia Regional Job Creation office took over the platform maintenance. It was interested in replicating the JMAP in OOS centres in other cities.

CSR contribution to the conflict mitigation between the community and tanneries

- In Modjo, the introduction of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been a pioneering experience, as CSR is not commonly integrated into company strategies or business planning, even among large corporations in Ethiopia. The initiative faced challenges due to the absence of established CSR policies or guidance, which the IRC had to develop.
- Through CSR, tanneries learned to collaborate with government offices and local communities in planning and executing projects.



People in Need is a Czech non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has been providing aid in troubled regions and supporting human rights since 1992. Since then, People in Need has grown into one of the largest NGOs in Central Europe. Today, its work focuses on humanitarian and development aid, advocacy for human rights and democratic freedom, field social work, and education, awareness and information.

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Stakeholders list

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Women and Children Affairs office

