



Tripoli, Libya, 9 August 2021 – The World Health Organization (WHO) country office in Libya, with support from the WHO Regional Office in Cairo, recently held a 3-day workshop in the Women’s Development and Training Centre in the city of Al-Zintan in northwest Libya. The course (25–27 July 2021) was the first of its kind in Libya and was funded through a general contribution from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The director of the centre and 6 social workers developed their skills in enhancing community awareness of the relationship between health, mental health and gender-based violence and strengthening referral services for survivors.

Participants shared their experiences and challenges. They also reflected on the importance of health care services as a culturally acceptable entry point to help prevent gender-based violence and provide care for survivors. Health services are an important means of enhancing community understanding of gender-based violence, as well as support survivors who disclose their suffering and refer them to appropriate local services.

One of the participants stated: “I thought that talking about gender-based violence within communities was impossible, but I learned that this is not the case. As social workers, we have an important role to play in addressing harmful practices, attitudes and behaviours. We can help people understand that violence is never acceptable and is not a solution.”

The training was conducted by a facilitator in Al-Zintan, with remote support provided by WHO staff in Libya and Cairo. One week after the training, the participants developed their own awareness sessions and presented them to the trainers in a second workshop.

This is the first of many capacity-building activities that will be conducted in the framework of the collaboration between WHO and GIZ in Libya. WHO plans to conduct similar training courses in 9 other women’s development centres in Libya. These centres are a safe space for women and allow them to reach out for services and support in a secure and trusted environment.

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