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ILO support for the emergency response to the crisis in Lebanon

Purpose of the document

This document provides an update on the ILO's work in Lebanon and describes the ILO's response, including in the process since the ceasefire of late November 2024 and the recovery and reconstruction. The Governing Body is invited to: (a) take note of the information provided on the contribution by the Office to the crisis response and the post-conflict recovery; (b) welcome the ceasefire understanding and call for compliance with the obligations thereunder; (c) request the ILO to prepare an assessment of the labour market, and to continue providing support for recovery in collaboration with the Government of Lebanon and the social partners; and (d) call on Member States to contribute towards the ILO's recovery support plan in Lebanon (see the draft decision in paragraph 18).

Relevant strategic objective: None.

Main relevant outcome: None.

Policy implications: None.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: None.

Follow-up action required: None.

Author unit: ILO Regional Office for the Arab States (RO-Arab States).

Related documents: [GB.352/INS/19/7](#).

► Update on the crisis in Lebanon

1. A ceasefire understanding of 27 November 2024 between Israel and Lebanon mandated a 60-day halt to hostilities and put in place a mechanism to monitor the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Southern Lebanon and of Hezbollah forces to the North of the Litani River. Despite frequent violations of the ceasefire, most of the displaced population have been able to return to their homes, although many found them destroyed or damaged. As of mid-January, over 100,000 people remain displaced. On 26 January 2025, the United States of America announced that the ceasefire arrangement between Israel and Lebanon would be extended until 18 February.
2. As winter sets in, a complex humanitarian situation persists in Lebanon. People are experiencing widespread destruction of homes and critical infrastructure, disruption in essential services, risks of explosive ordnance, and limited livelihoods. Agricultural production has been severely impacted and a lack of agricultural inputs, a scarcity of labour and an absence of markets are complicating the recovery. Continued efforts are being made to provide both immediate humanitarian relief and long-term recovery support, with a view to a permanent end to hostilities following the 60-day ceasefire.
3. The economic impact of the war has been profound and multifaceted, particularly on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which make up around 90 per cent of enterprises in the country. Disrupted supply chains, lost assets, damaged infrastructure, reduced consumer demand and limited access to finance have hindered MSMEs' operations, often forcing closures or lay-offs. They need support to rebuild, restart or maintain their activities. In total, an estimated 689,000 individuals were employed in the seven hardest-hit sectors.¹ In the most affected areas, workers have either lost their jobs – temporarily or permanently – or faced significant risks of job and income losses. The overwhelming majority are men, with 584,000 affected, compared to 104,000 women. At the national level, the unemployment rate is projected to increase, and had been forecast to reach potentially around 32 per cent by the end of 2024.
4. The fall of the Assad regime in the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic and the installation of a caretaker government in the capital, Damascus, is a significant development that will also have a major impact on the labour market situation in Lebanon. A large number (estimated at 90,000) of both Lebanese and Syrian citizens have arrived in Lebanon from the Syrian Arab Republic since the ceasefire, and a modest number of Syrian refugees (estimated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at 125,000 from all neighbouring countries)² have returned to their country.
5. The construction sector is expected to play a vital role in recovery and reconstruction in Lebanon, potentially driving job creation, but addressing the widespread prevalence of informal employment and poor working conditions in this sector will be essential to ensure sustainable and decent livelihoods. Construction and agriculture are the sectors of the Lebanese economy where Syrian workers have historically played essential roles. Therefore, if the number of departing Syrian workers becomes substantial, it could result in severe labour

¹ Agriculture, construction, manufacturing, transport and storage, accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, and arts and entertainment.

² UNHCR, "Regional Flash Update #9 – Syria Situation Crisis (10 January 2025)".

shortages, potentially hindering recovery efforts. Addressing this challenge will require effective strategies to attract and train local or foreign labour to fill these critical gaps.

6. After two years of a caretaker government being in place, the Lebanese parliament elected a President on 9 January 2025 and the President appointed a new Prime Minister designate, working to form a full government. The new government is expected to be able to prioritize a national reconstruction effort and put forward a proposal for reforms, which would in turn unlock critical financial support from the international community, not just for the humanitarian response and the reconstruction of infrastructure damaged in the war but also for a programme of structural reform.

► Highlights of the ILO's response and results achieved

Social protection

7. In partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ILO rapidly took measures to support vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities. Using existing national systems for a National Disability Allowance, it was possible to immediately make advance payments to over 27,000 individuals aged 15–30. In October 2024, with donors' support, an additional emergency top-up of US\$100 was disbursed to more than 5,000 Lebanese beneficiaries from the crisis-affected areas and to 4,603 refugees with disabilities from the most affected areas of the country.
8. Building on the National Disability Allowance system, in November and December 2024 the ILO and UNICEF supported the Ministry of Social Affairs in delivering an emergency cash transfer to persons with disabilities in possession of a valid personal disability card, from all age groups. The initiative successfully delivered a one-off transfer of \$100 to 43,000 individuals, using national budget allocations to social grants for the first time. The successful establishment of the regular and emergency operational mechanisms of the allowance led to a ministerial decision to expand, albeit temporarily, the coverage of the 2025 National Disability Allowance to further age groups until the domestic budget allocations to social grants has been exhausted, that is, approximately \$10 million.
9. Throughout the crisis, the National Social Protection Strategy has continued to serve as a critical framework providing continuity and direction for the emergency response. While the political landscape for 2025 remains uncertain, the Strategy will continue to be a relevant and adaptable policy tool to align short-term recovery measures with long-term development goals. At present, with the technical support of the ILO and UNICEF, the inter-ministerial technical unit responsible for the Strategy is working to develop a joint action plan for the 2025 implementation of the initiatives under the Strategy. Furthermore, the ILO and UNICEF are supporting the establishment of steering committees for each of the pillars of the Strategy, aiming to put in place effective coordination and governance mechanisms.

Sustaining jobs and livelihoods

10. ILO initiatives implemented under repurposed projects have addressed urgent needs effectively while fostering sustainable solutions. One example is the rehabilitation of public buildings, including schools and colleges, which improved the living conditions of internally displaced persons, created short-term employment under decent working conditions and upgraded the buildings for longer-term use. Another intervention was the installation of solar

panels in six vocational and agricultural training schools that are being used as shelters, which not only ensured a stable power supply, but also created work-based learning opportunities for beneficiaries and will benefit students in the long run, once the schools are no longer used as shelters.

11. Furthermore, ILO-certified trainees gained hands-on experience, short-term income and essential skills in the renewable energy sector, thus enhancing their employability. Similarly, support during the winter season included providing essential sewing kits and material kits to vulnerable people, alongside vocational training in sewing especially winter clothes, providing Syrian refugees and members of Lebanese host communities with protection against the cold in the winter months while equipping them with valuable skills to improve their self-reliance and future employment prospects.
12. Following a rapid assessment of the impact of the conflict on Lebanon's agriculture sector, around 360 farmers and agricultural workers received targeted support to address severe disruptions in critical value chains caused by the ongoing crisis. This included providing agricultural inputs, technical assistance and short-term employment opportunities, thus ensuring both immediate livelihoods and the continuity of food production. Another rapid assessment is under way in collaboration with employers' and workers' organizations to understand the impact of the war on enterprises and workers, providing evidence-based recommendations to support livelihoods, employment recovery and business continuity, particularly for MSMEs. The findings aim to identify key challenges, priorities and needs of both workers and enterprises across the country to inform the ILO's post-war recovery programming.
13. In parallel, the ILO is working with its tripartite constituents to support the integration of private sector needs for sustainable recovery and job creation in relevant economic recovery policies and plans. The ILO has supported the main employers' organization in the country, the Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI), in deploying new services and piloting some initiatives. The ALI has developed an Emergency and Crisis Resilience Support Plan that aims to provide immediate relief to its members, thereby strengthening the association's capacity to respond to the crisis and promoting sustainable economic recovery. Among other measures, the ALI is reinforcing linkages with the humanitarian sector through a dedicated service informing members about the main goods, equipment, services and supplies that the major humanitarian actors are seeking to procure, and compiling information and practical means to support members in the bidding process and in sourcing products to these entities. The ALI has increased its visibility and advocacy efforts and is developing an updated Business Policy Agenda summarizing its contribution to the economic recovery of the country.

► Outlook

14. Following a major effort to repurpose its programmes in Lebanon to respond to the mass displacement of the population, the ILO is now gradually returning to its prior work programme, in consultation with its constituents and taking into account the priorities that the new government will formulate. There will be a strong focus on reconstruction in areas affected by the war, with, for instance, the ILO's employment-intensive infrastructure programme contributing to rebuilding infrastructure while creating jobs in Lebanon.
15. With the election of a President and the subsequent appointment of a Prime Minister in mid-January, the new government is expected to create new momentum for reform. The ILO is well-

positioned to support Lebanese constituents in engaging in a process of reform, rebuilding public services and national systems. The ILO's work on social protection has remained focused on enabling the National Social Protection Strategy, which includes elements such as pension reforms and healthcare financing. The ILO's work with the employers' organization on skills development and business continuity and with all tripartite constituents on a road map for formalization in specific sectors are elements that can be built on.

16. In the wider region, the changes in the Syrian Arab Republic are likely to have an impact on Lebanon. The Office is working to establish to what extent and when Syrian refugees will return to their country, what kind of support they may require while they are still in Lebanon and how the ILO can support them on their return to the Syrian Arab Republic. Initial work with the UNHCR on skills mapping of returnees has already started. The Office will also continue to support Lebanon, which has traditionally relied on Syrians for lower-skilled labour in sectors such as construction and agriculture, in addressing the labour shortages that may be caused by the departure of Syrian workers.
17. The ILO has been engaging since mid-December with the new interim authorities in the Syrian Arab Republic and is now working to expand the modest programme it has in that country, as part of the broader United Nations response. The expected recovery and reconstruction efforts for the Syrian Arab Republic are expected to provide opportunities also for Lebanon, as a new regional context will mean the prospect of trade and investment increasing substantially.

► Draft decision

18. The Governing Body:

- (a) **took note of the information provided in document GB.353/POL/6 on the contribution by the Office to the crisis response and the post-conflict recovery;**
- (b) **welcomed the ceasefire understanding and called for compliance with the obligations thereunder;**
- (c) **requested the ILO to prepare an assessment of the labour market and to continue providing support for recovery in collaboration with the Government of Lebanon and the social partners;**
- (d) **called on Member States to contribute towards the ILO's recovery support plan in Lebanon.**