



International Labour Organization

Terms of Reference for service providers, specifically: registered companies, registered institutions, NGOs, organizations, sole proprietorship with a legal identity

Title: Service provider assignment for research piece on recruitment mechanisms and working conditions for seasonal workers in the agriculture sector

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Lebanon has been suffering from a severe financial and economic crisis with long-lasting effects on its economy and its people. With the drastic devaluation of the currency, prices of imported items have risen sharply, and households are now increasingly struggling to cover food needs. The combined effects of the crises have resulted in unprecedented levels of unemployment and pushed both the Lebanese population and the approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees further into poverty. The Lebanese agriculture sector remains one of few sectors where both Syrian refugees and Lebanese in vulnerable host communities who has been hard hit by the ongoing crisis can legally find employment.

The ILO as part of its mandate to promote decent work developed a project aimed at ‘Promoting Decent Jobs for Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees’ funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). The project will focus on the agriculture and agri-food sector as a key sector for the livelihoods of both Lebanese and Syrian vulnerable population groups and in particular women of both communities and aim to develop specific agricultural and agri-food value chains with potential for decent job creation that will benefit both groups.

The project will make use of the ILO’s Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS)¹ to safeguard jobs and livelihoods of vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian communities threatened by the crises and encourage decent job creation for both groups in sectors with potential. To that end, the project will use the market systems development approach to address key sectoral constraints to decent job creation sustainably, in combination with more direct interventions to strengthen capacities of vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian communities and safeguard decent work conditions.

2. BACKGROUND AND OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The agriculture sector in Lebanon holds significant importance serving as a source of livelihood for a substantial portion of the population, with approximately 20-25% of Lebanese² and 75,000 to 100,000

¹ More information on AIMS on www.ilo.org/aims

² FAO, Lebanon at a Glance, 2021. Link: <http://www.fao.org/lebanon/fao-in-lebanon/lebanon-at-a-glance/en/>

Syrian workers³ deriving their income from this sector. Within this workforce, there are both permanent and seasonal agricultural workers, along with farm holders who cultivate rented land. Agriculture workers are often subjected to dire working conditions, with long hours, low wages and exposed to hazardous agriculture practices. Notably, these workers do not fall under the protection of the labour law and social security fund. The conditions faced by seasonal workers, predominantly Syrian refugees, are of particular concern, as these are the circumstances where significant decent work deficits are most pronounced. Prior research indicated that wages of seasonal workers are substantially lower than those of permanent farm workers, and anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that child labour is more prevalent amongst seasonal farm workers.

Moreover, this research initiative seeks to dig deeper into the perspectives of farmers, as initial KIIs have shown their desire to retain the same seasonal workers on an ongoing basis to reduce training costs and mitigate the challenges arising from the shortage of a skilled workforce. By capturing decent work deficits among agricultural seasonal workers and comparing their experiences and needs with the preferences and operational requirements of the agricultural sector, this research piece aims to inform interventions to create a fairer and more mutually beneficial working relationship in the agricultural sector that will enhance the working conditions and quality of life for these workers, particularly the marginalized Syrian women who form a significant part of this labour force.

Therefore, the overall objective of this assignment is to support the ILO project team in conducting an in-depth investigation into the recruitment mechanisms, including the role of the labour brokers referred to as “Shaweesh”, and working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers in Lebanon. Additionally, the service provider is expected to provide insights into potential incentives for farmers to retain the same seasonal workers. The findings and recommendations from this investigation will inform initiatives aimed at improving the recruitment mechanisms and working conditions for seasonal workers in the Lebanese agriculture sector.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

a. Assess Decent Work Deficits:

- In the current legislative, regulatory and policy framework affecting workers’ rights in Lebanon including migrants and refugees workers, identify and understand the primary decent work challenges and issues faced by seasonal agricultural workers in Lebanon together with major gaps and issues related to Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW), namely child labour, forced labour, discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining, and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), as well as the right to work, freedom of movement, wages, working hours, overtime, rest periods, access to skills development and access to social protection. Categorize these challenges based on gender and nationality to provide a comprehensive overview.
- Analyze the profile of seasonal workers that are typically recruited by *shaweesh* for on-farm work (gender, age, nationality, etc.) and their current living conditions and socio-economic situation.
- Analyze the specific tasks and working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers, the nature of their current employment, and details regarding their job mobility (e.g., months worked per year) covering areas highlighted under the first point.

³ ILO, 2013. Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and their Employment Profile. International Labour Organization. Regional Office for the Arab States. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_240134.pdf

- Analyze the gender dimensions of the decent work deficits and the specific needs of women workers in agriculture be it Lebanese, Syrian refugee, or migrant woman worker .

c. Identify areas of improvement within the current legislative, regulatory and policy framework

- Explore the role of *shaweeesh* in connecting seasonal workers to farmers.
- Document the practices, fees, and mechanisms used by *shaweeesh* to recruit, manage, and deploy labour with reference to the ILO [General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and the Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs](#).
- Examine the impact of *shaweeesh* on the employment relationship between farmers and seasonal workers.
- Examine other issues such as addressing awareness raising gaps for workers, *shaweeesh*, etc. on labour law, social security law, right to organize, OSH, child labour, etc.

d. Identify incentives for Farmers and farmers' groups/cooperatives:

- Examine current challenges of farmers when recruiting permanent or seasonal workers for their farm (including issues related to finding workers with the right skills for various tasks) and analyze how farmers view the current *Shaweeesh*-based recruitment system.
- Based on the above, research and propose potential incentives for farmers to invest in retaining seasonal workers.
- Analyze the benefits of maintaining a consistent workforce in agriculture, including cost savings, increased productivity, and improved product quality.
- Investigate best practices and trends in worker retention and engagement in similar contexts. This includes the question of whether recruitment of permanent workers as opposed to seasonal workers is more likely in certain sectors, and/or on farms of a certain size or crop diversity.
- Provide recommendations on which incentives are most likely to be effective and sustainable in the Lebanese context.

4. METHODOLOGY:

The service provider is expected to employ a mixed-method approach, which may include but is not limited to:

- Literature Review:** Review existing reports, studies, and relevant data to provide context and background.
- Surveys and Interviews:** To capture the diverse perspectives and experiences within the seasonal agricultural workforce, the service provider will conduct surveys and interviews as follows:
 - Conduct surveys and interviews with at least 30 seasonal agricultural workers, with a focus on ensuring the participation of at least 15 women. These interviews need to be conducted in a secure and confidential environment, without the presence of either intermediaries or farmers.
 - Farmers, Labour Brokers, and Stakeholders: Additionally, a minimum of 20 interviews will be conducted with farmers, labour brokers, and other relevant stakeholders, including representatives of

trade unions and agriculture/agrifood chambers. to gain insights into their perspectives and practices. In consultation with the project team, farmers involved in selected value chains will be included in the interviews.

d. Data Analysis: Analyze both quantitative and qualitative data to draw meaningful insights.

The specific number of interviews required will depend on the quality and depth of the data collected. The aim is to ensure that a representative and diverse range of perspectives and experiences are captured, thus enhancing the validity and comprehensiveness of the research findings. The actual number of interviews may be adjusted as necessary to achieve this goal.

5. DELIVERABLES

The service provider is required to deliver the following:

- a. Inception Report: Present an initial plan outlining the research approach and methodology within two weeks of contract initiation.
- b. Draft Report: Share a preliminary report for review and feedback.
- c. Final Report: Submit a comprehensive report, including findings, analysis, and recommendations, addressing the objectives outlined in this TOR.

6. TIMELINE

The tentative timeframe is as follows:

Activity	Working days	Associated tasks	1. Timeline
Preparations and secondary research	5 working days	- Meeting with ILO to discuss assignment - Review of available literature, and project documents - Preparation of research tools - Preparation of inception report and logistical arrangements	27 February – 12 March 2024
Field research	15 working days	Conduct interviews with Lebanese farmers, Lebanese and Syrian workers, and with shaweeshs.	12 – 27 March 2024
Drafting of the report and validation	7 working days	- Meeting with ILO to discuss results of the analysis and recommendations - Finalization of report	27 March – 10 April 2024

7. PAYMENT SCHEDULE

1. **First payment** covering 20% of the full payment, to be tentatively due by 12 March 2024 upon satisfactory delivery and project approval on the following deliverable:
 - o Deliverable 1: Inception Report

2. **Second and final payment** covering 80% of the full payment, to be tentatively due by 19 April 2024 upon satisfactory delivery and project approval of the following deliverable:
 - Deliverable 2: Final report

All payments are in fresh USD via international bank transfer. A USD account should be available in the name of the service provider for payment transfers.

8. FOCAL POINT(s) AT ILO

The Service Provider will coordinate with Luana Ayala, the Project Technical Officer, and with the backstopping of Federico Barroeta, the Chief Technical Advisor, Badra Alawa, the Enterprise Specialist in ILO Beirut Office and with relevant technical departments involved in the ILO Headquarters.

9. REQUIRED QUALIFICATION AND APPLICATION

This call is for **service providers, specifically: registered companies, registered institutions, NGOs, organizations, sole proprietorship with a legal identity)**

Individual consultants are not eligible to apply.

To apply for this assignment the service provider should possess the following qualifications:

- At least 3 years of demonstrated experience in labour research, especially in the context of seasonal workers and/or agriculture.
- Strong knowledge of labour market dynamics and practices in Lebanon.
- Excellent research and data analysis skills.
- Proficiency in both qualitative and quantitative research methods.
- Strong written and oral communication skills in both Arabic and English.

Interested service providers are invited to submit a brief proposals of how the assignment will be implemented along with the CVs of the team members, financial proposal and a sample of one previous assignment in the email.

Deadline for submission:

**CVs and Proposals should be sent to: ayalal@ilo.org and obeid@ilo.org, CC chaya@ilo.org by 23 February 2024 COB Beirut time.
Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.**