

Improving Access to Employment and Social Protection for Palestinian Refugees Living in Lebanon

A Project funded by the European Union, and implemented by the ILO Regional Office for Arab States in association with the 'Committee for Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon' (CEP)

Concept Note For the Implementation of a Labor Force Survey Among Palestinian Refugees living in Lebanon

Background

It is estimated that 422,128 Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon, mostly under difficult conditions. The vast majority have very limited social and civil rights as well as poor access to public social services. Palestinians in Lebanon are considered foreigners and accordingly are prohibited by law from working in specific trades and professions; and whenever allowed to work they need to undergo cumbersome procedures to obtain work permission. Majority of Palestinians work in the informal market and as such exposed to exploitation and limited job security. On the other hand, professional occupations are almost closed to them whereby professional syndicates apply member restrictions to non-citizens. Access to social security is also limited as Palestinian workers in the formal sector are required to pay social insurance contributions, yet they are not entitled to receive all the benefits (health insurance, family benefits) under the social security law.

Moreover, the legislative issues related to the non-protection of Palestinian workers' rights are not widely discussed in public due to misconceptions and scarce data on Palestinian issues particularly what is related to employment. In the past years, some reform initiatives on the Palestinian issues and right to work and protection have been taken by Lebanese authorities. In order to promote discussion on Palestinian workers' rights and enhance the opportunities for improved legislative reforms to improve employability and social protection for Palestinian refugees, the ILO has put on track an EU funded project "*Improving Access to Employment and Social Protection for Palestinian Refugees Living in Lebanon*" that aims at achieving two specific objectives as the following:

1. **Develop** a reliable and objective **information base** on Palestinian employment and social protection in Lebanon in all its aspects.
2. **Advocate**, through dialogue and at grassroots levels, **for legislative and policy changes** in relation to access to employment, social protection and decent work.

Rationale

For the past years, Palestinians living in Lebanon have been excluded from national surveys and accordingly data on Palestinians is scarce and does not allow for evidence-based policy making that could contribute to improving the living conditions of Palestinians in the country. The legislative issues related to the protection of Palestinian refugees remain not discussed in public due to absence of scientific and reliable database on Palestinian employment. Moreover, misconceptions and lack of information on Palestinians are common among the Lebanese Public. The facts on and mechanism of the Palestinian labor force are also not known and often not clear even to decision makers, thus allowing for exploitation and unjustified connection between employment rights and fear of settlement. Within the framework of achieving objective one of the Project, a labor force survey is planned to be implemented covering Palestinian refugees in the camps and gatherings.

About the Labor Force Survey

The labor force survey will target Palestinian refugees living in camps and gatherings all around Lebanon. It will follow international standards and provide comparable data to the national labor force survey that is currently under preparation (with CAS). The survey will attempt to measure concepts related to employment, underemployment, informal economy, vulnerable employment, discouraged workers and other issues. More specifically, the survey aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Build the information and knowledge base on the situation of Palestinian labor market and their employment and employability
2. Enhance quality of discussion relevant to the Palestinian's right to work and to social protection based on objective and scientific facts and figures
3. Provide decision makers and concerned stakeholders (Palestinian and Lebanese workers and employers, CSOs, etc.) with reliable information on Palestinians employment and labor market in the country
4. Support evidence-based policy making towards improved working conditions and opportunities for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon
5. Empower advocacy efforts with needed information and figures for more convincing messages and dialogue on the Palestinians right to work and social security
6. Build the baseline information on Palestinian employment in Lebanon to act as basis for comparison with other regions and for future monitoring