



International Labour Organization Regional Office for Arab States

Enabling job resilience and protecting decent work conditions in rural communities affected by Syrian refugees crisis in northern Lebanon Project

Project Brief

The 'Enabling Job Resilience and protecting Decent Work Conditions in Rural communities affected by Syrian Refugees crisis in Northern Lebanon' project is a one-year project funded and implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO). It has been designed to provide livelihood opportunities to the vulnerable Lebanese host communities affected by the Syrian refugee crisis. The project's goal is: **Productive employment created through local economic development and sustainable enterprise.**

It has two components – employment services and Local Economic Development/value chain development – both of which are supported by capacity building. The project aims at (i) improving the employability of "vulnerable" job seekers regarding stresses of labour market due by the crisis; and (ii) unleashing the income generation and employment creation potential of an agricultural value chain through Local Economic Development (LED) and enhance the capacities of service providers to enable the creation of LED opportunities.

The project is implemented in North Lebanon allowing fine-tuning approach and tools during the first year (until June 2015). It is intended to scale up and expand the project's activities with additional funding.

Implementation Strategy

Employment services

In the North, employment offices are generally small. Thus available service centres will need to consider more extensive partnerships with other stakeholders within the labour market who provide employment services and the National Employment Office. A **mechanism of cooperation** is necessary to ensure transparent referral system, to capture quantitative and qualitative data, and to sustain services established, including active cooperation in sharing information; standardizing data and indicators.

The exchange of information on the labour market and usage of coherent nomenclature are essential between stakeholders and employment service providers to form the basis for employment policies and interventions. While labour market data are available, they are scattered and irregular, not being shared, or if available not properly used for career guidance. The result is a mismatch between the labour supply and demand and consequently little options for new entrants. For a more comprehensive understanding of the labour market needs, the project will gather and analyse available labour market data from surveys and employment services to **provide guidance on labour market trends and job opportunities**.

Furthermore, there is a need to focus on enhancing employability of new labour market entrants through better **counselling and orientation services** based on labour market needs, and subsequently to offer job placement services.

By interlinking and upgrading the existing employment service mechanisms, the project aims at creating a more functional network of employment service providers that institutionalises cooperation. Post-crisis it is likely that the two emergency employment services (IRC and UNHCR) currently focusing on refugees will cease to exist. However, institutionalizing cooperation of other service providers will contribute to making the provision of effective employment services in this vulnerable region more sustainable and thus contribute to resilience.

Furthermore, the project team will use its participation in the central and decentralised Livelihoods and Social Cohesion groups to encourage all agencies and NGOs to report their employment opportunities and tenders to the livelihoods centres. The project's support to create improved interlinkages among existing employment service providers will increase local procurement created by the aid economy.

Constraints around employment service provision are similar across Lebanon, thus this approach can be easily rolled-out into other regions.

LED interventions & capacity building

The **ILO's Local Economic Development (LED) approach** recognises the need for a more holistic and coordinated response to Lebanon's current crisis, in particular with regards to livelihoods and allows for adaptation in crisis-affected situations. It is a process that builds upon existing institutions and strengthens them to drive economic development of the selected area. In the case of this project, Akkar has been selected based on a range of criteria including vulnerability, potential of labour-intensive agricultural markets, availability of extension and other support services etc.

The project will involve existing local stakeholders in Akkar, including (but not limited to) Governor, Municipalities, Ministry of Agriculture representatives, local NGOs, employers' and trade unions, cooperatives, women groups etc. Given that the current Syrian refugee crisis calls for an adapted LED approach, other relevant groups such as Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees, and Lebanese returnees will also be involved to ensure the LED process is inclusive and the dialogue also listens to the voices of the more marginalised. The LED dialogue in Akkar will select a labour-intensive agricultural sector, support the value chain analysis, and identify, prioritise and guide the implementation of LED interventions to upgrade the value chain and make it more responsive to serve the needs of the vulnerable.

With regards to LED interventions, the project will base these on the **Making Markets Work for the Poor (M4P) approach** in order to ensure sustainability of economic gains and employment created. M4P is concerned with changing the way market systems work so that market systems offer more opportunities and benefits to poor and vulnerable people. For markets to work better for poor people, they need to facilitate the access of the poor to assets, and enable them to use these assets to generate livelihoods and to reduce vulnerability. The project's task is to facilitate change in the market systems to work more effectively and sustainably for the poor which will improve their livelihoods and consequently reduce poverty and increase resilience. The M4P approach entails enhancing the capacity of local service providers to cater for the needs of value chain actors, rather than providing externally arranged services. This allows value chain actors to build a sustainable network, which in itself builds resilience and increases preparedness against shocks. The graph below shows how the project intends to facilitate change in the market system through its outputs.

The focus of all LED interventions is to overcome bottlenecks in the selected value chain and its market system in order to help build a sustainable source of employment and income for the vulnerable poor and thus increase their resilience against shocks such current economic shocks resulting from the Syrian crisis. Both skills training and business development services provision are tied to the needs identified in the value chain and constitute major LED interventions.

When guiding the identification and prioritization of LED interventions the project will, where feasible, give special attention to potential interventions targeting highly vulnerable groups such as women or unskilled youth. The project will furthermore look into interventions that tap into the potential of the aid economy, such as linking farmers/cooperatives to shops contracted as part of the cash voucher programme for refugees where feasible as per value chain analysis findings.