

Call for Applications: National Consultants

Supporting Business Continuity, Resilience and Decent Job Retention in Lebanese SMEs in the agriculture and agro-food sectors

1. Background

In response to high levels of unemployment and increasing poverty and vulnerability levels of both Lebanese host and Syrian refugee communities, the Government of the Netherlands has launched a new Partnership entitled “Improved Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities” or “PROSPECTS” bringing together the ILO, UNICEF, UNHCR, WB, and IFC to jointly focus on nexuses between education, protection and employment. Implemented in eight countries, namely, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, PROSPECTS aims to help transform the way governments and other stakeholders, including the private sector, respond to forced displacement crises. In particular, the Partnership aims to:

- (1) enhance the enabling environment for the socio-economic inclusion of forcibly displaced persons (to mitigate their plight during years of exile and to best prepare them for their return);
- (2) enhance access to education and child protection for vulnerable children on the move;
- (3) strengthen the resilience of host communities through inclusive socio-economic development that also benefits forcibly displaced persons.

Within the framework of PROSPECTS in Lebanon, the ultimate objective of ILO’s intervention is promote access for vulnerable host communities and Syrian refugees to decent work opportunities (rights to work); and to ensure workers from both communities have safe working conditions and social protection (rights at work), in line with international labour standards.

2. Context

Under the ‘Employment with Dignity’ pillar of PROSPECTS, the ILO, in collaboration with the other partners, will ensure enhanced economic opportunities and decent employment for vulnerable Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees, with a focus on sectors with potential for growth, and job retention and creation. The situation analysis has highlighted pre-existing labour market and decent work challenges in Lebanon manifested in high unemployment particularly amongst women and youth, rising informality and poor working conditions that have been exacerbated further by the influx of Syrian refugees. Moreover, the situation analysis presented a bleak picture for employment and livelihoods creation primarily for Lebanese host communities but also for Syrian refugees amidst political instability and a deeply entrenched economic and financial crisis.

Against this backdrop, PROSPECTS seeks to identify sectors with some potential for growth, retention of jobs, and possibly creation of new ones. One prominent sector where the partnership will seek to work in is the agriculture/agro-food sector. At the operational level, the partnership identified closure of businesses, especially SMEs as a major challenge currently facing the Lebanese economy, as this has already resulted in significant job losses. According to a rapid survey undertaken by InfoPro, it is estimated that more than 200,000 jobs have been temporarily or permanently lost since October 2019. In addition, about a third of firms have “temporarily” reduced their employees’ salaries– by an estimated 40% on average. One third of companies reduced their workforce by 60% on average and 12% have ceased or suspended their operations.

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown measures in Lebanon, these figures are expected to have increased significantly, resulting in huge numbers of workers facing loss, suspension or reduction



of earnings. Moreover, the sharp contraction in the global economy that is expected to result from the negative impact of the pandemic on global demand and supply will put jobs at risk and further dampen prospects for decent employment creation in Lebanon, not only in the short run but also in the medium run, in the aftermath of the health crisis. In this context, the challenge now is to explore ways to support the existing SMEs in order to be able to maintain their business operation, access finance, remain competitive, and retain their employees.

3. Scope and objectives

Objective of the intervention

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current economic and financial crisis in Lebanon, the ILO designed an emergency response plan to help SMEs develop continuity plans, build resilience and preserve their workers' decent jobs. Specific objectives are the following:

1. Increase business continuity, resilience and decent employment retention in **15 to 20 SMEs employing vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees in the agriculture/agro-food sector**, through a number of interventions targeting business resilience/continuity planning, business management, productivity and working conditions, occupational safety and health, equal treatment of employees including refugees, social cohesion and gender equality.
2. Install in Lebanon an institutional capacity made up of business organizations, trade unions and private consultants that is able to support SMEs in the agricultural sector and their workers in facing the current financial and pandemic crisis in Lebanon through the proposed methodology.

Expectations from consultants

The ILO is seeking local consultants with experience of providing a range of business development services to small and medium agriculture/agro-food sector businesses in times of crisis. **A pool of 10 to 15 consultants** is needed to support the intervention by providing business continuity and business resilience training, coaching and advisory services, and respond to a range of other business development needs namely:

- Business Planning and Contingency Planning,
- Digital Marketing (such as the use of social media) and Branding
- Improving finances
- Managing People and Performance (HR)
- Improving productivity
- Decent Work
- Occupational Safety and Health

The aim is to create a pool of consultants who will each work closely with one or more enterprises engaged in the project. The purpose of engaging a pool of consultants is that they can each contribute something from their own specialism as required.

There is an expectation that all the consultants in the pool will already have all the essential core consulting competencies and values aligned with the ILO and its mandate (see Annex 1). In the pool of consultants, we wish to have the full range of the desirable competencies, but do not expect each of the consultants to



have all of the desirable areas of competence. It is envisaged they will work as a team and provide support to each other in their work with the individual enterprises as necessary.

Training will be provided in some of the desirable areas such as business continuity, business resilience, training, facilitation and coaching skills and the six areas listed above.

Selection of SMEs

The ILO has selected 15-20 SMEs mainly located in North Lebanon, Akkar and Beqaa and operating in agriculture and agro-food sectors, based on a list of criteria (see Annex 2).

Assessment of SMEs

A needs assessment is being conducted by the ILO to identify challenges and opportunities in each of the selected SMEs in terms of business continuity, resilience and job retention. It will allow for the development of tailor-made training and coaching material on business continuity, resilience and job retention and the six above-mentioned areas. The assessment results will be shared with the consultants once selected.

Selection of consultants

In line with the essential qualifications listed in Annex 1, consultants are expected to submit their applications to the ILO for interview and selection. As a first phase, five consultants out of the pool will be selected to engage with 15 to 20 SMEs; each responsible of five SMEs. At a later stage, five to ten other consultants will be recruited to assist in the scale-up of the intervention and reach-out to additional SMEs.

Training/coaching

Once selected, the pool of 10-15 consultants will participate in ILO training on business continuity, resilience and job retention and the six above-mentioned areas wherever relevant.

4. Duties and Responsibilities of Consultants

1. Participate in training with ILO on a range of technical areas including business continuity, resilience and job retention and the six above-mentioned areas (business planning, digital marketing and branding, improving finances, managing people and performance, decent work, improving productivity and OSH).
2. Participate in training with ILO on coaching and facilitation techniques.
3. Collect baseline and end line data to monitor the impact of the intervention in relation to the above-mentioned technical areas and specifically job retention.
4. Provide on-site training (individual and group) and coaching to SME managers and workers, on a range of technical areas including business continuity, resilience and job retention and the six above-mentioned areas (business planning, digital marketing and branding, improving finances, managing people and performance, decent work, improving productivity and OSH) whenever relevant.
5. Provide one to one and small group coaching (facilitation) with the business owners/senior staff to align their vision of their business growth with the ILO intervention.
6. Introduce a business improvement project to each business, using and where necessary adapting the business improvement project to reflect the SME priorities and needs. The Business Improvement Projects are conceived as small in-company business improvement activities, sponsored by the company owner and delivered by staff for a duration of 100 days. Project teams



are created in-house (2-4 people) who meet every ten days to work on a specific improvement and present the improvement to the managers for approval. The role of the consultant is to support the business improvement project teams and offer additional resources and materials.

7. Regularly follow-up (on-site and remotely) with each of the selected SMEs and request reports from each SME to monitor progress.
8. Provide support to other members of the consultants’ pool in areas of technical specialism.
9. Submit brief reports to the ILO SME Technical Officer on a monthly basis including ‘early warning’ indicators if the SME is failing to meet its obligations to the project.
10. Provide quarterly reports against the baseline data report.

Please refer to the detailed indicative work plan in Annex 3 for training and coaching timelines.

5. Place of Work

The intervention will mainly cover North-Lebanon, Akkar and Beqaa.

6. Deliverables, Timeframe

The duration of the project is one year from July 10, 2020 to July 10, 2021.

Deliverables	Indicative Deadline
Monthly reports to ILO SME Technical Officer to describe progress and challenges.	Monthly throughout contract
Provide quarterly reports that evidence progress against the established baseline data.	Quarterly throughout contract
Final report completed and submitted to the ILO’s satisfaction	End of Contract

All payments will be processed upon submission and approval the deliverables by the ILO.

7. Administrative Arrangements

All activities within the scope of this Terms of Reference will be carried out under the overall supervision of the SME Technical Officer of the ILO Regional Office for Arab States in Beirut.

Deliverables shall be submitted in line with the requirements explained in this TOR within the deadlines. The deliverables are subject to the approval of the ILO.

Consultants are responsible for informing the SME Technical Officer of the ILO Regional Office for Arab States in Beirut in advance in case of any unforeseen delays or changes.



8. Documents to be submitted in the application

Interested consultants must submit the following documents/information to demonstrate their qualifications:

1. CV (3 pages max)
2. Cover letter
3. Dates of availability and willingness to commit during the whole project implementation period
4. Indicative fee (the ILO has specific rates according to profiles and experience)
5. Detailed description of past works in conducting in the past five year similar business development for SMEs in agriculture/agro-food sectors
6. Two (2) references for similar past works undertaken by the consultant. Detailed contact information including the name, the title, and email and telephone numbers of people that can be contacted

9. Application

Applications should be submitted by email to Mr. Rayann Koudaih, SME Technical Officer, ILO ROAS Office (koudaih@ilo.org) by June 21, 2020.



Annex 1: Selection Criteria for Business Consultants

The following table specifies the **essential** and **desirable** criteria for the proposed consultants who should meet **ALL** the essential criteria and **SOME** of the desirable.

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Based in Lebanon	X	
Can sustain a business conversation & write in English	X	
Can sustain a business conversation in Arabic	X	
Experience of supporting SMEs (5 years +)	X	
Experience of supporting SMEs in agriculture and agro-food sectors	X	
Experience in crisis management at Enterprise Level (specifically financial crisis in Lebanon)	X	
Experience of running a business		X
Experience of working on business continuity		X
Experience of working on business resilience		X
Experience of delivering training on specific business management topics such as: <input type="checkbox"/> Business Planning, Marketing (digital marketing and use of social media) and branding <input type="checkbox"/> Improving finances <input type="checkbox"/> Managing People and Performance (HR) <input type="checkbox"/> Improving productivity <input type="checkbox"/> Decent Work <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational Safety and Health		X
Experience of undertaking baseline surveys		X
Experience of coaching business people		X
Committed to gender equality: <input type="checkbox"/> Uses gender sensitive language <input type="checkbox"/> Challenges negative stereotypes <input type="checkbox"/> Represents positive images of women in management and leadership in materials and examples they provide	X	
Supportive of protecting jobs of all vulnerable workers	X	
Open and receptive to new topics and intervention modalities	X	
Align their personal values with the ILO mandate and aim	X	
Able to work in a team	X	
Experience of managing projects and can work to deadlines	X	
Ability to listen and be receptive to information received	X	
Ability to patiently explain and simplify topics for up take by beneficiaries while keeping an open mind.	X	



Annex 2: Selection criteria for SMEs

CRITERIA	YES	NO	Don't know
1. Size of the enterprise between 15-90 employees			
2. At least 5 years of operations			
3. Operating in the agriculture or the agro-food sectors			
4. Can clearly identify staff/departments responsible for HR & Finance			
5. Existence of Lebanese and non-Lebanese workers in the enterprises			
6. Geographic spread mostly in Beqaa and Northern Lebanon Regions			
7. Willingness of enterprises to share business data* on Finances, business performance, business status & HR *(to be used only in pre and post assessment phases that are integral part of the project and not shared outside of the scope of the project nor divulged to 3 rd parties)			
8.a Willingness of enterprises to commit to the project by having the leadership team participate in coaching & facilitated sessions			
8.b. Providing time for employees to engage in training & business improvement projects			
9. Readiness to retain jobs and invest in reskilling workers for business continuity or growth.			
10. Facing challenges in retaining jobs or resuming work after COVID-19 e.g. the SME has reduced the number of staff, applied staff salary cuts or decreased/suspended some of its operations.			
11. Not engaged in any other similar programme on business continuity.			



Annex 3: Indicative work plan

The table below indicates a tentative work plan for one consultant receiving ILO training (inputs) and providing training/coaching to one SME (outputs).

Inputs/Outputs	Timeline											
	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21
Inputs (number of days)												
Introduction of the programme to the consultants	2 x 0.5											
Training of consultants on business continuity, resilience and job retention		5										
Training of consultants on coaching and facilitation			5									
Regular meetings with pool of consultants	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Training of consultants on the six technical areas					5							
Total inputs	2	6	6	1	6	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Outputs (number of days)												
First meeting of consultants with SMEs		0.5										
Baseline data assessment		0.5			0.5			0.5			0.5	
Coaching of managers/senior team			0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
One-on-one training of SMEs on business continuity			2x0.5	2x0.5	2x0.5	2x0.5						
One-on-one training of SMEs on business resilience						2x0.5	2x0.5	2x0.5	2x0.5			
Group training of SMEs on 6 technical areas in Bekaa ¹						2	2	2	2	2	2 ²	
Group training of SMEs on 6 technical areas in North/Akkar ³						2	2	2	2	2	2 ⁴	
Coaching of SMEs on the six technical areas in Beqaa (to follow-up on the group trainings)						0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Coaching of SMEs on the six technical areas in Akkar (to follow-up on the group trainings)						0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5

¹ Depending on the needs assessment results, not all SMEs might need training on all technical areas

² Each technical area might need the services of 2 consultants

³ Depending on the needs assessment results, not all SMEs might need training on all technical areas

⁴ Each technical area might need the services of 2 consultants

