



International
Labour
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i-eval Discovery



Bouzour Mid-Term Review

QUICK FACTS

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Administrative Office: RO-Arab States

Technical Office: DWT-Beirut

Evaluation manager: Luana Ayala

Evaluation consultant(s): Mohammad Muaz Jalil

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Key Words: [Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery](#) .

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The Bouzour Project, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) with a budget of \$3.54 million, is a 30-month initiative July 2023 – December 2025. implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The project adopts the ILO's Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS), integrating market-based solutions with interventions to strengthen vulnerable communities' capacities. Adopting the ILO's Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS) seeks to address systemic constraints in agriculture and promote climate-smart solutions, renewable energy adoption, and market linkages. The project operates in Lebanon, where persistent economic and political instability has compounded to create severe challenges for livelihoods and business operations. This mid-term evaluation was undertaken to provide insight into the project's performance, identify lessons learned, and recommend adjustments for improved impact and sustainability.

The evaluation focused on understanding the design, implementation progress, and potential for scaling. Key lines of inquiry included the project's relevance to market needs, coherence with ILO's strategic objectives, efficiency in resource allocation, effectiveness in achieving outcomes, and prospects for long-term sustainability. It also examined how effectively the project responded to Lebanon's socio-economic crisis, conflict-related disruptions, and the ongoing Syrian refugee situation. The evaluation also assessed how the program adapted during Lebanon's conflict and how it can leverage new opportunities following the end of the conflict and regime change in Syria.

Present situation of the project

The Bouzour project is currently in its second year of implementation (July 2023–December 2025) and is operating under **exceptionally difficult conditions** due to Lebanon's ongoing economic collapse and the **escalation of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in late 2023**, which significantly impacted **southern Lebanon**. These events have led to the **temporary suspension or relocation of field activities** in affected areas, particularly in the South and parts of the Bekaa. In response, the project has **reallocated activities geographically and adjusted timelines** to maintain operational continuity where feasible.

Despite these disruptions, most components remain underway, although at **varying degrees of progress**. Some interventions—such as the launch of OSH and recruitment mechanism pilots—were paused during the height of the conflict but have since **resumed**. The training of Master Trainers for the Improve Your Agribusiness (IYAB) module and greenhouse upgrade pilots are ongoing, albeit with some delays.

	<p>Engagements with private sector partners continue, though scaling activities have been affected by both economic and security-related constraints.</p> <p>The project continues to target vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian communities in agriculture but operates in a context marked by limited access to finance, volatile markets, and regulatory uncertainty, which require ongoing adaptation. The implementation remains broadly aligned with its original objectives but is proceeding with a more phased and context-sensitive approach than initially anticipated.</p>
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	<p>This mid-term evaluation of the Bouzour Project was commissioned by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The evaluation covers the project's implementation in Lebanon, focusing on interventions in key agricultural regions, including the North, Mount Lebanon, and the Bekaa Valley. Given the project's emphasis on inclusive market systems and employment generation for both Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees, the evaluation assesses progress across four outcome areas: productivity and decent work in horticulture, market access and value chain development, solar energy adoption, and business and financial capacity building. Applying a mixed-methods approach aligned with OECD-DAC criteria, the evaluation examines the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, while also assessing how interventions have adapted to Lebanon's ongoing socio-economic crisis and conflict-related disruptions</p>
Methodology of evaluation	<p>Applying a mixed-methods approach aligned with OECD-DAC criteria, the evaluation combined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review: Analysis of project reports, monitoring data, and partner documentation. • Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Remote interviews with project staff, implementing partners, and other stakeholders. <p>Due to security constraints, direct field engagement was not possible. Nevertheless, remote data collection facilitated various perspectives on project performance and contextual adaptability. This evaluation's primary clients are the Bouzour Management, ILO ROAS (Regional Office for Arab States), ILO HQ, national project stakeholders, and Sida, the project's donor.</p>

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

- **Relevance:** Bouzour interventions are well-aligned with Lebanon's urgent needs in agriculture, energy, and market access. By pivoting to cost-effective greenhouse upgrades (working with welders, etc. rather than supporting the establishment of new costly greenhouses), enabling solar rental solutions, and expanding market linkages (e.g., with QOOT clusters), the project remains responsive to economic crisis and conflict realities. However, limited formal labor representation in agriculture constrains alignment with the ILO's tripartite model.
- **Coherence:** The project aligns with ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B) 2024-2025, and Lebanon's UNSDCF priorities, yet internal coherence across outcomes could be enhanced. Improved integration among solar energy, horticulture upgrades, and IYAB training could amplify impact. Externally, deeper collaboration with complementary programs (e.g., ANERA, LIFE) may strengthen policy engagement and financial access.
- **Efficiency:** With a 77% delivery rate for 2024, Bouzour has shown agile management in adapting to Lebanon's volatile environment. Timely financial support and capacity-building have enabled partners to maintain operations during the economic crisis. Nonetheless, the broader financial climate in Lebanon, exacerbated by the devastating regional conflict, remains a significant constraint to growth, as this has effectively halted any investments on the side of private sector.
- **Effectiveness:** The **project is broadly on track to meet all key outcome-level targets**, particularly around productivity gains, market linkages, and solar adoption. Notable successes include YY Regen's solar rental model and cooperative-led purchasing arrangements. That said, scaling up IYAB training (Outcome 4) and fully embedding labor safeguards in agriculture remain works in progress.
- **Sustainability:** The Bouzour Project applies the ILO's **Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS)**, which is the ILO's methodology to apply MSD to fragile and forced displacement contexts. It combines **push** with **pull** strategies

to ensure sustainability, but more importantly emphasizes the need for flexibility and more hands-on support in these contexts. This approach **has been** further adapted to Lebanon's unique contexts, where business survival, rather than purely commercial expansion, is a priority. This **will** require reframing what sustainability means and **strengthening the push component** to include more and expand **direct partner support** in infrastructure and payroll. While some partners (e.g., SmartLand Agri, YY Regen) demonstrate early ownership, future sustainability hinges on securing access to finance, strengthening institutional capacities, and addressing regulatory gaps.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

- **Continue / strengthen the Hybrid MSD Approach:** Given Lebanon's unique, fragile economy (multiple economic crises and devastating war), a purely facilitative MSD approach is insufficient. Bouzour follows the ILO's **Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS)**, which blends traditional MSD's **pull** strategies (facilitation and market linkages) with **push** strategies (capacity building to build the capacity of farmers and small businesses to more effectively manage their businesses)¹. In practice—especially in fragile contexts—AIMS has also included **direct support and cost-sharing with private sector partners** to reduce risk and incentivize engagement. For instance, under AIMS projects in **Niger**, equipment such as **onion storage units and aquaculture facilities** was fully funded to catalyse private engagement in refugee-hosting areas². Bouzour has already applied such a **hybrid MSD approach**, combining facilitation with hands-on support for key private actors (e.g. co-investing in solar rental models, post-harvest equipment, greenhouse upgrades, and cherry export pilots). Such an **approach** is essential to sustain operations and ensure clients or beneficiaries like MSMEs and farmers can access critical services (e.g. solar energy, IPM products, hydro-coolers, etc.), and partner businesses can gradually transition towards full market sustainability. This direct support must be carefully designed, underpinned by **root cause analysis**, and time-bound to maintain a clear focus on long-term systemic change.

¹ See: <https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/approach-inclusive-market-systems-aims>

² See: International Labour Organization (ILO) & UNHCR. (2019). *Fiche Chaîne de valeur Oignon – Projet PAERCA, Niger (NER/19/01/USA)*. Niamey, Niger: ILO & UNHCR, funded by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM).

- **Strengthen Internal Coherence:** Bouzour's interventions—solar energy, horticulture upgrades, and IYAB training—should be better integrated to reinforce one another. IYAB graduates need clear market linkages, and solar adoption should directly contribute to productivity gains in targeted value chains. The new program design should structure Bouzour around three interconnected pillars: Enabling Environment (policy, finance, energy access), Value Chain Growth (agriculture, waste management), and Empowering MSMEs & Workers (recruitment, training, and labor rights). This will enhance synergy and long-term impact.
- **Expand Financing Pipelines:** Lack of financing remains a major constraint on agribusiness growth. To attract private capital, Bouzour should facilitate blended finance models, diaspora-backed investments, and risk-sharing facilities. Strengthening financial linkages will be critical for long-term sustainability.
- **Scale Up Successful Pilots:** Proven models, such as YY Regen's solar rental scheme and cooperative-led exports, should be expanded. This requires investment, policy support, and partnerships to transition these pilots into scalable, commercially viable models.
- **Address the Labor Challenge:** The agriculture sector's informality limits worker protections. Bouzour should explore interventions in adjacent sectors with stronger labor representation, such as waste management. Additionally, cooperative-led hiring and ethical recruitment practices could improve labor conditions in agriculture.
- **Transform Bouzour Regionally:** Expanding Bouzour to Syria would enhance sustainability by leveraging cross-border trade, remittance-linked financing, and workforce mobility. Facilitating Lebanese MSME expansion into Syria and institutionalizing IYAB training for refugees and returnees would support economic recovery in both countries.

**Main lessons
learned and good
practices**

Lessons Learned:

- **MSD in Fragile Contexts Requires Adaptation:** Direct financial support to partners is often necessary to stabilize partners. This aspect needs to be continued and further strengthened.
- **Energy Market Distortions:** Donor subsidies and weak regulation hinder the commercialization of the solar energy sector. Free or heavily subsidized solar installations funded by other programs undercut market prices, making it difficult for providers to compete. At the same time, the absence of a clear regulatory framework for private-sector electricity generation limits providers' ability to offer continuous or scalable services.
- **Skilling as a Public Good:** In a collapsed economy, vocational training may require sustained donor backing for short to medium-term
- **Gender and Refugee Inclusion:** Targeted interventions are crucial for women's participation and improving working conditions for Syrian refugees.

Good Practices:

- **Rental-Based Solar Model:** YY Regen's approach to the solar rental model bypasses high upfront costs for farmers (e.g. if they were to buy and install solar generators), enhancing energy access.
- **Adaptive Programming:** Pivoting greenhouse upgrades and market linkages demonstrates how flexibility yields continued results amid crises.

Overall, Bouzour is mainly on track, demonstrating resilience and innovation in a highly challenging context. Strengthening coherence, securing longer-term financing solutions, and expanding labor protections in agriculture will be essential to delivering sustained impact for Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees.