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Improving living conditions and resilience of refugees displaced by the Syrian crisis and vulnerable hosting communities in Lebanon. ENABLE project. Independent Midterm evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Lebanon

Evaluation date: [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS)

Technical Office: Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS)

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DC Symbol: LBN/22/01/EUR

Donor(s) & budget: European Union € 10.000.000€

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

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT	
Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure	ENABLE is a three-year project, implemented with financial support from the European Union, aimed to respond to the challenges of refugees displaced by the Syrian crisis and vulnerable hosting communities in Lebanon. Project activities take place under four main thematic areas: skills development; provision of short-term employment opportunities; strengthening of employment services; and entrepreneurship and private sector support. The anticipated results include increased access, with a gender sensitive focus, to livelihoods opportunities; provision of employment-oriented services and promoted the availability of short-term employment opportunities. Its geographical scope is nation-wide, and its budget is €10.000.000. The project is managed by a team of seven staff based in Lebanon supported by regional and global specialists from the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team at ROAS and from ILO Headquarters. The project formally began on 1 January 2023, but the inception phase effectively started the 8 March 2023. The project was planned to end on 31 December 2025.
Present situation of the project	The country's ongoing conflict dynamics, which intensified along 2024, affected the project implementation with some planned work put on hold and other activities adjusted to support emergency efforts. The ceasefire and the election of a new government in early 2025 has created a more conducive environment for advancing the changes proposed by the project. At the time of this evaluation, discussions were taking place for a non-cost extension.
Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation	The purpose of this mid-term evaluation was to independently assess the overall performance of the project so far while reviewing its evaluability, and to highlight challenges, lessons learnt and good practices and provide practical recommendations for the remaining period. The evaluation covered all aspects of project implementation, assessing progress from inception, in March 2023, until May 2025. The geographical scope of the evaluation aligns with that of the project in each area of Lebanon. The primary clients are the ILO/ENABLE team, the ILO ROAS Decent Work Team and the European Union as the donor. The evaluation shall also be useful for other secondary audiences, particularly, the national government, other constituencies, ENABLE implementing partners and other ILO projects.
Methodology of evaluation	The OECD DAC criteria have guided the evaluation to respond to the 14 evaluation questions and seven sub-questions. The evaluation utilized the following data collection and analysis approaches: Document review: Review of the project design document, progress reports, assessments, budget information and implementing partners information and data.

- Interviews: Over 45 online and face to face conversations were carried out with 41 stakeholders, including the ENABLE team, ILO regional and global staff, implementing partners, constituents, the donor, and other development partners.
- A phone survey was applied to 261 beneficiaries from project interventions.
- Group Discussions: 33 beneficiaries from different project activities participated in five focus group discussion in Lebanon.

The analysis uses different sources and elements depending on the content of each section. Primary qualitative data was coded and mapped against the analysis matrix. For the quantitative data, a basic descriptive analysis was performed. Bias in the evaluation data and conclusions was mitigated through standardising data gathering methods, including multiple and diverse data sources, and evidence triangulation.

Main challenges and limitations include the lack of proper project monitoring data and the absence of participation of representatives from supported municipalities and from People with Disabilities (PwD).

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

Relevance: ENABLE remains relevant to the current government's priorities and its intended beneficiaries although some of the interventions proposed such as short-term employment opportunities linked to public works do not satisfy y longer-term employment needs expressed by many participants. The project has demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing needs during emergency and recovery phases. At the same time, it aligns well with EU priorities, supporting vulnerable populations affected by the Syrian crisis and promoting employment creation. ENABLE's integrated approach to employment, entrepreneurship and social protection also supports key ILO outcomes.

ENABLE's design proposed relevant intervention areas, such as skills development, short-term employment opportunities, support for employment services and self-employment creation. However, its theory of change failed to clearly articulate the causal links between its components. This resulted in fragmented and siloed reasoning, as reflected in the project's logframe. Furthermore, the absence of an intersectional gender analysis meant that the project adopted a 'gender and inclusion targeting approach'. Its monitoring system includes mostly adequate reach metrics, but the lack of a baseline for some key indicators and a formal monitoring plan weakens the project's capacity to track progress and assess effectiveness. Given these shortcomings and the evolving context in the country, the theory of change needs to be refined and the project monitoring system strengthened.

Coherence: ENABLE is well aligned with the ILO's strategic approach in Lebanon and is consistent with the broader portfolio of EU-funded interventions for the country.

It has achieved good synergies with other ILO interventions, especially those focused on social protection and skills development, and has made efforts to coordinate with other EU interventions to avoid duplication, although there is potential for it to strengthen its connections with other EU interventions in support of the economy and recovery.

Effectiveness: Progress is uneven, as there are currently differences in the achievement of targets between outputs. Better results have been achieved in capacitating SDC staff, and a satisfactory number of participants have graduated from Work Based Learning (WBL) training. However, short-term employment opportunities have shown slower progress, although implementation has accelerated since the second quarter of 2025. Overall progress towards the project outcome remains limited, and it may be difficult to assess using the current metrics without a baseline and monitoring data. Progress is being made on gender participation targets, while there is insufficient data to assess progress on disability inclusion. However, efforts remain inconsistent overall and ENABLE needs to work towards systematically integrating gender and intersectionality into its assessments, as well as into the design, implementation and monitoring of its activities.

A combination of external challenges and internal project features has impacted ENABLE's ability to deliver results. The Lebanon-Israel war, the ongoing political instability and the deep economic crisis have caused delays. At the same time, the project's broad design has been a 'double-edged sword', offering flexibility to respond to emerging needs, but also making it harder to maintain a clear strategic focus. On a positive note, the ILO's strong technical expertise and solid partnerships have helped to keep key stakeholders engaged and improve implementation quality.

Efficiency: There is an overall agreement that ENABLE has sufficient technical and financial resources. However, the low spending and commitment rates to date highlight the need for stronger implementation practices. The combination of external and internal factors mentioned in the effectiveness' section has also affected operational efficiency, alongside inadequate planning and insufficient monitoring. The project is efficiently meeting its gender participation targets, but no resources have been allocated to gender equality specific measures, reducing its ability to ensuring equitable outcomes for women and men. In terms of communication and coordination, ENABLE has formed collaborative partnerships and is utilising its resources effectively, notably by co-developing pilots and joint training programmes with other ILO initiatives. To leverage these resources more effectively in future, it is essential to enhance internal cohesion within the ENABLE team, increase coordination with other actors operating at the SDC level, and sharpen its strategic approach.

Orientation to impact: ENABLE has the potential to have a long-term impact, particularly if it implements a clearer strategic focus, stronger integration of its components, and better monitoring measures. Although performance is delayed, primarily with regard to employment outcomes, some progress has been made in strengthening institutional capacity and supporting policy implementation. These are areas that hold potential for lasting impact. Feedback from beneficiaries reflects a mixed picture, highlighting both successes and ongoing challenges in accessing suitable employment, particularly for those in short-term employment opportunities. Persistent gender barriers and intersecting forms of discrimination emphasise the need for more targeted interventions to address multiple and overlapping forms of exclusion.

Sustainability: An exit strategy has not yet been defined for the project, but the efforts to strengthen capacities and foster ownership within SDCs are laying the groundwork for sustainable results. A clear sustainability strategy could be built on these achievements by ensuring that SDCs' employment-related services are formally recognised by relevant government actors and that opportunities are available for ongoing support. Other measures could include providing gender and intersectional capacity building.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

- Recommendation 1: Revise the project theory of change and update the project's Logframe.
- Recommendation 2: Develop a monitoring and learning framework.
- Recommendation 3: Prioritise strategic interventions and integrate the implementation of project components.
- Recommendation 4: Enhance coordination with national and development partners.
- Recommendation 5: Ensure that ENABLE is more gender-responsive and inclusive.
- Recommendation 6: Create additional and more comprehensive pathways for the different target groups to increase impact
- Recommendation 7: Ensure systematic application of conflict-sensitive approaches.
- Recommendation 8: Strengthen linkages with broader EU- funded interventions.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lesson learned: Enhancing outreach and profiling in Cash-for-Work (CfW) activities improve uptake.

Good practice: Providing capacity development opportunities for national partners strengthens service delivery and the sustainability of ENABLE's actions.