



Evaluation Summaries



LOCAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN WAR-AFFECTED AREAS OF SOUTH LEBANON

Quick Facts

- **Country:** Lebanon
- **Final Evaluation:** November-December 2008
- **Mode of Evaluation:** Independent
- **Technical Area:** Socio-Economic Recovery
- **Evaluation Management:** Regional Programming Services unit, ILO Regional Office for Arab States
- **Evaluation Team:** Roel Hakemulder (Team Leader) and Hala Dakhil
- **Project Start:** 1 August 2007
- **Project End:** 31 December 2008
- **Project Code:** LEB/07/01M/UND
- **Donor(s):** Lebanon Recovery Fund, International Labour Organization
- **Keywords:** Local Economic and Social Recovery, Participatory Value Chain Analysis, Livelihood Recovery, Micro-finance

Summary of the project purpose,

Background & Context

logic and structure

The project "Local Socio-Economic Recovery in War-affected Areas of South Lebanon" was launched in August 2007, in response to the July-

August 2006 war. It aimed at rapid livelihood recovery using a participatory approach, through direct assistance to those affected. At the same time it intended to build the capacity of local stakeholders to identify priorities and deliver assistance. The project focused on the caza of Bint Jbeil.

The Participatory Value Chain Analysis (PVCA) methodology was central to the project's approach. It enabled relevant stakeholders to jointly analyse a value chain and identify constraints and design and prioritise proposals that address the latter.

Two priority value chains, Olive Oil and Beekeeping, were selected in consultation with local stakeholders.

The project funded local partners to implement some of the proposals that came out of the PVCAs.

Other proposals that resulted from the PVCAs will be funded and carried out by local organisations themselves or have been included in requests submitted to donors. In the Beekeeping sector a Forum was established that facilitated the implementation of proposals and coordinates development of the value chain.

Loans and business training were provided to people in these as well as

other value chains. Project support enabled Al Majmouaa, a national microfinance provider to open an office in Bint Jbeil, which is improving access to micro-finance well beyond the project's immediate beneficiaries and will have an impact far beyond its duration. A separate activity was developed to support people with special needs. This included skills and vocational training, as well as access to loans and complementary grants.

▪ **Purpose, scope and clients of evaluation**

The purpose of the final evaluation was to:

- determine if the project has achieved its stated objectives and explain why/why not;
- determine the impact of the project in terms of sustained improvements achieved;
- provide recommendations on how to build on the achievements of the project and ensure that is sustained by the relevant stakeholders;
- document lessons learned, success stories and good practices in order to maximize the experiences gained. The evaluation should take into consideration the project duration, existing resources and political environmental constraints;
- Examine whether or not guidance provided by the Regional Office was effectively taken into account in project implementation; and if so, explain the increased impact that the support provided had on the project

The evaluation was guided by the following core evaluation questions:

- (i) the relevance of the project to the national priorities and the mandate of the Lebanese Recovery Fund,

- (ii) the coherence between the design of the project focus, the integration of ILO instruments in support of program objectives, and the coordination with other developmental actors;
- (iii) the efficiency measured both in terms of administrative costs and timeliness of execution;
- (iv) the effectiveness of interventions with particular attention devoted to investigating the sustainability of results and the contribution of the project to the institutional development of the local partners.

The evaluation also put a specific focus on the role of ILO constituents in the implementation of the project and the integration of the gender dimension. In particular the evaluation evaluated the quality and impact of project activities on the target groups.

The primary clients for this evaluation was the ILO regional management, ILO constituents, respective donors, the project management team, local and national partners. Secondary clients are the ILO HQ technical departments (CRISIS, SEED, SOCIAL FINANCE, COOP, CODEV, EVAL) and UN agencies collaborating with the ILO in the south.

▪ **Methodology of evaluation**

The evaluation was expected to address five groups of questions, concerning:

- Relevance and strategic fit;
- Validity of project design;
- Achievements (implementation and effectiveness);
- Management and use of resources;
- Impact orientation and sustainability.

The evaluation team opted for a participatory approach to assess the project against these groups of questions, for the following reasons:

- A participatory approach strengthens the reliability and relevance of the findings, enhances learning by the clients of the evaluation and increases the chance that recommendations will be followed up.
- A participatory approach does not preclude technical inputs from the evaluators.
- This specific project took a participatory approach to developing and implementing its interventions.
- Given the project's focus on rapid implementation, there was a significant need for additional data collection, which could only be met by taking a participatory approach.

Main findings & conclusions

- The project has largely achieved its objectives, especially when judged based on its strategy and progress towards its objectives. Direct and relevant assistance has been delivered to beneficiaries to support them in regaining and improving their livelihoods. Nearly 1,000 people benefited directly, more than double the number of 400 households the project document set as target. The large majority of beneficiaries were in the target group of the poor and vulnerable. Those included a small percentage of women (5% of direct beneficiaries), as well as people with special needs.
- Nearly all the assistance provided was found to be relevant and of high quality. However, some inefficiencies occurred due to the initially short (10 months) duration

of the project, which was too brief to include the full agricultural cycle.

- Given the agricultural nature of the value chains assisted, it will take time for the full impact of the interventions to be realised. However, the evaluation found that livelihoods have been recovered or improved by many and are in the process of being recovered or improved by the majority of beneficiaries. It is likely that most of these will prove sustainable. In addition, implementation of the interventions generated temporary work for around 200 people, which has provided immediate relief to those involved, though for a brief period of time. The livelihood impact for people with special needs has been small, as most have not taken up (self-) employment in the skills they were trained on. Better matching of training with the needs and aspirations of these beneficiaries could have increased the impact beyond the gains in self-confidence that have been achieved.
- A local capacity has been built to use the PVCA methodology among local organisations including cooperatives, trade unions, chambers of commerce, development NGOs, and municipalities. The methodology created a framework that offered opportunities for an integrated approach. The project exploited many, though not all, such opportunities. There are indications that the approach has been experienced as empowering, has created local ownership of resulting interventions, initiated a dialogue among stakeholders where none existed before, and developed and strengthened networks including those between organisations and individuals from different communities. However, even though stakeholders are

enthusiastic, their capacity is not yet adequate to conduct PVCA exercises independently. Further capacity building and training will be required to achieve this.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up:

- The evaluation recommends a new project to follow the current one, which will be completed on 31 March 2009 (following two extensions). Such a new project should continue its focus on Bint Jbeil caza, where the need is still great and where the project has built social capital and experience that will allow for high levels of effectiveness and efficiency.
- The Project should further strengthen the capacities of local stakeholders in Bint Jbeil to be engaged in Local Economic Recovery and Development, especially the PVCA approach.
- The Project should support implementation of interventions higher up the Olive Oil and Beekeeping value chains, to ensure sustainability of what has been achieved and increase the scope of outreach.
- Support at least two more PVCAs if the stakeholders agree there is potential. This should be for oregano production, where the project has provided support without doing a PVCA, and where marketing constraints are likely to arise in the near future. In new value chains, production level interventions should be implemented only if this is required to establish the credibility of the process.
- The project should promote and support the use of the PVCA approach beyond Bint Jbeil, targeting two other most war-affected cazas,. The Project, however should refrain from involvement in implementation of the proposals that result from the PVCAs. This should be left to local and international development partners with a capacity in the cazas in question.
- UNDP and the ILO need to enhance collaboration to build on the achievements of the current project, UNDP, and ART Gold, so as to ensure that one instead of two parallel approaches to Local Economic Development is being developed and promoted. This includes linking sectoral Forums, such as those promoted under the current project, to the planned Local Economic Development Agency in Tyre, and this and other such agencies adopting PVCA as one of their methodologies.
- The project's results confirm the ILO's experience that effectiveness of livelihood recovery, and its sustainability, benefit from a participatory approach. Participation, when done well, in a structured and result-oriented process, can be achieved relatively quickly and results in greater relevance of the assistance provided and greater ownership among recipients and stakeholders. It has therefore both short and long-term benefits – it delivers relevant assistance, and it lays the basis for the transition from recovery to development.
- Livelihood recovery projects should have a minimum duration of 24 months. The

project was originally designed to have a duration of 18 months, which was reduced to 10 months before project start, and increased to 17 and then 20 months when it was operational (the last with additional ILO funding) . One of the main lessons to be learned from this evaluation is that a duration of 10 months is too

short for a livelihood recovery project that aims at relevance and therefore impact. Forcing such a project into a time frame that short does not make livelihood recovery more "rapid", but is likely to result, rather, in inefficiencies, especially, but not only, in the context of a largely agricultural economy.