



# Evaluation Summaries

## Enhancing local employment, skills and enterprises in Nahr El Bared

### Quick Facts

**Countries:** *Lebanon*

**Final Evaluation:** *October-November 2010*

**Mode of Evaluation:** *Independent*

**Technical Area:** *EMP/SKILLS*

**Evaluation Management:** *Regional Programming Service Unit, ILO ROAS*

**Evaluator:** *Ziad Moussa*

**Project Start:** *August 2008*

**Project End:** *June 2010*

**Project Code:** *LEB/08/05/UNR*

**Donor:** *UNRWA Emergency Appeal*

**Keywords:** *Economic reconstruction, Employment Service Centre, skills development, employment generation*

### Background & Context

#### Programme Purpose, Logic and Structure

A recent study<sup>1</sup> estimates that two thirds of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in poverty and that the Palestinian refugee labour force in Lebanon is approximately 120,000 individuals; 20% are living in North Lebanon and 56% are unemployed. The employment situation was aggravated by the Nahr El Bared conflict in the summer of 2007 which led to a massive displacement within the population,

<sup>1</sup> "Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon", American University of Beirut, December 2010.

where 93% of the displaced population suffered significant disruption in terms of human, social, physical and economic capital; 79% of the displaced population was found to be unemployed.

In the context of the ILO's mandate and international experience with employment creation and livelihood recovery in post-conflict situations, and its current partnership with the Committee for Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, UNRWA invited ILO to provide specialized assistance on enhancing local employment, skills and enterprises through the project "Enhancing Local Employment, Skills and Enterprises in Nahr El Bared and Beddawi Camp".

The Project had the development objective "to reduce poverty amongst Nahr El Bared residents through providing better access to employment, self-employment and training opportunities". This was goal was addressed primarily through the establishment of an Emergency Employment Services Centre (EESC) and conducting Vocational Education Training (VET) sessions.

#### Purpose, Scope and Clients of the Evaluation

Following the completion of the first phase of the project, a Senior National Evaluator, Mr. Ziad Moussa, was recruited to conduct an independent final evaluation for the project, in

line with ILO evaluation policies and procedures.

The evaluation ran from 15 October to 15 December 2010, and included a desk review of secondary data provided by various UN agencies, several meetings with key project personnel and institutional counterparts in Beirut and North Lebanon. The Evaluator formed eight (8) Focus Groups drawn from project beneficiaries and carried-out several visits to apprentices in their place of work. As well, the Evaluator facilitated two workshops, an inception workshop and a stakeholder's workshop, to triangulate information received and gather comments and feedback on the draft findings.

The **purpose** of this formative evaluation process was to:

1. Determine if the project has achieved its stated objectives and explain why/why not.
2. Determine the impact of the project in terms of sustained improvements achieved.
3. Provide recommendations on how to build on the achievements of the project and ensure that is sustained by the relevant stakeholders.
4. Document lessons learned, success stories, and good practices in order to maximize the experiences gained.
5. Examine the UN joint programming management model, with a focus on the coordination between ILO and UNRWA to achieve the common pre-set objectives of the project.

The **primary clients** of the evaluation are the ILO Regional Office for Arab States, UNRWA and CIDA. Secondary clients include other units within the ILO that may indirectly benefit from the knowledge generated by the evaluation (SKILLS,

MICROFINANCE, CODEV, and EVAL), as well as project beneficiaries and partners.

The **scope** of the evaluation covered all project activities implemented from August 2008-June 2010. In particular the evaluation examined the quality and impact of project activities on the employability of Palestinian refugees.

### **Evaluation Methodology**

The evaluation's methodological approach had three phases:

1. A desk review of secondary data provided by ILO ROAS and other UN agencies.
2. Field interviews to collect primary data and validate the compiled information. Interviews were conducted with project beneficiaries and key informants, and field visits were performed to project sites for consultation with partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.
3. An inception workshop was held at the beginning of the evaluation to grasp stakeholder's main expectations and a Stakeholder Workshop was held during the process to disseminate the findings, triangulate information received from stakeholders, collect comments, feedback and additional information.

### **Main Findings & Conclusions**

The main findings of the evaluation can be summarized as follows:

Although the EESC was initially designed as an immediate relief intervention, it matured into a full-fledged recovery project which is well integrated in the UNRWA structure and able to attract additional donor support. As a result, it is currently being replicated in South Lebanon. It also managed to catalyze a broader thinking on Palestinian employability in Lebanon and of the ILO/UNRWA strategic partnership.

The evaluation confirmed the **relevance** of the EESC in targeting the employability of Palestinians in general, and in particular the employability within NBC and BC camps following the summer 2007 conflict. A clearer definition of the target groups, or the priority sectors that the project was trying to address, could have possibly led to more focused results.

The **design** of the project was in line with the ILO guidelines for establishing public emergency employment services while taking into account the specifics of the Palestinian Refugee situation in Lebanon. The project's operationalization could have benefited from a more systematic and transparent application of Project Cycle Management principles such as establishing clear baselines, developing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategy linked to well defined objectives and verifiable indicators, and developing an unambiguous management structure which defines the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

In terms of **effectiveness**, the project managed to attract 2,409 applicants over a period of 16 months of effective operations, and placed 18.5% of these applicants in jobs (397 in construction, 123 in other industry codes). Due to the absence of follow-up data, only a tracer study could determine if the placed job seekers were able to keep their jobs for more than a month and – most importantly – the working conditions that were achieved for these job seekers (i.e. contractual conditions, wages, incentives for productivity, working conditions, working hours, occupational safety and health).

The VET component of the project targeted mainly unskilled and semi-skilled job seekers, predominantly aged between 15 and 24 years and managed to place a total of 536 individuals in training, 315 of whom were trained through the VET component of the

project (115 referred through the EESC and 200 recruited directly by the VET providers). Another 161 individuals were placed in VET courses not funded by the project and an additional 60 individuals are reported as placed in training though not referred to training by EESC or covered by the VET component of the project. Participants in VET short courses expressed an extremely high satisfaction rate (90%). According to the estimations of the project, around 60% of the trainees were working 2-months after the end of the training courses.

The **efficiency** analysis under the current operational conditions turned-out to be quite complex in light of the special social and political context in which the project is operating, as well as the short life-cycle of the project. The total budget of the project, as per the inter-agency agreement between ILO and UNRWA, was \$650,000 (of which \$151,500 was for contracts with VET providers) with an additional in-kind support from UNRWA of approximately \$150,000. At later stages, if this initiative is to be replicated under comparable socio-economic conditions, it would be important to establish an *indicative cost* per job-seeker and per job-placement achieved over a more representative time period (36 months for example).

**Impact** could not be clearly determined due to the short life-cycle of the project and due to the absence of adequate qualitative and quantitative data. A series of planned and unplanned outcomes could be determined at the individual and the institutional level which, taken together, would lead to a deeper understanding of the project impact. In that sense, EESC was found to constitute one of the first comprehensive attempts to address the employability of Palestinians in Lebanon from a *system perspective* and outside the traditional perspective of sector or target-group

specificity. The project responded to a real need that goes beyond classical aid delivery. It marks a shift in the mindset of the Camp's population from a total dependence on UNRWA for their livelihoods needs to a win-win partnership where UNRWA is able to play an enabling role with the support of ILO.

Job seekers felt that they were better equipped and more empowered with EESC support. Although not mentioned explicitly in the official literature of the project, this aspect expanded the horizons of the boundary sphere in which NBC and BC camp residents were seeking employment from the camps and their immediate vicinity, reaching as far afield as far as Chekka and Halba. This is a very important outcome which ultimately will help heal the scars left in the collective sub-conscious of both Palestinians and Lebanese by the 2007 military offensive.

The approval for funding a second phase of the project by CIDA, and the ongoing endorsement of the project by UNRWA and ILO, in addition to the launch of a new EESC for South Lebanon are all positive signs of broad ownership of the project and its outcomes. The EESC is the only NBC recovery project that is continuing into a second phase, while most of the projects initiated under the Livelihoods Cluster are gradually phasing out.

## Recommendations & Lessons Learned

### Main Recommendations and Follow-Ups

1. Over the next phase, the EESC should develop a refined set of objectives, measurable performance indicators, and a clearly defined organizational structure.
2. In the future, the EESC should reconsider dealing with the community of Palestinian job-seekers as one homogenous group and should develop sector-specific and stakeholder-specific approaches.

3. The EESC should improve its management and data handling processes by creating a user-friendly Management Information System (MIS) and harmonise the data reporting.
4. It is recommended to designate a "data manager", or introduce a position for a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, in order to improve performance and strengthen accountability and learning.
5. It is highly recommended that an Advisory Board be established for the EESC bringing together ILO, UNRWA, CEP, VET providers, representatives of the education sector, Private Sector representatives and Chambers of Commerce.
6. UNRWA and ILO should play a more proactive role in steering the EESC and in setting its development agenda.
7. The EESC should be able to periodically re-define and adjust its approach and strategic choices based on the results of continuous monitoring.
8. The EESC should enhance its governance mechanisms for institutionalising its work and for a potential replication.

### Important lessons learned

1. Working along a Logical Framework model makes the project more structured and monitoring of its achievements more tangible.
2. The coherence of data is critical to understand the profound changes introduced by EESC.
3. Analytical qualitative reporting is as important (perhaps more important) than quantitative reporting.
4. The determination and measurement of outcomes and impacts is as important as the measurement and reporting of outputs.

The lessons learned from this evaluation should contribute to the improvement of the second phase of EESC, as well as the new EESC being implemented in South Lebanon.