



Final Evaluation
Support to Public Employment Services in Lebanon
LEB/08/01/CAN

INTERNAL FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
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1. Country Background and Context

1.1. Country Information

In late 2006 the ILO conducted a multidisciplinary assessment mission to Lebanon with the objective to contribute to the efforts of the Lebanese Government to overcome labour and employment related difficulties resulting from the conflict of 2006. The report of this mission concluded that: *“With efforts now being strongly exerted on the reconstruction of damaged areas, particularly in the South and in Beirut’s southern suburbs, a potential has arisen for implementation of active labour market policies to increase job creation through, for instance, labour market mediation, skills training and re-training, the adoption of employment-intensive investment approaches and local community and economic development, amongst others.”*

The report also proposed a collaboration focusing on enhancing labour market mediation through a two phase project. The first phase would provide immediate assistance in establishing emergency employment services. The second phase would provide the MOL’s National Employment Authority (NEA) with both short-term and medium-term assistance by strengthening the capacity of the NEA to deal with the aftermath of the conflict.

While the first phase of the proposed project was implemented through NGOs in the South of Lebanon to establish emergency employment services in Tyr and Nabatieh, the second phase was implemented by the ILO through the project “Support to Public Employment Services in Lebanon: Strengthening the Capacity of the National Employment Authority”. The first main outcome of this project has been to contribute to increased institutional capacity of the National Employment Authority, to assist the unemployed and underemployed workers and ensure efficient equitable provision on employment related services at the national and local level. A second main outcome has been to improve connectivity of various stakeholders and constituents to a general network of employment related information. A third expected outcome has been the promotion of (self-) employment opportunities.

2. Project Background

Since December 2008, the International Labour Organization has implemented ‘*Support Public Employment Services in Lebanon Skills*’, a project funded by CIDA with a total budget of \$2.2 million USD over the period of Dec 2008- March 2011. It was subsequently extended until December 2011, then again to June 2012.

The Project is a three year intervention funded to provide technical support to the Government of Lebanon in employment services and labour market information development. The primary goal of the project is to support the Ministry of Labour (MOL) and strengthen the capacity of the National Employment Office (NEO). The project seeks to ensure:

1. Increased institutional capacity of the NEO to assist the unemployed (and underemployed) and ensure efficient and equitable provision of employment related services at the national and local level.
2. Improved connectivity of various municipalities, employers and job seekers to a general network of employment related information through enhancements to the national labour market information systems and the development of an occupational information system.
3. Enhanced self-employment opportunities through improved skills and the establishment of successful small enterprises.

The Project has supported the NEO in order to enhance delivery of public employment services in the following areas:

- Capacity building/training of NEO staff through the ITC in Turin, study tours and locally organized training.
- Increased visibility of NEO through additional products such as the sector study, the publication of the analysis of existing labour market information, the introduction of a national occupational classification system based on ISCO 2008 and the organization of a job fair in North Lebanon.
- Provision of computers and other office equipment for the NEO offices in Beirut, Tripoli and Saida.
- Preparation of the Electronic Labour Exchange and a new web-site.
- Development of self-instructional material for job seekers and employers.
- A guide on employment counseling as reference material and as material for Trainers.
- An institutional assessment of the NEO with an outline of two future scenarios.

Table 1: Project Objectives and Outcomes

Development Objective:	
Contribute to raising the level of employment for poverty reduction in Lebanon in the aftermath of the war through the pursuit of a strategy that increases institutional capacities to deliver active labour market programming.	
<p>Outcome 1:</p> <p>Increased institutional capacity of NEO to assist unemployed and underemployed workers and ensure efficient and equitable provision of services.</p>	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 1.1: Employment service programs designed and implemented, including job search assistance and employability counseling program and services • Output 1.2: Sustainability of the programs ensured through Training of Trainers and the development of partnerships with capacity building activities with relevant associations. • Output 1.3: Results based monitoring and Evaluation system developed
<p>Outcome 2:</p> <p>Improved connectivity of various municipalities, employers and job seekers to a general network of employment related information</p>	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 2.1: Country-wide LMI network established. • Output 2.2: Computer – assisted occupational classification & information system (OICS).
<p>Outcome 3:</p> <p>Self employment opportunities promoted for men and women</p>	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output 3.1: Entrepreneurship Training program implemented

2.1. Main Achievements and Findings

Objective 1

The main result under Objective 1 has been the organisation of activities and services such as study tours, training at local and international facilities, the provision of modern equipment, computers, software and a new web portal to enhance the capacity of NEO to deliver better services. The achievements have been limited by archaic rules and regulations governing the work of civil servants such as the employment officers at NEO, making it virtually impossible to change the way employment services are delivered. It remains to be seen to what extent the Electronic Labour Exchange (ELE) will contribute to better achievements. Points of interest:

- An assessment of its impact after one year of operation in 2013 is recommended.
- Due to continued provisional government budgeting, NEO was not able to open two new pilot sites and recruit the required additional staff. Therefore the project could only support the three existing NEO offices in Beirut, Saida and Tripoli
- Training of Trainers has taken place in counselling according to the Canadian model. Due to the small number of NEO staff working in the employment department (ten) only three ToT could be identified as suitable.
- While reporting on lessons learned has taken place, mitigation efforts had very limited effect due to low level of base budget investment by Lebanese Government and continued changes within NEO at the management level.

Objective 2

The project has achieved creating more and better labour market information. It has also created the ELE that will provide better access to information on job opportunities and occupational information. However, an overall LMIS could not be established, as this would require a major reform of the public service system. For example the much expected Labour Force Survey to be carried out by the Central Administration of Statistics was not performed during the project period and is still pending the approval of the PM office.

While LMI providers were supportive in establishing an overall LMIS, the implementation has been impeded by continued budget constraints and a lack of ability/willingness to share data. An analysis of existing LMI and its quality has taken place and recommendations of this analysis have been shared with all major LMI producers.

While there is already plenty of occupational information available at various web-sites of employment services around the world, and in view of the continued challenges in adapting occupational information to the local context, the project decided to improve access to available information (Canada, Egypt) instead of “re-inventing the wheel”.

Objective 3

Four NEO staff members were trained through participation in a programme to develop entrepreneurial skills among rural women in North Lebanon. However, ‘BDS’ is not included in the NEO mandate and as such the NEO did not engage in further activities. However, the training has raised awareness at NEO that BDS might be a suitable service in the future.

The training of NEO staff on this component will have no impact as the NEO mandate does not include service provision in the area of entrepreneurial programmes.

2.2. Relevance and Strategic Fit

Lebanon ratified the ILO Convention 88 on Public Employment Services 1 June 1977. Lebanon is committed to the principles of the convention which include:

Article 1.2

The essential duty of the employment service shall be to ensure, in co-operation where necessary with other public and private bodies concerned, **the best possible organisation of the employment market** as an

integral part of the national programme for the achievement and maintenance of full employment and the development and use of productive resources.

Article 2

The employment service shall consist of a **national** system of employment offices under the direction of a national authority.

Article 3.1

The system shall comprise a network of local and, where appropriate, regional offices, **sufficient in number** to serve each geographical area of the country and **conveniently located** for employers and workers.

Article 3.2

The organization of the network shall:

(a) be **reviewed**--

(i) whenever significant changes occur in the distribution of economic activity and of the working population, and

(ii) whenever the competent authority considers a review desirable to assess the experience gained during a period of experimental operation; and

(b) be **revised** whenever such review shows revision to be necessary.

Based on the situation within the MOL's National Employment Office at the start of this project in 2009, the project itself was indeed highly relevant in attempting to move the state of the national public employment services to a level consistent with the principles of C88.

It is also worth noting that throughout the project implementation period additional capacity building projects were underway, first in Nahr el Bard later in Saida and finally in Tyre and greater Beirut, aimed at providing employment services to Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon. These projects were able to benefit from tools and activities initially introduced through the NEO project, while providing additional lessons learned which benefitted the implementation of all future activities for all of the projects.

Since Public Employment Services are considered to be key institutions in implementing labour market policies and programmes the success of this project can help assure the success of many of the other technical cooperation projects currently being implemented by the ILO in Lebanon.

2.3. Validity of Design:

The project design was ambitious, though not overly so, and dependent on the full commitment of the government to increase the level of financial and human resources allocated to the provision of employment services in Lebanon. Risks were identified appropriately and included mitigation strategies.

The project began with three main outcomes, 1) Capacity Building of NEO staff; 2) Support to enhance employment related information (LMI); and 3) (Self-) the promotion of employment opportunities. The majority of time and resources were dedicated to the achievement of the first two outcomes. The third outcome received less attention due to a shift in the Ministry away from an emphasis on entrepreneurial activities as part of the national employment strategy.

The focus of the Outcomes for the project are consistent with the core services expected of Public Employment Services and were prioritized in a manner which reflects the natural pattern in which the services should evolve over time.

2.4. Effectiveness

The project faced the continuing challenge of mobilizing sufficient numbers of staff within the NEO in order to achieve the initial outputs planned for this project. When these resources were not immediately forthcoming, it was necessary for the Project Management to adjust the project outputs within the allocated budget in order to still achieve the forecasted outcomes by the end of the project. This required both creativity and agility in the management approach to implementation. Based on the strong level of expertise offered by the CTA and the support he received from technical specialists in the ROAS, adjustments to the original project plans were made without negatively impacting the final results. Indeed, the overall goal of this project shifted from simply increasing the capacity of the NEO and staff through the development and implementation of additional

resources and tools, to one of demonstrating the importance of such services through the NEO. For this reason documentation of all project activities, including tools and resources introduced, became critically important. This has led to greater chances for sustainable results in spite of the fact that additional resources will only be realized in the post-project period.

2.5. Efficiency

This project did demonstrate efficiency in its operations. Due to the level of technical expertise of the CTA, it was possible to provide many of the technical inputs as part of the project management costs rather than through additional costs associated with contracting external experts. Technical inputs provided through the CTA also allowed for more constant follow-up support to the beneficiaries through coaching and frequent technical interventions to supplement training programmes. There were also economies of scale achieved through the use of the same training materials for the subsequent ES projects initiated for Palestinian refugees. Not only did this eliminate additional costs for training courses, by contracting with external consultants for the training delivery mid-level staff hired locally was assigned roles as trainers and mentors for the staff of these two smaller projects. Again, this resulted in the dual benefits of cost saving and reinforcing the technical capacity of the locally hired staff. This also helped secure the sustainability of project outcomes and offers an embedded core of trainers as the NEO moves beyond the project phase.

2.6. Management Effectiveness

The Project Management Team consisted of a full time Chief Technical Advisor, an international expert on employment services, and a locally hired Project Assistant. The initial CTA left the project after the first year due to personal reasons; however ILO management responded quickly to this unanticipated development and was able to re-staff the position with a highly qualified expert with a strong background of successfully implementing projects in the Region. While initially this change in a key project position was disruptive, in the end it has worked to the advantage of the project, as the new CTA brought valuable experience and lessons learned from previous work in the same domain within Lebanon.

The Project Assistant remained the same throughout the entire project providing the necessary continuity, particularly during the transition between CTAs. The project assistant participated in all elements of the project activities and this resulted in her personal capacity development in the field of employment services, as well in establishing a strong working relationship with the key stakeholders. This is particularly beneficial when considering longer term post-project results.

The division of roles and responsibilities between the CTA and Project Assistant were appropriate and again contributed to the development of the Assistant to remain a strong resource for the Ministry as they continue to develop and enhance their capacity to deliver a comprehensive employment service. For example, it was observed that during the final stakeholders' workshop, the Project Assistant moderated the event, taking charge of discussions, interacting constructively with participants and expert resources alike, and through good time management ensuring that all necessary topics were covered. During this same workshop the CTA took on the role of technical expert which helps to signal the transition from a project phase to a normal operational mode of activity within the National Employment Office.

2.7. Impact

The project has produced outcomes with impact, especially regarding the entrepreneurship objective. For example, the nearly five-fold expansion of trainees and training sites for instruction from one year to the next is an impressive change in magnitude. The demonstration of techniques for identifying and measuring training outcomes will give added value to the vocational training aspects and perhaps policy development as well. Positive statements by Lebanese interviewed during the midterm and final evaluations suggest a major impact resonated through the project even though the newly developed CBT has yet to be implemented.

2.8. Impact and Sustainability

There is no question that the impact of the project is significant. This message was heard repeatedly during the stakeholders workshop held 12 July in Beirut. A summary of the project results, as seen through the

perspective of a wide range of tripartite stakeholders¹, is appended to this report and provides evidence of the impact of the project.

From the earliest stages of project development and implementation there was a verbal commitment from the government of Lebanon to increase resources for the provision of employment services, it has taken the actual activities of the project and the ensuing positive results and feedback to move the appropriate authorities to take the next step in turning verbal commitments to concrete actions. During the workshop it was noted by representatives of the Minister that a decree has now been issued which will make possible the hiring of additional staff to be assigned to the National Employment Office.

While the ultimate sustainability of the project outcomes hinges on the ability of the government to allocate sufficient financial and human resources to maintain existing accomplishments and gradually increase the scope of their services. The project has done an excellent job of developing a wide range of tools and resources to facilitate these efforts.

These include the development of a blueprint for a Labour Market Information System. The completion of a study of the hospitality sector, which not only produced valuable information on a key sector in Lebanon but also provides guidance which will facilitate the completion of further studies; analysis of existing Labour Market Information including forming key alliances with other statistical agencies and research centres and the production of a Guidebook on Canadian Model Counselling and self- instructional material for job seekers.

Other key achievements contributing to the potential sustainability of the project outcomes include the upgraded Human Resource Management System; the NEO web-site; and the launching of an Electronic Labour Exchange. Not only do these innovations enable the NEO to broaden its outreach to job seeking and employer clients but it enables the NEO to offer its core services in a more modern and cost effective way. Work in the latter part of the project period resulted in the production of an index of occupations including a reference table linking the current occupational classification system to the newest version ISCO 08. Finally, an assessment of the current capacity of the NEO provides concrete advice on appropriate directions the Ministry may wish to consider as it moves to further enhance the availability of employment services throughout Lebanon.

During discussions related to the next steps in this process during the 12 July stakeholders' workshop², it became clear that having seen the advantages and value of these employment resources, neither the Ministry nor its partners are willing to see these tools disappear or become irrelevant. There is a strong commitment from the social partners, other government departments and agencies as well as non-profit and non-governmental agencies to continue progress in this area. In this sense, the project has indeed succeeded to bring the level of employment services to a stage where progress will not easily be reversed. While no doubt there will be increasing challenges in the coming months to maintain the momentum built established, the determination of many key stakeholders and in particular the Ministry itself, bodes well for the longer term sustainability of the key results achieved through the project.

This project has demonstrated the important role that a well functioning PES can play within the labour market. The project has also helped to identify through an early mapping exercise of other stakeholders involved in the provision of employment services, potential partners who may work cooperatively with the Ministry and NEO. Finally, the project has developed many useful tools and resources which will be invaluable to the Ministry as it moves forward and continues to build its capacity and critical mass as a national employment service offering free services to all of its citizens.

3. Recommendations

In order to enable NEO to provide even simple job matching services that do have substantial impact and visibility at national level, it would be necessary to expand the structure of NEO dramatically. The recent modest request to fill another 40 positions³ (not all of them would be actually delivering direct service to job

¹ A summary of presentations by stakeholders on the key achievements of the project is appended to this report as ANNEX 1

² A summary of key points covered during the discussions on the way forward for the NEO is appended to this report as ANNEX 2.

³ A country like Tunisia for example, with an active labour force three times that of Lebanon has an employment service network with more than 1.000 staff.

seekers, the request included 10 administrative staff and 30 technical for various departments) would enable NEO just to reach a minimum level of operation in five offices. Without a more strategic approach and in quantitative terms its role would still remain marginal.

As it is unrealistic to expect a dramatic expansion of the NEO structure beyond the recent request, however it is possible to re-organize NEO and to refocus its functions.

Assuming that a massive increase of staff at the NEO is unrealistic there are three activities that could be maintained and carried out professionally within the existing staffing limits:

3.1. Coordination and monitoring of all employment services existing in Lebanon

First of all, there are many providers of employment services in Lebanon, operating without any oversight and no regulations in place. NEO could play a role in this regard in monitoring the operation of such services, setting operational standards and collecting and analysing statistical data produced by these organizations and institutions. It would require a review of the current legislation and to make amendments to regulate the production and collection of statistics from such organizations.

3.2. Strengthened focus on labour market data collection, analysis and research

Secondly NEO could play a stronger role in collecting labour market statistics and in contributing to labour market analysis and research. This would require a team of experts in the existing NEO department to deal with the processing of such data collected from other employment agencies and to regularly collect and analyse labour market data produced by others, whether public or private. This would not require a change in the current legislation; however, it may require the development of a framework in which procedures/protocols are established on data sharing.

3.3. Maintaining the Electronic Labour Exchange as a service function of the NEO

Thirdly, NEO could still continue to provide job matching services through the upgrading of the Human Resources Management System and its web-portal, together the Electronic Labour Exchange. However, this will require a team of employment officers to update information on the web-site and to monitor the entry of job seekers and employers' data with regard to quality and reliability. The combination of on-line job matching and an active web portal with news and information on the labour market would certainly increase visibility of NEO and its services.

The logic to focus on these three activities is the following. All services delivered through employment services, whether by NEO or others, are delivered rather randomly and without a strategic approach. In the absence of sound labour market data collection, analysis and research this is not surprising. Comprehensive labour market information suitable for the formulation of employment policies is virtually absent. And finally, a considerable number of employment service providers outside the NEO structure operate without any coordination and regulation.