



Evaluation Summary



International
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Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey 2014 (LFHLCS) - Final Independent Project Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries:	<i>Lebanon</i>
Final Evaluation:	<i>July 31st, 2020</i>
Evaluation Mode:	<i>Independent</i>
Administrative Office:	<i>Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS)</i>
Technical Office:	<i>DWT Beirut</i>
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Project Code:	LEB/14/01/EEC
Donor(s) & Budget:	<i>European Union represented by the European Commission US\$ 5,002,870.00</i>
Keywords:	<i>Survey, Statistics, Labor Force, Living Conditions</i>

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic, and structure

Lebanon has traditionally been an important commercial hub for the Middle East. However, despite its small size, it has also often been at the Centre of Middle Eastern conflicts because of its borders with Syria and Israel. The country has been a refuge for the region's minorities for

centuries. Palestinians fled to Lebanon during the 1948 Palestine War and then again in the 1970s and 1980s alongside citizens from Ethiopia, Iraq, Sudan, and other countries. In more recent years, the conflict in Syria which started in 2010, created one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the world today. Millions have been displaced both inside and outside Syria with many taking refuge in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

The presence of such large refugee populations has put pressure on infrastructure and services of the host countries. In the case of Lebanon, economic pressures lead to high unemployment, competition for work and informal job markets contributing to social tension between refugees and host communities. Responding to the continuing refugee crisis, multilateral organizations and donor countries are assisting the Government of Lebanon in providing job opportunities and improved capacity for economic development and service provision.

Reliable statistics are key elements towards better measurement, monitoring and management of the results of development assistance and to provide essential information about the effectiveness of policies and programmes. Unfortunately, throughout its history, there has been a significant lack of reliable and timely data

on the conditions of work and life in Lebanon. The last census of population was conducted in 1932. During the civil war which lasted from 1975 to 1990, a fire destroyed the building of the Ministry of Planning which at the time had authority over the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS). All historical statistical documents and information was lost in this fire. There has been little interest in collecting data for statistical purposes and evidence-based policy making in this country.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Delegation of the European Union (EU) in Lebanon and ILO was signed in July 2014 to carry out survey(s) covering critical issues related to the consequences of the Syrian Crisis including the labour force situation and living conditions of the residents of Lebanon. An MOU was further signed In October 2014 between Government of Lebanon represented by the and ILO. This MOU states that “ILO is partnering with the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) to implement the Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey that will address the significant demand for data from Government agencies, international and national partners”.

The overall objective of this tripartite agreement was to improve the quantity and quality of statistical information in general with specific focus on the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. The goal was to produce estimates at the national, governate (mohafaza) levels, as well as individual districts (caza) in each governate to illustrate the disparities between regions. As a result, the LFHLCS is the largest household survey ever carried out in the country to provide reliable estimates at the cazas level.

The funds provided by the EU for this project is in the amount of €4,024,397 or US\$ 5,002,870.00. The role of the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States was to

provide the administrative and financial backstopping of the project in close cooperation with the relevant management units in ILO headquarters.

Present Situation of the Project

The Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey has been completed and the project was closed in February 2020. A full survey report was published at the beginning of the year, An English and Arabic version of the LFHLCS report has been released together data tables on demography, education, health insurance and disability, primary residences, income and labour force ; all available on the CAS website.

Purpose, scope, and clients of the evaluation

The purpose of this final and independent evaluation was to:

1. Determine if the project has achieved its stated objectives and explain why and/or 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 and the possible avenues, intended objectives and results of a second phase of the project.
4. Document lessons learned, success stories, and good practices to maximize the experiences gained.
5. Identify areas where strategic collaboration with other UN agencies, government entities and social partners could add value in a second phase of operations and future similar projects.

The evaluation was conducted was conducted as per the ILO evaluation policy and followed the OECD DAC Criteria for Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability. Users of this evaluation include the EU, CAS, the government and ministries of Lebanon, ILO Regional Office for Arab States

(ILO ROAS) and its tripartite constituents, UN agencies, policy makers and program developers as well as researchers. Secondary users include stakeholders of other CAS and projects besides ILO country offices that may indirectly benefit from the knowledge generated by the evaluation.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation questions were addressed using multiple lines of evidence, combining primary qualitative data as well as information gathered from a review of program documents and information from the Program reporting system. The travel restrictions in response to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, has imposed a remote data collection. Key Informant Interviews (KII) and semi-formal interviews were conducted on Skype for a total of 40 hours of discussions with 28 informants. It was not possible to conduct Focus Groups (FG) of survey interviewers and their supervisors as initially planned.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The LFHLCS project has designed a large household survey which required a sample size of 50 000 household to be able to produce estimates at the cazas level. The political instability and socio-economic crisis that prevailed in Lebanon during the life cycle of this project brought many challenges to the project team. The LFHLCS was conducted in two phases: Phase 1 started in August 2014 until the project was suspended in March 2016. In March 2016 or a year and a half after it started, the LFHLCS project was shut down by the EU amidst concerns that the project was facing serious delays. The key challenges were firstly the scope of the survey, secondly, difficult access to the sampled communities due to political blockages leading to potentially high non-response rate and thirdly, the high turnover rate and lack of experience on the part of interviewers.

Phase 2 began when the project resumed in January 2018 and ended in February 2020. The survey data collection was performed in four quarterly rounds (waves) starting in April 2018. The Evaluation finds the LFHLCS was an ambitious project given that this was the first experience for CAS and the ILO Regional Office for the Arab states in conducting such a large household survey. Nevertheless, the Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey has been completed and a full survey report was published at the beginning of the year 2020. An English and Arabic version of the report Labour Force and Households' Living Conditions Survey 2018-2019 is available on the CAS website as well as data tables on demography, education, health insurance and disability, primary residences, income and labour force in English and Arabic.

The Evaluation finds that the sampling design – a two stage cluster approach which is a classic design for household surveys was robust. The sample allocation method was chosen carefully for an effective representation of the regions. The data collection activities were carried out alongside quality assurance measures to ensure a reduction of errors and increased data reliability. On the other hand, the Evaluation finds that the project management arrangement was inadequate for the implementation of such a large-scale survey. The Evaluation finds that participation of data users at the conceptual stage and a steering committee made of the EU, CAS and ILO for the overall management of this project would have been more effectual in finding solutions for the numerous challenges that this project has faced as well as decision in the allocation of funds to the project activities. For future surveys, the evaluation has proposed a participatory approach more in line with management structures that are

put in place for large-scale survey conducted by national statistical agencies¹.

The Project budget shows a little over half a million-dollar surplus at closing. ILO has explained that currency exchange rates from Euros to America dollars, have contributed to an increase in the funds available. Furthermore, the political unrest and public protests of 2019, have prevented the project team to perform further analytical work on this project. After review of the budget and expenses, the evaluation finds that the budget allocation may not have been effective given the large amount of unspent monies (10%). Areas where the evaluation finds had limited funding includes the communication and awareness of the survey as well as the dissemination and analysis of the survey data. The budget for these activities were small and the Evaluation finds that lack of experience may have led to the absence of a data analysis plan which should have been designed and planned at the beginning of the project with suitable allocation of funding.

The Evaluation concluded that the objective of the project as outlined by the EU in the MOU with ILO ad described as “*To carry out surveys covering, critical issues related to the consequences of the Syrian Crisis including the labour force situation and living conditions of the residents of Lebanon including Syrian refugees*”, has been met. However, the Evaluation finds that the survey data should be further explored and analyzed to provide information on the socio-economic situation of people living in Lebanon. This is especially needed for the conditions of Syrian refugees which is of particular interest to the donor.

¹ See Compendium of Management Practices for Statistical Organizations, Statistics

The Evaluation considers that the sustainability of the LFHLCS Project is tied to CAS conducting more surveys in the future and to the capacity building of the organization. The Evaluation finds that CAS can and should build on what the LFHLCS has been accomplished with regards to the household sample frame such as using the LFHLCS sample frame when designing new surveys.

Recommendations

Main recommendations and follow-up

This Evaluation has provided 20 recommendations for the design, management, and technical aspects of future surveys. *The Evaluation recommends that CAS maintains key partnerships and seeks the support of the Lebanese government, donor countries and multilateral agencies to initiate a Labour Force Program which will collect labour statistics from establishment censuses and sample surveys; administrative records in addition to household-based sample surveys.* For the questionnaire design, the Evaluation recommends the participation of stakeholders and data users at the conceptual stage of the project to define clear objectives and data requirements for surveys. It recommends the use of computer assisted data collection methods for increased productivity and reduction of data errors.

In addition, the Evaluation recommends immediate actions to keep the LFHLCS data relevant and accessible. The timeliness of statistical information refers to the delay between the reference point (or the end of the reference period) to which the information pertains, and the date on which the information becomes available. *The timeliness of information will influence its relevance.* Over 12 months has passed by

Canada's International Statistical Fellowship Program, 2016

since the LFHLCS data has been collected; the period of reference for the survey data is from April 2018 to March 2019. The evaluation recommends that the quarterly data be released with the results of analysis that can demonstrate seasonal variation and trends.

The Evaluation has recommended that that CAS requests upon presentation of a well-designed analytical framework that the EU allocates the unspent monies for further analysis of the survey data.

The Evaluation recommends the analysis of employment in the different sectors of the economy with the participation sector analysis of the ILO ROAS, the government ministries and other interested institutions so that data priorities can be identified and selected for this analytical project. *The analysis should also focus on Syrians whose entry in Lebanon before or during the war in Syria, is presumed to have impacted the labour market in the country. This was a key requirement for the donor and this data has not yet been made available.*

Furthermore, the Evaluation recommends that thematic analysis of the Living Conditions Survey data be undertaken as soon as possible in collaboration of members of the United Nations Data and Statistics Working Group (UN DSWG) as well as NGO whose work are closely related to improving living conditions and reducing poverty and providing humanitarian aid.

The Evaluation suggests that future reports do not need to be lengthy, but the content must be relevant to the current socio-economic situation in Lebanon. They should include attractive graphics to represent the finding of the survey and the data analysis.

Given the low interest and little knowledge in survey taking and statistics in Lebanon,

the analysis of the LFHLCS data can and should constitute an opportunity to build capacity among ILO tripartite constituents and local researchers in the use of survey data, and to further bring visibility to the LFHLCS across the country.

The evaluation has recommended the use of social media for the dissemination of the finding. However, CAS is limited by the law and the government directives for use of social media. In fact, the limitation on CAS is extended to the need of the Prime Minister's approval for all activities planned by CAS before implementation including project and surveys. Data release requires the approval of the Lebanese Prime Minister.

The Evaluation has made recommendations regarding the accessibility of the survey microdata to users. Special attention must be given to data release to avoid bad publicity for this first large-scale household survey in Lebanon. The Evaluation understands that CAS will receive the support of ILO PROAS and the Statistical Division at the ILO Headquarters in Geneva to prepare a public LFHLCS micro-data file. The Evaluator strongly recommends that derived key variables be first created and included in the file to avoid misinterpretation of the survey data by external users. *CAS and ILO must ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of respondents is always protected.*

The Evaluator hopes that CAS with the support of its keys partners and the Government of Lebanon, will continue to conduct surveys and release data for evidence-based policy making and development of programs that will *advance the economic and living conditions of people living in Lebanon.* This is the ultimate outcome of the Labour Force and Households' Living Condition Survey Project.