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i-eval Discovery



Towards Improved Knowledge on Labour Market and Employment Conditions of Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan and Lebanon – Final External Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

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Technical Office: Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS)

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The Syrian conflict has caused the displacement of millions of Syrians from their homeland to neighbouring countries. Jordan and Lebanon, two countries already facing socioeconomic conditions and most importantly political conditions in Lebanon, have been largely affected by the influx of Syrian refugees. Further, the impact of this influx crisis continues to be felt in Lebanon and Jordan, particularly in communities where refugees settle, with significant increase in vulnerabilities and informality and crucial concerns over the increased competition in the labour market.

To this end, ILO has embarked on a 2-pillar project in Jordan and Lebanon, aimed at improving knowledge on the employment and labour market situation of Syrian refugees and host communities in both countries to ultimately help inform policy making.

In particular, the 2 pillars are as follow:

- Pillar 1 in Jordan: Advancing Decent Work under the Jordan Compact: Work Permits and their Impact on Decent Work for Syrian Workers in Jordan
- Pillar 2 in Lebanon: Employment and Working Conditions of Vulnerable Lebanese and Refugee Population Groups in Lebanon: Assessing the Labour Market Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis through an Informal Economy and Vulnerability Survey

Present situation of the project

The project's timeline was spread over 3 years (October 2018 – September 2021)

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This evaluation report provides an assessment of the project by addressing a set of key questions relating to its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The report also includes recommendations formulated based on the evaluators' desk review and consultations held with the various project stakeholders, in addition to good practices to be replicated and lessons learned to be considered for future after project design and implementation. These could be utilized by

	<p>the ILO to improve the planning, implementation, and management of future interventions. A mixed approach was used for data collection and analysis in which information was drawn from a range of key project stakeholders identified by the ILO. The evaluation process started with an intensive review of relevant project documents (as detailed in Annex A of the evaluation report) and was followed by qualitative data collection which comprised of 17 key informant interviews with different key stakeholders (presented in Annex B of the report).</p> <p>Clients of this evaluation include the ILO- ROAS, ILO constituents in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as project stakeholders (including the donor, project implementing partners and other project stakeholders and units within the ILO that may indirectly benefit from the knowledge generated by the evaluation).</p>
Methodology of evaluation	<p>A mixed methodological approach was used for data collection and analysis in which information was drawn from a range of stakeholders. The evaluation process started with a comprehensive literature review of ILO's project-related documents. This was followed by a brief inception report and qualitative data collection processes comprised of the following:</p> <p>Seventeen Key Informant Interviews (KII's) with different key stakeholders. Mapping of key stakeholders who have particularly informed perspectives on the project was conducted by ILO. Evaluators considered the entire list of key stakeholders.</p>
MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	<p>Relevance and strategic fit – Overall, the project was relevant in terms of the adequacy of its design and implementation. The design phase of the project has properly identified the needs and gaps to be addressed in both countries.</p> <p>Further, given the emergence of COVID-19 around the world and the unpredicted intensifying economic and political situation in Lebanon, stakeholders confirmed that the project</p>

remained relevant as the population groups targeted were already more vulnerable than others in both countries. Yet, the project did undergo certain adjustments including for example in terms of questionnaire design, to gather information related to the COVID-19 impacts on refugees and vulnerable host communities.

As for complementarity with previous projects, the project was one of its kind in its specific aspects in Lebanon, yet it did refer to the ILO/CAS Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS) of 2018-19 so as to provide a baseline nationwide analysis. Similarly, in Jordan, the project referred to and built on a previously implemented 2014 project “Impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian labour market” that was conducted in collaboration with FAFO, a Norwegian research foundation.

Coherence and validity of design – The underlying information about the targeted population initially gathered were true, as mentioned by interviewed stakeholders. The project did confirm initial assumptions and did provide new facts useful for evidence-based policy development. Moreover, despite initial assumptions being fair, relevant and true, stakeholders highlighted that the studies were exploratory and further fact identifications were expected. The structures and strategies followed in both countries supported quality output delivery and helped in successfully gathering needed data for filling information gaps useful for future policy development. As for inclusiveness of women and mainstreaming gender equality, women were adequately targeted in this project with statistical tools being properly designed to allow gathering information on women’s situation and the challenges that they face in accessing the labour market. People with disabilities were also targeted to the extent possible, with a special module targeting disabilities in the Lebanon informality survey. A chapter discussing the labour market situation of people with disabilities was also developed in the final report, along with special recommendations to support them.

Project progress and effectiveness – A number of obstacles has been faced throughout project implementation due to the

emergence of COVID-19 and the prolonged disabling factors that came along the political and economic situation in Lebanon. Nonetheless, all quantitative and qualitative research activities were successfully implemented following proficient statistical procedures to ensure excellent quality and alignment with the ILO's international standards and statistical definitions.

The delivery of the project activities amidst an extremely difficult environment, both in Jordan and Lebanon, was successful due to the identification and collaboration with professional and experienced implementing partners. However, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the compulsory restrictions that came along, implementing partners and ILO agreed to adhere to new innovative techniques to ensure effective implementation of all activities and the completion of the project in the best way possible. In Jordan, for example, awareness sessions were conducted through live streaming sessions on social media platforms, which attracted around 28,000 individuals.

Despite all the challenges faced, the project was successfully completed and all stakeholders confirmed that useful knowledge has been generated and disseminated in both countries. The project succeeded in achieving its results in addition to setting a roadmap for policy development based on tripartite dialogue with the governments and social partners.

Efficiency of resource use – In general, the project was efficiently managed financially, yet could have been managed better in terms of human resources. A lot of in-house ILO efforts were put into the project in areas primarily designated to other parties. For instance, report writing in Lebanon was time-intensive and challenging as the ILO spent substantial time working on the report to meet ILO's standards, in addition to intensive IT and statistical support. Interestingly, while no cost-sharing and project synergies were applicable in Lebanon, the ILO in Jordan collaborated with the World Bank, to cover certain aspects of the project which helped capitalizing resources.

Effectiveness of management arrangements – Overall, almost all interviewed stakeholders confirmed having positive relationships with the parties they engaged with in the project and no complaints were raised whatsoever. Clear coordination, constant interaction, sharing of expertise and delegation of tasks and responsibilities were also affirmed by interviewed stakeholders.

Impact orientation – The project was successful in achieving the overall objectives in both countries. In Lebanon, the project succeeded in providing an evidence base for policy development and in filling knowledge gaps on informality and vulnerability among refugees and host communities, a tripartite dialogue with key stakeholders was held after project conclusion. As for Jordan, all stakeholders confirmed that knowledge has been evidently advanced on the impacts of work permits on employment and decent work, which has subsequently created an evidence base which feeds into advocacy and can be used for policy making. The targeting of women was reported as crucial and reflective in the study, but stakeholders noted that female participation remains very low in the labour market, thus the need for continuous efforts including additional awareness and information sessions to encourage women to join the labour force.

Lastly, with regards to willingness to implement project recommendations, ILO staff sensed preparedness of employers' organizations and trade unions to implement the recommended practices, yet government cooperation is a key element and their commitment is linked to the political direction of the government as a whole.

Sustainability – Sustainability of research projects depends much on the follow-up activities designed to implement recommendations provided by these projects. The success of the tripartite dialogues with the governments and social partners in both countries is deemed critical, in addition to the implementation of the needed follow-up activities. Future ILO projects, including for example the National Employment Policy Project in Lebanon, will reflect on the findings and

recommendations of the informality and vulnerability study, and dialogue with relevant tripartite constituents will be maintained to ensure sustainability of project results. Interestingly, several stakeholders including INGOs confirmed that the data of the studies conducted are already being used by other UN agencies and organizations to support their projects and programs.

Conclusion

The project was an overall success with regards to its design, resources, and achieved objectives. However, it is vital to keep the project's findings and recommendations in perspective. The project design and implementation activities were set and built on previous relevant studies that reflect on the needs of the vulnerable targeted population. The design in specific was built and adjusted in a way to grasp all needs of Syrian refugees and host communities taking into account any further challenges faced due to COVID-19 and the unstable political situation in Lebanon. With that said, the surprising events that hit both countries left the ILO and implementing partners with various obstacles. However, despite everything, all project activities were successfully implemented and project objectives were achieved and the needed data were gathered. On that note, the project was able to reach the desired outcomes, improve and update knowledge on the labour market and employment conditions in both Lebanon and Jordan, in addition to filling major information gaps. Project resources were generally managed efficiently, as no financial challenges were faced and costs were strictly followed based on financial forecasts. On the other hand, additional human resources could have been built into the project budget to continued communication with all key stakeholders and less delays at certain stages of the project. Lastly, sustainability of the projects results and recommendations is key. The nature of the information gathered is not static, therefore, project follow-up is highly needed to ensure the relevance of recommendations during different times and situations in both countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

- To complement this project with an enterprise survey that provides more in-depth information and data on the demand side of the labour market in Lebanon and Jordan.
- To develop and implement follow-up projects and activities to learn if project results remain relevant or need to be updated.
- To conduct a specific project targeting PwDs only. Such study would shed light on their situation and the challenges that they face with regards to accessing the labour market.
- To consider having, in addition to these research projects, projects that aim to provide capacity building and skills development for refugees and vulnerable host communities.

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons Learned

- To conduct periodic evaluation exercises at certain milestones, including possibly a mid-term evaluation, involving relevant stakeholders. This is particularly important when projects span over a long period of time.
- Further events for the dissemination of project results and findings are needed to reach optimal dissemination goals and targets.
- To include a wide range of synergy and comparability between the two projects in Lebanon and Jordan. If the project was to be replicated in the future, similar components and aspects should be considered in both countries to have a more holistic report and regional study.
- Greater engagements with the ministries, civil society, cooperatives, and trade unions during the initial stages of

the project is suggested for future projects. Such stakeholders are key players in societies and are important sources of data in relation to issues of informality and Syrian refugees.

Good Practices

- Importance of continued collaborations with national statistical agencies and offices for household listings and field data collection activities.
- Quick response and adaptation with emerged challenges. Following uncommon data collection procedures and resorting to virtual meeting were good alternatives implementing partners resorted to. Such practices are successful at gathering needed information, and can be followed in future projects.
- Provision of all project materials in both English and Arabic languages.
- Trainings conducted to implementing partners and enumerator were vital as they ensured that data collection practices were aligned with ILO's international standards.