



## Lebanon: Public works for women's empowerment, refugee livelihood promotion and host community development

### 1. PROJECT SUMMARY

The “Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme” (EIIP) in Lebanon aims at creating short- to mid-term employment opportunities for Lebanese host community members and displaced Syrians through infrastructure works.

The programme is fully funded by The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany, through the German Development Bank (KfW), in partnership with the Lebanese Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Social Affairs to promote decent working conditions in ten infrastructure projects, of which four have been completed and six are ongoing in different vulnerable locations in Lebanon that host most of the deprived Lebanese and refugees.

At the centre of this project are labour-intensive infrastructure rehabilitation and improvement measures such as rural road rehabilitation, water catchment cisterns and terracing. The infrastructure measures are complemented by trainings on employment intensive methods for contractors and capacity building for public institutions. In addition, the Ministry of Labour is being supported in order to promote a system for speedy and transparent issuance of work permits to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, allowing them to legally and formally take up employment.

The programme has generated around 100,000 work days so far, with approximately 10% benefiting women and 2% people with disabilities.

### 2. GENDER COUNTRY CONTEXT

Lebanon's Labour Law of 2000 prohibits employers from discriminating between men and women with regard to type of work, amount of wages or salary, recruitment/employment, and promotion.

Nonetheless, some inequalities continue to characterise the labour market, in general and among refugees.

The female labour force participation was 23% in 2018.<sup>1</sup> The 2017 *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon* revealed that the working-age population in Lebanon was composed of 48% men and 52% women, but that only 7% of Syrian women were working.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> ILO modelled estimate from ILOSTAT ([www.ilo.org/ilostat](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat), accessed January 2019).

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, *Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR-2017)*, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, December 2017.

### Box 1: Reasons for not working cited by Syrian refugee women and men

For women, the primary reasons cited for not working were:

- Cultural reasons (29%);
- The need to take care of children and adults in the households (23% and 24%), and
- The lack of skills and experience to apply for jobs (19%).

For men, the primary reasons cited were:

- Having dependent family members and children (21% and 25%);
- The absence of employment opportunities (19%);
- Lack of skills and/or experience (17%), and
- Medical conditions or injuries (15%).

Source: UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, *Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR-2017)*, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, December 2017.

According to the survey, Syrian refugee women and men in Lebanon were engaged in different economic activities, with men being mainly involved in construction (33%), agriculture activities (22%) and services (16%), while women were mainly involved in agriculture (55%) followed by services (24%). Pay inequity also persists in the refugee community: on average, the monthly income was USD 206 for men, but only USD 158 for women, although they were employed for nearly the same number of working days (14 for men and 13 for women).

With regard to the construction sector in particular, one of the biggest challenges is cultural and social stereotypes: contractors, local authorities, partners and communities and even women themselves tend to believe that women are not capable of working in infrastructure projects for various reasons, including the purported lack of physical strength, risk of harassment, lack of basic technical skills, and perception of construction as “men’s work”.



### 3. ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

The following measures<sup>3</sup> have been taken by the programme to enable women to participate and benefit:

- Developing a gender strategy in order to provide guidance on gender mainstreaming in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the project, and to identify and outline practical measures to further gender equality;
- Setting a target of 10% for women's participation in the project, and providing guidance to implementing partners on ways to achieve this;
- Training contractors on gender-responsive recruitment and management as a prerequisite to submitting bids, and making women's recruitment mandatory;
- Recruitment of Social Safeguard Officers and training on gender-responsive safeguard practices including how to address workplace sexual harassment;
- Ensuring worksites have the required logistics facilities to enable women and men to work in decent conditions (for example, having separate toilets and rest areas for women and men);
- Structuring work teams in a way that women and men are comfortable working together (for instance, ensuring women can work with men from their families or communities, rather than complete strangers);
- Allowing multiple family members to participate in EIIP so there is less objection to women working in public spaces;
- Assigning tasks amongst women and men so that women have the chance to learn and refine their skills from the men who have more experience;
- Putting in place a task-based payment system so that women cannot be paid less than men for the same work;
- Ending the work day in the afternoon, so women and men can manage their reproductive responsibilities;
- Encouraging the provision of free, safe and convenient transport as this is very important for women; and
- Ensuring women's participation in the identification of infrastructure projects to ensure that the infrastructure developed responds to women's needs.

<sup>3</sup> Described and contained in the following documents: Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme in Lebanon (EIIP), *Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)*, ILO, 2018; Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme in Lebanon (EIIP), *Social Safeguards Framework - Local Resource Based Approaches*, ILO, 2018; and Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme in Lebanon (EIIP), *Increasing Women's Participation in Employment-Intensive Infrastructure Programmes*, ILO, 2018.

### 4. RESULTS AND IMPACT OF GENDER INITIATIVES

The programme has been able to achieve the following results in the field of gender equality promotion and women's empowerment:

- Women's participation: women make up on average 10% of the EIIP workforce across the projects that are run as part of the programme, and in one project, this figure reached 24%. Considering the cultural context and barriers to women's participation, these are significant achievements.
- Breaking rigid gender stereotypes: construction and infrastructure development were seen as "male" sectors prior to the programme, and involving women in these initiatives provides a first-time opportunity for women to enter these sectors and has a demonstration impact beyond the programme in terms of breaking prohibitive socio-cultural stereotypes.
- Obtaining better working conditions: even though women from the programme areas have traditionally worked outside the home, it has mostly been in agricultural work, where women are routinely paid half of men's wages.<sup>4</sup> The programme has enabled the women to access paid decent work with a contract and regulated working hours and conditions for the first time.
- New skills and social and economic empowerment: the programme has enabled women to gain new technical and soft skills, economic empowerment from the incomes they receive thanks to the programme, as well as social empowerment from engaging in public works alongside men.
- Improved intervention methods for greater impact: the programme has successfully developed and tested various intervention approaches to advance gender equality and ensure women can participate in the programme on an equitable basis, as noted above. It will be intensifying these efforts and in the third phase, the target is for 15% of the total beneficiaries to be women.

<sup>4</sup> The VASyR 2017 showed that men earned more than double what women earned in agriculture, 18,693 LBP (USD 12.4) versus 9,045 LBP (USD 6). Source: UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, *Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR-2017)*, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, December 2017.

## 5. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the better wages and working conditions that EIIP projects ensure as compared to the agricultural sector in which women have been traditionally involved, motivating women to work in the construction sector has been a challenge.

A factor which helped to overcome this challenge was the limited work opportunities available for vulnerable women in rural and refugee communities, and the need for alternatives.

In addition to this contextual push-factor, the project has introduced and tested a series of mechanisms to support women's participation as described above, and, will continue these efforts.

Its *Increasing Women's Participation in Employment-Intensive Infrastructure Programmes* strategy document<sup>5</sup> outlines a series of lines of action in this regard, from involving women in project identification to ensure the infrastructure that is developed also addresses their needs to post-EIIP referrals to training and work.



5 Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme in Lebanon (EIIP), *Increasing Women's Participation in Employment-Intensive Infrastructure Programmes*, ILO, 2018.

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[www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/lang--en/index.htm)