

Action Fiche for Lebanon

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Education, training and employment support for the Palestine refugees in Lebanon (ENPI/2012/023-399)		
Total cost	EU contribution: EUR 15,000,000		
Aid method / Method of implementation	1) joint management with UNRWA 2) direct centralised management		
DAC-code	11110	Sector	<i>Education policy and administrative management</i>
	11220		<i>Primary education</i>
	11330		<i>Vocational training</i>
	11420		<i>Higher education</i>

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

In spite of their longstanding presence in Lebanon, Palestine refugees remain excluded from key facets of social, political and economic life in the country. Poverty and unemployment have remained very high among the refugees, particularly within the camp enclaves, wherein two-thirds of them reside.⁵ While some recent political developments have sent a positive signal,⁶ there is little to suggest that the marginalisation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon will decrease substantially in near future.

One of the most effective tools in countering the unfavourable situation of the Palestine refugees has been education and training. The 2010 EU-funded *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*⁵ shows that education can help refugees secure more and better jobs and escape poverty. A refugee with a vocational or university degree is more likely to be employed than one holding a Brevet (an official government examination at Grade 9) or lower. Consequently, the poverty rate drops from 73% to 60.5%, and extreme poverty is halved, when the household head has an above-primary education. Moreover, of those with a university degree, 70% work as professionals or associated professionals. Employment rates for women who attended further education are also higher. Half of women with a university degree work and 43% of those with a vocational degree do. Yet, the results from the above

⁵ Two-thirds are poor (subsisting on less than USD 6 per day) while 6.6% of these exist in extreme poverty (less than USD 2.17 per day). Only 37% of the working age population is employed. *Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, American University of Beirut, 2010 (<http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011012074253.pdf>).

⁶ The positive developments include the establishment of a Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, the amendments to Article 59 of the Labour Law facilitating the access of Palestinians to un-syndicated jobs, and the commitment to improve the social rights of the Palestinians in the Ministerial Statement of Mikati's government.

Socio-Economic Survey also show that 8% of those between 7 and 15 years old were not at school in 2010 and only half of Palestinian refugees of secondary school age were enrolled. Two-thirds of Palestinians above the age of 15 do not have a Brevet.⁷

In the absence of Palestine refugees' access to the Lebanese public education services, formal education at the primary and secondary level, as well as some vocational training, have been provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). In Lebanon, the Agency runs 68 elementary schools (3 of them are French speaking schools and a fourth one, newly reconstructed in Nahr-el Bared has classes in French), nine secondary schools and one vocational training Institute with two centres, one in the north and one in the south of the country. Since 2005, UNRWA has also run an EU-funded university scholarship scheme. In addition, some 50 civil society organisations deliver complementary non-formal education programmes for refugees. While this system offers good access to education, there is an acute need to improve the quality of education and prevent repetition and drop-out.

In the area of vocational training, there is a further need to improve the external efficiency. This in the first place requires the official recognition of the UNRWA diplomas by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and an improved responsiveness of the course-offer to the needs of the labour market. Indeed, the links between vocational training and the labour market must be strengthened by direct and efficient interaction with companies.

At the level of higher education, access remains the main obstacle for the Palestinian students. The only public university in Lebanon applies restrictions on the admission of Palestinians, while the tuition fees in the private universities are prohibitively high. As result, only 6% of the Palestinian labour force, as compared to 20% of the Lebanese, has university training.

Regarding career guidance and employment services, young Palestinian refugees have practically no access to either. They are excluded from the Lebanese employment services, while UNRWA has acknowledged the importance of such support only recently by establishing the Placement and Career Guidance Unit (PCGU) and two Employment Services Centres (ESCs). However, the functioning of this support structure is still fragile and limited both in scope and capacity. Equally, the career guidance provision is at an embryonic stage within UNRWA, with occasional and fragmented support given in schools.

The programme is coherent with the priorities set down in the Joint Communications of the European Commission and of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy entitled "A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean"⁸ and "A new response to a changing Neighbourhood"⁹.

⁷ *The Socio-Economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, AUB, 2010.

⁸ COM(2011)200 of 08.03.2011.

⁹ COM(2011)303 of 25.05.2011.

2.2. Lessons learnt

The proposed action builds directly on two previous EU-funded projects: *Improve Education of Young Palestine Refugees* (EUR 15 million) and the *Scholarship Fund* (EUR 8.4 million). As attested by monitoring and evaluation reports, both these projects have been very relevant and brought substantial tangible results (e.g. end of double shifting, improved learning support, standardisation of kindergarten curriculum, development of new elementary cycle teacher methodology, introduction of school management system and provision of 340 university scholarships). At the same time, it is clear that improving the quality of education is a long-term process and further effort is needed, mainly in the areas of learning support, teacher training, and quality of learning materials. While UNRWA must remain our main partner, the complementarities of the non-formal education services provided by the strong civil society should also be supported. In addition, the link to employment should be strengthened, be it by a more appropriate course offer or effective career guidance and employment services.

2.3. Complementary actions

The proposed programme is complementary to:

- The UNRWA Education Programme financed from the UNRWA General Fund (the allocation for Lebanon was USD 36.1 million in 2010).
- The UNRWA Education Reform Plan (launched in October 2011) focused on: 1) Teacher Development and School Empowerment, 2) Inclusive Education, 3) Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), 4) Curriculum and Quality Learning, 5) Research and Educational Management Information Systems, 6) Advocacy, Communication, Partnerships and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).
- EU-funded projects currently under implementation:
 - Improve education of young Palestine refugees” (UNRWA, EUR 15 million).
 - Scholarship fund for Palestine refugees (UNRWA, total EUR 8.4 million).
 - Improving access to employment and social protection (International Labour Organisation, EUR 0.3 million).
- European Training Foundation (ETF) technical assistance in developing the UNRWA career guidance programme.
- EU policy work in the ENPI framework: discussions on legal and institutional discrimination against the Palestine refugees with the Lebanese government, particular attention given to the right to work, right to social security, recognition of non-ID refugees, and freedom of movement.

- A number of smaller scholarship schemes (e.g. Unite Lebanon Youth Project or OPEC¹⁰ Fund for International Development).
- International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) support to UNRWA: set up of the employment services and scholarships for Brevet Professionnel.
- Work of the Committee for the Employment of Palestinians (CEP), a Lebanese-Palestinian body mandated with providing information on Palestine refugee employment.

2.4. Donor co-ordination

On a monthly basis, UNRWA holds a donor meeting, attended by the Delegation as well as the other donors. Further ad hoc meetings are organised to discuss specific areas of intervention or new initiatives, such as those in education and employment. Being the largest donor to the UNRWA education activities in Lebanon, the EU Delegation has developed a strong partnership with UNRWA and with other donors. Regarding Component V (see 3.2) of the current programme, co-ordination will be ensured at the quarterly ‘Small-grant donor co-ordination group’ and the UNRWA-NGO Education Coordination Group and the Learning Support Advisory Committees established at UNRWA central office and consisting of NGO representatives. The EU Delegation has also a close working relationship with the Lebanon-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), which is an inter-ministerial government body formed by the Lebanese Council of Ministers, as well as the Palestine political representation. Throughout the implementation of this project, the strengthening of these relations will be ensured.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

Overall objective: Improve education and skills development to enhance the employability and employment prospects of the Palestine refugee youth living in Lebanon.

Specific objectives:

- To increase the number of Palestine refugee youth who complete the preparatory cycle and thereafter secondary education and have access to tertiary and vocational education.
- To improve the quality of technical and vocational education and training.
- To facilitate access to higher education for the Palestinian refugees including in English and French speaking universities.
- To extend and improve the provision of career guidance and employment services for the Palestine refugee youth.

¹⁰ Organisation of the Petrol Exporting Countries (OPEC)

3.2. Expected results and main activities

Component I: General Education

Result 1: Student retention and achievement in UNRWA elementary, preparatory and secondary schools is improved.

This component builds directly on the results of the previous EU-funded project “Improve education of young Palestine refugees”, and will focus on six areas: 1) learning support, 2) training and professional development for teachers, 3) School management system and education management and information system (EMIS), 4) development of textbooks and enrichment materials, 5) summer learning, and 6) accessibility for physically disabled children and environmental health in schools.

The main activities foreseen are:

- Set up of Learning Support Committees at all schools with Grade 1-9 and at a national level, application of diagnostic tests and after-school sessions, training for Learning Support Focal Points and teachers, provision of temporary learning support staff in targeted grades and production of learning support materials;
- Trainings for school teachers, Arabic teachers, education specialists and support staff;
- Upgrade of the existing school management system (new data collection modules, upgrades of hardware and connectivity) and training for users;
- Development and production of new Arabic textbooks for Grades 4-9, , adaptation and amendment of French textbooks for grade 1-9, English textbooks for Grades 4-9 and curriculum enrichment materials in all subjects for Grades 1-9 including Arabic, English and French.
- Introduction of regular summer learning programmes and materials for four grades;
- Upgrade of school infrastructure in order to make schools accessible for physically disabled students and compliant with basic environmental health standards.

Component II: Higher Education (Scholarships)

Result 2: At least 200 Palestine refugee students will be granted scholarships for university studies.

Building on the success of previous scholarship schemes (80% of the scholarship alumni report to be employed), a new scholarship fund will annually finance approximately 50 scholarships awarded by UNRWA, based on a selection procedure supervised by an Advisory Committee. In order to achieve bigger diversification, a quota system for universities or specialties may be introduced. A special provision for disabled students is also foreseen. Four intakes of students are foreseen.

Component III: Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and supportive career guidance and employment services

Result 3: Training provision of the UNRWA TVET Institute is diversified and leads to the acquisition of skills relevant to the labour market.

This result is to be achieved through a two-pronged approach: 1) accreditation of the UNRWA TVET Institute by the Lebanese authorities and 2) upgrading the curriculum (shift towards Competency-Based Training (CBT) to be considered, to the extent allowed by the Lebanese official system). The specific activities will include: curriculum review and implementation, and training to trainers and managers, initiation of the accreditation process at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the adaptation of the TVET organisation and the facilities to the requirements of the Lebanese system.

Result 4: The access for low educated Palestine refugees to TVET is improved.

This result is targeted towards the Palestine refugee youth who are outside the education system (e.g. early school leavers) and wish to enroll to technical or vocational courses so as to be able to receive a new qualification, pass official exams (such as Brevet Professional, Baccalaureate Technique and Technician Superior) and gain the possibility to continue in their studies if they wish so. As UNRWA itself is currently unable to offer such courses to the refugees, UNRWA will use accredited public or private providers to facilitate this training. The specific activities will include creation of a roster of eligible training providers, selection of trainees, their enrolment in the contracted training centres, and follow-up of trainees. UNRWA TVET institutions will ultimately be in a position to offer similar courses, once the accreditation and overall quality improvement at UNRWA centres are completed.

Result 5: The efficiency and coverage of the UNRWA Employment Services Centres is enhanced.

This action will support the Employment Services Centres (ESCs) in the provision of jobseeker and vacancy registration, counselling, job-matching and referral of clients to training programmes, social services and other employment-support initiatives, such as on the job training. In addition, the project will improve the connectivity and IT infrastructure of the ESCs. Before the start of activities, an external evaluation will be carried out to assess the performance of the ESCs and fine tune the action.

Result 6: Palestine refugee youth in UNRWA preparatory, secondary and vocational schools have access to regular career guidance and quality career information and learning materials.

UNRWA has recently developed an ambitious career guidance strategy (with the assistance of ETF). However, the Placement and Career Guidance Unit (PCGU) in charge of its implementation faces some serious challenges: the designated career guidance staff have no counselling experience and the PCGU itself is under-staffed and ill-qualified and thus cannot fulfil the function of a methodological centre. Therefore, the intervention will focus mainly on capacity building for the PCGU and school-based career guidance staff. In addition, a Career Information System (CIS) and context-relevant and flexible career guidance resource and learning materials

will be developed, tested and applied. Each school will have its own ‘School plan for career guidance’ updated on an annual basis.

Component IV: Non-formal education

Result 7: The number and quality of non-formal education/Vocational Education and Training (VET) initiatives complementary to the UNRWA system is increased.

Private not-for-profit organisations have a long and strong tradition of providing non-formal education services in the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon. Their role in filling the gaps of the formal but basic UNRWA system is irreplaceable. The project will provide grants to not-for-profit organisations for actions in those domains where UNRWA covers the needs insufficiently or not at all. This will include remedial education, extracurricular activities, special education (e.g. students with light mental disorders, visual or hearing impairments), and pre-school programmes. In order to increase information on and transparency of the UNRWA education reform, an UNRWA-civil society co-ordination mechanism and a social accountability function (e.g. work with media and/or Education Watch) will be put in place (through a grant or a service contract).

3.3. Risks and assumptions

The proposal assumes that (i) the political and security situation in Lebanon will not deteriorate to the point that UNRWA is unable to carry out the action, (ii) the UNRWA General Fund will not suffer significant shortages so that it can continue to finance the costs of the UNRWA education system, (iii) the Lebanese political climate will not turn more negative towards the Palestinians and their right to education and employment in particular, (iv) the budget will not be seriously negatively affected by the exchange rate fluctuations between Dollars and Euros, and (v) the NGOs will be receptive to the calls for proposals and to collaboration with UNRWA.

The potential risks are either internal to the implementers (UNRWA and CSOs) or external. Among the internal risks, the main ones are unclear division of roles between the different UNRWA departments, delays in recruitment and overburdening of existing staff, motivation of staff to engage in trainings and insufficient internal monitoring during the project life. In order to mitigate these risks, each contribution agreement will include clearly defined pre-conditions/mitigation measures, such as an agreement on distribution of responsibilities between PCGU and Education departments, adaptation of staff job descriptions to the new tasks, institutionalisation of school career guidance plans or inclusion of peer and study visits in the training plans. Equally, each component will have its own monitoring plan/system, with clear indicators.

The major external risks include the limited absorption capacity of the Lebanese labour market and reluctance to hire Palestinians, the risk of TVET accreditation becoming politicised, and a potential significant change of the Lebanese curriculum during the project life. These risks will be mitigated by the joint EU-UNRWA advocacy and awareness raising efforts and regular relations with the Ministry of Education so that any changes in the curriculum are known to UNRWA far in advance of their implementation.

Sustainability

The proposed programme has a high level of ownership (as it is fully aligned with UNRWA-own strategies and plans) and sustainability of impact on beneficiaries (as it focuses entirely on education and skill development). From the point of view of financial and institutional sustainability, the individual components have different levels of sustainability:

- Components I, III, and IV are sufficiently financially sustainable as management is embedded in the existing UNRWA Education Department, Scholarship Unit, and Placement and Career Guidance Unit (staffed by General Fund), only short-term positions, technical assistance and administrative positions specific to the agreements are funded by the project and there is a strong focus on capacity building and production of learning/information materials and tools.
- For Component II, in order to improve sustainability prospects, diversification of funding for the scholarship scheme will be sought (e.g. universities, other donors).
- For Component V, the grants to civil society, sustainability will be a criterion for project selection and will be examined separately for each project at the time of evaluation.

3.4. Cross-cutting Issues

Human Rights: To fulfil the refugees' right to quality education and employment are primary goals of this action. Furthermore, Components I, III and V directly target the rights of the disabled people.

Gender: The action will benefit both sexes, indeed more girls and women are expected to benefit from the project, as they form the majority of UNRWA students and scholarship grantees. Special attention will be paid to female-specific approaches in the career guidance and employment services,, as our previous experience shows that while female students outperform men in educational attainment, they are much less likely to be gainfully employed.

Good Governance: Participatory approach will be promoted. In particular, selected staff will be involved in the development of training modules, the UNRWA-civil society education group on will meet regularly, a Steering Committee will be established for components I and II, an Advisory Committee will oversee the selection of scholarship recipients and a civil society accountability mechanism is foreseen under component V.

Environment: As no activities directly impacting on environment are foreseen, it does not seem necessary to carry out an EIA.

3.5. Stakeholders

The direct beneficiaries of this programme are Palestinian refugee students living in Lebanon.

The indirect beneficiaries are:

- UNRWA Education Department, PCGU and Career guidance staff (registrars, school counsellors, teaching counsellors);
- School principals, teachers and trainers;
- Staff of the UNRWA VET centres;
- Parents of the direct beneficiaries and their local community;
- Palestinian civil society organisations (CSOs);
- Business community.

The key stakeholders, namely all the concerned UNRWA departments, registrars, staff of the UNRWA VET centres, Palestinian CSOs, have been all consulted during the project design process, either via individual consultations with the EU Delegation or ETF or in a workshop setting (issues of career guidance, non-formal education). UNRWA's ownership of the actions for components I to III has been clearly demonstrated by the Agency and all proposals have been checked against consistency with the UNRWA overall strategy for the education sector.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of implementation

Two implementation methods will be used:

For Component IV: Direct centralised management.

For Components I through III: Joint management through the signature of an agreement with UNRWA, in accordance with Article 53d of the Financial Regulation. UNRWA complies with the criteria provided for in the applicable Financial Regulation. UNRWA is covered by the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA) concluded between the European Commission and the United Nations on 29 April 2003. The contractual model that will be used is the Standard Contribution Agreement (two Contribution Agreements are foreseen, one for Component II and one for Components I and III).

Audit and evaluation activities will be implemented through procurement under direct decentralised management (service contracts).

The change of management mode constitutes a substantial change except where Commission "re-centralises" or reduces the level of tasks previously delegated to beneficiary country, international organisation or delegatee body under, respectively decentralised, joint or indirect centralised management.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

For Component IV:

1) Contracts

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the Commission for the implementation of external operations, in force at the time of the launch of the procedure in question.

Participation in the award of contracts for the present action shall be open to all natural and legal persons covered by the ENPI Regulation (Regulation EC No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006). Further extensions of this participation to other natural or legal persons by the concerned authorising officer shall be subject to the conditions provided for in Article 21(7) ENPI.

2) Specific rules for grants

The essential selection and award criteria for the award of grants are laid down in the Practical Guide to contract procedures for EU external actions. They are established in accordance with the principles set out in Title VI 'Grants' of the Financial Regulation applicable to the General Budget. When derogations to these principles are applied, they shall be justified, in particular in the following cases:

- Financing in full (derogation to the principle of co-financing): in view of the limited financial capacity of NGOs working with Palestinian refugees, the maximum possible rate of co-financing for grants is 90% of the total eligible costs of Actions financed under this programme. Full financing may only be applied in the cases provided for in Article 253 of the Commission Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2342/2002 of 23 December 2002 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of the Financial Regulation applicable to the General Budget.
- Derogation to the principle of non-retroactivity: a grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only if the applicant can demonstrate the need to start the action before the grant is awarded, in accordance with Article 112 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the General Budget.

and

For Components I through III:

All contracts implementing the action are awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the relevant International Organisation (UNRWA).

4.3. Indicative budget and calendar

The overall indicative budget of this proposal is EUR 15,000,000 distributed as follows:

	Method of implementation	EU contribution in EUR
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Component I: General education	Contribution Agreement (Joint Management)	5,500,000
Component II: Scholarships	Contribution Agreement (Joint Management)	4,000,000
Component III: TVET, employment services, career guidance	Contribution Agreement (Joint Management)	3,400,000
Component IV: Non-formal education	Grants Services (Direct Centralised Management)	1,900,000
Evaluation & audit	Services (Direct Centralised Management)	200,000
Total		15,000,000

Visibility costs are included in the budget of each component.

The operational implementation period of the action is foreseen for **60 months as from the adoption of the Financing Decision**. The beginning of the operational phase for Components I to III and the eligibility of related expenses will be determined by the date of the adoption of the Financing Decision, upon prior approval in case of retroactivity as per Article 112 Financial Regulation. The calls for proposals for the Component IV are foreseen to be launched in the first quarter of 2013 with all related grant contracts subsequently concluded before the end of 2013.

4.4. Performance monitoring

Achievements will be monitored regularly by UNWRA and the beneficiary NGOs and the results will be reported annually to the EU Delegation. The key performance indicators will be detailed in every Contribution Agreement and grant contract. The EU Delegation task manager will carry out at least one monitoring mission a year for each Component. It is expected that the individual Components will also be subject to the regular ROM monitoring missions.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

Each Component of the project will be subject to mid-term and final evaluations.

If necessary, *ad hoc* audits or expenditure verification assignments could be contracted by the European Commission on all contracts.

In principle, all auditing matters related to the contribution agreements with the international organisation UNRWA are governed by the Verification Clause annexed to and forming an integral part of the Financial and Administrative Agreement (FAFA) concluded between the European Commission and the United Nations on 29 April 2003.

An amount of EUR 200,000 is earmarked for audit and evaluation in the programme budget which will be implemented through procurement under direct centralised management (service contracts).

4.6. Communication and visibility

Adequate communication and visibility will be ensured by a) annual visibility/communication plans for each component, b) specific budget allocation for visibility/communication activities, and c) EU Delegation monitoring of the adherence to the visibility/communication plans.