



**Workshop Summary Report on the Study titled  
“Mapping Vocational and Educational Training (VET)  
Providers to Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon”**

**Workshop Summary Report**

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Funded by the Norwegian People’s Aid - NPA



# **“Mapping Vocational and Educational Training (VET) Providers to Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon”**

## **Summary Report**

The ‘Committee for Employment of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon’ (CEP) and the Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) organized a workshop at the Sheraton Hotel on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2010 to present and discuss the findings of the Analysis of Phase 1 of the “Mapping Vocational and Educational Training (VET) Providers to Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon” project.

The Analysis, prepared by the Consultation and Research Institute (CRI), is part of the first phase of a project funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by the NPA in cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), under the supervision of the CEP. It should be followed as a second step by an action plan aiming at adapting vocational education and training to market needs within the framework of the CEP’s strategy for building professional capacities quantitatively and qualitatively, as Ambassador Samir El-Khoury, Chair of the CEP, stated.

The workshop was attended by a number of representatives from the Palestinian civil society organizations in Lebanon, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNRWA, representatives from the vocational and educational training (VET) providers for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon as well as members of the CEP. Also attending the workshop was: Mr. Victor Kashkoush, the Head of the Welfare Association, who came specifically to Lebanon to be part of this event; and Dr. Raja Matar, Director of the Palestinian Student Fund.

The analysis studied a database compiled by 8 VET providers (including UNRWA) concerning 10553 students who graduated from their centers, in order to assess their impact on the employability of Palestinian refugees in hopes of influencing policy making with regards to these refugees. It brought forward recommendations and proposals for promoting the employment of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and improving the capacity of the VET providers to ensure better employment opportunities.

The representatives of the Consultation and Research Institute, authors of the Analysis, summarized the methodology used and the difficulties faced when mapping the vocational and educational training providers in Lebanon, pointing out that the tools and mechanisms used for the collection of the required information need to be improved in order to facilitate the analysis of the compiled data. The Analysis found that 30.74% of the refugees who graduated from these institutes and programs were currently working in the field of their vocational and educational training. As for the average wages earned by these graduates 44.21% earned between 321 and 600 US dollars a month and 38.82% earned 320 US dollars or less.

Furthermore, the Analysis showed that the course with the highest hard success rate was the construction course, with an average of 53.21%, followed by health and education, with 48.50%, while office work had the lowest success rate. The authors of the analysis emphasized that these facts reflect the reality of the legal and social situation of Palestinian refugees, which explains why Palestinian workers turn toward low wage work

where in most cases, they earn less than 320 US dollars a month, while those who engage in office work earn relatively higher wages.

The Analysis also noted that the VET providers needed to undergo phases of capacity building in order to improve their success rates, which may be affected by the courses offered, course content, curricula, prerequisites and the quality of human resources. One recommendation from the Analysis stressed the importance of exchanging experience, knowledge, and experiments between VET providers so as to reinforce their capacities and improve the conditions of employment of their graduates.

The participants from the VET centers and the ILO focused on the necessity of improving the data on which the Analysis was based in order to increase the accuracy of its results. The attendees were also unanimous about the necessity of going forward with the second phase of the project, which includes conducting a study about the labour market needs and the development of the training providers' work to match these needs.

The participants recommended the integration of the efforts of the VET providers and the standardization of the curricula and courses. They also stressed the role of official accreditation in conferring credibility to the diplomas obtained by the students and raising the standards of the courses at the level of basic qualifications for registration, soft success rates and hard success rates for each of the various fields of specialization.

The workshop resulted in a tentative agreement between the organizers and the attendees for the completion of the second phase of the scheduled project, by drawing up a study concerning the needs of the labour market and developing a comprehensive strategy for the vocational and educational training providers' work in Lebanon.

### **Ambassador Samir El-Khoury's introductory note**

Ambassador El-Khoury stressed in his speech that not only does the CEP work towards having the law amended, but it also deals with the situation in terms of immediate and practical needs of Palestinian refugees, considering its commitment to its role in improving the work environment of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The Committee pays therefore particular attention to promoting vocational training for Palestinians, and supports such training in a belief that possessing a diploma and acquiring professional experience and skills will help provide better employment opportunities for Palestinian workers in Lebanon. Ambassador El-Khoury rejected the fears that employment of Palestinian refugees would lead to settlement and confirmed CEP's commitment to objectively portray the problem of employment of Palestinian refugees by means of research and studies that contribute to present a clearer picture to the civil society. The CEP Chair enumerated the Committee's activities and invited the participants to have a look at the legal study completed in Arabic and English as well as a series of questions and answers pertaining to the employment of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, which are available on the CEP website.

### **Mrs. Wafa El-Yassir's introductory note**

Mrs. El-Yassir pointed out in her speech that the study included students who graduated between the years 2000 and 2008 but that a large number of graduates remained unreachable before the statistics were handed to the CRI. She urged all the associations to continue using the software, verifying the information carefully and registering the new graduates, reminding the participants that the NPA had trained some of the employees of these associations to use this software program so as to reduce the costs of employing additional staff for this task. She also called upon everyone to collaborate in order to assess the programs so as to adapt them to the Lebanese market, identify the professions needed and ensure proper orientation of graduates towards these professions. Mrs. El-Yassir declared that the second phase of the project titled "Matching and Adapting Vocational Education and Training to Market Needs" will be implemented based on this premise and that she hoped it would be in collaboration with the ILO.

### **Ghinwa Mikdashi's presentation**

In her presentation Ms. Ghinwa Mikdashi indicated that the subjects and courses provided in the different institutes were not unified, in the sense that in some cases, a course may have the same name in two institutes but have different subjects, programs, durations and diplomas. In other words, one institute may offer a four-month secretarial course while another would offer it over a period of two years, which exhibits a lack of conformity between the two institutes.

In addition, Ms. Mikdashi confirmed the need for coordination between the VET providers in order to avoid course redundancy, particularly in neighboring areas. She also stressed the need to follow up and maintain contact with the graduates, considering the team worked hard to collect the information gathered, which would become useless without proper follow up with the graduates. It is therefore necessary that each institute develop a way to maintain contact with the graduates and encourage them to keep the institute informed about any changes in their place of work, type of job or address so that the data remains updated.

Maintaining an ongoing relationship with graduates not only helps in updating the data but may also help give information about work opportunities for fresh graduates, as in the course of some informal contacts, a number of graduates reported vacancies in their place of work and asked to be provided with names of people looking for a job.

It is also quite apparent that there is a marked need for including new subjects in the programs, considering some disciplines are not integrated into the subjects and diplomas offered by the institutes. One such example is sales, which is not offered as a discipline, although some graduates have shifted to working in sales and a number of establishments have vacancies in their sales departments.

### **Recommendations:**

- The need to standardize the curricula of courses offered
- The need to continuously follow up and maintain contact with the graduates
- The need for coordination among the VET providers to avoid redundancy and conflicts of curricula in neighboring areas
- The need for an ongoing relationship with the students after their graduation
- The need to provide new courses

## Ms. Mira Saidi's (CRI) presentation

Ms. Mira Saidi explained the conclusions drawn by the authors of the Analysis based on the available data, which can be summarized as follows:

- Most of the unemployed individuals who had previously been employed and who are not seeking re-employment are married women. This situation may occur frequently in the study and results from social norms that push women to choose to stay at home or be obliged to.
- Though the VET providers might be unable to change the socio-legal reality relating to the employment of Palestinians in Lebanon, their efforts are nonetheless helpful in another way, and a 30% student success rate is quite a significant outcome.
- As previously mentioned, most Palestinian refugees work in the field of construction, which is not surprising. One of the possible reasons that may account for UNRWA's higher success rates is the Agency's ability to provide jobs for a number of its graduates. UNRWA also has an employment office with extended contacts and is thus able to assist its students in finding employment upon their graduation. The availability of funds and its widespread reputation are factors which also contribute towards increasing the success rate of UNRWA making it the largest VET provider for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.
- The high success rates in construction, health and education do not necessarily mean that additional courses must be provided in these fields. These high rates could be a result of the high number of graduates. Furthermore, we could also find that the demand for these fields and for the number of graduates according to the availability of jobs is saturated.
- The low success rates in the office work category indicate a need to reconsider these courses, restructure them or even reduce their number, as they are offered by all VET providers. Students graduating from these courses represent the highest proportion among the various categories of specialization and it is obvious that these graduates are unable to find jobs. It is consequently better to develop these courses in such a way that they fulfill specific needs such as market demands, as in the case of sales, as well as the qualitative and quantitative demand for Labour.
- The discrepancies in the performance rates of the VET providers which are neither due to low demand nor to the characteristics of the respondents' data bring to light the need to reconsider and restructure the courses offered. Some centers with weaker performances may benefit from the opinions and knowledge of other more experienced centers on which they may rely for capacity building.
- There is a prominent need for increased cooperation and strengthening of ties between the various vocational and educational providers, owing to their common objectives. This would promote cooperation, transfer of skills and increased efforts, and help enhance capacity building for all the courses.
- Finally, the courses offered must respond in a more dynamic way to the market needs, which change year to year and month to month. The VET providers must therefore find the means to meet these demands. For example, if the supply of office work courses exceeds the market demand, the number of these courses must be reduced and courses which are more useful to Palestinians should be promoted.

## Recommendations based on the participants' contributions

The workshop ended with a consensus among those present on the benefits of exchanging experience and opinions based on research and studies formulated upon the results of specific quantitative and qualitative analysis. Recommendations with regards to the work of the vocational and educational training (VET) providers in Lebanon which resulted from the meeting can be summed up as follows:

- a. Working on turning vocational education in Lebanon into a fully integrated body and setting up a coordinating body for the VET providers, which would be responsible for standardizing the courses, programs and curricula as well as formulating a common vision on how to improve the employment level of Palestinians.
- b. Establishing a Follow-up Committee which shall examine all the recommendations and proposals, in conjunction with the Consultation and Research Institute, and find the optimal way to include these recommendations and proposals in the “Mapping Vocational and Educational Training (VET) Providers to Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon” Analysis.
- c. Creating a team to be entrusted with developing a work strategy that takes into account both this Analysis and the second phase of the project titled: “Matching and Adapting Vocational Education and Training to Market Needs”.
- d. Verifying information available at relevant institutes for the years 2000 to 2008 so as to eliminate any possible flaws, particularly with regards to the unreachable group.
- e. Reviewing the “Mapping Vocational and Educational Training (VET) Providers to Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon” Analysis in light of the new information and the observations noted by the parties involved so as to include a wider range of available information.
- f. Continuing data entry in regards to graduates for the years 2009-2010 in all institutes and entering graduates' success stories in an appendix highlighting the successes and achievements of these students and the extent of the impact generated by the training programs.
- g. Establishing a Central Employment Office or a series of regional employment offices by UNRWA and the ILO, and working on developing vocational guidance and counseling services for VET students and graduates to raise their awareness with regards to the demands of the labour market. The institutes' database shall be made available for use for these purposes.
- h. Seeking compliance to “international job descriptions” and applying such descriptions to all available professions in the labour markets of Lebanon and the Gulf States, as well as ensuring collaboration with the Lebanese authorities with regards to the latest developments at the national level.
- i. Adopting the following criteria to the courses offered: Relevance, quality, access

- j.** Coordinating between the VET providers in order to avoid redundancy and conflict of courses in the same region.
- k.** Maintaining contact with students after their graduation.
- l.** Implementing diversity into training programs suitable for the Lebanese labour market, through offering new training programs in the VET institutes and giving grants to enroll students in institutions that enjoy good standards.
- m.** Comparing the results of this study to those of the FAFO and IUED/UCL studies.
- n.** Organizing workshops for women to discover the reasons behind their low participation rates, and a workshop for young people in order to verify our results. The outcome of these workshops should be attached as appendices to the study. The CRI should be asked to provide representative samples.
- o.** Analyzing the results, causes and indicators further.
- p.** Including more information about the VET providers and the types of vocational training they offer (course description) in the study.
- q.** Publish the findings of the VET Analysis Consultancy in a 2-3 page brochure, accessible to every graduate who seeks a job (to provide and explain options), and posted online.