Evaluation: UN Women Lebanon's 2021-2022 Livelihoods Initiatives
Final Report

By: Morgan Richards-Melamdir and Christelle Harb
March 2023

Global Insight

UN WOMEN

This evaluation was made possible with support from the Austria Development Agency funded by Austria Development Cooperation, in partnership with UNICEF under the project Emergency Livelihoods for Affected Marginalized Populations in the Beirut Explosion Area.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EMG	Evaluation Management Group
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ETM	Evaluation Task Manager
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System
HoO	Head of Office
HR	Human Resources
KII	Key Informant Interview
LLWB	Lebanese League for Women in Business
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex +
LUPD	Lebanese Union for People with Disabilities
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MS	Mouvement Social
MSME	Medium, Small, and Micro Enterprises
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RDFL	Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering
RES	Regional Evaluation Specialist
ROAS	Regional Office of Arab States
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment

List of Tables

Executive Summary

This evaluation aims to support UN Women Lebanon's strategic learning, decision-making, and positioning for cash for work and job placement programming. The evaluation followed a mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative data analysis) and participatory approach, including consultations with beneficiaries, key stakeholders, partners, and staff. Findings are presented with a forward looking and formative focus on lessons learned and recommendations for future work.

Overview of Evaluated Initiatives

This evaluation covers the cash for work/job placement interventions of three UN Women Lebanon projects funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) (2021/2022) and Japan (2020/2021 and 2021/2022), respectively. This includes the activities completed by three UN Women Lebanon implementing partners: Mouvement Social (MS) and Lebanese Union for People with Disabilities (LUPD) in Beirut and ACTED in Tripoli.

Evaluation Objectives and Intended Use

The evaluation aimed to provide a detailed assessment of the extent to which the livelihood activities achieved their intended results; identify and validate lessons learned, promising practices, and innovations from the cash for work/job placement projects within the context of humanitarian aid; and provide actionable recommendations for future Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) livelihoods programmes. The main evaluation users will be the UN Women Lebanon Country Office and stakeholders, who will apply the findings to the next planning cycle and in formulating future WEE programming.

Methods

The evaluation team used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data (baseline and endline surveys from beneficiaries) and qualitative data (key informant interviews with beneficiaries, stakeholders, and staff, as well as focus group discussions with beneficiaries). The qualitative sample included 74 beneficiaries and 11 staff and stakeholders. The quantitative sample included data from 339 women. This approach included a range of perspectives and used the multiple sources of data to triangulate and validate findings. Findings reflect on the efficacy of the ToC and the contribution of UN Women Lebanon to changes in the lives of beneficiaries. Further, findings use gender-responsive evaluation approaches to assess the extent to which interventions addressed gender inequality.

Findings and Conclusions

The points below summarize key findings and conclusions elaborated upon in more detail in the body of the report.

Conclusion 1: The projects created immediate reductions in the level of financial difficulty experienced by beneficiaries and increased their household income during the cash distribution period. Participants most often used income from the projects to meet their basic needs for food, healthcare, rent, education, and fuel. Women experienced increase in their skills and abilities to provide for their families, which contributed to improvements in their confidence and psychosocial well-being.

Participants increased decision-making power, especially in the form of influence over household spending, with marked reductions in the portion of beneficiaries reporting no influence or only a little influence over these decisions.

Conclusion 2: Factors which limited the achievement of intended results, or the quality of those results, included challenges related to transportation, childcare, training or learning conditions, and work placement fit and conditions.

Conclusion 3: The largest challenge to sustainability (importantly, not the main goal of this humanitarian intervention) is the state of Lebanon's labour market. Most women did not have jobs lined up at the end of the projects (87.9% for ACTED; 83.6% for MS), excepting the women still working for LUPD. When discussing future work options, most participants wanted to work, but were not sure they could find opportunities. This labour market weakness reflects the overall economic crisis in Lebanon, a crisis these interventions aimed to address through short-term humanitarian assistance.

Conclusion 4: The projects demonstrated overall strong human rights and accountability values and practices. Participants had an awareness of some reporting mechanisms, largely felt empowered to report problems, and tended to feel problems were quickly resolved. However, some participants reported negative experiences that were not resolved, and beneficiaries seemed frequently confused about when the projects would end, when future phases would begin, and if there would be opportunities for them to continue working in future phases.

Conclusion 5: In terms of institutional set-up, the projects developed strong partnerships, but future resource allocation should include, where possible, more robust budget lines for capacity building, additional social workers, and staff increases. There was also some room to improve how the institutional set-up affected working conditions for beneficiaries (specifics below), as well as to consider innovative solutions to either encourage beneficiaries to use funds set aside for transportation and childcare for those purposes, or to find alternative ways to provide transportation and childcare.

Conclusion 6: These projects largely align with the Country Office and UN Women strategies (theories of change and results frameworks), though the projects did not address some aspects (direct connection to the labour market excepting to produce income stability, the role of the private sector, national authorities, and CSOs in WEE). However, projects' strengths suggest the ToC may need to include a focus on creating jobs the way that ACTED and LUPD did (to address the weak labour market), and a greater recognition of how this portfolio creates psychosocial benefits for women.

Main Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The capacity building experience of beneficiaries could be improved with several specific changes: hard copy summaries of training content, sufficient equipment, inclusion of basic literacy and English language skills, increased training time for very in-depth courses, and better vetting of learning vendors and venues.

Recommendation 2: UN Women should consider changing the policies around payment of transportation during humanitarian crises, paying special attention towards disability-friendly transportation arrangements. It should consider alternatives to training reimbursement which do not require beneficiaries to pay transportation costs out of pocket prior to reimbursement, like direct

payment to a transportation service. If projects must continue to follow a transportation reimbursement model, consider modulating reimbursement based on travel distance to reduce a sense of unfairness felt by beneficiaries regarding the reimbursement amount.

Recommendation 3: UN Women Lebanon should explore additional options for providing childcare to beneficiaries. It should consider the option of subsidizing placements for children as needed at local nurseries, paying the nurseries directly for the care of those children. This may ultimately represent a more efficient use of funds. As not all women have children, paying for care only for those with children, rather than including a reimbursement for all, may be less costly. This also ensures funds set aside for childcare are actually spent on childcare. However, not all nurseries will take children short-term (or refugee/Syrian children at all), so additional resources for staff time to locate amenable centers, or developing project-provided care options may be necessary.

Recommendation 4: When arranging job placements with private sector employers, consider including a phase of the projects prior to the intake of beneficiaries which involves identifying, reviewing and arranging a certain number of placements for participants. Consider arranging job placement "spots" for participants prior to beneficiary intake. Part of this vetting process could include an assessment of both the local labor markets' ability to absorb the required number of beneficiaries and also working condition quality, including vetting employers for anti-Syrian sentiments. This process should also identify and avoid employers/fields where diplomas are preferred for full employment.

Recommendation 5: For projects which involve the sale of products produced at a central location, concrete actions to improve the ability of saleswomen to do their work should be taken. The project should provide materials and funds for transporting the product, visibility materials, like vests, for establishing the credibility of saleswomen, and realistic product samples. . Also, plan sales routes in advance to ensure there is no overlap, and place routes as close as possible to participants' neighborhoods.

Recommendation 6: Psychosocial support in the forms of life skills and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) trainings, social workers, therapists, inclusion advisors, and referral provision is a key success of these projects. Continuing this type of support is recommended as a valuable use of donor funding dedicated to women's economic empowerment.

Recommendation 7: Future project iterations should focus on increasing transparency and accountability towards the targeted population through: communicating to rejected project participants the reasons why their applications were not accepted; following-up repeatedly on beneficiary complaints of favoritism, ill treatment, or discrimination and telling beneficiaries exactly what mitigation strategies were taken; and establishing check-in points throughout the project to remind beneficiaries of how much time was left in the project cycle and what the project can (and cannot) do for them in the remaining time.

Recommendation 8: A more robust exit strategy should be developed, tailored for each project. Exit strategies should, ideally, demystify the labour market and job search process, while helping beneficiaries feel as though they have resources or support they can turn to after project closure to help them in this process.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background & Context

UN Women, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. Placing women's rights at the centre of all its efforts, UN Women leads and coordinates the efforts of the United Nations system in Lebanon to ensure that commitments on gender equality and gender mainstreaming translate into action. It provides strong and coherent leadership in support of Lebanon's priorities and efforts, building effective partnerships with civil society and other relevant actors.

Lebanon continues to confront an unprecedented political and economic crisis, compounded by COVID-19 and the continued impact of the Syria crisis on Lebanon. Multiple shocks hit the country throughout 2019 and 2020, including the explosion at the Port of Beirut on August 4, 2020. In 2021, the country experienced a dramatic deterioration, with sharp currency depreciation, monetary shortages, and inflation, and 2022 began with record highs in the black-market rate of the Lira against the US dollar. This generated significant unemployment and economic vulnerability, with UN The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) estimating that more than 82% of the country's population was trapped in poverty and struggling for basic necessities as of 2021. Women faced a 63% increase in unemployment in 2020 alone, following the 25% contraction in real GDP from 2017 to 2020, a conservative estimate considering the unmeasured exit of women from the labour force all together.[1]

The Beirut Port Explosion disproportionally affected women with increased vulnerabilities, with 51% of the affected population identifying as female headed households (FHHs), and 8% as elderly women living alone. This figure of FHHs is significantly higher than the national average of 18% for both Lebanese and Syrian refugee households. The explosion led to a significant reduction in employment opportunities for women. FHHs were 10% less likely than male headed households to report at least one member had generated income in the past two weeks, following the blast. Female migrant domestic workers were particularly impacted by job loss, as many employers abandoned them following the explosion. Data further suggests that there was a high number of women-led businesses in the explosion radius; of the 1,164 businesses across 24 neighbourhoods in Beirut, approximately one in five were owned by women. As women-led businesses are more likely to hire female workers, this loss in women-led businesses leads to additional loss in employment opportunities for women.[2]

Despite progress in expanding protection for women in the workforce, Lebanese labour law still presents significant challenges. Women remain prohibited from working in certain sectors. No legislation ensures equal pay for equal work. LGBTIQ+ persons lack legal protection from discrimination. Women are only entitled to certain social security benefits if their husband is dead or

[1] Salti, Nisreen. & Mezher, Nadine. "Women On The Verge Of An Economic Breakdown: Assessing the differential impacts of the economic crisis on women in Lebanon." UN Women. 2020. Available at https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2021/10/2021-00537-UN-WOMEN-EU-LebanonFINAL-WEB.pdf

[2] UN Women, CARE, UN ESCWA, ABAAD, UNFP, "Rapid Gender Analysis of the August 2020 Beirut Port Explosion: An Intersectional Examination." 2020. Available at https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/10/Lebanons%20Economic%20Report%20Updated%201110%20FH.pdf

disabled, and unequal inheritance laws lead women to have less access to/ownership of land. The Lebanese labour law further excludes Palestinian, Syrian, and other refugee populations and stateless people living in Lebanon. While a sexual harassment law was passed in 2020, its independence from the labour law and penal code means that it lacks clear implementation and does not include migrants, refugees, or LGBTIQ+ people. Additionally, despite the presence of legislation advancing women with disabilities' access to employment, only 5.5% of the population participate in the workforce. [3]

Within this context, UN Women works to empower women and girls of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds in Lebanon, at micro, meso, and macro levels. In 2016, UN Women established its office presence in Lebanon. Since then, the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) programme has predominantly focused on increasing the resilience of vulnerable women and girls in Lebanon through the provision of economic opportunities and improved access to violence protection services. UN Women Lebanon, in partnership with local actors supporting opportunities for women's employment, has provided direct support to help women vulnerable to exploitation meet their basic needs, while partnering with institutions to support longer term economic recovery efforts grounded in principles of equality. To address the immediate needs of those impacted by Lebanon's compounded crises, UN Women Lebanon combines rapid vocational training and soft skills development, including life skills and managerial skills, with a short-term employment opportunity, often cash for work and job placements. These interventions also seek to support women's long-term employability.

UN Women Lebanon has implemented different forms of cash for work and job placement interventions since 2016. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, UN Women Lebanon has used cash for work projects as a short-term intervention to provide temporary employment in Lebanon for vulnerable women. The cash for work methodology has become increasingly common in food insecure, disaster-affected, or post-conflict environments as a humanitarian and resilience intervention. Now, shifts are occurring in humanitarian assistance delivery, as more effective solutions are needed to address those furthest left behind. In addition, interventions are increasingly focusing on the humanitarian-development nexus to provide assistance and support to reduce risk, build resilience, and prepare for disasters both in the short, medium, and long term. Therefore, UN Women Lebanon intends to ensure that the cash for work and job placement services strengthen women's employability and lead to an increase in income for women as a result of the intervention.

Key stakeholders engaged in the implementation of these projects include the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), various UN Women agencies (especially in UNICEF as part of the joint project and members of the livelihoods working group), the implementing partners (ACTED, LUPD, and MS), and some private sector partners. UN Women Lebanon implemented these livelihoods interventions with the MOSA as the primary government partner. During these projects, MOSA did not directly participate in implementation, as their social development centres were mostly closed or partially operating at the time. Usually, MOSA makes these centres available as vocational training facilities. However, MOSA was consulted during pads distribution to refer potential beneficiaries in need. UNICEF acted as the lead agency for the project funded by Austria, under which MS and LUPD implemented their component. Other UN agencies and INGOs were informed about these projects through the livelihood working group and some of them expressed interest in purchasing the pads

[3] UN Women, "European Union Sector Specific Gender Analysis: An In-Depth Sectoral Examination Of Feminist And Women's Rights Issues In Lebanon." 2021. Available at https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/10/RGA%20_%20Beirut%20Explosion%20October%2028%202020.pdf.

from ACTED or catering from the community kitchen LUPD operated. The implementing partners also liaised with the private sector for various aspects of the projects, including LUPD working with representatives of restaurant owners syndicate to develop a catering plan that responds to their needs, ACTED working with private sector entities to purchase raw materials, and MS contacting a number of private sector employers as potential job placement locations.

Many UN agencies implement similar livelihoods initiatives, so this evaluation hopes to contribute to general knowledge regarding these interventions.[4] While not leveraging any guidance direction from the UN Cooperation Framework, this programming was informed by the ILO technical note on establishing a living wage for workers. The budget for these interventions was as follows: ACTED: 300,000 USD, LUPD: 172,250 USD, MS: 291,970 USD. The Lebanon WEE portfolio included these three interventions, alongside others. Table 1 below summarizes these projects.

Table 1. Women's Economic Empowerment Portfolio in Lebanon

Project	Budget (USD)	Time frame	Objectives	Implementing Partner	Areas	Beneficiaries
Government of Japan	786,909	Apr 1 2021- Mar 31 2022	Period poverty and livelihoods	ACTED	North Lebanon	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Protection and support to 2 women-led cooperatives	KAFA and Daleel Tadamone	Beirut	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
	1,294,388	Apr 1 2022 – March 31 2023	Period poverty and livelihoods	ACTED	North, south & Beirut	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Food Security and livelihoods	Initiate	Beirut, north & south	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Food security through livelihoods	LUPD	Beirut	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
Government of Australia	1,856,155	Apr 1 2022 – Dec 31 2023	Food security and livelihoods	Ar-en-ciel	Bekaa & Beirut	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Food Security and livelihoods	Initiate	Beirut, north and south	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Food Security and livelihoods	LUPD	Beirut	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Protection	KAFA	Bekaa, Saida and Beirut	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Protection	RDFL	North	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Period poverty and livelihoods	ACTED	Bekaa, Beirut & south	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
Austrian Development Agency	742,575	30 Sept 2021 – 31 Dec 2022	Vocational training and job placement	Movement social	Beirut	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
			Food security through livelihoods	LUPD		
			Protection	KAFA		
			WEPs	LLWB	All Lebanon	Lebanese businesses
UNHSTF	292,917	Apr 1 2022 – Mar 31 2023	Protection and livelihoods (in carpentry)	RDFL	North	Lebanese & Syrian refugees
Canada Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office	930,319	6 June 2020	Women agri-business entrepreneurs	LLWB	North	Lebanese & Syrian refugees

[4] UNDP, ILO, UN Habitat, UNIDO and IOM are directly implementing livelihood activities, while UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and ILO are funding livelihood projects implemented by implementing partners.

1.2. Theory of Change

In all its livelihood programming, UN Women links livelihoods interventions with the provision of proper protection information, awareness, and referrals, when needed, to the targeted women. The overall theory of change (ToC) of the WEE programme at UN Women in Lebanon at the time these projects were developed is listed below. The interventions covered in this evaluation sit under this ToC, and are part of a larger set of interventions which collectively contribute to the ToC:

> If women are well equipped with market-based skills and resources,
> If women are supported in accessing the local labour market,
> If women are provided with information and access to protection services and practical skills on self-protection,
>
> Then there will be a more protective and enabling environment for women's economic participation,
> Then women will be more resilient amidst the economic crisis and protracted refugee crisis,
>
> Because women will be more engaged in public life and better able to access decent work.

1.3. Purpose, Objectives & Scope of the Evaluation

1.3.1. Purpose

This evaluation aims to support UN Women Lebanon's strategic learning, decision-making, and positioning for programming using cash for work and job placement interventions. The evaluation followed a participatory approach that included consultations with beneficiaries and key stakeholders. The evaluation took a forward looking and formative focus, aiming to generate lessons learned and recommendations for future work, including scaled-up cash for work and job placement activities under the livelihood component of WEE programming in Lebanon. These recommendations also address the roles of stakeholder linkages and mutual synergies. The main evaluation users will be the UN Women Lebanon Country Office and stakeholders, who will use evaluation findings to inform the planning cycle for the next period and in formulating new WEE programming in Lebanon. Specifically, a condensed version of the evaluation will be shared with the projects' donors, UN agencies (UNDP, ILO, UN Habitat, UNIDO and IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and ILO), implementing partners, and other relevant national and international NGOs using cash for work interventions. The evaluation will also be shared and presented at the M&E group of the UNCT.

1.3.2. Objectives

The evaluation had the following specific objectives:

- Provide a detailed assessment of the extent to which the livelihood activities achieved their intended results in line with past and ongoing project results indicators.
- Identify and validate lessons learned, promising practices, and innovations of the cash for work/job placement work supported by the WEE programme within the context of the aid effectiveness agenda.
- Provide actionable recommendations with respect to the development of the livelihood component of the next WEE's programme.

1.3.3. Scope

This evaluation covered the cash for work/job placement interventions implemented between June 2021 and October 2022 as part of three UN Women Lebanon projects, funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) (2021/2022) and Japan (2020/2021 and 2021/2022) respectively. The evaluation focuses on lessons learned and evidence of the achieved outputs and activities.

This included the activities completed by the following UN Women Lebanon implementing partners: Mouvement Social, LUPD, and ACTED. The geographical scope included the projects' two implementation areas (Beirut and Tripoli). The evaluation included analysis of secondary quantitative data, interviews with principal stakeholders (see Annex 3 for a detailed list), and focus group discussions and interviews with women benefiting from the services provided under this component.

2. Methodology

2.1. Evaluation Criteria & Elaboration of Key Questions

The overall performance of the projects was assessed according to the OECD-DAC criteria, as well as Human Rights & Gender Equality and Accountability criteria (key questions for each are listed below). When assessing the following questions, the evaluation reflected on both implementation and results. The Evaluation Matrix (Annex 1) has a detailed breakdown of the evaluation sub-questions, indicators, and data sources associated with each of the criteria below. The matrix influenced both data collection tool development and analysis.

The evaluation team aimed to address all the questions listed. Since the evaluation relied on qualitative data for many questions, and beneficiaries and stakeholders offered less information on certain questions during interviews, not all questions include the same level of detail. Moreover, the evaluation team took a narrative approach, telling the story of programme implementation and results by grouping findings in a logical manner that addresses these questions in a holistic, narrative form.

Relevance

- To what extent did the projects reach out and respond to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries?
- To what extent was the design and implementation strategy and approaches of Cash for Work (CfW) and JP relevant to the needs and priorities in Lebanon?

Effectiveness

- To what extent did the projects increase the capacities of the targeted women?
- To what extent did the projects increase the access to market of the targeted women?
- What were the main successes of the project's interventions?
- What are the limiting factors that might hinder the achievement of the intended results and what needs to be done to overcome these limiting factors?

Efficiency

- To what extent did UN Women Lebanon's allocated resources (human and financial) enable the effective implementation of the CfW project interventions?

- What is UN Women Lebanon's comparative advantage for the implementation of livelihood services in Lebanon?
- What improvement in resources, institutional setup and arrangements is required for the efficient implementation and the achievement of results?

Coherence

- To what extent were the project interventions coherent with UN Women Lebanon's WEE Theory of Change?
- To what extent were the project interventions coherent with interventions with similar objectives of other stakeholders?

Sustainability

- Understanding that these livelihoods interventions took place within a humanitarian, emergency context, to what extent is there evidence of any sustainable results (both on the individual and the institutional level)?

Human Rights & Gender Equality

- To what extent was the human rights-based approach and gender equality incorporated in the design and implementation?
- To what extent has UN Women Lebanon been able to address the challenges in addressing gender equality, within the framework of the projects, and bring forth gender transformative changes?
- To what extent did the projects respect the level of involvement and accountability towards its beneficiaries, paying special attention to disability inclusion issues?
- To what extent was the power granted by the projects to all relevant stakeholders used responsibly?

2.2. Indicators for Measuring Results

The evaluation used existing and newly collected data to assess the extent to which the cash for work/job placement initiatives achieved the intended results. This included the extent to which the initiatives enhanced food security through livelihoods assistance in the port area (project outcome), by training targeted beneficiaries and enrolling them in cash for work opportunities (project outputs). These livelihoods components were further linked to UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and UNW Lebanon's Annual Workplan 2021 and 2022, and this evaluation reflected on how these livelihoods interventions contributed towards these results as well. This included the UN Women Strategic Plan (2022-2025) impact 2, "Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy," and well as the below from UN Women Lebanon's 2022 Annual Work Plan:

- Impact 2: Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy.
- Outcome 2.3: National authorities, private sector and CSOs are engaged in and actively support gender equality and women's economic empowerment and protection.
- Output 2.3.1: Promote employment opportunities for women through direct service delivery and engagement with the private sector.

2.3. Evaluation Design

To answer the evaluation questions articulated in the ToR, the evaluation team analysed a combination of quantitative data (baseline and endline surveys from beneficiaries) and qualitative data (key informant interviews with beneficiaries, stakeholders, and project staff, as well as focus group

discussions with beneficiaries). In addition, this evaluation used a desk review of project documents and monitoring data to contextualize findings from the survey, interview, and focus group discussion data. This mixed-methods, participatory approach included a range of perspectives, directly eliciting problem-solving oriented feedback from all parties and using multiple sources of data to triangulate and validate findings. Findings reflect on the efficacy of the ToC and the contribution of UN Women Lebanon to changing the lives of beneficiaries. Further, the evaluation used gender-responsive evaluation approaches, specifically the Gender Results Effectiveness Framework (GRES)[5] scale to assess the gender transformative nature of the interventions. Further, the evaluation team articulated evaluation questions related to changes in gender inequality. Then, all rights holders and duty bearers were specifically asked during the evaluation to reflect on the extent to which 1) the evaluation affected women's experience with gender inequality (improving, leaving unaffected, or compounding existing inequalities) *and* 2) gender and other statuses (disability status, immigration status, parental status, etc.) affected women's experiences as project participants. Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed in such a way as to answer these two questions, and findings then reflect on the role of gender and these statuses in affecting women's experience with the project.

2.4. Data Sources

The following data sources were used. This list includes both background documents, programme monitoring data, baseline and endline data collected by the implementing partners, and primary data collected by the evaluation team.

Planning and Implementation Documents

- UN Women Lebanon Concept Notes (to Japan and with UNICEF to ADA)
- UN Women Lebanon Partnership Agreements (with Mouvement Social, LUPD, ACTED)

Data Collection Tools

- Baseline and Endline Assessment Tool: Measuring the Impact of Short-Term Cash for Work Programme on Women Participants
- Vulnerability and Prioritization Assessment for the Selection of Project Beneficiaries

Reports

- ME Reporting Table (LUPD, Mouvement Social) (2022)
- Interim donor report to Japan (2021)
- First Progress Report to ADA (2022)
- Final narrative report ACTED (2022)
- Q1 narrative report LUPD (2022)
- Q1 narrative report Mouvement Social (2022)
- ACTED WEE Cash for Work Analysis (2022)
- ACTED GSRI Analysis (2022)

Datasets

- ACTED Baseline (2021) and Endline Assessment (2022)
- LUPD Baseline and Endline Assessment (2022)

[5] transformative-http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/gender/GRES_English.pdf

- Mouvement Social Baseline and Endline Assessment (2022)

Primary Data

- Key Informant Interview Transcripts
- Focus Group Discussion Transcripts

2.5. Data Collection

2.5.1. Step 1: Key Informant Interviews

In-depth interviews are ideal for capturing sensitive information and individual attitudes. Interviewees were assured of confidentiality, asked for their consent, and encouraged to provide candid responses in the interest of improving future implementation quality (see Annex 5 for the ethics policy followed during the evaluation).

The evaluation team held KIIs with UNW and implementing partner staff, as well as several additional stakeholders (Annex 3 for interviewees list). These interviews focused on the full range of evaluation questions to identify the successes and challenges faced during implementation, eliciting lessons learned from these successes and challenges. This included assessment of how effectively the interventions and the management of those interventions created high quality, sustainable results. The interviews also covered how well interventions complimented other livelihoods programmes operating in Lebanon as well as Lebanon's social and economic priorities. Finally, the interviews asked about the integration of human rights, consideration of gender inequality, and existence of downward accountability mechanisms during implementation.

The evaluators held KIIs with beneficiaries to explore their perspectives of whether and how the projects created improvements in their skills, livelihoods, and well-being, including whether they feel these improvements will be sustained in the future. Beneficiaries were invited to reflect on any challenges or barriers to project participation, as well as unexpected negative consequences of participation. Interviews covered the extent to which gender roles (and differences based on other marginalized identities) affected beneficiaries' experiences with the projects, and whether the economic empowerment component of the projects affected their experience with gender-based power differentials at home. Finally, interviews asked about beneficiary access to and use of downward accountability mechanisms.

The evaluation team held 39 KIIs with beneficiaries (see *Table 3* in the sampling section for a breakdown by implementing partner and location) and 11 KIIs with staff and stakeholders, producing a total of 50 KIIs. Please see Annex 2 for interview questions for staff, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.

All (100%) of sampled beneficiaries are women, as the project served only women as direct beneficiaries. All but one (91%) of staff and stakeholders interviewed are women. Thus, 98% of interviewed evaluation participants were women and 2% were men. Table 5 includes a breakdown of the characteristics of women in the quantitative sample. For LUPD, which selected project participants with disabilities or caregivers of those with disabilities, over 75% of the sample for baseline and endline were women with disabilities. Over 20% of MS respondents were also women with disabilities. As the qualitative interviews included a representative sample of these women, the interviews and focus group discussions included a similar proportion of women with disabilities.

2.5.2. Step 2: Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) offer a useful medium for understanding individual and group perspectives. These groups often prove especially useful for understanding what experiences are common or different amongst individuals. Collective discussions often lead to unexpected information, as participants build on each other's ideas and narratives. FGDs were held with beneficiaries served by each implementing partner (see sampling section for more details).

FGDs encouraged beneficiaries to talk about whether and how the projects created improvements in their skills, livelihoods, and well-being, including whether they felt these improvements would be sustained in the future, any challenges or barriers to project participation, as well as unexpected negative consequences of participation. Participants discussed potential solutions to any challenges faced. The evaluation team explored gender roles, and how the projects were both affected and influenced by those gender roles. Finally, the groups covered awareness of, access to, and use of downward accountability mechanisms. Annex 2 includes draft FGD questions.

The evaluators held a total of 10 FGDs (see Table 3 for a breakdown of groups by implementing partner and location) with a total of 55 beneficiaries (4-7 per group). All (100%) FGD participants were women.

2.6. Analysis

2.6.1. Step 1: Desk Review

Analysis began with a detailed review of all background documents and data (see above), including reports and previously collected project data. The desk review: (1) familiarized the evaluators with the programme rationale, staff, monitoring data, stakeholders, target groups, activities, and locations; (2) framed the study; (3) helped finalize the field data collection plan and data collection tools.

2.6.2. Step 2: Qualitative & Quantitative Data

Primary and secondary data analysis included several key phases: (1) Qualitative data was continuously reviewed during the field collection stage to ensure data saturation was achieved; (2) grounded, thematic, and directional analysis of qualitative data using Atlas.Ti software was conducted; and (3) quantitative analysis of survey data was undertaken using R (software). All data was analysed by the study team, integrating qualitative and quantitative sources to triangulate findings in response to the core evaluation questions.

Further, the analysis sought to both answer the evaluation questions and also reflect on the quality of the ToC and level of contribution of UN Women Lebanon to the results. Thus, the existing ToC was examined to gain an understanding of the conditions that affect results and to identify those strategies that are effective (or not). The evaluation explored whether any underperformance resulted from programme design, implementation, or external factors beyond programme control.

Initial findings were presented for validation and for deeper reflection and dialogue around what these findings mean for UN Women Lebanon staff and implementing partners. The final analysis integrated these reflections into the analysis, conclusions, and recommendations.

2.7. Sample

2.7.1. Beneficiary Sample

Table 2 offers a breakdown of beneficiaries across the three implementing partners. The sampling approach was designed to include a proportional number of beneficiaries served by each partner. In other words, the evaluation team recruited numbers of participants for focus group discussions and key informant interviews roughly proportional to the percent of beneficiaries served by each partner (last column of the table).

Table 2. Beneficiaries by Implementing Partner, Type of Vocational Skill & Region

Partner	Type of Vocational Training	Region	No. of Women	% of Recipients
ACTED	Menstrual Hygiene Production and Sales	Tripoli	120	35.3%
Mouvement Social	Aide Nursing, Childcare, Marketing, Photography & Photoshop, Computer & Mobile Repair, Full Stack Web Development, Housekeeping & Hotel Services	Beirut	160	47.1%
LUPD	Food Processing	Beirut	60	17.6%
		Total	**340**	**100%**

As the table shows, the subject matter of the vocational trainings and work placements varied widely across the three implementing partners. Further, the women targeted by the three implementing partners differed slightly. Beneficiaries from Mouvement Social were selected from among those women in the areas affected by the Beirut port explosion, especially refugee women, women with disabilities. Beneficiaries from LUPD were also selected from the area affected by the Beirut port explosion, with special consideration given to women with disabilities and including refugees. ACTED worked with women in Tripoli, selected based on applicable skills, experience, and interest in participation, as well as vulnerability criteria designed to reflect the socio-economic and protection situation of the women and their households. When selecting the final sample of beneficiaries for participation in FGDs, the evaluation team stratified the sample based on the available beneficiary characteristics listed above (and including age) and randomly sampled beneficiaries from within the strata. Further, the sample included beneficiaries across the major types of training offered by Mouvement Social.

Table 3. Beneficiary Sample for FGDs and KIIs

Implementing Partner	No. of FGDs	FGD Participants	KII Participants
ACTED	3	17	12
Mouvement Social	5	26	19
LUPD	2	12	8
Total	**10**	**55**	**39**

About half (51.2%, 20 beneficiaries) of the key informant interview sample came from beneficiaries who participated in the focus group discussions. Two participants from each group were purposively selected for interviews to allow the research team to follow-up with specific types of beneficiaries, especially those whose opinions run counter to the general feelings of the larger group, quiet or withdrawn participants, and/or participants who have had unusually good or bad experiences with the projects. This selection yielded data on what factors lead to very bad or very good experiences with the projects, as well as ensuring the opinions of individuals who struggle to share in group settings are

still represented in the data. The evaluation team interviewed an additional 19 beneficiaries not selected to join the focus group discussions (6 from ACTED, 9 from Mouvement Social, and 4 from LUPD). This enabled the evaluation team to compare data collected from individuals who participated in the FGDs with those whose perspectives remain unaffected by any group dynamics created by the FGDs themselves. Thus, the evaluation included interviews with 20 individuals who participated in the FGDs and 19 who did not for a total of 39 KIIs with beneficiaries. In total, the evaluation team gathered primary data from 74 beneficiaries (23.5% of the total cash assistance recipients). Table 4 and 5 below show key demographic characteristics of the beneficiaries who participated in the baseline and endline surveys and in the qualitative data collection efforts.[6]

Table 4. Beneficiary Characteristics from Qualitative Data Collection

Characteristic	ACTED	LUPD	MS
No. of Women Contacted	24	14	36
% Lebanese	75.0	57.1	41.7
No. Lebanese	18	8	15
% with Children <15 y.o.	--	14.3	30.6
No. with Children <15 y.o.	--	2	11
% Married	--	50.0	36.1
No. Married	--	7	13
Average Age	35	41	38
Note: Identified beneficiary data from ACTED did not include marital or parental status.			

Table 5. Beneficiary Characteristics from Quantitative Surveys

Characteristic	ACTED Baseline	ACTED Endline	LUPD Baseline	LUPD Endline	MS Baseline	MS Endline
No. of Women Surveyed	107	107	59	59	173	151
% Lebanese	88.8	88.8	66.1	65.9	39.9	41.1
No. Lebanese	95	95	39	27	69	62
% with Children	77.6	77.6	59.3	70.7	57.2	59.6
No. with Children	83	83	35	29	99	90
% Married	64.5	64.5	44.1	46.3	52.9	54.7
No. Married	69	69	26	19	91	82
% Household Heads	40.2	40.2	57.6	61.0	68.2	68.2
No. Household Heads	43	43	34	25	118	103
% Worked Before	79.4	79.4	33.9	39.0	61.9	63.6
No. Worked Before	85	85	20	16	107	96
% with Disabilities			76.3	75.6	20.8	21.2
No. with Disabilities	0	0	45	31	36	32
Average Age	34.0	34.0	37.8	38.4	33.7	34.1
Average Education Level*	2	2	1.54	1.61	1.86	1.83
Note: These are the characteristics for all beneficiaries who completed a survey at baseline or endline. Levels are: 0 – No education, 1 – Primary School, 2 – Secondary School or Vocational School, 3 - University						

2.7.2. Staff and Stakeholder Sample

Stakeholders selected to participate in key informant interviews were purposively sampled in collaboration with UN Women Lebanon programme team. Similarly, the evaluation included interviews with UN Women Lebanon staff, selected in collaboration with the programme team and

[6] Thus, of the 85 evaluation participants (74 beneficiaries and 11 staff and stakeholders), 98.8% were women and 1.2% were men.

the UN Women Lebanon's Monitoring & Evaluation focal point (ad interim). A list of stakeholders is included in Annex 3.

2.8. Limitations to the Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies

Quantitative data collected by implementing partners (rather than third party evaluators). The quantitative data came from the implementing partners. This does introduce a slight element of bias, as implementing partners have a vested interest in the projects appearing successful.[7] Further, beneficiaries may feel it is best to provide positive responses to questionnaires administered by implementing partners, even with confidentiality ensured, to avoid disrupting the flow of support from those partners. The main mitigation strategy applied here included validating the quantitative findings against the qualitative data (collected by this third-party evaluation team) and clearly identifying any points where the information from the two data sources differed.

Non-causal approach. Non-causal evaluations offer a great deal of information about the quality of implementation, achievement of project results, challenges, and lessons learned. Complete attribution of targeted improvements in the lives of beneficiaries to the projects through this evaluation, however, was not possible. Factors in their lives other than the projects might have changed and caused the benefits attributed to the projects. The quantitative data did not collect information about other changes in beneficiaries lives that might have affected their outcomes. Therefore, the primary mitigation strategies used to address this limitation involved 1) controlling for individual characteristics that might have affected their outcomes in quantitative analyses and 2) validating findings based on project participants' own attribution of improvements they experienced to the projects.

Sampling bias. The final qualitative sample included 6 fewer beneficiaries than selected during sampling (5 who did not attend focus group discussions and 1 who could not be interviewed). Additionally, 1 implementing partner staff member, 1 UNICEF staff member, and 1 stakeholder could not be reached for interviews. This may have left out some important perspectives on the projects. However, the baseline and endline quantitative data includes nearly all project participants (as compared to most baseline/endline surveys relying on a sample), which partially mitigates the risk of missing participant perspectives.

Social desirability bias. Research participants often feel the urge to tell researchers what they think researchers want to hear or what is socially acceptable, rather than honestly reflect on their experiences or behaviours. This is a concern for all research undertaken with human participants. To mitigate this risk, the Evaluation Team was trained on and made aware of the importance of reducing bias by clearly communicating with stakeholders and beneficiaries about the importance of honesty to the study. The evaluation team clearly communicated to study participants that, as evaluators, they were not invested in one kind of outcome or experience over another, but instead needed as accurate of information as possible so that they could draw conclusions and lessons learned. This sets up honest feedback as the socially desirable outcome of the data collection and helps mitigate this form of bias.

[7] For ACTED, the endline survey was conducted by the independent MEAL team which is separate from the project team. This may have additionally supported more unbiased and transparent results.

Subjectivity bias. A considerable portion of the data used is qualitative in nature. While rigorous coding methodologies were used, this still left room for some subjectivity in both the responses given and the analysis and interpretation of patterns in the data. To mitigate this form of bias, multiple evaluation team members analysed the qualitative data independently, compared findings, identified discrepancies in data interpretations, and only presented findings after any discrepancies were satisfactorily resolved by all parties.

3. Evaluation Findings

3.1. Main Successes

Finding 1: Several key successes demonstrate the projects' effectiveness, including nearly complete achievement of planned reach, improvements in women's economic conditions, capacity, confidence, and psychosocial well-being, and reductions in women's willingness to accept gender roles which limit their empowerment.

3.1.1. Nearly Complete Achievement of Planned Reach

The implementing partners reached between 93.3% to 100% of their targeted number of beneficiaries (96.5% total). The target for MS and LUPD together under the Austria-funded project was 210, with the partners given a slightly higher target to create a buffer in case some women could not complete the projects. Based on that target, the projects reached 99.4% of the targeted women (missing the target by just two participants). More women than those listed here were served by the projects at some point – 8 MS beneficiaries and 18 LUPD beneficiaries dropped out of the projects, which staff reported as due to health concerns, lack of family support, relocation, or other personal reasons. LUPD added 17 beneficiaries to the project, a smaller number of which received at least a month's worth of cash for work assistance (the cut-off point chosen here to represent meaningful project participation). Including the six women who received between 7-17 days of cash for work assistance would surpass the target for the Austria-funded project.

Table 6. Percent of Targeted Reach Achieved

Implementing Partner (IP)	No. of Women Reached	IP Target	% of IP Target	Grant Target	% of Grant Target
ACTED	120	120	100%	120	100%
Mouvement Social	152	160	95%	210	99%
LUPD	56*	60	93.3%		
Total	328	340	96.5%	330	99.4%

3.1.2. Immediate Improvements in Financial Conditions

Participants experienced reduced financial difficulty and increased income during their time in the cash for work program. This income allowed participants to secure basic necessities for themselves and their families. As one LUPD participant explained:

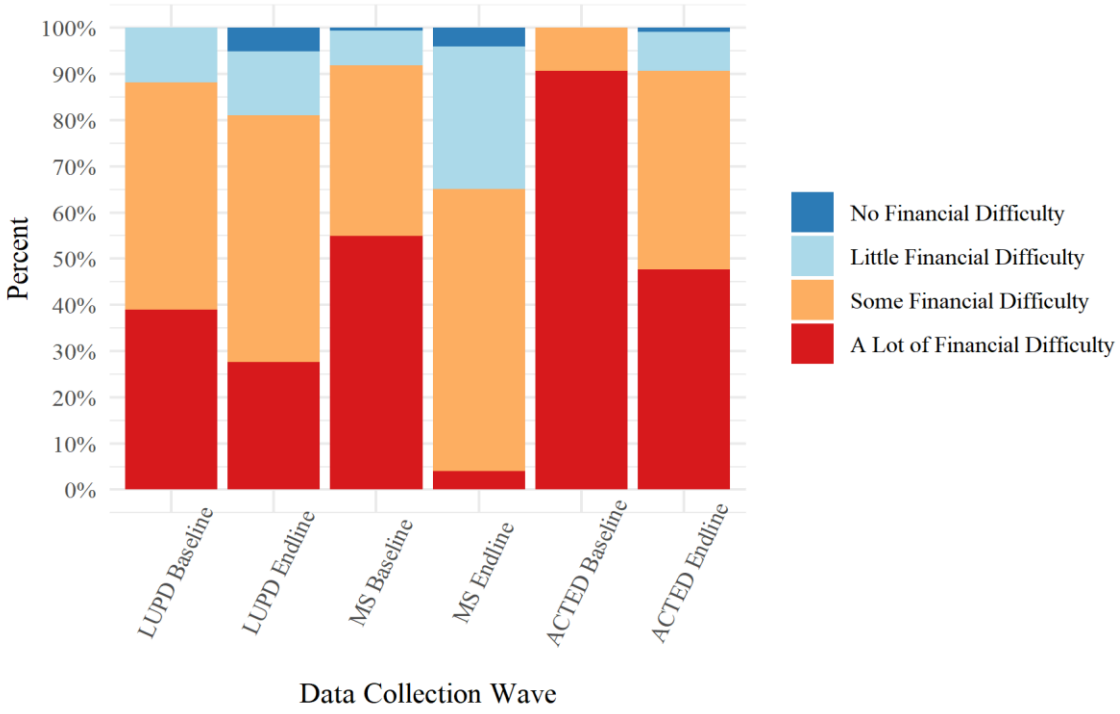
> *"Now I'm also making money, and this has changed the situation for the kids. I can provide for them more now, and it helped me relax because now I feel financial security."*

Self-reported financial difficulty dropped significantly from baseline to endline for participants in each project (based on paired T-tests for each set of project participants[8]). During baseline assessments, at least 85% of beneficiaries across the three projects reported experiencing "a lot" or "some" financial difficulty (Figure 1). ACTED participants reported the highest initial level of financial difficulty - 90.7% experienced "a lot" of financial difficulty. By endline, only 47.7% of ACTED participants

[8] LUPD: $t=2.81$, $p<0.01$, MS: $t=13.91$, $p<0.001$, ACTED: $t= 8.14$, $p<0.001$

reported that level of financial difficulty. For MS, 54.9% of participants reported "a lot" of financial difficulty at baseline, and by endline very few participants were experiencing this level of hardship (4.0%). The changes in self-reported financial difficulties for LUPD were slightly smaller, dropping from 39.0% to 27.6% of participants experiencing "a lot" of financial difficulty.

Figure 1. Change in Level of Financial Difficulty



Data source: Baseline and Endline data

Participants also reported increases in their household income (Figure 2). Increases in the average level of income (on a scale of 0, no income, to 8, 4 million LBP) from baseline to endline were statistically significant for all three projects (paired T-tests for each set of project participants[9]).

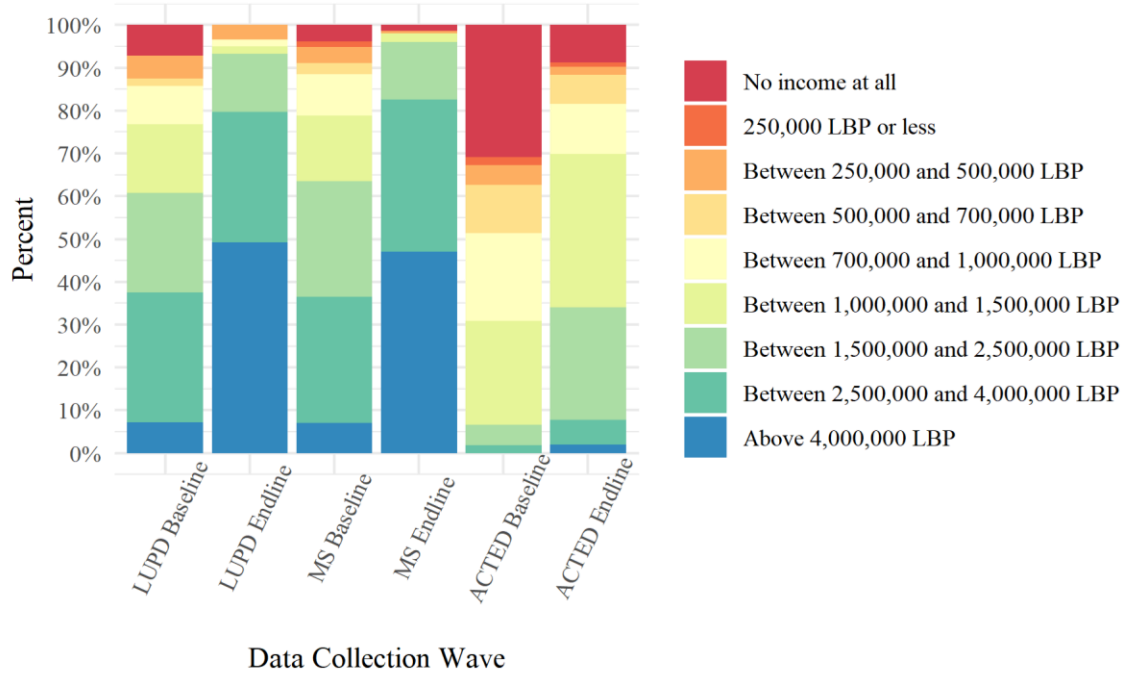
> *"Before starting with this project, I didn't have an income. It was really difficult to get a job and be able to work, and if there was work, the income would be too low and not worth it. Now it's different, and hopefully in the future I will manage to find a good job."* – MS Participant

Increases in the percentage of participants earning the highest income category were especially pronounced for LUPD and MS, increasing from 7.1% to 49.2% and 7.1% to 47.0% of participants having at least 4 million LBP of income, respectively. However, ACTED participants reported the largest overall increase in average income level (from 2.9, around 500,000 LBP, to 4.7, at the higher end of the 700,000-1,000,000 LBP level). ACTED participants reported marked reductions in the percent with no income at all, as well as increases in the percent with 2.5-4 million LBP.[10]

[9] LUPD: t= -5.85, p<0.01, MS: t= -8.50, p<0.001, ACTED: t= -8.41, p<0.001

[10] When calculating change in income, some beneficiaries reported their household income as zero, but personal income as non-zero. This suggests participants are *not* counting their personal income as household income. Because only household income was collected at baseline, to analyze change over time, we replaced the household income level with beneficiaries' individual income whenever 1) the beneficiary indicated household income was zero, but personal income was greater than zero, or 2) the beneficiary provided a value for their individual income, but not their household income.

Figure 2. Change in Level of Household Income

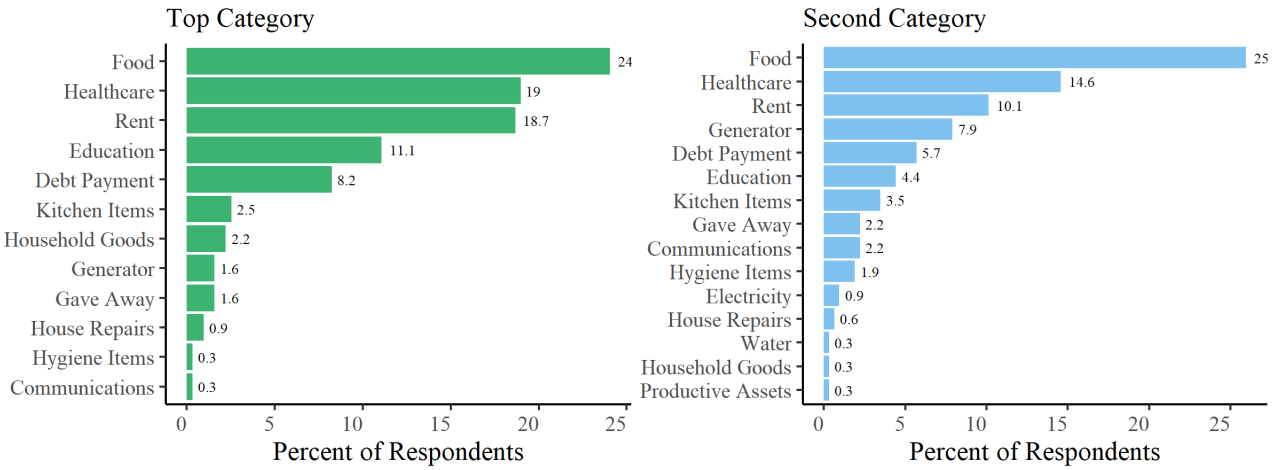


Data source: Baseline and Endline data

Participants largely used cash for work income to meet basic needs for food, healthcare, rent, education, and fuel (Figure 3). This suggests that cash provision was an extremely relevant project design element for beneficiaries and enabled participants to choose which needs they wanted to cover.

> *"Before we had to take drastic measures to be able to provide the bare minimum. Now, we're better financially and psychologically."* – LUPD Participant

Figure 3. Use of Cash Assistance



Data source: Baseline and Endline data

Even though self-reports of financial difficulties reduced and income increased, LUPD and MS participants still reported increases in debt level. Out of 8 debt amount categories (on a scale of 0, no debt, to 8, 4 million LBP), LUPD participant levels increased from 3.4 to 4.0, while MS participants increased from 5.2 to 6.1. The overall debt level for ACTED participants stayed stable. This increase or maintenance of debt levels may speak to the persistent consequences of on-going economic crises, despite the benefits of cash for work.

3.1.3. Changes in Capacity, Confidence, and Psychosocial Well-Being

Changes in women's capacity, both in terms of their skills and their ability to provide for their families, represented a major success of these projects. Capacity changes increased women's confidence and encouraged them to think differently about their lives. As participants got out of their homes, met new people, learned new skills, and applied them in the workplace, work and income became about more than money, but also about a sense of ownership over their lives. Their mental health improved, and some beneficiaries experienced a new sense of belonging and camaraderie with other women.

> *"Working with my own two hands improved my mental health state."* – ACTED Participant

> *"This project helped me a lot in building myself. I was married young, used to stay at home all the time. Now I'm meeting people and making new friendships and building my personality."* – MS Participant

> *Now I can rely on myself more. When you are working, you understand your value more, and you are in a better psychological situation, especially that now I'm able to help my parents.* – MS Participant

> *"We became one family with everyone here, the beneficiaries and the employees. It made our personality and our self-esteem stronger, and this happens when you feel like you're being able to contribute to your society.* – LUPD Participant

This change appeared especially important to LUPD participants. These women's previous experiences with discrimination and marginalization because of their disabilities meant the benefits of the project, their sense of confidence and ability to provide for their families, contrasted more sharply with their previous experiences.

> "*Society here is cruel to us; we usually hear comments like 'you should not be alive and having kids.' They looked down on us, but now I can create hope for my kids. Them seeing me in the condition that I am in and being able to work and to provide for them, it will help them overcome the negativity of society."* - LUPD participant

> *"We can prove our worth to a society that discriminates against us."* - LUPD participant

Well over half of MS participants (62.9%) and over 90% of ACTED (92.3%) and LUPD (98.3%) participants reported that their skills increased "a lot" as a result of the project. Further, the vast majority of beneficiaries reported that their confidence increased "a lot" as a result of the project (100% for LUPD, 96.7% for MS, and 89.7% for ACTED).

> *"It was psychologically very healthy to go through this experience, and I would like to work again. I like going out, meeting new people, and feeling more confident"* – ACTED Participant

> *"They always say that men can work, the trainings we had gave us confidence and experience we can face society with right now and claim our right to work."* – MS Participant

When asked to select the first and second most important impacts of the project, MS beneficiaries selected "new skills" more often than any other category as the most (33.8%) and second most important (31.1%) impact. While increases in family income was the most selected primary impact (30.5%) for LUPD participants, over half selected either new friends and connections (23.7%), new skills (22.0%), or increased confidence and interest in working (16.9%). New friends and connections and increased confidence became even more important categories (27.1% each) as secondary impacts (with new skills at 22.0% again).[11] This "spread" across the different categories of impacts suggest the projects had a holistic quality, affecting multiple aspects of women's material and psychosocial lives.

These skills and confidence increases are likely connected to good experiences during training. Beneficiaries were generally pleased with their experiences with capacity building elements of the projects, with most beneficiary comments (64%) about capacity building being positive.

For MS, participants expressed that the training sessions and job placements greatly enhanced their skills and job market preparedness, although with some variation based on the type of training (see the section on limitations below).

> *"I felt that we did everything they promised us. We learned a lot, and now have experience. We had an internship, and we got to see how the job market will be. And we have a certificate, which is very important to be able to apply for a job."* – MS Participant

Women in the ACTED project reported increased knowledge on personal hygiene, interpersonal and marketing skills, and increased confidence in skills acquired. Most participants already had experience in marketing and ran online businesses but still felt training sessions added to their knowledge and confidence.

> *"I had previous experience selling clothes from my house, but I did not have the proper marketing knowledge and skills. The training was very informative and greatly increased my knowledge."* – ACTED Participant

LUPD participants similarly praised the training sessions, especially reflecting on how the training enhanced their skills alongside a feeling that their disabilities need not be a barrier to becoming a skilled individual.

> *The experience that I got here is something new for me; I never knew how to work with dough, and I learned everything here even though I'm blind. I'm proud of myself that now I know.* – LUPD Participant

3.1.4. Pushing Back against Gender Roles and Expectations

Many women experienced changes in their decision-making power and felt as though they were confronting limitations placed on them due to their gender.

Before detailing these changes, it is important to note both the survey data and qualitative data showed that many women already felt relatively equal in their decision-making or autonomy in their homes

[11] The ACTED endline tool did not include this question.

prior to the projects. A little over a third of comments addressing gender dynamics (35.8%) in the qualitative data suggested women already felt empowered or equal. Most women across all three projects at baseline suggested they had equal or more say in household spending decisions (58.6% for LUPD, 63.8% for MS, and 70.1% for ACTED) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Change in Influence Over Household Expenditure

Data source: Baseline data

Still, increases in the average level of influence over spending were statistically significant across all three projects (based on paired T-tests[12]). By endline, only a small percentage (<3.5%) of women reported having "no influence" in spending decisions across all three projects (compared to just under or above 20% at baseline, depending on the project), and at least 90% reported having at least an equal say (compared to between 58.6% and 70.1% at baseline). For ACTED, increases in the "more say" category were especially pronounced, increasing from 28.0% to 77.4% of women having "more say," while the "no say" category dropped from 20.6% of women to 0% of women. LUPD similarly shows a dramatic increase in the "more say" category (9.8% to 58.6%), while MS shows a more modest change in the "more say" category (27.0% to 47.3%).

Among those women who felt the projects created changes in gender dynamics, in addition to changes in decision-making power (46.4%), women talked about having a stronger sense of their worth as workers and/or their right to work (29.0%), and greater feelings of independence (24.6%).

> *"After this project, I know that I have a right to work, and I can take care of myself."* – MS Participant

[12] LUPD: t= -4.79, p<0.001, MS: t= -6.81, p<0.001, ACTED: t= -8.14, p<0.001

> *"Now you feel that your fate and decision is in your hands, and you don't have to compromise just to survive because you have no other option."* - LUPD Participant

These women often drew a direct connection between their empowerment and project participation.

> *"Before this project, my husband was in charge of all our finances because he was the only one generating income. Now I'm also making money, and this has changed the situation for the kids. I can provide for them more now, and it helped me relax because now I have financial security"* – LUPD Participant

> *"Because of the project, I got some financial independence. For the first time, I had the confidence to say no to my husband when he asked me to stay at home, and I was able to pay off my personal debts using the money from the project."* – ACTED Participant

Many participants also trained in non-traditional vocations for women, which UN Women Lebanon and implementing partner staff identified as part of the project strategy. As explained by a member of the ACTED team, "We're moving women beyond traditional types of jobs as part of the gender agenda. Many of the previous kinds of interventions focused on quite gendered industries. Marketing and sales and production are uncommon jobs in Lebanon for women."

> *"You rarely find a woman, let alone a woman in a hijab, working in a mobile repair shop. So, this is something very new to us in our culture. I am so grateful for this opportunity."* – MS Participant

Working in non-traditional fields and settings may help participants confront internalized patriarchy, as one ACTED participant illustrated, "It made me feel good about myself and in my capabilities as a woman. I felt my own value. I am not less than a man."

The PSEA and life skills trainings also helped women begin to push back against gendered expectations, "We had social skills training. In one of the sessions, she asked us to talk about our lives, and I scream that I don't want to continue living my life like this, and I felt that I have to start working on changing it…he has used me enough and it's time for this to stop."

Women experiencing greater decision-making power and feeling less bound by traditional gender norms and expectations suggests a gender transformative element to the project. Women confronted their own internalized gender norms and expectations for what they are capable of as women and experienced changes in the power structures around decision-making within the home. Thus, the projects addressed two root causes of gender inequality, gender norms and power structures.

3.2. Key Limiting Factors

Finding 2: Despite these clear successes, some factors did limit the achievement of intended results or the quality of those results, posing challenges to project effectiveness. These tended to included challenges related to transportation, childcare, training or learning conditions, and work placement fit and conditions.

3.2.1. Transportation

Transportation was the most commonly mentioned challenge (mentioned 32 times during qualitative data collection). While the project stipend included transportation funds (exceeding the national

livelihoods sector standard by giving $3 instead of $2), participants reported issues with the timing of reimbursement, the amount of money given, the general distance needed to travel, and the way the reimbursement did not depend on distance travelled (which created inequality in pay and net expenses between different beneficiaries).

For ACTED, participants reported a marked delay in payment for transportation reimbursement, and it was only paid in one lump sum at the end of the project. Some women had to borrow money from relatives or husbands to attend training sessions and transport the products while doing marketing and sales work. One woman reported that she had to sell "mouneh" (prepared food) to pay for transportation as she was waiting for the payment. Importantly, participant feedback related to a lack of transportation *for sales* may indicate some participant confusion about the project design. ACTED intended project participants to conduct sales walkable distances in their neighbourhoods, making paying for product transportation unnecessary. However, participant feedback suggested they felt paying for transportation was necessary because the alternative was walking for several hours carrying a lot of product on a tight sales timeline. Both incurring debt and engaging in additional income generating activities to fund project participation represented unintended, in this case negative, results of the project. Addressing this issue in the future may require either additional funding for transportation or innovations around challenges related to transporting product by foot.

Participants in the MS project similarly faced transportation as a limiting factor. They reported a delay in reimbursement, so they initially paid out of pocket for transportation, also often borrowing money, which caused issues for some women with their husbands (which represents an unintended project result). Additionally, all participants received the same transportation reimbursement, regardless of the distance between their homes and the learning centre/internship. For women traveling much greater distances, this reduced their overall disposable income from the cash assistance.

> *"Transportation was a big issue. We didn't get transportation fee during the internship according to how far we live from the internship location, so some people benefitted more."* – MS Participant

LUPD participants faced challenges because transportation in Lebanon was often not disability friendly. Not all women had access to private transportation, so instead needed to navigate this challenge in public transportation. LUPD staff indicated that the transportation reimbursement paid to participants was adjusted for distance. LUPD participant feedback corroborated this as the challenge related to amounts not matching distances was not raised by these participants.

Discussions between the evaluation team and UN Women Lebanon and the implementing partners indicated both were aware of transportation challenges and actively problem-solving for future project iterations. Staff also attempted to adjust for transportation costs during the projects, by, as mentioned, increasing the amount of transportation reimbursement to exceed the standard for the livelihoods sector on a national level ($3 instead of $2). Further, UN Women policies did not allow them to provide transportation funds to beneficiaries before project activities, which meant some initial outlay of funds by beneficiaries for their participation in the projects was unavoidable at this time. Additionally, because the projects gave beneficiaries transportation reimbursements in USD and small bill denominations are scarce in Lebanon, partners did sometimes have to wait and pay women their transportation refunds in large instalments, which delayed reimbursement.

3.2.2. Learning Environment and Process

LUPD participants did not raise concerns about the learning environment or process. These complaints were also rare for ACTED participants. The only challenges raised by ACTED participants included the small size of the training space, lack of sufficient chairs for everyone during training, and a struggle to remember all the information learned in such a short period of time. Materials summarizing training content and more spaced sessions would have helped their learning process. MS participants also requested books or printed materials to help them retain information.

MS participants experienced more challenges with their learning environment and process. In terms of the learning environment, the learning centre could not properly accommodate participants, especially in the summertime, as the space was very small with no ventilation. Participants reported that the space was not clean, and that the food provided was not in good condition and even made them ill. UN Women Lebanon staff and MS acknowledged this challenge during interviews with the evaluation team and did improve food quality during the project in response to these complaints. In the future, the team intends to 1) increase the budget available to pay third party vendors for training services and 2) better vet third party vendors (e.g., the training centre) in future projects.

In terms of the learning process, not all subject areas were sufficiently resourced. For the technical elements of photography, not enough cameras were provided for participants to effectively learn these practical skills. Mobile repair classes were informative, but similarly not enough equipment was given to women to work with, and that limited their learning. In the photography and marketing sessions, there was not enough time for participants to learn the material, so they did not spend enough time on the marketing components. MS participants also requested English (and French, for a few) language skill development, including literacy, which seemed vital for job market competitiveness.

The quality of learning in the job placements also seemed to vary for MS participants, with several participants in aide nursing placements, especially, suggesting the job placements did not allow them to practice their skills enough because they did not have formal degrees.[13] Addressing these learning needs for future projects will increase the relevance of women's skills for the job market. Further, these challenges may help explain why MS participants rated their skill increases as lower, on average, than women in the other projects (62.9% versus over 90% for ACTED and LUPD). However, UN Women Lebanon staff observed that the training sessions for MS were more in-depth and included more information than the sessions held for LUPD or ACTED participants. Participants may also have felt that they mastered the content less fully because there was more content to master.

3.2.3. Childcare

UN Women Lebanon staff indicated that the amount of money given to beneficiaries as part of their cash for work compensation included additional funds to cover the cost of childcare. While beneficiaries received a lump sum, the $10 compensation package included $5 that could be thought of as "base pay," $3 for transportation (up $1 from the sector standard), and $2 for childcare (making the total package $3 more than the sector standard of $7). However, participants mentioned the difficulty of managing care responsibilities 22 times during interviews and focus group discussions, and 11 out of 16 people who identified that the project caused problems for them in the endline survey

[13] This may represent a need to manage participant expectations about what they can do during work placements, as they were not allowed to conduct activities that would require certification as a registered or technical nurse.

reported issues related to finding childcare (6 people) or having less time for with their children (5 people). Challenges included both arranging someone to provide care, and the logistics associated with transporting children to that care. Importantly, this may be a protection issue for children, if participants leave children alone while participating in the projects.

> *"Having to take care of kids was sometimes a barrier"* – ACTED Participant

> *"I have a daughter, but I would put her at my parent's place. But it was far, so I paid a lot on transportation."* – MS Participant

Care responsibilities beyond childcare also affected project participation for a few beneficiaries. Such challenges would not be solved by providing childcare through the projects. Instead, these situations may require flexibility in how women engage in the projects, for example offering trainings and work shifts at different times, when care work burdens are lighter.

> *"I have a family member at home that needs help with getting dressed and going to work early in the morning, which makes me unavailable during the time that I need to reach the institution and I couldn't find someone to trust that is not expensive and that can help."* – LUPD Participant

Thus, despite the stipend including childcare funds, it seemed like participants might still have needed to re-direct those funds to other expenses. LUPD and MS both worked with women to try and locate nurseries to care for their young children, but this happened during the projects, as issues with childcare became apparent. They did not find a holistic solution, although MS found placements for some women. MS beneficiaries who received childcare support through the project described it as highly beneficial for their full participation.

Discussions with UN Women Lebanon staff reinforced the difficulty of finding a standard solution for the issue of childcare. Many community-based nurseries do not accept registrations for children who are in care part-time (participants worked part-time, around four hours a day) or short-term (e.g., during the project duration). Some also do not accept Syrian or refugee children. In the past, UN Women Lebanon has tried to establish childcare rooms for similar projects, but this does raise questions about where to put such a room when, for example, vocational training happens in a different location from job placements. For future projects, UN Women Lebanon and the implementing partners intend to include identifying childcare needs and arranging childcare immediately after participant selection as part of the project design. This may need to include some combination of community-based and project-based childcare to address these complexities.

However, the challenge of balancing work and caregiving responsibilities is an enduring and gendered struggle facing women in Lebanon (and globally). While continuing to innovate around how to address the challenge benefits future UN Women projects and the humanitarian and development sector as a whole, this challenge may never be fully eliminated in projects of this sort while gendered divisions of care work endure as a feature of society. From this perspective, the projects were gender-responsive, in that the childcare needs of women were taken into consideration and women received compensation for childcare expenses above and beyond industry standard for such compensation. However, on this issue, the projects were not able to reach the level of a gender transformative intervention, given the enduring nature of inequalities around care work.

3.2.4. Working Conditions

The working conditions at LUPD were extremely well controlled and tailored to the population (more on this in the efficiency section). However, for ACTED and MS, room to improve exists. For ACTED, these challenges seem connected to the "growing pains" of organizing a new industry. MS faced these challenges as part of the difficult process of identifying good private sector employers.

Women in the ACTED project found the sales timeline tight and stressful, needed better bags for carrying the product with them as they sold the pads, and additional visibility materials to establish credibility with potential buyers. While ACTED provided flyers and labelled tote bags, participant comments suggested that additional materials might have improved the experience.

> *"The working conditions were not great. We had to do our marketing in the rain while carrying the pads in big bags or boxes with us. We don't have cars, so we walked a lot under the rain. It was tiring.*" – ACTED Participant

> *"Were promised vests with name of organization, but that was not given. Some people closed doors because of no visibility."* – ACTED Participant

> *"No bags were provided to the marketing teams to carry the pads. Not everyone had bags and had to deal with transporting big cartons."* – ACTED Participant

The regions where women visited to sell product were also not clearly assigned to individual women at the beginning of the project, leading to some frustration and duplication of effort.

> *"Clients should be exclusive to one marketing team. Some overlap and double work took place. When we raised this issue to the team, they said that the participants should keep each other in the loop…this frustrated us, as we had to work to fix the mistake and reach our targets. There should be a system in place from the beginning to prevent that and not have to do unnecessary work"* – ACTED Participant

For MS, finding the right fit between some women and their workplaces proved challenging. Women often reported positive experiences with job placements, but some women also found work placements did not fit their goals, the standards of the workplace were poor, or work hours changed without warning.[14] This was in addition to the challenges with the workplaces as learning environments (insufficient practice on certain skills) mentioned above.

> *"The working conditions were not good at all. Their standards are very low. It goes against my ethics, so I did the cash for work knowing that I won't continue there."* – MS Participant, on a childcare facility's standards.

> *They didn't put the right people in the right places. They put me in a place not suitable for me at all…no one would come. There were no patients except when they were doing free stuff. Then they moved me to another location, and things were a little bit better."* – MS Participant

[14] Note that work hours changed due to delays in the extension of the project. This meant MS had to try to finish all CFW days in a short time before the extension was confirmed.

"The cash for work times were abruptly changing without our consent, so that added a lot of pressure on us. We have kids and families to take care of and that took a toll on us" – MS Participant

Interviews and discussions with UN Women Lebanon staff suggested that some MS beneficiaries did raise this feedback to staff, who worked with participants to identify new placements and followed-up with beneficiaries to assess the fit of the new placements (see the second quote above). This flexibility and responsiveness to beneficiary needs represents a project strength. Additionally, staff suggested that MS needed to place too many women in too small a geographic area, which limited job placement options and possibly placement quality.

These challenges with working conditions may have contributed to a reduction in work motivation among a small number of MS and ACTED participants (Figure 5), which may represent an unintended result for these beneficiaries. A large majority of women across the three implementing partners felt highly motivated to work at baseline and at the projects' end. But, if we place the motivation categories on a scale of 0 (not motivated) to 3 (highly motivated), the average score from baseline to endline decreased for ACTED (from 2.99 to 2.77, with a higher percent of women "not motivated" and only "somewhat motivated") and MS (the average was basically stable, falling from 2.80 to 2.79, but a smaller percentage were "highly motivated"). In contrast, we see a strong increase in women's motivation to work among LUPD participants (from 2.68 to 2.90).

Figure 5. Change in Level of Work Motivation

Data source: Baseline and Endline data

3.3. Relevance of Cash Support, with Efforts Made for Skill Relevance/Marketability

Finding 3: The projects demonstrated relevance by meeting participants' basic needs during a humanitarian crisis through cash assistance. The projects also made an effort to ensure longer-term relevance by increasing participants' market-relevant skills and experiences. However, the weakness of the Lebanese labour market makes assessing the degree of market relevancy difficult.

The projects were relevant in that they met participants' basic needs through cash for work. This represents a success, as the projects' primary goal was humanitarian, to provide cash aid during acute economic crisis. While meeting immediate needs through cash assistance, the projects also hoped to provide beneficiaries with market-relevant skills which would both improve the likelihood of long-term employment for participants, while also supporting economic growth in Lebanon. However, the on-going economic crisis and poor labour market mean it was difficult to assess the extent to which women's future employment in these sectors was relevant to their labour supply goals and Lebanon's economy. Nevertheless, the projects did take steps to provide participants with relevant skills.
MS selected sectors for training and job placement based on what was most relevant to the market, "We try not to do capacity building for skills that are not needed." The organization determined relevance based on market research (although UN Women Lebanon staff indicated the assessment did not sufficiently focus findings on the needs of targeted beneficiaries), an ILO market assessment, and a local committee that helped secure jobs for women. These assessments suggested mobile repair, child-care and elderly-care services, hospitality management, photography and digital marketing, and aide nursing training would be the best fit for the market. Perhaps as an early sign of relevance for the Lebanese economy, MS beneficiaries subsidized the labour costs for medium, small, and micro enterprises (MSMEs) during this economic crisis, as those that partnered with the cash for work component were able to operate at full capacity. MS staff explained that "MSME capacity went from 50% to 100%," which would not have happened without the project. Further, looking at which training programs completed by MS participants are associated with post-project employment does suggest a high degree of relevance for the full stack web development course despite the economic conditions (more than half (55.6%) of these participants had a job at the end of the project). In contrast, 16.7% of participants in computer and mobile repair, 10% in housekeeping and hotel services, 8.8% in both childcare and photography and marketing, and 7.6% in aide nursing, had jobs following the project. Whether these lower rates relate primarily to the weak labour market or skill relevance was not clear at the time of evaluation.

LUPD, despite being focused on food preparation, also sought to train women in the broader set of skills needed to run the community kitchen. This included hospitality sector management, cooking, social media and marketing, and cleaning. One LUPD staff member described these skills as quite easily applied in the hospitality sector, which is robust, "the hospitality sector is always active, and employers are currently looking for low-paid employees, so our participants will surely be selected."

For ACTED participants, marketing is a fairly flexible and easily applied skill for a number of settings. An ACTED team member explained, "combining the training with job experience, repeating the pitch again and again, adapting it to customer's responses, participants will be able to talk about this…They have a record of their sales numbers to show potential employers."

However, as stated, the on-going economic crisis and weak labour market meant that the evaluation could not clearly conclude how relevant these skills were to women's future employment and

Lebanon's economic growth. These projects were intentionally short-term, designed to combine cash assistance during economic crises with skill development to provide some hope for sustainability when the labour market and demand for workers stabilizes. Some beneficiaries did find jobs after the cash for work finished (12.1% for ACTED, 16.4% for MS, the majority of LUPD beneficiaries were working, but in a second phase of the community kitchen).[15] However, as evidenced by ACTED participants, interviewed after more time had passed since project closure, many participants wanted to work in the areas in which they trained but had little ability to do so (more on this in the sustainability section below). While no amount of exit strategy can address the lack of job opportunities accompanying the economic crisis facing Lebanon, a clearer exit strategy might better position beneficiaries to capitalize on skill gains and improve the probability of the projects being relevant in the long-term (following economic recovery) for beneficiary needs and the future economic growth of Lebanon.

3.4. Sustainability of Results

Finding 4: The weakness of the Lebanese labour market and inflation without wage increases pose challenges to the sustainability of women's access to work. Additional barriers to women's future employment include disability status, country of origin (for Syrian women), limited education (in fields where employers sometimes desired degrees, like hospital-based nursing or childcare), and need for more time spent in training and/or hands-on practice for some heavily technical fields (e.g., mobile repair, photography, and aide nursing). However, institutional investments in the community kitchen and period product manufacturing represent potential for sustainable changes in women's access to work through direct provision of work opportunities.

3.4.1. Barriers to Future Work

Importantly, because these livelihoods interventions took place within a humanitarian, emergency context, sustainability is more of an aspiration than a core objective. Therefore, the observations noted here are designed to identify barriers to the probability of sustainability in hopes those can be addressed in future project iterations.

As indicated above, most women did not have jobs lined up at the end of the projects. Excepting the women still working for LUPD, 12.1% from ACTED and 16.4% from MS had jobs. When discussing the future, participants usually wanted to work (93.6% of ACTED participants and 88.7% of MS participants who were not working reported a desire to work at endline). This desire for future work is a success. But participants were not sure they could stay in the field in which they trained.

> *"I want to work in what I've learned, but if I don't find the right opportunities, I will be forced to look for any paying job."* – MS Participant

ACTED participants, spoken with well after the close of the project, had the best perspective on the level of sustainability of the project changes. Interviewees consistently felt that the project helped them gain skills, but not access to work long-term.

[15] NB: The endline assessments were conducted immediately after the end of each project. It is possible this number might have changed with time, including increasing as women had more time to gain employment. However, qualitative data from ACTED participants suggested significant employment barriers remained, largely related to the economic crisis and job scarcity, because most women wanted to work, but could not find opportunities.

"I have the skills and confidence, but there are no opportunities around me to apply what I have learned." – ACTED Participant

"The situation is bad everywhere. The project did not have a big impact on that" – ACTED Participant

Women engaged in work placements through MS also raised that, even when offered positions after project closure, the compensation offered was not enough to cover the expense of working (especially transportation). This likely speaks to the struggle of salaries to keep pace with inflation. Additionally, UN Women Lebanon staff felt this might also result from the cash for work compensation being in USD and at a higher level than local wages (necessary to cover basic needs). While unavoidable, because the cash for work amounts should cover basic needs, raising participant expectations around compensation may represent an unintended result of the project.

"The salaries they offered us after the training were low, and we live far and transportation is expensive so we couldn't accept the job, they were not offering us what we got paid during the internship." – MS Participant

Further, MS participants from multiple sectors (especially aide nursing and childcare) and one LUPD beneficiary reported that employer preferences for workers with formal degrees represented a challenges to their long-term employment.

"I don't know what I will do honestly. I don't think I will be able to find a job outside here because if you don't have a degree, they will not accept you." – LUPD Participant

"I did childcare, I learned a lot of good stuff, the problem was with the internships, they used to prefer university students, we learned everything, and I think I can handle a kid better than a university student." – MS Participant

Beneficiaries with certain vulnerability criteria, especially Syrian participants and the LUPD participants with disabilities, expressed even greater barriers to long-term employment.

Participants who do not have a national ID, largely Syrian women, cannot work outside of the projects. This limits the sustainability of project outcomes for these women. Further, Syrian women reported discrimination in the hiring practices of potential employers (discussed in more detail in the human rights and equity section). While this might relate to anti-Syrian sentiment, there are legal barriers to hiring Syrian women also, as private sector employers must pay for their work permits.

"I am Syrian. I won't be working at the place for too long since I cannot do that legally." – MS Participant

"Being a Syrian, rarely anyone would hire me. They prefer to hire Lebanese women." – MS Participant

LUPD participants helped each other navigate their unique configurations of capacities and needs for accommodation in the community kitchen. They helped each other, knowing that each one struggled in a certain way. This is a powerful component of the project. The project built physical infrastructure and social dynamics which accommodate women's conditions. Together, these women operated well in that environment. Sometimes their work was not as fast as it might be in a kitchen without workers with disabilities. This worried participants. Participants expressed fear of discrimination, or concerns that the Lebanese market lacked the work ethics, policies, and procedures necessary to support people

with disabilities. They feared they might not find the necessary support working in another setting, that employers would expect too much from them and not respect their work pace.

> *"In the workforce, I'm sure that more work should be done, but what we do here is treat each other as family and help each other a lot."* – LUPD Participant.

> *"We still need more time to practise and learn before applying to jobs outside of here, given our condition."* – LUPD participant.

Participants suggested turning the community kitchen into a business of their own where they could sell food and generate more income, keeping the kitchen running, and preserving jobs for a community that struggles to find jobs elsewhere.

> *"We can structure a new hierarchy for the institutional set-up, agree on salaries based on different job descriptions, and we can keep this going!"* – LUPD participant

LUPD is aware of this challenge. As they explained, "We need to plan for an exit strategy. By the end of March, a number of women need to be employed and open their own business. We are aiming for funds to support self-employment opportunities." The organisation is working with private sectors companies and the tourism sector to help participants land jobs. LUPD staff feel the hospitality sector is very active, and current employers are looking for low-paid employees due to the crisis. LUPD is also encouraging women to pursue entrepreneurship collectively, to avoid some of the discrimination they fear, "We are also encouraging them to team up and try to do business together and work as a team." Further, the life skills trainings in which MS and ACTED participants engaged included CV writing and interview preparation modules to support women's job search process.

Likely because few women secured employment at the end of the project, ACTED participants expressed an immediate return to economic hardship, reinforcing the importance of an exit strategy to mitigate the likelihood of shocks following project closure.

> *"My financial situation was better, but only during project"* – ACTED Participant

> *The payment helped during the month it was paid but the project did not have any financial benefits after that. It only helped me pay rent for a month or two but nothing more* – ACTED Participant

3.4.2. Enhancing Learning Sustainability

For MS participants, those in a few fields felt they needed more advanced courses, or more time to learn, especially mobile repair and photography and marketing. In part, women wanted more time in these courses because they did not have enough time with the limited equipment available during training. Not being sufficiently prepared may also affect their access to the labour market in the future.

> *"We needed more time to be prepared, especially in this kind of work [mobile repair], since a tiny mistake can cost us a lot of money…The learning centre is not prepared for us, it needs better equipment."* – MS Participant

Similarly, those in the aide nursing field were not able to practice their skills as much in the field, due to employer scepticism about their preparedness, as mentioned above. This may also reduce the sustainability of their skill and employability improvements.

3.4.3. Institutional Sustainability

Importantly, while the sustainability of future work prospects may be uncertain, again acknowledging that this is a reality of the project design and economic circumstances, several institutional changes represent opportunities for long-term sustainability. First, as will be discussed in more detail below, the establishment of the community kitchen represents a significant infrastructure investment with the potential to both reduce food insecurity in the community and provide a safe and affirming work environment to very vulnerable community members into the future. Similarly, the production infrastructure established by ACTED is the start of a long-term social enterprise designed to increase period product awareness and affordability, while also providing good jobs to women in a non-traditional sector. Both these institutional investments represent potential for sustainable changes in their respective communities.

3.4.4. Possible Limitations to Sustainable Changes in Gender Equality

Finding 5: Limitations to long-term changes in gender equality may include an end to improvements in women's household decision-making power when women no longer work, and backlash (for a small number of women) in the form of lessening family support for women working.

As shown above, women participated more in decision-making in their homes, expressing their opinions as they increased their income contributions. However, evidence from ACTED beneficiaries suggests these changes may be short-lived.

> *"I was able to tell my husband, I'm like you because I am working too. He couldn't look down on me anymore. But it was limited to the project."* – ACTED Participant

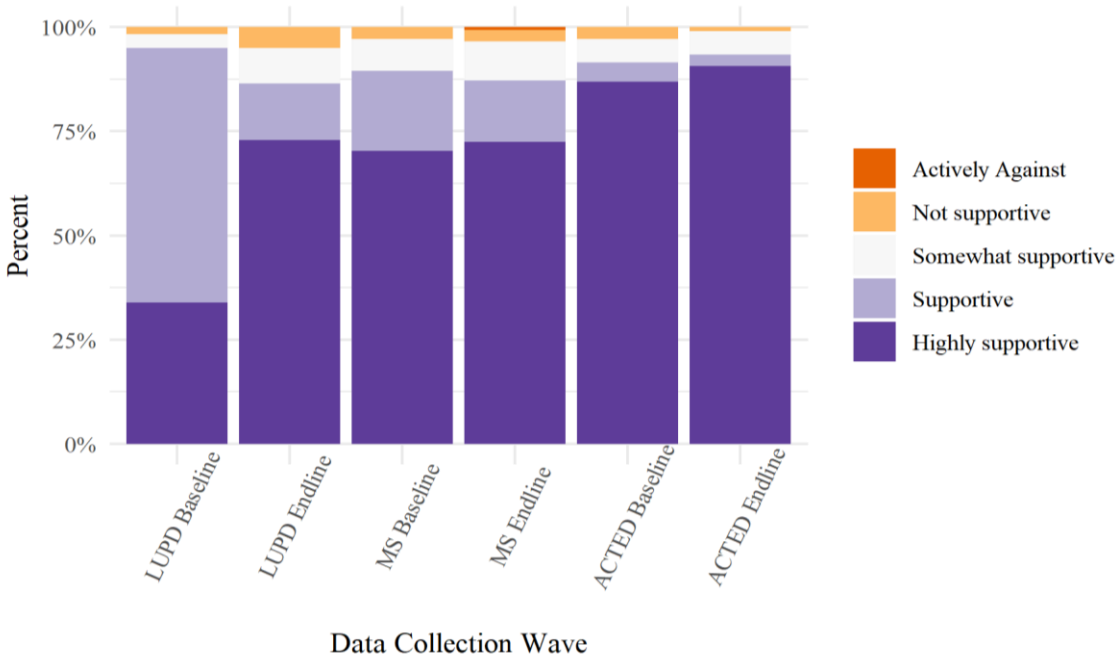
> *"I was able to be more independent and not ask my husband for more money. But it was temporary. My confidence raised, but I lost the upper hand when my income stopped."* – ACTED Participant

Based on this feedback from ACTED participants, referrals for psycho-social follow-up and support groups may be needed to uphold and sustain changes in decision-making. This is especially important when considering that some women in the projects lived with abusive partners. If the projects end with no clear exit strategy, women may go back to those abusive partners. Some women reported leaving their spouses and/or ending contact with them after these projects, finally finding a way out by having income (three women in LUPD and three in MS; no ACTED women reported this). Special attention should be given to these cases when considering an exit strategy.

Further, family support for women's work reduced for a small percentage of beneficiaries. Importantly, family support is *high* overall at baseline and endline (Figure 6) and change in the average level of support from baseline to endline is minimal (there is no statistically significant improvement or reduction). However, this hides relatively split changes, in which some women's families became more supportive and some became less supportive. For LUPD, 39.0% reported increases in family support (mostly from the 36.6% who reported that family members who were "supportive" became

"highly supportive"). However, 12.2% of participants reported that their families became less supportive (shown in Figure 6 as increases in the size of the white and orange bands). So, the overall percentage of women reporting "supportive" or "highly supportive" family became slightly lower (down from 94.9% to 86.4%). For MS, 19.5% of participants reported a lower level of family support at baseline, while only 18.8% reported increased family support. Thus, the overall percentage of women reporting "supportive" or "highly supportive" family reduced very slightly (from 89.5% to 87.2%). ACTED showed the smallest overall change, with more families increasing support (10.3%) than decreasing (7.48%), yielding a small increase in the percent who are at least "supportive" at endline (from 91.6% at baseline to 93.5% at endline). Reductions in family support for these women may represent an unintended project result.

Figure 6. Change in Family Support for Participant Working



Data source: Baseline and Endline data

Sustained changes in gender inequality, including changes for those families with more traditional gendered expectations for women, likely require a more holistic approach that includes both women's economic empowerment, the focus of these projects, and normative intervention avenues which work for the family members and community where women live, including, but also more expansive than the protection component alone. As one UN staff member noted, "You have to look at the culture. You have to look at the context of the community. I don't think there is one solution. I don't think as UN agencies we're doing the right approach still. To change something like this, you need to change the whole environment…It has to be economic. It has to be family. It has to be culture. It has to be community-based." A few comments from participants echoed this sentiment about the "sticky" nature of gender norms.

However, no matter how much women work, "men will always be the breadwinners." – ACTED Participant

"The project increased the opportunities for some women. It feels like that contributed to the decrease of inequities between genders, but men are still more powerful in society." – ACTED Participant

Thus, many women felt the project helped them confront gender roles and increase their decision-making power (see section 3.1.4.), suggesting a gender transformative element to the project. Gender transformative results, beyond changes in women's self-conception and control over their income, which include enduring changes in women's family and societal context may require additional interventions that were outside the scope of this set of humanitarian projects. UN Women Lebanon staff are aware of the challenges posed by the enduring nature of such norms and family arrangements, and pointed to the importance of the protection, social norm change, policy, and advocacy work that is part of the larger portfolio of interventions the office operates.

3.5. Human Rights around Equality of Results

Finding 6: In most cases, different types of beneficiaries experienced similar project outcomes. However, some exceptions exist. Household head status, more education, not being married, not having children, and being Lebanese did improve the likelihood of one or more positive outcome. In contrast, the LUPD project showed better outcomes for disabled (versus non-disabled beneficiaries), suggesting some equalizing effect of the project. Older women in MS and LUDP were also more likely to report increased income, suggesting a particular benefit of the projects for these women (although older women were less likely to report increases in influence over household expenditure).

To examine whether different types of beneficiaries experienced equal results, the evaluation team analysed change from baseline to endline in terms of three key outcomes: changes in financial difficulty, household income, and level of influence over household spending decisions. This included examining the effect of the following factors on outcomes: whether the beneficiary identified as disabled, education level, the presence or absence of children in the home, the presence of elderly household members, household head status, country of origin (Lebanese versus other groups), marital status, age, and whether the participant worked in the past.[16]

Household Head Status

Women who identified as household heads in the MS project were more likely to report reductions in financial difficulty (71.8% versus 63.0% for non-household heads). ACTED participants who were household heads were more likely to report income increases (70.0% v. 61.9%) and more likely to report that their families' support for their work increased (18.6% v. 4.7%).

Education Level

For ACTED, women with higher education levels were more likely to report reductions in financial difficulty (64.9% of those with the highest level of education reported reductions, versus 24.3% for those with the lowest education level). Women with higher levels of education (again for the ACTED project) were also more likely to report increases in influence over household spending (67.6% at the highest level of education versus 48.6% at the lowest). However, higher educated women in the

[16] To achieve this, the evaluation team used regressions of each outcome on the key characteristics listed. Differences between the probability of beneficiaries reporting any given outcome are reported if significant at the p<.10 level.

ACTED project were less likely to report an increase in household income (74.3% of those at the lowest level reported an increase versus 52.8% at the highest level). This is likely because women with higher education already earned income or had higher starting income.

Marital Status

Married women in LUPD, MS, and ACTED were all less likely to report increases in influence over household spending (42.1% v. 80.0%, 29.3% v. 67.7%, and 55.1% v. 62.2%, respectively). Four married women in the qualitative data identified resistance from their husbands as a challenge to project participation or future work, and this came up in conversation with MS staff. While a small number, this does suggest that married women and/or women from traditional families struggled more during the projects and will likely struggle more in the future.

> *"My husband does not let me work in just anything. So, here in our community we need more projects like this one, with NGOs, because otherwise there are no opportunities for us women"* – ACTED Participant

> *It [project participation] all depends on the man and how understanding he is.* – MS Participant

> *Some men only allowed women outside of the house if they were making money, not for training... it depends on how supportive the husband is.* – MS Staff

Age

Older women were more likely to report income increases for LUPD (the average age of women with increases in income was 2.1 years higher than those who did not report income increases) and MS (those with income increases were, on average, 3.8 years older). Older women in the LUPD, MS, and ACTED project were, however, less likely to report increases in influence over household expenditure. Women experiencing an increase in influence were, on average, 2 years younger for LUPD, 9.1 years younger for MS, and 5.9 years younger for ACTED.

Disability Status

Disabled participants in the LUPD project were *more* likely to report increases in income (96.6% v. 74.0%) and increased influence over household spending (70.8% v. 30.0%). This suggests the project had an equalizing effect for disabled women in terms of income and influence over spending.

Country of Origin

Lebanese women in the MS project reported larger increases in income than the Syrian women (average level change of 0.98 v. 0.30, with levels ranging from 0-8). Lebanese women in the LUPD project were more likely to report increases in influence over household spending (72.7% v. 33.3%). The qualitative data also revealed challenges faced by Syrian women. MS participants reported that one teacher in the childcare programme was very harsh with Syrian participants, failing to teach them adequately and verbally harassing them. The teacher was reported to staff, but participants felt this did not change the situation. Syrian women also reported discrimination in their work placements. Lebanese women were able to apply their knowledge more during placements. Syrian women were overworked and tasked with less relevant work than their Lebanese co-workers.

> *"They made me work more and in stuff not related directly to what we learned like cleaning and filing, I felt the discrimination, and I'm not the only Syrian woman who felt that"* – MS Participant

Parental Status
Women with children in the ACTED project were less likely to report income increases (57.5% v. 91.3%). While participants in the LUPD and MS projects with children were less likely to report increases in influence over household spending (50.0% v. 80.0% and 41.6% v. 54.2%, respectively).

LGBTQ+
As a very brief note, as acknowledged by both UN Women Lebanon and MS, the project aimed to include members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially trans women, as part of the project. However, the project was not able to put in place sufficient protection policies for this group of women to feel safe in transit and in groups with other women. UN Women Lebanon staff have identified that they need a specialized partner for working with trans women, so this represents a lesson learned.

3.6. Human Rights and Accountability

Finding 7: The projects demonstrated overall strong human rights and accountability values and practices. Participants had an awareness of some reporting mechanisms and largely felt empowered to report problems. However, beneficiaries reported confusion about project timelines and lacked clarity about how to continue working and experiencing the associated empowerment and psychosocial benefits in the future.

3.6.1. Accountability Mechanisms

Programme personnel described a robust set of downward accountability mechanisms, including phone numbers for supervisors given to participants, hotlines for reporting PSEA, PSEA flyers distributed in training centres and cash for work settings, external numbers for UN Women Lebanon contacts, comment boxes and/or email addresses, and independent committees to review any complaints submitted, as well as training for beneficiaries to socialize them on these mechanisms.

Participants had an awareness of some reporting mechanisms and largely felt empowered to report problems. Key staff serving as focal points seemed the most frequently used avenue for reporting issues related to the projects. Participants sometimes did not know about the comment boxes.

> *"Whenever we have a problem, we talk with the HR and they contact the supervisor. There's no suggestion box. We also have the number of the organizers, but we never used it. Here things are different, they have human values, and they treat us equally."* – LUPD Participant

> *"Lynn [the MS supervisor] finds a solution for everything and she makes me feel comfortable to talk to her about anything."* – MS Participant

Additionally, UN Women Lebanon staff explained that their field visits always included discussions with beneficiaries about their experiences, and those discussions involved asking beneficiaries if they were paid as promised and if they felt safe during trainings and while working.

3.6.2. Use of Power

Participants reported largely positive relationship with staff. However, MS Participants reported some negative experiences perceived as favouritism in the distribution of training materials and job

placement assignments. Three women reported securing internships for themselves because they were not given placements[17]. Similarly, 16 women felt the distance from their homes to the internships was considered for some participants and not others. Finally, the equipment distribution criteria were not clear to participants, which resulted in more feelings of discrimination. For job placement decisions, this may be a challenge related to how staff communicated these decisions with participants. UN Women Lebanon staff indicated that the MS team asked participants to suggest workplaces near their homes to reduce the transportation cost. However, it was not possible to find a nearby job placement for every participant, especially in the hospitality sector, as hotels are not in the suburbs. Based on participant confusion, the process regarding how placement locations decisions were made may have been unclear to some participants.

In addition, MS, participants in one FGD reported that a teacher in the Childcare programme treated Syrian participants differently and poorly (mentioned above). When more than one person reported the problem, the teacher assumed that a certain participant reported her and started harassing the participant even more. The issue did not get resolved, and it caused conflict between participants. A similar complaint emerged from another participant, which may suggest that more aggressive follow-up is necessary for these kinds of complaints related to third party vendors. Additional exposure to anti-Syrian sentiment thus represents an unintended result:

> *"I had a problem with the instructor who was teaching us. I spoke to the supervisors, and they spoke with the teacher. The first few days after they spoke to him, he fixed his attitude, but then after a while he went back to his old ways. If there were more follow ups it wouldn't have happened. I didn't speak about the issue anymore because I spoke the first time, and nothing happened.* – MS Participant

3.6.3. Communication of Expectations

UN Women Lebanon staff indicated that it is a standard practice to communicate to all beneficiaries the length of a project. However, beneficiaries seemed frequently confused about when the projects would end, when/if future phases would begin, and if there would be opportunities for them to continue working. UN Women Lebanon and the implementing partners did desire future iterations of the project, but had no guarantees. Thus, the organizations involved were themselves unsure if they could give beneficiaries future work opportunities. Designing an exit strategy for projects while also trying to fund them in the future might feel like a waste of time. But, providing participants with a clear set of expectations and attempting to coach beneficiaries through adapting to life after the projects helps reduce the tension and anxiety associated with the end of project benefits.

Further, some beneficiaries were waiting on the next project iteration rather than looking for other kinds of work. In this way, the confusion around future project iterations might generate the unintended result of reducing women's likely to search for work.

> *"I feel prepared and waiting for a second phase of the project. I am not searching for anything else."* – ACTED Participant

They talked about how unclear and disappointing their futures felt outside of the projects.

[17] The evaluation team did not ask this question in a systematic way, so more might have had this experience.

"If this project closes down, we will be lost. We need special attention in our vulnerable communities, especially for the ones with disabilities. This community needs to feel seen. I don't think anything I can learn can make me ready to carry on after this project, especially in my situation." – LUPD Participant

"We got out of our households, came here, learned, met new people, grew, and structured a new routine for ourselves with a new income. I am not sure I can go back to my old life, that would be disappointing." – MS Participant

Some MS participants experienced confusion around future work placements, believing the organisation would secure jobs for them, even though UN Women Lebanon staff indicated that this was not a commitment made by either the implementing partner or UN Women.

"They promised us that they will get us jobs at the end, and still that didn't happen." – MS Participant

While some confusion is inevitable, this level of confusion may mean participants needed more reminding at different points of time about how long the projects would last and what the projects could (and could not) do for them. Additionally, another module of life skills training on how to find and secure future employment, as well as laying the foundation for professional networks, may be important components of future projects. LUPD staff provided examples of this kind of work, collaborating with the Restaurant and Hotel Syndicate and Chamber of Commerce to source job opportunities for their population. MS may be able to rely on the local committee they developed to become a hub for job search information and support. Exit strategies should, ideally, demystify the labour market and job search process, while helping beneficiaries feel as though they have resources or support they can turn to after project closure to help them in this process.

3.7. Organizational Efficiency and Accountability

3.7.1. Resource Allocation

Finding 8: Based on participant and programme personnel feedback, several key areas of increased investment or different types of investment appear important. Some of these investments the projects had already initiated, and some may be long-term aspirations. These include transportation, childcare, capacity building and cash for work materials, venue, and vendors, additional social workers, and staff increases for MS and UN Women Lebanon.

Transportation

Because of the especially acute impact inflation had on fuel costs, transportation became much more expensive in Lebanon. Project staff recognized this and increased the transportation allocation from $2 to $3. Given the prevalence of anxiety from participants about transportation costs, this change was important and should be maintained in future iterations. As identified by LUPD staff, there may be opportunities to invest in disability-friendly transportation operated by LUPD in the future, possibly even as a social enterprise charging market rate (or less), so individuals with disabilities beyond project participants can move around more freely.

Childcare

As with transportation, the amount of the cash for work payment was larger than sector standard to accommodate childcare costs (additional $2). This might have been unclear to participants, or they were unable to re-direct funds to those costs, because women rarely mentioned paying for childcare.

No one from LUPD or ACTED mentioned this, and the MS participants who paid for childcare did not consistently identify the project as supporting their payment for childcare. Thus, it seems likely funds given for childcare were not often used in that way. Resources dedicated to childcare might be better directed to subsidizing placements for children as needed at local nurseries and paying the nurseries directly for those spots. This requires more third-party vendor vetting by UN Women Lebanon, so considerations for the cost of staff time necessary for that will need to be weighed when allocating resources to the childcare budget line. This is especially true as UN Women Lebanon staff reported that finding centres willing to take part-time, short-term placements and Syrian/refugee children was challenging when MS attempted to do so for some participants.

Capacity Building and Cash for Work Materials, Venue, and Vendors

For MS, especially, the learning experience suffered at times from not having enough of certain resources (not enough cameras or cell phones to practice skills with, dimly lit spaces, small projectors, poor quality food, etc.). The quality of instructors in the MS project also seemed to vary by subject matter. ACTED participants also mentioned not having enough chairs and the learning space being a bit cramped. Participants asked for summary materials related to their subject matter to help them remember what they learned. UN Women Lebanon staff already recognize the need to more carefully vet the quality of capacity building vendors and intend to increase that budget line in the future. The data support this investment, as well as investment in learning materials (inclusive of practice materials, like cameras and phones, and small booklets or other material summarizing training content).

ACTED beneficiaries reported that a lack of materials to support the transportation and sale of pads increased the difficulty of their work. Investments in materials to make carrying product easier, as well as visibility materials to increase the credibility of saleswomen (and brand recognition) would increase project efficiency.

Finally, the investments made by LUPD to make the kitchen entirely accessible to beneficiaries proved an excellent use of resources. Extensive research was done on how to implement an inclusive kitchen, drawing on specialists in the field of engineering, inclusion, and occupational therapy to design the space and create disability-sensitive job descriptions. LUPD beneficiaries had only positive remarks about their learning and working environment, and that speaks to the appropriate allocation of funds for the community kitchen space.

Social Workers

The PSEA elements of the projects were important and very helpful for participants. These included PSEA training for implementing partner focal points and project participants, monitoring from UN Women Lebanon to ensure implementing partners meet minimum PSEA requirements, and availability of social workers to offer psychosocial support and referrals. When women experience economic empowerment, this can lead them to recognize and reject abuse or exploitation experienced in the home, necessitating support to navigate their changing home dynamics. Additionally, women's empowerment can lead to increases (or initiation) of abuse if partners or fathers feel threatened by this empowerment. Having psychosocial support on hand to address these potentialities is a good use of resources. MS staff even suggested increasing the number of social workers might be important in future projects.

> *"In one case a husband objected to his wife's participation, but the social worker was involved, and we solved the matter. That's the importance of social worker capacity."* – MS Staff

"Women need psycho-social support, so we need more social workers…one social worker per 15 women for them to be able to follow-up because a lot of these women are also GBV cases." – MS Staff

Staffing

For LUPD, MS, and UN Women Lebanon, the issue of understaffing arose in conversation. MS staff expressed the need for additional team members to identify and manage the large number of training subjects and job placements. MS suggested this could include additional capacity building for their staff on how best to manage their complex portfolio. UN Women Lebanon staff also agreed with this assessment by MS. LUPD also felt the staff assigned to the project were overworked. Similarly, UN Women Lebanon staff reported that a larger team assigned to manage this portfolio would enable the UN Women Lebanon team to conduct needs assessments and design training plans with each partner, increase the number of field visits made, and more effectively support M&E.

3.7.2. Partnerships

Finding 9: The projects developed strong partnerships, earning praise from all partners. The only challenges to these relationships arose from tight implementation timelines and some budget challenges.

The quality of the partnerships between UN Women Lebanon, UNICEF, and the implementing partners represents a strength of these projects. The implementing partners described their relationship with UN Women Lebanon in highly collaborative terms, praising the team for providing important and useful feedback and problem-solving during design and implementation. ACTED described UN Women Lebanon as "understanding, flexible, experts at livelihoods" who engaged in "interesting discussions and idea exchanges. We're still engaging in brainstorming innovations together." LUPD explained how "everything was participatory." They praised UN Women Lebanon for being "involved in the field" to "see its challenges and successes" and "join us to offer solutions." MS explained that the organization, "received full support from UN Women. They were good partners and very supportive, even in daily challenges and in communication and budget reallocation." UNICEF similarly characterised the partnership as "smooth, easy going, with no friction."

The only challenges in these relationships involved the volume of work needed to complete UN Women requirements, tight implementation timelines, and some budget challenges communicated by MS in relation to inflation. Interviews with UN Women Lebanon staff suggested they are aware of requirement challenges and work with partners to navigate these. LUPD and MS both mentioned that a change in the timeline for implementation created stress and may have reduced the quality of some elements of project implementation. LUPD attributed this shortening to late disbursement of donor funds, which is likely unavoidable and therefore not a reflection of UN Women Lebanon's efforts. However, some of this delay also resulted from UN Women documentation requirements, which LUPD found challenging. The institutional set-up section includes additional observations on project timeline. In terms of budget challenges, MS staff explained, "admin costs are very needed…especially because the costs are fluctuating a lot, this should be taken into consideration."

3.7.3. Institutional Set-Up

Finding 10: There is some room to improve institutional set-up in the beneficiary selection, job placement, and monitoring process used by MS, as well as clearer planning of sales routes and resourcing saleswomen on the part of ACTED.

Timelines for Project Design and Initiation

As mentioned above, rushed timelines had some negative effects on the institutional set-up efforts of implementing partners. For MS, this affected the outreach process, a crucial step for a project which requires matching women with training and job placements that appeal to participants' goals. As they explained, "Our initial problem was the outreach itself. There were very specific and numerous criteria and little time for outreach." LUPD mainly characterized the rush as affecting their workload (hence the mention of needing more staff). ACTED experienced a delay in implementation due to the late arrival of the production machine. This proved especially stressful for participants, as they tried to make sales goals in a much shorter than expected timeline. As a participant described, "The marketing was intense. We had to sell everything in 2 days because the machine was late which caused delays in the production." Finally, UNICEF also felt additional time in the project design phase could have improved project efficacy, "If we had more flexibility or more time, we could have easily done a better job... I would have designed the program more complementary to each other…providing an integrated package of services to the individuals."

Select Processes

ACTED used a detailed scoring process based on set criteria to enhance selection objectivity. They engaged in extensive outreach to receive as many applications as possible, including requesting referrals from other organizations. Multiple staff members compiled and validated data on applicants to ensure accuracy, including members of the M&E and project teams. The only potential area of improvement in this process involves communicating with applicants not selected for participation. Several (9) ACTED participants mentioned conflict or jealousy related to project selection, including from women who applied and were not accepted. Importantly, one woman said she might "backout [of a second phase] because my surrounding has been jealous and accusing me of having connections. I would drop out of another phase just to avoid that." ACTED staff explained that there is a process for communicating decisions to non-selected women, who receive a text message, and are provided with the hotline number they can contact for more information on the reasons why they were not selected. The data available for this evaluation does not enable an investigation of any communication challenges or if another communication avenue might have been better, but it does seem like some confusion or jealousy remained and may represent an unintended result of this project.

Similarly, LUPD described their selection process as criteria-based with two levels: general criteria and a capacity function assessment. They collaborated with UNHCR, UNDP, and other organizations during outreach, which included using data on the Beirut explosion to target women who were disabled because of that event. The LUPD team identified the participation of social workers and occupational therapists as vital during these participant assessments.

For MS, the selection process was challenging. They experienced an enormous influx of interest in project participation. As they described, "Due to word-of-mouth after the explosion, over 600 women approached the organisation within just one month, so we didn't have enough time to properly screen and filter participants. Everything happened very fast, with so little staff." They struggled to apply the selection criteria required by UN Women Lebanon in the time allotted. Applicants came from a diverse set of backgrounds, a wide variety of training needs and desires, and "they could not fit everyone into what they offered." The team indicated that they did prioritize vulnerable women but described their selection process in less detail than the other partners, suggesting this may be an area where additional capacity building, as requested by the organization, could increase efficiency.

Operations

The three implementing partners had quite varied experiences with the day-to-day operations of their projects, with some key strengths and room to grow emerging.

For LUPD, the team planned and implemented a fully equipped and inclusive community kitchen that also runs GBV case management and follows up daily with participants through a therapist and inclusion advisor. Participants repeatedly described their relationships with each other and kitchen staff as "like a family," indicating that the intensive preparatory work done to establish a strong foundation for daily operations created a safe and affirming environment for this vulnerable group of women. This institutional set-up is strong and should be considered a model for similar interventions where inclusion and accessibility are vital components.

MS faced challenges as they worked with third-party vendors to organize trainings on multiple types of subject matter and liaised with many private sector entities to identify and arrange women's job placements, adjusting as needed in response to women's experiences with their placements. MS staff felt that the breadth of training and placements offered was beyond their capabilities to monitor. "With not enough M&E for this big of a scope, we cannot really know what we're accomplishing. We need a better M&E system, or at least more focused training sessions in focused areas if we want to keep up with what we're doing." They expressed a desire for the project to, "be more centralized, and under full control of the implementing organization." They did use a local committee to help suggest the kind of skills needed in the local economy and aid in securing women job placements, which they hoped would be useful in the future as well. "The local committee was a very important factor because it gave them ownership of the project. The women in the local committee also benefited so much from this project. They gained skills, and it's good for sustainability because they can still be active citizens after this project." UN Women Lebanon staff expressed some concern that one unintended result of the committee model is conflict created as participants pressured the committee members to give them certain job placements. This suggests boundaries for communication with the committee are needed to maintain this model.

During interviews, ACTED reported clearly defined policies and procedures for beneficiary selection, protection, and accountability, as well as cash distribution, financial reconciliation, and monitoring with beneficiaries to ensure cash access modalities work and no one is exploiting women after cash receipt. The operations challenges faced by ACTED manifested more from the production and sales process being novel. The machine arrived late and sometimes broke down, delaying production further. Sales teams did not have clearly defined territories, leading to some overlap and reducing efficiency. Similarly, the teams did not have all the resources they needed for distribution (additional funds to help transport large amounts of product, easy materials for transporting the product, visibility materials to mark saleswomen as part of the project). Trying to market the product before it was made also led to some disappointment when customers felt it did not align with their expectations. All these factors created the unintended result of stressful working conditions for beneficiaries (as described above in the section on working conditions). Addressing such challenges related to operating a new social enterprise will be critical to ensuring the project can offer a supportive cash for work environment for participants.

3.8. Design Innovation and Synergy

3.8.1. Coherence

Finding 11: These projects largely demonstrated alignment with the Country Office and UN Women strategies from theories of change and results frameworks. Areas of weaker alignment include less direct connection to the labour market (ACTED and LUPD participants), minimal project provisions for changing the private sector, national authorities, or CSOs, and shorter-term change than focused on by the UN Women results framework. The ToC could improve to include as key results areas, job creation (as done by ACTED and LUPD) and the psychosocial benefits of work for women.

These projects align well with the country office theory of change for women's economic empowerment and the annual workplan for this portfolio, with some room for greater coherence.

The WEE program theory of change states that,
"If women are well equipped with market-based skills and resources,
If women are supported in accessing the local labour market,
If women are provided with information and access to protection services and practical skills on self-protection,
then there will be a more protective and enabling environment for women's economic participation,
then women will be more resilient amidst the economic crisis and protected refugee crisis because women will be more engaged in public life and better able to access decent work."

The relevant annual workplan outcomes are:
Outcome 2.3: National authorities, private sector and CSOs are engaged in and actively support gender equality and women's economic empowerment and protection
Output 2.3.1: Promote employment opportunities for women through direct service delivery and engagement with the private sector

Women engaged in the projects felt their skills increased. While the projects built skill marketability into the design, the extent to which those skills are marketable is still unclear based on the instability of the Lebanese labour market. Women received support to access the labour market, especially women in the MS project. Participants working for ACTED and LUPD were not connected with private sector employers but did gain work experience. In this sense, all three partners promoted employment opportunities for women through either direct service delivery or engagement with the private sector (Output 2.3.1). The provision of information and access to protection services and practical skills on self-protection represents a strength of these projects, as the praise for the social workers and therapists detailed above demonstrates. The projects helped women work in a safer way by giving them PSEA reporting mechanisms, and LUPD, especially, physically created a more supporting work environment. However, these projects did not create noticeable changes in the private sector, which was not part of the project design. Similarly, the projects did not clearly contribute much to changing the role of national authorities and CSOs in supporting WEE (Outcome 2.3) (also not part of the project design). The UN Women Lebanon office may want to ensure this kind of project design is complemented by others focused on policy change and government capacity to provide a stronger socioeconomic safety net for long-term change (several of the implementing partners and UNICEF interviewees mentioned the important long-term role of the government). The projects created short-term improvements in resilience, including for refugee women, although it was

not able to prevent all experiences with anti-Syrian sentiment. Women did engage more in public life, and these social interactions are an extremely important success of these projects.

The results of these projects speak to a few key limitations of this theory of change in the Lebanese context. First, as suggested, the local labour market is extremely weak and seems unable to integrate many workers at wages that support a meaningful standard of living. The theory of change does not include a focus on *creating* jobs the way that ACTED and LUPD did. If either or both can be transformed into sustainable social enterprises, and if those models are replicable, such job creation may represent a meaningful strategic addition to the theory of change. Second, the theory of change does not recognize one key result achieved by economic empowerment – the psychosocial benefit women experienced from providing for themselves and their families and how that changed their confidence, sense of self-worth, and aspirations. Recognizing this as an outcome of this portfolio enhances the programs' connection with the "empowerment" part of WEE.

Coherence with the UN Women strategic plan impact focused on women's economic empowerment, "Impact 2: Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy," may be slightly limited due to the short-term nature of the projects. Specifically, income security suggests a long-term level of income stability which the projects were not designed to achieve, while the economic autonomy and associated empowerment in the household may prove limited to the project duration as well.

3.8.2. Comparative Advantages

Finding 12: The projects' primary comparative advantage is the integration of humanitarian assistance with additional objectives (period product availability, community-based food aid preparation and distribution, and labour subsidization of small businesses during crises).

These three cash for work models walked a delicate line, serving as a humanitarian intervention in a time of deep crises, while also trying to lay a foundation for women's empowerment and future work prospects. As LUPD staff explained, "this project works as a short-term alternative resolution in a country going through a multi-layered crisis." It's "perhaps not the best option. It's a plan B." While sometimes increasing the complexities of their operations and leading to challenges, each implementing partner chose to design their projects as cash for work "plus," adding other elements to the project design to meet multiple needs at once. For ACTED, this included creating an entirely new business, which offered women increased awareness about feminine hygiene and affordable period products. Similarly, LUPD's community kitchen offered food to vulnerable community members, alongside work opportunities for women discriminated against and marginalized in the labour market. MS designed in-depth training opportunities for women in a wide range of job types, while trying to select small businesses as job placements which might otherwise have closed during the crisis if not for the how cash for work recipients acted as a subsidization of their labour force.

In addition to these partner-specific comparative advantages, these projects as a whole also brought an important gender lens to cash for work as a modality. Women learned and worked in non-traditional job types (even LUPD beneficiaries trained in the skills, beyond cooking, necessary to run a small commercial kitchen). UN Women Lebanon produced a study on childcare and the livelihoods sector and increased the stipend amount from the sector standard to accommodate childcare costs. Including PSEA and life skills trainings as well as social workers to identify and address acute gender-based issues facing women meant the project design addressed the more holistic set of challenges

women face when trying to enter and stay in the workforce. Thus, these elements meant these projects' gender lens acted as a comparative advantage in implementing cash for work programming. This gender lens also elevated the project from a gender-targeted set of interventions (in which women are the primary beneficiaries) to at least gender-responsive, as project design considered women's unique needs, and, at times, gender-transformative (see section 3.1.4).

4. Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Projects created immediate improvements in level of financial difficulty and income, and participants used income from the projects to meet their basic needs for food, healthcare, rent, education, and fuel. Fewer participants reported experiencing a lot of financial difficulty, and more reported little or no financial difficulty. Nearly half of LUPD and MS participants reported household income of 4 million or more LBP at endline, and ACTED participants experienced a change in average income from around 500,000 LBP to between 700,000-1,000,000 LBP. Women experienced increases in capacity, confidence, and psychosocial well-being. Most participants reported that their skills increased "a lot" as a result of the projects, while nearly all participants said their confidence increased "a lot" because of the projects. Women reported increases in their psychosocial well-being from changes in confidence, feelings of belonging and camaraderie with other women, and financial stability. Participants increased decision-making power in the form of their influence over household spending, with marked reductions in the portion of beneficiaries reporting no influence or only a little influence over these decisions. Women often drew a direct connection between their empowerment and participation in the projects, especially the income they earned. (**Finding 1)**

Conclusion 2: Factors which limited the achievement of intended results or the quality of those results included challenges related to transportation, childcare, training or learning conditions, and work placement fit and conditions. Transportation reimbursement policies, as well as the lack of small bills in USD in Lebanon meant participants had delayed access to the resources necessary to reach training and work placement locations, leading to temporary out-of-pocket costs which participants struggled to manage. Participants also felt a standard transportation reimbursement was not fair, given large variation in travel distances/cost. Participants struggled at times to arrange childcare and may not have fully understood or been able to use the portion of their cash for work compensation intended for that purpose. The learning environment and equipment availability for MS was not ideal and created some barriers to learning. ACTED and MS participants (with variation, depending on the placement) felt working conditions were challenging. ACTED participants found sales timeline tight and stressful, needed better bags for carrying the pads, and lacked the visibility materials necessary to establish credibility with potential buyers. A subset of MS participants found work placements were not a good fit for their goals, the standards for the workplace were poor, or work hours changed without warning. **(Finding 2)**

Conclusion 3: The largest challenge to sustainability was the state of Lebanon's labour market. Most women did not have jobs at the end of the projects. Excepting the women still working for LUPD, only 12.1% of women from ACTED and 16.4% from MS had jobs. When discussing future work options, participants usually wanted to work, but were not sure they could stay in the field in which they trained or find work at all. Just over half of women trained in web development, however, did find jobs, suggesting some fields may be more immune to the economic crisis. Beneficiaries identified several specific barriers to future employment, including disability status, country of origin (for Syrian women), and limited education (in fields where employers sometimes desired degrees, like hospital-based nursing or childcare). Not finding employment at the end of the projects also risked the loss of some of the gender equality and empowerment gains made by beneficiaries. **(Findings 3, 4, and 5)**

Conclusion 4: The projects demonstrated overall strong human rights and accountability values and practices. Participants had an awareness of some reporting mechanisms and largely felt empowered to report problems. Key staff serving as focal points was the most frequently used avenue for reporting

project issues, and participants tended to feel problems were quickly resolved. However, MS Participants reported some negative experiences perceived as favouritism in the distribution of training materials and job placement assignments, as well as experiences with anti-Syrian sentiment. Further, beneficiaries were frequently confused about when the projects would end, when future phases would begin, and if there would be opportunities for them to continue working. Providing participants with a clear set of expectations and coaching beneficiaries through adapting to life after the projects are important components of maintaining sensitivity to beneficiaries' needs and rights. **(Finding 7)**

Conclusion 5: Organizationally, the projects developed strong partnerships, with the only stress coming from tight timelines and some budget challenges. Several important areas of future resource allocation emerged, including capacity building and cash for work materials, venue, and vendors, additional social workers, and staff increases for MS and UN Women Lebanon, especially. There is some room to improve institutional set-up in terms of beneficiary selection, innovative solutions to either encourage beneficiaries to use funds set aside for transportation and childcare for those purposes or find alternative ways of providing transportation and childcare, job placement locations and monitoring process used by MS, as well as clearer planning of sales routes and resourcing saleswomen on the part of ACTED. **(Findings 8, 9, and 10)**

Conclusion 6: These projects largely demonstrated alignment with the Country Office and UN Women strategies from theories of change and results frameworks. Areas of weaker alignment include less direct connection to the labour market for ACTED and LUPD participants, minimal project provisions for changing the private sector, national authorities, or CSOs, and shorter-term change than focused on by the UN Women results framework. However, project strengths suggest the ToC may need to include a focus on creating jobs the way that ACTED and LUPD did (to address the weak labour market), and a greater recognition of how this portfolio creates psychosocial benefits for women, who feel empowered by providing for themselves and their families, increasing their confidence, sense of self-worth, and aspirations. These projects also created comparative advantages by integrating humanitarian assistance with additional objectives (period product availability, community-based food aid preparation and distribution, and labour subsidization of small businesses during crises). **(Findings 11 and 12)**

5. Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: When using third parties to provide capacity building, UN Women Lebanon should more directly vet the training facility, materials, and practices to ensure high quality service provision. UN Women Lebanon personnel already recognized this need, required the vendor to make improvements to the learning environment during the project, and identified it as a lesson learned, acknowledging also that this may require increasing the budget set aside for this purpose.

Lesson 2: Transportation amounts may need to be adjusted in response to changes in economic conditions. The UN Women Lebanon team recognized this need and did increase the transportation reimbursement offered. However, it may also be necessary to tailor increases to the distance traveled by participants to ensure feelings of equity in disposable income.

Lesson 3: Including childcare compensation in the budget is a gender-responsive strength of these projects. However, these funds had to be re-directed at times by beneficiaries. Identifying which beneficiaries need childcare (as well as the care for elders or other dependents) should be done with

participants immediately after women are selected as project participants. As childcare needs arose during the course of these projects (despite the childcare portion of the cash for work stipend), implementing partners struggled to help women access care alternatives on a case-by-case basis while also running the other elements of the projects. Integrating time and resources to address this challenge from project inception, likely through direct arrangements with childcare providers, rather than a stipend, will help prevent this in the future. UN Women Lebanon staff have identified this as a practice they wanted to adopt in the next phase, and all current implementing partners have been instructed to ascertain childcare needs at project inception.

Lesson 4: Multi-site job placement projects require more resources for placement identification, monitoring and troubleshooting than the kind of "in house" cash for work operations run by ACTED and LUPD. As such, additional staff need to be allocated to projects which include this as a design element. Absent additional staff, training and placement types need to be more focused, with fewer training topics and employers. Further, the outreach phase should be longer to ensure a fit between potential participants and the training curriculum/job placement types available.

Lesson 5: Designing safe and accessible working environments and job descriptions for people with disabilities is best done in consultation with an array of experts – engineers, occupational therapists, and social workers. Because LUPD leveraged this level of expertise, beneficiaries experienced a safe, affirming, and productive work environment. This contributed to the project's strong outcomes in terms of skill and confidence increases amongst beneficiaries. This model should be replicated in future similar projects. LUPD staff did suggest some room to grow, though, in the development of written policies and guidelines for conflict resolution. Clients from different backgrounds did occasionally experience conflict, and management of this conflict should be standardized.

Lesson 6: While a very minor element of the project, as acknowledged by both UN Women Lebanon and MS, the project's attempt to include members of the LGBTQ+ community was not successful because the project team did not fully understand the needs of this group, especially trans women, at the start of the project. UN Women Lebanon staff have identified that they need a specialized partner for working with trans women, so this represents a lesson learned as the country office reaches for even more inclusive programming.

Lesson 7: UN Women Lebanon built strong and collaborative partnerships with the implementing partners. This strength originated from a high level of engagement between UN Women Lebanon and partners in the form of both strategic thinking about project design and constructive problem-solving. This level of engagement should be maintained in the future, so investments in staff capacity should match the need for this type of relationship with partners.

6. Recommendations

The recommendations have been drafted following a consultative approach with the programme stakeholders. Presentation of preliminary findings and the way forward took place in a workshop with the evaluation management and Reference Group members to inform the recommendations presented below. Each recommendation is tied to corresponding findings and conclusions and includes actions for consideration by the Country Office. The level of priority and responsibility for actions are indicated with each recommendation.

Strategic Recommendation 1: The capacity building experience of beneficiaries should be improved with several specific changes.

Action points:

- First, provide hard copy summaries of training content to participants. Women could then refer back to this information to review key concepts, which is especially important for courses offered in a great deal of detail, like aide nursing.
- Second, ensure the right amount of equipment is available and distributed to everyone equally. If sufficient resources for this are not available, clearly explain why some (and not others) receive materials (based on grades/performance for example), or otherwise do not distribute materials.
- Third, include basic literacy and English language skills if women are entering work environments where literacy and English are required. Fourth, consider increasing the training time period for very in-depth courses, particularly those offered to MS participants.
- Finally, as covered in lessons learned, vet learning vendors and design venues to ensure they are suitable learning environments.

(Findings 2 and 8, Conclusion 2, Priority - Medium, Responsible – UN Women, Implementing Partners, Training Venues)

Strategic Recommendation 2: UN Women should consider changing the policies around payment of transportation during humanitarian crises, paying special attention towards disability-friendly transportation arrangements.

Action points:

- UN Women Lebanon should consider alternatives transportation support which do not require beneficiaries to cover transportation costs themselves prior to reimbursement.
- Long-term, considering UN Women policies requiring transportation funds be paid after activities occur, UN Women Lebanon should consider paying a transportation vendor to provide that service.
- If the projects continue to use a transportation reimbursement model, consider modulating reimbursement based on travel distance to reduce the sense of unfairness felt by beneficiaries.
- Finally, for LUPD, investment in a disability-friendly transportation social enterprise, a concept raised by LUPD staff, does seem advisable.

(**Findings 2 and 8, Conclusion 2, Priority – High, Responsible – UN Women)**

Strategic Recommendation 3: UN Women Lebanon should explore additional options for providing childcare to beneficiaries.

Action Points:

- Consider the option of subsidizing placements for children as needed at local nurseries, paying the nurseries directly for the care of those children. This requires more third-party vendor vetting by UN Women Lebanon, so the cost of staff time for this vetting is a necessary consideration as part of exploring this option, as is additional resource allocation for transportation reimbursement to cover the cost of children's transportation. However, it may ultimately represent a more efficient use of funds. Because not all women have children, paying for care only for those with children, rather than including a reimbursement for all, may be less costly.

(Findings 2 and 8, Conclusion 2, Priority – High, Responsible – UN Women and Implementing Partners)

Strategic Recommendation 4: When arranging job placements with private sector employers, consider including a phase of the projects prior to the intake of beneficiaries which involves identifying, reviewing and arranging a certain number of placements for participants.

Action points:

- Conduct an assessment of the ability of local job markets to absorb workers, which would then inform the geographic areas from which the projects draw participants. This will help ensure that there are not too many participants for each to be matched with high quality, local placements.
- More pre-vetting of employers will also help ensure quality working conditions, avoiding situations like those raised by participants who observed unsafe childcare conditions at their placements and reducing the probability of Syrian participants experiencing discrimination by clearly laying out expectations for the types of tasks participants should perform.
- Identify fields where diplomas are desired for full employment, so those fields can either be avoided or a list of employers who accept non-credentialed workers can be compiled before or early in implementation.

(Finding 2, Conclusion 2, Priority – Medium, Responsible – UN Women and Implementing Partners)

Strategic Recommendation 5: For projects which involve the sale of products made at a central location, as was the case for ACTED, concrete actions to improve the ability of saleswomen to do their work should be taken.

Action points:

- The project should provide materials and funds for transporting the product, visibility materials, like vests, for establishing the credibility of saleswomen, and realistic product samples.
- Sales routes should also be planned out in advance to ensure there is no overlap and to place routes as close as possible to participants' homes for additional ease of transportation.

(Finding 2, Conclusion 2, Priority – Medium, Responsible – UN Women and Implementing Partners)

Strategic Recommendation 6: The psychosocial support provided by most of the projects in this portfolio, the life skills and PSEA training, social workers, therapists, inclusion advisors, and referral

provision, is a key strength of these projects. Continuing this type of support is recommended as a valuable use of donor funding dedicated to women's economic empowerment.

Action Points

- Future iterations of these projects should at least include a level of psychosocial support on par with that provided by the projects evaluated here.
- UN Women Lebanon should consider increasing investment in these supports for their livelihoods portfolio, where possible.

(Findings 1 and 8, Conclusion 1, Priority - High, Responsible – UN Women)

Strategic Recommendation 7: Future project iterations should focus on increasing transparency and accountability towards the targeted population.

Action points:

- First, if time and resources allow, communicate to rejected project participants the reasons why their applications were not accepted.
- Second, follow-up repeatedly on beneficiary complaints of favoritism, ill treatment, or discrimination, and tell beneficiaries exactly what mitigation strategies were taken.
- Third, establish check-in points throughout the project period in which staff remind beneficiaries of how much time is left in the project cycle and what the projects can (and cannot) do for them in the remaining time.

(Finding 7, Conclusion 4, Priority - High, Responsible – UN Women and Implementing Partners)

Strategic Recommendation 8: A more robust exit strategy should be developed, tailored for each project. Exit strategies should, ideally, demystify the labour market and job search process, while helping beneficiaries feel as though they have resources or support they can turn to after project closure to help them in this process.

Action points:

- Develop and implement a clear exit strategy and plan.
- First, include a more comprehensive module of life skills training on how to find and secure future employment.
- Second, include elements of professional network development (connect women with mentors in their fields, syndicates, job placement organizations or programs, or local committees, like the one used by MS).
- Third, offer time and space for women to organize entrepreneurship groups during the projects to lay the foundation for their own business development initiatives.
- The exit strategy will also need to consider how best to support Syrian women who cannot legally work, as well as women who left abusive partners, so they can access services to reduce the probability that they return to abusive situations after project closure.

(Findings 3-5, Conclusion 3, Priority - High, Responsible – UN Women)

220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA

www.unwomen.org
www.facebook.com/unwomen
www.twitter.com/un_women
www.youtube.com/unwomen
www.flickr.com/unwomen