



EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS
UNDER THE LEADERSHIP, EMPOWERMENT, ACCESS AND
PROTECTION IN CRISIS RESPONSE (LEAP) PROGRAMMING IN
THE ARAB STATES REGION (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon)



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¹ Available as separate document at GATE (Add link)

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BDC	Business Development Centre
CfW	Cash for Work
EE	Economic Empowerment
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FTL	Fair Trade Lebanon
GES	Gender Equality Seal
GEHR	Gender Equality and Human Rights
HA	Humanitarian Action
IDP	Internal Displaced People
IGA	Income Generating Activity
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IR	Inception Report
JEFE	Jordan Education for Employment
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LEAP	Leadership, Empowerment, Access, and Protection
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PS	Private Sector
ROAS	Regional Office for Arab States
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Refugee Agency for Palestine Refugees
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In 2017 the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) commissioned a thematic evaluation of UN Women's Humanitarian Action in the Arab States region. The evaluation highlighted, *inter alia*, the need to take a more in-depth look at promoting economic opportunities in humanitarian action. This evaluation builds on the regional evaluation and focuses on evaluating Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) initiatives in humanitarian action supported through the *UN Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access, and Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP)* programming in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, in addition to other funding support mechanisms.

The evaluation findings and actionable recommendations are expected to inform future decision making and UN Women's approach to promoting the economic empowerment of refugee, internally displaced and host community women affected by crisis in the Arab States region and beyond.

The objectives of the evaluation, as described in the Terms of Reference (TOR) were to:

- a. Assess the **effectiveness** of UN Women's approach to economic empowerment of refugee, internally displaced and host community women in humanitarian contexts
- b. Assess the **connectedness and sustainability** of UN Women's initiatives focused on increasing economic opportunities for refugee and internally displaced women
- c. Identify and validate **lessons learned, good practice examples and innovation** of work supported by UN Women
- d. Provide **actionable recommendations** with respect to UN Women's approach to promoting women's economic opportunities in humanitarian settings.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are UN Women senior management and programme staff at regional and country levels, strategic partners, and key stakeholders.

Evaluation Methodology

The overall evaluation approach was:

- a. **Utilization focused:** the evaluation aimed at providing evidence-based findings and actionable recommendations for UN Women staff and improvements for rights holders.
- b. **Theory based:** The Theory of Change (TOC) developed by the UN Women LEAP Programme and the Theory of Change developed for UN Women's economic empowerment approach underpinned the evaluation.
- c. **Gender Responsive and Human Rights based:** Human Rights and Gender Equality principles were integrated throughout each phase of the evaluation. A Gender Equality and Human Rights (GEHR) based approach was mainstreamed in the evaluation questions, criteria, and methodology.

The evaluation was guided by an **evaluation matrix** based on two broad evaluation criteria: i) Effectiveness, and ii) Connectedness and Sustainability.

The evaluation had both a **summative and formative approach**, using both quantitative and qualitative data sources, and had a strong emphasis on meeting with primary stakeholders (i.e. women from refugee, IDP, and host communities) and the private sector. In total, the evaluation includes the perspectives of 124 individual and institutional stakeholders, 102 women and 22 men

The temporal scope of the evaluation was the period between 2012 and 2018. Its geographic scope included Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon with a more in-depth focus and field visits to Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon.

Evaluation context

As a smaller agency within the UN family and with a more recent history in the Arab States region, UN Women has been responding to humanitarian needs through a number of interventions including, but not limited to:

- a. supporting other humanitarian actors to integrate gender equality within their own interventions through knowledge production, technical assistance and active engagement in humanitarian coordination networks;
- b. supporting safe spaces for women in refugee and IDP camps and host communities through which access to a range of holistic services, including protection services, economic opportunities, leadership training and day care, remedial education is made available, and
- c. supporting economic opportunities targeting vulnerable women in refugee, IDP, and host communities.

Since 2012, UN Women has incorporated the development of economic opportunities for vulnerable women as part of its programme portfolio supporting resilience building – of people and communities. Resilience focused interventions have received increasing attention and emphasis as the humanitarian crisis in the region has evolved into a protracted crisis. This has been combined with a greater focus on a vulnerability approach to programming, rather than a status-based (refugee, displaced) approach – which seeks to assist national capacity and local populations while responding to the refugee crisis affecting the region. In its findings, the evaluation team notes that creating sustainable employment opportunities for refugees in contexts where their right to remain, legal rights in the country and access to educational or training opportunities are severely constrained, is a considerable challenge for national and international partners (and often at odds with national priorities).

Most important findings and conclusions

Women targeted with economic interventions under humanitarian action face an immediate need to find income to support their families. UN Women

has responded to this need through implementing a variety of economic interventions which have provided immediate access for women to income including through access to Cash for Work. Opportunities or economic models that provided limited opportunity to earn an immediate income are less welcomed by women.

Effectiveness

Over a short period of time, UN Women has been able to develop strong implementation models based on a partnership between UN Women, relevant national government counterparts, the private sector, and NGO implementing partners across the region. This multi stakeholder partnership framework provides a strong basis for further development across the region and has the potential of informing UN Women’s WEE strategy globally in the context of humanitarian action. One of the strengths of this model is the emphasis on engaging with local organisations – to ensure local buy-in, leverage local expertise and promote sustainability, whether these are government institutions, civil society, or private sector actors.

In addition, UN Women’s added value lies in its holistic approach to economic empowerment through which economic initiatives are paired with awareness raising (e.g. protection including workplace safety, labour rights) and access to support services (e.g. child care, transportation, protection referrals) to enable women to work. At a national level, UN Women engages with relevant ministries to support policy development.

This holistic approach has been shown to be effective since the direct provision of economic opportunities alone is not sufficient to produce large scale results. While the economic opportunities provide a direct impact on the well-being of the women and their families, UN Women needs to find ways to scale up these interventions and share with other actors the experiences of the different economic models tested.

UN Women’s approach to provide follow up and support, life skills, and protection is an effective approach to support economic and broader empowerment when working with vulnerable women. This holistic approach makes a significant difference to the coping strategies of women, both refugee and host community women.

Ensuring different economic interventions implemented by UN Women contribute to long-term employment and income generation for women has been challenging due to the nature of the humanitarian donor funding which tends to be short-term with annual funding cycles. As there is greater realisation that the refugee crisis is a protracted one, UN Women should assess which of the donor countries it receives support from are funding resilience-focused interventions.

Funding cycles have also affected the approach for monitoring and data collection by UN Women. Assessing impacts around sustainable access to income and employment requires multi-year funding cycles with a supportive long-term M&E approach.

Results from income generation and employment are varied and are strongest where interventions are implemented in collaboration with private sector and where training courses allow women to achieve a skill level of a sufficient level to find employment. Lessons identified are an opportunity to further strengthen economic interventions.

Safe and social spaces have the potential to become 'economic empowerment hubs' when the necessary equipment and training opportunities are located within the safe spaces. Further work in this area should continue to be based on close links with other humanitarian actors and the private sector and respond to market needs. UN Women should support quality market research in areas where data is lacking and build on existing market research done by other actors. Where safe spaces are located within refugee camps the potential of the camp as a market due to the closed camp boundaries should be further investigated, with the acknowledgement that some work around this has been done and is underway.

Different economic models:



Skills training (UN Women across the region):

Skills training combined with job placements was perceived positively by beneficiaries and other stakeholders (including the private sector). The additional component of supporting job placement makes skills training more effective as a tool to find employment.

The training was of high quality but was often considered too basic and too short to assist women in establishing their own businesses or to find work within the private sector. Women need to be trained to a level where they can compete, and training must be linked to other interventions. This does not mean long-term training (similar to TVET institutions), but appropriate skills that can be achieved through revising training modules (e.g. a two-week hairdressing course should focus on a specialised area in hairdressing, such as colouring, instead of attempting to cover all the hairdressing basics).

Nonetheless, skills training positively impacted women socially and increased their self-esteem, particularly when linked to concrete opportunities. Learning a new skill can be a starting point for women to think further about their economic contribution and the ramifications of that. This is an important aspect for women's empowerment.

Women who met the selection criteria were supported with training to start their own business. In some instances, start-up packages or capital was provided. Business establishment is a good activity for some women and where women are linked with small-scale credit institutions the results are strongest and more sustainable.

Some discussion took place around whether or not informal economic activities can be supported. The evaluation team is of the opinion that omitting the informal economy would exclude a large number of women from support. Working with these women and assessing opportunities to bring them into the formal economy would be the most effective way of providing assistance to this particular population group.



'Production units' linked to private sector or based within local civil society or government structures (UN Women in Lebanon):

A joint understanding of the meaning of 'production units' among different stakeholders was not immediately evident. The term supports a vision of ongoing production, with ongoing opportunities for women to produce for the purpose of selling, and to have ongoing employment and access to income.

Production units have been impacted negatively by a lack of sustained funding to support the different units to reach production scale. The units continued to provide training to vulnerable women using the existing equipment often through peer-to-peer training. It was found that an opportunity exists to link these units with private sector or change the operation mode to support more ongoing production. A combination of ‘training’ and ‘production’ is viable.



Cash for Work (CfW) initiatives (UN Women in Jordan and Iraq):

CfW was not within the scope of this evaluation, given that it is in itself not a sustainable employment model, and that UN Women’s work in this area has been evaluated numerous times recently. However, it is important to highlight some aspects of CfW as UN Women has aimed, where possible, to link the relief nature of CfW to longer-term development needs. These linkages have considered legislative and other contextual constraints which can negatively impact this initiative.

As mentioned, UN Women has commissioned a number of evaluations focused on the effectiveness of its CfW programming. These evaluation reports, and UN Women’s own monitoring reports, confirm that women were able to increase their income for the duration of their CfW engagement, were able to use these additional income resources to support their families with priority needs and, in some instances, women used the income earned to set up a small business.

In all cases the CfW interventions supported women to learn a skill, raise their self-esteem, and allowed them to expand their networks. This remains an important mechanism for vulnerable refugee and displaced women. Where feasible, UN Women has linked the CfW experience with training and capacity building that women might use after CfW activity has ended.

There is increased discussion between humanitarian actors around whether or not CfW initiatives can be utilised effectively with a longer-term vision in a protracted refugee crisis. The CfW approach is mostly short-term focused, which limits humanitarian actors’ ability to use this modality to

design and implement economic interventions with a longer-term vision.



Cooperatives and markets (UN Women in Lebanon and Egypt):

UN Women has piloted the establishment of new initiatives such as the establishment of the cooperative structure, e.g. Akkar cooperative in cooperation with Fair-Trade Lebanon and Al Mashqal in Egypt in cooperation with Care International. These initiatives were initiated to respond to the urgent needs of vulnerable women to access employment opportunities that generate an immediate income, and the longer-term goal of setting up sustainable structures that require initial investment and can provide sustainable long-term income opportunities.

The evaluation team found that it was a challenge for the cooperative initiatives to provide a quick response to the immediate needs of the beneficiaries. Setting up cooperative structures, or other organizational structures, requires a longer-term timeframe whereas the focus of vulnerable women is on immediate income earning opportunities. Cooperative models could be tagged with cash for work to address this.

In addition, UN Women’s work with cooperatives did bring people together and has the potential for longer term economic engagement. Initiatives such as the production unit in Egypt have the potential to become a vibrant social enterprise where vulnerable women have strong ownership.

In this way, the initiative provides a solid learning base for UN Women and other humanitarian actors as an innovative approach to provide employment opportunities and support social cohesion and co-existence between different population groups.

The experiences gained will now allow UN Women to strengthen further their business models, learn from and share lessons with other similar initiatives, develop monitoring tools to allow for lessons learning and adjust implementation as the project evolves.

Connectedness and sustainability

'Economic models' are designed by UN Women with a long-term vision in mind. These experiences, processes, lessons, and adaptations need to be well documented by UN Women as this will further strengthen UN Women's capacity to improve on the initiation of different economic models.

A common understanding of the 'meaning' of each model is required to ensure that expectations for results are clear. Sustainability factors need to be built into the economic model design from the outset.

Scaling up of the various interventions is possible if a strong economic strategy is developed which includes well-developed models and sharing of lessons (where the economic model succeeded and where it did not).

Based on the available data and the in-country feedback, the interventions with the strongest potential for scaling up are:

- a. skills training in response to identified market demands and involvement of the private sector in the design and quality assurance of the skills training. Where skills training is closely linked to private sector needs, allowing the private sector partners to influence training activities and provide quality control, and was combined with a job placement, the likelihood for women to find employment was strengthened.;
- b. skills training combined with job placements as this approach increases the potential for women to find employment after the training; and those which support women to establish small-scale businesses based on strong coaching support from the design through to implementation. Businesses incubators should be set up to provide support.

More awareness raising among donors is needed regarding UN Women's coordination and operational mandate. UN Women is viewed as an agency focusing on advocacy and policy reform around women's rights. Its operational and coordinating mandate is less known.

There is room for improvement around how UN agencies work together in a complementary way, allow each to work on their core mandates. Other

UN agencies implement WEE work and could benefit from integrating UN Women gender expertise and gender equality in economic interventions. That this is seen as a weak point is not a reflection on UN Women, but on the UN family as a whole. UN Women and ILO have taken proactive steps to develop joint proposals in the region utilising each other's complementary comparative advantages.

Good practices and innovation

- a. What is clear from the work undertaken by UN Women in the region is that the organisation works effectively with both the private sector and with local government structures. UN Women has developed several innovative initiatives for engaging with a wide variety of private sector actors around employing vulnerable women in their businesses.
- b. A variety of research and evaluation reports have been commissioned by UN Women around supporting WEE in humanitarian action. These now form a good basis for learning within the agency and for further strengthening the models. Lessons should be shared with other actors to influence the practices of other organisations and stimulate debate and improved methods.
- c. The Gender Equity Seal (GES) initiative in Jordan was seen by all private sector actors as an innovative and good practice they would like to continue. The companies interviewed showed a strong ownership and provided evidence of introducing more gender equitable practices. There is some potential to use this initiative, at a regional level, as an entry point to engage the private sector around corporate entrepreneurial responsibilities focused on the SDGs. There is clear benefit to opening up discussions with the private sector about its engagement with and support for women from displaced and refugee communities.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: To be demand driven, consider a regional portfolio and strategy which includes a variety of well-developed economic models based

on the experiences and the research conducted to date and the priority needs identified by the target group, governments, and other actors.

- a. The portfolio should focus on the partnership model developed in the region including UN Women, local government structures, national civil society actors, and private sector.
- b. UN Women’s holistic approach to WEE should be maintained which stands out as being strong and positive. The economic activity should be further complemented with soft skills training and awareness raising on protection.
- c. This portfolio and strategy should be the basis for regional fundraising efforts, with more proactive initiatives from UN Women showcasing its efforts to date.
- d. The portfolio should be developed whilst clarifying the differences in strategies required to reach refugee women and women in host communities. For example, legal constraints around refugee women’s access to the labour market impact their participation in that market. The approaches adopted by and targets set within the different strategies should reflect the needs of target beneficiaries.
- e. The programme portfolio should demonstrate the added value and expertise UN Women brings to WEE. This should include technical knowledge around economic empowerment along with solid project management skills that enable results achievement. The added value of UN Women in supporting the capacity development of local organisations should be developed further.

Recommendation 2: Continued management support is needed, in particular where the presence of UN Women is more recent and where fully-fledged country offices have yet to be established. When presences in those countries are established, the necessary resources to ensure delivery of programme quality must be allocated. UN Women has a good basis from which to develop and implement strong economic interventions, but the requisite resources need to be made available. During the early stages this could require own core funding investment.

- a. The humanitarian and development community in the Arab States is very crowded and competitive, especially with respect to the Syrian refugee crisis. In such a competitive environment it is important that sufficient capacity is in place and high-quality programme interventions can be delivered from the outset.
- b. A longer-term approach to monitoring and implementation for resilience focused interventions will ensure the assessment of long-term sustainable results (e.g. income, employment) beyond the immediate project cycle. WEE multi-year strategies should be developed that can be broken down into annual plans (or other suitable timeframes) to accommodate short-term humanitarian funding cycles.
- c. UN Women has a strong focus on engaging with and supporting local national actors. This practice should be maintained and strengthened further. However, working with local actors directly without an international NGOs as an intermediate actor requires that UN Women provide direct capacity building support to these organisations.

Recommendation 3: UN Women should build further on its strengths and the progress made to date in engaging with private sector actors.

This could be done through:

- a. continuing to combine short-term self-reliance support for both refugees and host communities through Cash for Work and engagement with private sector;
- b. expanding demand driven vocational training and match the skills required by the labour market in partnership with private sector including extending training duration to allow sufficient time for acquiring skills;
- c. complementing skills training with job placement facilitation with the private sector, negotiate and follow up possibilities of ongoing employment post placement;
- d. expanding start-up and growth support for small enterprise development including home-based businesses, targeting both refugees and

nationals, and exploring possibilities for more age-differentiated business ideas;

- e. working towards a win-win situation for both the private sector and the target population with investment and contributions from the private sector discussed openly;
- f. engage actively with municipalities, CBOs, and the private sector as part of its locally based approach, and foster a dialogue among these sectors to support women's economic development as part of the local economic development plans; and
- g. document and share lessons on the integration of the private sector into crisis response efforts. Although private sector involvement in crisis response is at the heart of the resilience-building narrative, domestic and/or international mechanisms are not yet in place for effective integration of private sector partners into the crisis response.

Recommendation 4: UN Women should consider whether an 'advisory' presence within relevant ministries (a counterpart for the economic empowerment agenda) would enhance UN Women recognition among other stakeholders as an important WEE actor. This would follow the example of other multilateral agencies (e.g. ILO and UNDP) who have advisory presence within the ministries which are their primary counterpart.

- a. In Lebanon and Egypt this should be explored with the Ministries of Social Development (MoSD) /Social Affairs (MoSA), based on the model and experiences of UN Women in Jordan.
- b. An 'advisory' presence would enable joint fundraising efforts between UN Women and MoSD/MoSA as well as enabling the influencing of policy in at ministerial level.
- c. A presence within ministries supporting the ministries' capacity to implement WEE interventions and policy development would enhance UN Women's capacity in developing interventions and supporting their effectiveness on the ground. It would also leverage UN Women as an important WEE actor among other stakeholders.

Recommendation 5: Between humanitarian actors there is an absence of strong knowledge and research which demonstrate the complexities required to support response strategies. Across the region there are deeply rooted cultural and social norms which have affected women's access to employment. While UN Women addresses this well, more diverse responses should be included in recognition of the diversity of women from displaced, refugee, and host communities and the diversity of assistance required to support them.

LIST OF FINDINGS

Finding 1: Across the region, UN Women was able to develop different economic models appropriate to the context in which they were working. The effectiveness of different economic models varied in terms of supporting women to find long term sustainable employment.

Finding 2: Opportunities designed and supported by UN Women placed beneficiary women at the core of the interventions and considered their protection and safety.

Finding 3: The ‘production units’ require more time and capacity support to evolve into units accessible to vulnerable women where they can access available instruments to make products to generate an income.

Finding 4: UN Women took steps to implement creative and often innovative economic initiatives based on collective action models targeting women from both refugee and host communities.

Finding 5: The cooperative model requires further support to balance the long-term perspective required to develop products that meet fair trade standards with opportunities to support women’s immediate income needs.

Finding 6: The production unit in Egypt provides a good foundation to become a vibrant social enterprise where vulnerable women have strong ownership.

Finding 7: The rights holders are not always familiar with the operation and management procedures of the administrative systems of cooperatives. Cooperative and other collective structures need to follow working methods that support transparency between members and managing bodies.

Finding 8: The training provided was generally of good quality, but more advanced training opportunities are needed to enable women to reach a skill level sufficient to gain employment or establish their own competitive businesses.

Finding 9: Where skills training was closely linked to private sector needs, allowing the private sector partners to influence training activities and provide quality control, and was combined with a job placement, the likelihood for women to find employment was strengthened.

Finding 10: UN Women has engaged with private sector actors across the region in both the humanitarian and development fields.

Finding 11: Barriers to increased women’s participation in the CfW were identified and strategies put in place to ensure equitable access. While there is still funding available for CfW, it is increasingly important for aid agencies to assess how these opportunities can be followed up with support to women to work in private companies in the hope that they will be retained after a period of time.

Finding 12: Future pilot interventions would benefit from good design based on action research and effective monitoring tools. This would build a strong body of lessons learning that would enable a model to be adjusted based on collected evidence. It would also allow lessons to be shared with other actors and donor agencies.

Finding 13: The holistic approach used by UN Women in supporting economic interventions targeting women is a clear added value compared to other actors supporting similar interventions.

Finding 14: UN Women is encouraged to consider long term benefits and sustainability of its economic interventions in a more systematic manner.

Finding 15: UN Women is focused on establishing strong engagement with private sector actors across the region, but a win-win situation is not always sought where the private sector and women both benefit from the cooperation.

Finding 16: The economic models which were suggested to support sustainability emphasised

operational and coordination structures more than they emphasised viability.

Finding 17: Skills training linked to the private sector increases the possibilities for women to find factory employment or work from home.

Finding 18: UN Women rightly targets women from refugee and host communities with interventions that consider the different constraints faced by the different target groups. This differentiation could be further strengthened and be made more explicit

1 BACKGROUND

1.1

Introduction

This Evaluation Report concerns the evaluation of Women's Economic Empowerment initiatives in humanitarian action supported through the *UN Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access, and Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP) project* and other funding support mechanisms.

The evaluation was undertaken by two external consultants, Martine Van de Velde (Team Leader) and Safa' Abdel Rahman (Madi, Economic Development Consultant). In Lebanon, the lead consultant was accompanied by UN Women's regional evaluation specialist, a staff member of the UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Service.

The Evaluation Report was prepared following an inception phase (April 2018) during which the evaluation team conducted inception meetings with key stakeholders and reviewed documentation to refine the key questions and identify the evaluation approach and methods. Field visits to Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan were undertaken during May 2018. Field trips were conducted to observe project activities and to talk to local implementing partners and programme beneficiaries. In lieu of a field trip to Iraq, phone

interviews were conducted with stakeholders in Iraq.

The Evaluation Report is structured as follows:

- a. The **Executive Summary** focuses on the evaluation's most important findings, conclusions, and recommendations
- b. **Section 1** – Background to the evaluation including purpose, scope, objectives, approach, and data collection methods
- c. **Section 3** – Findings against effectiveness, sustainability and connectedness criteria based on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data review and primary data collection through key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGDs)
- d. **Section 4** – Conclusions and actionable recommendations for UN Women to strengthen its engagement in support of WEE in the region
- e. **Annexes** – Terms of Reference, Evaluation matrix, List of Persons met, LEAP Framework, Background documentation, List of WEE initiatives at country level, Stakeholder analysis.

1.2

Evaluation Objectives and Scope

The evaluation covers UN Women's economic interventions in a humanitarian context supported under the LEAP regional project April 2017- March 2018 and through other funding sources. The UN Women RO has opted for a limited focus for this evaluation to allow for a more in-depth examination of its approach to promoting economic

empowerment of displaced and vulnerable women and girls as a follow-up to the broader evaluation of UN Women's humanitarian action work in the Arab States in 2017. The geographic coverage of the evaluation includes Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. This evaluation is expected to assist UN Women to identify good practices that promote

sustainable economic opportunities which strengthen women's resilience and economic empowerment for future programming in this area.

BOX 1. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives as stipulated in the evaluation TORs, and validated during the inception phase consultations with UN Women ROAS, were as follows:

- Assess the **effectiveness** of UN Women's approach to economic empowerment of refugee and internally displaced women within the framework of the LEAP (and host community focused WEE related programming in Jordan)
- Assess the **connectedness and sustainability** of UN Women's initiatives on increasing economic opportunities for refugee and internally displaced women
- Identify and validate **lessons learned, good practice examples and innovation** of work supported by UN Women
- Provide actionable **recommendations** with respect to UN Women's approach to promoting women's economic opportunities in humanitarian settings.

1.3

Methodology

This section summarises the key features of the evaluation methodology which was developed during the consultative inception phase between

February and March 2018. See Annexes 2 and 4 and the Evaluation Inception Report for further details.

1.31 Evaluation Approach

The overall evaluation approach was formative with summative elements with a strong emphasis on joint learning. It was theory based, utilisation focused, and gender responsive and human rights based. As part of the inception process, emphasis was given to reviewing good practices in assessing women's economic empowerment programmes in humanitarian contexts.

Formative and summative, with a focus on understanding causality: The evaluation had both formative and summative elements as a number of interventions were still ongoing or are in the pilot phase. To support the understanding of lesson-learning, the evaluation team focused not just on 'what' happened, but rather on 'why' it happened. Understanding of causality supports scaling up and understanding of the factors that impact on sustainability.

Joint learning: The evaluation aimed to support a process of learning and critical reflection to inform UN Women's future WEE efforts to strengthen programmatic and policy interventions in settings affected by sudden onset emergencies and protracted crisis effectively. Debriefing workshops were held in each country where field missions occurred on the last day to discuss emerging findings and recommendations.

Accordingly, the evaluation examined the underlying **Theory of Change** (see page 19) that underpins the different economic models and UN Women's holistic approach in supporting economic interventions.

Utilisation focused: The evaluation aimed to provide an evidence-based assessment with actionable recommendations for identified duty bearers

(government, humanitarian actors, UN Women) and improvements for rights holders (refugee and internally displaced women, host community women). The evaluation was designed to address the intended uses and priorities of the primary users. Primary users were consulted throughout the process.

Principles in assessing WEE programmes in humanitarian context: For the purpose of the evaluation, economic empowerment is defined as a process whereby women's and girls' lives are transformed from a condition where they have limited access to economic assets and decision-making power over resources to a situation where they experience economic advancement and their power and agency is enhanced. While a strong economic empowerment focus was maintained, the team did consider the intertwining of economic and social roles in women's lives.

Limited OECD-DAC criteria: The TORs included a number of evaluation questions to assess

BOX 2. EVALUATION OF WEE

Evaluations that explore how interventions (programmes of projects) lead to a transformation change in women and girls' lives enhancing their power, including control of resources, decision-making and agency and not simply increased income, provide a more meaningful understanding of women and girls' economic empowerment.

Economic empowerment will only be sustainable if there are changes within the individual, in communities and institutions, in markets and value chains, and in the wider political and legal environment.

(ODI, March 2014).

interventions against the criteria of Effectiveness, Connectedness, and Sustainability. The limited number of OECD-DAC criteria for this evaluation supported the expectation of the report having a more in-depth focus.

BOX 3. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Effectiveness measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Implicit within the criterion of effectiveness is timeliness.

Connectedness refers to the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account.

Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable.²

1.3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Multi-method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection: Quantitative data collection was based on available UN Women progress, monitoring, and annual reports. Where feasible, the data was cross-

checked during the in-country consultation process. Qualitative data was obtained through structured and semi-structured questionnaires supporting FGDs and KIIs. Prior to the in-country consultation process, the team reviewed reports and research

² Overseas Development Institute, ALNAP, Working with the DAC criteria in the evaluation of EHA, London, 2006. DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance. www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/

documents from UN Women as well as humanitarian and development actors and government. A total of 60 documents were reviewed as part of inception and data collection.

Stakeholder consultations: Prior to fieldwork, a detailed stakeholder analysis of duty bearers and rights holders was conducted in each country to ensure broad participation and determine who would participate in the evaluation and how. In Lebanon and Egypt extensive consultations took place with women targeted under the interventions. Speaking with primary stakeholders was a priority for the evaluators to ensure that their interests and views were well-represented. The evaluators worked with UN Women to identify women participating in the different economic models developed by UN Women, meeting with both host community and refugee women. Consultations also took place with UN Women staff in all countries, as well as selected key stakeholders (government, aid organisations, donor community, and the private sector). (See Annex 5 for in-country

schedule.) Throughout the evaluation process, the perspectives shared by all stakeholders were cross-checked to ensure rigor.

Consultations with private sector actors: The evaluation had a solid face-to-face engagement with private sector actors in three of the four countries under review, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq where UN Women was more engaged with the private sector. The private sector actors who were consulted had a current or past relationship with UN Women. Efforts to meet with private sector actors who had no previous relationship with UN Women to explore external point of views did not result in any interest. Based on this experience and that the evaluation team had good in-country consultations with the private sector, it was decided that an online follow up survey was unnecessary. It was the view of the consultants that this would not add further value to the existing evidence.

In total, the evaluation represents the views of 124 individual and institutional stakeholders, 102 women and 22 men divided as per figure 1.

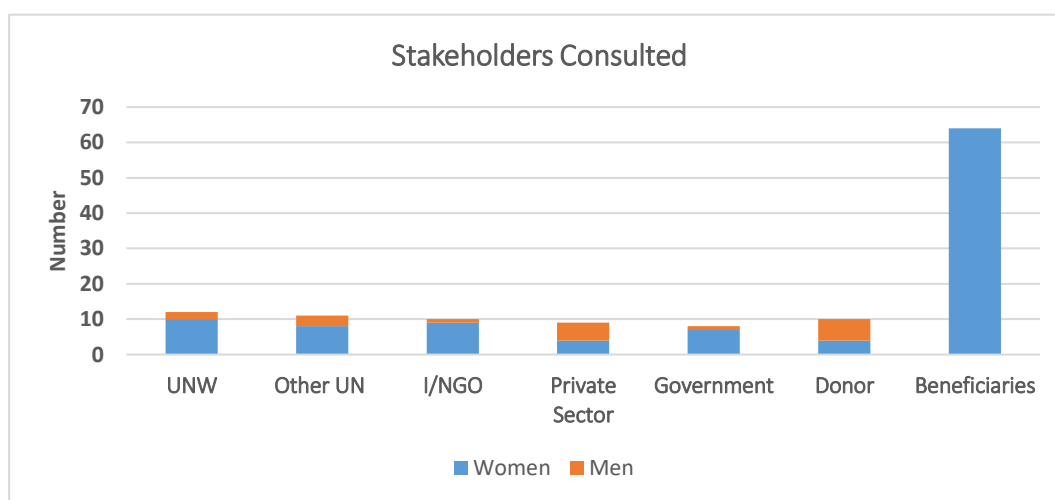


Figure 1: Stakeholders consulted by type and sex

1.3.3 Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the *UN Women Evaluation Policy 3 and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System*.⁴

Independence and impartiality: Clear reasons for evaluative judgments and the acceptance or rejection of comments on evaluation products were provided in written “comment trails” for each version of the evaluation deliverables. All findings were triangulated by multiple team members.

Credibility and accountability: The Inception Report and Draft Report were subjected to review and comments by the UN Women ROAS and Reference Group.

Confidentiality, integrity, and transparency: The evaluation respected stakeholders’ rights to provide

information in confidence after providing free and informed consent to participate in the evaluation. Information was used and represented only to the extent agreed to by its contributor.

Avoidance of harm: The evaluation team analysed the context of local conflicts and worked with local UN Women offices to identify vulnerable groups prior to field visits, and to ensure that any participatory processes and evaluation questions were responsive to their needs.

Accuracy, completeness and reliability: All evaluation questions were answered through triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources and were processed using multiple analytical tools. The evaluation matrix was used to link each EQ to the related evidence.

1.3.4 Evaluation Constraints and Limitations

The following challenges were faced by the evaluation team:

- a. The geographic focus of the evaluation is four countries but only three out of the four countries could be visited. No visit to Iraq was possible due to visa and security constraints. Interviews with UN Women staff and Implementing partners in Iraq were done by Skype during the inception phase and after the visits to the region.
- b. Only Jordan was visited by both the evaluation team members. While it was planned for both evaluators to visit Lebanon due to visa requirements for Palestinian nationals to visit Lebanon, this did not eventuate.
- c. The evaluation approach had a strong emphasis on consultation of primary stakeholders which

happened in Lebanon and Egypt where women from refugee and host communities were consulted. In Jordan, during the weeks leading up to the evaluation, another field research was conducted. The evaluation team reviewed the data available from the previous research and concluded that additional interviews with the primary stakeholders were not needed and that the data provided was sufficient for analysis to support the evaluation. This avoided overwhelming the project beneficiaries already recently interviewed and instead it was decided that in Jordan emphasis is put on consultations with implementing partners and private sector actors with whom UN Women worked under humanitarian action and other development interventions.

3 UN Women, Evaluation policy of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women /2012/12)

4 UNEG Ethical Guidelines, accessible at: <http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp>

?doc_id=102 and UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system, accessible at: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=100

- d. The increasingly negative public views and government restrictions toward presence of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon had an impact on openly discussing with – for instance private sector – on how to support both refugee and local women from a humanitarian perspective. This was not a challenge faced in Egypt.
- e. Limited M&E data available which assessed interventions more long term. This is often the case under humanitarian action where activities are mostly short-term, with a period of 6 or 12 months.

2 Evaluation Context

2.1

Regional Humanitarian Background

Each of the countries included in this evaluation are host to some of the largest refugee populations in the world. Together, Jordan and Lebanon host 1.02 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR and over 1 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA. Lebanon also hosts around 35,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria. Egypt hosts a myriad of different refugee nationalities and Iraq has a large number of IDPs as a consequence of long violent conflict.⁵

While substantial humanitarian efforts have eased survival pressure and provide refugees and IDPs with access to basic services, there is an increased realisation that host governments are confronting a protracted Syrian refugee crisis, in addition to the longstanding Palestinian refugee crisis. There is also a realisation that the return of the Iraqi IDPs to their places of origin will require long-term support. The lack of socio-economic prospects, increased poverty, and the absence of employment opportunities contributes to people risking their lives to migrate to or seek asylum in Europe, and elsewhere.

There is a growing acceptance within the development sector that the Syrian crisis will take longer to resolve than was originally anticipated and will cause more permanent displacements than first expected. Multilateral and bilateral agencies have begun to devise longer-term engagements which support host governments to conceive strategies to provide access to employment and other economic opportunities. There has also been an increased acceptance – as stipulated within the Jordan Response Plan and the Lebanon Response Plan – that both refugee and vulnerable host communities

need to be targeted with such economic interventions.

In such a fragile context, supporting access to economic opportunities is challenging. This is especially so in countries where government institutions are faced with limitations in terms of capacities and resources, where there is a need for a more enabling environment that support private sector development and inclusive growth, where education and training systems should be better aligned to labour market needs.

Box 4. Women's participation in labour force

Women's participation in the labour force is low throughout the region, both for host community women and refugee women. Female labour force participation rates in the four countries, ranges from 14% in Jordan to 23% in Lebanon, with Iraq (19%) and Egypt (22%) falling in between (World Bank Open Data, 2017) For refugee women the rates are lower; ILO figures indicate that economic activity rates were 5.9% for Syrian women in Jordan and 19% for those in Lebanon. Similarly, results from a UNHCR Egypt Vulnerability Assessment for Refugees (EVAR) indicated that only 5 percent of 'working age females are employed'. (Egypt 3RP, 2017-18)

In these contexts, providing support to vulnerable women to access the labour market and find employment opportunities is challenging. However, it is a necessary component of a long-term and resilience-based humanitarian and development response to a protracted crisis, the constraints of which include:

⁵ UNHCR 31 October 2018; UNRWA

- a. **For vulnerable women who are nationals of host countries:** cultural constraints on women finding work outside the home; low levels of educational achievement; and limited skills training opportunities which do not sufficiently match market needs.
- b. **For refugee women:** In addition to those constraints faced by host community women, refugee women are faced with negative perceptions and limited legal access to the formal and informal labour market.

For more country specific analysis please refer to Annex 7

2.2

UN Women Economic Empowerment in Humanitarian Action

UN Women developed the Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP) (see Annex 3) programme in 2012 to support gender responsive humanitarian action including women’s active participation in economic life. Components of the LEAP programme have been implemented in Jordan since 2012 and in Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon since 2014. Supporting economic opportunities for displaced and vulnerable women and girls has been central to the LEAP approach.

Since 2012, UN Women has been positioning itself as an agency that is piloting different modalities to support economic opportunities for refugee women, IDP women, and vulnerable women in host communities. Various interventions have been implemented including CfW support, financial support for start-ups, vocational and skills training, and establishing women’s cooperatives and placements with the private sector.

As the different crises in the region have become protracted, there is recognition among humanitarian actors and governments of the need to support more resilience-building models. These require a new way of working in which humanitarian and development actors, the private sector, governments, and regional bodies cease

working in siloes and increase their collaboration to better address the needs and reduce vulnerability.⁶

In response to the need to support resilience programming, UN Women, through the current phase of the LEAP regional programme (launched in March 2016) and other similar initiatives, is working to consolidate its ongoing initiatives

Box 5. LEAP Programming

Overall, the LEAP programme aims to improve the gender responsiveness of humanitarian action by:

- i. ensuring that humanitarian / crisis response planning, frameworks and programming are informed by gender analysis;
- ii. increasing access to protection and economic opportunities for vulnerable and displaced women affected by sudden onset emergencies through safe/social spaces and income generation opportunities. These social spaces promote awareness raising; access to multi-sectoral services and referral mechanisms; women support groups; child care services; as well as facilitating access to skills training, CfW and livelihoods support; and
- iii. bridging the humanitarian / development divide in protracted and slow onset crises by promoting positive coping mechanisms, and sustainable livelihoods for marginalised women.

⁶ O’Brien Stephen, Rising humanitarian needs call for a new way of working, 14 March 2018, Portland Communications

including those related to women's economic opportunities with the objective of supporting sustainable solutions for refugee, displaced, and host communities where viable and working with regional bodies to support an end to conflict and instability.

The regional LEAP has one outcome and three outputs related to the economic empowerment of displaced and vulnerable women and girls

BOX 6. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OUTCOME OF LEAP REGIONAL PROGRAMME

Outcome II: Displaced and vulnerable women and girls are economically empowered and have access to humanitarian services that are gender inclusive

Output 2.1: Gender analysis and assessments conducted to inform multi-sectoral humanitarian / crisis response planning and programming.

Output 2.2: Increased capacity and effective engagement of women & gender machineries in humanitarian planning and response frameworks.

Output 2.3: Displaced and marginalised women and girls have new sources of income and economic opportunities through Direct Cash Assistance, CfW and skills development.

2.2.1. Different Economic Models

While the different economic models implemented by UN Women are listed separately as distinct interventions, it should be noted that models have been used in combination. For instance, CfW recipients received skills training, and women who received skills training received private sector placements to gain on the job experience.

UN Women's interventions are supported through a solid policy influencing strategy to reduce restrictions for refugee women's access to the labour market, support better regulatory frameworks for women and girls accessing the labour market, and rights based working conditions for women.

These interventions are shaped by the country-specific contexts and host governments' attitudes toward the presence of the refugees. Advocacy includes addressing gender-specific constraints for women to access the labour market, e.g. safe transportation, child-care, etc.

a. Cash for Work – link with sustainable employment. CfW represents a strong

component of UN Women's humanitarian work in the region. It has allowed women to access economic opportunities to meet their immediate needs, to develop their skills, and/or access resources to invest in longer-term employment and income generation opportunities. UN Women has aimed, where possible, to link the relief nature of CfW to longer-term development needs, taking into consideration legislative and other contextual constraints which negatively impact this approach.

(Note: CfW is not, in its entirety, within the scope of this evaluation. It is included only where it has allowed women to use the income or skills gained to find additional employment after the CfW opportunity was completed).

b. Financial support for start-ups (individually or a small group of women together). Access to finance is considered a challenge especially for women in the region. UN Women, as part of its holistic approach and based on international good practices, facilitates access to finance

complemented with business coaching support to reduce failure rate of newly established businesses and have longer term and sustainable impact.

Beyond financial support, assistance is provided, where needed for:

- ❖ business development and/or management and/or marketing skills;
 - ❖ mentoring and business incubators;
 - ❖ vocational training or skills development to strengthen quality and productivity directly linked to the small business; and
 - ❖ collective action by women to set up networks to support productivity or marketing.
- c. **Short-term skills training courses** is a strong component of the work of UN Women, and is largely provided through sub-contracted partners (mainly local and international NGOs). The selection of skills training topics varies as well as the location where the skills training is provided. In most instances the skills training courses are:
- ❖ based on market needs;
 - ❖ based on a need identified by private sector actors;
 - ❖ followed by support in finding employment based on skills gained; and/or
 - ❖ complemented by life skills training.

2.2.2. Country specific interventions

In **Egypt and Lebanon** where refugees are not centred in camps, UN Women has supported community centres in host communities to provide vulnerable Syrian refugee and host community women with capacity building programmes, vocational training, and access to financial services

d. **Cooperatives⁷ and 'collective action'**: The cooperatives model is supported mainly in Lebanon where refugee women and women from host communities come together as a group to use their skills to establish income generating opportunities. The extent to which cooperative structures are being 'revived' across the region and their potential to support economic opportunities for women needs to be explored beyond this evaluation. These initiatives could be considered as part of the economic model described as 'collective action'.

e. **Links with the private sector.** Various interventions are being supported under which working with the private sector is becoming increasingly important. Initiatives include the setting up of production units linked with a private sector actor and work placements, e.g. apprenticeships and job-matching schemes. Agreements made with the private sector include rights and protection of women at work including safe transportation, child-care, etc.

f. **Trade (including fair trade) and marketing.** Trade and marketing are critical to the viability of women's enterprises. To support smaller enterprises, collective action can be more effective than individual based marketing support. One of the models in Lebanon includes links made with fair trade institutes.

as well as strengthening their protection through engaging different national and local actors. In both countries, UN Women has initiated a number of production units supporting women to gain employment and generate income.

⁷ A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social

and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. (ILO definition.)

In **Lebanon**, UN Women has also supported the establishment of women agribusiness cooperatives with Syrian and Lebanese members, as well as job placement programmes with private sector. The economic projects bringing together women from the Syrian refugee community and the host community also had an impact on the social cohesion in locations which are often economically deprived and isolated.

In **Iraq**, UN Women supports Syrian women refugees within camps and Iraq internally displaced women dispersed across Iraq through providing safe access to livelihood opportunities including CfW schemes. This has included support to CfW/income generation activities, while simultaneously offering protection and psycho-social support services through the already established women's resource and protection centres. Women in host communities are also supported with livelihood enhancing interventions.

In **Jordan**, the project addresses the humanitarian priorities of Syrian women refugees living in camp (Azraq and Za'atari) and non-camp settings through

the provision of employment opportunities, skills training, and access to protection services. The safe/social spaces directly supported by UN Women also serve as 'economic empowerment hubs' by strengthening women's access to productive assets and skills, supporting their leadership in community life and decision making, and targeting gender-specific structural barriers and discrimination rooted in prevailing social norms and attitudes.

Across the different countries there are some similarities and some differences in the types of economic interventions that have been supported. It should be noted that each country has a different regulatory framework and different policies in place regarding refugee rights (Annex?). Across the region, the direct services delivery is complemented by efforts to work with government to improve policy and regulatory frameworks. UN Women engages with other humanitarian actors to make their livelihood interventions more accessible for women and is an active member of the UN livelihood working groups.

2.2.3. Underlying Theory of Change

The Theory of Change that underpins UN Women's economic interventions in the Arab States region within the humanitarian action framework is that the resilience of vulnerable women within refugee and host communities can be strengthened by increasing the capacity of and

opportunities for women to access employment and income in a sustainable manner in parallel to enhancing their agency through increased self-confidence and decision-making power over generated resources



Figure 2: Theory of Change

3 FINDINGS

3.1

Effectiveness

1A. How effective have the economic opportunity models developed and / or implemented by UN Women been in helping women find employment (self or other) once project participation is completed?

1B. To what extent are the opportunities created ensuring the safety and security of women?

Finding 1: Across the region, UN Women was able to develop different economic models appropriate to the context in which they were working. The effectiveness of different economic models was varied in terms of supporting women to find long term sustainable employment.

While women found access to more short-term or ad-hoc opportunities for employment, it was more difficult for them to find long-term, sustainable employment. This was found to be the case for both refugee and host community women across the region with refugee women facing greater legal and other obstacles in finding employment.

The legal frameworks and policies regarding refugees in each country affected the types of economic activities which could be implemented, particularly with respect to economic opportunities.

Assessing the extent to which different economic interventions contribute to employment for women requires more systematic data collection and monitoring / tracking over time. Based on the available project reports and consultations in-country, the evaluation team noted that success around employment is varied. The reason for the varying degrees of success was determined to be influenced by a number of factors, including whether or not:

a. the economic model had a long-term or short-term focus of employment creation;

b. skills training was demand driven and/or of a sufficiently advanced level for women to start their own business or find employment;

c. women were supported with 'start-your-own business' training and initial investments (grants, loans, or tools) to establish their own small business;

d. production units were provided with sufficient outreach and marketing support to create a permanent demand for goods produced;

e. CfW was supported from the outset with a follow-up phase specifically to support women to find employment;

f. income and employment were included as expected results in the design of the projects and implementation was monitored and managed to achieve these results; and/or

g. the country-specific context, especially regulations setting the framework for access to the labour market for refugees, was duly considered.

Finding 2: Opportunities designed and supported by UN Women placed beneficiary women at the core of the interventions and considered their protection and safety.

This was best reflected in the holistic approach supported by UN Women in which protection services, awareness raising, and action research around social and cultural norms complemented the economic activities. Various interventions, such as the skills training, were implemented in UN Women's safe spaces or community-based structures, e.g. social development centres, familiar to the women and their families.

UN Women has aimed to develop interventions that were suitable to meet refugee or host communities' needs, either jointly (production units, skills training) or by targeting women separately if contextual or legal constraints required alternative approaches. It was noticeable from the in-country consultations that the women found support among each other.

It is clear from the kind of interventions implemented that the wellbeing and safety of the women is of critical importance to UN Women. UN Women's safe spaces and government social development centres (which are, for the most part, based within communities) provide a safe environment for women. This was especially the case in Lebanon and Jordan. It was found that women's wellbeing in the government centres was closely linked with the (variable) quality of the

leadership displayed by the director of the centre. In the case of the UN Women's safe spaces, this was not an issue, and nor was access to the space.

UN Women does focus on awareness raising among women on their rights and benefits at the workplace including issues around safety and protection. The degree to which women's rights are respected in the workplace when participants were undertaking internships or when employment opportunities are found, was varied. This was directly influenced by the direct engagement of UN Women or other external actors raising awareness around workplace safety and other rights linked to labour conditions. It was found that whilst UN Women does monitor workplace environments and engage directly with the private sector, it was less able to influence these external environments. UN Women has taken steps to strengthen women workers' protection through collaborative efforts with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as evidenced in the EU Madad regional funding proposal. Under the EU Madad proposal two UN organisations bring together the organisational strengths of two technical UN Agencies (ILO focusing on workplace safety, labour rights; UN Women gender equality focus).

Effectiveness of the different economic models

Note: To assess the **effectiveness of the different economic models implemented**, a regional view has been taken, and not all models implemented across all countries have been included. A sample has been taken to show learnings of benefit to the region as a whole.

3.1.1.1. Production Units

Finding 3: The 'production units' require more time and capacity support to evolve into units accessible to vulnerable women where they can access available instruments to make products to generate an income.

Currently, 'production units' are training centres set up within local government agencies or NGOs to provide women with access to skills training. This training was not always followed up with initiatives to support ongoing production of products within the centre nor were participants provided with continued access to training instruments. Overall, it was found that women had access to the machines during the training but not after training was completed.

For this evaluation, a 'production unit' is considered to be a unit where the training is provided in combination with, or is followed by, an opportunity to earn an income from items that have been produced. Where skills training was provided in a centre in isolation from any opportunity to produce

an item for sale or trade, the evaluation team was of the opinion that these units should be described as 'training units' as incorporation the term 'production' raises beneficiary expectations regarding training and employment outcomes

3.1.1.2 Collective action models

Finding 4: UN Women took steps to implement creative and often innovative economic initiatives based on collective action models targeting women from both refugee and host communities.

Across the region collective action models are under pressure to find a balance between, or trying to meet, two different expectations, i.e. (i) the urgent needs of vulnerable women to access employment opportunities that generate an immediate income, and (ii) the longer-term goal of setting up sustainable structures that require initial investment.

In Lebanon this approach centred around an agri-food processing cooperative. In Egypt, the collective

action model tested was centred around the Al-Mashgel production unit set up within CARE's premises. Both models provide a solid learning base for UN Women and other humanitarian actors as an innovative approach to provide employment opportunities and support social cohesion and co-existence between different population groups. The learning is further strengthened through a UNW commissioned review of its different economic models by Lebanese economist, Michel Samaha.

Agricultural Cooperative in Lebanon

Finding 5: The cooperative model requires further support to balance the long-term perspective required to develop products that meet fair trade standards with opportunities to support women's immediate income needs.

The establishment of the Agricultural Cooperative in Akkar was in direct response to the needs of the local women and the very limited employment opportunities available to them. The cooperative is located within the municipality building and aims to secure interest from women in the refugee and local host communities. Implementation of the initiative was supported by Fair Trade Lebanon (FTL) and SAFADI Foundation.

To achieve this balance UN Women and its partners should support the bottom-up initiatives and innovative and creative ideas that women are presenting. In the development and implementation of the cooperative model more space should be given to let women themselves, with capacity building support and market advice, carry out their own income generating ideas. The

BOX 7. COOPERATIVES

While women have no regular employment or income from the cooperative, the women themselves have grown in confidence. They have benefited from having the opportunity to work outside the home and express their opinions and ideas around the direction of the cooperative in terms of production and management. However, it was evident from the conversation with the women that there is limited understanding of what a 'cooperative structure' means and there is a certain level of impatience which is rooted in the need for the women to earn an income to support their families. Vulnerable women within refugee and host communities are in urgent need of accessing employment opportunities to support their families. The ability to earn an income is an immediate need.

cooperative should also be more open to access and integrate knowledge of other actors in the region to develop and market produce.

The evidence base for choosing a cooperative structure in Akkar and replicating it in other regions (such as Bekaa) is unclear. Whether or not the structure was chosen for administrative and legal reasons, or if it was seen as the best organisational model to support income generating opportunities compared with other models, is not evident.

Box 8. Cooperative Structures

While cooperatives are also businesses the main objectives for people to set up or join a cooperative is to improve their economic and social conditions through joint action for the good of all members rather than through individual concerns only. (FAO Cooperative Training Manual)

With the registration of the cooperative, the production unit has now been transformed into a formal business. Gaining registration and being elevated from the informal sector is important because the previous informality of the business affected its potential development and productivity. Most informal businesses remain

small and isolated from the formal market, face difficulties in accessing markets, and thereby sell their products and services to a narrow client base (usually within a close community circle).

FTL provided support to establish the cooperative structure and is working with the women to developing several quality products that meet fair trade standards. Women work at the cooperative when an order for their produce is placed by a supermarket or when supporting events.

The training provided, coupled with internships and participation in fairs where they can sell produce, has resulted in women becoming more market aware, more knowledgeable of demands in the market, and familiar with hygiene standards.

These creative and often innovative, bottom-up ideas should be considered and supported when possible. Feasibility assessments should be carried out systematically and professionally and results shared with the women in a transparent manner.

Example of bottom-up creative ideas and initiatives:

One of the cooperative's main product lines is jam. The evaluation looked into this product line in detail but was unable to form a firm opinion about product suitability because of the contradictory messages received by interested parties. It is evident that the jams produced by the cooperative are not selling in large enough volume in local supermarkets. This, together with the cost of raw materials and the associated costs involved in placing the product in supermarkets, has made it difficult to turn a profit.

Women were keen to explore their other ideas for making popular products, e.g. pastries, sambousek, and vine leaves. From the consultations with women and the staff of FTL, it is evident that the continuation of jam as a product line must be determined in addition to addressing the challenges of marketing products. It is important to assess which products would be in greater and more regular demand decide production lines within the cooperative and to

support women to earn an income on a regular and sustained basis.

Al-Mashgel production unit in Egypt

Finding 6: The production unit in Egypt provides a good foundation to become a vibrant social enterprise where vulnerable women have strong ownership.

Al-Mashgel production unit is established within the women's safe space of CARE in Nasr City. It aims to produce socially-driven fashion and craft brands for the local market.

Al-Mashgel is not a cooperative structure but does aim to be a social enterprise supporting vulnerable women. The production unit is aiming to generate regular employment for targeted women through reaching scale to respond to a larger market segment.

UN Women commissioned market research and the unit engages mainly with social enterprises, such as Fair-Trade Egypt, that have a focus on handicrafts, facilitating Al-Mashgel products to market.

Al-Mashgel brand has potential to grow further through:

- a. a creative marketing strategy targeting social enterprises and the wider private sector;
- b. women being involved in the marketing and engaging youth in innovative marketing strategies;
- c. skills training, quality supervision; and providing popular patterns;

- d. ensuring that women remain at the core of the unit through a transparent management structure;

BOX 9. AL-MASHGAL PRODUCTION UNIT IN EGYPT

The 12 women (4 Egyptian, 3 Sudanese, 3 Yemeni, 2 Syrian) participating in the FGD explained the importance of being able to have an income, and the need for permanent employment. Most women expressed they would like to have their own businesses; some have started but not everyone received the necessary tools after the training. The majority of the women recommended a permanent exhibition hall where they could sell their products. While recognising the quality of the training received the majority stressed the need for more advanced, ongoing training and quality control.

- e. accessibility to the metro, homes, and schools;
- f. provision of training certificates;
- g. transparency of price setting and profit use;
- h. establishing a permanent exhibition place; and
- i. ensuring that women have equal access to tools.

Management structure for the collective action models

Finding 7: The rights holders are not always familiar with the operation and management procedures of the administrative systems of cooperatives. Cooperative and other collective structures need to follow working methods that support transparency between members and managing bodies.

Any formal structure should have women as being central to the unit and they should influence its direction. Members need to be given the opportunity to express their views with the

expectation that they are listened to. Possible tension among members can then be avoided.

The roles of the municipality, members, management, or any other actors directly or indirectly involved with collective action models should be clarified and documented. UN Women should take on this role to ensure adherence to agreed-upon working principles.

UN Women's engagement with Al-Mashgel to ensure that women remain at the centre of the initiative is a good example of the role UN Women can play. UN Women should actively champion the different initiatives it has supported and engage with municipalities and local government agencies to ensure that women's rights and needs are central to any decision making.

3.1.1.3 Skills Training

Finding 8: The training provided was generally of good quality, but more advanced training opportunities are needed to enable women to reach a skill level sufficient to gain employment or establish their own competitive businesses.

Opportunities are limited for participants to reach a skill level sufficient to gain employment or establish their own small businesses. Skills training is a strong component of the work of UN Women and is mainly provided through sub-contractors (national and international NGOs) and delivered in community centres managed by government institutions, such as the Social Development Centres (SDCs) in Lebanon or the Ministry of Women's Affairs Women's Centres in Egypt. In some instances, training was provided within UN Women or NGOs Safe Spaces in Jordan and Iraq. In all instances training was provided in centres accessible by women and known in the community.

Interventions can benefit from a more systematic and consistent approach to skills training that is:

- a. based on market needs;
- b. based on a need identified by private sector actors;
- c. followed by support in finding employment based on skills gained; and/or
- d. complemented by life skills training.

The quality and duration of the skills training have a direct impact on whether or not women are better placed to gain employment and financially support their families.

Based on the feedback received from women participating in skills-based interventions and

private sector actors, the following findings need consideration:

- a. A main driver of employment is education, and skills training is integral to this. Skills training should respond to demand in the labour market, private sector needs, or an assessment that the skill will allow the women to set up their own small business, inside or outside the home. UN Women has a strong focus on this and should ensure that, based on experiences gained, commissioned action-oriented research (including market research) is of high quality and directly linked to strengthen economic interventions.
- b. Receiving proof of training is important so that women can access advanced or follow-up training opportunities or demonstrate course completion when seeking employment. For refugee women, the certificate has a high value when returning home even if they are not able to use their new skills professionally.
- c. Across the region, skills training is provided by multiple humanitarian actors but coordination among the different actors is not very effective, with course duplication existing. The provision of skills training provided by national governments has surged, especially training which has a resilience focused agenda. There is potential for UN Women to support improved coordination and advise other actors on which trainings

should be provided, to avoid ongoing repetition of similar trainings.

- d. UN Women is recognised for its efforts in linking skills training with the private sector through work placements and providing its quality control. A good example of this is the work with Al Zeitouni factory in Lebanon where UN Women's close involvement has resulted in permanent employment for 40 women.
- e. The women targeted under UN Women's programmes are vulnerable, have been displaced, and often have minimal education attainment. Complementing skills training with broader life-skills training was welcomed by businesses and training participants. Life skills

training equips women to better integrate within the work place, contact businesses to seek employment, etc.

- f. Participants in training are often of mixed skill level. Where possible, for basic training, trainees should be placed in training sessions based on their skill level and with others of comparable ability. The women with advanced skills level should receive training to allow them to progress.
- g. The majority of women would welcome working outside the home in a place where they can work together as a group, using their own skills, and earning their own income.

BOX 10. LINKING TRAINING WITH MARKET NEEDS IN JORDAN

Two skills development and job placement projects were implemented in partnership with the **Jordan Education for Employment (JEFE)** during 2015 and 2016.⁸

The first was implemented over seven months, targeted 150 women from Irbid, Zarqa, and Mafraq, and focused on skills training matched with identified needs of the garment sector.⁹ Women were trained for two weeks on technical and soft skills, two days on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and three days on political engagement. A one-month job placement in garment factories was provided. Of 166 women trained, 116 found full time work.

The second project was implemented over eight months, targeted 300 women from Irbid and Zarqa, and focused on building women's skills in data entry for job placement and self-employment.¹⁰ Women received two weeks English language training, two weeks of soft skills training, two days of SGBV training, and three days of political participation training. One month of practical data entry training was provided in professional computer labs. The project trained 306 women and provided job internships for 195 participants, 156 of whom were then employed through formal contracts.

Both cases indicate that where training was provided in response to a market need, women have an opportunity to gain employment after training.

JEFE adopted and integrated SGBV training into these two programs and has agreed to include it for future participants, highlighting the importance of building the capacity of private sector partners and different service providers to include SGBV, civic engagement, and labour rights in their training.

⁸ Projects were funded by UN Women under its call for "Services to improve the socio-economic well-being of vulnerable Jordanian women in host communities in Al-Mafraq, Irbid, and Zarqa governorates".

⁹ The project budget was \$202,657.

¹⁰ The project budget was \$451,443.

BOX 11. TRAINING THAT DID NOT REACH SKILL LEVEL NECESSARY TO ACCESS EMPLOYMENT IN THE MARKET

Jordan Business Development Centre (BDC)

BDC was contracted by UN Women to provide skills training for Syrian women in Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps. The project aimed to train 150 Syrian women in each camp on relevant vocational skills in the context of the camp market, whether for independent income generation; income substitution; or accessing cash for work opportunities. Six days of training were delivered, one day focused on soft skills and five days on a vocational area: tailoring, food processing, home maintenance and IT skills. BDC over-achieved on the number of women targeted but encountered challenges.

- Six days were insufficient for women to acquire the requisite skills for income generation, although income substitution was also considered a targeted result. For example, tailoring skills may have been too basic to enable them to access employment in a garment factory but were sufficient to provide the basis to access tailoring opportunities as income substitution within the camp and apply to cash for work tailoring positions.
- More time should be allocated to soft skills which employers specifically requested.
- The literacy of participants must be factored in when designing the training material and delivery tools.
- Greater focus should be placed on applied trainings and the use of videos and visual tools.

Linking skills training with the private sector

SAFADI Skills Training in Lebanon

Finding 9: Where skills training was closely linked to private sector needs, allowing the private sector partners to influence training activities and provide quality control, and was combined with a job placement, the likelihood for women to find employment was strengthened. Moreover, skills training linked to the private sector increases the possibilities for women to find factory employment or work from home.

SAFADI is UN Women's main training partner in Lebanon. Before its partnership with UN Women, SAFADI did not offer job placements. UN Women's involvement complemented SAFADI's capacity and facilitated the dual approach of providing training and job placements. SAFADI's increased focus on offering training that is linked with private sector demands and market needs and supplementing its training with job placements reflects Lebanon's shift in approach to training provision.

SAFADI's experience and understanding of the market is that there is a strong need for women's capacity development when starting up their own businesses and managing small sub-grants.

The evaluation team's consultations in Lebanon had a strong emphasis on consulting with women who had benefited from the training in different community centres. Based on the evidence collected it is clear that the training received was of good quality, with trainers who were respectful and supportive to the women.

3.1.1.4 Private sector engagement

Finding 10: UN Women has engaged with private sector actors across the region in both the humanitarian and development fields. UN Women is focused on establishing strong engagement with private sector actors across the region.

These innovative experiences can be the foundation for lobbying the private sector for its commitment to provide employment to women post-training, with internships or job placements provided by the private sector and facilitated by UN Women as direct support to the private sector.

The experience gained in engaging with the private sector in Jordan and Lebanon might be of benefit to the work being undertaken in Egypt and Iraq where private sector engagement is currently being established. Because of the context and the legal restrictions on hiring refugees by the private sector, UN Women has an advocacy role in demonstrating how hiring women (both local women and refugee women) would benefit industry.

A number of experiences have been selected with the potential to replicate across the region:

Jordan

The Gender Equity Seal (GES) initiative in Jordan was seen by all private sector actors as an intervention they would like to continue. The companies showed a strong ownership and provided evidence of introducing more gender equitable practices. There is potential to use this initiative at a regional level, as an entry point to engage the private sector around corporate entrepreneurial responsibilities focused on the SDGs. Potentially, it can open up discussions with the private sector about supporting women from displaced communities.

The GES initiative was implemented prior to the Syrian refugee crisis and therefore there was no link between the GES initiative and supporting a national resilience agenda. However, there is opportunity to work with the private sector, e.g. tourism, which is a priority sector, under a public-private partnership in areas with tourism potential.

BOX 12. GENDER EQUALITY SEAL

The Gender Equality Seal initiative contributed to the development of organisational policies to address gender discrimination in the workplace, resulted in a larger number of women being hired and a greater female retention rate. More women applied for vacancies when the GE Seal was awarded to the company. The Seal branded the company as a safe and equitable workplace.

The co-founder of Crystal Call, a call centre company, mentioned that “the GES is a prestigious recognition of the company’s firm stand on gender equality. It is very important to us and we are interested in working with UN Women to renew it.”.

Strengthening the tourism sector could provide a wide range of employment opportunities for vulnerable women and youth in catering, food processing, marketing, and the service sector.

Opportunities exist to extend and scale up the GES initiative to more companies and organisations in current and new sectors. UN Women could empower and provide incentives to a select number of beneficiary companies from the first round of the GES to act as champions and facilitators to new beneficiary companies. UN Women could adapt the GES to cater to not-for-profits, business associations, labour unions, and syndicates supporting a sector-wide impact. Amending governance policies would ensure equitable representation of women at all levels of governance.

However, it should be noted that the possibility to engage with these public sector actors in providing employment to refugee women is untested.

Lebanon

The partnership that was developed between Zeitouni factory and UN Women is a good example of how the private sector can be engaged to support training and employment for vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian women. The project was able to find

innovative approaches by linking a training/production unit with the factory. This has resulted in 40 number of women having found full time employment within the factory.

The owner of Zeitouni factory owner encouraged UN Women and donor countries to support the establishment of a training unit in the area to provide training in direct response to the needs of the private sector. There are few factories in the area and those that do exist face challenges in finding well-trained employees. This training initiative could be developed as a public/private partnership.

The Jbeil Handcrafts Palm Leaves initiative supported 22 women to attend skills training and seven women (six Lebanese and one Syrian) succeeded in reaching a level where they are now ready to produce local handicrafts to sell in the

market. Women made a number of suggestions to support the likelihood of their success including marketing of their products to attract orders, exploring other ways of buying raw materials to reduce costs, support with setting price, and ongoing quality control (through private sector feedback). UN Women has facilitated the connection between the handcraft initiative and a local private sector Est. Alice Eddeh with a chain of tourist shops in Jbeil area.

As these models progress, more follow up meetings and monitoring should take place to assess the extent to which women were able to use their newly acquired skills to set up income generating activities or engage in any type of temporary or permanent employment inside or outside the camp.

3.1.1.5 Cash for Work (CfW)

Finding 11: Barriers to increased women's participation in the CfW were identified and strategies put in place to ensure equitable access.

CfW is an important mechanism for refugee women because of the very limited employment opportunities in the camps, legal restrictions, or geographic remoteness. Improving women's access and benefit under CfW interventions was addressed through the collective efforts of relevant UN and other international agencies.

While there is still funding available for CfW, it is increasingly important for aid agencies to assess

how these opportunities can be followed up with support to women to work in private companies in the hope that they will be retained after a period of time.

Coordination among agencies involved in CfW is necessary to ensure that women do not attend skills development sessions provided by different donors or multiple times to benefit from more CfW opportunities as a coping mechanism.

Developing economic models as pilot interventions

Finding 12: Future pilot interventions would benefit from good design based on action research and effective monitoring tools. This would build a strong body of lessons learning that would enable a model to be adjusted based on collected evidence. It would also allow lessons to be shared with other actors and donor agencies.

It is important that adequate human resources and technical expertise is made available in-country and at regional level. The development and humanitarian sector in the Middle East is crowded and, with reduced donor resources available, donor countries will opt to support those agencies with a track record for delivering strong results.

Own core funding should be used (where donor funding is not yet available) or should be costed within donor funded projects. It is understood that in some countries UN Women has submitted project budgets that are lean and with minimal overheads to donor agencies. However, effectiveness and sustainability are core criteria for donor agencies and funding is made available to ensure this

2A. To what extent have the safe / social spaces established / supported through UN Women served as ‘economic empowerment hubs’, by strengthening women’s access to productive assets and skills, supporting their leadership in community life and decision making, and targeting gender-specific structural barriers and discrimination rooted in prevailing social norms and attitudes?

Finding 13: The holistic approach used by UN Women in supporting economic interventions targeting women is a clear added value compared to other actors supporting similar interventions.

Economic interventions are part of an overall protection and prevention approach utilised by UN Women including awareness around SGBV and legal knowledge combined with support in addressing obstacles for women in finding employment such as transportation, access to child care services, and broader life-skills training. Safe/social spaces are considered by women as places where they can meet with other women for support or find solutions to problems faced.

UN Women under LEAP focused particularly on the most disadvantaged women. While recognizing the effort of other agencies and partners in providing equal employment opportunities for women and men, in such dire humanitarian context it is valid to target specifically extreme vulnerable women. In such cases often the vulnerable women are discouraged from applying or showing interest to

benefit from projects from the start due to the limited education levels, lack of experience in the labour market, low self-esteem and belief they will not be able to be selected compared to other more skilled and educated women and men.

BOX 13. LEAP EMPLOYMENT HUBS

UN Women’s ‘LEAP’ employment hubs model brings together three building blocks to provide a holistic package of support to promote empowerment and resilience – livelihoods (short and longer-term), protection and leadership. UN Women’s Buy from Women platform which creates digital platforms to enhance cooperation between small producers and procurements relationships between female producers and buyers”. 3RP, p.16

UN Women's LEAP employment hubs model was referred to in the 3RP as a positive example with potential to be scaled up to benefit large numbers of refugees and host communities.¹¹ This reference

goes beyond the model developed in the safe spaces in the camps and highlights that the interventions supported by UN Women are well-received by the host governments.

3A. What are the intended and unintended, positive and negative, effects of the intervention on women and men, institutions and the physical environment?

3B. How has the intervention affected the well-being of the different groups of stakeholders?

It is necessary to work within the socio-cultural constraints. Attitudinal change takes a long-term approach, e.g. women will readily accept lower pay and will not seek work far from home. According to the CfW Assessment conducted by UNHCR and NRC in mid-2017, women beneficiaries reported improved control of their income and acquired decision-making power with regard to spending of income, albeit sometimes jointly with their husbands.

Participation in skills training contributed to self-confidence and was an opportunity to get out of the house, away from the daily problems faced. Women who want to advance themselves found skills training as a first step to develop themselves. Training increased women's self-worth and raised their own awareness that they could contribute to the family income. After training completed,

women reported that they wanted to find employment and ways to use their new skills to earn an income.

Working with women from refugee and host communities was intended to contribute to reduced social tension. Very limited evidence exists to assess whether or not this actually took place and there is no strong evidence that the collective action model resulted in stronger cohesion between Lebanese and Syrian refugee women.

What was evident from the consultations is that social tensions are higher in rural areas than in urban centres. Municipality officials in rural areas in Lebanon suggested that a 'village-based' approach might reduce social tensions in rural areas and advocated for transparency in beneficiary selections.

3.2

Connectedness and sustainability

To what extent are the models developed and / or implemented by UN Women to promote women's economic empowerment supporting sustainable economic opportunities, particularly for host community women? What are the measures that have been built in to promote sustainability? To what extent do these measures reflect on and take into account factors which have a major influence on sustainability e.g. economic, ecological, social and cultural aspects?

¹¹ 3RP, p.16.

To what extent do interventions, as designed and implemented, take longer-term and interconnected problems into account? Do they contribute to interventions planned in the longer term, such as recovery or development?

Finding 14: UN Women is encouraged to consider long term benefits and sustainability of its economic interventions in a more systematic manner.

Where the context and need for rapid response allow UN Women should consider strengthening the development of the different business models underpinning the economic interventions. Where feasible anticipated return on investment in terms of expected income gained by the women or other social outcomes should inform the design of economic activities.

What happens after the project intervention concluded, in terms of income or access to employment, is central to assessing sustainability. Other indicators that should also be considered in assessing sustainability include:

- a. Did other actors replicate activities or approaches in supporting women to gain access to employment and income?
- b. Did the intervention influence policy change in favour of women's economic empowerment and reduce barriers for women to access employment?
- c. What is the level of ownership by the women of the products or initiatives created? (Women should be enabled and supported.)
- d. Did the intervention result in strengthening social cohesion? This is important because communities who work together will have a

positive impact on the social and economic well-being of their communities.

The time and information available did not allow a cost-benefit analysis of the different models to be undertaken. This exercise that should be further developed by UN Women and an approach to do so could also be developed for the region as a whole. The analysis of the different economic models undertaken by the consultant in Lebanon could be used as a starting point for this.

A cost effectiveness analysis or a broader Value for Money assessment (inclusive of an efficiency analysis) should be developed to ensure an understanding of the return on investment in terms of income created versus cost per beneficiary. It is important that this is done objectively across the region based on a strong methodological approach. Agreed metrics would be useful in comparing the different models and countries. However, it should be noted that there might be contributory factors in one country that affected results which were not present in other countries.

Sustainability and scaling-up are closely linked and both are more likely if the intervention is in response to a clear market need/unserved market segment/market gap for the skills and products developed by the women.

Finding 15: UN Women is focused on establishing strong engagement with private sector actors across the region, but a win-win situation is not always sought where the private sector and women both benefit from the cooperation.

The evaluators are of the opinion that if UN Women's Lebanon office continue working with the same private sector actors then a number of conditions need to be set. Future financial support

should be linked to a clear commitment or financing to ensure that the private sector is in the partnership for a clear business need rather than free funding and payment of women. This could be

a contractual agreement between UN women and private sector actors who commit to one year of work contracts at a minimum.

Finding 16: The economic models which were suggested to support sustainability emphasised operational and coordination structures more than they emphasised viability.

To support business viability and sustainability, three criteria should be considered:

- a. Relevance to women:** Chosen economic activities should be relevant for women, be suitable to their skill and educational levels, and allow for scaling-up. The greater the number of women in the chosen sub-sector, the more relevant it is for women.
- b. Economic opportunity:** The chosen sub-sector should present an economic opportunity such as a clear market demand. Demand for products should exceed supply or products should be competitively priced and have clear potential for sale. In an underserved market there should be clear added value to ensure

marketability and clear customers' willingness to pay for what a product offering.

- c. Feasibility of intervention:** Interventions should consider the enabling environment, political economy, size of available funds, and the capacity of direct entities' successful implementation.

If the above criteria are not present and supported by evidence, then there is a high risk that the said intervention will not produce sustainable outcomes after the conclusion of project and when funding has ceased. Adjusting interventions so that they mitigate risk or considering other opportunities could provide better results (i.e. failing fast and sharing learnings)

Box 14. Palm-Craft in the SDC of Byblos

Byblos is an ancient city with a strong tourism sector and an assumption was made that palm crafts would appeal to visitors to the city.

- Is there is a market for palm hats should be tested by talking to actors within the market and potential customers (e.g. cultural organisations, tourists, restaurants, retail shops, etc.).
- Identify several unique products without fierce competition that can be produced by well-trained women to a high standard that could be branded as 'made in Byblos' for local and foreign tourists.
- Consider diversified market segments and identify a product needed by each segment, e.g. restaurants by the beach may require decorative items including table runners, light decorations, etc. Any identified items should undergo a market analysis and needs analysis. Sample products could be designed and developed to determine interest and validated demand before full scale production.
- Asking design experts to produce samples of potential products and showcase them to potential clients will enable an assessment of customer interest, determine a sale price, and validate real interest in placing orders prior to piloting the intervention.
- A production unit can then be equipped and supported to train women to produce the palm crafted products. A key success factor would be that the women receive high quality training and coaching to strengthen their value proposition and strengthen any future branding efforts.

Finding 17: Skills training linked to the private sector increases the possibilities for women to find factory employment or work from home.

Training should be tailored to support women finding employment factory or home settings as different skills and techniques are required. In both instances the training needs to be of high quality and sufficient duration to allow women to use their skills for the purpose of earning an income.

There are few options for low skilled women to find employment and this is especially so in the formal sector. Women often turn to the textile sector to find employment as there are limited alternative income generating activities suitable to them. The textile industry is a declining sector in the region with the few remaining SMEs operating on small margins. Decreasing production costs are key for the business owners to sustain their businesses.

The private sector frequently works within niche markets:

- a. High-end haute couture which requires high skill, high quality, and modern designs which are not relevant or attainable for the targeted segment of vulnerable women; and
- b. Low to medium ready cut and ready-to-wear textiles where opportunities are extremely limited due to strong competition from low-cost countries.

The women targeted by UN Women are low skilled and seeking employment in lower paid jobs. The training and internship with the private sector bring an added value to the women as the training is

directly linked with the needs of the private sector and will position the women better in finding work within this sector. Internships provide women with an advantage over their competitors who have no on-the-job experience.

It is important for UN Women provide clear incentives for private sector engagement, e.g. increased production capacity, accessing well-trained women seeking employment, etc.

Moreover, women who have acquired the requisite skills and do not seek or find work in factories, need to be provided with access to appropriate tools or machinery. For example, women who have been provided with sewing training should have access to a sewing machine at home to enable them to engage with private sector directly (orders paid per piece) and use their free time to provide tailoring services to customers in close proximity of their home. This will broaden their choices regarding where and how often they prefer to work. Alternatively, a production unit could be established where the unit maintains its autonomy and has flexibility to serve different clients (business and direct consumers) and diversify its revenue source. Production units should be supported with a business and marketing plan and provide women with ongoing access to machines for 'production'. This will require clear governance and operational arrangements to ensure ownership and sustainability.

Finding 18: UN Women rightly targets women from refugee and host communities with interventions that consider the different constraints faced by the different target groups. This differentiation could be further strengthened and be made more explicit.

UN Women has been exploring interventions supporting resilience of refugee and host community women across the region with the aim to reduce vulnerability, increase capacity,

and support positive coping mechanisms. UN Women supports a good mixture of opportunities ranging from temporary to longer-term and sustainable employment.

Based on its experiences to date, UN Women is now in a position to further differentiate and be more effective in targeting different groups of women. This is very important when it comes to assessing employment and income generation opportunities for refugee and host community

women. Refugee women are often blocked of accessing certain occupations and they face legal constraints in accessing the labour market. To address these constraints different types of interventions need to be considered

4 Lessons learned, good practice examples and innovation

UN Women has shown a good level of flexibility across the region to design its interventions based on context and needs of women. Less evident is whether responses and strategies are adjusted during implementation and post completion according to lessons and changing circumstances. To be able to do so, strategies should ensure that responses include monitoring and information sharing processes to enable a solid feedback loop.

Moving forward, concerted efforts should be made to identify those livelihoods and economic interventions that can be scaled up to benefit large numbers of refugees and host communities, linked closely to other resilience building interventions in a sustainable manner. In rural areas UN Women should consider using a village-based approach which would allow for a value-chain approach and to respond to local economic development plans. When a village-based approach is used it is more feasible to think broadly about economic opportunities and to have a stronger influence on social cohesion. This approach would be more effective as it could respond to local economic development needs and priorities and take into consideration a value-chain approach in rural areas.

A village-based approach will also be more supportive of social inclusion and support the UN's commitment of 'leaving no one behind' to support inclusive economic opportunities.

Where UN Women is active in refugee camps such as in Azraq and Za'atari camps in Jordan, it is important to explore further options for sustainable income generation providing self-reliance inside the camp. UN Women's safe spaces should be further strengthened as productive spaces to gain new marketable skills, increase self-reliance and build pathways towards economic empowerment. Camps should be further explored as market places

and the needs of these market places should be understood and skills training choices adjusted accordingly.

UN Women has a strong focus on vulnerability, ensuring that the most vulnerable are being targeted. But insufficient attention is being given to capacity analysis of communities and of individual women. As an example, the skills training should build on what women already know and help them move ahead. It seems that at the moment skills training in most instances is delivered at one level to all women despite different levels of experience or understanding.

Participation at exhibitions is one of the most important methodologies helping women and small business, cooperatives or others to bring their products to the markets and connect with potential customers. However, participation at exhibitions can be costly and attendance and sales can be unpredictable. Given this fact, it is important for businesses to understand that exhibitions are tools for marketing more than they are for sales. In other words, making sustainable deals and following up on connections during exhibitions is more important for sustainability of businesses than the number of sales achieved at the exhibition.

It was noticeable – especially among rural host community women – that for social and religious reasons there is still a reluctance to take loans. Hence, they look for grants or try to use their own finances to start their businesses, with all the risks associated with the latter approach when families are already economically very vulnerable.

A common feature across the region was the way women were linking up with each other, forming groups, trying to use Instagram and Facebook for marketing their product. With some small effort this could be stepped up by:

- a. Providing a small grant to women to buy advertisement space on social media;
- b. Having youth volunteer groups meet with women in social development centres or safe spaces supporting women.

Skills training needs to respond to market needs and the skills that targeted populations already have. Skills training programmes are widely perceived as ineffective if they do not lead to access to employment. Skills training programmes should have an explicit connection to the private sector, shifting training into more pragmatic programmes.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on this experience gained since 2012 UN Women is now in a position to develop a solid economic empowerment programme portfolio where access to income and employment for women should be at the core. The portfolio approach will allow UN Women the flexibility to pilot different types of interventions. Some will exclusively target the most vulnerable through CfW interventions and skills development, which is a continuation of its humanitarian work and crisis response to the Syrian refugee crisis. But at the same time, this will ensure that other interventions have a more long-term sustainable approach responding to the needs of other disadvantaged national and refugee women.

A sufficient number of pilot projects has been implemented to be able to develop further effective and cost-beneficial ways of supporting women in finding income, trying to reach scale in the numbers of women targeted with sustainable economic opportunities. Critical to its success will be the way the different interventions are designed prior to the start of the intervention.

The current emphasis of this portfolio is rightly targeting the most socio-economic vulnerable women. In the current context in the region vulnerability goes beyond economic vulnerability alone. Further support for solid research highlighting the diversity and complexities of both refugee and host community women is important to inform well designed and well targeted initiatives.

The different economic models supported by UN Women in the different countries in the region had varying success in achieving access to employment or income beyond the life of the project cycle.

A strength of UN Women programming has been to include both refugees and host nationals as explicit beneficiaries in all programming efforts. This recognises that host communities need assistance

in addition to the refugees and is in direct response to the national response plans of the different governments in the region. However, it should be noted that in Lebanon and Jordan only the Syrian refugee women are included in the target population, not other refugee nationalities as is the case in Egypt. This is mainly due to donor and national government requirements.

Social tensions, especially related to economic opportunities, will remain a persistent problem. Differential access to economic opportunities, whether as a consequence of employment in the private sector or donor-funded activities, has been and will continue to be a source of potentially destabilising social tension between host communities, Syrian refugees and IDPs. Few of the knowledge products or experiences have been shared between actors on how to best address this. This report suggests adopting a more community or village-based approach.

UN Women's added value is recognised as its accountability to the women. The holistic approach to women's economic empowerment by providing other services and awareness raising sessions is seen as very positive.

UN Women is seen as very approachable by their partners, but partners also expect a systematic learning process from UN Women, a strong monitoring plan to ensure results are being achieved, and the necessary expertise to help partners with bringing the project forward to ensure results are achieved.

UN Women's engagement with the private sector to support economic opportunities for women from host, refugee, and IDP communities stands out. UN Women's efforts are in direct support of international efforts to work with the private sector to support the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8). Internationally, effective engagement is in its early stages with

lessons to be learned and shared. UN Women should contribute to this through well-developed interventions where its added value and expertise are highlighted and supported with good learning mechanisms. The organisation should be open about its successes and the aspects of its interventions that were less successful.

The added value of UN Women is in its training approach to complement training with job placements. Ongoing follow-up and more long-term engagement of UN Women was also commented upon favourably, staying engaged beyond the training.

UN Women should develop the practice of collecting more systematic evidence on the results and impact of the different economic models it is implementing. This is currently lacking and is an obvious gap that could be filled by reviewing available M&E data. The commissioning of rapid

data collection and assessment of previously implemented models where clear successes and results were achieved (e.g. GES initiative, CISCO academies) would synthesise data for the development of business cases and evidence bases that could be utilised in policy development, the design of new programmes and fundraising.

Moving forward UN Women should capture through its M&E system how its economic interventions:

- a. Achieved sustained increases in women's income and control over household finances;
- b. Improved perspectives on women and women's rights in the community;
- c. Increased involvement of women in decision making in the community and engagement with external bodies

6 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

To be demand driven, consider a regional portfolio and strategy which includes a variety of well-developed economic models based on the experiences and the research conducted to date and the priority needs identified by the target group, governments, and other actors.

Priority: High

Time: Short to medium term

- a. The portfolio should focus on the partnership model developed in the region including UN Women, local government structures, national civil society actors, and private sector.
- b. UN Women's holistic approach to WEE should be maintained which stands out as being strong and positive. The economic activity should be further complemented with soft skills training and awareness raising on protection.
- c. This portfolio and strategy should be the basis for regional fundraising efforts, with more proactive initiatives from UN Women showcasing its efforts to date.
- d. The portfolio should be developed whilst clarifying the differences in strategies required to reach refugee women and women in host communities. For example, legal constraints around refugee women's access to the labour market impact their participation in that market. The approaches adopted by and targets set within the different strategies should reflect the needs of target beneficiaries.
- e. The programme portfolio should demonstrate the added value and expertise UN Women brings to WEE. This should include technical knowledge around economic empowerment along with solid project management skills that enable results achievement. The added value of UN Women in supporting the capacity development of local organisations should be developed further

Recommendation 2

Management support should be provided to country and programme offices where needed. This is especially the case for offices in countries where the presence of UN Women is more recent and where fully-fledged country offices have yet to be established. When presences in those countries are established, the necessary resources to ensure delivery of programme quality must be allocated. UN Women has a good basis from which to develop and implement strong economic interventions, but the requisite resources need to be made available. During the early stages this could require own core funding investment.

Priority: High

Time: Short term

- a. The humanitarian and development community in the Arab States is very crowded and competitive, especially with respect to the Syrian refugee crisis. In such a competitive environment it is important that sufficient capacity is in place and high-quality programme interventions can be delivered from the outset.
- b. A longer-term approach to monitoring and implementation for resilience focused interventions will ensure the assessment of long-term sustainable results (e.g. income,

employment) beyond the immediate project cycle. WEE multi-year strategies should be developed that can be broken down into annual plans (or other suitable timeframes) to accommodate short-term humanitarian funding cycles.

- c. UN Women has a strong focus on engaging with and supporting local national actors. This

practice should be maintained and strengthened further. However, working with local actors directly without an international NGOs as an intermediate actor requires that UN Women provide direct capacity building support to these organisations.

Recommendation 3

UN Women should build further on its strengths and the progress made to date in engaging with private sector actors.

Priority: Medium

Time: Medium term

This could be done through:

- a. continuing to combine short-term self-reliance support for both refugees and host communities through Cash for Work and engagement with private sector;
- b. expanding demand driven vocational training and match the skills required by the labour market in partnership with private sector including extending training duration to allow sufficient time for acquiring skills;
- c. complementing skills training with job placement facilitation with the private sector, negotiate and follow up possibilities of ongoing employment post placement;
- d. expanding start-up and growth support for small enterprise development including

home-based businesses, targeting both refugees and nationals, and exploring possibilities for more age-differentiated business ideas;

- e. working towards a win-win situation for both the private sector and the target population with investment and contributions from the private sector discussed openly;
- f. engage actively with municipalities, CBOs, and the private sector as part of its locally based approach, and foster a dialogue among these sectors to support women's economic development as part of the local economic development plans; and
- g. documenting and sharing lessons on the integration of the private sector into crisis response efforts. Although private sector involvement in crisis response is at the heart of the resilience-building narrative, domestic and/or international mechanisms are not yet in place for effective integration of private sector partners into the crisis response.

Recommendation 4

UN Women should consider whether an 'advisory' presence within relevant ministries (a counterpart for the economic empowerment agenda) would enhance UN Women recognition among other

stakeholders as an important WEE actor. This would follow the example of other multilateral agencies (e.g. ILO and UNDP) who have advisory

presence within the ministries which are their primary counterpart.

Priority: High

Time: Short term

- a. In Lebanon and Egypt this should be explored with the Ministries of Social Development (MoSD) /Social Affairs (MoSA), based on the model and experiences of UN Women in Jordan.
- b. An 'advisory' presence would enable joint fundraising efforts between UN Women and

MoSD/MoSA as well as enabling the influencing of policy in at ministerial level.

- c. A presence within ministries supporting the ministries' capacity to implement WEE interventions and policy development would enhance UN Women's capacity in developing interventions and supporting their effectiveness on the ground. It would also leverage UN Women as an important WEE actor among other stakeholders.

Recommendation 5

Between humanitarian actors there is an absence of strong knowledge and research which demonstrate the complexities required to support response strategies. Across the region there are deeply rooted cultural and social norms which have affected women's access to employment. While UN Women addresses this well, more

diverse responses should be included in recognition of the diversity of women from displaced, refugee, and host communities and the diversity of assistance required to support them.

Priority: Medium

Time: Medium term

