



International
Labour
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► EIIP Lebanon Review Summary of three projects completed in Phase IV

Expansion of Muhammara Public School, Construction of sidewalks in Qab Elias, and Rehabilitation of Social Development Center in Yohmor

► Introduction

This report presents findings from an independent review of three projects implemented under Phase IV of the Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme (EIIP) in Lebanon. Funded by the German Government through the German Development Bank (KfW) and implemented by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in partnership with the Ministry of Labor (MoL), Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), other technical Ministries such as Ministry of Public Works (MOPW) and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) as well as beneficiary municipalities, the EIIP seeks to deliver both infrastructure improvements and short-term, decent employment for vulnerable Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees residing near project areas.

The three projects under consideration, namely the Muhammara Public School Expansion (Akkar), the Qab Elias Sidewalk Construction and Rehabilitation (Beqaa), and the Yohmor Social Development Center Rehabilitation (South Lebanon), were implemented in close alignment with the core strategy of EIIP to improve and/or rehabilitate public infrastructure using Local Resource-Based Technology (LRBT) and Decent Work Principles (DWP). In fact, contractors were awarded the project implementation contracts because of their technical qualifications as well as their mandatory training program on LRBT and DWP, as required by the ILO. Most Works were executed using manual labour, with specified activities implemented using light equipment. Workers were trained to deliver the tasks whenever necessary. Every attempt was made to implement the project under decent working conditions, including fair and transparent recruitment, and effective inclusion of women and persons with disabilities.

Methodological Approach

A mixed-methods approach was used to review the economic, social, and institutional impacts of the projects implemented under Phase IV of the EIIP.

The methodology combined qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. Key components included:

- Desk Research: Project documentation, administrative data, and technical reports provided by the ILO and implementing partners were reviewed, supported by observations from field visits; and
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Two FGDs per site were conducted with beneficiaries (e.g. workers, service users, teachers, local residents) and non-beneficiaries (community members not directly affected by the projects). Discussions explored themes such as employment, service delivery, infrastructure use, and perceived benefits and limitations; and
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Fifteen semi-structured KIIs (five per site) were held with municipal officials, contractors, school and SDC administrators, business owners, and community leaders. These interviews offered institutional perspectives on project implementation, employment generation, infrastructure performance, and sustainability; and
- Survey: At the Muhammara and Qab Elias sites, a structured survey was administered to 100 respondents (70 stakeholders to the project, 30 community members that live in the area but were not implicated in the project). The surveys captured data on socio-economic conditions, employment outcomes, perceptions of infrastructure quality, and community-level impacts.

Across all three projects, the EIIP generated a combined 41,676 worker-days and engaged nearly 900 workers, primarily from marginalized communities. This included a significant number of Syrian refugees (77 percent), with strong representation of youth and moderate inclusion of women, especially in Yohmor and Muhammara. In total, the interventions yielded approximately USD 339,314 in direct income for workers and supported over 4,961 indirect beneficiaries (i.e., household members). The short-term employment helped mitigate immediate livelihood pressures, particularly for informal workers without social protection.

1. Muhammara Public School Expansion Project

The expansion of the Muhammara Public School under Phase IV of the EIIP sought to remedy severe educational infrastructure gaps. Prior to the intervention, students were housed in prefabricated hangars prone to flooding, collapse, and extreme discomfort, especially during the winter season. The deteriorating physical conditions not only posed safety risks but also reduced student morale, attendance, and overall learning outcomes.

In response, the project involved:

- The demolition of unsafe hangar structures; and
- The construction of a new school block featuring reinforced concrete, plastered and tiled classrooms, double-glazed windows, and upgraded sanitation facilities; and
- The provision of furniture tailored to meet school needs; and
- The installation of a green rooftop for insulation and potential environmental education use.

The Muhammara Public School Expansion notably improved educational conditions through a new school block and green rooftop, which helped ease overcrowding and provided better ventilation and lighting. Teachers and parents highlighted increased student attendance and morale. The school also served as a symbol of communal trust, having functioned as a shelter for displaced families during conflict.

The project succeeded in generating short-term employment for both Lebanese host community members and Syrian refugees. This employment translated into tangible financial gains. The Muhammara project created employment for 652 individuals, generated 27,190 number of worker days, and produced 438 of full-time equivalent jobs, relying primarily on locally sourced materials such as concrete blocks that were produced on-site. When asked about the impact of their employment earnings, the overwhelming majority of employed beneficiaries in Muhammara stated that their financial situation improved, with approximately half reporting moderate to significant improvements. The income generated helped them meet essential needs such as food, school fees, medical bills; it also allowed them to settle debts or unmet household expenses. As one respondent put it, “We could finally cover rent without asking anyone for help”. Moreover, Muhammara realized indirect employment due to the new expanded infrastructure which allowed the school to introduce summer programs and recruit six additional teachers, thereby expanding the school’s offerings and employment opportunities.

The beneficiaries of the project reported major improvements in the classroom atmosphere, describing the space as safer and more comfortable; this boosted teacher morale and student engagement, resulting in a marked improvement in student attendance. Parents recalled that the previous school structure posed real safety risks, often requiring evacuation during storms and causing frequent disruptions due to power outages. Student enrolment increased from 950 to 1,400 after project completion, with numbers increasing from 350 to 500 for the Lebanese and from 600 to 900 for the Syrian students.

2. Qab Elias Sidewalk Construction and Rehabilitation Project

The construction and rehabilitation of the Qab Elias sidewalks sought to provide safe passages in heavily populated areas surrounding the schools, worship centres, the old souk and crowded areas during the day by students, parents, shoppers and workers. The project involved the rehabilitation of damaged sidewalks and construction of approximately 4.3 kilometres of sidewalks spread across six distinct locations within the village.

The project generated a total of 9,617 workdays for 265 beneficiaries. Syrians made up the majority of the workforce (81.5 percent). Women represented around 18.5 percent of total employment, a relatively high rate for public works in the region. Average engagement was just above 36 days, falling four days short of the ILO's full-time equivalent benchmark. Although this rotation broadly aligns with the EIIP's strategy to spread income support across vulnerable populations, it limits sustained livelihood improvement. Skills development also remained largely informal, with very few female workers receiving formal training depending on their competency and the current scope of their engagement.

Though the project created vital mobility infrastructure, connecting schools, markets, and residential areas, its impact was constrained by poor planning in key areas, such as parking and pedestrian access. Still, it offered essential short-term income to vulnerable populations and modest improvements to accessibility and road safety, particularly for school children and the elderly. Moreover, technically sound in construction, issues such as sidewalk encroachment by vehicles, missing safety features near water canals, and low community engagement diluted the expected mobility and economic gains. Residents also expressed frustration over missed employment opportunities and underwhelming commercial spillovers in the local market.

3. Yohmor Social Development Center Rehabilitation Project

The rehabilitation of the Yohmor Social Development Center (SDC) sought to improve both the physical condition and functional inclusivity of the centre. More specifically, the intervention aimed to enhance the accessibility of the centre for persons with disabilities and elderly individuals by implementing targeted structural upgrades. The project was designed around two core objectives: (1) ensuring the SDC was accessible to persons with disabilities and (2) constructing and equipping a dedicated toilet for persons with disabilities.

The project met key EIIP targets related to employment generation and livelihood support. A total of 60 workers were directly employed, evenly split between Lebanese (28) and Syrian (32) nationals, with Syrians accounting for a slight majority (53 percent). The workforce included 10 women and one person with a disability, highlighting the program's commitment to inclusivity, though their representation remains modest. Employment income from the project totalled USD 23,063. The labour share of the total project cost was approximately 27.5 percent, exceeding the 25 percent minimum threshold recommended for EIIP infrastructure investments.

In terms of local impact, both labour and inputs were sourced primarily from Yohmor and surrounding areas. This localized approach bolstered the immediate economy and helped integrate host and refugee communities through joint participation in productive work.

Although the initiative restored operation to a vital service hub for the community, especially for the disabled and elderly residents, its usage remains limited. According to staff interviews, the number of patients served dropped from 3,500 annually (pre-2019) to fewer than 100 per month in recent years, largely due to the withdrawal of MoSA-supported doctors and NGOs. Current activity is limited to emergency IV treatments and occasional vaccination campaigns. Despite the rehabilitation, the facility has not yet regained its central role in community health and wellbeing. Moreover, recurring issues of governance and maintenance, coupled with underfunding and understaffing risk reducing its long-term utility.

► Conclusion

All three projects illustrated the strengths and weaknesses of infrastructure-driven employment programming in Lebanon's fragile context. Local municipalities, while appreciative of the physical upgrades, often lacked the resources and institutional capacity to sustain them following the handover. Maintenance planning, particularly in Qab Elias and Yohmor, was either informal or non-existent, raising concerns about infrastructure longevity. Community engagement varied widely. In Yohmor, beneficiaries and local actors praised the inclusive planning and responsiveness of ILO staff. By contrast, in Qab Elias, a lack of transparent communication and labor integration generated local discontent and undermined community ownership. Across all sites, the absence of formal mechanisms for participatory planning, skills certification, and routine monitoring limited the transformational potential of the interventions.

The three projects assessed under EIIP Phase IV demonstrate that employment-intensive public works can deliver tangible infrastructure gains, short-term livelihood relief, and localized social benefits, particularly when rooted in community needs and backed by effective coordination. However, to unlock their full development potential, future EIIP interventions should:

- Deepen community participation at all stages, particularly the initial planning phase; and
- Improve job quality and skills transfer mechanisms to enhance future employability; and
- Institutionalize long-term maintenance planning and funding; and
- Strengthen the local government's capacity for asset management; and
- Embed inclusion and sustainability principles into infrastructure projects more systematically.

These lessons are especially salient as EIIP expands into Phase VI, offering a unique opportunity to refine its model for greater impact across Lebanon's strained yet resilient communities.