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SHEILD
Small Enterprise Development
Incentives for Labor Development

LABOR MARKET ASSESSMENT

South Lebanon | January 2015



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Acknowledgements

This report is the outcome of a close collaborative effort between Mercy Corps and the Social, Humanitarian, Economical Intervention for Local Development organization (SHIELD.)

We would like to thank the SHIELD field team and executive management who were instrumental in their knowledge and expertise of South of Lebanon.

In particular, we acknowledge the time, thoughts, and efforts of the people who participated in collecting the data that were pertinent to this report, specifically those representing the various municipalities, businesses and the Lebanese host community members and Syrian refugees in the areas we targeted.

Our thanks also go to the Mercy Corps' Technical Support Unit for their support in designing the labor market methodology and tools, as well as their valuable sector advice.

We acknowledge the time and expertise of the Mercy Corps colleagues who improved the quality of the report by providing vital comments to the various drafts. A special thank in these terms go to Alexa Swift and Victoria Stanski. Finally, the study would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the European Union.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

EU	<i>European Union</i>
FGD	<i>Focus group discussion</i>
FORDS	<i>Fostering self-reliance for displaced Syrians and host communities in the South of Lebanon</i>
LMA	<i>Labor Market Assessment</i>
MSME	<i>Micro, small and medium enterprises</i>
MSNA	<i>Multi-Sector Needs Assessment</i>
NGO	<i>Non-governmental organization</i>
SHEILD	<i>Social, Humanitarian, Economical Intervention for Local Development</i>
UNDP	<i>United Nations Development Program</i>
UNHCR	<i>United Nations Commissioner for Refugees</i>
UNICEF	<i>The United Nations Children’s Fund</i>

Executive Summary

Mercy Corps and Social, Humanitarian, Economical Intervention for Local Development (SHEILD) undertook a labor market assessment (LMA) to inform the design and scope of the “*Fostering Self Reliance for Displaced Syrians and Host Communities*” program. The latter is a livelihoods intervention generously funded by the European Union and collaboratively implemented by both organizations in the combined South Lebanon and Nabatieh Governorate.¹



The objective was to collect robust quantitative and qualitative data about the state of the economy in South Lebanon, the hiring preferences and practices of employers in the region, and the skills necessary for young people seeking employment. The LMA used a combination of surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. It is hoped that the methodology, as well as findings and recommendations of this report will be used as a basis by other organizations to strengthen their livelihoods programming-related efforts. It is vital that such initiatives are aligned with market demands, which also add value to employers who are more likely to hire and retain skilled vulnerable community members and become long-term partners in training and support efforts.

The key findings of this assessment demonstrate that the most sought-after skills for employers in the South are basic professional behavior – integrity, responsibility – combined with industry and company-specific technical skills. In short, employers want to hire people they can trust. As such, an apprenticeship or on-the-job training program, combined with workshops to develop general professional skills, would have the greatest impact in this environment.

Throughout all of the focus groups, vulnerable youth reiterated the need for enhanced technical skills and more on-the-job training programs, along with improving communication and language skills.

Given employers heavily rely on personal connections to find employees, Lebanese youth would benefit from job placements, as they would allow them to develop specific job skills and give them an opportunity to gain experience, while challenging the perception of Lebanese youth as lacking seriousness and commitment.

Vulnerable young men recognized that vocational training sessions could be a starting point for establishing themselves as professional and skilled workers in the field of their choice. They advocated for trainings that focus on enhancing their technical skills, as they felt that was the most important factor in finding employment. Syrian men specifically shared their concerns around being exploited in labor-intensive positions.

From these key points, vocational training programs in South Lebanon will have the most success if they focus on a combination of on-the-job training and workshops on basic professional skills such as resume-writing skills, communication and interpersonal skills, networking and interview skills, as well as basic job-hunting advice. Programs that develop apprenticeships would be beneficial, and would allow youth to gain the specific job skills needed to find employment in specialized businesses.

¹ In this report, reference to “South Lebanon” indicates both South and Nabatieh Governorates.

Entrepreneurship is another skill that could be helpful, particularly to Lebanese youth, as many expressed the desire to open their own small businesses. Understanding the many skills needed to open and run a business, from identifying a niche and finding capital to managing minor accounting, are crucial to finding success as a small-business owner. Perhaps another set of workshops could be held for those interested, focusing on developing these skills.

Youth would also benefit from apprenticeships and professional skills workshops, as they would allow them to develop further labor market oriented skills and create a network of businesses and professional contacts in their area of residence.

Introduction and Background

In November 2014, UNHCR reported that there are 134,368 registered Syrian refugees in the combined South Lebanon and Nabatieh Governorate. Although South Lebanon holds the least number of refugees of Lebanon, it shares similar challenging economic realities with the other governorates. Based on the International Labor Organization (ILO) report assessing the “Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and Their Employment Profile” published in 2014, in the South, per capita household consumption is three quarter of the national average, and is among the lowest in the country alongside the North and the Beqaa. Inequality rates reported in these districts are also the highest in the country.

With the Syria conflict entering its fourth year, the long-lasting presence of Syrian refugees in South Lebanon has put a strain on the governorate's limited assets, resources and labor market, as well as its hosting capacities, causing greater suffering for both host communities and refugees. Thus, there is a critical need to improve the capacity of vulnerable job seekers affected by the labor market stresses to be self-sufficient through increased income generation and temporary employment.

Such positive coping mechanisms will be addressed in the 18-month “*Fostering Self Reliance for Displaced Syrians and Host Communities*” (FORDS) program. The latter is an initiative generously funded the European Union (EU) and implemented by Mercy Corps and SHEILD in the three Southern districts of Tyre, Nabatieh and Jezzine.

The overall objective of this program is to help vulnerable communities to cope with the effects of the Syria conflict and enhance their livelihoods prospects in Lebanon. It aims to:

- » Enhance the livelihood opportunities of 600 people by providing them with new vocational and educational skills.
- » Provide tailored support for entrepreneurs to launch income-generation activities, with a focus on women and youth.
- » Provide Lebanese MSMEs and cooperatives with seed funding to facilitate their growth.

The LMA was conducted to inform the overall design and scope of this program and ensuring FORDS is rooted in economic realities.

METHODOLOGY

This Labor Market Assessment (LMA) aims to achieve the following key objectives:

- » Identify high potential growth sectors and employment trends in three districts of South Lebanon: Tyre, Nabatieh and Jezzine.
- » Analyze current employment practices and skills in demand in the local labor market.
- » Determine constraints faced by vulnerable youth in the labor market.
- » Identify potential employment and self-employment opportunities for vulnerable community members.

The findings of this labor market assessment informed FORDS program activities, including selection of vocational training courses, job placements, and support for entrepreneurs, MSMEs and cooperatives. The LMA is based on two core principles:

Market-Driven: The LMA employed a market-driven approach. It was based on the rationale that FORDS' first step is to identify potential economic growth sectors and local opportunities for temporary employment. The next step consisted in the analysis of the existing gaps between the skills of current labor force and the ones sought by employers. By engaging in such a study and gap analysis, FORDS ensures that the project is well informed about the market dynamics that impact vulnerable communities in their pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. In all subsequent activities, FORDS works to ensure that its interventions are rooted in the economic reality of these regions.

Community-Led: Mercy Corps and SHEILD worked with municipalities and local key stakeholders to organize key informant interviews, assemble focus groups, and identify local businesses to survey. These actions ensured that future interventions would be relevant to both the needs of target beneficiaries and the realities of the local market. Moreover, they validated the interests of employers and employees in vocational training courses and job placements.

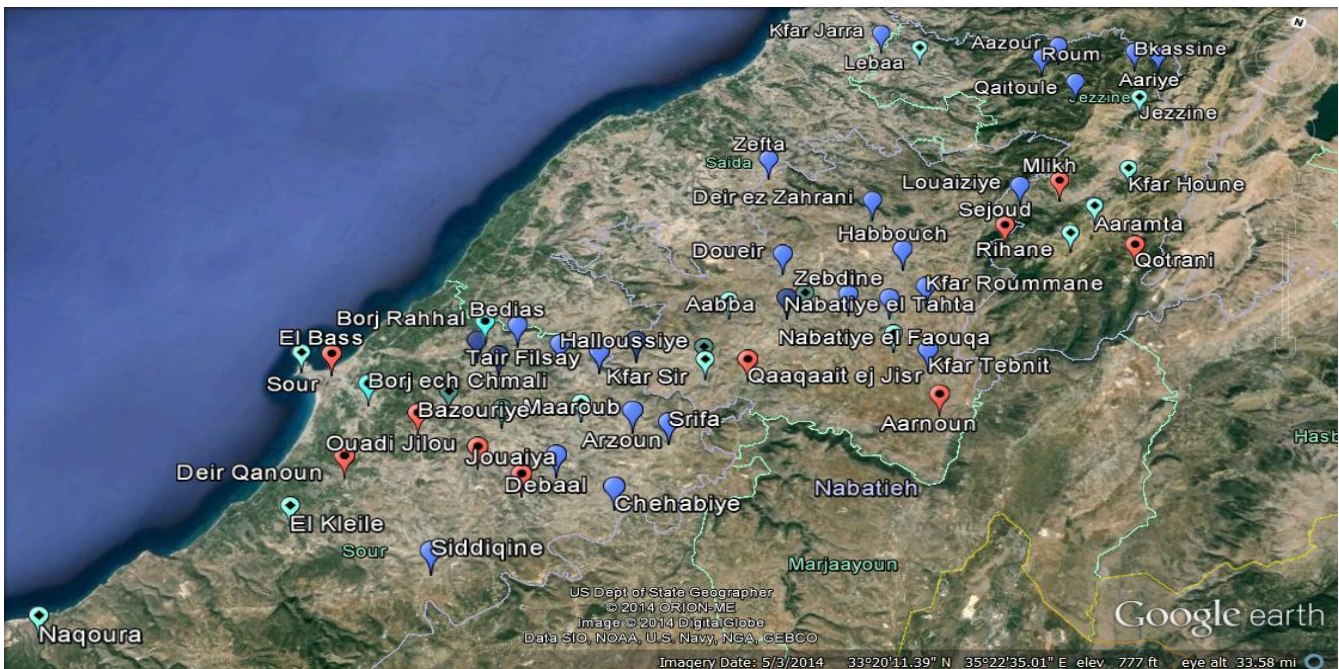


Figure 1: Geographic Coverage of the Labor Market Assessment

Legend: Red Pin: Surveyed businesses - Blue Pin: Surveyed municipalities - Green Pin: Surveyed businesses and municipalities

Labor Market Assessment Tools

The LMA utilized multiple tools in order to achieve the outlined objectives, including:

- » Key Informant Interview Questionnaire
- » Business Survey Tool
- » Youth Focus Group Discussion Guide

A. Key Informant Interviews (qualitative)

In order to determine the larger market environment for employment and self-employment, as well as gather rich, qualitative data on opportunities for program linkages, the assessment team developed key informant interview questions that were administered to 52 targeted stakeholders from local and international organizations to public sector institutions.

The majority of key informant interviews were conducted with municipalities from the most-vulnerable cadastral list formulated by the Government of Lebanon’s National Poverty Program, in association with UNHCR and UNICEF. The head of municipalities and their municipal-level staff from the following towns and villages in the South were consulted:

Table #: 01
Municipalities as key informants

District	Towns and Villages
Tyre	Aabba, Aabbassiyeh, Arzoun, Bazouriyeh, Bedias, Borj Chemaly, Borj Rahhal, Chehabiyeh, Debaal, Doueir, Halloussiye, Harouf, Jibchit, Kfar Sir, Maarake, Maaroub, Naqoura, Qoulayla, Siddiqine, Sir el-Gharbiyeh, Srifa, Tair Debba, Tair Felsay, Toura, and Tyre
Nabatieh	Deir ez-Zahrani, Habbouch, Kfar Houne, Kfar Rommane, Kfar Tebnit, Nabatieh, Nabatieh el-Fawqa, Nabatieh et-Tahta, Rihane, Zebdine, Zefta
Jezzine	Aariye, Aazour, Aramta, Bkassine, Kaytoula, Kfar Jarra, Lebaa, Loueizeh, Qseibe, Roum

B. Business Survey tool (quantitative)

The goal of this tool was to capture local businesses’ perceptions of Syrian and Lebanese workers and to determine opportunities for short-term employment and job placements. Moreover, it sought to identify high potential growth sectors. Interviewees were asked to identify skills (both soft skills and technical skills) and characteristics most desired by employers versus the existing skills and characteristics of current employees. 104 businesses were surveyed across three districts in South Lebanon. This sample included formal businesses in rural and urban areas.

The employers who participated were open and generated significant data and a good level of consistency in responses across the various sectors.

C. Youth Focus Group Discussion Guide (qualitative)

The LMA included 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) with host communities and Syrian refugees in order to understand social perceptions of Lebanese and Syrian youth towards each other, their economic statuses and future opportunities. The FGDs aimed to understand the specific differences and challenges that young Syrians and Lebanese face in accessing employment opportunities. They were disaggregated by sex and nationality, with male and female separate sessions occurring simultaneously for each nationality.

The FGDs collected information from four groups in 12 sessions: Lebanese young men, Lebanese young women, Syrian young men, and Syrian young women.

FGD participants were selected by SHIELD, in coordination and collaboration with local municipalities. Participants were between 18-35 years of age. Female FGDs were led by a female facilitator to create a safe and comfortable environment for participation. The twelve FGDs occurred as follows:

Table #: 02
FGDs schedule

District	Nationality	Date	Location	Participants
Tyre	Lebanese	9 April, 2014	Bazourieh Municipality	11 males and 8 females
	Syrian	24 April, 2014	Maaroub Municipality	11 males and 13 females
Nabatiyeh	Syrian	23 April, 2014	Nabatiyeh School	6 males and 10 females
	Lebanese	25 April, 2014	Nabatiyeh School	10 males and 9 females
Jezzine	Syrian	10 April, 2014	Aramta Municipality	10 males and 10 females
	Lebanese	17 April, 2014	Aramta Municipality	11 males and 8 females

A. Constraints

- » This assessment was designed to address particular program design questions for Mercy Corps' FORDS program. It is not intended to be a thorough labor market analysis of the entire South Lebanon governorate.
- » The number of Syrian refugees entering Lebanon and/or leaving the country, as well as the numbers of Syrian refugees residing in the South often fluctuates. There is also frequent internal mobility from one village/town to another within the region.
- » The selection of businesses only represents a sample and is not intended to generalize current employment trends within one particular industry.
- » The assessment did not specifically look at Palestinian labor, though this group does play an important role in South Lebanon's economy.

Key Findings Business Survey

In order to get an overview of the state of the economy in South Lebanon, 104 businesses were interviewed on a variety of topics. Those interviewed were largely middle-aged (62.9%), male (94.3%) business owners (81.9%). Another 15.4% of those interviewed were managers in the selected businesses. Their businesses are spread across South Lebanon, with 43.8% in Tyre, 36.2% in Nabatieh, and 19.0% in Jezzine.

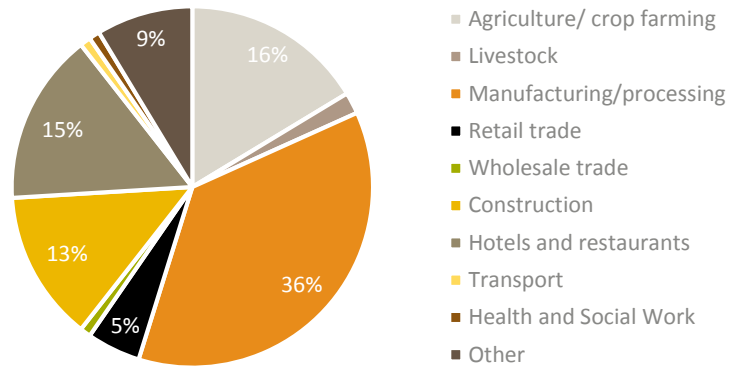


Figure 2: Sector Distribution

The businesses surveyed were mostly engaged in the manufacturing/processing (36.2%) sector, followed by agriculture/crop farming (16.2%), hotels and restaurants (15.2%), and construction (13.3%). Most (83.8%) reported that their business had been operating for more than three years.

A. Employee Profile

The businesses surveyed employ between two and eight employees, with an average of eleven employees. A large majority of those employees (84.8%) are male, with just 15.2% female. However, among the largest businesses, those employing twenty or more, the percentage of female employees is somewhat larger, at 20.2%.

When asked about the age distribution of their employees, none of the businesses surveyed report employing anyone under the age of 11. Just 16.3% report having employees between the ages of 11 and 18, and this likely reflects the employment of older teenagers who have dropped out of school. In Lebanon, the labor laws clearly stipulate that the legal age to work is 13 years old. All children aged between 13 to 18 can only be employed if they have a health certificate stating they are physically suited to work. In the next age bracket, 61.5% of businesses reported having employees aged 18-25. Finally, a full 80.8% of businesses indicated that they employ individuals aged 25 and older.

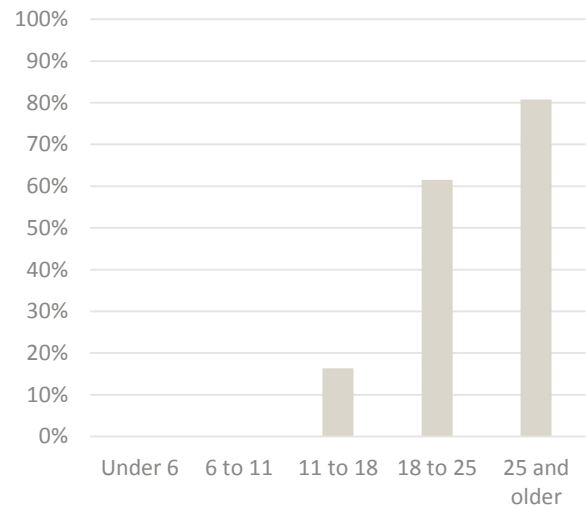


Figure 3: Age Distribution of Employees

When asked about the nationality of their staff, 75.0% reported that they have Syrian employees, while just 11.5% reported having Palestinian workers. Those that indicated that they employ Syrians affirmed that they are daily laborers, thus are offered temporary employment opportunities.

B. Consumers and Competitors

Respondents were asked about who their major customer base is. The most-selected group of consumers, with 83.7%, was individuals and households. A majority (51.9%) indicated that they sell to small businesses and traders. Many fewer reported selling to large businesses (17.3%), the international/export market (13.5%), government agencies (6.7%), or NGOs (6.7%). Neither sector nor number of employees was correlated with the tendency to have the international market, government, or NGOs as customers.

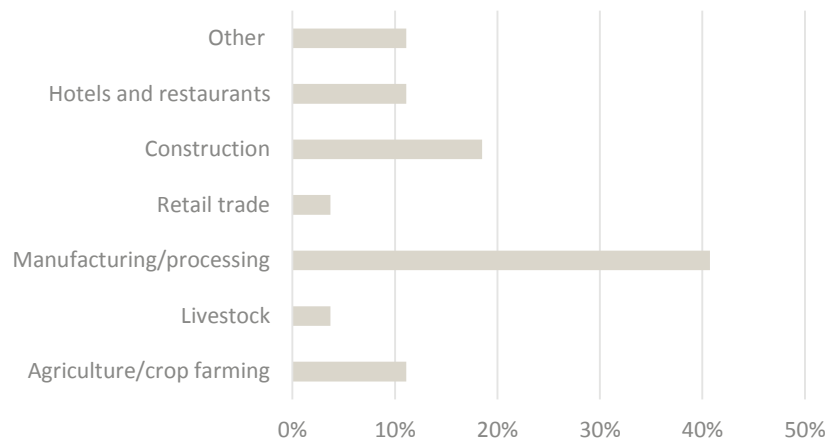


Figure 4: Businesses That Report No Local Competitors (by Sector)

Respondents were also asked how many other businesses in their area provide similar goods or services as them. Most (47.1%) indicated that there are between one and five similar businesses in their area – a healthy level of competition in the small-population markets of the South. However, 26.9% report that there are six or more similar businesses in their area, with 11.5% indicating that there are more than 20. This represents an oversaturation in such small markets as Nabatieh, Jezzine, and Tyre.

Conversely, 26.0% report that there are no other businesses that do similar work in their area. This represents a lack of competition for those businesses. Of those businesses that report no other similar local businesses, most (40.7%, or 11 out of 27 businesses) are in the manufacturing/processing sector. This may be due to the high levels of specialization among businesses in this sector (i.e. manufacturing car parts vs. manufacturing glass vs. metal works, etc.), or may merely reflect the overrepresentation of manufacturing sector businesses in the dataset.

C. Key Challenges and Effects of the Syrian Crisis

When asked to name the top two challenges faced by management in running this business, the most popular response was “competition in the market”, with 26.0% citing it as their biggest challenge and 12.5% selecting it as their second-biggest challenge.

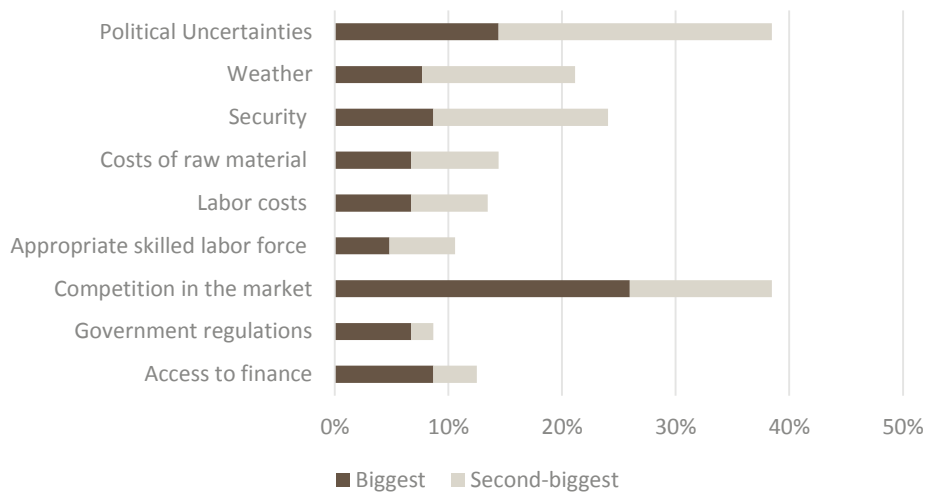


Figure 5: Key Challenges

“Political uncertainties” was an equally popular response, with 14.4% indicating it is their biggest challenge and 24.0% stating it is their second-biggest challenge. Two other, similarly general, challenges come next, with “security” and “weather”. Market-specific challenges, like “cost of raw materials”, “appropriate-skilled labor force”, and “government regulations” were also cited, but somewhat less often.

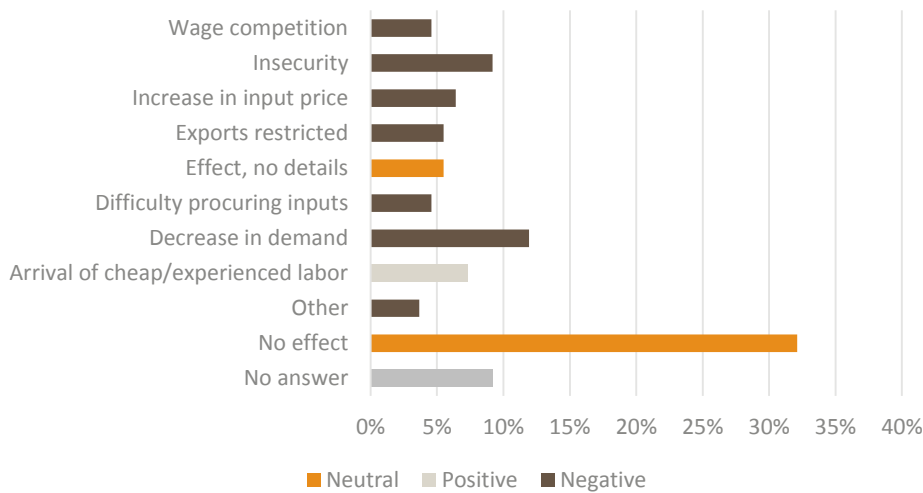


Figure 6: Effect of the Syrian Crisis

Respondents were asked to describe the effect of the Syrian crisis on their business. This was an open-ended question and some respondents gave multiple answers. The most common response was that the crisis has had no effect on their business (32.1%). The second most-selected answer (11.9%) was that the crisis has led to a decrease in demand for goods and services. This was most frequently mentioned by those working in the construction and tourism industries. The only positive effect highlighted by respondents was the influx of cheap and experienced labor from Syria. This was cited by 7.3% of respondents. When effects are grouped into

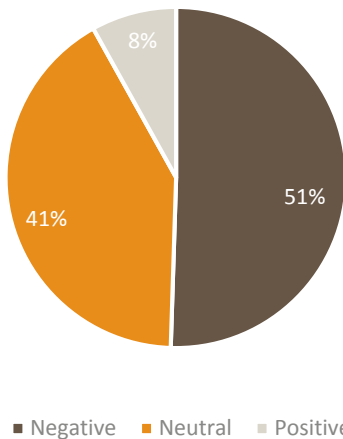


Figure 7: Overall Impact of Crisis

positive, neutral, and negative, very few business owners (8.1%) believe that the crisis has had a positive impact on their business. Remaining opinions on the impact of the crisis are fairly split. 50.5% reported a negative impact outlining challenges in the purchase of cheaper raw material from Syria and disrupted trade routes. 41.4% stated that the crisis has had no impact or a neutral impact on their business. Such businesses are mainly in industries benefiting from cheaper manual labor and dependent on sales of goods and services.

D. Hiring Practices and Preferences

Businesses were asked a series of questions about their hiring over the past year, their planned hiring for the coming year, and their preferences about potential employees. When asked whether, at the same time last year, they had more, fewer, or the same number of employees, a majority (62.5%) reported that they had the same number of employees. Another 20.2% indicated that they had fewer employees one year ago, meaning they had hired new staff within the last calendar year. Finally, 16.3% reported that they had more employees one year ago, indicating that some staff had left the company for one reason or another.

When asked whether they had hired any employees in the past six months, just 26.0% reported that they had hired new staff. A large majority, 74.0%, indicated that they had not hired any new staff. Additionally, when respondents were asked whether they have faced problems recruiting the kinds of employees they require, 71.2% answered no. This likely means that the businesses have not limited their hiring due to lack of available workers, but due to a lack of need for additional help. The high number of businesses reporting that they have the same number of workers supports this, and, combined with the low hiring levels, may indicate low turnover among existing employees.

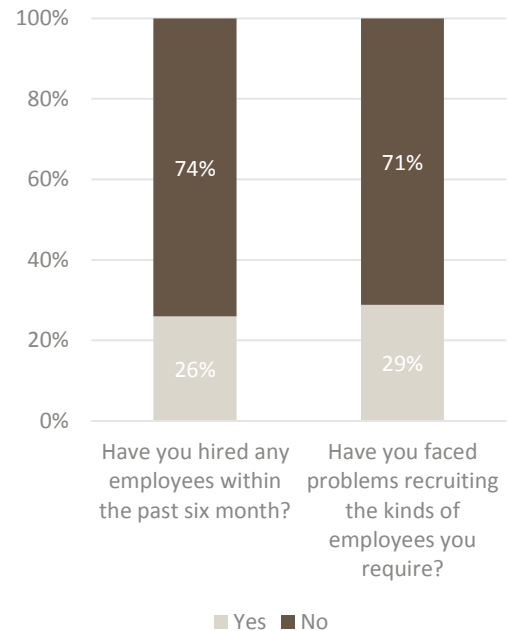


Figure 8: Recent Hiring

Despite the lack of hiring in the past six months, most survey respondents (78.8%) reported that they planned to hire new employees in the next six months. Even more respondents (93.3%) indicated that they would be willing to take on interns or on-the-job trainees.

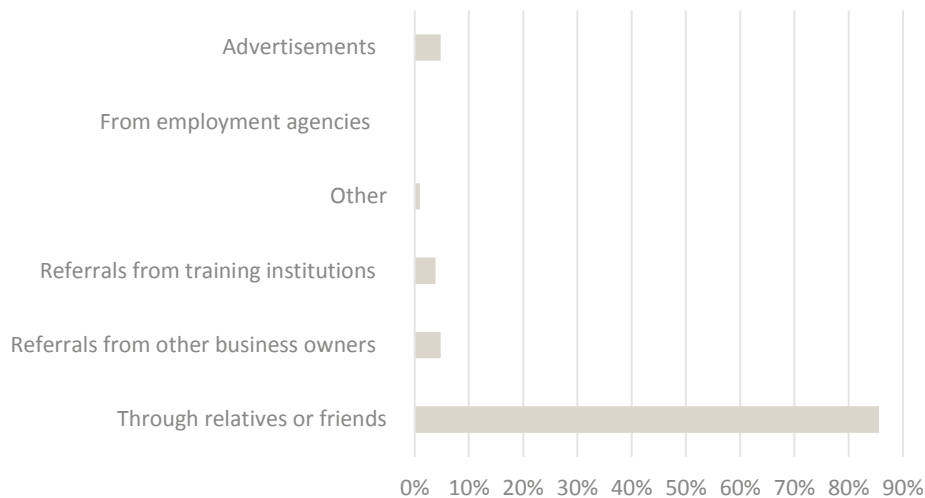


Figure 9: Recruitment Methods for New

Respondents were also asked how they usually identify new employees. A majority, 85.6%, reported that they usually found new employees through relatives or friends, rather than through using advertisements (4.8%) or through using referrals from education/training institutions (3.8%) or from other businesses (4.8%). None reported using employment agencies to find new employees.

Finally, survey participants were asked about their hiring preferences. When asked about age, most respondents (54.8%) indicated that they prefer to hire individuals aged 18-25. Another 26.9% preferred to hire individuals aged 26-35. When asked about gender, most respondents (62.5%) indicated that they prefer to hire men. Another 32.7% reported that they have no preference when it comes to gender. When asked about marital status, most respondents (76.9%) indicated that they have no preference when it comes to the marital status of their employees. Another 17.3% preferred to hire unmarried individuals.

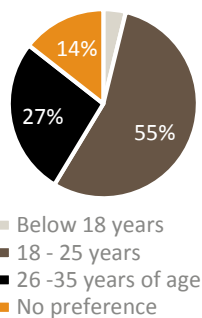


Figure 10: Age

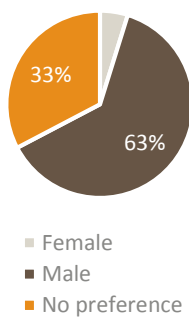


Figure 11: Gender

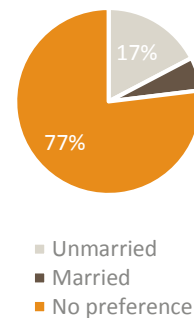
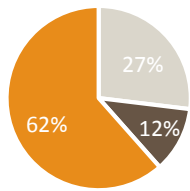


Figure 12: Marital Status

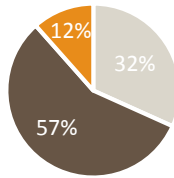
When asked about nationality, most respondents (61.5%) indicated that they have no preference. Another 26.9% prefer to hire Lebanese workers. When asked about the importance of basic literacy and numeracy among potential employees, most respondents (56.7%) indicated that these skills were “somewhat important” to be

successful workers. Another 31.7% stated that these skills were “not important”. In keeping with this, when asked about education level, most respondents (51.9%) indicated that they have no preference. Another 35.6% prefer hiring individuals who have completed primary school.



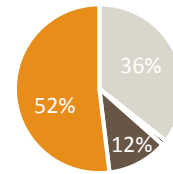
■ Lebanese
■ Syrian
■ No preference

Figure Figure 13: Nationality



■ Not important
■ Somewhat important
■ Very important

Figure 14: Literacy/Numeracy



■ Completed primary school
■ Completed secondary school
■ Complete vocational school
■ No preference

Figure 15: Education

E. Syrians in the Labor Force

Survey participants were asked a series of questions specific to Syrian workers. Respondents were asked to identify the sectors that would be most likely to hire Syrian refugees. This was an open question, and those surveyed gave multiple answers. The most-selected responses were construction (89.4%, or 93 of 207 total responses), agriculture (65.4%, or 68 of 207), and industry (29.8%, or 31 of 207).

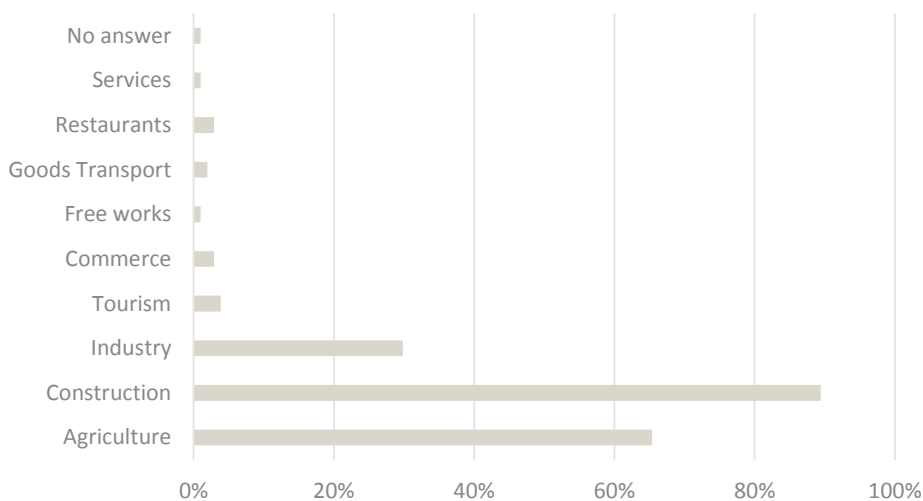


Figure 16: Sectors that Hire Syrians

When asked whether Syrian refugees were reliable employees, a large majority (79.8%) stated that they were reliable. When asked whether, if their business was hiring, they would be willing to take on Syrians as employees or interns, nearly all respondents (92.3%) stated that they would. This may be due, in part, to the lower salary expectations of Syrians in comparison to Lebanese.

When asked about Syrian refugees' salary expectations, most respondents (69.2%) confirmed that they expect lower pay than Lebanese employees do. However, when asked about whether Syrian refugees and Lebanese *should* be paid equally for the same position, most respondents (68.3%) stated that they should be paid the same for the same work. Another 30.8% felt that Lebanese employees should be paid more.

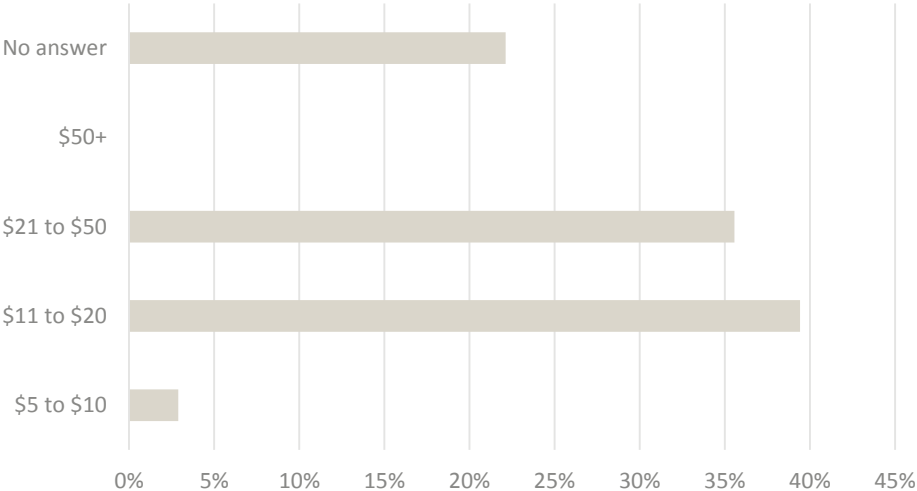


Figure 17: Average Salary of Syrian Employees

In regards to Syrian employees at their own business, respondents were asked the average daily salary they are paid. Most respondents (39.4%) indicated that Syrian employees were paid \$11-\$20 per day. Nearly as many respondents (35.6%) reported that Syrian employees were paid \$21-\$50 per day. The highest salaries were reported in manufacturing and processing, metal and stone works, construction, as well as hotels and restaurants. A large number of respondents (22.1%) elected not to answer this question. This high refusal rate may be due in part to the disconnect between the high number of respondents who state that Syrians *should be* paid equally to Lebanese, and the reports from many that the influx of Syrian labor has led to intense wage competition, with Syrians being paid, in some cases, a lower amount of what Lebanese laborers will accept.

F. Perceptions of Employees

Survey participants were asked to rank both Lebanese and Syrian employees on a variety of topics either “good”, “average”, or “poor”. For the Lebanese, respondents indicated that they had “good” communication skills (68.3%). Opinion was more split as to whether their technical skills were “good” (55.7%) or “average” (42.3%). Respondents reported that Lebanese education levels were “average” (71.2%). Commitment/discipline was also reported as “average” (61.5%). When asked to rank their overall ability, most selected “good” (55.8%), though a significant minority (43.3%) indicated that Lebanese ability was “average”.

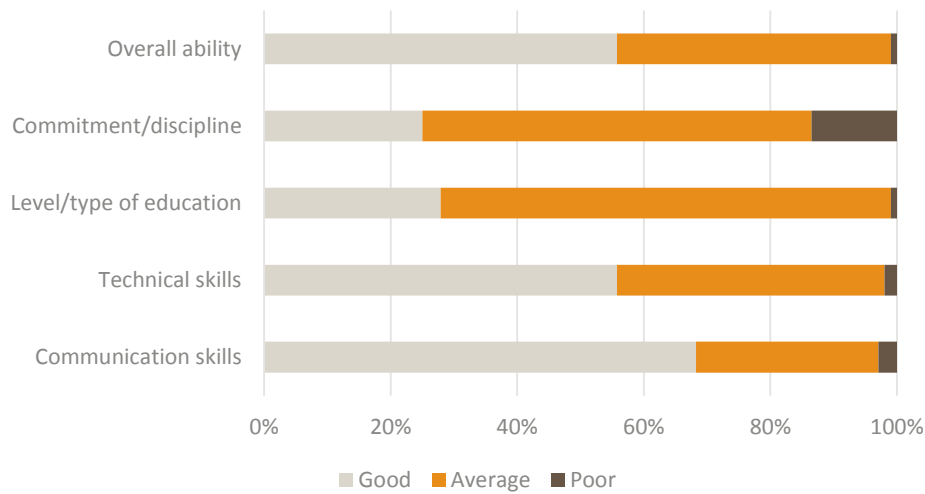


Figure 18: Employer Perceptions - Lebanese

For Syrian workers, respondents indicated that they had “average” communication skills (65.4%). Opinion was more split as to whether their technical skills were “good” (54.8%) or “average” (40.4%). Respondents reported that Syrian education levels were “average” (69.2%). Commitment/discipline was reported as “good” (58.7%). When asked to rank their overall ability, most selected “average” (54.8%), though a significant minority (42.3%) indicated that Syrian ability was “good”.

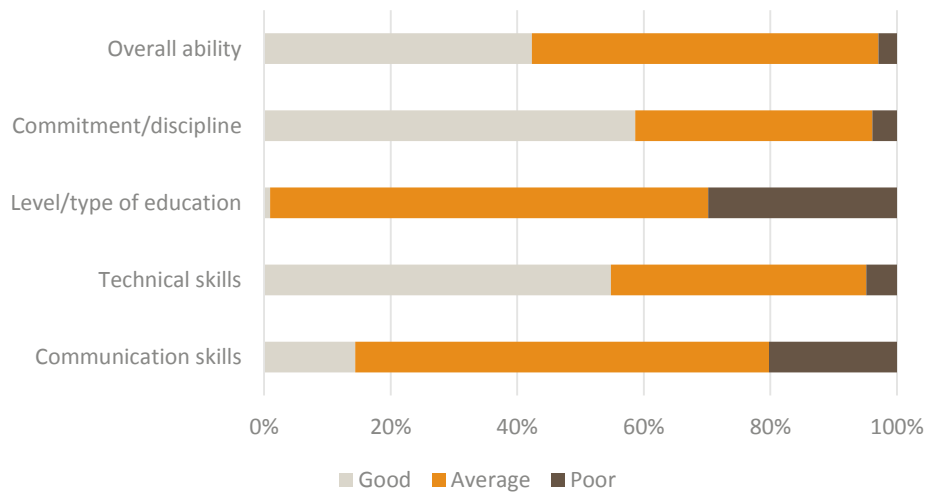


Figure 19: Employer Perceptions - Syrians

G. Characteristics and Skills of Potential Hires

Survey participants were asked about the most important characteristics and skill-sets of potential employees. The most-selected response was job experience (36.5%), followed by skills (27.9%), and honesty/trustworthiness (15.4%). Meanwhile, the most selected skill-sets were technical skills (80.8%), and communication skills (11.5%).

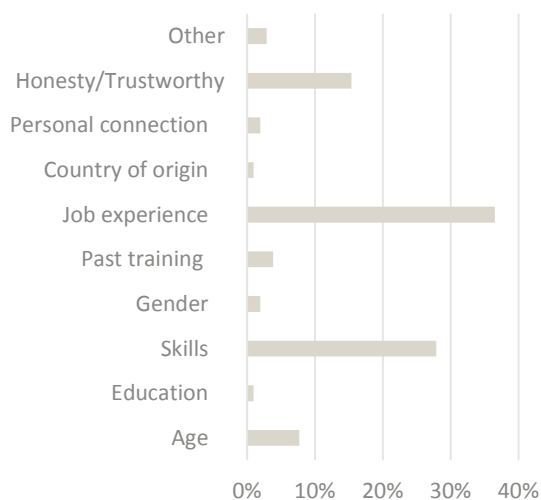


Figure 20: Key Characteristics

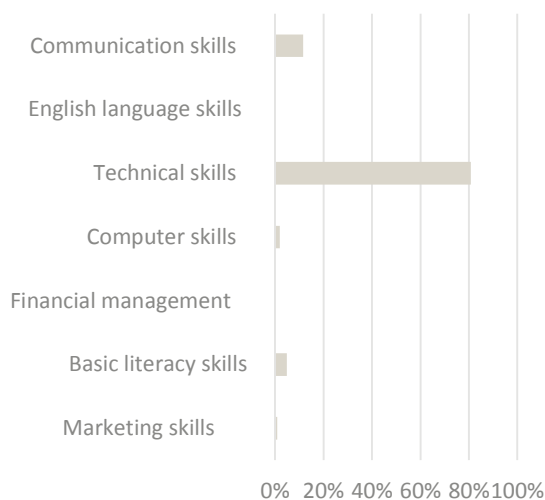


Figure 21: Key Skills

Respondents also listed the three most important skills they look for in a potential employee, as an open-ended question. Many of the answers given to this question fit better into the category of characteristics rather than skills. The most popular answers were commitment (33.6%), integrity (31.7%) and honesty (24.0%). The next responses were skills (21.2%), professional skills (21.2%), and experience (20.2%). None of these responses provided much information about what types of skills a potential employee would need to find a job.

However, survey participants were also asked what specific trainings they provide to new employees. This question gives a clearer picture of the types of skills employees would need to use in these positions, and therefore the specific types of skills and experience that would help them find employment. Of the top-ranked skills trainings these firms would provide, 93.3% were industry-specific skills. These skills vary from sector to sector and business to business. Cutting and assembling glass, caring for seedlings, and welding are just three of the many different skills that were mentioned. In the second and third rank, less specific skills, like communication skills and customer service, are mentioned, but still far less than specific skills.

This set of questions gives very clear information about what potential employers are looking for in an employee. They want a set of basic professional behaviors – integrity, honesty, commitment – combined with industry-specific skills and experience.

Key Findings – Key Informant Interviews

In order to gain a deeper understanding of existing vocational training and support programs in South Lebanon and to develop target sectors and activities, 52 key informants were interviewed on a variety of topics. They were located across South Lebanon, with 46.2% (24 of 52 informants) in Tyre, 30.8% (16 of 52) in Nabatieh, and 23.1% (12 of 52) in Jezzine. Most of those interviewed were representatives of the local municipality, whether the head (55.8%), vice-head (9.6%), or other municipal actor (15.3%).

When asked about which sectors livelihood programs should target, most expressed that the agricultural, construction, and tourism sectors should be the focus. This reflects common understanding of the role of Syrian labor in the Lebanese economy – all three of these sectors were studied in the Emergency Market Mapping Analysis completed in April 2013.² Indeed, when asked about the sectors that employ the most Syrians, nearly every interviewee identified agriculture and construction as the primary sectors. In terms of job creation, most cited construction as the sector currently creating the most new job opportunities, while tourism was identified as the sector most likely to create jobs in the future.

Another area in which most interviewees agree is the lack of support for livelihoods from the Lebanese government. When asked to identify sectors enhanced by government programs, 40 of the 52 interviewees (76.9%) said there were none. International and local actors were reported to have had a slightly larger impact, with several interviewees mentioning programming in the agricultural and construction sectors. They also highlighted support for municipalities and social services that international and local organizations have provided.

During these interviews, participants were asked to discuss key stakeholders in livelihoods programming in the South. SHEILD was the most frequently cited organization. Others included UNDP and Caritas. Interviewees were also asked to identify any best practices they had observed from previous livelihoods projects. Interviewees noted that the most successful projects were those that continued over a longer time span and included regular check-ins with their beneficiaries. Other best practices cited included coordination with the municipality and a focus on practical, rather than theoretical, trainings.

Finally, interviewees were asked about any tensions that exist between Lebanese and Syrians in their area due to competition over jobs or employment. Many of them cited the low wages earned by Syrians and the lack of enough job opportunities overall as the major tension points between the two communities. However, others stated that there is no tension or competition between Lebanese and Syrians, as Syrian labor is a necessary part of the economy.

² Lebanon Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA), International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Danish Refugee Council, Oxfam, UKAid, April 2013

Key Findings – Focus Group Discussions

Understanding the social dynamics between Lebanese and Syrian communities, as well as their attitudes and perceptions towards each other was an important part of this assessment. The focus groups conducted were disaggregated by sex and nationality and facilitated by experienced SHEILD team members. They were organized in collaboration with the municipalities of Bazourieh and Maaroub in the Tyre district, Aramta in the Jezzine district and the Nabatieh Public School in the Nabatieh district.

A. Perceptions of Lebanese Youth

Lebanese young men and young women both describe Lebanese youth as helpful, enterprising, bold, and ambitious. They feel they are educated and have good communication skills. They also stated that they have good work opportunities in the current market.

However, according to Lebanese young women, business employers perceive Lebanese youth as demanding high salaries and employment benefits, such as medical insurance and social security. Moreover, both Lebanese young men and women feel that business owners think Lebanese youth are not willing to hold responsibilities and are not always serious in their work.

Syrian young men and women also see Lebanese young men as open-minded, bold, and ambitious. They feel that Lebanese young men are presentable, educated, and have good communication skills. Like Lebanese young women, however, both Syrian groups stated that Lebanese young men are spoiled, and lack seriousness. Both groups of Syrian youth noted the unwillingness of Lebanese young men to take jobs that lack prestige. Syrian young men also called them unaccepting of other people.

Lebanese young women see themselves as liberal and stylish. They say they love to work and are very committed. Neither group of Syrian youth indicated that they have much direct contact with Lebanese young women. However, they said their interactions with older Lebanese women are always respectful, and that they communicate easily with them.

B. Perceptions of Syrian Youth

Syrian young men see themselves as serious, persistent, and hard workers. They have many responsibilities, as many leave education early to work. They brought up the issue of exploitation, which they feel that they encounter in the workforce. Syrian young women agree with this assessment of Syrian young men, though they also attribute the inability to find local employment to lack of ambition. Most Syrian young women indicated they feel their husbands have become more open minded since being displaced to Lebanon.

Lebanese young men see Syrian young men as serious, persistent, and hard workers. They agreed that Syrian young men lack work opportunities and face terrible working conditions due to the high number of Syrians in the

workforce. Lebanese young women, meanwhile, see Syrian young men as very traditional and inflexible. They agree that Syrian young men are hard workers and experienced, but state that they must be supervised in their work. Both Lebanese young men and women state that Syrian young men discriminate based on gender.

C. Opportunities and Challenges for Lebanese Youth

Lebanese young men stated that they are primarily seeking employment in management, tourism and hospitality, agriculture, insurance, and in the public sector. They also brought up the possibility of opening their own small businesses. Lebanese young women felt the same, also including the military and political parties as potential employers.

When asked about youth in general, Lebanese women solely focused their responses on males and did not immediately think that they could also provide feedback about themselves. When further probed about female work opportunities, they unanimously stated that the most decent jobs for them were teaching, nursing, sewing, hairdressing, beauty care, and owning a small business.

Lebanese young men and women both identified corruption and favoritism as the main challenges they faced when looking for decent employment. The saturated job market, the influx of foreign labor, high cost of living and the security situation were also seen as problematic. When asked about obstacles to setting up their own businesses, Lebanese young women identified lack of capital, a lack of market knowledge, and the overall fragile economic situation in Lebanon. Lebanese young men added other obstacles, including the high cost of raw material, strict governmental regulations, high interests on loans, and strong competition in the market.

D. Opportunities and Challenges for Syrian Youth

Syrian young men stated that the only available employment opportunities for them were very physically demanding and required long working hours. They would prefer jobs in different sectors that do not necessarily involve 'hard labor.' They indicated that their main means of identifying potential job opportunities were through friends and relatives. Syrian young women also felt that daily labor was the most likely opportunity for Syrian male youth. This was described as including working as a doorman or working in construction, agriculture, house refurbishments, mechanics, or hotels and restaurants.

Syrian young women felt that for themselves, the only employment options available were in hairdressing, sewing, cooking, and house cleaning. They also stated they were ill-informed about the processes and ways to find work. Interestingly, the majority of Syrian young men stated that they were encouraging female members of their households to seek work in Lebanon to supplement the household's income. They explicitly affirmed that they would never allow women to work in Syria, but stated that the situation was different in Lebanon.

When asked about obstacles for Syrian youth, both groups of Lebanese mentioned discrimination, as well as the security situation and protection concerns such as the imposed curfews and limited freedom of movement. The Lebanese also further asserted that they perceive Syrians were not motivated to seek jobs due to the humanitarian assistance provided to them.

The employment challenges Syrian youth alluded to were discrimination and exploitation by Lebanese employers, low salaries, and the limited job options for Syrians. They also brought up the psychological impact of forced migration and the general impact of the security situation. Syrian young women highlighted the lack of technical experience among Syrian youth, as well as their lack of knowledge of new technologies, as another challenge to finding employment. Syrian young men, meanwhile, expressed that being unable to ensure basic protection and mobility was a major challenge.

E. Existing Skills and Future Training

Throughout all of the focus groups, it was reiterated by Lebanese and Syrian youth alike that Lebanese youth have excellent skills that could benefit employers. These included communication skills, creativity, technical knowledge, professionalism, innovative thinking, fast learning, and ambition.

Lebanese young women stated that they would like to see training projects focus on developing skills in computer technologies. Lebanese young men, meanwhile, highlighted the need for enhanced technical skills and more on-the-job training programs, along with improving communication and language skills.

Syrian young men recognized that vocational training sessions could be a starting point for establishing themselves as professional and skilled workers in the field of their choice. They advocated for trainings that focus on enhancing their technical skills, as they felt that was the most important factor in finding employment.

Guidance for Future Programming

The information gathered for this Labor Market Assessment can inform youth livelihood programming in South Lebanon. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected through the business survey, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, the following are key points to consider when developing programming:

- » Job experience and technical skills are two of the most important factors that employers consider when looking for new employees
- » Technical skills vary greatly from sector to sector and business to business
- » Professionalism, honesty, and commitment are characteristics employers value in potential employees
- » Most businesses use personal connections and networking when they want to hire new employees
- » Syrian youth feel that they are exploited and kept in particular, labor-intensive, positions
- » Lebanese youth feel that they have a lot to offer, but that employers do not take them seriously and it is difficult to compete with cheaper foreign labor

From these key points, vocational training programs in South Lebanon will have the most success if they focus on a combination of on-the-job training and workshops on basic professional skills. Programs that develop apprenticeships would be beneficial, and would allow youth to gain the specific job skills needed to find employment in specialized businesses.

Additionally, workshops that focus on professional behavior, networking and interview skills, and basic job-hunting and resume-writing skills would help youth develop the more general skills they need to find opportunities and engage potential employers.

Given employers heavily rely on personal connections to find employees, Lebanese youth would benefit from job placements, as they would allow them to develop specific job skills and give them an opportunity to gain experience, while challenging the perception of Lebanese youth as lacking seriousness and commitment.

Moreover, vulnerable youth would also benefit from apprenticeships and professional skills workshops, as they would allow them to develop further labor market oriented skills and create a network of businesses and professional contacts in their area of residence.

Entrepreneurship is another skill that could be helpful, particularly to Lebanese youth, as many expressed the desire to open their own small businesses. Understanding the many skills needed to open and run a business, from identifying a niche and finding capital to managing minor accounting, are crucial to finding success as a small-business owner. Perhaps another set of workshops could be held for those interested, focusing on developing these skills.

ABOUT MERCY CORPS

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