

A stylized human figure logo composed of thick, curved lines. The head is a yellow circle, the torso is a grey vertical line, and the arms and legs are yellow and grey curved lines respectively.

**Republic of Lebanon, Ministry of Social Affairs
United Nations Development Programme - UNDP**

**Preparatory Assistance
National Programme for Improving Living Conditions of
the Poor in Lebanon (Leb/98/004)**

P R O G R E S S R E P O R T

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A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 Background

The Mapping of Living Conditions in Lebanon is the first output of the Poverty Strategy Initiative of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) supported by the UNDP Lebanon Country Office, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) and technical assistance from FAFO Institute for Applied Social Science (Norway). The Mapping of Living Conditions, which shall be addressed as the Poverty Mapping in this report, was approved by the Council of Minister and publicly launched on 17 October 1998.

Realizing the need to strengthen national capacity and develop a national framework for poverty alleviation, UNDP assisted the Ministry of Social Affairs in formulating a Preparatory Assistance Project (PA) aiming to develop a National Programme for Improving the Living Conditions of the Poor in Lebanon. The Ministry of Social Affairs, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) and UNDP signed the PA document in October 1998.

It is important to note that the launching of the project coincided with a change in the Government and the appointment of a new Minister to MoSA. The new Minister of Social Affairs, after initial briefings, embraced the project and its potential to contribute to national efforts for improving living conditions of the poor. The Commitment of the Ministry of Social Affairs was, furthermore, demonstrated as it organized for a coordination committee of UN supported projects and the concerned departments of MoSA to ensure sustainability, enhance ownership among Ministry staff and maintain consistent and efficient use of resources.

It is worth mentioning that the objectives of the project are aligned with the agenda of the new Government, which considers social development, and poverty alleviation a national priority as declared by the new President of the Republic and the new Prime Minister in their inauguration speeches.

A.2 Outputs

The activities of the project and the progress attained to date, reinforce and confirm the achievement of the following outputs:

- The technical design and institutional arrangements for the implementation of a Multi-Purpose Poverty Survey and a Social Outlook for Lebanon. The objective of these studies is to support the government identify an income poverty line (Note should be made that the Unsatisfied Basic Needs threshold was depicted in the Poverty Mapping). **(Objective 1, Output 1.1)**
- A Programme to Support Regional Development Development in Aakar – North Lebanon. **(Objective 1, Output 1.2)**
- MoSA central staff's capacity strengthened to integrate project activities into the Ministry's programme. This is being done through the development of a coordination mechanism for UN supported projects and Director of MoSA departments. **(Objective 2, Output 2.1)**
- MoSA Social Development Centers staff, in the regions, strengthened to assess the needs of their communities, formulate development projects and coordinate with community groups and NGOs. This is being developed through focused training, which has so far benefited 150 staff members across the country. **(Objective 2, Output 2.2)**

- Implementation of micro-projects for poverty alleviation in Aakar, one of the poorest areas of Lebanon, according to the findings Poverty Mapping. These projects aim to promote income generation and job creation; economic empowerment of women and promoting gender mainstreaming, strengthening local government services; and strengthening civil society organizations, coordinating with NGOs. Implementation of the priority projects will be decentralized to the Social Development Centers of MoSA. **(Objective 2, Output 2.3)**
- Additional resources mobilized for the implementation of the activities and programmes that would result from the preparatory assistance project. **(Objective 4, Output 4.1 and 4.2)**

A.3 The PA Project Resources

The financial resources of the project consisted of Government/MoSA cost-sharing in the amount of \$285,000, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo, Norway in the amount of \$524,000, and UNDP-\$200,000.

A.4 The PA Project Staffing

The project's operations began in October 1999. The Director-General of MoSA, Ms. Nimat Kanaan acts as the National Project Coordinator (NPC). The core staff consists of 5 professionals including the Project Manager, Mr. Adib Nehmeh, a Project Assistant, a Field Coordinator, a Capacity Building Officer and a Field Officer. The project workplan was completed and approved by UNDP and MoSA in January 1999. Three National UN Volunteers were recruited in May 1999 to assist locally with the implementation of the micro-projects in Aakar and Bab el-Tabbaneh.

A.5 Financial Statement

Enclosed in Annex 1, is the last budget revision that UNDP has undertaken on the PA Project Leb/98/001, which reflects estimated expenditures for 1999 as per budget lines corresponding to the planned activities of the project.

A.6 Resources Mobilization Efforts

The project is also playing a catalytic role in identifying *potential sources of additional funding* needed to ensure the full implementation of the objectives and the outputs stipulated in this initial phase of preparatory assistance **(objective 4, output 4.2)**.

1. Efforts are on-going to solicit the contributions of donors and Government for a follow-up project that would continue to strengthen the capacity of MoSA, to improve its status of governance for social development and poverty alleviation. Hence, the project has attempted to seek initial resources for the Information Management System of MoSA; a Social Webpage; strengthening MoSA/NGO partnership; and the full implementation of the Multi-Purpose Poverty Survey (a proposal in the amount of \$357,000 submitted to the World Bank, who, however, declined to contribute).
2. Efforts are on-going to solicit the interest of donors to support a Regional Development Programme to Support Poverty Alleviation in Aakar for a first phase of 3 years.

It is very important to note that efforts are on-going to submit proposals for the needed funds and initial interest is identified through CDR, and OMSAR in the Government of Lebanon. Potential external donors could include the World Bank, the European Union, and an inquiry of interest of the Government of Norway will also be examined.

B. ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

The section describes the activities that have been developed and implemented to date. The achievements are divided into three main headings: Activities that contribute to capacity building of MoSA; the progress made towards the implementation of the poverty surveys and studies; and micro-projects for community development / poverty alleviation in the region of Aakar-North Lebanon.

B.1 Capacity Building of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Improved Coordination of MoSA Programmes

(Objective 2, output 2.1 and 2.2; objective 3, output 3.1)

I- Training

1. Training on the concept of Sustainable Human Development and the role of the Social Development Centers in promoting local development.

The training session extended for 3 days (13-15 April 1999) and targeted 57 staff members from different Development Centers in addition to around 10 staff members from other UN/MOSA projects and from other MOSA departments (total 67 trained).

2. Training of MoSA Social Development Centers Staff on Identification of the local community, its needs and formulate community development project accordingly.

The training programme benefited around 110 MoSA and Social Development Centers staff from 45 Social Development Centers across the country and was implemented in the different regions (to facilitate attendance of staff in remote areas):

Region	Date	Number of Beneficiaries
Tripoli - North Lebanon	21-23 June, and 12-14 July	14 Centers and 34 Members
Nabatiyeh – South Lebanon	28-30 June, and 15-17 July	19 Centers and 44 Members
Zahleh - Beqaa	5-7 July, and 19-21 July	12 Centers and 32 Members

The training programme was designed to introduce the trainees to a number of techniques related to development work and then training on how to use such techniques. This was done in two phases whereby each phase contained a theoretical component followed by a practical activity to execute what was learnt. The practical training resulted in the preparation of **44** village monography (phase 1) and **33** project proposals (phase 2). Topics of proposals included rehabilitation and / or establishment of social institutions for the youth, solid waste treatment projects, establishment of agricultural centers, cooperatives, etc; reproductive health programmes; irrigation projects, etc. All proposals were submitted for review by the project team and the respective committee to provide comments and assistance for follow-up to study feasibility of implementation with in cooperation with other agencies / institutions.

3. A Third Phase Training to be implemented before the end of December

As a result of the above training activities, a selection of a group of SDC staff members (5 members from each Mohafaza - a total of 30 participants) who showed excellent potential

and desire for learning and development work, were nominated for an extensive follow up training. The intensive training programme would prepare the group to follow up on the practical implementation of the local-community-development projects in the field as well provide consultation and technical assistance to other members in other SD centers. One of the main outputs is to select a group of at least 5-7 SDC staff members to become trainers for the Social Training Center at MoSA in Local Development Projects.

II - Mainstreaming the Results of the Poverty Mapping

More than 30 presentations were made by the Project Manager on the findings of the Poverty Mapping through the press, TV, radio and fora with NGOs and development stakeholders, and the UN system agencies.

III - Building Information Capacity of MoSA

The project solicited a consultancy for developing a proposal for building information capacity of the MoSA. The consultancy resulted in two proposals:

1. For a Social Website for MoSA
2. Modernizing the Ministry and strengthening its operational capacity by : building the Ministry's communication and computing infrastructure, strengthening the staff capacity to utilize this information and office productivity software and building critical applications. Initial support is planned to target the Ministry's Headquarters and 10 Social Development Centers across the country (including 5 centers to assist the disabled and 5 Regional centers providing a variety of welfare services).

Follow-up towards funding and implementing these activities is on-going with the Technical Cooperation Unit (TCU) of the Office of the Minister of State for administrative Reform (OMSAR), and the CDR. Further contacts are needed with interested donors and partners.

IV - Producing 26 monographs on the Kadas of Lebanon

The production of 26 booklets on the 26 Kadas of Lebanon, in cooperation with the Institute for Social Sciences (Lebanese University) will briefly list the main socio-economic indicators of each kada, describe the main characteristics (geographic, economic, etc) with a short analysis on the characteristics of the population, their living conditions, the community and any special issues worth mentioning. (*Due date of completion December 1999*).

V - Ensuring a participatory mechanism for the management of the project

The project has been instrumental in formulating a number of relevant committees to ensure broad-based participation among those concerned in MoSA, official institutions, civil society and national experts. The aim of the committees is to integrate the project's activities into the concerned departments of MoSA and hence promote participation and empowerment of MOSA staff to insure sustainability. The respective committees are:

1. A Technical Committee

Composed of the National Project Coordinator, the Project Manager, representatives/Directors of departments in MoSA, CDR, and UNDP. The functions of the Committee are to review and approve the proposed activities to be implemented within the project. The committee has had 4 meetings, in which it reviewed and approved 15 proposals of the micro-projects in Aakar, reviewed the curriculum, proposal and procedures for the training of MoSA /SDC staff mentioned above.

2. Sub-Committee on Surveys and Studies (*Social Outlook and the Multi-Purpose Poverty Survey*)

Consists of FAFO Consultant, International Technical Advisor, a representative of CAS, National Expert of the Housing and Population Survey, and two Directors in MoSA, Social Outlook Coordinator in addition to the Project Manager. The function of the committee is to set up the design and technical structure of the questionnaire and sample as well as follow up on data collection and analysis of the Multi-Purpose Survey. In addition, it is entrusted with following up on the production of the national living condition report through analysis of existing data (the Social Outlook). The Committee met more than 10 times including 4 missions of FAFO consultant, Mr. Ole Ugland and 1 mission of Dr. Moh'd Hussein Bakir, international consultant on poverty (the mission of Dr. Bakir resulted in the first draft of questionnaire and sampling frame of the Multi-Purpose Survey).

3. Coordination and sustainability between Departments of MOSA and UN/MOSA joint projects

The project played a catalytic role in formulating a mechanism of cooperation and coordination between the departments of the Ministry and the UN projects. To this end a Unified Coordination Committee was formed presided by the Minister of Social Affairs and coordinated by the Director General. Members of the Committee included the UN/CDR Coordination Officer, Chiefs of the Ministry's departments, UN/MOSA project managers, and UN officers (UN agencies involved are UNDP - UNFPA and UNIFEM). The Objective of the Committee is to strengthen integration of projects' activities within the Ministry's scope of work, improve coordination, establish effective means and channels of communication, and insure efficient use of resources (financial, human and time).

B.2 Poverty Survey and Living Condition Report

(Objective 1, output 1.1)

I - The Multi-Purpose Survey

1. A Partnership between MoSA and the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) was forged and defined.

CAS would be sub-contracted to implement the field activities of the Multi-Purpose Poverty Survey. The discussion with CAS benefited from the input of FAFO consultant, Dr. Ole Ugland, and the Technical Advisor, Dr. Bakir. This partnership represents a breakthrough in the coordination of data collection in Lebanon, resolving a prolonged disagreement between MoSA and CAS.

2. Sample Design (increase to 12,000 households) of the Multi-Purpose Poverty Survey:

The objective of the survey is to assist in calculating a national poverty line, and hence the methodology consists of enlarging the existing data on Household Income and Expenditure for Greater Beirut -- undertaken by CAS in 1998 and released in August 1999. In light of the newly released data, the sample design of the Multi-Purpose survey was reviewed, jointly by FAFO, MoSA/Project and CAS. The review recommended increasing the sample size from 6,000 (as per previous proposal) to 12,000 households in order to ensure a representative sample for each of the district to be surveyed.

3. Resource Mobilization Proposal for securing additional funds needed to implement the Multi-Purpose Poverty Survey.

The change in the sample design of the Survey imposed additional cost to the budget available from the initial contribution of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo, Norway of \$489,000. Based on discussion of a possible interest by the World Bank, a proposal was sent to them. However, the World Bank declined to provide financial assistance to this end.

4. Questionnaire.

A first draft questionnaire was designed during a mission of the Dr. Bakir, poverty international consultant, and Mr. Ugland, FAFO consultant. The questionnaire was sent for comments and feedback to more than 10 social science consultants and development experts and researchers. A meeting was held to discuss comments and feasibility of questionnaire during the month of June and modifications on the questionnaire were made accordingly (in full coordination with FAFO, Dr. Bakir and national expert of PHS).

II - The Social Outlook

The Social Outlook (a national poverty profile consisting of consolidation and analysis of existing data) is in the phase of initial preparation. Achievements so far can be listed as follows:

1. Identified participants - chapter's authors and co-authors (national and FAFO experts) - and necessary contracts were signed.
2. Designed the Report's framework (general principle). Local authors and FAFO authors prepared draft chapter outline which included table of contents, subsections and titles of each chapter (including lists of tables / figures and charts to be incorporated within the chapter).
3. FAFO drafted chapter one of profile (discussions and comments on the chapter to take place soon).

(Final drafts of all chapters are supposed to be finalized before the end of November - by the end of December Report should be translated, edited and printed).

B.3. Micro development projects in the region of Aakar and Bab el-Tebaneh

(Objective 2, output 2.3)

1. Solicited and reviewed 15 proposals for community based projects in North Lebanon (specifically, the cluster of Joumeh, Fneidek, and the neighborhood of Bab-El-Tabbaneh in

Tripoli) from local community groups, NGOs, and municipalities in collaboration with the Social Development Centers of the MoSA in the region. The three pilot areas were identified based on the findings of the Mapping of Living Conditions and a rapid field assessment conducted at the start of the project. Projects reviewed are currently under implementation. Some of these projects were terminated leaving a very positive impact on the living conditions of the people in question **(see Annex II - Summary of projects implemented)**.

2. Within the framework of increasing awareness on poverty in Lebanon, 4 documentaries (short films) are produced to reflect the living conditions and needs of the communities in the deprived and remote areas (the clusters of Aakar and Bab el-Tebaneh). The documentaries shall portray as well the project's achievements on all levels (capacity building of MOSA and community development projects in the North). A producer was subcontracted to this end; films produced would participate in all media activities and awards.

C. PLANNED ACTIVITIES / FUTURE ORIENTATION

The PA modality stipulates that the existing project is closed within a year of start of operations. Hence, upon the expiry of the one-year limit, the PA having tested the validity of the need for the assistance provided, will produce two strategic interventions to support poverty alleviation in Lebanon:

1. The first intervention will be through the implementation of a Regional Programme to Support Poverty Alleviation in the Region of Aakar-North Lebanon. Field assessment and preparations of the Programme are underway in collaboration between the project team, MoSA and notably the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR).
2. Formulate a project to strengthen Governance for social development and poverty alleviation in the Ministry of Social Affairs, including technical assistance and capacity support to MoSA with the aim of enhancing its role in planning for poverty alleviation and social development.

Further evidence to the need for continued support is due to the fact that the current project did not produce a national strategy for poverty alleviation as anticipated, because of shortage in time, insufficient data and notably the social and political changes witnessed by the country in the last year.

At the operational level, the next steps are to develop two comprehensive projects aiming to address the continuing needs and fully implement the activities initiated by the PA. Additional resources must be mobilized to ensure the process.