



# INTAJ 2 EVIDENCE PAPER:

## Assessing Results

APRIL 1, 2016 – DECEMBER 31, 2016

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>METHODS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF RESULTS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
SKILLS RESULTS .....	5
<i>INTAJ 1 Recommendations Addressed.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Skills Dashboard .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Key observations and trends .....</i>	<i>13</i>
SME RESULTS.....	15
<i>INTAJ 1 Recommendations Addressed.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>SME Dashboard.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Key observations and trends .....</i>	<i>19</i>
SWM/R RESULTS .....	22
<i>INTAJ 1 Recommendations Addressed.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>SWM/R Dashboard .....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Key observations and trends .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<b>OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....</b>	<b>29</b>
SKILLS COMPONENT.....	29
SME COMPONENT .....	30
SWM/R COMPONENT .....	31
<b>INDIRECT EFFECTS OF INTAJ 2.....</b>	<b>32</b>

# Introduction

**With the support of the Government of the United Kingdom**, Mercy Corps is implementing Improved Networks, Training and Jobs (INTAJ) 2 in target communities in Lebanon. The aim of the program is to address the economic needs of communities in the Beqaa and North Governorates of Lebanon by building stronger businesses and increasing employment, thereby achieving greater stability and resiliency.

In designing INTAJ 2, Mercy Corps relied on the experience and lessons learned from the implementation of the pilot phase. In preparation for the pilot (INTAJ 1), crosscutting constraints to jobs growth in Lebanon that affect actors at the individual, business and market levels of economic activity were identified. To address these constraints and stimulate sustainable jobs growth, the program was designed to provide interventions at different levels as follows:

- Engaging established private sector companies and/or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to provide demand-driven, hands-on, practical skills training and workforce-skills development for individuals.
- Supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with a mix of specialised technical assistance, in-kind grants and linkages to business support services.
- Supporting the development of the solid waste management and recycling (SWMR) sector by working with existing market actors to expand their capacity to process more recyclable solid waste, improve efficiency and quality, and incentivise further investments.

The initial pilot phase of INTAJ ran from September 10, 2015 to March 31, 2016. That phase allowed for a refinement of the intervention activities and tracking, monitoring and evaluation methodologies. In order to ensure sufficient learning from the pilot phase, internal evaluations were conducted and an evidence paper including supplementary information and analysis from baseline and endline data collection, as well as lessons learned and best practices identified by the programme team was developed.

Similar to and following up on the first paper, this Evidence Paper aims to record benefits of INTAJ interventions that are not necessarily captured in the logframe. It also highlights case studies and qualitative data gathered by the team to provide a field view of effects of implementation, as well as better demonstrate value for money offered by the programme.

The recommendations and lessons from the pilot phase that were identified in the previous paper were taken into account during INTAJ 2. The follow-up on those recommendations is presented, as well as results to date and next steps for each component. The information below is intended to better inform program planning for upcoming phases and to continually improve INTAJ to achieve the best results possible while effectively and efficiently implementing the program to maximize impact going forward.

## Methods

The data for this paper was collected through a qualitative design due to the need for a deeper understanding of the satisfaction of INTAJ 2 beneficiaries with the program, perception on the effects of the collaboration on their economic future and identification of any issues that could be improved during the

upcoming phase. Inclusion criteria were: (1) being a beneficiary of INTAJ 2 in any of the three components and (2) willingness to participate. The M&E team developed Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and interview guides with oral prompts customized for the beneficiaries of each of the three INTAJ 2 components to be used for data collection. The questions were derived from the objectives of the paper mentioned above with the aim of gaining insight into the perspectives of INTAJ 2 partners to help inform upcoming activities. In addition, data was extracted from the discussions conducted with the trainees, training providers, trainers, SME and SWM/R actors that are documented in the M&E team's spot check visit reports and feedback interviews. Below is a summary table of the component, data collection tools and method used, and number of FGDs and interviews.

Component	Stakeholder	Tool Used	Data Collection Implemented
<b>Skills</b>	Training Provider	Spot check reports and feedback interviews	Spot Check reports of 27 courses  13 Feedback interviews
	Trainer	Spot check reports	Spot Check reports of 27 courses
	Trainees	Spot check reports and FGDs	Spot Check reports of 27 courses  6 FGDs with skills trainees (3 in Bekaa for 3 courses and 3 in the North for 6 courses)
	INTAJ skills component team	FGD	1 FGD with Project Managers, Field Coordinators and Technical Advisor
<b>SMEs</b>	SME owners	Feedback interviews and FGDs	3 Feedback interviews  5 FGDs (2 Bekaa with 10 SMEs total, 3 North with 9 SMEs total)
	INTAJ SME component team	FGD	1 FGD with Project Managers, Field Coordinators and Technical Advisor
<b>SWM/R</b>	SWM/R SME actors		4 Interviews
	SWM/R CBO actors	Semi-structured interviews	3 Interviews
	Partner Municipalities		6 Interviews
	INTAJ SWM/R component team	FGD	1 FGD with Project Managers, Field Coordinators and Technical Advisor

# Summary of Results

## Skills Results

As the Syrian crisis continues, as well as the relative stagnation of the Lebanese economy, pressures on Lebanese nationals and refugees are ongoing. With more than 25% of the population being comprised of Syrian refugees<sup>1</sup> the competition between Lebanese and refugee workers in both the formal and informal sectors remains rampant. Unemployment in Lebanon is still a major issue that is faced by workers in the country and has only intensified as the crisis in Syria continues.

Research by Mercy Corps and partner organisations in Lebanon has shown that a major cause of unemployment is the incompatibility of the skills of potential employees with the market demand for professional and technical expertise. To address these constraints, INTAJ partners with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private technical schools and consultancy firms to train Lebanese people in a wide variety of in-demand technical skills to improve their employability. In addition to the course-specific module, the trainees are provided with soft skills sessions that address a wide variety of skills that could significantly prepare them for their venture into the job market.

From April 2016 to December 2016, INTAJ successfully **implemented 42 skills training courses in the Beqaa and North Lebanon**. Within these courses, around 830 trainees were registered to participate. 620 of these trainees have been baselined by December 31, 2016 and all the data analysis within this document relies on those trainees. The remaining 210 trainees had not



**As of December 2016, this component of the program enabled 132 individuals to secure full-time positions, part-time positions, internships and self-employment**

been baselined at the time of cutoff for data collection due to the fact that the courses were still in the set-up or initiation phase. Of those who have successfully completed the training, approximately 51% were men and 49% were women.

One key output from the pilot phase that was previously mentioned in the last evidence paper was the development of specific processes that



*“Because of INTAJ we are feeling more active in the society where the narrow-minded people are spread, even if we are females and uneducated we can be an active member of the society”*

Soap Training Participant

<sup>1</sup> UNDP-UNHCR Joint Secretariat (2015) Syrian Crisis Discussion Paper Series



were proven successful in the implementation of the skills-building component. The team was able to further modify and improve the process over the last period during the implementation of INTAJ 2. In particular, the team was able to enhance the content of the skills courses through a more rigorous selection method for training provider applicants as well as increased involvement of the skills team with the partners. In addition, the M&E team enhanced the monitoring and evaluation procedures to take into account continuous tracking and development of the program activities.

With respect to the skills component processes, the new elements added to the process included:

1. specification of a recruitment plan by all training providers and provision of signed MoUs with local businesses, which are expected to be submitted with the proposal
2. development of a checklist for the “kick off” meetings that are held with partners to ensure the provision of a standard package across partners and eliminate the possibility of omitting important processes/expectations
3. enhancement of the grading matrix to include all elements related to desired standards of trainings
4. standardization of the selection panel members to include an operational representative, programmatic representative and M&E representative
5. switching of the programmatic representation in the selection committees so that none of the voting members in the committees belong to the field team from which the proposal has originated

On the other hand, with respect to the M&E, some of the processes that were enhanced include:

1. strengthening of qualitative data collection tools by reviewing them and adding sections where the M&E team can collect data from multiple perspectives during each visit (trainees, training providers, trainers and team)
2. revising of the pre/posttest developed by the training providers to ensure that the questions are relevant and appropriate to the course content
3. overseeing the pre/posttest administration to ensure that the tests are properly conducted and the results are not influenced by any interferences
4. implementing frequent unannounced spot check visits to trainings for quality assurance
5. identifying specific reporting processes so that there is open and frequent communication between the M&E team and the program team to share any gaps and advise on possible steps

## **INTAJ 1 Recommendations Addressed**

The pilot provided data, lessons and recommendations to be addressed and to be used to inform the design of the INTAJ 2 skills activities. These recommendations were taken into account and addressed during the implementation. The recommendations and actions taken are as follows:

**Continued tracking of employment outcomes to identify factors for success.** The need for the continuous follow-up of the INTAJ beneficiaries and the interest in developing a trainee profile prompted the team to build on the data being collected during INTAJ 1 and to enhance the content and data compilation processes. One of these actions included the separation of the employment questions from the course endline, which is typically designed to assess satisfaction and confidence in economic future. In addition, questions related to the work environment and satisfaction with employment were added to the newly revised “employment endline”. In addition, follow up is conducted with trainees each quarter to identify any new cases of employment. Finally, a skills component database was developed in order to facilitate the documentation, data storage and data analysis process and help in the identification of any

***“Many employers explicitly told me that they cannot employ me because I’m veiled”***

— Trainee, North

gaps in the tools used as well as the elimination of duplication. The purpose is mainly to attempt to provide some insight into any possible trends in employment or unemployment through systematic data collection and documentation. The focus groups with the trainees showed that certain beneficiaries faced some form of

discrimination upon their entry into the labor market. The two main themes that seem most prominent are related to “geographic location” and “personal appearance” (mainly being veiled).

The trainees who have been able to secure employment have not identified any barriers or challenges encountered in the process. However, the team will continue to track the trainees over the duration of the program to develop a full profile of those who were not able to secure employment. To date, quarterly follow-up is conducted with the trainees and further qualitative methods may be incorporated during the upcoming phase to help give a clearer picture of issues faced by the beneficiaries of the skills component.

*“When I say to an employer that I attended an intensive “Medical Secretary” training, I feel empowered”*

Wissal, Medical Secretary Trainee



**Further disaggregate the effects of soft skills training versus other course content.** The trainees, trainers and training providers under INTAJ 2 praised the soft skills sessions provided. Course beneficiaries who have been employed to date are working in the specific area of the attended trainings, implying that the employment of the beneficiaries can be attributed to the technical content of the courses. However, the trainees have given highly positive responses to soft skills and have stated that these sessions have not only benefitted them professionally but on the personal level as well. Many of the trainees stated that they were able to secure a job interview because of the addition of their attendance in the INTAJ 2 training on their CV and the technical skills that they have acquired. In addition, many affirmed that they were able to successfully complete the interview due to the thorough way they were prepared for it in the soft skills sessions. This positive attribution of both elements only solidifies the conviction of the INTAJ team that the matching of these elements within each course are each important and influential in their own way. In one rare extreme case, some trainees felt that the technical content was purely responsible for securing employment. This can be ascribed to (1) the higher age of the trainees (2) their low perceived need for the development of a CV and (3) the fact that they were selected and absorbed by the training provider and did not have to go through a rigorous job application process.



*“After the life skills training, and according to what we learned during this training, I managed to update my curriculum vitae to a completely professional CV. I also managed to control my anger in many situations through which I would have probably snapped and lost it if it was not for what I was taught.”*

— Nelly, Hospitality Course Trainee

In the pilot, some anecdotal evidence highlighted the benefits of provision of soft skills training on employment outcomes. Due to this evidence and the high satisfaction of the trainees with the module, pure soft skills trainings are being provided in both areas when the chance is presented as core soft skills courses. Monitoring of job placement, relevance of job to course attended and trainee feedback on effects of the technical and the soft skills sessions will be continued throughout the grant duration.

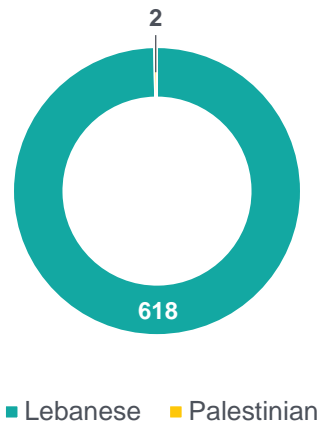
**Identify opportunities to further refine the training model in order to further improve employment outcomes.** In INTAJ 2, a closer collaboration between the selected training providers and local employers has been encouraged so the course modules can be based on the identified need in the specific communities. Up until December 2016, around 21 training providers had completed or were in the process of implementing skills courses in the Beqaa and the North. Training topics have varied, including topics such as industrial electrical maintenance, industrial mechanical maintenance, construction works, soap production, embroidery and stitch works, hospitality, food safety, marketing and sales management, beauty care, elderly care, child care and nurse aid. In addition, all training providers have been required to secure Memorandums of Understanding with local businesses for at least 25% of their trainees. These trainees have to be placed in related jobs within 2 weeks – 2 months of course completion. Moreover, in the signed agreements, the last payment to be disbursed to the training provider is directly linked to the employment outcome of the course as assessed and verified by the M&E team. As a result of these strict requirements, applicants have been more diligent in responding to local needs, which in turn has improved the percentage of trainees being placed in jobs (full-time, part-time and internships/apprenticeships). For example, LEAD, a healthcare consultancy firm providing trainings in the North, has strong connection with hospitals and healthcare centers in the area. As a direct benefit of this network, the organization is able to determine specific needs and gaps in the labor market. One of the trainings they provided over the last phase was an “Elderly Care” training that was modeled around the gap in availability of trained individuals who could work in such positions. Upon completion of the training, 50% of the trainees were placed in jobs.

## Skills Dashboard

In INTAJ 2, as was the case in the pilot phase, the trainings were open to any individuals who wished to participate and had a good probability of employment. Due to restrictions in potential fields of employment of Syrian workers and the tailoring of the trainings to specific local businesses’ needs, the majority of trainees have been Lebanese nationals.



Figure 1. Skills Trainees by Nationality



Upon further disaggregation of the data, the distribution of the trainees by gender seems to be almost equal. Most of the outreach is done directly in the field by the INTAJ 2 team, consisting of both women and men, in order to overcome any gender barriers. In the outreach activities implemented from April 1st to December 31st, 52% of the outreached individuals were women. In the skills building component, initial outreach, planning, and negotiation with training providers has included considerations to ensure equal access for women such as alternative training timing and transportation as needed. Women are also encouraged to participate in courses outside typical gender norms, if they are willing and interested.

Figure 2. Skills Trainees by Gender

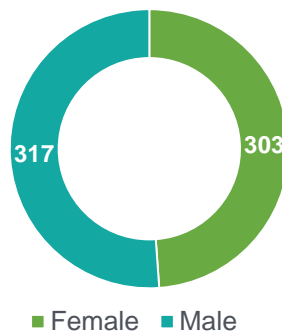


Figure 3. Skills Trainees Employed by Gender

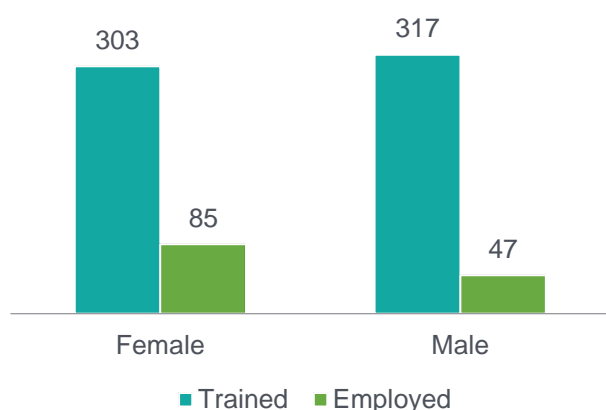
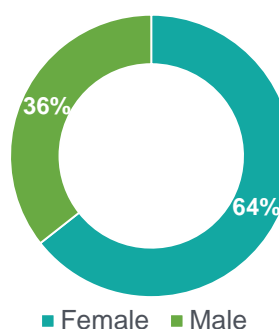
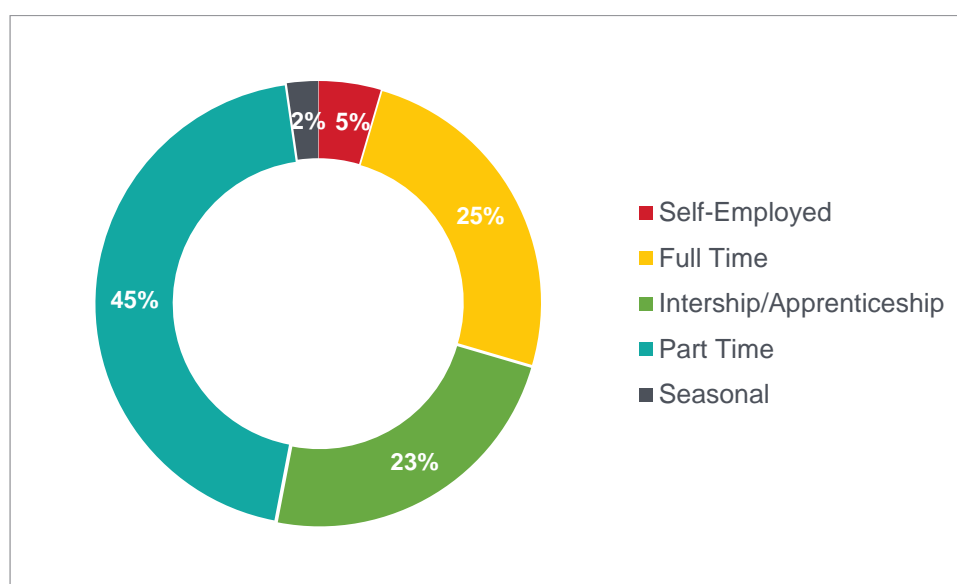


Figure 4. Skills Trainees Employed by Gender (%)



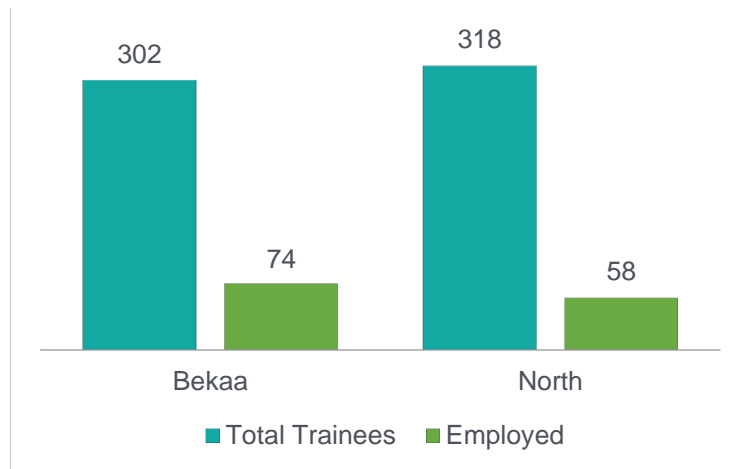
As mentioned before, by December 2016, 132 trainees had secured employment in the Beqaa and North Lebanon. The individuals who reported having found work have secured full-time positions, part-time positions, internships/apprenticeships and self-employment. Sixty-four percent of those beneficiaries are female and 36% are male.

Figure 5. Skills Trainees Placement by Job Type



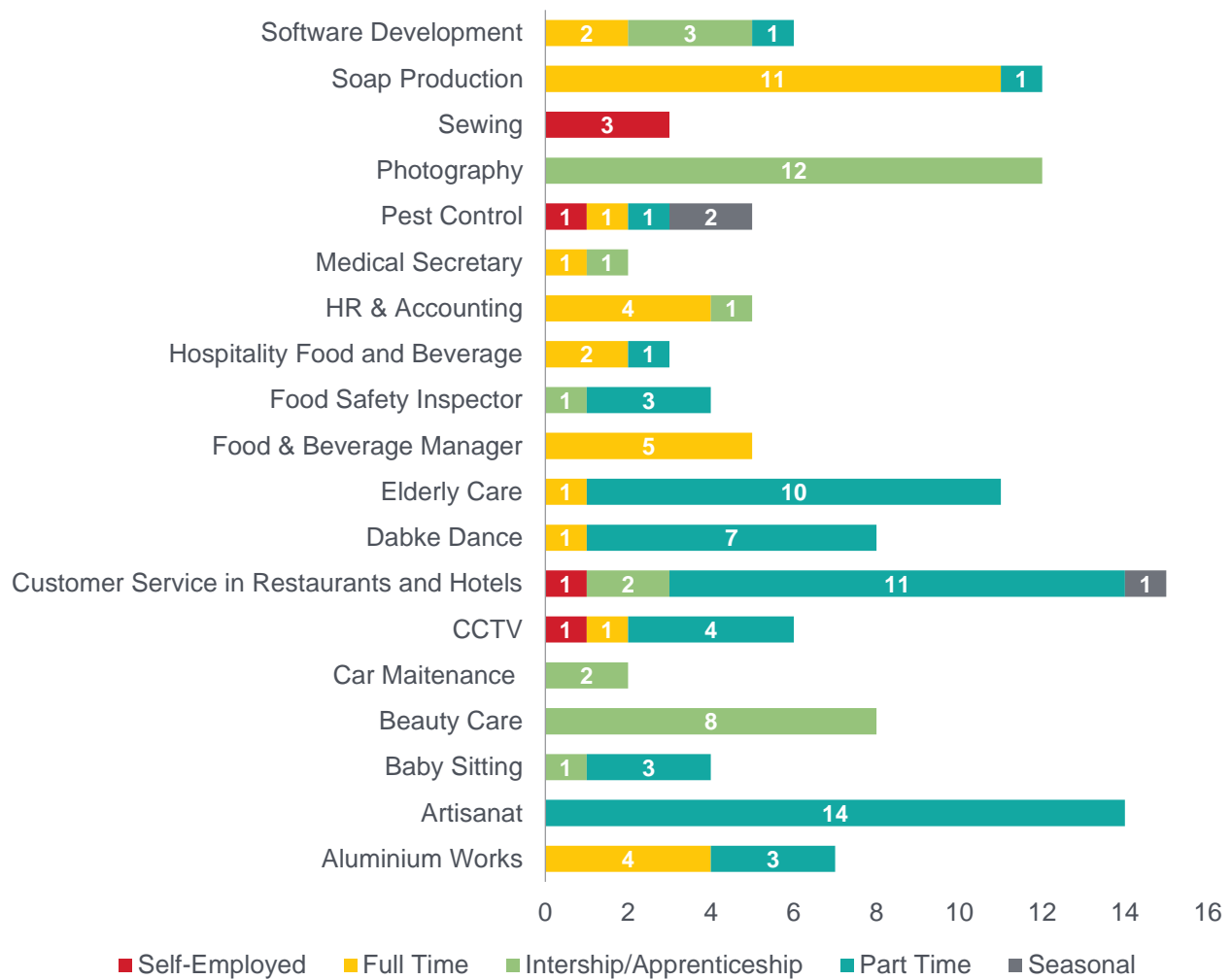
The geographic division of the skills trainees was almost even and the proportion of those who secured employment after completion of the courses was relatively close. This result was anticipated by the INTAJ team due to the rejection of some trainees of the provided jobs. This situation is noted and future steps have been developed to mitigate this risk in the future. The abundance of part-time employment is also related to the fact that many trainees are seeking an education so their time is not flexible enough to retain a full-time position.

Figure 6. Employed Trainees by Region



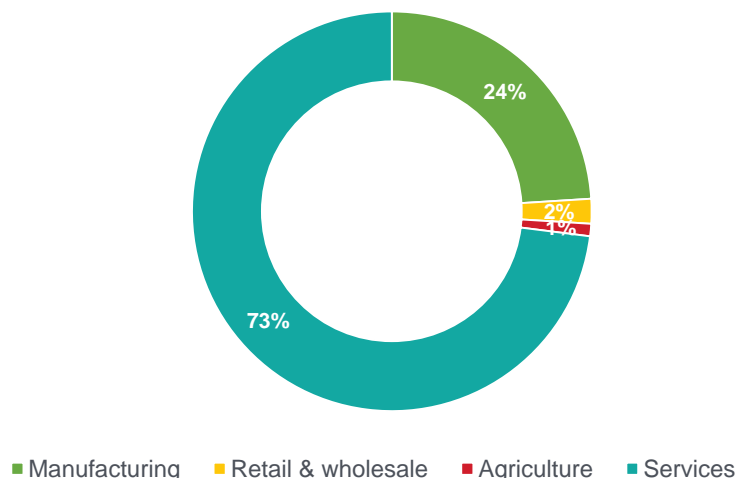
It is clear that the strength of the training providers is directly related to their connections within their communities and their ability to develop solid MoUs with local businesses. As observed in INTAJ 1, the highest rates of full-time employment were mainly observed in the providers who were aiming at hiring a certain number of trainees themselves as observed below in the Soap Production course and the Aluminum Works course. However, positive employment was observed in the majority of the courses that were implemented. In addition, some of the trainees who are completing their internship have been promised part-time or full-time employment upon successful completion. An example of this is the Beauty Care training course where the eight trainees have started as interns but they will be offered part-time and full-time positions after the internships are completed.

**Figure 7. Skills Trainees Placement Rate and Job Type by Course**



The sector where highest employment occurred was the services sector, reflecting the training courses that were offered during this time frame.

Figure 8. Jobs distribution by Sector



## Key observations and trends

**Training providers have become more understanding and appreciative of the selection process of trainees.** Initially they were hesitant and used to view it as an inconvenience and a waste of time and effort. At the beginning of INTAJ 2 some of the training providers disclosed their annoyance with the component processes mandated in the selection of trainees. The process includes:


- an announcement of the training to the public,
- application form submission,
- review of the candidates based on the application,
- shortlisting (if necessary),
- interviewing the selected individuals (and further shortlisting if necessary),
- contacting the final selected trainees,
- registration of the trainees on the first day of the training

This process has allowed the training provider, in collaboration with the INTAJ 2 team, to be more selective with the course trainees and eliminate individuals either who do not fit the desired criteria or who show a low commitment potential. The program team has become more involved in the actual interviews that are conducted with the shortlisted applicants. As the selection process has been refined, the increased commitment of the trainees and the appropriate matching of trainees to the courses have been observed. The follow up related to this issue will continue in the upcoming phase of program implementation and amendments to the processes can be made if any further need arises.

**There are certain characteristics that have been observed in certain trainees related to low readiness and willingness to work.** One trend that has been noticed in some of the trainees in the North is their reluctance to accept jobs that are offered to them. Around 32 trainees were offered jobs after being interviewed and declined the offers. This phenomenon was not shocking given that the INTAJ 2 team had observed the presence of a “lax culture” among youth in the area. Many are looking for “easy jobs” and fast money that does not require too much of a commitment or an effort. This was also observed and mentioned in the SME partner FGDs where the partners referred to facing an issue in finding actual hard workers who




put an effort into their job. They mentioned that they feel like some of the workers that they recruit refuse to push themselves to improve and are more than happy achieving the bare minimum at most.



**Some people are just looking for a fast fix; they want an easy job not requiring a lot of effort**

Some trainees have specified the issue as the distance needed to travel, the salary and/or the working hours as the problem, however, all jobs that have been secured are in reputable local business with good employment packages. In one case, the trainees cited the long distance between the office location and the areas they are from as the reason they are refusing the jobs. The employer offered those individuals accommodations and a competitive salary but the trainees still refused. As a mitigating measure, the team has become even more selective when it comes to the trainee interviews and acceptance into the courses. This has proven to work so far and the team has been able to see good employment results. This phenomenon will continue to be monitored over the next months to identify any further issues. It is important to note however that this cannot be generalized to all trainees and in some cases, the opposite is being observed.

**Soft skills have proven to be a crucial part of the training curriculum.** They continue to be offered, the scope of which is meant to provide trainees with necessary skills to market themselves in a competitive process and in some cases developed into providing trainees with basic life skills to cope with their personal challenges. Moreover, the ability to refer trainees to additional services such as social support services has been observed as a necessity in some training courses.



***“the time management training taught me how to organize my tasks and divide my time between them so I can come out with the best results and still save time for other tasks”***

— Omar, Hospitality Trainee

Upon talking to the trainees it is clear that almost all feel like they not only benefitted from the technical training but also the soft skills sessions that were offered as part of the curriculum. Even those who purely attribute their increase in skills and employment to the technical content have praised the soft skills sessions. Many trainees feel that they are now more knowledgeable in how to develop and structure their CV, how to present themselves during

interviews and how to look for vacancies. In addition to that, many sessions included elements such as time management, anger management and communication skills based on the identified need. In one case, the trainer and the INTAJ 2 team collaborated to refer the trainees to receive social support services since they were in dire need of assistance in their living situations and some were suffering from problems in their households.

**Increased visibility of INTAJ and participation in broader outreach yielded positive results in attracting new training providers and trainees.** The skills component is the component most benefitting from outreach that takes place on a larger scale. The program has been able to attract a number of training providers and a large number of applications for participation in the courses through these events. A clear example of this was the Hire Lebanese Job Fair in Tripoli. During this event, around 800 individuals applied to attend skills training courses. These applications were entered into INTAJ 2 database and distributed to available courses when applicable. Additionally, INTAJ 2 implemented 2 graduation events for trainees who had completed their skills training. These graduation ceremonies aim to give the trainees exposure in their communities, motivate them and make them proud of their achievements in front of their families and loved


ones. This was very positively received by the trainees, the training providers, local stakeholders and community members.

## SME Results

An unstable security and political situation, coupled with a significant decline in demand, has created a difficult business environment for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), especially in the Beqaa and North regions that host the majority of Syrian refugees. Due to the conflict in Syria, the Lebanese borders have been closed or have had limited accessibility affecting export and import. Experience from the INTAJ pilot phase has shown that in the current Lebanese business climate, businesses are often either struggling to remain profitable, or display an extremely low risk appetite even where a business case for investment is clear.

Through INTAJ 2, Mercy Corps is working closely with Lebanese SMEs to help them grow and succeed in this challenging economic environment:

- INTAJ 2 provides coaching and a package of intensive expert management support in 3 phases to analyse existing business problems (Phase 1), develop a plan for improving the business (Phase 2) and begin implementing the developed business plan (Phase 3).
- INTAJ 2 identifies around 35% of those businesses with a strong growth and employment potential, and provides them with grants to support their improvement and growth plans.
- INTAJ 2 facilitates networking and access to key business support services such as branding and design, training, quality control, health and safety training and certification service, and others.



**By December 2016, 4 people secured full-time employment with a much larger number expected starting January 2017.**

From April 2016 to December 2016, INTAJ 2 successfully **completed the technical assistance intervention to 12 businesses and completed phase 2 out of 3 for 27 SMEs** (15 in the Beqaa and 12 in North Lebanon). The sectors of the SMEs supported during this period were diverse in nature and included manufacturing, food


production, retail and wholesale, agriculture and services. Grants covering goods such as production equipment, alternative energy solutions and management software and services such as branding and marketing support were provided to eight businesses (5 in the Beqaa and 3 in North Lebanon). Moreover, by the end of 2016, INTAJ 2 had selected and kicked off three Business Service Provider grants.

The key output of the pilot phase was the development of the SME assistance package and a more rigorous outreach process for beneficiary selection. The INTAJ 2 program built on the recommendations that were extracted from the pilot by addressing them as thoroughly as possible and the specific trends that were observed during implementation. These processes identified during the pilot were further developed during INTAJ 2 and refined in order to manage the large number of SMEs targeted within the program activities for the grant duration.

## INTAJ 1 Recommendations Addressed

The pilot provided data, lessons and recommendations to be addressed and to be used to inform the design of the INTAJ 2 SME activities. These recommendations were taken into account and addressed during the implementation. The recommendations and actions taken are as follows:

**Track how broader outreach effort will affect the development of detailed and meaningful intervention plans.** After the pilot, there was a shift towards broader outreach under the premise of reaching a wider pool of partners with a high success potential. A total of 9 Road shows and Q&A sessions (5 in North and 4 in Beqaa) were implemented to introduce INTAJ 2 to potential partners and answer all




**Even though the broad outreach approach proved beneficial for the Skills component, a mixed methods approach to outreach seem to be most effective in the SME component**

related questions. In addition, INTAJ 2 participated in one of the biggest job fairs in Lebanon, Hire Lebanese Job Fair, which took place in Tripoli and the Zahle Christmas Fair that took place in the Beqaa. In both events, SMEs that are supported through the program were featured (4 in the event in North Lebanon and 6 in the event in the Beqaa) to help increase their exposure and visibility. This shift within the SME component outreach approach did not achieve the desired results. In the North, the events did not yield much in terms of applications to the program. The majority of the SMEs that was eligible and promising as applicants were ones that

were outreached directly by the team in a more direct and focused approach.

In the Bekaa, the team observed the same regarding effects and benefits of broader outreach with respect to identifying eligible and promising partners. No more than six of SMEs who were eventually selected were a result of the broad outreach while the remaining businesses were recruited through a more targeted approach. However, in both cases collaborating with local stakeholders proved to be beneficial in increasing visibility and raising awareness of the program so that it is recognized as a legitimate partner within the local communities.

**Understand how the revisions to the technical approach may influence the quality of beneficiary outcomes.** In the pilot, each SME case was tackled through a different approach as opposed to a standardized one. This resulted in the team fielding requests on a case-by-case basis, which was overwhelming and in some cases did not yield desired outcomes. In INTAJ 2, the technical approach that was adopted was based on the experience that all beneficiaries could strongly benefit from business development. This new method provides defined scopes and clear packages where the SMEs are given general business coaching that is more focused than INTAJ 1, however, based on their needs at the same time. INTAJ 2 has a structured approach to address a more specific range of problems related to business management: understanding performance, identifying market opportunities, and data driven decision-making. The SME has choices and plays a significant role in defining the scope of work of the intervention and can review and adjust it based on his/her expectations; they are customized within a pre-defined scope. The effects of this shift may be linked to the low yield of applicants through the broad outreach activities given that many may feel like they are not in need of business coaching.



***“Strengthening the business (through the coaching) and creating jobs are more effective than simply giving out donations and will have a longer impact on the business.”***

— Doony's, SME in Beqaa

Many business owners believe that they already know their business, the external market factors that affect them and the gaps that they are in need of addressing. Moreover, it has improved the quality of beneficiary outcomes since the majority of the businesses who are interested are those who are open to the coaching. This is reflected in the number of applications that are now more relevant. This has also allowed the team to scale in a way where managing this high number of targeted SMEs is easier to do than when each intervention was modeled differently. In addition, the targets and outcomes of the interventions have become more concrete for all parties where before it was mostly reports submitted, now it is more relevant and

related to new contracts, new employment etc. Finally, the program has been able to meet the expectations of the SMEs given that from the outreach phase, the package is clearly defined so the beneficiary is extremely aware of what the phases will be. The outcome is one vision shared by the team and a better relationship with the beneficiaries and higher satisfaction with the intervention itself. The effects of this new approach on the business confidence remain to be seen.

**Monitor how the SME portfolio changes over time.** In INTAJ 1, the majority of the businesses in the beneficiary pool were characterized as manufacturing businesses in different sectors. This was mainly attributed to the short duration of the pilot program, the limited scope of work of 20 SMEs, and the targeted outreach implemented. Up until December 2016, the program had reached approximately 46% of the projected number of SME beneficiaries; which means that the current portfolio can easily look much different



**The INTAJ 2 program is providing support to 55 SMEs in the Beqaa and North Lebanon**

within the upcoming months of implementation. The beneficiaries belong to a variety of sectors including (from least to most common) artisanal manufacturing, agriculture, hospitality, retail and wholesale, services, manufacturing and food services. Even though there are some businesses belonging to sectors not reached in the pilot, the majority of the beneficiaries of INTAJ 2 belong to the manufacturing

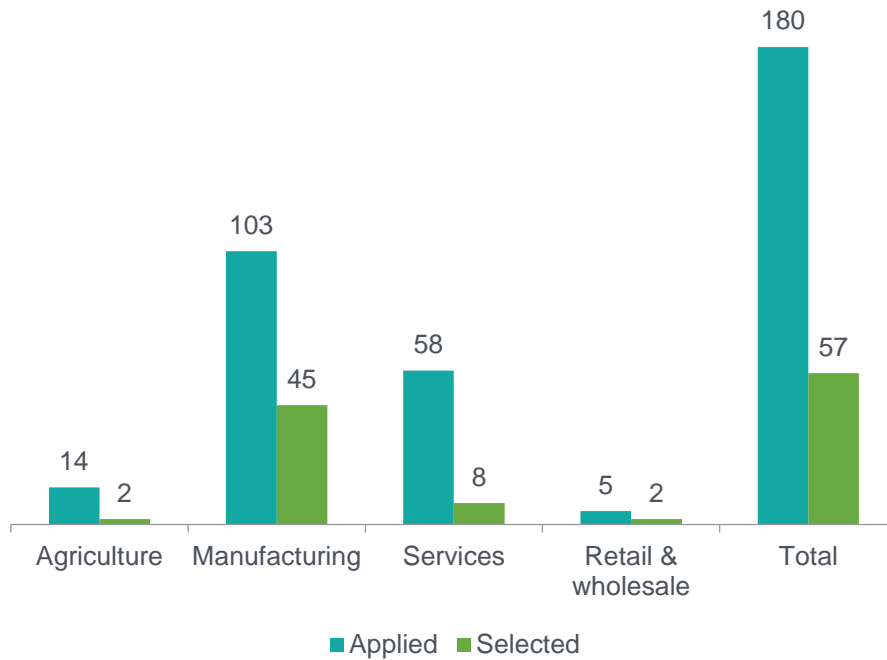
sector with the highest sub-sector being food processing. A high percentage of businesses found in the areas of intervention by nature are related to food processing and manufacturing. Although agricultural land is widely available, it is mostly used by entrepreneurs or farmers with limited growth and job creation potential. Moreover, because of conflict and stability issues faced by those areas in light of the continued crisis in Syria and large refugee influx, the hospitality sector is limited. Additionally, the service sector potential had drastically declined due to centralization of businesses within and around Beirut. It is important to note that some SMEs working on high tech areas have been added to the portfolio, which was not seen in the pilot. An example of this is a company called Tragging who is developing various hardware and software solutions using RFID technology. The SME portfolio will continue to be monitored for the grant duration to track any trends or shifts.

**Continue monitoring beneficiaries from the pilot phase to better understand minimum and average payback periods.** The effects of the original interventions were monitored and observed in the form of additional employment that could be linked to the original intervention up until September 2016. The results showed that approximately 59 additional employments occurred in the SMEs from the pilot. However, these employments had taken place within the span of a few months after the end of the pilot program. It is clear that monitoring beneficiaries for up to 6 months after the end of the program may still provide outcomes related to the implemented interventions. This recommendation is still valid for the upcoming period and as such, all INTAJ 2 beneficiaries will be monitored for approximately 6 months after the interventions are fully finalized.

## **SME Dashboard**

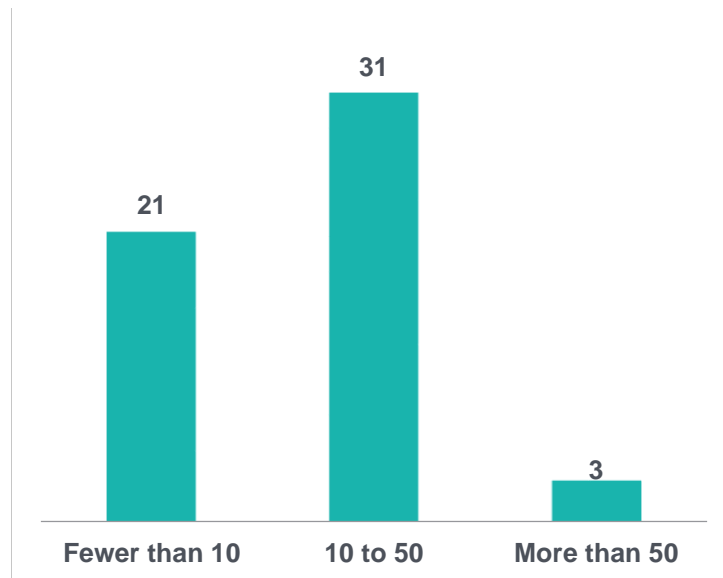
Similar to the results of INTAJ 1, manufacturing and food processing accounts for a big part of the portfolio (95% for INTAJ 1 and 80% for INTAJ 2).

Figure 9. SME portfolio by Sector



The SME portfolio by staff size has shifted in INTAJ 2 so far when compared with the pilot. While the percentage of supported enterprises having fewer than 10 employees has slightly decreased (42% in INTAJ 1), those having 10 to 50 employees have increased by almost 10% (47% in INTAJ 1). Finally, the percentage of supported enterprises having more than 50 employees has decreased by almost half (11% in INTAJ 1).

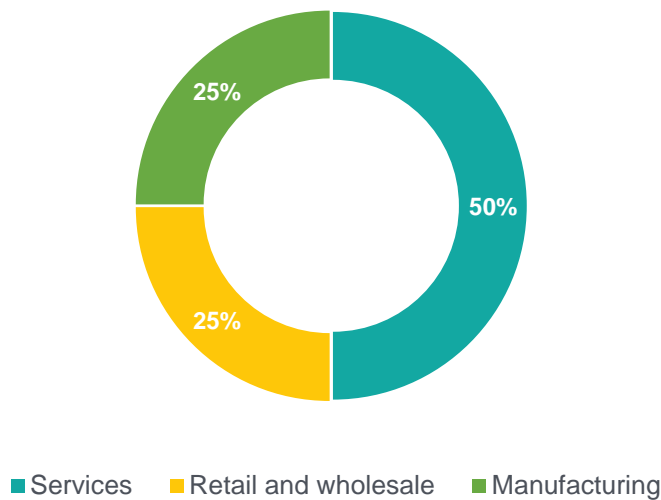
Figure 10. SME portfolio by staff size





SME interventions had yet to yield the employment targets, as it was still too early to expect to see employment. However, four jobs were created in three of the SMEs due to the INTAJ 2 interventions. One SME in North Lebanon hired two new employees and two SMEs in the Beqaa hired one new employee each. An increase in this variable is expected to be observed in the upcoming months based on intervention projections.

Figure 11. SME job creation by sector



Key observations and trends

**Outreaching potential businesses by the team and increased program visibility has increased the familiarity with INTAJ 2 and the trust in the program by the local communities.** A big effort for outreach was taking place during events such as roadshows, which allow the team to reach a larger audience. During these events, the team collaborated with local stakeholders whose presence mostly give the program more credibility and acceptance and increases the attendance of local businesses. These partners included municipalities, chambers of commerce and entrepreneur clubs. During these events, the team was able to share success stories and give a comprehensive presentation of the program, including the program purpose and eligibility criteria. Moreover, the team was able to provide those interested with an idea about the technical approach of INTAJ 2; which is the standard business coaching lasting around 3-6 months followed by potential for grant application depending on the findings. This was done to prepare any potential SMEs for what to expect if they are accepted into the program and to avoid any misconception about the followed process at later stages. This helped create a better relationship with the local community because there were no promises made at any point, even in the outreach, beyond what is applied.

In addition, communications materials were developed and utilized during all outreach events to introduce the program and to present what has already been achieved in the pilot. These materials were very successful in providing tangible outcomes based on previous experiences that took place in the local communities.

**The process conducted by the team as part of the outreach and selection allows them to gain more information and better knowledge of the applicants and create a rapport with them, increasing quality of the intervention.** During INTAJ 2, the team became more involved in the collection of information about the applicants that showed high potential. Before the proposal reaches the selection committee stage, 2 to 3 visits are conducted to the business to gather information about their operations. Through these visits, three main goals are achieved: technical data of the business is collected, characteristics of the owners are observed, and a one-on-one connection and proximity are developed. Each of these aspects has its own benefits to the selection and the quality of the intervention. The technical data collected provides in-depth knowledge of the businesses, which is important in the identification of the most promising beneficiaries who would benefit from the offered intervention. Additionally, it is useful in understanding the business portfolio and subsequently pairing them with the appropriate consultant while considering the need and the consultant's area of expertise. The knowledge gained on the characteristics of the owner provides the team

*“the confidence and the support of the partnership and the professionalism and personal investment of the team pushed us towards positive results and more (results) will come with time”*

Menessa Metal Owner, SME in Beqaa



insight into the cultural background of the business owner, which allows them to better understand the personality behind the enterprise. This knowledge is complementary to the technical data in the consultant pairing process since a mismatch in approach could lead to an unsuccessful intervention. In the case where an SME is accepted by the panel, the team is easily able to identify which consultant would work best with the beneficiary with respect to the specific need and the compatibility of their personalities. Finally, the connection already established between the team members and the potential beneficiary helps increase their trust in the program, their openness to the intervention activities and their likelihood of providing full disclosure and cooperation. All these elements result in a higher quality of selection of program beneficiaries.

This trust and proper pairing proved to be one of the pillars of success of the business coaching approach. One SME in North Lebanon states, “the consultants have helped me a lot in the areas of management, accounting, feasibility study and a business plan for the future...I could never have done this on my own...you can say that this was like a miracle for me.”

**Linkages facilitated by the INTAJ 2 team and consultants continue to positively affect many of the interventions being implemented.** These linkages are not only between the beneficiaries and potential clients, partners or suppliers but also with other INTAJ 2 SMEs as well. One example of this linkage was observed in SMEs in North Lebanon where a connection was made between an SME working in the food processing industry and another in maintenance services. When one of the food production businesses was in a need of maintenance work to improve the conditions of his premises, the INTAJ 2 team and the

consultants immediately identified another INTAJ 2 SME as the primary choice. As a result, they now have a maintenance works contract and have shared their experiences; building a bond that was not previously present. This unique linkage between SMEs of the INTAJ 2 program has strength in the fact that the common factor of being beneficiaries of the same program increases the level of trust in the expected quality of work. In addition, another example is one SME who is in need of warehouse management assistance who is in the process of being linked with a beneficiary of the program working on software solutions. Intra-program linkages and even experience-sharing events, such as the FGDs that took place for this paper, have proven to be valued and beneficial for the beneficiaries.

**The concept of the partnership with “no strings attached” gave the SME beneficiaries hope.** A large number of SMEs stated that they had “lost hope” due to the current country situation and the low interest that the government has shown in strengthening local businesses. They continued to say that the program has given them hope of achieving the outcomes that they had originally wanted to obtain. However, many emphasized that the program is limited in how far it can allow them to reach and to advance without the simultaneous support from the government (regulations and financial support). One SME shared that “there is no stability in our communities, especially economic stability, as long as our government remains the way it is and does not become more supportive of businesses in Lebanon”. Another continued “at this point in time, INTAJ 2 is doing the job of the government by supporting local businesses and helping them get on their feet so they are not lost”. Some of the issues that were discussed with respect to government support were related to taxation, provision of low interest loans, limiting foreign imports, and not enough control over penalizing illegal businesses.



***“I have been fighting since the day I opened...INTAJ 2 held my hand and guided me in the right direction, like a dream, and is helping me develop my business...it is too good to be true”***

— Noir E Blanc, SME in North Lebanon

On the other hand, the partnership with INTAJ 2 for some SMEs represented a chance at a fresh start with proper guidance. Some described it as the much-needed push in the right direction and others even went as far as saying that without this partnership they would not have lasted much longer. Besides that, a lot of emphasis was placed on the importance of the open relationship and constant follow-up conducted by the team where the SMEs are getting the sense that the team “has adopted” their businesses and are as invested in the interventions’ success. This helps build the trust between the program and the local community, which in turn will also increase the reach of the program across the areas where activities are being implemented.

## SWM/R Results

The Solid waste management and recycling (SWM/R) sector continues to be at the forefront of community and government priorities. While the sector remains underdeveloped, significant investments are being made by foreign donors and local government specifically around waste management infrastructure including sorting facility construction and equipment. There is a clear momentum from key stakeholders in developing the sector. Presently, INTAJ is the only programme working throughout the SWM/R entire value chain.

By building new market-driven relationships and incentivizing further investments in upgrading the value chain, INTAJ 2 promotes 'green jobs' and service upgrades that benefit thousands of households across more than a dozen municipalities.

- INTAJ 2 partners with local government and other organisations to encourage home sorting of waste and improve municipal waste management services. This not only improves the efficiency and working conditions of existing sorting facilities, but also increases the amount of recyclable material available for businesses in Lebanon to process, sell and export; allowing them to become more productive and increase employment.
- INTAJ 2 supports businesses that process recyclable waste to minimise their costs, improve their organisational structure and access new markets for their recycled products, thereby increasing their market competitiveness and boosting total demand for recyclables.
- INTAJ 2 cultivates innovation, profitability, and efficiency in the recycling industry, by providing technical assistance and in-kind grants to SME's and working on the development of new services and products made from recycled materials such as blown glass and sustainable construction material.

**From April 2016 to December 2016, INTAJ 2 successfully provided business consulting services to 9 SMEs in the solid waste management and recycling (SWM/R) value chain across Lebanon.** In addition, 5 source separation initiatives have either been initiated during this time in collaboration with CBOs from the areas. These initiatives included initiating home sorting of waste, providing recycling awareness at the household level, improving waste collection services and supporting companies to improve management practices. Through this support, 11 individuals secured employment (4 part-time and 7 full-time).

While the focus of the SWM/R component in the pilot was mostly mapping and analyses to better understand the sector, INTAJ 2 is directed more towards implementation of specific interventions with SME and CBOs. Efforts have been concentrate so far on increasing the supply of recyclable material for processors through strengthening household and municipal sorting of waste; improving competitiveness and cost efficiency of existing processors; supporting access to new markets for Lebanese recycled commodities; and improving working conditions at processor facilities to promote decent work in the sector.

## INTAJ 1 Recommendations Addressed

The pilot provided data, lessons and recommendations to be addressed and to be used to inform the design of the INTAJ 2 SWM/R activities. These recommendations were taken into account and addressed during the implementation. The recommendations and actions taken are as follows:

**Refine CBO awareness model to ensure consistency and maximum impact.** During INTAJ 2, a more systematic approach was adopted for the CBO awareness model. To begin with, the data collection tools, system used and volunteer training became standardized across all CBO partners. In addition, the awareness has been divided into multiple visits over 3-4 months instead of one. This allowed for more open communication channels, continued reminding of sorting guidelines and increasing the visibility of the CBO and Municipality efforts. In addition to the above, comprehensive waste management plans for municipalities is being implemented in large-scale interventions such as Chouf, Jizzine, Zgharta and West Beqaa (at different levels). This new approach will continue to be used for the upcoming phase with revisions if needed if any gaps are identified.

**Continue to build on the work of the Zahle intervention in order to maximise return on investment, and reinforce the value chain approach.** The Zahle intervention had many lessons learned which have been incorporated in the planning, design and implementation of INTAJ 2. One of which was building the evidence base from the beginning of the intervention, ensuring the presence of credible partners to collaborate with, ensure sorting at source so the facility is receiving already sorted materials and having an independent expert to assess the facility and recommend what is needed. Up until December 2016, there was still willingness by the mayor to introduce home sorting; however, no local partners from the area have been identified yet.

**Develop a working group or other coordination mechanism to harmonise ongoing efforts within the SWMR sector in Lebanon.** Over the last few years there are increasing donor funds that have been and continue to be allocated to the SWM/R sector. INTAJ 2 was part of the creation of the first SWM/R working group in Lebanon to coordinate over \$55 million that has been allocated to the development of the sector. The working group consists of donors and implementers with significant funds and with a long-term strategy (as opposed to ad hoc activities that may take place as a one-time event) that can move the sector forward. INTAJ 2 has collaborated with the American University of Beirut and through the initiative, members were invited to participate and as such the group ended up consisting of representatives from European Union, Italian Cooperation, UNRWA, UNDP, American University of Beirut, and Mercy Corps. During the meetings, the need to involve government representatives was identified. As a result, the group has reached out to the Council of Development and Reconstruction (CDR), ESFD and other entities. Through this group, INTAJ 2 has received some interesting and promising potential interventions including providing support to and building the capacity of multiple sorting facilities. If progress continues in the group then this could potentially provide substantial support to the government and funding agencies in implementing sustainable interventions. In addition, bridges could be built with different levels of government which pushes not only INTAJ 2 but also Mercy Corps and DFID as major players.

**Improve tracking of positive externalities from investments within the value chain.** There are increased investments by local stakeholders due to the support of INTAJ 2 such as building facilities, bins purchasing, awareness implementation, purchasing equipment etc. Some of the investments may also be indirect such as employment increase in entities who are working with INTAJ 2 beneficiaries. Externalities that are being observed are not limited to monetary but are also social. An example of this is the collaborations and partnerships that are being established between government and local CBOs on a major issue that is being faced by the country as a whole. It is clear that the waste management in the areas of intervention have become more systematic and focused. One example is the Union of municipalities of Zgharta who is working with 9 municipalities, a local CBO and a local SME to resolve the waste management in the area. This was also observed in Bechmizzine where the original group of 4

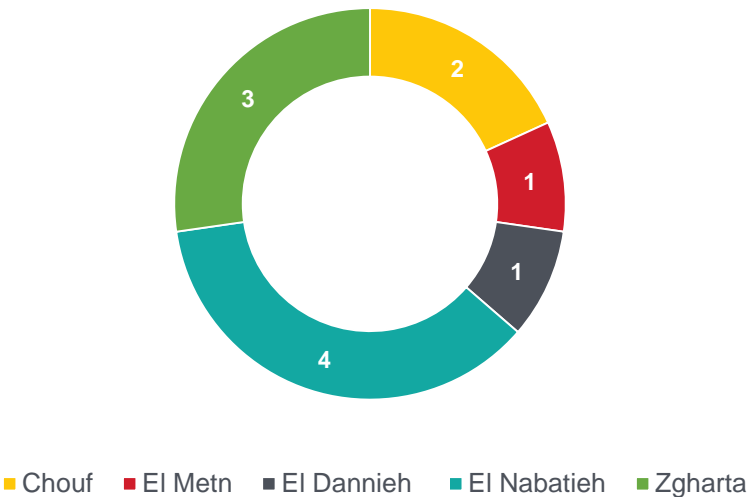


municipalities slowly grew to 7 municipalities from different political affiliations collaborating on one issue regardless of these differences.

**SWM/R Dashboard**

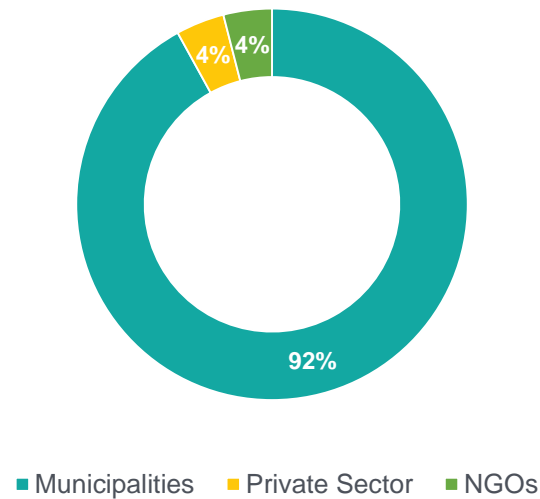
INTAJ 2 interventions created 11 jobs by December 2016 in different areas if implementation within the Beqaa and North Lebanon.

Figure 12. Number of SWMR jobs created by region



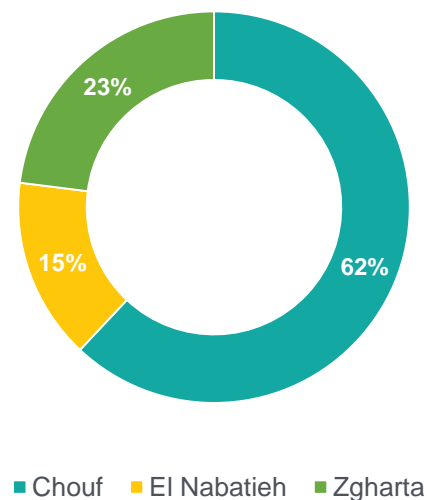
INTAJ 2 is focused on the importance of partnerships and their role in improving the value chain. The culture in Lebanon is reliant on trust relationships that are cultivated with time and taking part in enhancing these relationships and facilitating these partnerships will increase the level of the linkages and collaborations in the areas. To date, 27 new partnerships were established and formalized through MoUs. These partnerships are between local CBOs and municipalities, NGOs and the private sector within the same areas. Out of the 27 MoUs, 25 were with municipalities.

Figure 13. Distribution of SWMR partnerships



In total, 6,824 households in the target areas were reached through the INTAJ 2 interventions. These households received waste bins and/or recycling awareness messaging by volunteers from the community who were trained by the INTAJ team on how to communicate awareness messages and how to collect and enter the data from the households.

Figure 14. Distribution for Households Increased Access to service



## Key observations and trends

**An assessment of the needs of beneficiaries before proceeding with any intervention is key to obtaining positive outcomes.** The general waste management expertise in this sector in Lebanon is very low relative to the rest of the world. Subsequently, the process for INTAJ 2 included the recruitment of an independent party to give an assessment of the beneficiaries' needs, especially when dealing with sorting

facilities. The SMEs under the SWM/R component were paired with consultants who would provide an assessment and business coaching similar to the process within the SME component. This approach enabled the beneficiary to identify the specific practices that need to be improved in order for the SME to grow and increase competitiveness and efficiency.

**There is more interest in the SWM/R sector and more willingness of some local governments and private actors to take the lead on waste management initiatives.** It is clear that many municipalities who have been involved in the INTAJ 2 interventions have seen tangible results in the decrease of waste management cost and in the increased collaboration of the households in the community. When asked about how the partnership with INTAJ 2 and with local CBOs has helped them overcome their challenges, the municipalities stated that:

- The financial burden of waste management has decreased
- The amount of waste on the roads which affect the health and the environment has decreased
- Sorting at households has decreased the amount of waste generated

One of the most obvious examples of this shift and acceptance was observed by the team in the Upper Chouf. During the first visit to the Upper Chouf Union of Municipalities, the support of sorting at source and the belief that households would engage in sorting was non-existent. In addition, they were not aware of the possibility of selling recyclables from the community. After the INTAJ partnership with a local CBO who implemented a source separation initiative in the area, the President of the Union has become one of the strongest proponents of waste management and the Union of Municipalities has decided to invest in their own sorting facility. In addition, the Union has been provided equipment by the program to enhance the waste management at their sorting facilities. In North Lebanon, the intervention implemented by a local CBO including awareness at the household level has influenced neighboring areas. The intervention has motivated other municipalities currently not included in the project to ask for the Union's support to start planning for a similar project in their villages. In addition, the Union of municipalities has purchased over 850 bins to be distributed in one of the villages neighboring to the ones covered by the INTAJ 2 intervention. In the Beqaa, the intervention has encouraged the municipalities to start looking for more long-term solutions such as possibilities of building facilities.


*“Some of the municipalities are now financially contributing with a small amount of money because they are seeing the tangible outputs of the project such as the decrease in the amount of waste in the villages (financial output) or the positive impact on health and environment.”*

Al Midan, CBO



It is important to note that most municipalities also referred to the importance of continuing efforts and support so that they can be able to achieve the goal of purely leading the solid waste management efforts independently. As the Mayor of the Jarjou Municipality in Beqaa explained, *“this kind of intervention needs continuous effort, support and follow-up, which we are planning to go on with. The follow-up and the*

seriousness of INTAJ 2 staff were great and encouraging, one of the reasons that made us take this intervention very seriously.”



***“The municipalities we started to work with on this project were very positive and responsive since they are aware of the big problem they have considering waste management. They all contacted us to see how we can collaborate.”***

— LHEE, CBO

**Collaborations between CBOs and/or private sector actors and local governments are the most effective approach observed to date.** The key to sustainability within the SWM/R sector, lies in the active involvement and support of local governments, collaboration with private sector/CBOs and the linkage to sorting facilities (if the initiative is not originating from one). Having a CBO/private sector actor responsible for collection has yielded higher involvement than when it is solely reliant on the public sector actors. There are some municipalities already contracting CBOs/private sector actors to collect the normal waste and manage local facilities while in other areas, the CBOs/private sector has taken the lead. However, it has been observed that the only way this model

could be sustainable is if the municipality is paying for collection, assisting in the collection, or if the collection itself is generating income (ex: household subscription).

Based on this, during INTAJ 2, some proposals from potential beneficiaries were not accepted due to the lack of support of local governance since it will not be a sustainable effort. In addition, the process of involving CBOs/private sector actors in a municipal collection and facility management has proven easier than involving the municipalities themselves directly. Nevertheless, this model of interventions being linked to a sorting facility and having some subsidy has shown more success in achieving desired outcomes so far. In addition, during INTAJ 2, the community leaders were targeted and participated in awareness efforts within the communities through Town Hall meetings and one-on-one meetings. This inclusion of community stakeholders has led to an increase in the support of SWM/R initiatives.

**Given the longer term for implementation of INTAJ 2, more options of types of possible interventions are provided to the beneficiaries and a large percentage of the SWM/R SMEs are choosing one form or another of business coaching.** In the pilot, time was limited and the ability to implement interventions that require extended periods was not available. In INTAJ 2, options such as business coaching, trade exhibitions, training centers and energy audit are being presented. The SWM/R SMEs have been choosing the options that help them increase their sales, such as business coaching and training facilities. This is due to the fact that the prices of oil have dropped since the beginning of the pilot phase so energy costs are lower. Additionally, the priority now to lower production costs is to increase sales since the machines are running constantly so the more material that can be processed and sold, the lower the production cost would be.



***“INTAJ helped me put a business plan. We used to work with a family business mentality where we put a lot of effort to grow but without the correct business basis. That’s why the help of the consultant was very essential.”***

— LRW, SME

**CBOs are getting some sort of coaching and/or capacity building regardless of whether it is part of the defined scope.** Due to the low waste management expertise in the country, the capacity of CBOs to independently implement the intervention activities is average. The partners seem to have low confidence in their ability to identify next steps and the required approach to achieve them. On the positive side, some of

these partners have been noticing this weakness and have been investing more time and effort to learn from the INTAJ 2 team and have been asking about possible capacity building trainings. The team has acknowledged that in many cases they are involved in guiding the partners through the implementation process and providing them with all the tools necessary to successfully complete each step. Moreover, they are attempting to connect them to other partners with complementary expertise when applicable and feasible. It has generally been observed that when partners have a background in SWM/R or in specific fields such as finance, business or project management, the process has been smoother.

**The presence and acceptance of INTAJ 2 as a key partner in the SWM/R sector has increased in many areas around Lebanon due to the increased visibility, intensive communication efforts and successful implementation of interventions.** Some municipalities are approaching INTAJ 2 with the desire to be involved in the program even if only through community awareness as a first step. Others are expressing high interest in an equal partnership to improve the SWM/R situation within their communities. These local stakeholders are contacting the INTAJ 2 program directly asking for information and support. INTAJ 2 is being viewed as a real partner that has already been working within the community and is trusted.



# Outstanding questions and next steps

## Skills Component

**Incorporate an “orientation” session/day where the trainees are presented with all details of potential jobs based on the skills acquired during the course.** Based on the observations of the team and the job placement experiences to date, it seems in many cases there are misconceptions about the jobs related to the training course and about what it means to have a job where employees are expected to work and give an effort. Regarding the misconception of job content, it may be beneficial to provide the trainees with detailed insight into the tasks associated with the jobs that may be offered after the training is completed. Providing the trainees with a clear image of the job will result in 2 outcomes; (1) the trainees who are uninterested have a chance to drop the course before investing the time and effort then realizing they do not like the jobs offered and (2) the trainees who are interested have a clearer idea of what the job entails. This orientation may include detailed description of all tasks and sub-tasks related to the field being discussed during the training and/or a field visit so the beneficiaries are able to observe first hand specific job-related tasks. This will help eliminate misconceptions and dissatisfaction after employment is secured or even drop out. On the other hand, the selection process has already been further refined to recruit trainees with a higher commitment and readiness to learn and work.

**The soft skills may be better if given in increments throughout the training and incorporated into the different modules.** So far, the soft skills are given to the trainees at the very end of the training after the technical content is complete. However, many instances have been faced where the trainees request or even require additional soft skills training. This will enable the trainees to benefit from the sessions in a way that allows them time to absorb what is discussed and inquire about any relevant issues they may think of during upcoming soft skills sessions. In addition, providing the soft skills in increments can give the trainees the chance to identify specific skills that they may want to know more about and give the trainer the flexibility to amend the topics to cater to the present need. Moreover, as the trainer spends more time with the trainees, he/she should be able to adapt the content of the soft skills training based on the needs observed. The feasibility of conducting the soft skills through such an approach needs further study. Some soft skills training providers are not able to conduct multiple visits to rural areas to conduct multiple sessions. At times, the trip to and from the course locations is time consuming and dividing the sessions could increase the cost of this segment of the courses. It may be beneficial to pilot this process



with a few courses to assess whether it would be more or less beneficial to implement the soft skills sessions in this manner.

**Continue to monitor employment status of trainees throughout the program.** This will allow the team to track additional employment achieved through the component beyond the first data collection wave. In addition, it may help identify any success factors, barriers to employment or even additional training needs.

## SME Component

**Revising the grants-related process to allow for the planning of possibilities even before the business coaching is completed.** The grants procedure length from preparation to delivery is a long process that requires time and effort. In the country in general, suppliers are slow to deliver which can cause a delay in initiation of work. Building on this, revising the process and experimenting with outcomes of pre-planning grants as soon as the need is identified at the early stages of the business coaching could prove to be more effective.

**Maintaining a small margin of flexibility for very specific cases may be worth exploring.** The revised technical approach for business coaching has proven to be successful. The new standardized approach of providing business coaching to all and then proceeding to grants if applicable has proven to be necessary in light of the large SME target to be reached during INTAJ 2. However, in very specific cases, there is no reason why some flexibility cannot be shown in some cases where high focus and potential benefit is identified. This situation was faced during this phase where a specific need for a restaurant developer presented itself. The process of recruiting consultants has allowed for the provision of a big pool of experts to be contracted as necessary. In addition, in the future, based on the trends observed in the industries where the component interventions are focused, the program may have a more accurate knowledge of what type of experts are needed. This could be piloted within this program with exceptional cases that deserve additional effort to customize the plan even further. Such an approach requires higher cost, more extensive logistical efforts, as well as more time to identify the expert who is compatible for the SME and to evaluate potential benefit. Over the next phase there will be a trial of conducting group coaching when similar needs are identified which could potentially increase value for money.

**Planning specific events for all program beneficiaries to facilitate direct linkage with other beneficiaries within their communities may help create a business owner network and referral platform.** This can have multiple paybacks in itself, such as: (1) enabling the beneficiaries to meet other businesses undergoing the same process and exchange experiences, (2) increasing the awareness about the different services that are found within the beneficiaries' communities, (3) providing the beneficiaries with the chance to meet with the team and connect in a less formal setting, and (4) increasing the chances of sharing clients between the different businesses.

**Continue monitoring the SME portfolio and paybacks of the interventions post implementation.** Monitoring of the program and its effects will continue and should preferably be ongoing even after the INTAJ 2 program is completed. This will provide insight into expected paybacks of the interventions and will better inform future programs on what they can expect in terms of target-setting and time needed to fully capture outcomes and impact of similar interventions. As a first step, it will be beneficial to develop a database of all beneficiaries to under the SME component in order to facilitate the monitoring and tracking process and the development of a full portfolio profile when needed.

## SWM/R Component

**Implement operational models at the level of sorting facilities.** As part of the INTAJ 1 program lessons learned and upon working with different facilities in INTAJ 2, it has become clear that there is a need for staff training to improve operations. Most sorting facilities lack operational models, which guide them on how to operate the facility, how to set operational processes, how to identify the type and number of staff needed and what types of training does the staff require. Many facilities have been built and never operated because no thought was given to needed trainings, maintenance and operational costs and method of operation. In the upcoming phase, the feasibility of incorporating this element to sorting facility actors will be studied and, if possible within this fund's lifecycle, implemented.

**There is a need to develop a SWM/R training model.** In light of the multiple sorting facilities proposals that will be initiated in the upcoming phase, it is important to have a concrete model to provide training and capacity building when the time comes. Lack of skills of municipalities and the lack of expertise in facility management, design and operations are all major concerns that need to be addressed. This training model will be designed to include staff training, organizational training, facility management training, machinery training etc. The development process of this model will require significant time to be implemented properly so the outcome may not materialize until end of INTAJ 2.

**Provide the option of coaching for CBOs to help build their capacity and increase their confidence in their ability to implement interventions.** The weakness of many CBOs has been identified by the team and by the partners themselves. This has enabled all parties to collaborate to ensure that the gaps are being addressed to obtain optimal outcomes through multiple methods such as higher involvement, closer team follow-up, informal coaching etc. The coaching that could be offered would not necessarily need to be as intensive as the business coaching provided to the SMEs, it could be a CBO-tailored capacity building related to program implementation and tracking. In addition, opportunities for trainings through other beneficiaries or other programs to help build their capacities could be incorporated for all partners. Some main trainings needed are related to project management, financial management, HR, and procurement. In some cases, experience exchange visits or small-scale mentoring could be an option if the right occasions present themselves.

**Explore methods to increase ownership of the CBOs of the household data and clarifying potential benefits of the data.** CBOs have limited understanding of what kind of data could benefit them and how this information could be useful. In addition, so far, low ownership of CBO partners of the household data collection tools has resulted in an indifference towards them. The main reason the CBOs are agreeing to documenting the efforts in the methods suggested by the awareness model is solely that it is a requirement to document reach of the awareness. Over the next phase, it may be advisable to add some information in the program statement and proposal template that data collection is required through a data collection system and some explanation of benefits of the data. Communication between the M&E team and the partner CBOs should take place to explain the INTAJ 2 M&E system and indicator importance, involve them in the revision of the tools and identify what data they feel would be beneficial for them. This may lead to higher interest and commitment to the idea of collecting data, analyzing it and using it to inform community interventions.

## Indirect Effects of INTAJ 2



*“Kamal was not interested in the training at first. He was convinced that the training is very limited. After a few weeks of the beginning of the training, he got a loan and bought a new scanner for his garage. This scanner will be a huge push for his business. He also invited the class over to his garage to practice on the scanner.”*

— Imad Machaalany, Labora Mechanics Course Trainer

**The formation of support groups through the development of trainee networks and creation of a community.** During the course of the trainings, a group chat is established in order to share any updates or changes in schedule. These groups evolved and developed into a safe space for the trainees where they are maintaining contact with fellow trainees and are sharing experiences and job vacancies. This connection to the trainees and the training provider is a form of support group for the trainees and allows them to have a sense of belonging to a group of people who are in the same situation. The importance of this is the many studies that have shown the importance and effectiveness of support groups in increasing the positive reinforcement and providing emotional support to one another.

**The growth of some of the INTAJ 2 partners has been observed.** This growth has occurred with some of the consultancy firms who have been contracted to provide the business coaching for SMEs and with one of the training providers in the North who has been contracted to provide multiple courses. The coaching provided to the SMEs across the SME and SWM/R components was outsourced to consultancy experts to provide better quality and more efficient and effective interventions. As a result of the large volume of SMEs requiring business coaching, the service providers are expanding their networks and experiencing growth. Three of the consultancy firms have recruited additional employees in order to keep up with the demand of the INTAJ 2 program. In addition, these firms are attracting interest from the local market through their recognition by the local businesses. One of the firms has now opened a new premises focused on the Lebanon market. In addition, LEAD, a health care consultancy firm providing trainings in the North, has grown significantly since beginning work with INTAJ. It has expanded from providing trainings in two areas to four areas. It has also established an office space and improved operations by hiring a coordinator to manage the courses and coordinate with the INTAJ 2 team and the beneficiaries. LEAD has adopted the monitoring tools that have been provided by the program, has added to them, and standardized them across all their courses. Finally, through their own initiative, representatives from the firm have traveled to the USA and conducted meetings with similar firms in order to gain more knowledge and learn from their experiences.

**The stability of communities being allegedly improved through reducing the tensions arising from diversion of most funds to refugees in the target communities.** It is clear that one of the impacts of the program is the increase in stability due to job creation, which in turn reduces instability. In addition, the creation of jobs reduces the tensions from the blame being placed on the refugees of taking away jobs due to the cheaper labor cost. However, when asked about this issue, one additional element was discussed by the SME partners which is the tension that is being created due to the diversion of most funds provided to host communities to the refugee population. This has resulted in tensions and jealousy as it is viewed as low consideration for the host community who has also suffered from the repercussions of the crisis. It was best described by one of the SME partners as “giving something desirable to one sibling and not the other”. In

addition, providing this support to SMEs has been viewed to affect stability through increasing the ability of the businesses to continue supporting the already present employees as opposed to having to let them go which in turn also affects tension levels and increases unemployment.

**The Mercy Corps INTAJ program is actively participating in standardizing and influencing data collection in the country.** Mercy Corps is part of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) Livelihoods Core Group and as such attended the meetings hosted by the UNDP. Part of the group tasks was to collaborate on the development of the glossary of the livelihoods sector response plan and logframe, including core indicators that can be used by partners working in the sector. The aim is to standardize the M&E data collected and the reporting that is being conducted by the partners. MC shared the INTAJ indicators with the group and as a result, at least 4 of the indicators included have very similar elements to the INTAJ indicators.

## References

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### About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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