

# **CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

# FINAL INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF STRENGTHENING NEXUS COHERENCE AND RESPONSIVENESS IN THE PALESTINIAN SOCIAL PROTECTION SECTOR.

ILO/ ROAS is searching for an evaluator to undertake the final independent evaluation of the ILO Project "Strengthening nexus coherence and responsiveness in the Palestinian social protection sector", funded by the European Commission.

The activities should take approximately 33 working days, with work expected to be undertaken during the period August 2024 to November 2024. The current call is asking for expressions of interest from interested consultants specialized in project evaluations. The Terms of Reference document is <u>under</u> draft and once finalized, further requests for proposals from short listed candidates may be requested.

Please see Background Information and draft TORs attached for further information.

**Duration of the contract**: Mid-August – November 2024

**Application deadline**: August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 (11pm Beirut time)

#### Desired profile of the lead evaluator:

- Master's degree in social sciences, economics, development studies, evaluation or related fields, with demonstrated strong research experience.
- A minimum of 7 years' experience in conducting projects and programme evaluations, with demonstrated experience in development related programmes.
- Previous experience in evaluations for UN agencies is required. Evaluation experience with the ILO is an advantage.
- Relevant regional experience and familiarity with implementation of programmes and projects in the region. Experience in the OPT region is an asset.
- Particularly, previous experience in evaluating social protection and nexus programmes is an advantage.
- Full proficiency in English. Command of Arabic is an advantage but not a requirement.
- Knowledge of the ILO and its normative mandate, tripartite structure and technical cooperation activities is an advantage
- Excellent communication, interview and report writing skills.
- Demonstrated ability to deliver quality results within strict deadlines.
- Facilitation skills and ability to manage diversity of views in different cultural contexts.
- The evaluator(s) must have no previous involvement in the delivery of the project under evaluation.



#### **Proposal submission**

Interested candidates intending to submit an expression of interest must supply the following information:

- 1. A cover letter describing how the personnel skills, qualifications and experience are relevant to the assignment.
- 2. The CV highlighting previous evaluations that are relevant to the context and subject matter of this assignment.
- 3. A financial proposal with daily professional fees expressed in US dollars.
- 4. Sample of similar work written by the applicant.
- 5. At least two professional references.

Please send your application with relevant attachments to <a href="mailto:tawfeeq@ilo.org">tawfeeq@ilo.org</a> copying <a href="mailto:alrifai@ilo.org">alrifai@ilo.org</a> by <a href="mailto:the ading: "ILO SP-OPT-Final Independent Evaluation"." the subject heading: "ILO SP-OPT-Final Independent Evaluation".

Information	Details
Project title	Strengthening Nexus Coherence and Responsiveness in The Palestinian Social Protection Sector
DC Symbol	PSE/21/01/EUR
Type of Evaluation	Independent
Timing of Evaluation	Final
Countries	Occupied Palestinian Territory
P&B outcomes	1, 2, 7, 8
SDG (s)	Goal 1.3
Duration	24 months
Start Date	July 2021
End Date	August 2024
Administrative unit	Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS)
Technical Backstopping Unit	SOCPRO
Collaborating ILO Units	GEDI; DEVINVEST; DWT-Beirut;
Donor	European Commission
Evaluation Manager	Marwan TAWFEEQ
Budget	1,500,00.00 Euros



# Introduction

The Occupied Palestinian Territory is home to about 4.8 million people, of which 2.9 million live in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the remaining 1.8 million live in the Gaza Strip. Two out of five Palestinians living in OPT are refugees; 40% of the population is under 14 years old and almost 70% of the population is younger than 30, while around 4% is over 65 years old.

For decades, the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been a highly fragile and conflict-affected environment. In 2023, the Fragile States Index rated it the world's 34th most fragile context, scoring negatively on external intervention, security, state legitimacy, and economic decline indicators. The illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory has lasted for 57 years, stunting the economy through the 17-year blockade of Gaza and the withholding of increasingly large proportions of the Palestinian Authority's revenues.

This state of fragility has dramatically increased since 7 October 2023, with the ongoing war and acute humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Gaza Strip, alongside growing violence, restrictions and economic challenges in the West Bank. The war has led to an approximately 1.7 million Palestinians being internally displaced as of April 2023. The overwhelming majority of Gazans are now estimated to be living in multidimensional poverty, and vulnerability is also on the rise in the West Bank.

#### Poverty and vulnerability trends across the West Bank and Gaza

Even prior to the COVID-19 crisis, both poverty and extreme poverty had increased throughout OPT since 2011. An increase in poverty was driven by a worsening situation in Gaza, mitigated somewhat by modestly declining poverty in the West Bank, prior to 7 October. Meanwhile, the overall share of the population classified as either poor or vulnerable to poverty had remained unchanged, meaning many who were previously considered merely vulnerable to poverty had ultimately slipped into poverty and deep poverty since 2011.

Poverty rates are relatively stable across the lifecycle, with significant shares of working poor. However, urban and refugee camp residents experience spikes in old age. In 2017, the poverty rate was highest among working age adults aged 26 to 35 years old. Between 2011 and 2017, poverty appears to have increased particularly for young children, young adults and the elderly (60+). However, a lack of significant variation in poverty across the life cycle suggests an important role for covariate shocks, rather than idiosyncratic life-cycle related events, in influencing poverty. While joblessness can often be associated with poverty, there are large numbers of households with working members—including many engaged in formal employment—who live in poverty. Persons with disabilities are 30 per cent likelier to experience poverty and 40 per cent more likely to experience extreme poverty than their non-disabled counterparts.

According to research conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the ILO1:

"as of 31 January 2024, 507,000 jobs have been lost across the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a result of the hostilities, compared to an earlier job loss estimate of 468,000. This includes 201,000 jobs lost in Gaza and 306,000 jobs lost in the West Bank. These job losses translate into daily labour income losses of USD 21.7 million. This figure increases to USD 25.5 million per day, when combined

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> PCBS and ILO, <u>Impact of the War in Gaza on the Labour Market and Livelihoods in the Occupied Palestinian Territory:</u> <u>Bulletin No. 3,</u> 2024



with the loss of income resulting from the partial payment of wages to civil servants and the reduced incomes of workers in the private sector across the Occupied Palestinian Territory."

### Social protection in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)

Access to social protection is a human right. It is fundamental to protect individuals and their families across the life cycle, to build political stability, and to ensure societies' resilience to different types of shocks. Thus, social policies are vital to prevent and address current global risks, ranging from the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to refugee crises, forced migration, climate change, inequalities, and conflict.

Before 2024, the National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) was the main public social protection programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Managed by the Ministry of Social Development, the NCTP provided cash transfers to some 115,000 households (70 per cent in Gaza) living in deep poverty through four quarterly payments per year. Transfers ranged from 750 to 1,800 Israeli shekels per household per quarter. Previously, the planned annual budget for the NCTP amounted to approximately 517 million shekels (0.9 per cent of GDP), although budget execution has been significantly lower since 2018.

The NCTP depends heavily — and increasingly — on financial support from the European Union's PEGASE mechanism (Mécanisme Palestino-européen de Gestion de l'Aide Socio-économique), and to a lesser extent from the World Bank and others. Until 2023, the NCTP targeted households below the national extreme poverty line, as well as vulnerable and marginalized households, specifically those whose members include persons with disabilities, elderly persons, orphans, people with chronic illnesses, and households headed by women. Targeting was achieved primarily through a proxy means test (PMT), developed and applied by the ministry's staff and social workers, with the support of the World Bank, to rank families registered in the social registry from "poorest" to "wealthiest".

Since 2018, NCTP payments have become less reliable and predictable, with the NCTP budget no longer being fully executed. While domestic revenues have increased and the PEGASE NCTP financial contribution has remained stable since 2018, overall overseas development assistance (ODA) has declined and clearance revenues due to the Palestinian Authority have been withheld by Israel, leading to a decline in social sector budget execution. The National Social Registry (management information system) was established with the support of the World Bank and is managed by the Ministry of Social Development since 2023.

Before 7 October 2023, the Palestinian Authority had made significant steps towards establishing a rights-based social protection system, moving towards protecting individuals throughout the stages of their life cycle. In the social protection sector, the earlier narrative of relief and safety nets had been on a trajectory towards more comprehensive national systems and social development. In September 2023, the Council of Ministers adopted the Ministry of Social Development's new policy, which introduced individual social allowances for persons with severe disabilities and older persons over 65 years old without another source of income. Over one-quarter of older Palestinians live in poverty. This disproportionately affects older women, who tend to live longer than men and are more likely to be widowed and live alone, depriving them of important spousal material, social and emotional support. Poverty rates are starkly and consistently higher (roughly 9 per cent higher) across the life cycle among persons with disabilities compared to the rest of the population. These new social allowances build on the existing commitment to establish a social protection floor – articulated in the ministry's previous strategies and budgets – in solidarity with groups that suffer from the highest levels of social and economic exclusion, and which have limited capacity for self-reliance or to attain a minimum standard of living. The social allowances will start being paid in 2024, with the financial



support of PEGASE. The move to social allowances is particularly important given the low coverage rates of contributory social protection. Following extensive public consultation and tripartite agreement by workers, employers and the Palestinian Authority, a draft Social Security Law was also on the cusp of adoption in October 2023, before the escalation of hostilities; the adoption of the draft has since been postponed.



#### **Project background**

With the support of the Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA) the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and Oxfam have been implemnting the Project: Strengthening nexus coherence and responsiveness in the Palestinian social protection sector which aims at addressing, together with government, other UN agencies and humanitarian partners, the fragmentation of programming, including at the humanitarian-development nexus, and increasing the capacity of MoSD and its partners to quickly leverage social transfers (cash and inkind) in efforts to respond to emerging needs across Palestinian society. The overall objective of the project is to assist in the achievement of SDG 1.3, for countries to "implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including [social protection] floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable. Specifically, it will i) enhance rights-based and nexus programmatic coherence of the Palestinian social protection sector and ii) increase the responsiveness of the social protection system in times of crisis to support OPT's progress on SDG 1.3. The project will generate the necessary outputs towards the achievement those specific objectives.

The European Commission delegated the implementation of the project to the ILO through a Contribution Agreement. The ILO as an EU Pillar assessed organization has the full responsibility for the implementation in line with its own procurement procedures, accounting, internal control and audit systems which have been positively pillar assessed.

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) undertakes strategic supervision and guidance, and include representatives from MoSD, the EU and the ILO. The PSC meets annually and reviews the project progress and approve the Annual Working Plans(AWPs). The PSC is consulted on different occasions to address contingent strategic issues.

The PSC is assisted by a Project Consultative Committee (PCC), providing strategic and policy advice on relevant issues pertaining to the areas of operation of the Project. The PCC members were chosen among relevant humanitarian organisations in West Bank and Gaza.

# **Expected results**

#### **Impact**

The Overall Objective of the action is to support the implementation of "SDG Target 1.3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable…" [Sustainable Development Goal 1.3]

#### **Outcomes and Outputs**

#### **COMPONENT 1 – CROSS-NEXUS COHERENCE**

Specific Objective 1: Rights-based and cross-nexus programmatic coherence of social protection is enhanced

Through this Specific Objective, the development intervention will seek to:

• Formulate and operationalize a common policy orientation across the spectrum of social protection actors in line with the SDSS



- Develop a whole-of-sector planning and budgeting framework for implementation of the SDSS
- Harmonize/align key programmatic design features across government and humanitarian interventions
- Maximize operational efficiencies across programmes, sharing businesses processes and administrative resources

Output 1.1: A programmatic and financing framework for cross-nexus implementation of the Ministry's Social Development Sector Strategy (SDSS) is developed

<u>Output 1.2: A cooperation agreement outlining roles and responsibilities among humanitarian social</u> protection actors and MoSD is developed

Output 1.3: Cross-nexus social protection programme design features are reviewed to improve programmatic coherence

Output 1.4: Administrative tools and resources are assessed to unlock and expand operational synergies across the nexus

#### **COMPONENT 2 - RESPONSIVENESS**

### Specific Objective 2: Responsiveness of the social protection system is enhanced

Through this Specific Objective, the development intervention will seek to:

- Develop shock-responsive protocols and procedures for expanding and managing social protection programmes during crises
- Establish or reactivate Joint Planning Groups (JPG) across the West Bank and Gaza in support of strengthening vertical coordination between national and local government
- Develop capacities and raise awareness among local government, CSOs and humanitarian agencies on government's rights-based vision of social protection, the SDSS, current programmes, and administrative practices.

Output 2.1: Shock-responsive measures are developed for expanding and managing social protection programmes during crises

Output 2.2: Joint Planning Groups (JPG) are established or reactivated across the West Bank and Gaza in support of strengthening a SRSP system through vertical coordination between national and local government

Output 2.3: Capacities developed among local government, CSOs and humanitarian agencies on government's rights-based vision of social protection, the SDSS, current programmes and administrative practices

Output 2.4: Awareness is raised among stakeholders on MoSD's rights-based vision for social protection governance and administration



#### Evaluation Background

ILO considers evaluation as an integral part of the implementation of development cooperation activities. Provision is made in the project in accordance with ILO evaluation policy and based on the nature of the project and the specific requirements agreed upon at the time of the project design and during the project as per established procedures. As the project is coming to an end and in line with the evaluation policy, a final independent evaluation is due. The final evaluation aims to assess the achievement of the results, identify the main difficulties/constraints, and formulate lessons learned and practical recommendations to improve future similar programmes.

### **Objectives**

This evaluation will examine the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and potential impact of the project. It will provide recommendations for future similar projects. This evaluation will also identify strengths and weaknesses in the project design, strategy, and implementation as well as lessons learned and good practices.

Specifically, the evaluation will examine the following aspects:

- Changes in context and review of assumptions (relevance): Is the project's design adequate to address the problems at hand? Were the project objective and design relevant given the political, economic, and financial context?
- **Coherence:** Is the project compatible with other interventions in country and in the region on social protection?
- Results in terms of outcomes and outputs achieved (effectiveness): How has the project contributed towards project's goals? To what extent did it contribute to the ILO's Programme & Budget, Country Programme Outcomes, and more largely SDGs?
- Use of resources in achievement of projected performance (efficiency): How have the resources been used to fulfil the project performance in an efficient manner with respect to cost, time and management staff?
- **Assessment of impact (impact):** To what extent has the project the potential to contribute to long-term intended impact?
- **Sustainability:** Will the project's effects remain over time?

The evaluation will comply with ILO evaluation policy<sup>2</sup>, and the UNEG ethical guidelines<sup>3</sup> will be followed.

# **Scope of the Evaluation**

The evaluation will assess the project's overall performance in line with its planned outcomes and outputs. It will cover all aspects of the project highlighting the main challenges and good practices The evaluation will integrate ILO's cross-cutting issues, including norms and social dialogue, gender equality, disability inclusion, and other non-discrimination concerns throughout its methodology and all deliverables. The geographical coverage is the OPT, Westbank and Gaza. The evaluation should cover the period of July 2021 – August 2024, while the project ends on 31 August 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed mas/---eval/documents/policy/wcms 603265.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866



## **Clients of the Evaluation**

The primary clients of this evaluation are ILO ROAS, ILO SOCPRO, GEDI; DEVINVEST; DWT-Beirut; the donor, ILO constituents in the country of implementation, and the project's key stakeholders. Secondary users include other project stakeholders and units within the ILO that may indirectly benefit from the knowledge generated by the evaluation.

A participatory approach involving key stakeholders will be ensured to the extent possible.

## **Evaluation Criteria and Questions**

The evaluation utilizes the standard ILO evaluation framework and follows the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria with emphasis on integrating gender.



# Evaluation Criteria and Questions (including Cross-cutting issues/ issues of special interest to the ILO)

The evaluation utilizes the standard ILO evaluation framework and follows the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria with emphasis on integrating gender:

### Relevance and strategic fit

- How did the project contribute to the ILO's Programme & Budget 2020-2021 and 2022-2023, Country Programme Outcomes, and United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2020-2024, and the SDGs?
- How well was the project designed to address relevant priorities and needs of constituents whether goals have been clearly specified?
- How do the project's objectives and interventions address the specific needs and priorities of the target population, especially the most vulnerable groups?

#### **Coherence**

- To what extent is the project coherent with other interventions of the ILO in OPT and in the region?
- To what extent is the project consistent with the policies and goals of OPT on social protection including work on gender?
- What strategies are in place to ensure coherent collaboration between various stakeholders, including government, international organizations, and local NGOs to avoid conflicts or duplication of efforts??

#### **Effectiveness**

- To what extend did the project achieve the overall objective, outcomes, and outputs?
- How did the project's outputs and outcomes contribute to ILO's mainstreamed strategies including gender equality, social dialogue, and labour standards?
- How effective was communication among the project team, the regional office and the responsible technical department at ILO headquarters? Has the project received adequate technical and administrative support/response from the ILO backstopping units?

#### **Efficiency**

- To what extent were the project activities cost-efficient? Were the resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise etc.) allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? To what extent can the project results justify the time, financial and human resources invested in the project?
- To what extent has the project been able to create synergies in cost sharing with other ILO or non-ILO initiatives either nationally or regionally?
- How did the project's governance structure facilitate good results and efficient delivery? And if not, why not?

#### **Impact orientation**

• How does the project measure and track the long-term effects of social protection interventions on reducing poverty and inequality?



- How likely are the project achievements to contribute to the social protection systems of OPT,
  West Bank and Gaza?
- What mechanisms are in place to assess the impact of coordinated efforts between governmental and non-governmental actors on the overall effectiveness of social protection programmes and to what extend gender balance is taken into consideration?

# Sustainability

- Are the results achieved by the project likely to be sustainable? What measures have been considered to ensure that the key components of the project are sustainable beyond the life of the project?
- Can future projects be built upon the results of this current project, ensuring sustainability and optimal use of results?
- What strategies are in place to secure long-term funding and resources from both national and international stakeholders to sustain social protection interventions?



# Methodology

The evaluation will be carried out by an external consultant. The following is the proposed evaluation methodology. The evaluator is expected to conduct quantitative and qualitative data collection approach, triangulation of findings, and integration of cross cutting issues. Only if needed and upon the approval of the ILO, a local consultant can be hired. Any changes to the methodology should be discussed with and approved by the Evaluation Manager.

## Document review and analysis

In preparation of any evaluation, an important first activity that should be carried out is the review and analysis of project-related documents. These include but not limited to project documents or concept notes with logical framework, work plans, progress and technical reports, financial reports, any materials/ studies/ events proceedings prepared or undertaken within the framework of the project.

# Briefing and inception report drafting

The evaluator will have an initial consultation with the Evaluation Manager and the relevant ILO staff managing the project in OPT. The objective of the consultation is to reach a common understanding regarding the status of the project, the priority questions, available data sources and data collection instruments and an outline of the final evaluation report. The following topics will be covered: status of logistical arrangements, project background and materials, key evaluation questions and priorities, outline of the inception and final report.

#### **Individual Interviews**

Following the desk review conducted by the evaluator and after the initial consultation/briefing with the project manager, as well as the approval of the inception report, the evaluator will hold virtual meetings with constituents/stakeholders together with interpreters supporting the process if needed. Individual or group interviews will be conducted.

# Drafting the evaluation report

The evaluator will draft the evaluation report based on the outline agreed upon in the inception report. The evaluation manager will share the draft report with relevant ILO staffs, partners and stakeholders and will consolidate their feedback. The evaluator will, thereafter, amend the evaluation report and submit a final version to the evaluation manager which needs to be approved by EVAL.

#### Presentation of preliminary findings

The evaluator will convene a workshop inviting individuals who have taken part in the interviews as a way to present preliminary findings and validate the interpretations.



### Management arrangements and work plan (including timeframe)

The evaluator will report to the ILO's evaluation manager and should discuss any technical and methodological matters with him. The ILO ROAS will provide administrative and logistical support during the data collection. The Evaluation Office will approve and sign off the final evaluation report. The evaluator is responsible for conducting the evaluation according to the terms of reference (ToR). He/she will:

- Review the ToR and propose any refinements to evaluation questions and methodology during the inception phase.
- Review project background materials (e.g., project document and progress reports).
- Prepare an inception report.
- Develop and implement the evaluation methodology (i.e., conduct interviews, review documents) to answer the evaluation questions.
- Conduct preparatory consultations with the evaluation manager prior to the evaluation mission.
- Conduct key informant interviews and collect information.
- Either conduct focus group discussions or guide and coordinate with a national consultant to do so
- Analyze findings from key informant interviews and focus group discussions.
- Present preliminary findings
- Prepare an initial draft of the evaluation report with input from ILO specialists and constituents/stakeholders.
- Prepare the final report based on the ILO, donor and other stakeholders' feedback obtained on the draft report.
- Makes sure all deliverables are submitted as per EVAL's guidelines using the most updated templates.

#### **Evaluation Timeframe**

The evaluation is to commence in August 2024 and complete in November 2024. The following table describes the tentative timeframe:

Tasks	Number of Working days
Desk review of documents related with project, drafting and submitting an inception report draft and its revision after incorporating comments	10
Conducting interviews	8
Data analysis	5
Drafting submission of evaluation report	5
Preparation of the Presentation of preliminary findings and conducting it.	1
Revising draft final report	2
Integration of comments and finalization of the report	2
Total	33



#### **Deliverables**

The main outputs of the evaluation consist of the following:

- Deliverable 1: Inception Report with comments log
- Deliverable 2: Draft evaluation report
- Deliverable 3: PowerPoint Presentation on preliminary findings
- Deliverable 4: Final evaluation report with comments log and a separate template for executive summary and templates for lessons learned and good practices duly filled in (as per ILO's standard procedure, the report will be considered final after EVAL's approval)

# **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### The ILO Evaluation Manager is responsible for:

- Drafting and Finalizing the ToR with input from ILO colleagues and other stakeholders
- Hiring the evaluator and providing the evaluator with the project background materials
- Assisting the implementation of the evaluation methodology, as appropriate
- Reviewing the inception report, initial draft final report, circulating it for comments and providing consolidated feedback to the evaluator on the inception report and the final report
- Reviewing the final report
- Coordinating with the Regional Evaluation Officer for the Evaluation Office's clearance of the final report
- Disseminating the final report to stakeholders and Coordinating follow-up as necessary.

#### The ILO Regional Evaluation Officer:

- Provides support to the planning of the evaluation.
- Approves selection of the evaluation consultant and final versions of the TOR.
- Reviews the draft and final evaluation report and submits it to the ILO Evaluation Office.
- Disseminates the report as appropriate.

#### The Project team is responsible for:

- Reviewing the draft TOR and providing input
- Providing project background materials, including studies, analytical papers, reports, tools, publications produced, and any relevant background notes.
- Providing a proposed list of stakeholders
- Reviewing and providing comments on the initial draft report
- Participating in the debriefing on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations

#### Legal and ethical matters

- This evaluation will comply with ILO evaluation guidelines and UN Norms and Standards.
- The ToRs is accompanied by the code of conduct for carrying out the evaluation "Code of conduct for evaluation in the ILO"4. The selected consultant will sign the Code of Conduct form along with the contract.
- UNEG ethical guidelines will be followed throughout the evaluation.
- The consultant will not have any links to project management or any other conflict of interest that would interfere with the independence of the evaluation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms 649148.pdf