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**EMBASSY OF ITALY IN BEIRUT  
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OFFICE**

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For immediate release

**Vocational training for the construction sector to boost social and economic recovery and employment generation in southern Lebanon**

*Nearly 300 trainees receive certification after six-month ILO and Italian-supported course*

BEIRUT (ILO News) – More than one thousand Lebanese will have benefited from the ILO project ‘Skills development, employment services and local economic recovery for the construction sector in south Lebanon’ when a further 287 trainees receive a proficiency certificate at the Yassin Jaber Centre in the southern city of Nabatieh on Tuesday (March 29).

This final round of graduates brings to a close the skills development component of a three-year two-million euro project that has been funded by the Italian Cooperation - Embassy of Italy in Beirut since October 2008 and is set to conclude in May 2011.

“We hope for vocational training in this sector to continue because it responds to a skills gap in the labour market, and many of the courses were oversubscribed, so there is a clear demand for it among the young people of this region,” said Adnan Duhaini, a member of the advisory panel of the project representing the Collective of Industrialists of Jabal Amel.

Implemented by the International Labour Organization in partnership with workers and employers’ organizations, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and a number of vocational training schools, as well as the municipalities of Bint Jbeil, Hasbaya, Marjayoun, Nabatieh, Tyre, Sarafand and Saida, the project aims to boost employment generation and the socio-economic recovery of south Lebanon in the aftermath of the July 2006 hostilities.

“Through a strategy of promoting skills development, employment and sustainable enterprises, the ILO has successfully improved opportunities for decent work in southern Lebanon,” said Nada al-Nashif, ILO Regional Director for the Arab States. “More than 70 per cent of trainees during the first phase of this project were offered jobs within two months of graduation and over ten per cent either established or improved their own businesses.”

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Italy's Ambassador to Lebanon, Giuseppe Morabito, said that the project served to reinforce synergy with the existing network of job centres in order to provide labour market services for the unemployed.

"The Italian Government financed this project because we believe that employment is crucial for southern Lebanon. I am confident that the combined efforts of the Italian Cooperation, the ILO, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the local authorities, the union of industries, the local employers' network, and workers' organizations will ensure the success of this initiative in the long term and in a sustainable manner," he added.

During the second and third phase of the project, a total of eighteen courses have been administered in seven schools in electricity, painting, plumbing, aluminium, carpentry and mosaics, including training of trainers' sessions. Out of six hundred and eighteen trainees certified in 2009-2011, there are 78 women and 40 persons with disabilities.

"This project develops much-needed skills in the construction sector and also helps to break the gender barrier by training women to become electricians or painters," said Ali Harb, a member of the advisory panel of the project from the Lebanese Federation of Trade Unions and the Head of the Union of Construction and Timber Workers in South Lebanon.

"I am more confident about entering the job market thanks to the skills that I have acquired during this training, I now plan to set up my own business", said 22-year-old Mazen, an electricity graduate with special needs.

The ILO is committed to supporting initiatives in Lebanon relating to employment creation and skills development, local socio-economic recovery in war-affected areas, women's empowerment, labour inspection, social security reform, combating child labour, the right-to-work for Palestinian refugees, and the protection of the rights of migrants and domestic workers. In addition to its normative work, the ILO implements ten technical cooperation projects nationwide.

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