



BEIRUT OFFICE

**Call for proposals addressed to organisations and entities registered in the list referred to in paragraph 3 of the art. 26 of Law no. 125/2014 for the Award of the implementation of the Initiative:
"Promoting sustainable local development and job creation in Lebanon"**

AID 012816

Beirut, 06 February 2024

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ACRONYMS

3RF	Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework
AICS	<i>Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo</i> – Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
ATS	<i>Associazione Temporanea di Scopo</i> – Temporary Purpose Association
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CfP	Call for Proposals
CoM	Cluster of Municipalities
CSO	Civil Society Organisation and other Non-Profit Organisation
DG	Directorate General
DGCS	<i>Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo</i> – Directorate General for Development Cooperation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MAECI	<i>Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale</i> – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NCC	National Coordination Committee
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PAT	<i>Portale Amministrazione Trasparente</i> – Transparent Administration Portal
PRAG	Practical guide on contract procedures for European Union external action
RUP	<i>Responsabile Unico del Procedimento (RUP)</i> – Person in charge
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TC	Technical Committee
UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UoM	Union of Municipalities

This Call for Proposals (CfP) is published on “*Portale Amministrazione Trasparente*” (PAT) of AICS. AICS Beirut, responsible for the publication of the CfP and its award, will also be responsible for the evaluation procedure, the signature of the contract and the monitoring, pursuant to the Joint Committee Decision no. 8/2017, and its subsequent amendment with Decision no. 50/2018.

AICS Beirut reserves the right to not assign all or part of allocated funds of this CfP if all or part of the proposals received are deemed non-eligible or not suitable for financing.

1 - INTRODUCTION

With this Call for Proposal, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Lebanon (hereinafter referred to as “AICS” or “AICS Beirut”) intends to identify **four (4) Implementing Organisations** for the execution of the initiative named "Promoting sustainable local development and job creation in Lebanon" – AID 012816 (hereinafter referred to as “Initiative”).

The CfP has been drafted in line with the Guidelines titled "*Conditions and Modalities for the Award of Development Cooperation Initiatives to Civil Society Organisations and Non-Profit Organisation listed in Article 26, Paragraph 3 of Law no. 125/2014*" endorsed by the Joint Committee for Development Cooperation through Decision n. 8/2017, and subsequently amended by Decision n. 50/2018. They rule the public competitive processes for awarding development cooperation projects to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and other non-profit Organisations registered in the list in accordance with Article 26, Paragraph 4 of the Law and Article 19 of the Statute, in line with the existing legislation and in conformity with the principles established by the European Union for grants in the framework of PRAG.

The Initiative, approved by the Joint Committee with decision n. 127 of 9 June 2023 for a total contribution of Euro 5.000.000,00, will be awarded for a maximum amount equal to Euro 4.800.000,00 to four (4) CSOs for the implementation of four (4) projects with a total maximum budget of Euro 1.200.000 each, as per the above-mentioned law, while Euro 200.000,00 will be dedicated to the local management by AICS Beirut for guidance, coordination and monitoring.

The contracting authority is AICS Beirut and the person responsible for the process is the Head of Office.

The official language for the comparative procedure is English.

2 – DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

2.1 General Information

The Initiative will be implemented by AICS Beirut by awarding the activities implementation to four (4) CSOs selected through a CfP and coherently with the procedures for *Affidati*.

The proposed intervention aims at promoting an inclusive and sustainable local development as follows:

- by supporting local business/cooperatives oriented to public value and social impact through technical and financial assistance to scale up the market, create new decent job opportunities and stimulate an increase in job demand.
- by fostering employment opportunities through the improvement of the job placement services and through pilot interventions to support technical and professional training, as well as job placement pathways for vulnerable beneficiaries, unemployed persons, and first-time job seekers at the community level and in collaboration with local authorities.

The Initiative intends to promote the economic local development of the target areas and the active role of the Lebanese local authorities in the development processes and strategic planning; it will adopt market-oriented approaches to boost local economies, as well as a systematic and participatory approach focused on the promotion of synergies among public, private and non-profit stakeholders.

2.2 Country context

Lebanon is facing a multidimensional crisis that is exacerbating its structural long-term vulnerabilities and increasing the risk of instability. According to the World Bank, the Lebanese crisis ranks among the “most severe crisis episodes globally since the mid-nineteenth century”, and the main factors include (i) the severe financial crisis started in 2019, which led to a period of deep economic and financial depression built on the previous political and economic fragility; (ii) the high flow of refugees from Syria; (iii) the Beirut harbour’s blast on 4 August 2020, with a considerable impact on the decline in GDP; (iv) the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, which contributed to worsening the serious economic recession and have undermined the functioning of the social protection system; (v) the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which led to a further general increase in prices of imports and specifically of food items; (vi) the Gaza crisis affecting the south of the country and the increasing of IDPs.

The abovementioned shocks, added to chronic political, social, and economic conditions, led to a drastic increase in poverty, fewer job opportunities and the collapse of public services.

The current situation in Lebanon has resulted in a downgrading of the country classified by the World Bank as a lower-middle income, down from upper middle-income status in July 2022. Lebanon had declared default in 2020, the Lebanese Pound has lost more than 95% of its value, and inflation rates – which reached 161.8% in August 2022 – have affected the vulnerable as well as the middle-class population in terms of access to basic needs included affordable food, fuel, medication, electricity, and water. As a matter of fact, the poverty rate in the country has doubled from 39% of the total population in 2019 to 81% in 2021; 34% of the population around 1,650,000.00 people, approximately 400,000 families in 2021 are in conditions of extreme poverty, an increase of 8% from 2019.

To respond to the socioeconomic and employment crisis in the country, the Initiative aims at promoting sustainable local development and at enhancing decent job creation and job placement opportunities by supporting local business entities in the sectors of (i) agriculture/food processing, (ii) waste management and recycling, and (iii) sustainable and responsible tourism. An in-depth assessment of the context has been conducted and needs identified have been validated during the mission organized by AICS Beirut in the period from the 9th to the 18th of November 2022 for the elaboration of this Initiative.

Furthermore, several meetings with relevant authorities painted a peculiar picture, in which institutions at national and local level face difficulties in managing the economic crisis and relaunching development processes. Therefore, and within this framework, the efficient strategy would be boosting local development processes on one hand and promoting an immediate impact on the most vulnerable populations on the other.

Through a fruitful exchange with the Lebanese institutions, AICS Beirut has identified objectives, expected results, and activities of this Initiative. Lebanon constitutes a priority country for the Italian Cooperation, and the proposed action – included in the 2022 programming document

approved by the Joint Committee on 9 June 2022 – is in line with the *Three-year Programming and Direction Document 2021-2023*, which sets the following priorities: (i) supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; (ii) investing in training for people who have lost their jobs or face difficulty for job reconversion; (iii) creating job opportunities; (iv) promoting public-private partnerships between governments, governorates, municipalities, businesses, workers and CSOs. The Initiative is also in line with the Italian Cooperation's "[*Guidelines on agriculture, rural development, and food security*](#)", which identify the agriculture, in its broader meaning, as key driving sector in the growth of a country by favouring economic development, reducing poverty, promoting environmental protection, supporting education and technical trainings, improving women and minors' conditions, and improving the health conditions in rural areas.

The Initiative is coherent with strategic objective 4 "*Strengthen economic, social and environmental stability*" of the *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-2023* (LCRP), in which the re-establishment of commercial activities, the creation of jobs and the speed up of reforms in the domain of business environment are considered crucial priorities for the country. In addition, it adheres to strategic pillar 2 "*Work and opportunities for economic*" of the *Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) 2020* and with the Action Plans developed by United Nations and European Union coordination groups, in which Italy regularly participates. The Initiative is also consistent with the *Stabilisation Roadmap of the Government of Lebanon*, the *Lebanon SME Strategy of the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Social Affairs*, the *National Agriculture Strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture*, the *Lebanon Solid Waste Roadmap for 2023-2026 of June 2023*, the sectorial strategies for tourism, such as the *Rural Tourism Strategy in Lebanon*, the *Decent Work Country Program 2017-2020 of the Ministry of Labour*, the *National Strategy for Women in Lebanon*, and finally the *2020-2027 Strategic Plan for the Protection of Women and Children* of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

2.3 The sector and needs analysis

Lebanese labour market is characterised by several weaknesses: an economic growth not able to produce proportionally jobs opportunities; endemic unemployment especially among young people; low involvement of women within productive activities; extensive informal economy; high degree of social segmentation reflected within the labour market and inadequate working conditions.

By the end¹ of 2022, the unemployment rate was at 29.6%, an increase from the previous years, and youth unemployment rate (15-24 years old) was at 47.8%, almost double compared to the adult unemployment rate (25.6%). As regards Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)² it is reported an estimation of one-third of the female youth population (32.1%) and 26.1% of the male youth population. Both percentages show a rise of approximately 8% of NEET rate compared to 2018-2019.

With reference to female involvement, the share of women who lost their jobs during the crisis is greater than men, also considering a high level of discrimination when it comes to access to the job market, which already in 2019 was equal to 1/3 of the male rate.

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--arabstates/--ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_848353.pdf

² http://www.cas.gov.lb/images/Publications/LFS_2022/Fact%20Sheet%20%20Follow%20Up%20LFS%20Lebanon%202022.pdf

A central role in the Lebanese economy³ is played by the private sector driven mainly by MSMEs: it contributes to around 80% of the GDP and absorbs 85% of the workforce. It is worthy to note that MSMEs in Lebanon represent 95% of all companies and take 50% of national employment. The resilience of MSMEs has been jeopardised in the last two years; as a matter of fact, it is reported an increase of employee layoffs and MSMEs, cooperatives and small farmers face significant challenges in finding financing channels and guaranteeing the minimum sustainability for their activities.

The informal economy reflects the complexity of the overall situation⁴ as it takes a growing share of workforce: in 2021 informal work rate among vulnerable Lebanese was at 78%. Since the beginning of the crisis, many companies, due to the absence of capital and the difficulty of attracting financing, have been forced – temporarily or permanently – to reduce or shut down their activities. The public sector, which is responsible for developing policies and strategies, is experiencing a stage of extreme fragility and deadlock leading to large deficits in terms of accountability, transparency, and effectiveness, as well as to the absence of relevant data.

The Initiative aims to respond to the following main challenges:

- Lack/weakness of local and sector development plans capable of mapping and promoting the business and defining value chains.
- Poor coordination between public, private, and non-profit entities.
- Insufficiency of capital and barriers in attracting alternative sources of financing for MSMEs/startups/cooperatives/small producers.
- Lack of financial resources and therefore weak management capacity of local institutions.
- Difficult access to the job market, especially for vulnerable categories of the population.
- Lack of knowledge of decent working conditions among workers and relevant authorities.
- Work placement paths not adequately market oriented.

Based on consultations conducted by AICS Beirut, it emerged that, in order to tackle the challenges posed by the crisis, it is necessary to support business and strategic supply chains to relaunch the economy and promote jobs opportunities. Supporting MSMEs, cooperatives and small producers to stimulate the local market can represent a great lever to overcome challenges of the economic crisis, and it would contribute to creation of work opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable groups. The relevant sectors, assessed as priorities during the meetings held with local stakeholders, are the following:

- Agriculture/food processing
Despite the large number of people employed in and affected by it, the sector received little support in terms of share of national budget. With its capacity of providing a safety net for the most vulnerable population, agriculture and food processing are among the main sectors to reduce poverty, increase food security and boost local economy through scalability of the actions and the value-adding potential.
- Waste management and recycling

³ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099927411232237649/pdf/IDU08288b3490ed820409e0886a08ea1efef93be.pdf>

⁴ https://lebanon.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/LCRP%202022_FINAL.pdf

It represents a growing priority for local administrations and, based on Lebanon Solid Waste Roadmap for 2023-2026, an urgent problem to be addressed to promote environmentally sustainable territorial development.

- Sustainable and responsible tourism,

It is a driving force for the Lebanese economic development and is a sector with high revenue and employment potential, despite the current crisis.

In addition, crucial would be the promotion of technical education and professional training and the labour force integration system to improve its quality, effectiveness and increase its sustainability.

The technical education and/or professional training pathways should meet the real needs of the labour market, including technical and non-technical training (life skills), coaching and personalised guidance for target groups, internships and “on the job training” technologies required by the production.

The development of human capital and market-oriented capabilities combined with improved employment services represents an essential pillar for relaunching local economies. Eventually, strong involvement of public entities and their strengthening in terms of management capabilities and strategies is needed to guarantee sustainability within the development processes.

2.4 Area of intervention

The activities of the Projects shall target Unions of Municipalities (UoMs). In absence of UoMs, organised Clusters of Municipalities (CoMs) can be taken into consideration.

The below table 1 is the list of UoMs in Lebanon, reinforced by the map.

It is made mandatory to intervene in Unions whereby a Development Strategic plan/a road map, whether comprehensive or sectorial, has been already developed.

In this regard, it is worthy to mention the programme funded by the Italian Cooperation and implemented by UN-HABITAT in 10 UoMs titled “Road Map towards a Socioeconomic Development Plan.

The Unions of Municipalities that are South of the Litani River are excluded by this CfP.

Table 1: List of Unions of Municipalities

UoM Name	District	Governorate	AID 11744 UN Habitat	South Litani river
UoM of Akkar El-Chamali	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Arqa El-Athariya	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Arqoub	Hasbaya	Nabatiyeh		YES
UoM of Baalbek	Baalbek	Baalbek El-Hermel	YES	
UoM of Batroun	Batroun	North		
UoM of Beqaa El-Aousat	Zahleh	Bekaa		
UoM of Bint Jbeil	Bint Jbeil	Nabatiyeh		YES
UoM of Bouhayra	West Bekaa	Bekaa		
UoM of Caza Bcharreh	Bcharreh	North		
UoM of Caza Jbeil	Jbeil	Mount Lebanon		

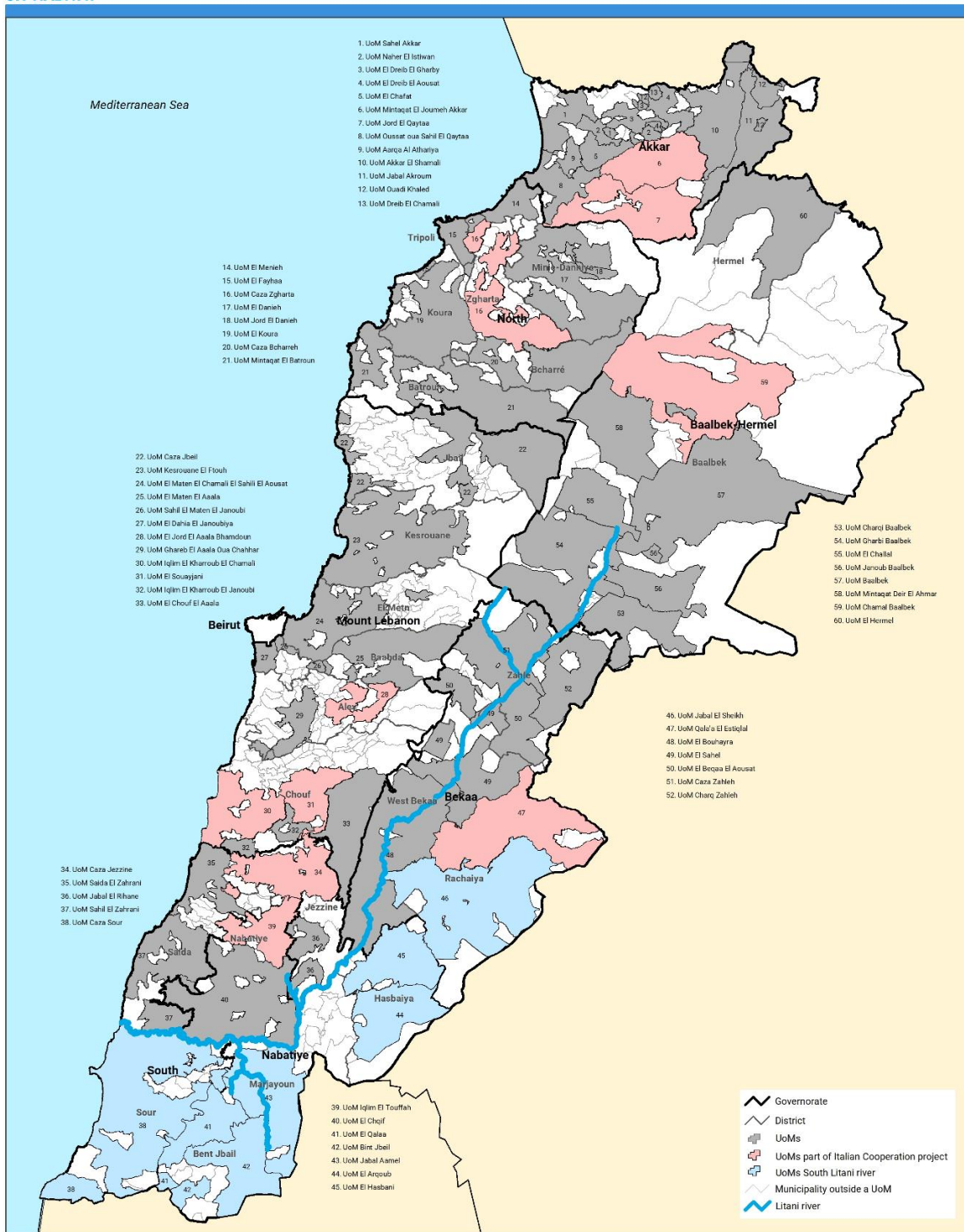
UoM Name	District	Governorate	AID 11744 UN Habitat	South Litani river
UoM of Caza Jezzine	Jezzine	South	YES	
UoM of Caza Sour	Sour	South		YES
UoM of Caza Zahleh	Zahleh	Bekaa		
UoM of Caza Zgharta	Zgharta	North	YES	
UoM of Chafat	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Challal	Baalbek	Baalbek El-Hermel		
UoM of Chamal Baalbek	Baalbek	Baalbek El-Hermel	YES	
UoM of Charq Zahleh	Zahleh	Bekaa		
UoM of Charqi Baalbek	Baalbek	Baalbek El-Hermel		
UoM of Chouf El-Aala	Chouf	Mount Lebanon		
UoM of Chouf El-Souayjani	Chouf	Mount Lebanon	YES	
UoM of Chqif	Nabatiyeh	Nabatiyeh		
UoM of Dahieh El-Janoubiya	Baabda	Mount Lebanon		
UoM of Danniyeh	Miniyeh–Danniyeh	North		
UoM of Deir El-Ahmar	Baalbek	Baalbek El-Hermel		
UoM of Dreib El-Aousat	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Dreib El-Chamali	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Dreib El-Gharby	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Fayhaa	Miniyeh–Danniyeh	North		
UoM of Gharbi Baalbek	Baalbek	Baalbek El-Hermel		
UoM of Ghareb El-Aala Oua Chahhar	Aley	Mount Lebanon		
UoM of Hasbani	Hasbaya	Nabatiyeh		YES
UoM of Hermel	Hermel	Baalbek El-Hermel		
UoM of Iqlim El-Kharroub El-Chamali	Chouf	Mount Lebanon	YES	
UoM of Iqlim El-Kharroub El-Janoubi	Chouf	Mount Lebanon		
UoM of Iqlim El-Tuffah	Nabatiyeh	Nabatiyeh		
UoM of Jabal Akroum	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Jabal Amel	Bent Jbeil	Nabatiyeh		YES
UoM of Jabal El-Cheikh	Rachaya	Bekaa		YES
UoM of Jabal El-Rihane	Jezzine	South		
UoM of Janoub Baalbek	Baalbek	Baalbek El-Hermel		
UoM of Jord El-Aala–Bhamdoun	Aley	Mount Lebanon	YES	
UoM of Jord El-Danniyeh	Miniyeh–Danniyeh	North		
UoM of Jord El-Qaytaa	Akkar	Akkar	YES	
UoM of Joumeh	Akkar	Akkar	YES	
UoM of Kesrouane El-Ftouh	Kesrwane	Mount Lebanon		
UoM of Koura	Bcharreh	North		
UoM of Metn El-Aala	Baabda	Mount Lebanon		
UoM of Metn El-Chamali El-Sahili El-Aousat	Meten	Mount Lebanon		
UoM of Miniyeh	Miniyeh–Danniyeh	North		
UoM of Naher El-Istivan	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Ouadi Khaled	Akkar	Akkar		

UoM Name	District	Governorate	AID 11744 UN Habitat	South Litani river
UoM of Oussat oua Sahil El-Qaytaa	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Qalaa	Bent Jbeil	Nabatiyeh		YES
UoM of Qalaat El-Istiqlal	Rachaya	Bekaa	YES	
UoM of Sahel	West Bekaa	Bekaa		
UoM of Sahel Akkar	Akkar	Akkar		
UoM of Sahil El-Metn El-Janoubi	Baabda	Mount Lebanon		
UoM of Sahil El-Zahrani	Saida	South		
UoM of Saida El-Zahrani	Saida	South		



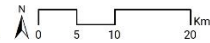
Unions of municipalities (UoMs) in Lebanon

December 2023



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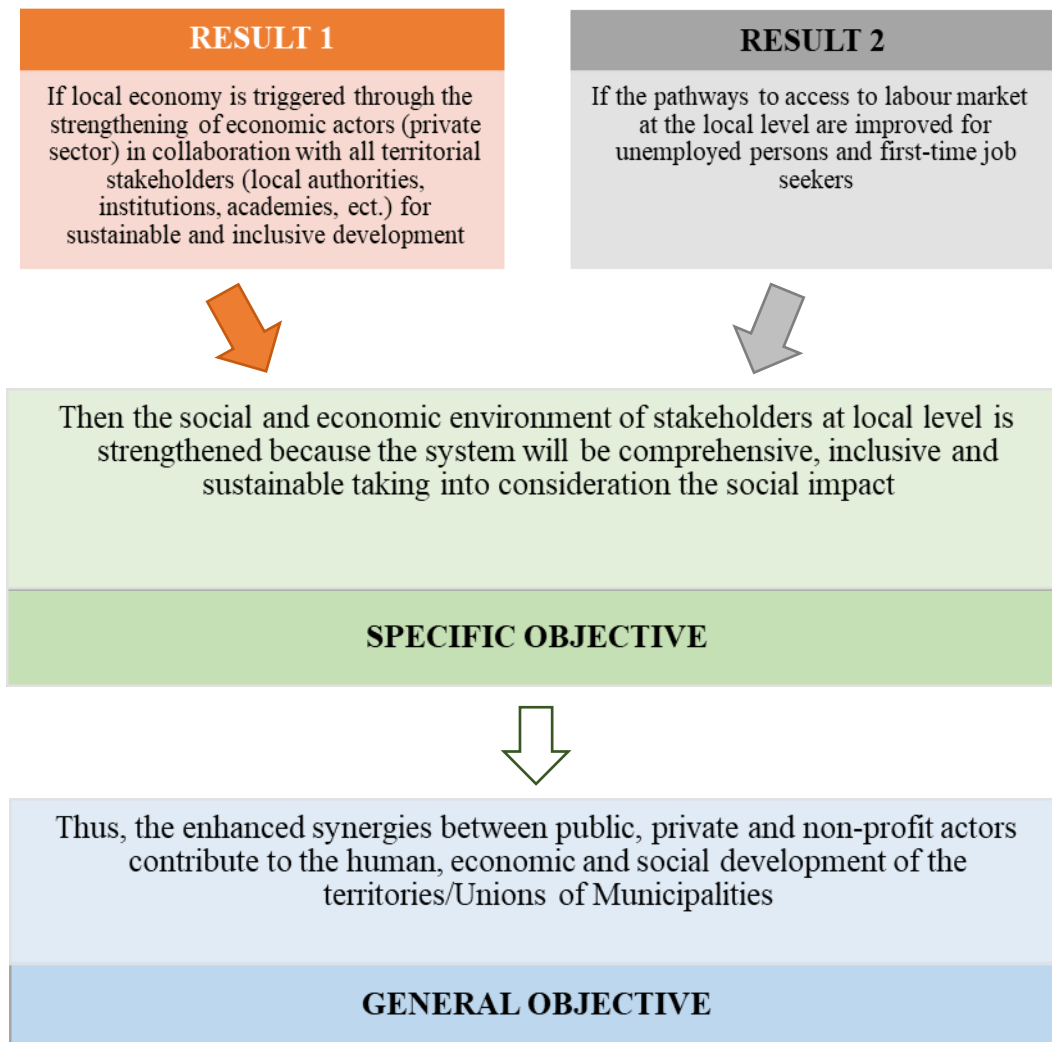
Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



2.5 Intervention strategy (TOC)

The Initiative will be implemented in the Unions of Municipalities and/or Clusters of Municipalities as mentioned in section 2.4. The intervention will support the economic development at the local level focusing one or more of the following sectors: **agriculture/food processing, sustainable and responsible tourism, and waste management and recycling.**

The Theory of Change of the Initiative is presented in the below diagram:



The intervention approach should be based on some methodological milestones throughout the different steps:

- **Alignment and contextualisation:** the intervention shall take into consideration the difficulties and the resources of the Lebanese context to propose actions that are feasible and aligned with stakeholders' priorities.
- **Continuous monitoring and context evaluation:** activities' implementation will be adjusted if needed by the progressively achieved results and by the emerging challenges.

- **Rationale:** the whole process will be based on valorising the capacities and the knowledge of the stakeholders involved and promoting dialogue and cooperation among the actors.
- **Replicability:** the challenge is to set up a systematic approach that will ensure replicability, scalability, and sustainability of the proposed activities.

The Proposal must adopt a market-oriented approach to boost local economies, as well as a systematic and participatory approach focused on the promotion of synergies among public, private, and non-profit stakeholders.

More specifically, the CSO must involve, since the proposal formulation stage, UoMs and decentralised public institutions, as public entities; Universities, research institutes, Chambers of Commerce; MSMEs, startups, cooperatives oriented to public value and social impact, and CSOs as private and non-profit stakeholders.

The involvement of Italian public and private stakeholders will constitute an added value of the proposal that will promote exchange of knowledge, sharing of best practices, bilateral cooperation channels, and joint ventures.

Therefore, in line with Agenda 2030 and with the general theory of change elaborated by AICS, the Initiative, through its general and specific objectives, contributes to the achievement of OUTCOME 1 within the “*PROSPERITY*” pillar that responds to Sustainable Development Goals SDG: 8 targets 8.2, 8.3, 8.6 and 8.a.

In this framework, to achieve results 1 and 2, during the elaboration phase of the project proposal the CSO must identify one or more Union of Municipalities and/or Cluster of Municipalities based on the following relevant criteria:

- Strategic plan/road map, including sectorial ones, available (not older than 3 years).
- Priority sectors of intervention are agriculture/food-processing, waste management and recycling, and sustainable and responsible tourism.
- Not being South of Litani River, as mentioned in paragraph 2.4.

The CSO must introduce the intervention strategy to the UoMs/CoMs and discuss the possible activities to be undertaken. Proposals shall therefore be jointly discussed with representatives of the UoMs/CoMs, and prepared and drafted with a participatory approach. Moreover, the role and tasks of the UoMs/CoMs included those within the project governance structure, shall be properly identified and agreed upon. As mentioned in the paragraph 8, the CSO shall request a Letter of acknowledgment from the UoMs/CoMs for the submission of the proposal, inclusive of the intervention strategy within the selected sector(s), its objectives and the roles of the CSO and the UoMs/CoMs.

The rationale of this approach is to foster ownership, relevance, coherence, and inclusiveness of the project, its activities, and its results.

To achieve **Result 1**, during the implementation phase, an inclusive and functional governance structure must be guaranteed through the establishment of a Technical Committee (TC) chaired by the UoMs/CoMs and made up of representatives of the CSO, the decentralised public institutions, and the private sector(s) identified, which shall be formally invited by the UoMs/CoMs.

During the first meeting, the CSO and the UoMs/CoMs shall introduce to the TC members the existing development strategy/road map and the selected sector(s) of intervention.

On that basis, the TC shall develop and approve the Action Plan, identifying the priorities of intervention and the activities to support the local economic development.

The TC shall also set up a joint monitoring process to follow up on all activities.

During all the phases of the intervention, UoMs/CoMs and the decentralised public institutions could invite representatives of the public institutions at central level to align the national and local approach, ensuring the sustainability of the intervention.

The CSO should work closely with UoMs/CoMs, as well as with the decentralised public institutions to align the intervention and avoid overlapping and duplication.

A mapping exercise of the existing stakeholders (MSME/start-ups/cooperatives) and an economic analysis of each of them are required. The analysis of the stakeholders should take into consideration, among others, criteria such as the strategic value for the development of the area in the specific sector, the possible exploitation of economies of scale, the value-adding capacity, the potential in job creation, with reference to the occupational inclusion of people with disabilities, the social impact, the environmental sustainability, gender (if they are female-led and/or women-intensive enterprises), etc.

In parallel to the analysis of the private sector stakeholders, the decentralised public institutions should be included and taken into consideration to promote a public-private partnership while supporting MSMEs/start-ups/cooperatives and orienting job seekers through capacity building and job opportunities. The support provided to the public institutions should focus on introducing/increasing their knowledge in local development topics, such as sectorial strategy development, guidance and monitoring, digitalisation, Geographic Information System Mapping (GIS), design and management of sustainable territories, monitoring of public policies. The role of women in governance should be also taken into consideration in line with AICS *Guidelines on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (2020-2024)*.

The identified private sector stakeholders, where needed, should be coached on organisational development, development of innovative and sustainable business models, investment strategies, decent work policies, marketing, and administrative and financial management.

In line with local development plans, economic actors participating in the project activities may apply for funding to strengthen value chains, expand their market, create new job opportunities, increase social responsibility, and improve the environmental impact. Specifically, the funding may be directed to the purchase of technical equipment and machinery to improve production technologies in the sectors.

As mentioned, the involvement of the public and private actors of the Italian system is considered as an added value of the proposal, notwithstanding a particular attention to the sustainability of the actions.

Concerning **Result 2**, the focus should be on empowering the demand-driven labour market. In this regard, employability should be fostered through vocational trainings, technical education programmes, and job placement activities, such as job-shadowing, internships, etc. Where necessary, the project should develop, with the support of and in collaboration with the relevant decentralised institutions, specific curricula targeted to bridging the gap between education/

training and access to employment in the value chains within the sectors identified and linked to the public/private actors involved in the project.

It is important to develop a clear mechanism where job seekers, vulnerable categories of the population, and unemployed people could be oriented towards trainings and employment by the local public entities. The approach for the identification of the beneficiaries should be based on a system to match demand and offer. The vulnerable categories should be oriented towards “job placement” and/or “training” opportunities within the system. The mechanism must be endorsed by the Technical Committee and shall a) define tasks, roles and mandates of each local stakeholder, b) establish the communication modalities among them and c) take into account criteria, such as professional skills, age, economic condition, gender, disability, etc. The Implementing Organisation shall verify, in collaboration with the concerned institutions, the list of beneficiaries in order to ensure the compliance with the identified criteria.

The project shall monitor the progress of the selected candidates in the trainings and report on the employment rates after the formative path is completed.

Role of the Implementing Organisation

- To guarantee the involvement and participation of the UoMs/CoMs from the project proposal phase to ensure local ownership of the action
- To be accountable towards AICS about the management of the project implementation
- To implement all project activities
- To facilitate coordination among all local stakeholders during the whole process
- To facilitate the organisation of the activities carried out by the stakeholders to achieve the expected results
- To facilitate the exchange of best practices between Lebanese stakeholders (private and public) and Italian actors
- To facilitate the knowledge sharing among different stakeholders
- To propose project governance structure
- To work closely with the UoMs/CoMs
- To monitor the implementation of the project.

Role of the UoMs/CoMs

- To set up and the Technical Committee at local level, formally inviting all members
- To chair the meetings
- To coordinate with the relevant decentralised institutions based on the needs of the sector(s)
- To work closely with all the local public entities in the planning process
- To facilitate the involvement of the private sector
- To facilitate the implementation of the activities
- To monitor the implementation of the project
- To work closely with the CSO

National Coordination Committee (NCC)

AICS will set up a National Coordination Committee (CC) composed by the representatives of the awarded OSCs, UoMs/CoMs and any other relevant stakeholder involved in the 4 projects. The aim of the NCC would be to facilitation of the process if needed, the harmonisation of the interventions among the sectors and the projects of CSOs, the promotion of the dialogue and the exchange of best practices among the UoMs/CoMs, the capitalisation and possible replication.

2.6 Proposed Logical Framework

	<i>Intervention logic</i>	<i>Suggested Indicators</i>
<i>Overall Objective</i>	<i>To contribute to the human, economic and social development at the local level by strengthening synergies among public, private, and non-profit stakeholders.</i>	
<i>Specific Objectives</i>	<i>To boost local economies through the promotion of inclusive development and business oriented to public value and social impact.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Number of local authorities with increased capacity in the sustainable management of the territories and in safeguarding the economic structure.</i> - <i>Percentage of people who, following the project, report a positive impact on their quality of life in economic, social, and environmental terms.</i> <p>https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators</p>
<i>Expected Results 1</i>	<i>Local economies are revitalised through the strengthening of economic actors and by involving all the stakeholders at the local level.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>No. of strategies/development plans/implementation plans for the sustainable and inclusive development of the territories adopted by local authorities following the project activities.</i> - <i>Number of supported MSMEs/cooperatives reporting improved performance and growth of their business disaggregated by enterprise size, sector and sex of enterprise owner/manager</i> - <i>Number of start-ups launched.</i> - <i>Gender wage gap.</i> - <i>Number of local authorities' officials and technicians (disaggregated by gender and disability) have increased their skills in the sustainable management of the territory and in safeguarding the economic structure.</i> - <i>Number and type of partnerships developed/strengthened.</i>

	<i>Intervention logic</i>	<i>Suggested Indicators</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of MSMEs/cooperatives that have benefited from a positive change at local level for doing business (in terms of the presence of development plans, dialogue/coordination with public and non-profit actors, human resources training) following the activities of the project. https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators
<i>Expected Results 2</i>	<i>The labour market access at the local level is improved for unemployed people and first-time job seekers.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of people (at least 50% women) included in the working network, disaggregated by gender, age, disability. - Percentage of MSMEs/cooperatives expressing satisfaction with the skills of the people trained during the project, number of persons reached disaggregated by type of contract and gender. https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators

Suggested activities

Applicants shall clearly outline and describe all activities that will be implemented and the logical connection among them. Below are a set of standard activities the applicants may refer to. Additional activities might be introduced where deemed consistent with the objective of this CfP.

<i>Suggested activities under Result 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Setting and/or reactivating public and private working groups to define the action plan of the intervention, to monitor and ensure the sustainability. 1.2 Studies aimed at mapping and analysing stakeholders within the relevant sectors of intervention. 1.3 Identification and selection of startups/MSMEs/cooperatives to deliver social impact services and implement public value interventions in line with local development processes. 1.4 Training and capacity building to the local public entities on local government management and safeguarding of local economies. 1.5 Coaching and technical assistance to startup/MSMEs/cooperatives on business strategies and entrepreneurship, value chains. 1.6 Financial support to startups/MSMEs/cooperatives to enhance value chains/expand markets/improve corporate social responsibility and environmental impact/contribute to create new job opportunities. 1.7 Strengthening partnerships with Italian public and private actors. 1.8 Communications and increasing awareness activities to disseminate project results, to share the best practices identified, to promote peer to peer knowledge exchange among private and public stakeholders, to increase entrepreneurs' exposure to the markets, to spread and foster innovative business oriented to public value and social impact.
<i>Suggested activities under Result2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Technical and financial support to enhance job placement services in synergy with public, private, and non-profit stakeholders. 2.2 Orientation, identification and selection vulnerable categories, unemployed persons and first-time job seekers through community-based outreach campaigns involving public/private professional training centres. 2.3 Mentorships' activities and job orientation to the selected beneficiaries. 2.4 Supporting selected job seekers through vocational and technical trainings, on the job training, and paid internships.

2.7 Beneficiaries and Stakeholders

Direct and indirect beneficiaries will be defined in quantitative terms within the project proposals presented by the Applicants and, where relevant, disaggregated by gender, nationality and age. The exact number of beneficiaries per each activity is expected to be identified at the first stage of analysis of the project during the preparatory actions for the elaboration of baseline and throughout the implementation of all relevant activities.

Direct beneficiaries:

Economic actors	MSMEs/startups/cooperatives/small producers
Individuals	Vulnerable unemployed youth, other vulnerable groups and already employed people resident in the areas of intervention identified through the criteria developed by the ad hoc committee at local level. Representatives of local stakeholders involved.
Local Institutions/ Stakeholders	Unions of Municipalities and Clusters of Municipalities involved. Chambers of Commerce. Local decentralised offices of line ministries.

Indirect beneficiaries:

The overall population economically active within the target area of intervention; supported MSMEs/startups/cooperatives families; the families of unemployed who have started a new job; and the population residing in the intervention areas.

Additionally, Central Institutions will indirectly benefit from the project activities thanks to the constant involvement of their decentralised offices in the implementation of the activities.

2.8 Duration and timetable

Each Applicant's proposal must have an implementation period of maximum 24 months. An inception phase of three months will be dedicated to the elaboration of the General Operation Plan and to the collection and assessment of relevant information for baseline and the specific targets identification.

2.9 Allocated funds

The overall indicative amount made available under this Call for proposals is Euro 4.800.000,00 which will be awarded by a maximum of 4 CSOs and/or ATS according to the following division.

The Contracting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Applicant	Number of CSO/ATS	Maximum amount in Euros per CSO/ATS	Total contribution in Euro
CSO	4	1.200.000,00	4.800.000,00

2.10 Complementarity with other interventions

Applicants are advised to maintain active coordination with other implementing entities through the participation to United Nations and EU working groups in order to maximise synergies and implement shared interventions. In particular, complementarity of actions shall be ensured through participation in the Livelihood working group established within the LCRP and through

participation in the sectoral working group relating to strategic pillar 2 "*Work and economic opportunities*" as part of the *Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)*.

3 - CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The proposed Initiative is consistent with the Italian Cooperation's "[*Environment Guidelines*](#)" adopted in 2011, as it responds to the principle of supporting production activities that are not harmful to the environment. The culture of the territory and respect for the natural environment, combined with the more general contribution and commitment to environmentally sustainable development, are central principles in the Initiative.

The Initiative takes into consideration also the "[*Italian Cooperation's Guidelines on Cultural Heritage and Development*](#)" adopted in 2013, linking the socioeconomic development of an area to its cultural heritage and therefore to the tourism sector connected to it. The guidelines support the utilisation of the cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable through the creation of a value system, the development of entrepreneurial activities, the dissemination of knowledge, know-how and good practices.

Moreover, this Initiative is consistent with the AICS "[*Guidelines on gender equality and empowerment of women, girls 2020-2024*](#)", as it promotes the role of women in governance and income-generating activities. In line with CEDAW, the program aims at increasing the active participation of women in the economic and social life of the territories, contributing to improve access to the job market, financial services and quality technical-professional training. With a view to strengthening women and gender equality, particular attention will be paid to women-run businesses, as criteria for the selection of businesses that will be supported under the project (activities 1.2, 1.6). The Initiative is also in line with the "[*Guidelines for disability and social inclusion in cooperation intervention*](#)" adopted by AICS in 2018.

As regards the public sector, the Initiative encourages the participation of women in training and capacity building activities to promote the role of women in decision-making and territorial governance processes. The proposals are expected to provide specific indicators disaggregated by gender to monitor and evaluate the gender impact of the planned activities.

4 - SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the Initiative has been elaborated according to the following paragraph. Therefore, Applicants are highly suggested to develop project proposals taking into consideration the reported sustainability features.

Institutional sustainability

Coherency with national and local policies, strategies and development plans guarantees the overall institutional sustainability of the project.

The systemic approach based on the promotion of public and private partnerships at territorial level aims at relaunching the role of local institutions as central actors of the local development.

Furthermore, the involvement of local civil society organisations and private sector actors will constitute a further aspect in the sustainability of the intervention.

Technical sustainability

The technical sustainability of the project will be based on the support to private, public, and non-profit actors already present and well rooted in the Lebanese context. Furthermore, the systemic approach proposed aims at promoting the creation and strengthening of partnerships between public, private, and non-profit entities at the local level with the purpose to grant sustainability and to strengthen the endogenous factors of territorial development.

The Lebanese market will be fostered, and preferences of local actors will be promoted compatibly with Italian legislation and AICS procedures.

Financial and economic sustainability

Overall, the Initiative is sustainable from an economic and financial point of view, as the proposed capacity building activities addressed to local institutions aim at strengthening the capabilities of the public sector in managing the territory and safeguarding the local economic fabric in terms of economic growth, local development strategies and human resources.

The program intends to allocate resources to empower business and cooperative to relaunch the economy and create job opportunities. On the other hand, strengthening the job placement paths aims at increasing the human capital of the company workforce and to fill the gap between training and access to work, improving the matching between supply and demand in the labour market.

5 – RISKS AND PRE-CONDITIONS

Main preconditions and assumptions shall be assessed by the Implementing Organisation and constantly updated, together with the relative mitigation measures, during the implementation phase.

Preconditions:

- Good cooperation and teamwork among partners

Assumptions:

- Government, local authorities, and other stakeholders make human, social and local development a priority in reaching SDG 8.
- All the actors involved support the success of the project.
- Local authorities are more likely to strengthen the collaboration with the private market.

Following the main risks and mitigation measures that are to be considered in the current Lebanese context:

Risks	Mitigation measures
Escalation and geographical expansion of the war between Israel and Hamas	The South of Litani River is not covered by the project. The awarded CSO should follow closely

Risks	Mitigation measures
	the indications of the Italian Embassy concerning the security measures.
Political Instability and social tensions due to the worsening of the economic crises	The development of the projects shall stem from a strong collaboration with local administrations; the Project's main priority shall be strengthening the social and non-profit business to appease social and economic consequences of the political instability. It should be foreseen regular meetings with the actors involved in the implementation of the activities as well as with the local communities.
Lack of local and national planning	The interventions will foresee the implementation of existing local sectorial development plans agreed with the local authorities. Overall, it should be noted that adopting an intervention approach which includes the collaboration and active participation of local development actors, will reduce the risk related to the lack of planning.
Devaluation of the Lebanese Lira and the following increase of the inflation	The CSO must take into consideration economic inflation development while elaborating the Budget (Financial Plan) and the expenses monitoring strategy.

6 - PARTNERSHIPS

Applicants may enter into partnership agreements for the implementation of specific activities of the project with:

- a) CSOs from an OECD member country or included in the OECD-DAC list of ODA Recipient Countries
- b) Government agencies from an OECD member country or included in the OECD-DAC list of ODA Recipient Countries
- c) International Organisations

The selected partner must be clearly specified in the proposal, and the Agreement signed with the partner should be included as an attachment to the proposal (**Annex 4**). In the case of international or local CSOs without an operational headquarters in Italy chosen as partners, they must be established in accordance with the legislation in force in the country of origin and in compliance with the provisions for non-profit entities under the same legislation.

The rules and regulations of partnerships are described in the Financial Report Guidelines for Cooperation Initiatives (**Annex 12**).

The Implementing Organisation is accountable for the proper implementation of the activities as defined in the Partnership Agreement towards the relevant AICS office.

7 – TERMS AND MODALITIES OF SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

The Applicant must submit the proposal in PDF format to AICS Beirut within and no later than, under penalty of exclusion, **3:00 p.m. (Lebanese time) of 8 April 2024** through certified email (PEC) and specifying the following in the subject:

“ApplicantAcronym_InitiativeEconomicDevelopment_AID12816” to the e-mail address: beirut@pec.aics.gov.it

As well as a notice of dispatch by a separate email to the following address: beirut@aics.gov.it

The date and the time of the certified e-mail (PEC) by AICS Beirut will prove the validity of reception.

Each Applicant may submit **only one** (1) proposal as single applicant, lead applicant or as co-executing members of an ATS. Submission of more than one proposal by the same organisation, (even in the role of Representative of an ATS), will result in their exclusion from the selection process.

All CSOs, whether they are single applicant, lead applicant, or co-executing members of ATS, must be registered in the list of CSOs referenced in Article 26, Paragraph 3, of Law no.125/2014.

It is mandatory for CSOs to follow the guidelines provided in the annexes mentioned in paragraph 8 (including the specified number of pages per section, maximum total and annual amounts to be included in the financial plan, etc.).

A specific Evaluation Committee shall be appointed by the Head of Office, as mentioned in point 14 below, after the submission deadline of proposals.

8 – DOCUMENTATION TO BE SUBMITTED TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL

The project documentation should encompass all essential information required for a proper final evaluation. Consequently, it must encompass the following:

- **The Proposal** (Project Document – Annex 1).
 - **Logical Framework** (Annex 1a).
 - **Timetable** (Annex 1b).
 - **M&E Plan** (Annex 1c).
- **Terms of Reference of the administrative and managerial personnel.**
- **Budget Breakdown/Financial Plans template** (Annex 3).
- **Partnership Agreement’s** (Annex 4) or **Letter of Intent for a Partnership** (Annex 5).
- **Self-declaration of Local Operational Capacity** (Annex 6).

- **Anti-mafia Data Communication** (Annex 7) & **Anti-Mafia Check Scheme** (Annex 7a). In the case of projects jointly presented by multiple organisations, each member of the Association must individually submit the anti-mafia documentation.
- **Letter of acknowledgment** from the UoMs/CoMs, inclusive of the summary of the proposal and the roles of the CSO and the UoMs/CoMs.
- **UoMs/CoMs strategy and/or Road map document.**
- In the case of a joint project presented by two or more eligible CSOs, it is necessary to provide an Agreement establishing a **Temporary Purpose Association (ATS)** or a Letter of Intent. These documents should be signed by the legal representatives of the participating CSOs, indicating their commitment to form a Temporary Purpose Association before the contract is signed. The ATS must be submitted as an authenticated private agreement.
- **Self-declaration Affidavit** of the eligibility requirements possession referred to in point 9 (**Annex 2**).

The technical details presented in section 2 of this CfP (including expected results, activities, and identified targets) have been provided to guide potential Applicants in elaborating their proposals. These Applicants can suggest other activities or operational solutions that are relevant and aligned with the project framework, as long as they fall within the maximum eligible budget, which must not be exceeded. Moreover, all the indicators must be based on RBM approach and Logical Framework may be revised jointly with the Contracting Authority at this regard. The capacity of the Applicant to propose amendments to the project activities that are pertinent and coherent with the intervention strategy will be evaluated during the evaluation phase based the pre-determined evaluation grid attached to this CfP.

9 – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR APPLICANTS

CSOs eligible to participate in the selection procedure must, at the date of publication of the call for proposals, meet the following requirements:

- a) Being registered in the List in article 26, Paragraph 3, of Law no.125/2014;
- b) Having proved capacity to operate in Lebanon and in the areas of intervention: this is proved either through the formal registration of the CSOs with the relevant Lebanese authorities or a documented 2-year (minimum) experience in the country in the cooperation sector;
- c) Not being debtors to public administrations, for assured, cash and due debts, including those debts arising from measures of cancellation/revocation of contributions related to “*promossi*” and/or “*affidati*”, and/or humanitarian aid projects;
- d) Not being in a state of bankruptcy, insolvency, or liquidation, where the assets are managed by a liquidator or a judge, or where there is an agreement with creditors, or where the activities are frozen, or any other similar situation as defined by national law;

- e) Being compliant with the regulations related to the right to work of persons with disabilities according to the Italian legislation (Law no. 68 of 12 March 1999 and subsequent modifications and integrations;
- f) Being compliant with the anti-mafia documentation, pursuant to Article 85 of Law n. 159/2011 and subsequent modifications and integrations and submit the necessary documentation to obtain the anti-mafia certificate issued by the competent Italian authorities;
- g) Being up-to-date with the payment of taxes, social security, and welfare contributions as required by the current national legislation or the legislation in force in the country where the contract is being executed;
- h) Against whom has not been issued a final judgment or administrative final decision for serious violations of the legislation or ethical standards within the professional sector to which the organisation belongs or for unlawful behaviour that has negatively impacted the professional credibility of the organisation. This includes, in particular, the following scenarios:
 - I. for having submitted false statements or fraudulent documentation in the execution of a contract or in relation to eligibility criteria and relevant conditions for the participation in selection procedures;
 - II. for having entered into agreements aimed at distorting competition;
 - III. for violating intellectual property rights;
 - IV. for attempting to influence the decision-making process of the Contracting Authority during a selection procedure;
 - V. for attempting to obtain confidential information that could confer unfair advantages during a selection procedure.
- i) Against whom a final judgment has not been issued for one of the following crimes:
 - I. fraud, as defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Protection of the Financial Interests of the European Communities, referred to in the Council Act of 26 July 1995;
 - II. corruption, pursuant to art. 3 of the Convention on the fight against corruption of officials of the European Communities or officials of the Member States of the European Union, referred to in the Council Act of 26 May 1997, and in art. 2, paragraph 1, of the Council Framework Decision 2003/568/JHA, as well as pursuant to current Italian legislation, or the legislation in force in the country in which the entity has its registered office or in the country in which the contract is executed;
 - III. participation in a criminal organisation, pursuant to art. 2, of the Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA;
 - IV. money laundering or terrorist financing, as defined in Article 1 of Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and the Council;

- V. crimes related to terrorism or terrorist activities, as defined, respectively, in Articles 1 and 3 of Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA, or incitement, complicity, aiding, or attempting to commit the aforementioned crimes, in accordance with Article 4 of the above-mentioned Framework Decision;
 - VI. child labour or other types of human trafficking as defined in Article 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and the Council.
- j) Being not compliant towards contract obligations funded by the European Union or Italian public administrations, which have resulted in the early termination of the contract, the application of penalties, or the settlement of damages, or which have come to light during inspections, audits, or investigations conducted by authorised officials from the European Union, OLAF, the Court of Auditors, or Italian public administrations.
- k) Against whom has not been pronounced a final judgement or definitive administrative decision related to irregularities, as defined in Article 1, paragraph 2, of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) no. 2988/95.

Participants confirm that they meet the mentioned eligibility criteria through the Self-declaration Affidavit (**Annex 2**) in accordance with the regulations of the Consolidated Law concerning legislative and regulatory provisions on administrative documentation, as referred to in Presidential Decree No. 445 dated 28 December 2000.

AICS Beirut conducts investigations regarding the eligibility criteria about the awarded Implementing Organisation. For the purposes of the aforementioned investigations concerning information held by Italian public administrations, the provisions of D.P.R. 28 December 2000 n. 445 is applied. For inquiries involving information kept up by authorities of other countries or international organisations, AICS Beirut reserves the right to request participants to provide the required documentation.

10 – TECHNICAL CAPACITY AND LOCAL OPERATION REQUIREMENTS

10.1 Technical Capacity

The Implementing Organisation, whether it is a single CSO or the lead CSO within an ATS, is expected to have prior experience in local economic development in the sectors of (i) agriculture, agro-food processing, (ii) waste management and recycling, and (iii) sustainable and responsible tourism. The experience should be related to promote public private partnerships, provide technical expertise for the mentioned sectors, support and facilitate business and job creation opportunities.

10.2 Capacity to operate in loco

The Implementing Organisation must be able to prove its capacity to operate in Lebanon through specific documentation (registration of the CSO at the relevant authorities in Lebanon or evidence of a minimum 2-year experience in the country on development projects as well as the capacity of the CSO to effectively manage human and financial resources within the country of intervention).

The operational capacity requirements are described in the proposal presented, along with a signed declaration in accordance with the regulations of Presidential Decree No. 445 dated December 28, 2000 (Annex 6).

11 - GROUNDS FOR EXCLUSION

The following are grounds for exclusion of proposals:

- a) Failure to comply with the procedures or deadlines established for the submission of proposals;
- b) Lack of eligibility criteria;
- c) Lack of technical capacity requirements;
- d) The submission by the Applicant and/or partners of a number of proposal higher than what is required by the call;
- e) Failure to sign one of the required declarations, in accordance with the provisions of Presidential Decree no. 445 dated 28 December 2000.

12 – PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTING INFORMATION AND CLARIFICATIONS

AICS Beirut will organise an info session on the **19 February 2024 at 3:00 p.m. (Beirut Time)**

Any request for clarification can be addressed within **18 March 2024 at 12: 00 p.m. (Beirut time)** to the following certified email address: beirut@pec.aics.gov.it

As well as a notice of dispatch with a separate email, to the following address: beirut@aics.gov.it

AICS Beirut has no obligation to provide clarifications to applications received after the 18 March 2024 at 12: 00 p.m. (Beirut time).

All questions and answers, along with any significant communications that AICS Beirut decide to disclose during the selection process, will be made available in the section dedicated to the publication of the call for proposals and on the “*Portale Amministrazione Trasparente (PAT)*” on AICS Beirut website.

13 – PRIVACY PROTECTION

The data processing is necessary for the public power exercise and to comply with legal obligations to which AICS is subject as Owner for data processing. The purpose of the data processing is the proper execution of the insolvency procedure and the consequent establishment of the contractual relationship, for the purposes of the expected performance, in compliance with legal obligations. The data will be processed by internal staff and collaborators specially trained and prepared, may be shared with third parties only if it is necessary to comply with the subsequent obligations of the contract itself or to apply measures of a social security or assistance, always in compliance with

national legislation. The data will be kept for the necessary period of time, however, for the duration of the contact and also subsequently to cope with all the rules, rights and obligations to which the Agency is subject. The collection and storage of the data will take place by means of paper-based collection and by means of digital documents and if they come from abroad or to be transmitted, your data will be processed in accordance with GDPR 2016/679 in other non-European countries and in any case the privacy measures provided by the standard clauses of protection will be applied to them on the basis of the forecast of art. 45 of the GDPR.

As an interested party, you may exercise rights related to data protection, including the right to complain in the forms provided by the current legislation.

14 – SELECTION, ASSESSMENT, AND APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS

The selection procedure is aimed at identifying a suitable Implementing Organisation to carry out the project described in this call for proposal.

The selection procedure includes a phase of administrative verifications and another one of technical evaluation of the proposals. The administrative verifications consist in checking the completeness and accuracy of the documentation submitted and compliance with the eligibility criteria specified in the call for proposals. The technical evaluation of the proposals entails a comparative review of the Applicants characteristics (expertise, experience in implementing similar projects, human resources dedicated to the project) and the project proposals in terms of appropriateness of the identified activities, implementation methodology, level of innovation, proposed technical and operational solutions, coherence and validity of the project timeline, accuracy and measurability of selected indicators and related sources of verification, the capacity of identifying coherent and reliable baseline and target, the effectiveness of the monitoring program and allocated resources, the capacity of intervention on factors affecting sustainability, the proposed exit strategy, the capacity of building partnerships, the appropriateness of technical, human, and financial resources allocated to each activity of the project, as detailed in the Evaluation Grid attached to this call (**Annex 13**).

The overall duration of the selection, namely, the period between the deadline for submitting proposals and the final approval of the projects, cannot last longer than **180 (one hundred and eighty) days**.

The proposals submitted following the publication of the call for proposals are assessed by an Evaluation Committee, which is appointed by the Head of Office of AICS Beirut through a dedicated decision. The Evaluation Committee is composed by a non-voting president, a secretary, and an odd number of voting members.

The secretary carries out the administrative verifications to check the participants and the proposals compliance with the eligibility criteria as per the requirements specified in the call for proposals and conveys for approval to the committee the list of proposals admitted for the evaluation phase along with the reasons for any exclusion. Upon receiving the documentation, the Committee reviews and validates the results of the administrative verification.

The Committee may reserve to request integrations e/o corrections to the documentation in each phase of the procedure, recording the reasons of the undertaken decision.

The proposals will be evaluated and scored, through an in-depth analysis of the proposal and, possibly, field visits, with an overall score calculated by summing the scores allocated to each of the evaluation parameters as per the annexed grid (**Annex 13**).

A minimum threshold of 66 points, out of a maximum total of 100, as a score that must be achieved to award of the project.

Once the evaluation process is completed, the Evaluation Committee develops the ranking of the eligible proposals and informs the RUP to carrying out other internal procedures preliminary to the approval and the publication of the ranking.

The Notification to all the Applicants of the evaluation results and of the subsequent proposal for awarding the project related to this call for proposals must be communicated within 1 (one) working day from the approval of the final proposals. The results will also be published on the “*Portale Amministrazione Trasparente* (PAT) of AICS Beirut.

15 – CONTRACT SIGNATURE

After the completion of the evaluation by the Evaluation Committee, the Head of Office AICS Beirut proceeds with the Decision of award (*Determina di affidamento*) of the project and inform the awarded Implementing Organisation. This communication includes also the indications for the submission of the required documentation for the signature of the contract.

The Contract is the agreement between AICS Beirut and the Implementing Organisation that lays down the rules on the implementation modalities of the project (beginning of activities, amendments, etc.), payment modalities, reporting procedures, and other conditions, all of which are extensively outlined in the Financial Report Guidelines for Cooperation Initiatives (**Annex 12**).

The signature of the Contract represents the starting date for the eligibility of expenditures. Any expenses incurred before the contract's signature are not reimbursed other than the Pre-financing Guarantee Certification (*Fideiussione*). A template of the contract is attached to this call for proposals (**Annex 10**).

Prior to the contract signature, AICS Beirut reserves the right to request the Applicant to make corrections to the Financial Plan in case of clerical errors or not eligible costs and/or to make needed modifications Those must be minor changes which do not alter the proposal, on the basis of the coherency with the minutes of the Evaluation Committee or the indications provided to the applicants in the time between proposals submission and approval. The amendments cannot, in any case, affect the total cost, the amounts or the overall structure of the project, in compliance with the principles of equity and equal treatment.

Upon receiving the Decision of Award (*Determina di affidamento*), the selected Implementing Organisation is required to submit the needed documentation to AICS Beirut as outlined in point 16 below.

16 – DOCUMENTATION TO BE SUBMITTED BEFORE THE CONTRACT SIGNATURE

Within 61 working days from the communication of the Decision of Award (*Determina dell'affidamento*) mentioned in above point 15, the Implementing Organisation must provide the following supporting documentation:

- **Pre-financing Guarantee (Annex 8)** in case of pre-financing request;
- **CV and statement of exclusivity of the project management staff (Annex 9)**. It will be the responsibility of the Implementing Organisation to acquire and present the necessary work permits, when necessary, for the personnel employed in the project;
- Award to the **External Auditor** and related Declaration of an Absence of Incompatibility (**Annex 12b**);
- Declaration of the External Auditor including the Certification of the internal Procedures of the Implementing Organisation and Partner/s (**Annexes 12c, 12d, 12e**);
- Any documentation supporting the self-declaration submitted with the proposal, confirming the absence of any foreseen grounds of exclusion;
- A dedicated bank account number in loco or in Italy to ensure the proper traceability of financial transfers. If the dedicated bank account is in Italy, it is important to emphasise that fund transfers must be directed to a local current account that is exclusively allocated to the project;
- Delegation of signature and authorisation to use the bank account of the project on behalf of the Project Manager or any other person assigned to the project;
- All the submitted documents (Registration with the competent authorities of Lebanon, contracts or agreements) that demonstrates previous experience in one or more sectors specified in this call for proposals as indicated in the previous section 8;
- If there are one or more co-executors, to provide documentation that certifies the establishment of the Temporary Purpose Agreement (ATS). This agreement should be formalised as an authenticated private agreement.
- Security Declaration (**Annex 15**)

17 – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The Implementing Organisation has the option to implement the project involving partners and/or third parties who are designated to perform specific activities. If the implementation is entrusted to partners, it is necessary to regulate the terms of collaboration in the relevant agreement. If the implementation is entrusted to third parties, the Implementing Organisation shall use for the acquisition of works, goods and services, public comparative procedures in compliance with current legislation, making use, preferably and when possible, of local personnel and materials. These same procedures should be followed by partners as well.

The contribution will be disbursed in instalments according to the organisation of the project activities, the operational, and financial plan. Payments due to the Implementing Organisation are made by AICS Beirut via bank transfer from its bank account in Italy to the dedicated current account indicated. The instalments of the contribution, if breakdown of the budget proposed by the Implementing Organisation is approved by AICS Beirut, can be made in two modalities: in advance payment or based project progress.

The pre-financing payment, when requested, is disbursed upon submission of an appropriate Pre-financing Guarantee equivalent **to 30% of the pre-financing**, in accordance with the provisions of Article 26, paragraph 4 of Law no. 125/2014, within 15 working days from the contract signature.

The guarantee must operate in accordance with the following methods:

- a) the amount must be **equal to 30% of the amount of the contribution** paid as pre-financing, pursuant to and in the manner referred to in the art. 26, paragraph 4 of Law no. 125/2014;
- b) The **duration** of the guarantee should be sufficient to cover the time required for AICS to approve the final narrative and financial report. The guarantee should only be released upon formal communication from AICS.
- c) If there are **extensions** of the project's duration and/or delays in the submission of the final report, which necessitate prior approval from AICS, the implementing Organisation must also extend the Guarantee accordingly.
- d) In case of instalments with different amounts, the guarantee can be adjusted time after time, at the respective 30% the advance payment, taking into account any deductions made by AICS Beirut for residual funds and ineligible expenses. In such instance, the Implementing Organisation once has received the approval communication for the annual report, which includes the instalment amount to be paid, **the guarantee must be updated** to match this

amount and AICS must be promptly informed. Subsequently, AICS Beirut⁵ will proceed with the payment of the instalment.

The guarantee can be either in the form of a bank guarantee or an insurance guarantee. It must be issued in Italy by authorised institutions in accordance with Article 35, paragraph 18, third and fourth sentences of the public contracts code, as established by Legislative Decree no. 50 dated April 18, 2016, and should be in operation for at least three years. The guarantee, chosen by the Implementing Organisation, must explicitly include the waiver of the right to preventive forfeiture of the principal debtor, the waiver to the exception stipulated in Article 1957, paragraph 2, of the civil code, and the guarantee's validity within fifteen days upon a simple written request from AICS.

The guarantee is released upon the conclusion of the project, prior approval of the final report. However, AICS Beirut may initiate the forfeiture of the guarantee in the event of significant irregularities in the execution of the project. This includes instances of persistent and unexplained delays in the submission of annual and/or final reports, as well as cases involving the reimbursement of amounts for expenses deemed ineligible, particularly after the final financing instalment has been received.

Subsequent instalments, starting from the second instalment onwards, will be disbursed following the approval of the narrative and financial reports, excluding ineligible expenses and possible residual funds, within 30 days of the submission of the descriptive and accounting report.

In case of disbursement based on project progress, all instalments will be disbursed subsequent to the accomplishment and payment of expenses, and after the approval of the narrative and financial reports by AICS excluding ineligible expenses and residual funds. These payments will be processed within 30 days from the receipt of the report.

In both cases, whether an advance or project progress-based payment, the instalments will be paid as follows:

- a. The funding can be divided into a maximum of three instalments.
- b. The second instalment can be requested once at least 70% of the first instalment has been spent and/or committed.

After 60 days from the initiation of the project, the Implementing Organisation can present a revised version of the proposal as well as the timetable, the logical framework and the financial plan. This would help to integrate the document with missing baseline and/or target.

The selected Implementing Organisation is required to submit the following to the AICS Beirut:

- i. Six-month narrative report on the progress of the activities for all the duration of the project.

⁵ The Guarantee policies must be sent to the AICS Beirut via PEC (beirut@pec.aics.gov.it) and be produced according to the annexed templates (**Annex 8**).

- ii. Narrative and financial reports at the end of each year or when requesting the second and third instalments as mentioned previously.
- iii. Final narrative and financial reports.

The reports should be prepared in English using the standard format (**Annex 14**) for the intermediate, annual, and final narrative reports, and in **Annex 11** for the presentation of the Operational Plan. These reports must facilitate a transparent comparison between the progresses realised towards the expected results outlined in the approved project. They should describe the implemented activities compared to the initially planned activities.

The narrative and financial reports should be supplemented with a report prepared by an External Auditor as described in the Financial Report Guidelines for Cooperation Initiatives (**Annex 12**).

18 – ELIGIBILITY OF EXPENSES

Eligible expenses are:

- a) **relevant** and solely **attributable to the project activities**. Relevant correlation between should be between expenses and expected results of the project;
- b) **having the commitment date and supporting document falling within** the temporary limits of duration established in the signed Contract and its related annexes, except of the Pre-financing Guarantee Certification costs;
- c) necessary for the implementation of the approved project starting from the eligibility date of the expenses and activities as defined in the Contract by AICS;
- d) **consistent with** the baseline criteria of the sector and the local/geographic context, as highlighted by the Applicant in the proposal;
- e) foreseen in the Financial Breakdown of the project;
- f) **actually incurred**, supported through bank transfer and other bank operations or equivalent money transfer entities (except of payment where the self-certification is eligible and other cash transactions for which it is evidently impossible to proceed with bank operations that have to be verified by the External Auditor - refer to the Management and Financial Guidelines of the Cooperation Initiatives), proved by invoices, receipts, or accounting documents possessing equal evidentiary validity, enabling the determination of the complete payment and proper recording in the accounting records;
- g) **properly recorded**, thus included in an accounting system of the Implementing Organisation as per its internal procedures, leading to the creation of accounting records in accordance with legal requirements, accounting standards, and any additional specific guidelines outlined in compliance with prevailing legislation;

- h) **traceable** as stipulated by prevailing legislation and any exceptional provisions established therein;
- i) **compliant** with both European Union and national regulations, while also considering local legislation;
- j) those having the date of the supporting documents and the date of the payment within 6 months for the finalisation of the financial report.

Eligible expenses are calculated exclusive of **Value Added Tax (VAT)** (or any equivalent tax in effect in the beneficiary country) if the Implementing Organisation is either exempted from such taxes or entitled to their reimbursement. If VAT (or the applicable tax in the foreign country) cannot be recovered, it should be incorporated in the expense declarations and reports. In the latter scenario, it's mandatory to provide supporting documentation, which may also be in the form of a Self-declaration Affidavit (*atto di notorietà*) containing the required information.

The financial breakdown of the project defines the maximum amount of expenses that are eligible for AICS.

Certain types of expenditures (such as expenses related to taxis used for project-related purposes in the beneficiary country, parking fees for project vehicles, purchase of mobiles and related costs, cost of accommodation and food purchases) are eligible only when related to activities aiming to achieve the expected results and objectives.

Ineligible costs are listed in the paragraph 7 of the Management and Financial Guidelines for Cooperation Initiatives.

19 – REPORTING OF EXPENSES

All expenditures realised in currencies other than the Euro must be converted to Euro using the average monthly **InforEuro** exchange rate for the month in which the expenses were incurred. This rate can be found on the InforEuro website:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/inforeuro/index_en.cfm

Otherwise, it may be considered the **weighted average exchange rate** or the **FIFO exchange rate**. In any case, the implementing Organisation **must choose a single criterion** to be applied for the duration of the project. The External Auditor will verify that the selected modality is compliant with the internal procedures of the Implementing Organisation.

As agreed in the framework of the signed Contract between the Implementing Organisation and the External Auditor, the supporting documents for the expenses should:

- be produced in Italian and/or in the vehicular language established between the Parties in the contract ordered according to the reporting modalities compatible with the Accounting Information System (IT) used by the Implementing Organisation;

- be compliant with the accounting modalities, codification and classification of expenditure according to the applicable internal procedures of the Implementing Organisation;
- be in the original or, if agreed with the External Auditor, in a certified simple copy of the original and/or an electronic copy;
- be in the name of the Implementing Organisation or clearly identified Project Partners in the proposal for which an appropriate Partnership Agreement has been submitted.

20 – SECURITY PROVISIONS

The implementing Organisations must abide by the rules and measures of the Italian Embassy in Lebanon in the realisation of the project as well as to the [Protocol for the Security of the personnel working for the cooperation](#) and to the AICS [Code of conduct](#), and to follow the indications and updates defined in the Webpage <http://www.viaggiasesicuri.it> related to Lebanon.

The document concerning the Security Declaration should be attached (**Annex 15**) after the signature of the Contract.

21 – FINAL PROVISIONS

For any matters not explicitly enclosed in this call for proposals, it applies the "Conditions and modalities for the awarding of Development Cooperation Initiatives to Civil Society Organisations and other non-profit Entities registered in the list referred to in Article 26, paragraph 3, of Law 125/2014", approved by the Joint Committee for Development Cooperation with Decision n.8 of February 2017 and with Decision n. 50 dated February 5, 2018, and the Accounting Guidelines for Cooperation Initiatives, approved by Decision n. 461 of 29 December 2022 of the AICS Director and principles which can be consequent to the relevant rules in force.

AICS Beirut reserves the right to cancel or terminate this call for proposals in case of insufficient funds to finance the project.