

# Labor Market Assessment (LMA) – 2026

Beirut & West Bekaa

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# I. Background and Context

Lebanon's labor market continues to face profound and multi-layered challenges stemming from a protracted economic, political, and social crisis that has intensified since October 2019. As documented in the 2025 Labor Market Assessment (LMA), multiple crises including economic collapse, currency devaluation, political instability, and conflict-related disruptions have severely constrained labor force participation, employment opportunities, and income security, particularly for youth and women (World Bank, 2024; ILO, 2024; WFP, 2022). The public sector, while providing employment stability, has been unable to transition to dollarized payments due to limited governmental resources, resulting in persistently low wages. Concurrently, private sector employment contracted by over 5% between 2018 and 2022, while public sector employment increased modestly from 12.4% to 16.1%, reflecting a structural shift in labor absorption. Informal employment has expanded significantly, reaching 62% by 2022, as households and enterprises adapted to economic instability and the lack of social protections.

Unemployment trends remain critical indicators of labor market distress. The total unemployment rate, which was projected to decline from 13% in 2020 to 11.5% in 2022, in fact surged dramatically due to successive shocks, reaching 29.6% in January 2022 (CAS & ILO, 2022), with regional disparities particularly pronounced in Bekaa/Baalbek El-Hermel, where unemployment reached 40.9% compared to 11% in 2018–2019. Youth unemployment remains disproportionately high at 47%, compared to 25.6% among adults aged 25 or above. Gendered disparities are also stark where women's unemployment consistently exceeds men's, reaching 43% among women in December 2021, and women constitute 75% of the inactive working-age population. Despite this, educational attainment among women often surpasses that of men, with only 32.6% under-educated compared to 40.2% of men in 2022, highlighting persistent structural barriers and a gender pay gap that continues across all education levels.

Sectoral employment patterns have shifted in response to both crisis and opportunity. As of 2022, employment remains concentrated in wholesale and retail trade and motor vehicle repair (20%), public administration (12%), and manufacturing (12%), followed by construction, education, health, and transport. Men experienced notable declines in managerial positions from 7.8% to 3.2%, while women's representation dropped from 5% to approximately 2%. In contrast, both genders observed growth in services, sales, and technical occupations. Men's share in elementary occupations increased from 9.8% to 13.3%, while women's declined from 28% to 14%, reflecting differing vulnerabilities and opportunities across the labor force.

A comparison with the Save the Children-led LMA further reinforces these findings, highlighting that high youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and reliance on low-productivity sectors remain persistent constraints. The Save the Children assessment, conducted under the SUBUL program and employing the ILO Tree Methodology, also emphasized regional variations in labor demand and the importance of inclusive approaches for youth, women, and persons with disabilities (PwDs). Both LMAs identify sectoral priorities, skills gaps, and the need for actionable pathways in wage employment and entrepreneurship, demonstrating strong alignment with the labor market assessment done by FSF in 2025 trends while offering additional granularity on recovery-related sectors such as manufacturing, health services, agriculture, community health, digital services, and vocational trades.

In the updated 2026 labor market assessment done in Beirut and West Bekaa, it was confirmed that these dynamics persist while highlighting additional sectoral and skills-related trends that are increasingly relevant for livelihood interventions. High unemployment, informality, and skills mismatches continue to constrain labor market participation and enterprise sustainability, particularly for youth and women (World Bank, Lebanon Economic Monitor, 2025; ILO, Lebanon Labour Market Trends, 2024). Emerging sectors driven by technology, energy, and sustainability now offer more viable pathways for income generation, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas such as Beirut and West Bekaa. SMEs report heightened demand for multi-skilled, adaptable employees capable of supporting operations, quality assurance, and sales in the face of economic instability, conflict-related disruptions, and emigration of skilled workers (IRENA, 2024; UNDP & ILO, 2024). This evolution reflects an increasing reliance on renewable energy solutions, digital platforms for marketing and sales, and sustainable agricultural practices as both survival strategies and avenues for economic growth.

Public and private investment, workforce training, and entrepreneurship support remain critical to reversing these trends. The labor market assessment done in 2025, emphasized that inadequate public investment, low wages, and poor working conditions limit job creation and retention, while skills gaps prevent youth and women from accessing higher-value employment. This was reinforced in the updated labor market assessment, these findings and adds nuance, demonstrating that localized, targeted interventions particularly in digital literacy, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and enterprise development can enhance employability and labor force participation. The evidence from both assessments underscores the persistence of structural labor market constraints while highlighting opportunities for FSF's targeted livelihoods and entrepreneurship programming, including the potential to strengthen youth engagement, enhance gender equity in employment, and support SME growth through capacity-building and skills development initiatives.

The updated labor market assessment corroborates the findings from the labor market assessment in 2025 while providing a richer, localized understanding of evolving sectoral trends, labor demand, and skills needs. The integration of Save the Children's LMA provides additional validation of persistent challenges and confirms the relevance of sectoral priorities, skills gaps, and inclusive approaches for youth, women, and PwDs. By combining insights from all three assessments, FSF can design evidence-informed interventions that address persistent unemployment, promote equitable access to employment, and facilitate sustainable economic participation, particularly for vulnerable youth and women in Beirut, West Bekaa, and surrounding regions.

## **II. Assessment Objectives**

The labor market assessments conducted in 2025 and 2026 share a common goal of understanding Lebanon's evolving employment landscape, with particular attention to youth, women, and vulnerable groups, and informing targeted interventions in vocational training, entrepreneurship, and inclusive labor market support.

The labor market assessment done in 2025 objectives focused on providing an in-depth analysis of labor market demand, obstacles to employment, and workforce characteristics across Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa, North, and Akkar. Key aims included assessing youth skill levels, exploring occupational preferences of job seekers and employers, identifying emerging trends and changes in employment patterns, and evaluating the impact of external factors such as economic conditions, policy changes, and technological developments. The assessment also sought to identify key challenges and opportunities for job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders, and provide recommendations for strategic interventions and policy actions to promote inclusive economic development.

Building on these objectives, the updated LMA done in 2026 further refines and localizes the analysis, focusing specifically on Beirut and West Bekaa and incorporating both supply- and demand-side perspectives. The assessment done in 2026 aims to:

- Update labor market demand and skills priorities, identifying sector-specific and cross-cutting trends affecting youth employment and entrepreneurship.
- Identify emerging employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth, particularly in sectors aligned with sustainability, digitalization, and green economy trends.
- Assess priority sectors and skills from both the perspectives of youth (supply) and SMEs (demand), highlighting alignment gaps and actionable interventions.
- Inform FSF's 2026 vocational training (VT) and entrepreneurship training (ET) programs, ensuring evidence-based and targeted support.
- Support geographic targeting of interventions based on region-specific labor market dynamics, building on previous multi-governorate insights.

By comparing the 2025 and 2026 labor market assessments, it becomes evident that the core challenges are high youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and structural barriers to employment remain largely unchanged, while the 2026 updated LMA provides enhanced granularity on emerging sectors, market demand, and skills priorities, ensuring FSF's programs are responsive, sustainable, and aligned with both current and forward-looking labor market needs.

### **III. Methodology**

The 2026 Labor Market Assessment (LMA) builds directly on the FSF 2025 LMA, providing an updated, localized analysis of labor market dynamics, skills priorities, and sectoral opportunities, with a focus on Beirut and West Bekaa. The methodology was designed to maintain continuity with the 2025 assessment while incorporating additional insights to inform FSF's 2026 vocational training, entrepreneurship, and livelihoods interventions.

#### **Data Collection Methods:**

- Desk Review: The 2025 FSF LMA served as the primary baseline for labor market trends, including youth and women's employment, informal sector expansion, sectoral

shifts, and skills gaps. Comparative analysis also incorporated the 2025 Save the Children LMA to validate persistent challenges and sectoral priorities.

- Two (2) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with youth:
  - One (1) FGD conducted in Beirut with eight (9) youth participants
  - One (1) FGD conducted in West Bekaa with fourteen (12) youth participants
- Ten (10) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):
  - Five (5) SMEs interviewed in Beirut
  - Five (5) SMEs interviewed in West Bekaa

SMEs represented agriculture, agri-inputs, agri-food production, crafts, organic farming, renewable energy-related services, and small creative enterprises, providing a diversified view of labor demand across sectors.

This approach ensured alignment between secondary evidence, youth aspirations, and employer demand, building on the 2025 LMA methodology.

### **Comparison with 2025 FSF Labor Market Assessment**

The 2025 FSF LMA employed a broader, multi-region approach, covering Akkar, North Lebanon, Bekaa, Beirut, and Mount Lebanon. It combined youth surveys (392 valid responses), FGDs, and in-depth employer interviews (50 KIIs) to map labor market demand, emerging skills, and workforce characteristics, with a particular emphasis on women's participation. The updated LMA in 2026 retains the mixed-methods design but focuses on priority regions, allowing deeper, region-specific analysis of youth employment, SMEs, and emerging sectors.

### **Enhancements in the updated LMA**

- Focused on Beirut and West Bekaa, while retaining comparability with 2025 data.
- Integrated insights from both youth (supply) and SMEs (demand) perspectives.
- Examined emerging employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in technology-enabled, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and creative sectors.
- Strengthened inclusivity analysis by considering youth aspirations alongside labor market realities.
- Ensured methodological continuity while refining regional targeting to support FSF's 2026 programming.

By building on FSF's 2025 LMA, the 2026 assessment maintains methodological continuity, validates persistent labor market trends, and enhances the evidence base to guide FSF's interventions. The triangulated approach of desk review, FGDs, and KIIs provides actionable insights on youth employment, sectoral opportunities, and skills development, ensuring FSF's programming is responsive, targeted, and aligned with evolving labor market needs.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

The 2026 LMA employed a rigorous mixed-methods analysis, building on the FSF 2025 LMA and integrating insights from the Save the Children LMA, to ensure comprehensive, reliable, and contextually relevant findings.

**Qualitative Analysis:** Data from key informant interviews (KIIs) with SMEs and focus group discussions (FGDs) with youth were analyzed in their original language to preserve participants' phrasing and perspectives. A narrative thematic analysis was conducted, with responses systematically coded and organized into thematic matrices using Microsoft Excel 2019. Themes included sector-specific labor demand, youth employment priorities, skills gaps, and emerging opportunities, with attention to gender dynamics and youth inclusion.

**Quantitative Analysis:** Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to analyze survey and scoring data from SMEs and secondary sources, utilizing IBM SPSS Statistics v.25 and Kobo Collect. Quantitative insights were triangulated with qualitative findings to identify emerging employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, regional priorities, and skills-demand gaps.

**Sector Prioritization:** Priority sectors were identified through triangulation of qualitative KIIs and FGDs with quantitative data from scoring exercises and desk review. A multi-criteria approach weighted factors such as employment intensity, inclusion potential (youth, women, persons with disabilities), sector growth trends, and skills gaps. This process enabled the selection of sectors aligned with local realities, labor market demand, and FSF's programmatic focus on Beirut and West Bekaa.

**Validation:** Preliminary findings, sector scoring results, and proposed recommendations were validated through internal FSF workshops, where staff discussed and refined sector priorities. This participatory process ensured accuracy, local ownership, and actionable guidance for FSF's 2026 vocational training and entrepreneurship programming.

**Triangulation:** Multiple data sources were triangulated throughout the analysis, including secondary reports, previous LMAs (2025 FSF and Save the Children), and primary qualitative and quantitative data, to strengthen the validity and reliability of the conclusions and recommendations.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The updated LMA adhered to international ethical standards throughout all stages of research to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of findings:

**Training and Safeguarding:** All data collectors at FSF have received comprehensive training on confidentiality, voluntary participation, informed consent, data privacy, and child safeguarding. Special emphasis was placed on safely and respectfully engaging with youth and other vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities.

**Informed Consent:** Verbal and written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any point without consequence.

Inclusion Measures: Reasonable accommodations were provided to promote inclusive participation, including accessible locations for FGDs.

This approach ensured that the updated LMA generated high-quality, actionable labor market insights but and upheld the highest standards of ethical practice and participant protection.

## **IV. Supply-Side Findings – Youth Perspectives (FGDs)**

Building on the 2025 Labor Market Assessment conducted by FSF, which identified persistent barriers to employment, skills mismatches, and the need for future-oriented skills particularly for women and youth, the 2026 update confirms that youth priorities have remained largely consistent, while becoming more geographically and sectorally defined.

### **Beirut – Youth Priorities**

Youth in Beirut identified technology and energy-related skills as the most relevant pathways to employment:

1. E-marketing and digital skills, including social media marketing, online promotion, and content creation
2. Coding and basic programming, linked to freelance and remote work opportunities
3. Solar panel installation and maintenance, reflecting growing demand driven by electricity shortages

These priorities directly reinforce the 2025 findings related to emerging employment trends, technological advancement, and the growing importance of digital skills as a response to economic instability and limited formal job opportunities.

Youth emphasized the importance of flexibility, income diversification, and future-proof skills, particularly those allowing remote or freelance work.

This emphasis aligns with the 2025 assessment’s identification of structural labor market constraints and the need for adaptive employment pathways in response to economic conditions and limited wage employment.

Several participants expressed interest in entrepreneurship and self-employment, especially in digital services that can support small businesses and local producers.

This further confirms the 2025 conclusion that entrepreneurship represents a critical alternative to wage employment, particularly for youth facing restricted labor market access.

### **West Bekaa – Youth Priorities**

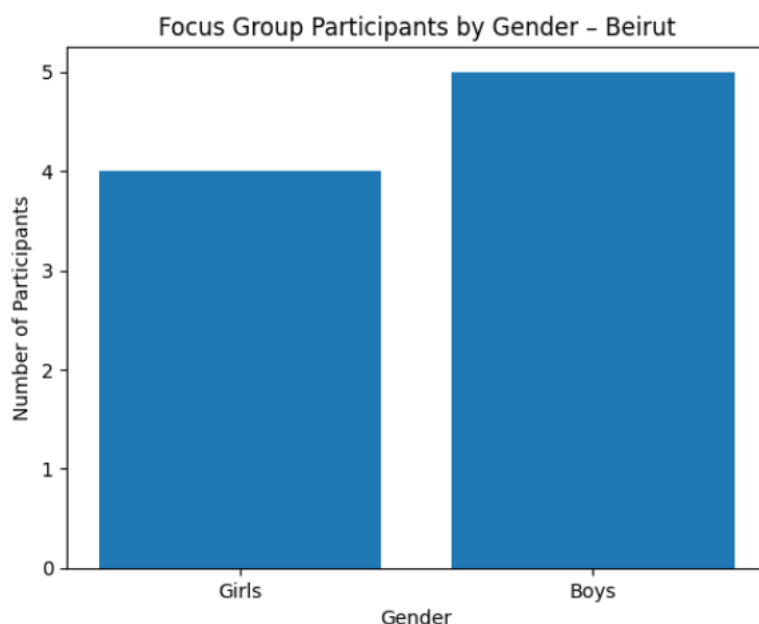
Youth in West Bekaa prioritized a mix of digital, energy, and agriculture-related skills, closely linked to local economic realities:

1. E-marketing and digital skills, mainly to support small businesses, agricultural products, and home-based enterprises
2. Solar panel installation and maintenance, seen as a practical and in-demand technical skill
3. Sustainable agriculture, with a focus on introducing new and improved agricultural techniques, including modern irrigation, climate-resilient practices, and productivity enhancement

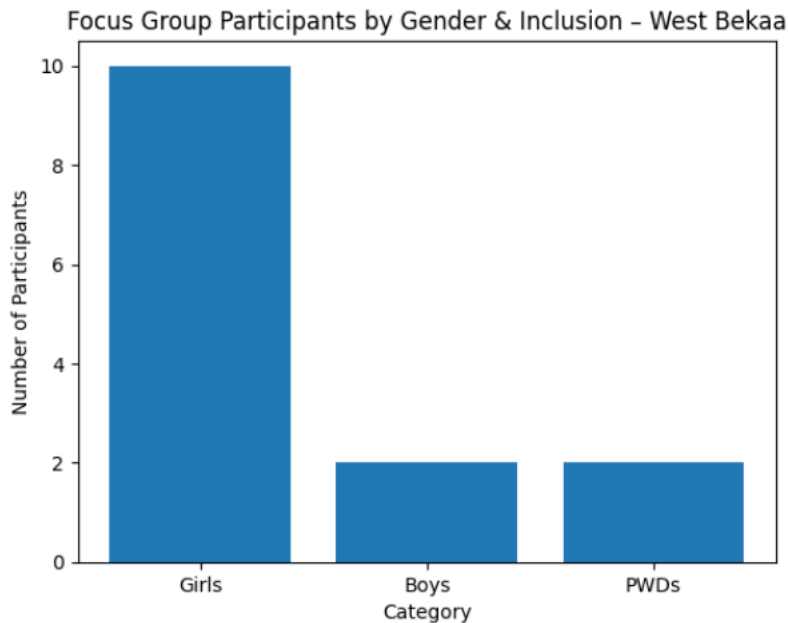
These findings are consistent with the 2025 assessment’s identification of agriculture and agri-related value chains as key livelihood sectors outside urban centers, while adding greater emphasis on sustainability and innovation rather than traditional practices.

Youth expressed limited interest in traditional agriculture unless combined with innovation, sustainability, and value addition. This reflects the 2025 findings on changing youth attitudes toward traditional sectors and the need to modernize skills profiles to improve sector attractiveness.

Youth highlighted the need for practical training that leads to income opportunities, rather than purely theoretical learning. This reinforces the 2025 recommendation to strengthen demand-driven vocational training aligned with real labor market needs.



*Figure A: The Beirut focus group included 9 participants (4 females and 5 males), reflecting a relatively balanced gender representation.*



*Figure B: The West Bekaa focus group included 12 participants, predominantly female (10 females, 2 males), including 2 persons with disabilities (PWDs), highlighting strong female participation and inclusion.*

## V. Demand-Side Findings – SMEs Perspectives (KIIs)

Key Informant Interviews with SMEs in Beirut and West Bekaa revealed a strong demand for job-ready, multi-skilled profiles capable of improving operational efficiency and boosting sales. This finding directly echoes the 2025 assessment, which identified skills mismatches and low job readiness as key obstacles affecting both employers and job seekers.

SMEs across both regions reported challenges related to economic instability, supply chain disruptions, low wages, and the emigration of skilled labor, all of which affect recruitment and staff retention. These challenges mirror the external economic and structural constraints highlighted in the 2025 LMA, confirming that the broader labor market context has not fundamentally shifted between assessments.

### Priority Skills Identified by SMEs:

#### 1. Digitalization and Marketing

- High demand for digital and social media marketing skills
- Need for staff capable of managing online presence, customer engagement, and sales promotion
- General marketing skills (branding, targeting, sales strategies) identified as critical gaps

- Beirut SMEs emphasized branding, packaging, product presentation, and digital marketing for local and export markets
- Sales skills and customer communication were consistently identified as critical gaps across both regions

The sustained demand for digital marketing, branding, sales, and customer communication skills directly confirms the 2025 assessment's identification of marketing and business development capacities as critical cross-sectoral gaps. The 2026 findings further demonstrate that these skills have evolved into core operational requirements rather than optional functions, reinforcing their relevance across both urban and semi-rural SME contexts.

## **2. Agriculture with Advanced and Sustainable Techniques**

- SMEs emphasized the need for workers trained in advanced agricultural techniques
- Strong focus on sustainable agricultural practices, including modern irrigation, climate-smart agriculture, and improved crop management
- Beirut-based agri-food and organic farming SMEs highlighted shortages in food safety, and quality control skills
- West Bekaa SMEs stressed hands-on field experience, safe use of pesticides, and practical crop management skills
- Employers stressed that traditional skills alone are no longer sufficient

This emphasis reflects continuity with the 2025 LMA, which highlighted the declining relevance of traditional agricultural skills in isolation. The 2026 update deepens this analysis by specifying concrete technical gaps such as climate-smart practices, modern irrigation, food safety, and safe pesticide use thereby refining rather than redefining sector priorities.

## **3. Renewable Energy and Technical Skills**

- Growing demand for solar panel installation and maintenance technicians
- Emerging need for solar panel cleaning services, identified as a niche but expanding market
- Preference for technically skilled workers who can operate independently and efficiently
- Solar installation was widely viewed as a complementary skill that enhances employability across agriculture and other sectors

The growing demand for renewable energy skills builds on trends already emerging in 2025, driven by chronic electricity shortages and rising energy costs. The 2026 findings add nuance by identifying niche services and reinforcing employer preference for autonomous technical profiles, suggesting a maturation of the sector rather than a new labor market shift.

## **4. Crafts and Creative Production**

- Craft and creative SMEs reported limited availability of skilled artisans with strong finishing, creativity, and product consistency skills

- The combination of craftsmanship with pricing, sales, and online promotion was seen as essential for business sustainability

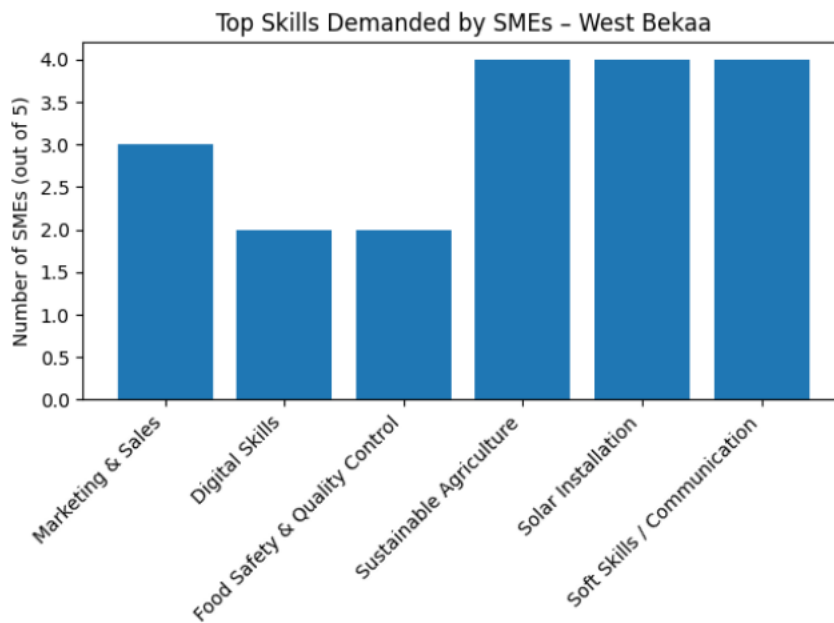
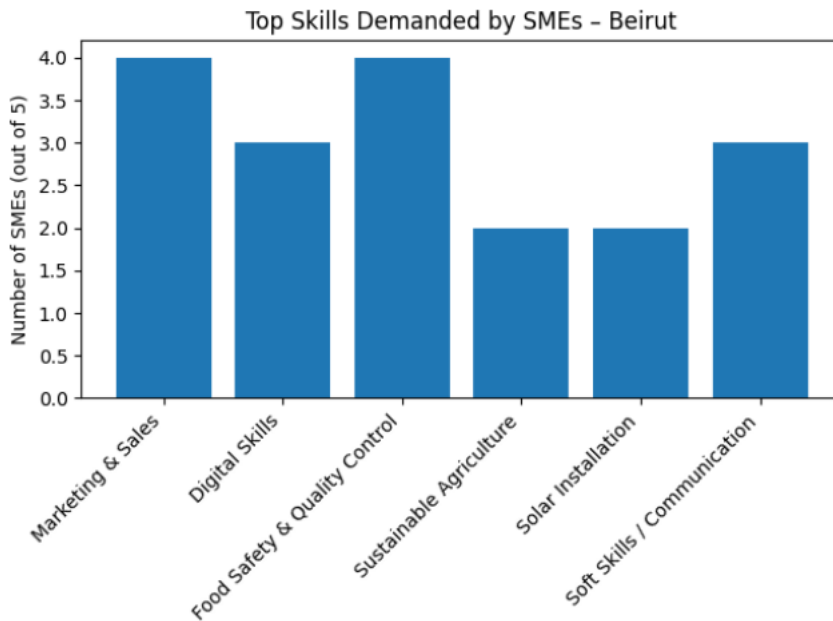
This finding aligns with the 2025 LMA’s observation that craft-based livelihoods require integration with market-facing skills to remain viable. The 2026 update reinforces the need for combined technical, creative, and commercial competencies to ensure sustainability in small creative enterprises.

## **5. Soft Skills and Work Readiness**

- SMEs reported shortages in communication skills, problem-solving, adaptability, and work ethics
- Several employers noted that job applicants often prioritize salary over skills development, contributing to turnover and performance challenges

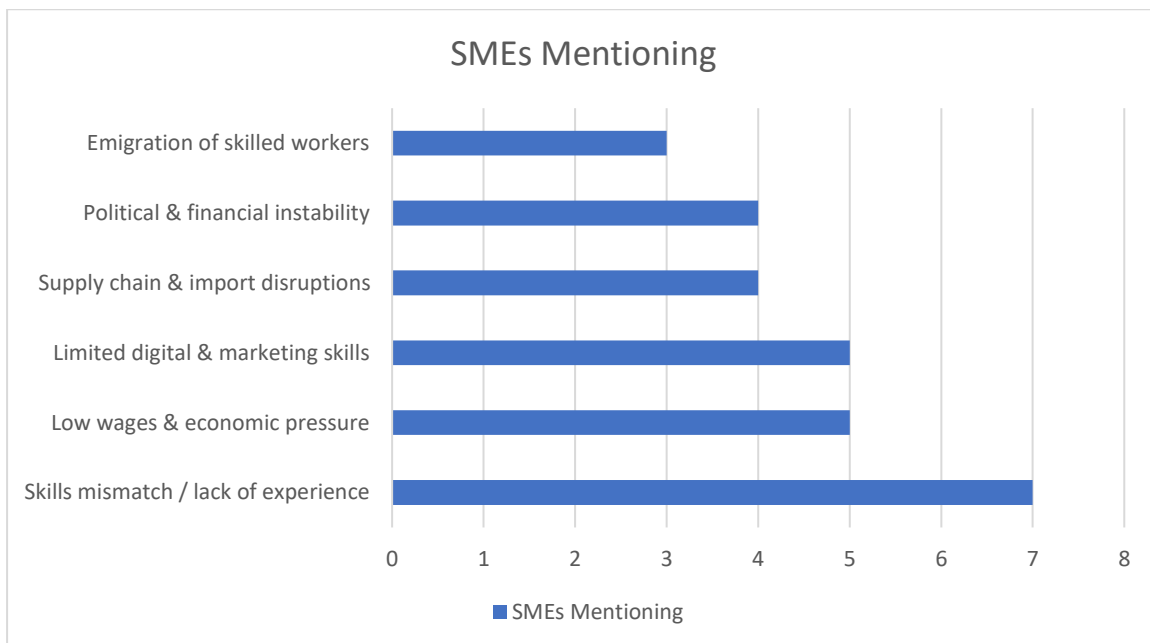
The continued emphasis on soft skills echoes the 2025 assessment’s conclusions regarding communication, adaptability, and work ethics as persistent employability gaps. The 2026 update confirms that these deficits remain structural in nature and continue to contribute to turnover and performance challenges among SMEs.

*Figure C and Figure D below summarize the most frequently cited skills demanded by SMEs interviewed in Beirut and West Bekaa*



The data highlights clear regional differentiation in labor demand, with Beirut SMEs prioritizing marketing and quality-related skills, and West Bekaa SMEs emphasizing sustainable agriculture and renewable energy competencies.

However, despite these skills needs, SMEs face multiple constraints that limit their ability to hire and retain qualified employees. Figure D summarizes the key constraints reported by SMEs.



The graph highlights that skills mismatch, economic pressure, and limited digital capacity are the most frequently reported barriers to SME hiring. This further supports the need for targeted vocational and entrepreneurship training while acknowledging structural employment limitations.

## VI. Supply–Demand Alignment

The findings show a strong convergence between youth interests and SME needs, particularly in:

- Digital marketing and e-marketing
- Solar energy installation, maintenance, and cleaning
- Sustainable and technology-enhanced agriculture

In Beirut, alignment is strongest in digital marketing, agri-food, and creative industries, where youth interest in entrepreneurship overlaps with SME demand for market access and branding skills.

In West Bekaa, alignment is strongest in agriculture and renewable energy, though SMEs emphasized a greater need for practical, field-ready competencies than youth initially articulated.

Both supply and demand sides emphasized:

- Practical, hands-on skills
- Technology integration
- Sustainability and efficiency

- Income-generating potential rather than purely academic qualifications

This highlights the importance of applied learning, on-the-job practice, and employer engagement within training programs. This convergence between youth aspirations and SME labor demand is consistent with findings from the 2025 Labor Market Assessment, which already identified a persistent mismatch not in sectoral interest, but in the level of job readiness and practical skill application among youth. The 2026 update demonstrates that while youth interests remain largely aligned with market needs, particularly in digital skills, renewable energy, and agriculture, employers continue to emphasize the need for immediately deployable, hands-on competencies rather than entry-level or theoretical knowledge.

Compared to 2025’s labor market assessment, the 2026 LMA findings do not indicate a structural shift in demand but rather a reinforcement of previously identified patterns, with clearer articulation of where alignment exists and where gaps persist—particularly regarding practical experience, technical depth, and workplace readiness. This suggests that labor market challenges are driven less by lack of interest or sector mismatch, and more by insufficient integration of applied training, employer engagement, and experiential learning pathways within skills development programs.

*Figure E: Alignment Between Youth Aspirations and SME Labor Demand*

<b>Skill Area</b>	<b>Youth Demand</b>	<b>SME Demand</b>
Digital marketing	High	High
Solar energy	High	Medium–High
Sustainable agriculture	Medium–High	High

The high degree of alignment observed in digital marketing and solar energy reflects trends already documented in the 2025 employer interviews, where digital literacy, e-marketing, and technical energy-related skills were repeatedly identified as critical needs across regions. The medium-to-high alignment in sustainable agriculture further confirms the 2025 finding that agricultural employment remains viable only when combined with modernization, technology adoption, and productivity-enhancing practices. The 2026 assessment therefore enhances, rather than revises, the 2025 evidence base by narrowing the analysis to priority regions and clearly mapping convergence points between supply and demand.

## **VII. Priority Sectors for 2026 (Beirut & West Bekaa)**

Based on triangulated findings, the following sectors are prioritized:

### **Beirut:**

- Digital Economy (e-marketing, coding, freelance services)
- Renewable Energy (solar installation and maintenance)
- Entrepreneurship linked to technology-based solutions

## West Bekaa:

- Sustainable Agriculture and AgriTech
- Renewable Energy (solar installation and cleaning services)
- Digital marketing supporting agriculture and local SMEs

The prioritization of these sectors reflects a strong convergence between youth aspirations identified through FGDs and employer demand captured through SME KIIs in both Beirut and West Bekaa. Digital economy and renewable energy sectors emerge as cross-cutting priorities, consistently highlighted by youth as future-proof and flexible income pathways, and by SMEs as critical to improving competitiveness, sales, and operational resilience.

Compared to earlier assessments, the 2026 labor market assessment findings provide clearer geographic differentiation, with Beirut showing stronger alignment toward freelance digital services and entrepreneurship, while West Bekaa emphasizes sectoral integration particularly the use of digital marketing and renewable energy within agriculture and local SME ecosystems.

## VIII. Entrepreneurship Training (ET) – Thematic Focus

The Entrepreneurship Training (ET) component will target youth interested in developing technology-enabled solutions addressing Lebanon’s structural challenges, particularly in agriculture, water, and energy.

This focus directly responds to labor market evidence indicating that youth increasingly view self-employment and entrepreneurship as viable alternatives to wage employment, particularly in contexts of economic instability and limited formal job creation. SMEs interviewed also emphasized the need for entrepreneurial profiles capable of innovating around resource constraints, improving productivity, and expanding market access, especially within agriculture, renewable energy, and digital services.

ET ideas will be selected under the following thematic areas:

- **Clean Tech** – renewable energy, energy efficiency, environmental solutions
- **AgriTech** – smart farming, climate-resilient agriculture, agricultural technologies
- **Agri-food** – value-added food production, processing, and sustainable food systems

These thematic areas align closely with priority sectors identified in both Beirut and West Bekaa and build on the 2026 assessment’s emphasis on sustainability, innovation, and value addition. In contrast to traditional entrepreneurship models, the ET approach emphasizes technology-enabled and market-oriented solutions that respond to real SME constraints, including limited productivity, high input costs, and weak access to customers. This marks a shift from generic business training toward context-specific entrepreneurship pathways grounded in labor market demand.

ET will integrate basic business management, marketing, and digital skills to respond to SME-identified gaps in market access and sales. This approach promotes innovation, sustainability, and scalable job creation. By embedding entrepreneurship training within priority economic sectors and equipping youth with both technical and commercial competencies, the ET component aims to enhance business survival rates, improve income generation potential, and strengthen linkages between emerging entrepreneurs and local SME value chains. This integrated approach ensures that entrepreneurship is positioned not as a standalone activity, but as a complementary pathway to broader employment and economic resilience objectives.

## **IX. Conclusions**

The 2026 Labor Market Assessment confirms a clear shift toward digital, green, and sustainability-driven skills in Beirut and West Bekaa. This analysis triangulates findings from FSF's 2025 and 2026 Labor Market Assessments and Save the Children's 2025 LMA, providing a comprehensive view of youth employment priorities, sectoral demand, and skills gaps across Beirut, West Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, and Akkar. Youth are increasingly seeking flexible, technology-based opportunities, while SMEs require skilled workers who can immediately contribute to productivity and sales growth.

Beirut SMEs face acute shortages in digital marketing, food safety, quality control, and creative production skills, compounded by skilled labor emigration. Similarly, Save the Children's 2025 assessment highlighted systemic barriers including low wages, informal hiring practices, and limited access to sector-specific vocational skills. In West Bekaa, SMEs continue to struggle with limited availability of field-ready agricultural workers and applied technical skills. Across both regions, solar energy skills have emerged as a cross-cutting opportunity that enhances employability and resilience.

On the supply side, youth priorities identified in both FSF and Save the children's LMAs align closely where Beirut youth focus on digital, freelance, and entrepreneurial pathways, while West Bekaa youth emphasize sustainable agriculture and applied technical skills. Save the Children additionally underlined the critical need for digital literacy, business management, and practical vocational competencies across all regions.

Aligning vocational and entrepreneurship interventions with these realities is essential to improving employment outcomes and supporting local economic resilience. The integrated findings emphasize that inclusion of women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized youth remains a cross-cutting priority, as systemic and social barriers continue to limit equitable labor market participation.

### **IX.a. Continuity and Evolution of Findings (2025–2026)**

The findings of the 2026 Labor Market Assessment largely reaffirm the core conclusions of the 2025 assessment, indicating that labor market dynamics, skills gaps, and employment constraints in Lebanon have remained structurally consistent over time. While the geographic focus of the 2026 assessment narrows to Beirut and West Bekaa, the priority skills, sectoral

challenges, and supply–demand mismatches identified closely align with those documented in 2025 across Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa, North Lebanon, and Akkar.

In both assessments, digital skills, sales and marketing competencies, and solar energy-related skills emerge as persistent and cross-regional priorities. The 2025 LMA identified strong demand among youth, particularly women, for digital skills training, sales and marketing, computer literacy, and solar panel installation across multiple regions, including Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and Bekaa. These findings are further validated in 2026, where youth in Beirut and West Bekaa continue to prioritize e-marketing, digital services, coding, and renewable energy skills as pathways to flexible income generation, remote work, and self-employment.

From the demand side, the 2026 assessment reinforces patterns already evident in 2025 where employers consistently emphasize the need for job-ready candidates with practical digital, marketing, customer service, and technical skills. SMEs’ reported shortages in digital marketing, sales, food safety, quality control, and applied agricultural skills directly echo the 2025 findings, which highlighted employers’ reliance on continuous training to cope with evolving market demands, technological change, and economic instability. The continued emphasis on Excel, digital marketing, customer engagement, and applied technical skills across both assessments underscores the persistence of foundational skills gaps rather than the emergence of entirely new ones.

The 2026 assessment further sharpens sectoral and geographic differentiation already implicit in the 2025 analysis. While the earlier assessment documented broad regional variation in skills demand, the 2026 update provides more targeted insights: Beirut SMEs face intensified shortages linked to digitalization, creative production, and quality standards, compounded by skilled labor emigration, while West Bekaa SMEs continue to struggle with access to field-ready agricultural workers and applied technical expertise. This refinement does not contradict the 2025 findings but rather deepens them by linking skills gaps more explicitly to local economic structures and SME operational realities.

Importantly, both assessments converge on the conclusion that the primary labor market challenge is not a lack of interest among youth, but a sustained mismatch between labor market demand and the skills offered by job seekers. The 2025 LMA framed this mismatch as a national issue affecting employability, workforce retention, and inclusive economic development. The 2026 LMA confirms that this mismatch persists, while also highlighting solar energy, digital services, and sustainable agriculture as cross-cutting opportunities capable of improving employability, income diversification, and economic resilience in the current crisis context.

Overall, the 2026 Labor Market Assessment should be understood as a targeted validation and enhancement of the 2025 findings rather than a departure from them. The update consolidates existing evidence, strengthens the alignment between youth aspirations and SME demand, and provides a more focused basis for geographically and sectorally tailored vocational and entrepreneurship interventions, while remaining fully consistent with the structural trends identified in the earlier assessment.

## X. Recommendations

- Design demand-driven vocational training in digital marketing, solar energy, and sustainable agriculture, integrating insights from Save the Children’s 2025 LMA on basic digital literacy, business management, and sector-specific vocational skills.
- Geographically target e-marketing training in Beirut and sustainable agriculture and solar installation training in West Bekaa
- Embed food safety, quality control, and hygiene standards within agri-food and agriculture-related training, consistent with Save the Children labor market assessment recommendations on vocational quality standards.
- Integrate technology and sustainability components across all training programs
- Strengthen entrepreneurship support in Clean Tech, AgriTech, and Agri-food. Include Save the Children’s labor market assessment emphasis on microenterprise development, seed funding, and financial literacy to enhance youth-led business sustainability.
- Promote employer-linked training, internships, and applied learning
- Integrate communication, sales, and customer engagement modules across vocational tracks. Include Save the Children’s recommendation to combine these with digital literacy, business management, and inclusion practices for women and PwDs.
- Support youth-led solutions addressing energy, water, and food security challenges. Ensure that interventions explicitly address barriers to participation, including flexible scheduling, accessibility, and childcare support as highlighted in Save the Children’s 2025 labor market assessment.

## XI. References

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