

External Evaluation of the Project Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities: Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions.

Final Report

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Executive Summary

This evaluation is an external evaluation of the UNDP project “Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities: Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions” for the period 2020 – 2021. The project falls under the UNDP Lebanon Stabilization and Recovery Program – Supporting Resilience in a Time of Crisis, designed to help stabilize and develop the resilience of the communities who are hosting refugees from Syria. It has seven outputs:

Output 1: Provide environmentally and economically sustainable WASH services at community level in the gatherings

Output 2: Improve environmental and structural conditions of shelter units in the gatherings

Output 3: Promote inclusive and safer environments in the gatherings through comprehensive neighborhood upgrading interventions.

Output 4: Improve hygiene conditions for host and new refugee communities in the gatherings

Output 5: Reduce youth risky behaviors in the gatherings through livelihood interventions.

Output 6: Develop a national coordination and planning platform for response and development in Palestinian Gatherings

Output 7: Local communities and institutions supported to respond to COVID-19 in the gatherings

The main objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the project, taking into consideration the current multifaceted crisis facing the country.
- Identify key lessons learnt and recommendations that will feed back into current and future project programming by UNDP and its partner local NGOs

Key Findings

Relevance: Project activities are highly relevant to the needs and priorities of vulnerable communities living in Palestinian Gatherings and have contributed to improving their living conditions and increasing their livelihood opportunities.

Palestinian Gatherings are known to be areas of extremely high socio-economic vulnerability characterized by lack in basic infrastructure and services, a situation that the economic crisis has only exacerbated. At the same time, these areas remain under-served by the government and international community alike, where they fall outside of UNRWA’s mandate¹ and are not recognized by municipalities as part of their responsibility. UNDP remains the major developmental actor in Palestinian Gatherings in addition to some local NGOs.

¹ UNRWA operates inside the camps only but provides access to health and education services to all Palestinian Refugees

The project is aligned with the UNDP strategic plan and country development program, the SGDs, LCRP, as well as with national priorities. It targets highly marginalized communities living in poverty and lacking opportunities for improving their situation in the Gatherings. Project activities are aimed at giving these communities access to better basic services including water, sanitation, and hygiene, as well as empower them to have improved livelihood opportunities, which lies at the core of national and UNDP priorities

Findings show the project has been successful in adequately identifying needs and priorities in each community and addressing them in the most relevant manner. All interviewed stakeholders concurred that the UNDP projects have been crucial for their local communities, whether they were WASH and shelter related or livelihood related. The project design included an extensive needs assessment process for all activities. Interviewed stakeholders commended the knowledge of the UNDP team of the local needs and the complexity of social dynamics in the different regions and appreciated the extensive field visits and involvement of the team on-ground during the assessment phases of the activities.

Effectiveness: The vast majority of targets in terms of number of beneficiaries were achieved; key results were observed for the various beneficiary groups despite the numerous challenges faced by the team mainly due to the crisis context in Lebanon.

The target number of beneficiaries were overachieved during 2020 and 2021. Some activities were extended from 2021 to 2022 to overcome challenges relating to the overall situation in the country (refer to the section on challenges). Local communities, including vulnerable households, have seen positive results in their areas of dwelling as a result of WASH, upgrading and shelter projects (refer to the opposite box). Youth beneficiaries of livelihood related activities reported improved levels of skill, increased degrees of social integration with their surroundings, enhanced opportunities for income generation, and overall higher confidence of being able to cope with the economic crisis.

Satisfaction survey conducted with 100 households in Beddawi Camp Adjacent Areas:

Shelter works: 81% saw an improvement in their overall living conditions; 57% reported major impact.

WASH works: 86% believed that the wastewater conditions have improved significantly; 75% stated they have more running water.

Upgrading: the majority of people believe they can now move better.

Positive changes in building relations of collaboration and cooperation between the gatherings and local authorities is evident. The approach of the project in all the regions has relied extensively on including the local authorities from municipalities to popular committees and government agencies in the situation analysis, project design, implementation, and handing over of project outputs. The financial crisis is foreseen to have a significant impact on the ability of local authorities to take on responsibilities, which should be included in projects design.

The area-based approach delivered through developing improvement plans provides the most comprehensive example for the participatory approach to development and addressing needs of local

communities that exhibit multiple vulnerabilities. Conflict-sensitivity measures and gender-sensitivity were applied.

The project has followed an action plan in line with gender transformative programming. The physical component of the project focused on gender responsiveness through prioritizing female headed households and considering issues of protection to make women feel safer. Socio-economic activities, such as vocational training and post-graduation support and income generating activities, were most elaborate in terms of gender responsiveness due to their nature and defied gender stereotypes.

Efficiency: The project used financial resources efficiently to implement its activities and had suffered delays due to the crisis caused complications in implementation.

Project budget during 2020 – 2021 was divided across sectors as such: 45% on upgrading and shelter rehabilitation, 40% to WASH and 13% to socio-economic activities. Results indicators reflect the large number of beneficiaries reached; these could be expanded to capture other aspects of the outputs achieved as detailed later in the recommendations section.

Impact: The positive impact has been observed across the various activities, with varying degrees, depending on the type of activity. Physical and spatial improvements have had an immediate direct impact.

Physical projects had a direct impact on hygiene conditions, health and hygiene and education. For the indirect impact of shelter works, refer to the example in the opposite box. Assessment of the impact related to livelihood projects showed improved levels of skill and increased employment opportunities. These include vocational and business trainings, support to SMEs through incubation and seed grants, and job creation.

Satisfaction survey conducted with 100 households in Beddawi Camp Adjacent Areas:

- 40% believed works helped them provide space for isolation in case of COVID
- 41% thought they had more privacy in their homes
- 44% believed work helped their children study better at home

Sustainability: Sustainability issues have been considered and planned for since the design phase with local partners and authorities; however, the many new challenges that have emerged as a result of the crisis require rethinking sustainability for current and upcoming projects.

The depreciation of the local currency has rendered municipal budgets smaller; local committees in the Gatherings are also in a similar situation. In addition, the authorities' ability to collect municipal and other fees from the residents has been significantly reduced. This requires rethinking sustainability for current and upcoming projects.

Challenges:

The UNDP team faced several challenges over the past two years due to the overlapping changes in context and procedures that took place.

- The economic crisis, especially the depreciation of the local currency, impacted the availability of certain materials and has driven the team to develop more creative alternative solutions. Theft and security issues also resulting from the crisis have impacted the project implementation. As the crisis continues to unfold, the UNDP team needs to factor in delays, alternative scenarios and allow for enough time and resources for creative solutions and ideas that can face the challenges brought by the crisis.
- The COVID pandemic imposed challenges on the project implementation and its timeline. The government enforced lockdowns mainly in 2021 forced all communication to move to on-line communication, which was challenging given the power and internet cuts in the gatherings.
- Another challenge was related to the changes in some finance and procurement procedures that the UNDP launched in 2020. Coping with these changes has been difficult; however, now that the adjustment phase has largely passed, should not be as large a challenge for the future.

Lessons Learned

The following lessons learned could be summarized:

- For activities directly implemented with municipalities, key elements that were present to ensure success of the interventions are: (1) creating a “win-win” situation for both communities, where each community finds benefit in investing in a cooperative relation, (2) ensuring financial capacity for each entity to be able to contribute to the maintenance and operation , (3) selecting engaged stakeholders who demonstrate strong buy-in for the activities.
- The main lesson learned in response to the challenges is to factor in all possible risks that may affect the timeline, especially within the context of economic crisis, into the design of interventions.
- The crisis has also brought several aspects of projects sustainability in Lebanon in general under question. The evaluation concludes a number of lessons learned in that regard including (1) securing safety and security arrangements surrounding installed equipment such as water pumps, solar energy panels, water treatment plants, etc., (2) supporting local authorities and popular committees who are suffering from lack of funds with the depreciation of the Lira, to secure funds for maintenance, and repair.

Recommendations:

In terms of recommendations:

- Increase the number of livelihood programs and dedicate a larger share of the budget to such efforts is recommended. The increased focus on livelihoods integrated with neighborhood and shelter upgrading should indeed steer the way to a long-term economic developmental perspective.
- In terms of social stability and activities tackling tensions in communities, this is a theme that is recommended to be more present in the future, as it is expected that tensions will rise among members of the communities with the deepening of the economic crisis.
- Develop more elaborated tools for measuring results achieved by the project, which can be collected by the team internally or by external studies measuring outcomes and impact.
- Implement tracer studies to measure the impact of the scholarship and vocational training programs on job creation.
- Capitalize on the existing agricultural support activities and expand them to other regions while working on market linkages for selling the products and providing income for the beneficiaries beyond self-sustaining agricultural practices.
- Support self-employed and micro-SMEs to sustain their businesses and help them cope with the challenges of the economic crisis.
- Include plans for sustainable sources of funds for operation and maintenance of WASH projects, examples could include parallel income generating activities, schemes for collecting affordable fees from local communities, or other means determined in participation with the local communities.
- Replicate pilot activities to support people with disabilities in collaboration with the right local organizations in various regions.

1 Introduction

The UNDP project “Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities: Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions” builds on interventions in those areas that have been taking place since 2013 with the main purpose of improving the living conditions of communities living in the Palestinian Gatherings and strengthening their stability. The nature of the interventions has evolved over the years to respond to the changing needs of the dwellers. The project currently falls under UNDP Lebanon Stabilization and Recovery Program – Supporting Resilience in a Time of Crisis, designed to help stabilize and develop the resilience of the communities who are hosting refugees from Syria. Based on evaluated activities, the main approach of the project could be summarized to empower local development through implementing physical and community interventions, all while building strong relationships with local actors and empowering local committees, CBOs, and local authorities. Furthermore, the project aims to create livelihood opportunities for the target communities through supporting various programs related to training, capacity building, and business support.

The project table below summarizes the project outcome and its expected objectives, in addition to its alignment with UN strategic objectives.

Project Title: Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities: Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions.

Project Outcome: Stability of refugee host communities in Palestinian Gatherings strengthened through improving living conditions.

UNDAF / UNSF Outcome 4: By 2014, the socio-economic status of vulnerable groups and their access to sustainable livelihood opportunities and quality basic social services are improved within a coherent policy framework of reduction of regional disparities.

UNDP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) Outcome 6: Early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) Outcome 1.1.2: Marginalized groups, particularly the poor, women, people with disabilities and the displaced, are empowered to gain universal access to basic services and financial and non-financial assets to build productive capacities and benefit from sustainable livelihoods and jobs.

LCRP Objective: Strengthen the capacity of national and local service delivery systems to expand access to and quality of basic public services: Expand safe water, sanitation and hygiene for the most vulnerable communities through emergency gap filling and by reinforcing existing services.

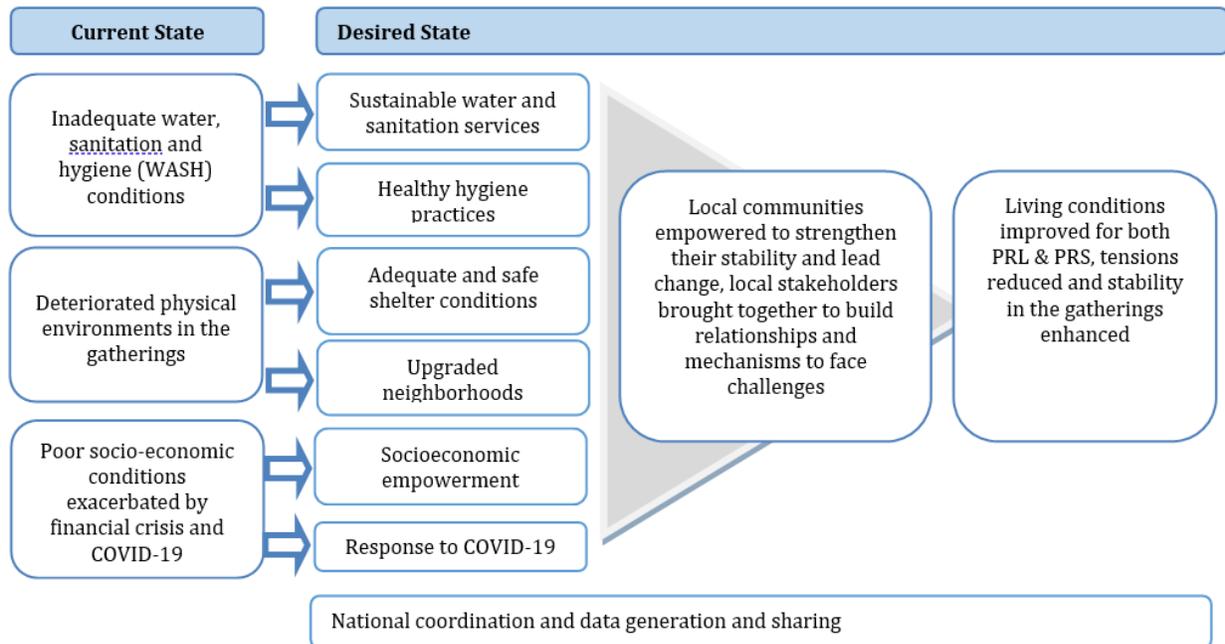
Expected Outputs:

- Output 1: Provide environmentally and economically sustainable WASH services at community level in the gatherings.
- Output 2: Improve environmental and structural conditions of shelter units in the gatherings.
- Output 3: Promote inclusive and safer environments in the gatherings through comprehensive neighborhood upgrading interventions.
- Output 4: Improve hygiene conditions for host and new refugee communities in the gatherings.
- Output 5: Reduce youth risky behaviors in the gatherings through livelihood interventions.
- Output 6: Develop a national coordination and planning platform for response and development in Palestinian Gatherings.

- Output 7: Local communities and institutions supported to respond to COVID-19 in the gatherings.

The project’s theory of change suggests that the inadequate WASH conditions, deteriorated physical environments, and poor socio-economic conditions exacerbated by the financial crisis and COVID-19, present in the Palestinian gatherings need to be addressed to reach a state where these conditions are dealt with and desired state is reached, leading to long-term improvement in local communities’ living conditions, and their empowerment to strengthen their stability and cope with the challenges they face. The figure below summarizes this theory of change.

Figure 1: The project theory of change



1.1 Objectives of the Evaluation

The present evaluation is an external evaluation of the project for the results achieved during the period 2020 – 2021, with focus on outputs 3 and 5. In terms of geographical coverage, the project is active in some 45 Palestinian Gatherings and their host municipalities (25), located in the various regions of Lebanon. it should be mentioned that this assignment focused on North and South Lebanon, where the bulk of activities during evaluation period, and also gatherings, are concentrated.

The main objectives of this evaluation are to:

1. Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the project, taking into consideration the current multifaceted crisis facing the country as well as the vulnerable communities living in Palestinian Gatherings.
2. Identify key lessons learnt, best practices and recommendations that will feed back into current and future project programming by UNDP and its partner local NGOs.

As for the intended use and users of the study, the evaluation results will be used as part of the organizational learning process aiming to replicate best practices and increase program effectiveness. Therefore, the main audience of this report are the UNDP team, implementing organizations, donors, and partners.

2 Evaluation Key Questions

The evaluation of the project was focused on a series of key questions that meet the International Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) evaluation standards and guidelines, namely: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The following key questions were developed by the UNDP team as part of the ToR for this study.

Table 1: Evaluation matrix

IMC / OECD criteria	Key Questions	Data source / Collection method
Relevance <i>Did the program do the right thing?</i>	1.1. To what extent have the initiative met relevant needs of the beneficiaries and contributed to improving their living conditions? 1.2. To what extent is the initiative consistent with national and local policies and priorities and country programme outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs especially given the current crises? 1.3. To what extent did disadvantaged minority groups (women-headed families, PWDs, youth, etc.) in the context of Palestinian Gatherings particularly benefit from this UNDP project? 1.4. To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project? 1.5. Were persons with disabilities meaningfully involved in programme planning and implementation?	In-depth interviews with key stakeholders including UNDP project staff, and stakeholders who are part of case studies. Focus Groups with Beneficiaries
Effectiveness	2.1. To what extent has progress been made towards intended results?	In-depth interviews with implementors and project team

<p><i>Did the program achieve the results it said it would achieve?</i></p>	<p>2.2. What key results and changes have been attained for men, women, youth, vulnerable groups, and local authorities?</p> <p>2.3. What overall lessons can the management team of the project learn from the implementation so far?</p> <p>2.4. Were there active measures to include disadvantaged minority groups in the different project phases and are there extra steps that should be taken in this regard?</p> <p>2.5. Were there active measures to ensure that the project activities are gender-responsive or gender transformative in Palestinian Gatherings or are there extra steps that should be taken in this regard?</p> <p>2.6. To what extent did the project ensure the active participation of women and men in the community and among local actors to promote positive change in gender equality in the context of the Palestinian Gatherings?</p> <p>2.7. Were the specific challenges faced by PWDs in Palestinian Gatherings addressed?</p>	<p>Focus Groups with Beneficiaries of various projects through the case studies</p> <p>Satisfaction Survey in Beddawi</p>
<p>Efficiency <i>Did the program leverage its resources well?</i></p>	<p>3.1. How well inputs have been converted into activities, in terms of quality, quantity and time?</p> <p>3.2. Was the project managed in a cost-efficient and efficient manner?</p> <p>3.3. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance or delivery?</p> <p>3.4. Were the result indicators and their means of verification adequate?</p> <p>3.5. To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?</p> <p>3.6. Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of the approaches and results it achieved during the evaluation period?</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with implementors and project team as well as stakeholders part of the case studies</p>
<p>Impact <i>What difference did the program make in the target areas and communities?</i></p>	<p>4.1. Were there changes in human development and people's well-being brought about by development initiatives, directly or indirectly?</p> <p>4.2. What, if any, were the unintended impacts of the project intervention, both positive and negative?</p> <p>4.3. Was the project able to monitor, mitigate and respond to any unintended negative effects?</p> <p>4.4. Did any unintended effects emerge for women or men because of the project activities?</p>	<p>Focus group meetings with specific beneficiary groups as part of the case studies for the different projects</p> <p>Beneficiary Survey in Beddawi</p> <p>In-depth interviews with key stakeholders including implementors, community actors and government agencies</p>

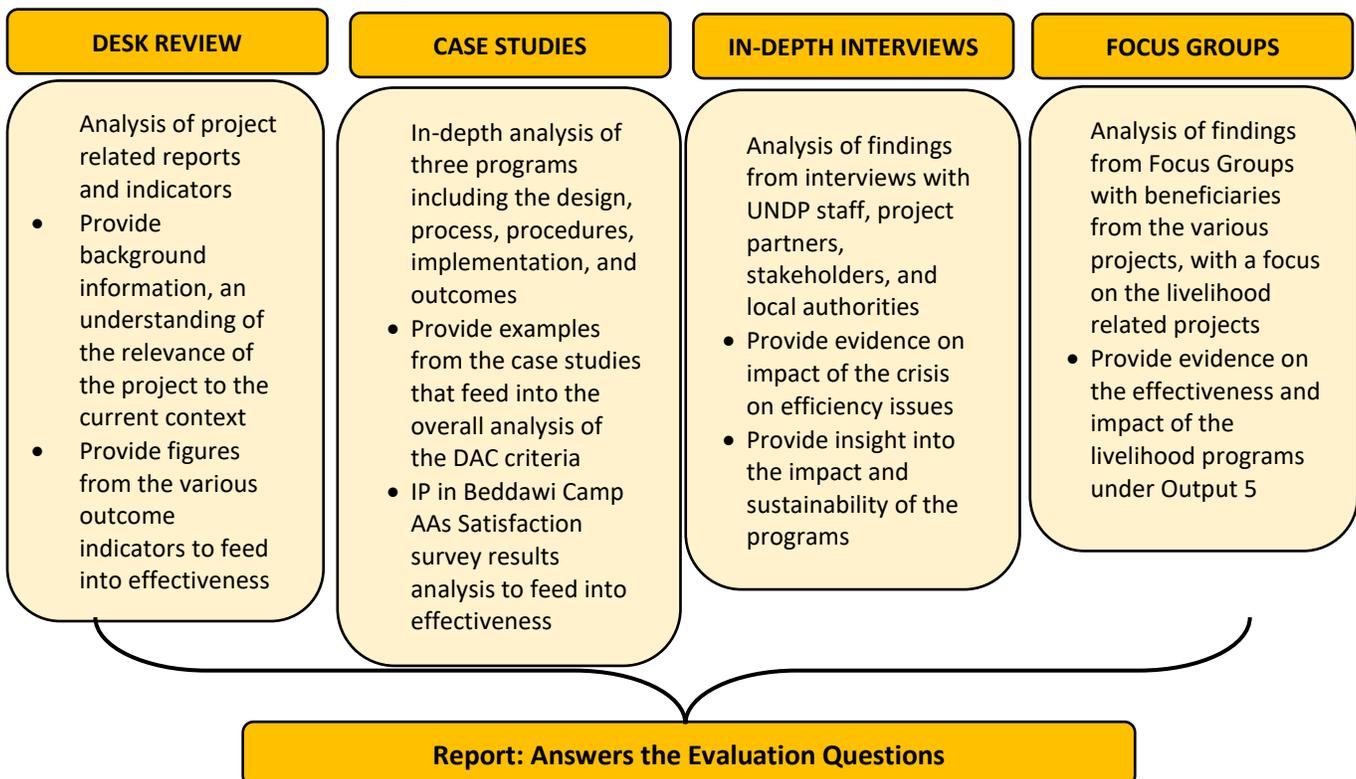
<p>Sustainability</p> <p><i>Do the results and changes achieved by the program hold after the program ended?</i></p>	<p>5.1. What evidence is there to suggest the project’s interventions and/or results will be sustained after the project end?</p> <p>5.2. To what extent did the project establish links with the relevant local, regional, national existing structures to ensure sustainability and to what extent are partners committed?</p> <p>5.3. What are the possibilities for replication and extension of the project’s outcomes?</p> <p>5.4. Are there any risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs?</p>	<p>In-depth interviews with implementors and community actors as part of the case studies</p> <p>Focus group meetings with specific beneficiary groups as part of the case studies</p>
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3 Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The evaluation methodology relies on a mixed methods approach to data collection, through three main sources of data: (1) secondary data from desk review, (2) quantitative primary data from satisfaction survey, (3) qualitative primary data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The figure below explains the overall approach as well as the tools that were used for gathering the information for the analysis. The data collected from these tools was triangulated to synthesize the final report.

Figure 2: Methodological approach of the evaluation study



Through the data collection/ analysis process, gender considerations were heeded in the following ways:

1. Selection of female stakeholders to be part of the KIIs and FGDs.
2. Inclusion of gender specific questions and nuances in the technical tools used during data collection
3. Inclusion of gender specific results and observations in the analysis

3.2 Desk Review

The first step in the study consisted of a thorough review and analysis of the project’s key documents to propose a detailed evaluation plan that will assess the program against composite project specific criteria agreed with the project team. During kick-off, the UNDP team shared with EDS a list of documents including:

- **Project Document:** describing the project rationale, aims, objectives, activities, management, and results and resources framework.
- **Annual workplans and budgets.**
- **Proposals to donors**
- **Consolidated donors’ progress quarterly and annual reports.**
- **Project Newsletters:** A total of 7 quarterly newsletters outlining the main project activities in the different regions, highlighting the success stories, and providing figures on number of beneficiaries and budget updates.
- **Highlights of project board meetings.**
- **Project publications** such as vulnerability assessment, Improvement Plan, etc.

What is an Evaluative Case Study?

A case study is a method for learning about a complex instance, based on a comprehensive understanding of that instance obtained through extensive description and analysis of that instance taken as a whole and in its context.

Morra, L.G. and Friedlander, A.C., (n.d.). *Case Study Evaluations, The World*

3.3 Evaluative Case Studies

Evaluative case studies are an efficient tool for a more in-depth understanding of projects and activities performed.

This evaluation conducted three case studies following the

“explanatory case study approach” that consisted mainly of key informant interviews with project implementors and stakeholders, as well as focus group discussions with beneficiaries. The purpose of explanatory case studies, as the name implies, is to explain the relationships among program components by looking at program implementation and effects.

Case Study One: The Improvement Plan (IP) in the Adjacent Areas to Beddawi Camp (BAAs) in North Lebanon

The Improvement Plan of the Beddawi Camp Adjacent Areas aims at developing a pretext for improving living conditions in these vulnerable gatherings. It addresses two main strategic themes: the first theme covered the urban design and the spatial dimensions of areas (including the state of the built environment, basic urban services and infrastructure, the public domain such as roads and community spaces, facilities, housing, etc.), while the second theme focused on the socio-economic aspects (including income

generation, employability, youth status, etc.). It is the result of a participatory process with the local communities, local actors and stakeholders, national and local organizations and expert groups. The case study covered the various aspects of the IP and shed light on the various challenges faced during implementation.

Data on the projects was collected through:

1. A satisfaction quantitative survey: A sample of 100 dwellers of BAAs (more specifically in the neighborhoods of Muhajarin, Mankoubin, Maslakh, and Abu Naim) were contacted to fill a short satisfaction survey that included questions about their overall level of satisfaction with the various works implemented in their neighborhoods as part of the IP. A team of two trained surveyors were trained to perform the survey on the ground using KoboCollect software. The results are presented mostly in the effectiveness and impact sections.

2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): A series of KIIs with members of the community including the municipality of Wadi Nahle and local stakeholders were organized.

Case Study Two: Collaboration with Seed in a Box for agricultural support in Beddawi and Muhammara

In 2020, UNDP partnered with Seed in a Box and Amel Association to support sustainable agriculture in Beddawi including the Adjacent Areas to Beddawi Camp, and Muhammara including the Adjacent Area to Nahr el Bared Camp, with focus on youth training and income generation. Young women and men were trained on ecological farming in home gardens and two neglected agricultural lands in the area. The project in BAAs is being transformed into a self-sustained agricultural cooperative, and its members received a Training of Trainers (TOT) which allowed them to participate in the Right to Food Campaign as trainers and assistant trainers with agronomists. In Muhammara, the project has also worked with farmers on changing their agricultural practices to more sustainable and ecological practices using less pesticides and relying on heirloom seeds. Given its success, UNDP also plans to replicate this experience in Saida, including the Adjacent Areas to Ain Helwe Camp.

The case study shed light on the elements of success of this experience and presented lessons learned for the replication of the project. The evaluation team performed a series of in-depth interviews with various stakeholders from organizers to implementors and two focus groups with beneficiaries to investigate the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the project

Case Study Three: Solid Waste Sorting in Sibline

UNDP worked with the municipality of Sibline, CityBlue collector and local NGO PARD on management and at-source sorting of solid waste in Sibline town and the Wadi Zeineh gathering.

The case study collected data through a series of interviews with the partner NGO and the municipality, and a focus group with the volunteers who were part of the project implementation.

3.4 Key Informant Interviews

The rest of the activities, i.e., those not covered in the case studies, were evaluated through a series of key informant interviews with stakeholders including municipal members and mayors, government agencies (e.g., the Litany River Authority), and local partner CBOs and NGOs. Furthermore, individual interviews were conducted with the UNDP team members and the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative. The following table presents the number of people interviewed within each profile of respondents (these are the total number of KIIs done for the case study purposes and the rest of the projects).²

Table 2: Number of interviews per profile of respondent.

Profile of Interviewee	Number of interviews for case studies	Number of interviews outside case studies	Total	Role and involvement
Municipality (member, member, union representative)	1	1	2	Municipalities and unions were active partners during implementation and will play a crucial role for maintenance and sustainability
Government agency		1	1	The Litani River Agency was an active partner and stakeholder one of the project activities
Partner organization	4	2	6	Local NGOs and CBOs were involved in planning, assessment, and implementation. The communities they work in are the main target beneficiaries of the activities.
Popular committee		1	1	Popular committees were part of the consulting and assessment process before implementation, and supported and facilitated implementation
Local stakeholder	2		2	Stakeholders who were involved in supporting project implementation through liaising with the local community, or providing insight into potential challenges and mitigation measures

² At the time of preparing this first draft of the report, some interviews are still scheduled but not conducted. The number of KIIs is expected to increase to around 24 in time for the final draft submission.

Private company	1		1	The waste collection company that was involved in waste management in All members of the project team who were involved in project design and implementation, as well as procurement.
UNDP		6	5	
Total	8	11	19	

KII guidelines were designed for facilitating the interviews (see Annex 1). The questions were largely inspired by the evaluation matrix and had the main purpose of feeding into answering the key evaluation questions. KIIs with the different stakeholders had different purposes, as such they were used with some flexibility depending on the profile of respondents and the saturation of information received from previous interviews.

3.5 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted as part of the case studies as well as for the other projects. A total of 6 FGDs were conducted. The table below summarizes the FGDs and the profiles of participants that were included.

Table 3: Number of FGs and profile of participants

FDG	Number of Participants	Profile of participants
Beddawi agriculture support	8	Project beneficiaries and current employees
Muhammara agriculture support	6	Project beneficiaries
SEAC center (Tripoli)	8	Training and business support beneficiaries
Sibline and Wadi el Zeini gathering solid waste sorting	8	Project Volunteers
Burj Rahal solid waste sorting	4	Project Volunteers
Qasmieh solid waste sorting	3	Project Volunteers

The FGDs were facilitated through a number of questions (see Annex 2). The research team recorded the sessions and took detailed notes in order to produce focus group reports that would feed into the analysis.

Finally, the following table summarizes the primary data collection tools that were used for each of the projects to collect data and information for the evaluation.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data obtained from the above tools was analyzed separately and triangulated to reach the main conclusions and analysis drafted in the final report. The desk review provided the basis for the questions of the KIIs and the FGDs. The notes and transcripts from the KIIs and FGs were synthesized and triangulated with the findings from the desk review and secondary data sources.

The final draft was written in accordance with the proposed outline and was structured to answer all the evaluation questions.

3.7 Limitations and Mitigations

There were no serious limitations to the study that would affect the quality of the findings or analysis. The table below presents the limitations faced and the mitigation measures that the research team took to eliminate or limit their impact. The main consequences from these limitations were related to time, as they both caused some delays in the data collection process.

Table 4: Limitations to the research

Limitation	Mitigation
Nonresponse of some stakeholders	Finding alternative people who are equally knowledgeable and involved in project activities
Weather conditions	Scheduled focus groups had to be moved to a different location from the Beddawi Farm to SEAC center in Tripoli

4 Evaluation Findings

4.1 Relevance

Finding 1: Project activities are highly relevant to the needs and priorities of vulnerable communities living in Palestinian Gatherings and have contributed to improving their living conditions and increasing their livelihood opportunities.

❖ To what extent has the initiative met relevant needs of the beneficiaries and contributed to improving their living conditions?

Palestinian Gatherings are known to be areas of extremely high socio-economic vulnerability and lack in basic infrastructure and services, a situation that the economic crisis has only exacerbated. The gatherings vulnerability assessment of 2018 (UNDP) showed that even before the economic crisis, these areas suffered from undeveloped labor market with low labor force participation (24%), low employment levels (33% of adults aged 30 to 64 were employed), and unemployment (21%) coupled with under-employment (35% of employed population work less than 40 hours per week). The average monthly wage in the gatherings in 2018 amounted to USD 365, with an 11% gender pay gap. In terms of housing and basic infrastructure, the vulnerability assessment shows that the majority of residents in Palestinian gatherings suffer from poor housing conditions including low quality building materials, dampness, darkness, and crowded living conditions.

Under the current crisis, poverty and vulnerability are sure to have deepened, rendering the residents of these gatherings in an even more precarious situation.

At the same time, these areas remain under-served by the government and international community alike. They fall outside the UNRWA mandate for many of its services (UNRWA operates inside the camps only but provides access to health and education services to all Palestinian Refugees), they are not recognized by the Lebanese municipalities as also part of their responsibility in terms of service provision, and UNDP remains the major developmental actor in addition to some international and local NGOs.

Within this context of increasing vulnerability, the project’s mission has been to identify the most pressing issues and priorities that need to be addressed in each community. And in fact, the study findings showed that the project has been successful in adequately identifying these priorities and addressing them in the most relevant manner, as all of the interviewed stakeholders concurred that the UNDP projects have been crucial for their local communities, whether they were WASH and shelter related, or livelihood related.

For example, the Improvement Plan in the Adjacent Areas to Beddawi Camp (BAA) addressed the living conditions of its dwellers, and according to the local NGOs operating there, the Improvement Plan and the various physical and livelihood activities implemented within its framework are the first large-scale projects in these areas.

“I am educated but I have not been working for a long time. We constantly needed food and vegetables and I love planting. I saw the opportunity on Facebook and wanted to make the best of it. I wanted to learn how to actually do it right, and in a healthy and organic way. I wanted to be self-sufficient. So, I learned everything and made sure I implement it in my household.” – Beneficiary from agricultural support in BAAs.

Beneficiaries of the evaluated livelihood projects agree that their involvement has helped them improve their skills to earn a living or provide produce for their households. For instance, the agricultural support activities in the BAAs have created full-time employment at the ecological farm for 17 individuals who are running the farm and providing income to support their families. Another example can be taken from the SEAC center in Tripoli, established through support from the project, that has provided numerous trainings and supported start-ups by housing their activities and providing them with technical and logistical support. The program on training nursing and paramedics is still on-going, but evidence for its relevance stems from the large number of candidates who applied for the courses (800).

Furthermore, it is important to note the project design included an extensive needs assessment process for all activities. Interviewed stakeholders commended the knowledge of the UNDP team of the local needs and the complexity of social dynamics in the different regions and appreciated the extensive field visits and involvement of the team on-ground during the assessment phases of the activities.

❖ ***To what extent is the initiative consistent with national and local policies and priorities and country programme outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs especially given the current crises?***

The project document reports the relevance of the intervention to several objectives of the UNDP strategic plan 2018 – 2021, the UNDAF, and the LCRP.

UNDAF / UNSF Outcome 4: *By 2014, the socio-economic status of vulnerable groups and their access to sustainable livelihood opportunities and quality basic social services are improved within a coherent policy framework of reduction of regional disparities.*

LCRP Objective: *Strengthen the capacity of national and local service delivery systems to expand access to and quality of basic public services: Expand safe water, sanitation, and hygiene for the most vulnerable communities through emergency gap filling and by reinforcing existing services.*

Project activities have addressed the gap in basic service provision in Palestinian gatherings through: (1) interventions in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), (2) livelihood activities addressing the socio-economic vulnerabilities of residents in the gatherings with focus on women, youth and PWDs who face particular vulnerabilities within their communities. As will be shown throughout the report, these activities have contributed to enhancing the living conditions of the gatherings' dwellers, improving their access to basic services and strengthening the ability of local authorities to provide these services.

UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) Outcome 1.1.2: *Marginalized groups, particularly the poor, women, people with disabilities and the displaced, are empowered to gain universal access to basic services and financial and non-financial assets to build productive capacities and benefit from sustainable livelihoods and jobs.*

Palestinian Gatherings are home to Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon (PRL), Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS), Syrian refugees (SRS) as well as vulnerable Lebanese. All of these groups are highly marginalized, living in poverty and lacking opportunities for improving their situation. All of the project activities are aimed at giving these communities access to better basic services and improved livelihood opportunities.

In addition, the project has addressed gender issues through its gender transformative programming as shown later within this report. It has also launched a pilot project with PWDs in BAAs, which the evaluation recommends expanding to other regions based on its positive results.

LHSP objectives³: *(1) to improve livelihoods and economic opportunities in areas hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, (2) strengthen the capacity of local and national actors in the delivery of basic services, and (3) improve the local level dispute resolution and community security.*

The project has tackled these objectives of the LHSP through its activities. As mentioned earlier, the gatherings host Palestinian Refugees from Syria as well as Syrian Refugees; the various project activities targeted all dwellers in those areas, whether Lebanese, Syrian, or Palestinian (PRL and PRS). Secondly, one of the project's objectives is to tackle issues related to involvement of local authorities and their relationship with the local communities in the Gatherings. The project has made significant effort to build networks and relations between local authorities and the gatherings, and in relevant cases, interventions are operated and maintained by municipalities. There are several examples where the legitimacy of the municipality has been significantly increased in the perceptions of dwellers in the gatherings, and collaboration between Lebanese and Palestinian actors has taken new forms based on mutual benefit and interest.

³ As this project is sometimes part of the LHSP proposals, the objectives of LHSP were considered for the evaluation of the project relevance.

In addition, the project has directly and indirectly addressed tensions in the communities that have stemmed from insufficient access to public services and broken community ties. Activities of the project have contributed to building bridges between the different members of the communities and reducing tensions over service provision.

❖ *To what extent did disadvantaged minority groups (women-headed families, PWDs, youth, etc.) in the context of Palestinian Gatherings particularly benefit from this UNDP project?*

Women as a vulnerable group benefitted from the projects in different ways. For example, the shelter and WASH projects addressed protection issues making women feel safer; and female headed households were prioritized in shelter rehabilitation. In addition, mobility and safety were enhanced for women; 82% of interviewed females in the neighborhoods of Adjacent to Beddawi report that they feel safer thanks to the neighborhood upgrades performed by the UNDP project. Furthermore, women were targeted in all the livelihood activities implemented in the different regions. In addition, women actively participated in all aspects of the projects related to the solid waste sorting, where they were part of the volunteers who were trained on recycling and waste sorting.

The project answered to the economic, social, and psychosocial needs of persons with disability (PWDs) through a pilot intervention in the North. The three-month assessment in BAAs and NBC AA revealed the multitude of challenges that PWDs faced in these areas. The interventions focused on: (1) the social isolation that PWDs face as a result of their immobility through the provision of adequate equipment (walking aids, wheelchairs, water mattresses, etc.), (2) the provision of psychological and psychosocial support with experienced professionals, and (3) supporting SMEs run by PWDs or self-employed PWD's to help them cope with the economic crisis that had severely impacted their livelihoods. The success of the pilot project in the BAAs should be an incentive for the replication of this experience in other regions, which is one way to include and integrate PWD issues more extensively in the project.

As for youth, the main beneficiary targets for livelihood programs were youth group, as the requirements for most of the activities were to include people aged between 17 and 35.

❖ *To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project?*

As mentioned earlier, the project was designed by integrating Gender Transformative Programming into the planning of the activities. There is a gender focal point who is part of the team and advises on all gender related matters as well as ensures that gender issues and women's needs are addressed adequately in all project activities, including design and implementation.

❖ *Were persons with disabilities meaningfully involved in programme planning and implementation?*

As mentioned above, the pilot project with PWDs in the Adjacent Areas to Beddawi and Nahr el Bared Camps was the only PWD focused activity of the project. In addition, street upgrading works had indirect positive impact that benefitted PWDs in form of improved mobility. In addition, families with PWDs were given priority in shelter renovation activities, where ramps and aids were installed when needed.

Having said this, it appears that mainstreaming PWDs needs is less evident compared to gender mainstreaming. The UNDP team reported currently working on more consistent and structured inclusion of PWDs needs into their project in line with the UNDP Country Office direction. Throughout the report, the research team highlights some ways in which this can be achieved.

4.2 Effectiveness

Finding 2: The vast majority of targets (number of beneficiaries) were achieved, and key results were observed for the various beneficiary groups despite the numerous challenges faced by the team mainly due to the crisis context in Lebanon.

❖ To what extent has progress been made towards intended results?

Given the situation in the country in 2021, the project reallocated around USD 1 M to 2022 through the extension of one donor agreement (PRM till March 2022). The challenges are discussed hereafter.

That being said, the target number of beneficiaries were overachieved during 2020 and 2021 as shown in the table below. In the majority of cases, this was due to the fact that the actual number of dwellers in some targeted communities was higher than the average initially considered, and that the depreciation of the Lebanese Lira has allowed for increased level of activities and beneficiaries.

Some of the activities where targets in 2021 were not achieved were part of the PRM funded project, and thus the targets have been pushed and achieved by March 2022.

Table 5: Expected outputs, indicators and achieved targets for 2020 and 2021 as per the Annual Working Plans for the project

2020		2021	
Planned Targets	Achieved Targets	Planned Targets	Achieved Targets
Output 1: Provide environmentally and economically sustainable WASH services at community level in the gatherings and their surrounding		Output 1: Provide environmentally and economically sustainable WASH services at community level in the gatherings and their surrounding	
Target: 30,000 individuals have improved water and sanitation systems and services.	35,210 (over- achieved)	Target: 23,500 individuals have improved water and sanitation systems and services.	23,170 (Almost achieved)
Output 2: Improve environmental and structural conditions of shelter units in the gatherings		Output 2: Improve environmental and structural conditions of shelter units in the gatherings	
Target: 1,000 (200 households) individuals live in structurally safe, environmentally adequate shelters.	1,500 (over-achieved)	Target: 1,775 (200 households) individuals live in structurally safe, environmentally adequate shelters.	3,354 (over-achieved)
Output 3: Promote inclusive and safer environments in the gatherings though comprehensive neighborhood upgrading interventions		Output 3: Promote inclusive and safer environments in the gatherings though comprehensive neighborhood upgrading interventions	

<p>Target: 5 neighborhoods have safer roads including electricity networks and street lighting, storm water disposal, paving, etc. and inclusive community spaces</p> <p>5 (Achieved)</p> <p>Target: 12,000 have access to safer roads and inclusive community spaces</p> <p>22,500 (over-achieved)</p>	<p>Target: 4,550 have access to safer roads and inclusive community spaces</p> <p>4, 835 (over-achieved)</p>
<p>Output 4: Improve hygiene conditions for host and new refugee communities in the gatherings</p>	<p>Output 4: Improve hygiene conditions for host and new refugee communities in the gatherings</p>
<p>Targets: 15,000 PRS who have periodic access to hygiene and baby kits</p> <p>35,000 (over-achieved)</p>	<p>Targets: 20,000 PRS who have periodic access to hygiene and baby kits</p> <p>35,000 (over-achieved)</p>
<p>800 students who have benefitted from hygiene awareness campaigns at UNRWA schools</p> <p>1,720 (over-achieved)</p>	<p>Target: 10,500 dwellers who have experienced awareness raising activities</p> <p>12,000 (over-achieved)</p>
<p>Output 5: Reduce youth risky behaviors in the Gatherings through empowerment and socio-economic interventions</p>	<p>Output 5: Reduce youth risky behaviors in the Gatherings through empowerment and socio-economic interventions</p>
<p>Targets: 80 youth benefit from training and skill development and income generation support</p> <p>215 (over-achieved)</p>	
<p>Targets: 1,220 benefits from social and socio-economic interventions</p> <p>600 (Not achieved)</p>	<p>Target: 170 youth benefitting from training, skill development and post-graduation support</p> <p>190 (Almost achieved) 568 (Not achieved; activities extended to March 2022)</p>
	<p>Targets: 660 individuals benefitting from NGO activities</p>
	<p>Targets: 2,400 individuals benefitting from support to local economic structures in the gatherings</p> <p>10,000 (over-achieved)</p>
<p>Output 6: Develop a national coordination and planning platform for response and development in Palestinian Gatherings</p>	<p>Output 6: Develop a national coordination and planning platform for response and development in Palestinian Gatherings</p>
<p>Indicator: The Gatherings working Groups remain active</p> <p>Group remain active (Achieved)</p>	<p>Indicator: The Gatherings working Groups remain active</p> <p>Yes (Achieved)</p>
	<p>Output 7: Strengthen communities' preparedness and response to COVID-19.</p>
	<p>Target: 3 institutions supported through equipment, works and training</p> <p>3 (Achieved)</p>
	<p>Target: 50 youth trained in nursing and paramedics domains</p> <p>239 (150 youth for 2020/21 period) (Over-Achieved)</p>

- ❖ *What key results and changes have been attained for men, women, youth, vulnerable groups, and local authorities? Were there active measures to include disadvantaged minority groups in the different project phases and are there extra steps that should be taken in this regard?*

The project has achieved key results for the local communities in the Palestinian Gatherings in terms of improving their living conditions, their built environment, skills, and capacities, as well as livelihood opportunities. The findings from the interviews with key stakeholders and the focus groups with the beneficiaries from the different activities show that the intended results have been achieved, despite the various challenges that the project has faced during implementation.

Local communities, including vulnerable households, have seen positive results in their areas of residence thanks to the various types of upgrading works and housing rehabilitation (refer to Box1: Satisfaction survey for spatial interventions part of BAAs Improvement Plan), as well as the waste sorting initiatives in some areas of the South. More examples include the wastewater collection center in the South, where interviews with stakeholders report that wastewater collection had a positive impact on the entire community and on the environment in the area. The LRA representative reported that *“the project significantly improved the quality of water as well as the quality of relationship with our neighbors”*.

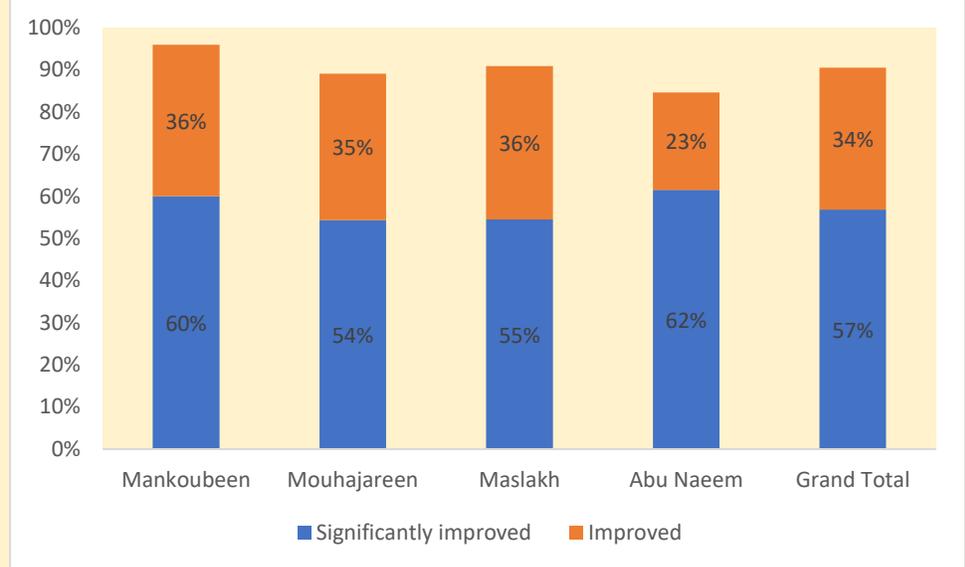
SATISFACTION SURVEY FOR SPATIAL INTERVENTIONS PART OF THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN IN THE ADJACENT AREAS TO BEDDAWI CAMP

Regarding housing conditions and needs, the situation analysis depicted the reality of housing conditions. BAAs mostly has poor housing conditions since houses were built as emergency shelters by displaced populations. Crowding in the BAAs is very high, at a 1.8 persons/room⁴. 45% of households were severely affected by dampness (35% in gatherings); 31% by darkness (22% in gatherings); and 20% have metal or tin roofs (11% in gatherings). In response and as part of the Improvement Plan in the BAAs, UNDP led renovations that benefited 300 households.

The satisfaction survey conducted with 100 beneficiaries shows that the majority of households believe that the works have improved their overall living conditions. The figure below shows that 81% of respondents see an improvement in their overall living conditions after the project renovation and rehabilitation works. For 57% of respondents this impact has been major.

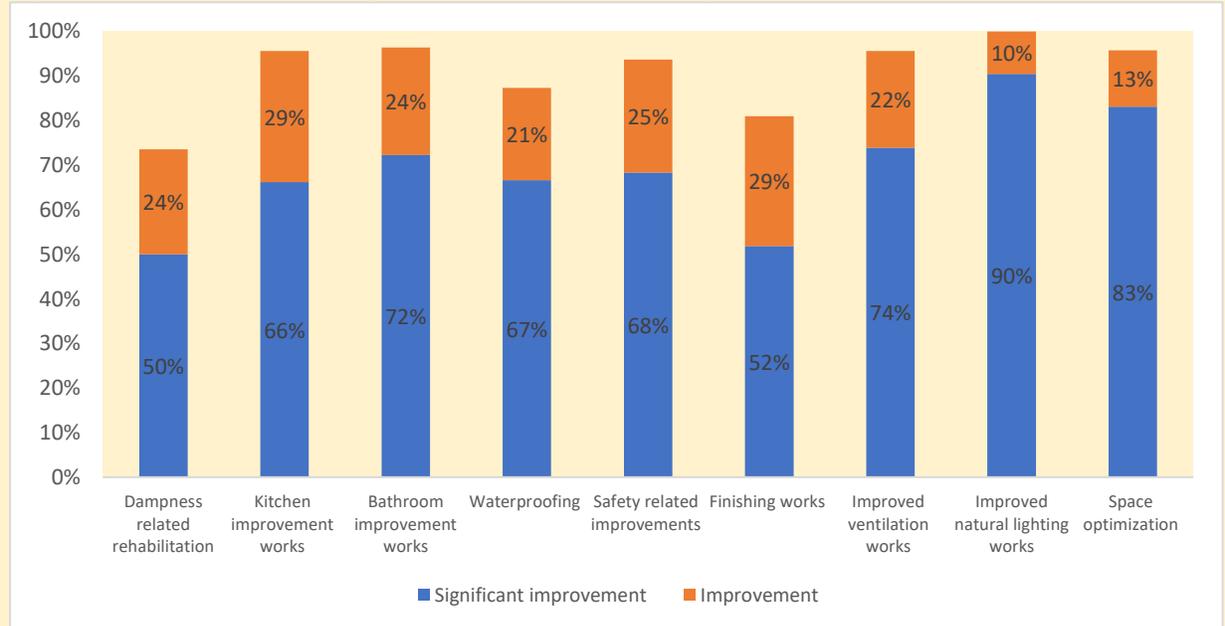
⁴ Compared to Palestinian Gatherings (1.5 person/room)

Figure 3: To what extent do you believe the works in your home improved your living conditions?



Looking at the specific types of works, the results show that the major problems of dampness and darkness have been addressed in addition to a variety of other issues. The highest levels of drastic improvement is observed for natural lighting improvement works, followed by kitchen and bathroom and space enhancement related works.

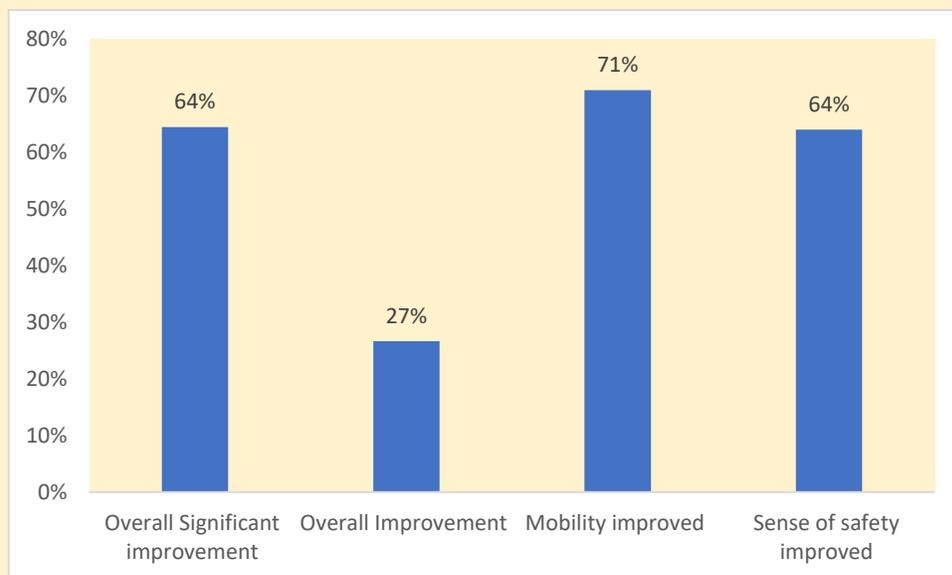
Figure 4: Improvements in housing related problems addressed by renovation works



As for the overall neighborhood WASH conditions, the situation analysis showed that streets suffered from lack of sewage connections, rainwater drainage, proper paving, safe electrical networks and/or lighting. All of these factors affected hygiene as well as safety and mobility mainly for children, women and the elderly and students' ability to reach schools. In response, the UNDP interventions tackled rehabilitation of streets, installation of sewage and storm water networks as well as water systems connected to solar panels for pumping.

Beneficiaries from the neighborhood and WASH projects show high levels of satisfaction with the projects. Findings from the satisfaction survey conducted in the Beddawi adjacent area show that 76% of respondents believe the street conditions are much better as a result of the works done, and 72% believe that there is less water in the streets thanks to the storm water channels that have been installed in the neighborhood. According to the figure below, the majority of people believe that they can move better in their neighborhood thanks to the works done.

Figure 5: How has the neighborhood improved as a result of the works done?



As for the wastewater, 86% of respondents believe that the wastewater conditions have significantly improved thanks to the project. In addition, 75% stated that they have more running water compared to before, and that the distribution of the running water is more equitable.

The main results that specifically concerned youth were mostly related to the livelihood and vocational training activities of the project. Youth beneficiaries of all activities looked into by the evaluation team report improved levels of skill, increased degrees of social integration with their surroundings, enhanced opportunities for income generation, and overall higher confidence of being able to cope with the economic crisis.

Regarding The translation of skills into job opportunities cannot be fully assessed at this stage partly due to the fact that some trainings are still in progress (e.g., the nursing and paramedics training conducted by CIS College), and partly due to the recent completion of other trainings and the insufficient information on tracking the graduate students. In addition, the overall crisis situation and subsequent lack of job opportunities poses more challenges for job seekers.

To present a few examples to support the above conclusions, the beneficiaries from agricultural support in BAAs and NBC AA and surroundings stated that they have learned essential skills in organic farming and have transferred these skills to their parents and extended families who also work in agriculture. They

were also able to generate significant income from selling farm products. The linkages to selling directly to restaurants in Beirut has proved to be a successful model and has the potential to expand and further develop as interviewees report that the demand is actually larger than their ability to supply, so this is an underutilized opportunity that can be potentially expanded and lead to higher levels of income generation. Furthermore, beneficiaries and the local partners report that the increased knowledge and skills of trainees has allowed them to perform a variety of freelance jobs such as plowing farmlands using the equipment from the farm, selling heirloom seeds, consulting on organic agriculture to farmers in the area, etc. all of which generate secondary income for the individuals and their families.

The beneficiaries take pride in being able to transform the municipal lands in Beddawi from a barren and un-usable land to a productive and ecologically sustainable farm. The beneficiaries see that their skills in beekeeping can be further expanded and would like to focus more on this area of farming.

“We thought a plant would never grow if it’s just organic. We learned the opposite. We learned compost. It was much more efficient” – Beneficiary from Beddawi Farm

The beneficiaries in NBC AA (part of Muhammara region agricultural support project) stated that the training is starting to have some breakthroughs in the mentality of farmers to move to more sustainable and clean farming. The farmers in this area are quite dependent on pesticides and non-sustainable methods that are mainly pushed forward by large input suppliers, and it is quite difficult for them to break their relations from those suppliers mainly because of financial dependency relations. The activities of the project as well as the success of the agricultural support program in BAA has proved to have a positive impact on farmers’ willingness to change their methods. The financial crisis has also pushed farmers to get into organic farming as they are unable to purchase inputs and chemicals with USD, so they are starting to believe that organic farming is actually a viable alternative. Indeed, the project should capitalize on this situation to continue its support to these farmers by working on linkages to markets similarly to the linkages to restaurants.

Key results can also be observed for self-employed and SME owners from the PWD community in Beddawi. The economic crisis and COVID-19 lockdowns had an immense impact on the businesses and economic activities of PWDs in the Beddawi and Nahr el Bared adjacent areas. Some of the challenges they faced were related to their inability to purchase products for their businesses or afford transportation. The project supported them in various ways, financial and in-kind, with the purpose of sustaining their income-generating activities through the crisis. Constituted of – much needed - working capital and raw materials, support has been essential in terms of medium-term sustainability for these vulnerable groups. The project has supported 29 PWDs business owners whose sustained income is helping their families and extended families.

Minority groups including PWDs, women, and youth have all been part of the targeted beneficiaries of the projects in the different regions and have witnessed the result of these projects. They have also been part of the focus group meetings conducted by UNDP and partners during the needs assessment phases, which reflects their active involvement in the planning stages of the project. NGOs who work with

these groups have been implementing partners for the projects and have been empowered to better tackle the challenges that these minorities face in the current complex context.

Positive changes in building relations of collaboration and cooperation between the gatherings and local authorities is evident and manifested in various ways. Overall, the approach of the project in all the regions has relied extensively on including the local authorities from municipalities to popular committees and government agencies when relevant in the situation analysis, project design, implementation, and handing over of project outputs. The financial crisis has had a significant impact on the ability of local authorities to take on responsibility for running the activities that require financial commitments related to operations and maintenance, which has had, and could have in the future, a negative impact on some of the project outcomes.

Supporting evidence for the above conclusions can be taken from several initiatives. One example is the wastewater project in the Southern town of Adloun not only helped solve the problem of water contamination of the Litani river, but also put an end to the strenuous relation between the LRA (Litani River Authority) and the Palestinian Gathering and establish a relation of cooperation between them, where both the LRA and the local community are working together on operating and maintaining the wastewater collection network. The LTA mentioned that they used to file complaints daily about infringements and it was causing tensions with the Palestinian communities who were *“going up and down to the police station”*. Today this has been changed and no complaints are being filed anymore.

Another example is the waste sorting activity in Sibline and the adjacent gathering in Wadi el Zeineh, where the Lebanese community and Palestinian community collaborated successfully on sorting their waste with the support of the Sibline municipality. According to the beneficiaries as well as the mayor, these activities helped bring people closer and induced a meaningful collaboration for the overall welfare of the area.

Analysis from the findings however shows that there are some conditions that need to present for such positive relations to be established and fostered: (1) creating a “win-win” situation for both communities, where each community finds benefit in investing in a cooperative relation, (2) financial capacity on each part to be able to contribute to the maintenance and operation of the common goods, (3) engaged stakeholders who demonstrate strong buy-in for the activities and work towards achieving common goals and sustaining them.

Finally, the improvement plan approach and process that was followed in BAAs provide the most comprehensive example for the participatory approach to development and addressing the needs of the local community. Conflict-sensitivity measures and gender-sensitivity were applied. The IP can act as a road map for the developmental work in BAAs and is a tool that has been shared with organizations and delivered to the local authorities for their future planning. The results of the interviews with stakeholders from the area however show that, although everyone in BAA considers the IP to be one of the most effective and large-scale project implemented in the area to date, the heterogenous structure of the local authorities that consists of popular committees and Lebanese municipal authorities with complex social

and political dynamics rather than one coherent institution might limit the extent of use and benefit from the IP for the future.

❖ *What overall lessons can the management team of the project learn from the implementation so far?*

The UNDP team management faced several challenges over the past two years due to the overlapping changes in context and procedures that took place and stemming from those challenges were a number of lessons learned and coping strategies developed.

The economic crisis, especially the depreciation of the local currency, impacted the availability of certain materials and has driven the team to develop more creative alternative solutions. The crisis limited the ability of contractors to obtain some raw materials which caused delays in the implementation. It also affected the availability of materials and equipment to the team, which forced them to “think out of the box” and come up with creative alternatives to replace the unavailable materials. The team’s work was also interrupted at many instances due to the fuel crisis and electricity crisis.

As the crisis continues to unfold, the UNDP team needs to factor in delays, alternative scenarios and allow for enough time and resources for creative solutions and ideas that can face the challenges brought by the crisis.

One challenge for the project was related to the changes in some procedures that the UNDP launched in 2020, especially within an already challenging context (including Covid 19, economic crisis, and Beirut Blast). However, coping with these changes for the future, now that the adjustment phase has largely passed, should not be as difficult. The economic crisis further complicated the application of the new procedures, such as requesting bank guarantees than many suppliers did not have due to the blockage of their accounts.

As the UNDP team has had more than a year of experience with operating the procedural and organizational changes, they have gone through internal discussions and agreements on certain action points that would facilitate the work within the challenging context. One way to face the challenges was “early planning, early start”, where the team members were kicking off processes as early as possible and launch projects as early as possible. It is not expected that these challenges will persist with the same intensity for the next year.

❖ *Were there active measures to ensure that the project activities are gender-responsive or gender transformative in Palestinian Gatherings or are there extra steps that should be taken in this regard? To what extent did the project ensure the active participation of women and men in the community and among local actors to promote positive change in gender equality in the context of the Palestinian Gatherings*

The project has followed an action plan in line with gender transformative programming and the team has a gender focal point responsible for following up on the adequate implementation of this plan.

The physical space component of the project focused on gender responsiveness in several ways:

- Female-headed households were prioritized for shelter rehabilitation activities
- In shelter rehabilitation, issues of protection were taken into consideration, to make women feel safer. This included adding separations in the homes, adding windows and doors where needed to make homes safer and more private, and other similar works that were decided upon on case-by-case basis.

The soft component of the project, i.e., the socio-economic and awareness related activities were probably more elaborate in terms of gender responsiveness as the nature of activities allowed for more gender focused activities, and they included:

- Socio-economic empowerment through education scholarships (nursing and paramedics courses), livelihood support programs (grants and paid internships), professional trainings (including non-conventional trainings in construction works, and electrical works)
- Socio-economic empowerment through trainings on agricultural practices in BAAs and NBC AA. Most of the participants to the trainings and the ToT were women.
- Approaching awareness campaigns in a manner that shows equality between men and women, and fights stereotypes. For example, the awareness sessions on waste sorting that took place in Sibline and Wadi el Zeineh gathering targeted both men and women participants to break the stereotypes that waste management at home concerns only the women housewives.

For future interventions, the project should consider designing measurable indicators to track and measure gender related activities and be able to track the progress in achieving objectives on gender transformative programming. In addition, the UNDP team have been planning to hire a gender consultant who would train the team and partner organizations on gender transformative programming. Interviews with the team members confirm that the consultant is going to be hired in 2022. The evaluation team strongly recommends a gender training for partner organizations and CBOs.

Besides the project activities, women were also part of the needs assessments prior to project designs. They were part of the focus group participants in the different areas during the assessment phase. Women led organizations and CBOs were also actively involved in the needs assessment process.

The popular committees in the gatherings, as well as Lebanese municipalities, are male dominated and are not usually prone to including women in discussions and decision-making processes. Therefore, the inclusion of women by the project did break barriers in terms of women's participation.

4.3 Efficiency

Finding 3: The project has used financial resources efficiently to implement the various activities and had suffered some delays due to the crisis caused complications in implementation. Results indicators reflect the large number of beneficiaries reached; these could be expanded to capture other aspects of the outputs achieved.

❖ *How well inputs have been converted into activities, in terms of quality, quantity and time? Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of the approaches and results it achieved during the evaluation period?*

Allocation efficiency is high for this project, indicating that financial and human resources have been used efficiently to achieve the project objectives. These are several observations leading to this conclusion, mainly:

- The types of projects selected were responsive to the needs of beneficiaries
- The selected projects were managed by people with the adequate skill set and needed experience. In addition, there is extensive organizational experience in implementing these types of activities.
- Variations in the budget have been minimal, indicating adequate estimations of costs for the various activities. Team members describe the process of budgeting as very comprehensive.

Furthermore, it is important to note here that the variance in the exchange rate allowed the project to purchase more materials and equipment and increase project activities, thus also reaching a higher number of beneficiaries.

Factors that contributed to or hindered UNDP performance are discussed hereafter.

The value of the UNDP gender marker for the project is 2, which reflects that the project activities have significant gender equality. The evaluation team believes this value to be fair to the project as it has placed significant effort into gender mainstreaming activities at all phases of the project (as mentioned in earlier sections of the report). It does not have gender equality as a principal objective, and thus does not reach the rating of 3. For the future, the project should aim at maintaining this rating.

❖ *Was the project managed in a cost-efficient and efficient manner?*

Although it is difficult to measure without a separate study dedicated to cost-efficiency, the number of activities executed, and the number of beneficiaries given the budget can be considered efficient. The table below summarizes the budget expenditures of the project for 2020 and 2021 by type of activity. Almost half of the budget (45%) has been dedicated to the shelter interventions, which is expected as this type of work is the costliest. It has reached 4,854 beneficiaries or 1,078 households⁵, i.e., on average 767 USD per beneficiary or 3,451 USD per household. Livelihood projects took up around 13% of the budget and have reached around 11,573 beneficiaries, which is on average 90 USD per beneficiary.

Table 6: Budget spending by type of activity for 2020 and 2021

Activity	2021 (USD)	2020 (USD)	Total (USD)	Share from total budget
WASH	1,923,000	1,260,172	3,183,172	39%
Shelter	1,854,000	1,869,001	3,723,001	45%
Livelihood	689,305	355,105	1,044,411	13%

⁵ The average household size is 4.5 members.

COVID 19 response	304,085	-	304,085	4%
Total	4,770,391	3,484,278	8,254,668	100%

Furthermore, contributing to cost efficiency are the procurement processes that are clear and strict whereby service providers are subject to a public bidding process and the lowest compliant price is selected. The team has been able to sustain their standards in selecting the most cost-efficient suppliers, contractors, consultants, etc. Within the context of the crisis, some materials and equipment were not available at the market and the team has gone to great lengths to find cost-efficient alternatives and continue to follow the adequate procurement channels.

In addition, all interviewed partners clearly stated that the UNDP team were working efficiently and dealing adequately with the rising challenges. They describe the team as flexible, efficient, knowledgeable, and professional. They view their relationship with the UNDP team as a true partnership rather than a “funder – beneficiary” relationship. Most partners also mentioned the difficulties in payment and the numerous procedures required, but they understood that the bureaucracy falls outside of the team’s control.

❖ *What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance or delivery?*

Several factors the hindered the UNDP performance and timely delivery of projects and activities and thus affected the time efficiency of the project:

- **The economic crisis and Lira depreciation caused delays** on part of the contractors implementing infrastructure projects due to lack of materials and equipment and changing prices of inputs among other supply chain difficulties.
- **Security issues became a growing concern** as theft of some installed equipment and materials took place in one of the project locations. This is a direct consequence of the crisis, where many already vulnerable households have lost their livelihood sources and have fallen into extreme poverty. Cases of theft, especially of steel and electrical material, are expected to be on the rise, and the evaluation team suggests factoring security matters into project design and sustainability plans. Another security threat to the project has emerged during the works in Beddawi region, in the Mankoubin area, mainly related to some dwellers threatening the contractors and engineers on the ground due to requests of personal nature. The issues escalated due to several reasons mainly related to the nature of the local dynamics and the lack of strong authority hold of the area (neither municipal nor by a popular committee). The UNDP team dealt with these challenges in a way that did not compromise UNDP integrity, the project outputs, or their approach to working in the area. Works were stopped when such incidents occurred while the team coordinated with local authorities and security forces and used the de facto forces governing the neighborhood to be able to re-establish the proper work-conducive environment.

- **Changes in procedures (discussed earlier)** that lead to delays in procurement were a source of delay in payments to consultant and contractors as well as in the provision of materials and equipment to health centres.
- **Management difficulties** emerged in the absence of a Program Manager under the Crisis Prevention and Recovery program, which led to additional burden on PG program manager and project team.
- **The COVID pandemic** imposed challenges on the project implementation and its timeline. The government enforced lockdowns mainly in 2021 forced all communication to move to on-line communication, which was challenging given the power and internet cuts in the gatherings. Furthermore, some activities related to trainings had to be conducted virtually, which also had its challenges.
- **Security events** such as roadblocks and closures and demonstrations also hindered the implementation work, which led to delays and required adjustment of timetables. This type of risk is constantly present in the Lebanese context, and thus should be considered during planning.

❖ *Were the result indicators and their means of verification adequate? To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?*

The results indicators are all related to the number of beneficiaries of the various interventions; they can be updated to relate to the outputs in other ways and could be more gender and PWD sensitive. The table below presents the results indicators for each output and suggests some additions that guide the creation of additional indicators. These indicators have been part of the M&E system used by the UNDP team to follow up on work progress and achievement of objectives. For the period of this evaluation (2020 – 2021), there are no specific M&E reports that have been prepared by the team or external consultants.

In addition to the results indicators, a series of impact related indicators can be developed to reflect the concrete impact that the various activities have on the local communities. Quantifiable indicators related to the improved living conditions and livelihoods of the beneficiaries are essential to capture the medium- and long-term impacts. This would require separate impact evaluation studies for the various activities and the project needs to consider increasing the share of budget dedicated to such studies.

Table 7: Existing and suggested indicators for project outputs

output	indicator	suggested additions
Output 1: Provide environmentally and economically sustainable WASH services at community level in the gatherings and their surrounding	Indicator: # of individuals with improved water and sanitation systems and services.	More specific indicators for each type of intervention such as beneficiaries from sewerage connection, from the connection to running water networks, etc. Number of women, and PWDS beneficiaries

Output 2: Improve environmental and structural conditions of shelter units in the gatherings	Indicator: # of individuals living in structurally safe, environmentally adequate shelters.	Specific indicators to the types of interventions done (ex: number of kitchens renovated, number of bathrooms renovated) Protection related indicators concerning women and young girls, such as % women and girls reporting feeling safer, % women and girls who have a private space in their home, % women and girls who report feeling safer using their bathroom. PWD related indicators Satisfaction survey indicators
Output 3: Promote inclusive and safer environments in the gatherings through comprehensive neighborhood upgrading interventions	Indicator: # of neighborhoods with safer roads including electricity networks and street lighting, storm water disposal, paving, etc. and inclusive community spaces	Measures of safety such as number of accidents that can be obtained from secondary sources Measures related to inclusiveness such as increased mobility of vulnerable groups such as elderly, PWDs and children
	Indicator: # of individuals with access to safer roads and inclusive community spaces	
Output 4: Improve hygiene conditions for host and new refugee communities in the gatherings	Indicators: # of PRS who have periodic access to hygiene and baby kits	Indicators on number of women and young girls receiving kits Indicators on % of beneficiaries from total population Indicators on changes in hygiene practices within households
	# of PRS and PRL students who have benefitted from hygiene awareness campaigns at UNRWA schools	
Output 5: Reduce youth risky behaviour in the Gatherings through empowerment and socio-economic interventions	Indicators: # of youth benefitting from training and skill development	Indicators on number of SMEs receiving support / could also be done by type of economic sector or activity Indicators on number of self-employed individuals receiving support Indicators on women and PWD beneficiaries
	# Of individuals benefiting from social and socio-economic interventions	
Output 6: Develop a national coordination and planning platform for response and development in Palestinian Gatherings	The Gatherings working Groups remain active	Indicators related to the activity of working groups such as number of meetings, participants to meeting, women and PWD participants / members Indicators related to the results of the meetings
Output 7: Strengthen communities' preparedness and response to COVID-19.	# Of institutions supported through equipment, works and training	Indicators related to the use of the equipment such as number of tests done, number of patients using the equipment,
	# Of youths enrolled in accredited educational and vocational training	Indicators related to the different types of training and professions, women and PWD

	programs in needed paramedical domains	participants, economic vulnerability levels of the participants
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4.4 Impact

Finding 4: A high level of impact on local communities is evident for both physical and socio-economic interventions.

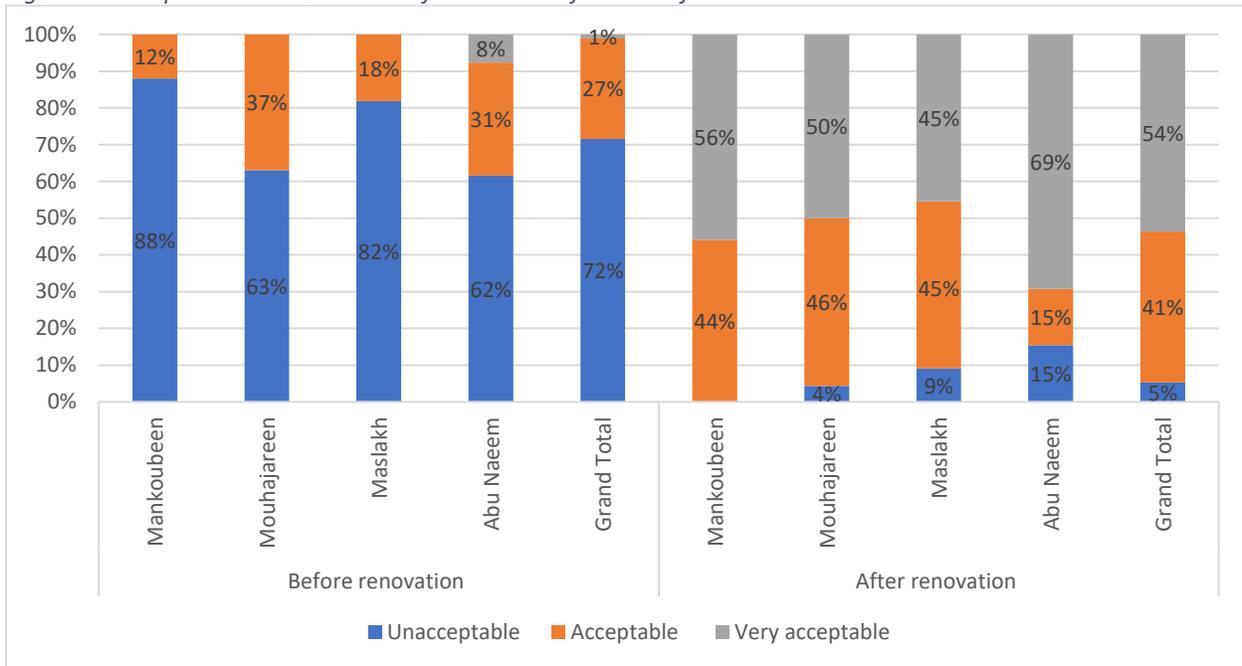
❖ Were there changes in human development and people’s well-being brought about by development initiatives, directly or indirectly?

The achieved results for local communities in terms of their housing conditions, neighborhood upgrading, access to basic services, improvement of environmental conditions, increased skills, capacities, and improved livelihoods have all had a positive impact on their overall well-being and have helped them cope with the severe reduction in their standards of living resulting from the crisis.

The positive impact has been observed across the various activities, with varying degrees, depending on the type of activity. Physical and spatial improvements have had an immediate direct impact.

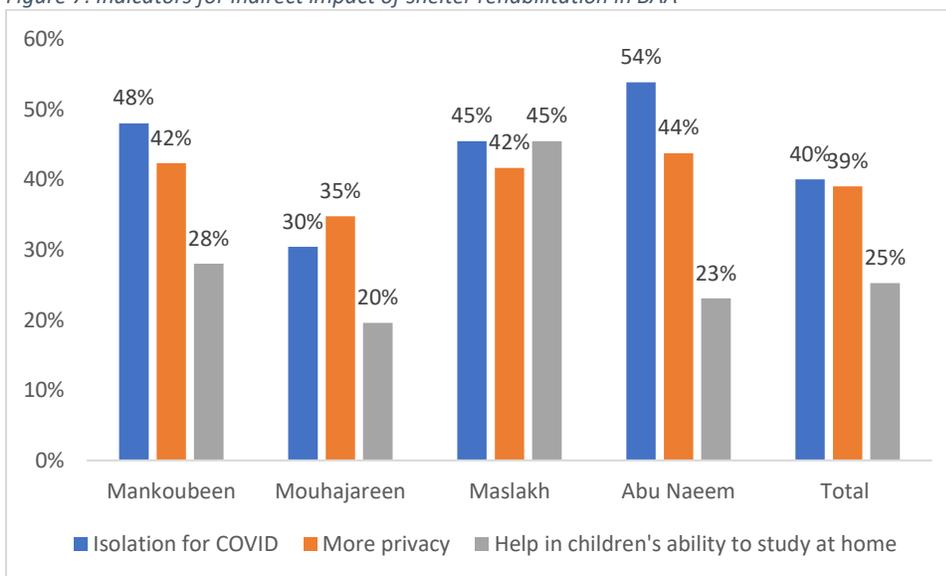
The satisfaction survey in the BAAs IP project is taken as a case study example. Shelter results show an overall perception that works have contributed to improving the state of the houses and the overall living conditions of the households. 72% of respondents believed that the state of their homes was totally unacceptable before the works, and this share decreased to 5% after the renovation. 86% of respondents see an improvement in the state of their homes after the renovation works. The figure below depicts the distribution of perceptions by neighborhood. The highest level of perceived improvement appears to be in Mankoubin.

Figure 6: Perceptions on overall state of the home before and after the renovation works



There are also indirect positive impacts to the shelter renovation works done. 40% of respondents receiving shelter renovation related to the weatherproofing and space optimization believe that this has helped them provide space for isolation in case of COVID in the household. 41% of respondents see that they have more privacy in their homes because of the works. 44% of households with school age children believe that the works have helped their children study better at home.

Figure 7: Indicators for indirect impact of shelter rehabilitation in BAA



Impacts related to livelihood projects were evaluated through focus groups with beneficiaries. The focus groups with beneficiaries from SEAC trainings, and Seed in a Box collaborations in Beddawi and

Muhammara showed common trends relating to improved skills, increased income, and a growing sense of community and belonging.

Skills: All participants have gained skills in various domains that have impacted their overall levels of knowledge and capacity and have improved their work opportunities as well as their sense of confidence and optimism about facing the economic crisis. For young women, being part of the project has given them opportunities to express themselves and establish a social network that they say they would not have had without the projects. Indeed, it is evident that the projects have offered a space for women to express themselves and to break stereotypes on their abilities and the ways they can participate in the labor force and in society.

“As a woman, I feel like the community supports men and suggests that men are more capable. I felt that my personality and character was affected by that, and I subconsciously was not motivated and wasn’t trying to prove them wrong, and just accepted the situation. When I came here, I completely changed and became more confident and passionate, and saw the potential I have in myself” – SEAC beneficiary

Work and income: The trainings and ToTs provided at SEAC and Beddawi Gardens have provided sources of income for the participants. SEAC has supported the creation of several start up SMEs that it hosts. They are currently operational and benefit from the power and internet available at the center, as well as from the exchange of knowledge and experience in terms of technical and managerial skills provided by the center. Trainees from the center either work as freelancers using their acquired skills in graphic design, marketing, coding, and others, or they are employed by the center to perform trainings (as part of ToT program), or other tasks including web development, logistics, and others (on full time or part time basis). In Beddawi Gardens, the beneficiaries run the farm at the moment and generate income from selling the products to restaurants in Beirut.

- ❖ *What, if any, were the unintended impacts of the project intervention, both positive and negative? Was the project able to monitor, mitigate and respond to any unintended negative effects?*

Positive unintended impacts

One observed positive unintended impact has been, according to interviewed stakeholders, the encouragement of other organizations to also work in the areas of intervention such as Old Saida. This has contributed to further increasing the services and renovation works in those areas. In this respect, the Gatherings Working Group, a national planning and coordination platform chaired by UNDP for UN agencies and organizations active in the gatherings, represents an added value.

Negative unintended impacts

In some cases, works and plans had to be adjusted due to creating sensitivities among different groups in the gatherings. For example, a sewerage network in Ain el Helwe Camp Adjacent Areas had to be rerouted because it passed through neighborhoods of opposing on-the-ground forces and factions and this created conflict that was not foreseen.

Another possible unintended impact is related to the shelter renovation works that have increased the value of the properties and thus could create incentive for landlords to increase rent or evict the current tenants for the prospects of higher rent. The UNDP team has signed memorandums of agreement with the landlords that oblige them to keep the rent and the tenants for the value of the works done. These agreements are technically legally binding, but the repercussions of breaking them are not evident in terms of actionable steps in favor of the tenants.

4.5 Sustainability

Finding 5: Sustainability issues have been considered and planned for since design phase with local partners and authorities; however, the many new challenges that have emerged as a result of the crisis require rethinking sustainability for current and upcoming projects.

❖ *What evidence is there to suggest the project's interventions and/or results will be sustained after the project end? Are there any risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs?*

The activities are designed with a large focus on sustainability. The UNDP team has shown to place a lot of weight on sustainability through developing sustainability plans and engaging with partners, local authorities and communities to take responsibility for operation and maintenance after the projects end. However, as is discussed later in this section, the economic crisis has presented new challenges to sustainability.

The economic crisis is proving to be a major challenge for sustaining many of the infrastructure related projects that require operation and maintenance. Prior to the crisis, the costs of the operation and maintenance could be borne by the local authorities and stakeholders to which projects were handed over, and municipalities indeed agreed that they did have the budget and means to perform these tasks before the crisis; however, the depreciation of the Lira has rendered municipal budgets much smaller than they were and popular committees are in a similar situation. In addition, the authorities' ability to collect municipal and other fees from the residents has been significantly reduced. At the same time operation and maintenance costs have increased with some materials and spare parts being hard to find or having become very expensive (usually payment needs to be in USD).

Security issues and theft pose a threat to sustainability. With the onset of the economic crisis and the severe reduction in people's purchasing power, cases of theft have increased. One of the project activities has fallen victim to cases of theft of equipment and installed machinery. Therefore, security risks should be evaluated for each activity that involves physical equipment and the adequate budget should be placed for that.

❖ *To what extent did the project establish links with the relevant local, regional, national existing structures to ensure sustainability and to what extent are partners committed?*

Establishing links with the local authorities and existing structures is evident for all the activities that have taken place. Examples include the municipality of Siblinge for solid waste sorting, the Litani River Agency for the Adloun sewage disposal, local NGO PARD for management of the community center in Kharayeb, the popular committees in the Beddawi area, etc.

Partners are committed to the extent of their ability to commit. There are several challenges related to the current context that render them less able to commit than before to sustaining the implemented activities (the challenges are discussed in the subsequent questions in this section).

❖ *What are the possibilities for replication and extension of the project's outcomes?*

Due to the high relevance of the project and the positive impact it has on the local communities, the evaluation concludes that the outcomes of the project can be replicated in other gathering based on the adequate assessments. Given the increased levels of poverty and vulnerability among the residents in the gatherings, livelihood related projects can take up a higher share of the budget.

Relatedly, agricultural support interventions like the ones implemented in Adjacent to Beddawi areas and Muhammara, when linked to markets to sell their products, can be replicated in other regions with a different set of crops and products. The local market demand for organic produce has increased since the reduction of imported organic products; therefore, finding adequate markets is possible with the proper market study and linkages.

As for WASH and shelter interventions, they are essential for upgrading the neighborhoods and improving living conditions in the various gatherings. To overcome some of the crisis induced challenges, the UNDP team are implementing solar energy for the operation of water and sewage treatment plants and reduce the cost of energy for operation these WASH interventions. For future similar interventions, the project can link in a more direct manner livelihood issues, such as cash for work programs, or trainings with applied internships on renovation and construction sites.

Waste sorting and management related projects have proven to engage local communities and spread awareness on waste management among households very efficiently. However, the economic crisis has also impacted their operationalization beyond the timeframe of the intervention. The overall reduction of waste due to reduced purchasing power of residents, and the spread of scavengers who collect the sorted waste before the collection companies or municipalities do so, have significantly reduced the incentive of local authorities or private waste collectors to engage in collecting and selling the waste; they say it is not economically viable at this point, especially also with the increase in fuel prices for transportation. Therefore, replication of such projects needs to take into consideration the ability of local authorities and partners to sustain the sorting and collection. More specifically, funds must be secured for paying dumpsite fees, fuel for trucks, and for maintenance of trucks.

Furthermore, as recent indicators show a worsening in health-related indicators, continuing support under the COVID response activities is needed within the gatherings. The latest vulnerability analysis shows that 73% of households have required medical attention within the past 3 months and 21% of household who have needed this medical attention have not received it. Over the past three months, 59% of households have not been able to purchase needed medication and 52% were not able to afford health services. All these figures show that continuation of health-related support is crucial especially with the deepening of the economic crisis.

5 Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

5.1 Conclusions

Overall, the project has been successful in achieving its output objectives in 2020 - 2021 and has dealt with the various challenges that the Lebanese context has posed over the past two years. These challenges include:

- The economic crisis, especially the depreciation of the local currency, impacted the availability of certain materials and has driven the team to develop more creative alternative solutions. Theft and security issues also resulting from the crisis have impacted the project implementation
- The shortages in fuel and power also led to delays in implementation of activities and communication with partners and beneficiaries
- Another challenge for the project was related to the changes in some finance and procurement procedures that the UNDP launched in 2020
- The COVID pandemic imposed challenges on the project implementation and its timeline. The government enforced lockdowns mainly in 2021 forced all communication to move to on-line communication, which was challenging given the power and internet cuts in the gatherings

In terms of relevance, the project proves to be highly relevant to the needs and priorities of the vulnerable communities, especially during the times of financial and economic crisis that the country is passing through.

In terms of effectiveness, most targets have been achieved and the number of target beneficiaries has been reached. Gender issues have been tackled through gender transformative programming that has focused on women-specific challenges and has priorities vulnerable women to access project activities.

The project has used financial resources efficiently to implement its activities but has endured delays due to the economic crisis that created complications and challenges to implementation. Recommendations on how to deal with these challenges are presented in the section below.

In terms of impact, the positive impact of the activities and works has been observed with varying degrees, depending on the type of activity. Physical and spatial improvements have had an immediate direct impact. Some activities has shown

As for sustainability, although sustainability plans for all activities have been set in place, the challenge remains for stakeholders and local authorities to be able to adhere to them in light of the crisis.

It is important to note that the project carries particular importance to the Palestinian gatherings as the UNDP is the major, if not only, actor in most of them. The particular situation of the gatherings, as outside the UNRWA mandate and not serviced by the host municipalities, renders them in a grey area where they

are under-serviced by the government as well as by the international community, In terms of strategic orientation, and in line with the changing Lebanese context, the overall strategy for the project could set its outputs to better converge to a more developmental approach aligned with the stabilization approach of the UNDP.

5.2 Lessons Learned

For activities directly implemented with municipalities, there are some lessons to be learned regarding elements or pre-requisites for success:

- creating a “win-win” situation for both communities, where each community finds benefit in investing in a cooperative relation,
- ensuring financial capacity on each part to be able to contribute to the maintenance and operation of the common goods,
- selecting engaged stakeholders who demonstrate strong buy-in for the activities and work towards achieving common goals and sustaining them.

The main lesson learned regarding timelines and delays is to factor in all possible risks that may affect the timeline. The previous year has shown delays due to various interruptions in supply chains, availability of power and fuel, fluctuations of prices, and other challenges arising from the crisis that should be factored into the timelines of the various activities to allow for smoother implementation.

The crisis has also brought several aspects of project sustainability under question. The evaluation suggests that the following issues must be heeded for future planning:

- Safety and security arrangements surrounding installed equipment such as water pumps, solar energy panels, water treatment plants, etc. These could include security cameras, security guards, or any other measures deemed sufficient.
- As local authorities and popular committees are suffering from lack of funds with the depreciation of the Lira, maintenance, and repair costs that they would have borne before the crisis are not easy to provide now. Therefore, the project design needs to factor these challenges by supporting with maintenance costs and implementing activities that have low maintenance costs. This could be done through evaluating the sources of revenues for municipalities, supporting the creation of long-term partnerships between local authorities and the private sector or local CBOs, working with unions of municipalities where adequate and relevant, among methods that can be elaborated in collaboration with the municipalities and local authorities.

5.3 Recommendations

The following are a set of recommendations based on the findings suggested as ways for taking the project forward into the next period of its operation.

Types of interventions: (for UNDP and project team)

- As the livelihood related challenges are increasing at an accelerated speed due to the on-going and expectedly protracted crisis, the vulnerable communities living in the Palestinian Gatherings are at risk of falling into extreme poverty and facing more challenges in terms of sustaining their employment or finding work opportunities. Therefore, increasing the number of livelihood programs and dedicating a larger share of the budget to such efforts is recommended. The increased focus on livelihoods integrated with neighborhood and shelter upgrading should indeed steer the way to a long-term economic developmental perspective. At this stage, this could take several forms, including:
 - Capitalizing on the existing agricultural support activities and expanding them to other regions while working on market linkages for selling the products and providing income for the beneficiaries beyond self-sustaining agricultural practices. The experience in Beddawi and Muhammara of obtaining (municipal) farmland has been successful and merits replication in other regions where such lands can be obtained.
 - Working with the graduates of the nursing and paramedics courses on job placement activities including writing resumes, filling job applications, preparing for job interviews, searching for positions online, etc. Tracer studies here are also recommended to measure the impact of the scholarship program on job creation.
 - Support to self-employed and micro-SMEs is essential to sustain their businesses and help them cope with the challenges of the economic crisis. Support can take the form of cash grants, technical support, management support, or a combination of them, with the purpose of helping SMEs deal with challenges such as price fluctuations, lack of power and internet, provision of alternative raw materials, linking SMEs to sources of information, creating SME clusters that work together, etc.
- WASH and solid waste sorting and management are crucial and need to be replicated and expanded based on adequate assessments in the various Palestinian Gatherings. However, during the current crisis, maintaining their operation has been challenging for local municipalities and popular committees. In this respect, it is recommended that replicating such projects involves plans for sustainable sources of funds for operation and maintenance through parallel income generating activities, or schemes for collecting affordable fees from local communities, or other means determined in participation with the local communities.

- In terms of PWD focus, the project has had a successful pilot activity in the North, which has supported PWDs in various ways, to improve their living conditions and socio-economic well-being. The evaluation team encourages the replication of this activity in collaboration with the right local organizations who work with PWDs in the Palestinian Gatherings in the various regions. In addition, suggested steps for overall better involvement of PWDs in the project include: (1) more structured trainings to the CBOs actively working with minority groups and equipping them with tools to face the challenges arising from the economic crisis, (2) more structured involvement of PWDs in all project activities, not only the activities specifically catering to PWD needs, (3) setting more specific M&E indicators to track the inclusion of minority groups across all phases of the project, (4) expand PWD related interventions to all regions and gatherings.

Additional activities (for UNDP and project team)

- More elaborated tools for measuring results achieved by the improvement plan need to be developed, which can be collected by the team internally or by external studies measuring outcomes and impact. This would entail developing indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, related to improvement in health indicators, enhanced safety and protection for vulnerable groups, improved living conditions, etc. Such measurable indicators would contribute to showing the results of the improvement plan beyond the infrastructure projects and highlight the positive impacts of the integrated approach to neighborhood upgrading.
- Relatedly, research studies such as satisfaction studies, impact studies, perception studies, and others could be considered to better reflect the outcomes of the project as well as the medium- and long-term impacts.
- In terms of social stability and activities tackling tensions in communities, this is a theme that is recommended to be more present in the future, as it is expected that tensions will rise among members of the communities with the deepening of the economic crisis. Integrating social stability and tension reducing measures and activities into the overall project would contribute to better achievement of the overall project objectives.

Annex 1: Key Informant Interview Guidelines

Introduction

1. Tell us a bit more about your role in the project.

Relevance: We are going to start our conversation talking a bit how significant has the project been vis-à-vis national priorities and requirements

1. What in your opinion are the biggest challenges facing residents of the gatherings that affect their living conditions, especially today with the on-going crisis?
2. In what ways do you think the activities of the project (especially outputs 3 and 5) fit into the overall UNDP strategic plan and SGDs? (Please give concrete examples)
3. How appropriate were the planned results and their associated indicators? *(Asked to UNDP staff only)*
4. Did you have to alter / change any planned activities and projects due to the changes that were brought upon by the crisis? How did that happen?
5. How did the project take into consideration the needs of PWDs? At the project design phase and implementation phases (Please give concrete examples)
6. How did the project take into consideration the needs of youth? At the project design phase and implementation phases (Please give concrete examples)

Effectiveness: We now move to talk about whether the project has achieved its goals and objectives

7. What are the project's intended outputs and objectives according to what you know, especially in outputs 3 and 5?
8. How well has the project achieved these outputs and outcomes, considering Lebanon's multiple crises situation?
 - 8.1. What do you consider were the program's biggest achievements (success stories)?
9. What overall lessons can the management team of the project learn from the implementation so far?
 - 9.1. What were the biggest design challenges and how did the team deal with them?
 - 9.2. What were the biggest implementation challenges and how did the team deal with them?
 - 9.3. What are other enabling or inhibiting factors that were beyond the control of the project management structures?
 - 9.4. What would you do differently during the next phase of the project?

10. Were there active measures to include disadvantaged minority groups in the different project phases? (PWDs, youth, women)

10.1. What are the extra steps that should be taken in this regard for the future?

11. Were the specific challenges faced by PWDs in Palestinian Gatherings addressed?

12. To what extent did the programme lead to changes in knowledge and attitudes towards gender equality issues?

Efficiency: We move to discuss whether the project has achieved its objectives economically

13. How did you use your resources (human and financial) to design and plan the activities?

14. Are the results being achieved at the expected cost set before project implementation?

14.1. What were the main challenges in this respect?

15. Has the project implementation differed from the budgeted costs?

16. Did the project implementation happen according to the timeframe?

16.1. Which projects in particular faced delays and why?

16.2. How did you factor in these delays and update the timeframe accordingly?

17. Were there result indicators for the various activities? (Give examples)

17.1. How about their means of verification? Were they adequate?

18. To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?

Impact: We now move on to talk about the impact, or difference the program made in the target areas and communities

19. What were the direct changes you have observed in terms of people's well-being brought about the different initiatives?

19.1. What were the in-direct changes that you have observed?

20. Did you observe any positive / negative unintended impacts from the projects? What were they?

20.1. How did you respond to the negative unintended impact?

Sustainability: Lastly, we will talk briefly about what will happen to the project after the funding ends

21. What evidence is there to suggest the project's interventions and/or results will be sustained after the project end?

21.1. Which projects are likely to carry on and which ones do you expect will not? Why?

22. To what extent did the project establish links with the relevant local, regional, national existing structures to ensure sustainability and to what extent are partners committed? (Discuss the various projects in the different regions)

23. What are the possibilities for replication and extension of the project's outcomes? (Discuss the various projects in the different regions)

24. Are there any risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs? (Discuss the various projects in the different regions)

Exit

25. Is there anything you would like to add related to our discussion that can be useful for this evaluation?

Annex 2: Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

Relevance

1. What are the social and economic challenges that you were facing and that this project tackled, and helped you with? (Probe: employment / being part of community / learning new skills)

Effectiveness

2. How would you describe your overall experience in the project?
 - a. The positive sides
 - b. The sides that could be improved
3. What would you say is your biggest achievement on this project?

Efficiency

4. Do you think the process of doing the project can be improved? How? What could be done better?

Impact

5. How do you think this project affected you and your family's life?
6. Do you think this project had an impact on all of your community? How?

Impact

7. How will you keep this project alive and sustainable?
8. What do you think are risks that jeopardize the sustainability of the project?

Exit

9. Is there anything you would like to add to the discussion that we did not ask about?

Annex 3: List of project activities covered by the evaluation

	PROJECT
	WASH
1	Water in Mankoubin and Mankoubin (adjacent to Beddawi Camp)
2	Sewage in Adloun, South Lebanon
3	WASH project in Jabal Halib (adjacent to Ain Helwe Camp)
4	Supporting solid waste sorting at source Sibline and Wadi Zeineh gathering
5	Supporting solid waste sorting at source in Burj Rahhal and Qasmieh gathering
	Shelter
7	Shelter rehabilitation in Mankoubin / Muhajarin / Abu Naim / Maslakh (adjacent to Beddawi Camp)
8	Shelter rehabilitation in Ain Helwe Camp Adjacent Areas (AEH)
9	Shelter rehabilitation in Old Saida
10	Rehabilitation of buildings and houses in Burj Hammoud (post-blast)
	Upgrading
11	Outdoor community space (complementing community center) Kharayeb
12	Football field (roof top) NBC AA
13	Rehabilitation of sections of market in Burj Hammoud (post-blast)
	Livelihood
14	Support to establishing SEAC & training and grants to youth
15	Support to sustainable agriculture with Seed in a Box (SIB)
	COVID response
16	Support to PWDs through CBRA in Beddawi and NBC AAs
17	Vocational training (nursing and paramedics)

Annex4: Summary of Field work data collection

PROJECT	Data collection tool(s)
WASH	
Installing water system in Mankoubin and Muhajarin (BAAs)	Survey / KIIs / FGD (Case study)
Installing sewage network in Adloun, South Lebanon	KIIs
Supporting solid waste sorting at source Sibline and Wadi Zeineh gathering	KIIs / FGD (Case study)
Supporting solid waste sorting at source in Burj Rahhal and Qasmieh gathering	KIIs / FGD
Shelter	
Shelter rehabilitation in Mankoubin, Muhajarin, Abu Naim and Maslakh (BAAs)	Survey / KIIs / FGD (Case study)
Upgrading	
Establishing outdoor community space (complementing community center) in Kharayeb	KIIs
Livelihood	
Support to establishing SEAC center in Tripoli and training and grants to youth	KIIs / FGD
Support to sustainable agriculture in BAAs and NBC AA	KIIs / FGD (Case study)
COVID response	
Support to PWDs in BAAs and NBC AA	KIIs
Vocational training (nursing and paramedics) to youth from the Gatherings	KIIs / FGD