Evaluation of LEBANON HOST COMMUNITIES SUPPORT PROJECT (2019-2022)

Evaluation Report

20 October 2023

Project/outcome Information	
Project/outcome title	Lebanon Host Communities Support Project - LHSP
Atlas ID	00084708
Corporate outcome and output	UNDP CPD 2017 – 2022 **Outcome 1:** Local communities and institutions ability to mitigate tensions and prevent conflict are strengthened, and the overall response on the evolution of tensions is informed. **Outcome 3:** To improve the ability of vulnerable groups, especially women and youth, and of micro, small and medium size enterprises, to cope with and recover from the economic shock through stabilizing and improving income and revenues.
Country	Lebanon
Region	Middle East
Date project document signed	30/11/2019

Project dates	Start	Planned end
	1 December 2019	31 December 2022

Total committed budget	**93,517,370**
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	**USD 105,246,418**
Funding source	**Donor contributions**
Implementing party[1]	**UNDP**

Evaluation information	
Evaluation type	Project evaluation
Final/midterm review/ other	Final evaluation of Third Phase

Period under evaluation	Start	End
	2019	2022

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[1] This is the entity that has overall responsibility for implementation of the project (award), effective use of resources and delivery of outputs in the signed project document and workplan.

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Evaluation dates	Start April 2023	Completion October 2023

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Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
BPRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration – US Department of State
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPR	Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development – United Kingdom
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GoL	Government of Lebanon
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KfW	Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau – Germany
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LHSP	Lebanon Host Communities Support Project
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDI	Multi Deprivation Index
MoIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MRR	Maps of Risks and Resources
MSR	Mechanisms for Stability and Resilience
MSLD	Mechanisms for Stability and Local Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PMC	Programme Management Committee
PRL	Palestine Refugees in Lebanon
PRS	Palestine Refugees from Syria
RF	Results Framework
SC	Steering Committee
SDC	Social Development Centre
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLD	Stability and Local Development
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
TG	Technical Group

ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

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1.0 Executive Summary

The subject of this evaluation is UNDP's Lebanon Host Communities Support Project (LHSP) and its Project of work from 2019 to 2022. Launched in 2014, LHSP was developed within the framework of interventions conducted by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), the Council of Development and Reconstruction (CDR), the targeted municipalities, and Union of Municipalities.

LHSP's broad objective is to enhance social stability in Lebanon and promote development as part of a national strategy to respond to Lebanon's protracted crises. According to LHSP's Theory of Change, the expected impact of LHSP includes the reduction of tensions and conflict; new employment opportunities; reduced competition over services; and transparent local governance accountability. LHSP aims at creating these positive impacts by enhancing stability and development opportunities across Lebanese regions that are most affected by the impact of the Syria crisis. During the period 2019 – 2022 the LHSP / SLD programme had a total programme budget of USD 93,517,370. The largest donors have been in order of size: KFW, UK - FCDO, BPRM, ILO, Norway and China. Historically since the start of LHSP the UK - FCDO has been the largest donor.

Based on the Terms of Reference this evaluation is to inform UNDP as well as key stakeholders on the best programming strategy and approach and for future support to host communities in Lebanon. The results of the evaluation are expected to inform the design of a new phase of the project. The main stakeholders for this evaluation are UNDP Country Office management, UNDP Regional Office, LHSP staff, Area Office Management, Government stakeholders, donor and UN agencies representatives, municipalities, and beneficiaries.

1.1 Evaluation approach
The overall evaluation approach was guided by OECD DAC criteria.

▶ **Relevance:** The degree to which the project objectives, design and Theory of Change consider the local context and conditions in which it takes place. The extent to which the objectives of LHSP are consistent with beneficiary requirements.

▶ **Effectiveness:** The extent to which LHSP results have been achieved. Considering: 1) if the activities were coherent with the overall objectives and project purpose; 2) if the analysis of principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objective was sound.

▶ **Efficiency:** The extent to which resources are used appropriately and economically to produce the desired outputs.

▶ **Impact:** Expected significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, higher-level effects.[2]

▶ **Sustainability**: The project capacity to produce and to reproduce benefits over time. Considering to what extent intervention benefits will continue even after the project is concluded.

▶ The evaluation also integrates key **cross-cutting issues** including Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), Inclusion of People with Disabilities (PWD) and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).

A theory-based evaluation process was implemented, utilizing the Theory of Change and the Results Framework as guiding tools for the evaluation. The primary analytical instrument employed by the team throughout both data collection and analysis was the Evaluation Matrix. This matrix encompasses five main OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and sets out relevant approaches, including sub-questions, indicators, data sources and data collection methods.

Data collection was conducted through a diverse array of methods, including interviews, focus groups, site observations and document reviews. In the subsequent analysis of the collected data, the evaluation team attempted to identify causal relationships and patterns by triangulating information from different data sources. To ensure the quality of analysis and foster team consensus, a collaborative approach was adopted during the data analysis and reporting phases.

The evaluation team collected an array of quantitative and qualitative data inputs. The main data sources informing this evaluation were:

▶ Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 118 beneficiaries (including 57 women)
▶ Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with internal and external stakeholders
▶ Field visits to 26 LHSP projects
▶ A desk review of relevant documents, including UNDP progress reports and donor reports
▶ An analysis of LHSP Output Data.

1.2 Principal Findings

Relevance

LHSP's objectives and design are relevant to Lebanon's multi-layered protracted crisis. It addresses needs related to social stability and local development. However, the Theory of Change and Results

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[2] Including but not limited to: (i) Agulhas Perception Surveys (2020-2022) (ii) joyn-coop Mid-term evaluation of the German Contribution to the LHSP in Lebanon (iii) ARK (2017-2018): Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon; (iv) AKTIS (2016): Impact Evaluation Report: Lebanon Host Communities Support Project; (v) Dylan O'Driscoll (2018): Donor Response to Refugee Tensions in Lebanon

Framework were not sufficiently adapted to account for significant contextual changes since 2019, such as COVID-19 pandemic, economic collapse, Beirut port blast, and increased tensions.

LHSP effectively promotes conflict sensitivity through its Mechanism for Stability and Local Development (MSLD). The MSLD process allows community members to collectively address challenges and proposes solutions at the local level. However, challenges arise when donor preferences conflict with community priorities identified through the MSLD process.

LHSP has made progress in promoting gender equality and empowering women. Women actively participate in project activities and decision-making processes. LHSP has engaged youth and vulnerable groups and considers youth needs within activities. While there is consideration for vulnerable groups, further integration of their concerns is needed in activity planning.

Effectiveness

The evaluation has identified several **positive contributions made by LHSP processes, including the potential for tension reduction at the local level through the MSLD process.** Furthermore, many of LHSP's individual projects received positive feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders, particularly those related to economic development and livelihood opportunities. However, it's important to acknowledge that LHSP, despite its strong communication strategy, has faced challenges in addressing escalating anti-Syrian sentiment. These sentiments have upsurged considerably since 2019.[3]

While there have been obstacles in output implementation, such as limited municipal capacity and bureaucratic hurdles, it's crucial to note that **LHSP's outputs have evolved significantly during the evaluation period with an increased emphasis on economic and livelihoods opportunities.** This adaptability demonstrates LHSP's ability to respond to unforeseen factors and shifting circumstances.

Nonetheless, there is **room for improvement in establishing a more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system**, particularly with an emphasis on analysing output data and contributions to outcome, incorporating qualitative data collection, and integrating lessons learned into interventions that can enhance LHSP's overall effectiveness. Achieving this may necessitate additional human resources at both the area office and country office levels.

Efficiency

LHSP's decentralization and strong area management support shows efficient and effective engagement at the community level. **The role of UNDP area offices in coordinating local and regional efforts has been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes.** However, a clearer vision and

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[3] The period under evaluation was marked by escalating tensions between the Lebanese and displaced Syrian communities. This growing trend was evident in both the Ark and the Agulhas surveys. The evaluation itself took place during a period of heightened tension, characterized by an increased number of deportations and the proliferation of social media campaigns.

operational framework for 'localization' within LHSP's governance structure would provide better guidance and alignment for future initiatives.

Concerning the project's governance structure, it has **a strong institutional foundation, but there appears to be reduced ownership at the ministerial levels, indicating room for improvement**. At the national level, the governance structure and institutional arrangements have not performed as expected, primarily due to weak communication between LHSP management and the relevant ministries.

The direct implementation modality has significantly contributed to efficient project execution. However, time efficiency has been adversely affected by various crises and lengthy contract procedures. Projects aimed at promoting economic development have been well-prepared, with thorough feasibility assessments and careful analysis of anticipated returns on investment. LHSP has worked toward preventing funding duplication within communities by engaging at the community level and coordinating with relevant structures.

Impact

At a local level, many of the projects visited by the evaluation team were high-quality, suggesting a **positive influence on community resilience and stability.** Encouragingly, in some instances, LHSP's positive engagement appeared to serve as a catalyst for additional local developments. Notably, economic opportunities with a community-level reach hold substantial potential for aiding vulnerable individuals in responding to economic shocks, enhancing social cohesion, and mitigating tensions. Cash for Work offers short-term support; however, where it involved the rebuilding of a productive asset it likely had broader impact.

Social cohesion yielded more varied results. While there were instances of positive changes that could reasonably be attributed to LHSP at the community level, the results were not uniform. It's important to acknowledge that at the national level, LHSP's impact on prevailing levels of anti-Syrian refugee hostility appeared to be limited. However, LHSP has actively utilized diverse communication channels to counteract the rising rhetoric of hostility that became more pronounced during the evaluation period.

Sustainability

The MSLD Process, ideally, has in-built advantages for sustainability. By ensuring that projects are selected by, and reflect, the needs of the local community those projects are more likely to continue after completion due to a combination of 'buy-in' and 'necessity.' However, a range of factors and risks influence the degree to which projects enjoy sustainability after completion; the most significant being the continued deterioration the Lebanese economy. Moreover, some stakeholders worry that

MSLD committees do not always maintain engagement-levels when projects close. Externally, for infrastructure projects, many Lebanese municipalities lack the fiscal space to carry out routine repair and maintenance. Recognizing these risks, **LHSP has put in place several measures to address sustainability concerns and mitigate associated risks.** For instance, the livelihoods unit conducts systematic feasibility assessments and evaluates potential returns on investment, enhancing the likelihood of project success. Additionally, LHSP maintains a strong presence at the area level, allowing for regular project follow-ups. Stringent contracting procedures are also enforced to ensure that contractors deliver high-quality products, further promoting project sustainability.

1.3 Conclusions

The evaluation report includes further elaboration of the conclusions. The executive summary includes the headline conclusions and recommendations. Recommendations are addressed to UNDP.

Conclusion 1 – The objectives of the LHSP project focusing on tension mitigation and support for economic opportunities have maintained their relevance. Adjusting the Theory of Change in response to shifting contextual realities and having a major emphasis on area based economic opportunities would have strengthened results.

Conclusion 2 – The effectiveness of LHSP was hindered by the absence of a cohesive project-wide strategy to analyse results and identify overarching lessons. LHSP's effectiveness and ability to adapt has been impacted by the absence of a comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis.

Conclusion 3 – A localised approach has contributed to economic activities that generated income for several community members. But not having the interventions placed in or linked to a more area-based economic development approach reduces broader impact.

Conclusion 4 – This evaluation has identified positive contributions made by the LHSP project toward tension mitigation, particularly in instances where the MSLD process was executed in an inclusive and participatory manner. The extent of tension mitigation could not be ascertained through this evaluation and will require, moving forward, a more systematic research and analysis by the LHSP project team.

Conclusion 5 – Reduced funding will require LHSP to engage in strategic dialogues with donors and national government stakeholders on the future direction of the project.

Conclusion 6 - The Project's decentralised approach has proven to be effective to support a contextualised implementation of LHSP. UNDP area-level staff resources are not sufficient to maximise the strengths of a decentralised and localised approach. Diverse and collaborative partnerships have contributed to identifying effective development solutions in communities.

1.4 Recommendations

<u>Note</u>: For a comprehensive overview of the detailed actions included under each recommendation, please consult the main report.

Recommendation 1: Update the LHSP design and allow for annual updates to reflect contextual and programmatic changes. (Strategic)

Recommendation 2: Strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning to inform Project decisions combining a systems-based M&E approach with strong field monitoring. (Strategic)

Recommendation 3: Transition to an area-based intervention approach addressing the needs of a geographic locality rather than targeting individuals or groups. (Strategic)

Recommendation 4: Maintain the MSLD process supporting a participatory conflict sensitive approach for mapping priorities and triggers of instability but shorten the process for project identification. (Operational)

Recommendation 5: Support efficiency in resource use to optimize Project outcomes (Operational)

Recommendation 6: Enhance the engagement of government stakeholders and collaboration with other development and humanitarian actors. (Operational)

2.0 Evaluation Overview

This section describes the evaluation's 1) purpose; 2) scope; and 3) the subject evaluated (including its main frameworks, features, strategic positioning, and a summary of previous evaluations). Annex 1 includes the Terms of Reference.

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to examine the extent to which UNDP's Lebanon Host Communities Support Project (LHSP) has realised its Theory of Change (ToC) in Lebanon, against a context of rapidly evolving crises. As such, the evaluation analyses LHSP in-light of several important processes, including (but not limited to) the increasingly protracted and multi-faceted nature of Lebanon's crises, and growing host community fatigue. As such, this evaluation is intended to inform UNDP, as well as key stakeholders, on programming strategy and approach for conceiving and implementing future support to host communities in Lebanon.

2.2 Scope & Objectives

The temporal scope of the evaluation covers the period 2019 – 2022, covering all geographic areas where LHSP is implemented focusing on Lebanese host communities.

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

► **Assess** the level of progress made towards achieving outputs and outcomes of the project, considering the changes in the local context over the examined period (2019-2022).
► **Capture** lessons learned and good practices from the implementation of the project with special focus on consolidated results of the different interventions.
► **Provide** actionable strategic and operational recommendations informing how in its next phase the LHSP could improve, inter alia, its relevance, delivery of results and engagement with stakeholders, including local communities, Lebanese authorities, and donors.

The evaluation also integrates across key cross-cutting issues including Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), Inclusion of People with Disabilities (PWD) and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).

The evaluation adopted appropriate gender and age-responsive tools and methods in data collection, analysis, and reporting. The findings include the views of internal and external stakeholders, from national and local government entities to community groups, beneficiaries, and donors. The ET relied on existing documentary resources and research (See Annex 2) and prioritised in-country direct consultations with beneficiaries and community groups and government stakeholders.

2.3 Subject Evaluated

The subject of this evaluation is LHSP, and its programme of work from 2019 to 2022. Launched in 2014, LHSP was developed within the framework of interventions conducted by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), the Council of Development and Reconstruction (CDR), the targeted municipalities, and Union of Municipalities.

During the period 2019 – 2022 the LHSP / SLD programme had a total programme budget of USD 93,517,370 (financial figures provided by the CO). A detailed overview of the financial contributions is included in Annex 3. The largest donors during the period under evaluation have been in order of size Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau (KFW), Department for International Development (DFID, now Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; FCDO), Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), International Labour Organisation (ILO), Norway and China. Historically, since the start of LHSP, DFID has been the largest donor.

LHSP's broad objective is to enhance social stability in Lebanon and promote development as part of a national strategy to respond to Lebanon's protracted crises. According to LHSP's Theory of Change, the expected impact of LHSP includes the reduction of tensions and conflict; new employment opportunities; reduced competition over services; and transparent local governance accountability. LHSP aims at creating these positive impacts by enhancing stability and development opportunities across Lebanese regions that are most affected by the impact of the Syria crisis. The Project conducts local interventions in vulnerable areas, villages, municipalities, and clusters of municipalities that host a high ratio of Syrians displaced to Lebanese population. These communities are at a high risk of tensions resulting from pressures linked to the lack of services and the competition over job opportunities among other factors. UNDP is primarily responsible for the delivery of the identified

projects, including procurement of contractors, quality assurance as well as tension mitigation strategy.[4]

As such, LHSP aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, it addresses:

- ► **SDG 1:** No Poverty
- ► **SDG 5:** Gender Equality
- ► **SDG 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth
- ► **SDG 11:** Sustainable Cities and Communities
- ► **SDG 16:** Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
- ► **SDG 17:** Partnership for the Goals.

LHSP coheres with, and is integrated within, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). At the design stage, the LHSP was positioned as contributing to the following LCRP's Social Stability and Livelihood Sector outcomes:

- ► **Strategic Objective 4: Social Stability** *(Impact 5 – strengthening municipalities and communities' systems ability to mitigate tensions)*
- ► **Strategic Objective 4: Livelihoods** *(Impact 4 – local economic development, reduce unemployment and create income-generating opportunities)*[5]

Under the 2021 update of the LCRP, LHSP planned to contribute to:

- ► **Strategic Objective 3: Support service provision through national *systems*** *(Impact 3 – Vulnerable populations have equitable access to basic services through national systems)*
- ► **Strategic Objective 4: Reinforce Lebanon's economic, social, and environmental stability** *(Impact 4 – Mitigated deterioration in the economic condition of vulnerable populations and Impact 5 – Social stability is strengthened in Lebanon)*[6]

The Strategic Objectives under the LCRP 2022 remained the same as in the 2021 updated version.[7] LHSP's areas of local interventions follow criteria considered by the LCRP[8], which mainly include:

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[4] UNDP. LHSP. Project Document.
[5] LCRP. 2017-2020 (2019 update).
[6] LCRP. 2017-2021 (2021 update). p.43. https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-2017-2021-2021-update
[7] LCRP. 2022. Pp.15-16. https://lebanon.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/LCRP%202022_FINAL.pdf
[8] See LCRP 2017-2021 and LCRP 2022.

► Multi Deprivation Index (MDI is a composite index, based on deprivation level scoring of households in five critical dimensions: 1) access to health services; 2) income levels; 3) access to education services; 4) access to water and sanitation services; 5) housing conditions) [9]

► Lebanese population dataset (based on CDR 2002)

► Refugee population figures (including all registered Syrian refugees, Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (PRL) and Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS), Syrian refugees' data from UNHCR, and Palestinian data from American University of Beirut/UNRWA)

The LHSP project document includes several outputs and outcomes. The evaluation team explored these outputs and outcomes and identified the ways in which outputs could be credibly said to have contributed to outcomes.

LHSP's four outputs are:

1. Capacity of local stakeholders strengthened to assess and respond to the needs of the community in the design and delivery of interventions in a conflict-sensitive and participatory manner.
2. Competition for basic services reduced in vulnerable communities.
3. Income generation for vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees created through intensive labour activities supporting rapid employment schemes.
4. Competition for jobs reduced through economic opportunities improvement, including vulnerable groups (women and youth).

LHSP contributes to the Country Programme Document (CPD) through:

Outcome 1: Local communities and institutions' ability to mitigate tensions and prevent conflict are strengthened, and the overall response on the evolution of tensions informed.

Outcome 3: To improve the ability of vulnerable groups, especially women and youth, and of micro, small and medica size enterprises, to cope with and recover from the economic shock through stabilizing and improving income and revenues.

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[9] MDI is from CAS, UNDP and MoSA Living Conditions and Household Budget Survey conducted in 2004.

LHSP contributes to the United Nations Strategic Framework Programme Results and Resource Framework through:

Outcome 1.2. Lebanon has institutionalised mechanisms to promote peace and prevent, mitigate and manage conflict at national, municipal and community levels.

Outcome 3.1. Productive sectors strengthened to promote inclusive growth and local development especially in most disadvantaged areas.

As detailed in the findings section, the ET included these two outcome objectives (and broader analysis) under the headlines 'peacebuilding outcomes' and 'economic outcomes.' While separated for the purpose of analysis, peace and economy are also evidently interlinked, where they can be either mutually positive or indeed mutually negatively enforcing.

LHSP conducts local interventions in vulnerable areas, villages and municipalities and cluster of municipalities that host a high ratio of displaced Syrians displaced. These communities are at high risk of tensions resulting from pressures linked to the lack of services and the competition over job opportunities and other factors. Based on the results framework the project targeted Lebanese host communities, aiming to reach gender parity among beneficiaries. In addition, Syrian refugees were also benefit from interventions.

Municipalities, MoSA, MoIM and the CDR act as principal partners of the project, meanwhile engagement of donors and other UN agencies is a key factor in the LHSP implementation.

One key feature of LHSP is its participatory project selection method. Activities of LHSP (specific interventions-projects) are (ideally) to be identified through a conflict-sensitive needs assessment methodology - Mechanisms for Stability and Local Development (MSLD).[10] This is a process owned by the community and endorsed by the municipalities. The MSLD process follows five phases:

- ► **Phase 1:** Entering and launching of the process
- ► **Phase 2:** Mapping and analysis
- ► **Phase 3:** Formation of the MSLD committees comprised of community representatives from diverse sectors.
- ► **Phase 4:** Formulation of the Stability and Local Development Plan
- ► **Phase 5:** The implementation of the activities included in the SLD plans.

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[10] Referred to in the 2019-2022 LHSP Project Document as MSR (Mechanisms for Stability and Resilience).

This evaluation reflects the activities of LHSP across 1) North Lebanon; 2) South Lebanon; 3) Bekaa and Baalbeck-Hermel and 4) Beirut and Mt Lebanon areas. These are the four area offices for LHSP where programmes work in close coordination with LCRP actors at a local level. Within this geographic modality, the ET randomly selected sites that are in urban, rural, and peri-urban locales spread out across core sectoral interventions, including: WASH, electricity; infrastructure and livelihoods. (See Annex 4 for overview of projects selected).

Where relevant this evaluation report references two earlier evaluations.

In 2016, LHSP conducted an external evaluation providing the following main recommendations to strengthen implementation:[11]

- ► **Develop** an approach for dealing with population data issues
- ► **Scale up** and consider increasing focus
- ► **Revisit** the structure and management of the peace-building component
- ► **Take steps to i**mplement livelihoods projects systematically and comprehensively
- ► **Introduce** formal capacity development activities for municipalities
- ► **Develop** a clear and agreed upon Theory of Change

In 2018 a second evaluation was commissioned providing the following main recommendations:[12]

- ► **Update** the selection of targeted communities and review the selection criteria
- ► **Enhance** the livelihood programme through comprehensive livelihood projects
- ► **Support** a locally based area approach to scale up LHSP
- ► **Support** sustainability through a capacity development strategy for local actors
- ► **Review** the LHSP governance structure

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[11] Adam Smith International. (2016) LHSP Evaluation.

[12] Knowledge Development Centre. 2018. Final Evaluation Report. LHSP. 2015-2017.

3.0 Contextual Background

Twelve years into the Syria crisis, Lebanon remains at the forefront of one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time and continues to host the highest number of displaced persons per capita and kilometre in the world.[13] Lebanon's situation in the past years has been portrayed as a multi-layered crisis offsetting development gain, with acute humanitarian consequences. It is estimated that 2.5 million people are in need.[14]

Lebanon's dire economic situation was a critical trigger to the civil unrest that erupted in October 2019. The worsening financial crisis was caused by very high levels of public debt (one of the largest debt-to-GDP ratios in the world), a large deficit in current accounts due to trade deficits in goods, soaring inflation rates associated with a shortage of US dollars and the collapse of the Lebanese pound. In the subsequent months, the country was also faced with a currency crisis. Losing about 95[15] percent of its value compared to the US dollar, to which it was pegged, the currency crisis resulted in low levels of purchasing power and consumption and prevented much-needed public and private investments. Lack of economic diversity in terms of agriculture, industry and services also created a situation where the informal economy provides the majority of jobs.[16]

Lebanon is a highly economically and politically stressed host country, having faced the devastating impact of the unprecedented economic, financial, social and health crises of the last four years. As of October 2021, the Government of Lebanon (GoL) estimates that the country hosts 1.5 million Syrians who have fled the conflict in Syria, including 844,056 registered as refugees with UNHCR, along with 257,000 Palestinian refugees. These populations live across all governorates in Lebanon. Since 2015, Lebanon has received over US$8.2 billion in support for displaced Syrians, vulnerable Lebanese, and Palestinian refugees under the LCRP.[17]

It is estimated that 2.5 million people are in need.[18] According to OECD, Lebanon's fragility increased in five of the six dimensions between 2019 and 2021, most markedly in the economic and political dimensions. Lebanon is not categorised as fragile in the 2022 edition due to its still-relatively strong

[13] Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2022-2023. (2022).
[14] OCHA (2022). Increasing Humanitarian Needs in Lebanon. April 2022.
[15] https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/lebanon
[16] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_374826.pdf
[17] https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-lcrp-2022-2023
[18] Ibid.

performance in the environmental, human and societal dimensions.[19] However, after 4 years of a crippling economic crisis, 80 percent of the population has been pushed into poverty.[20]

Nearly half of the Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian populations affected by the crises are children and adolescents. About 1.4 million children under 18 years of age are at risk and have an acute need for basic services and protection. In 2019, 55 percent of Syrian refugee households lived in extreme poverty (USD 87 per month) and 73.5 percent lived below the poverty line of less than USD 3.84 per day.[21] In 2022, the situation had further worsened with a total of 3.2 million in need (1.5 million displaced Syrians, 1.5 million vulnerable Lebanese[22], 180,000 Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (PRL) and 29,000 Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS).

The 2022 VASyR data revealed that despite the price of essential items and services skyrocketing by over 700 percent since June 2022, families in Lebanon still earn less while having to pay much more for the most basic goods.[23] In 2021, almost 9 in 10 displaced Syrian households were living in extreme poverty. The increased difficult situation for vulnerable population groups has contributed to increased negative inter-communal relations with 21 percent of Lebanese and Syrian households reporting inter-communal tensions in July 2018, rising to 36 percent in August 2021.[24] Intra-Lebanese community relations have also witnessed a decline since 2019. In 2018, just 4 percent of Lebanese cited negative relations between different communities, rising to 32 percent in August 2021.[25]

Multi-dimensional poverty has doubled from 42 percent to 82 percent.[26] Since 2019, poverty has been increasing owing to a decline in economic activity and widespread political instability. These interlinked shocks caused currency depreciation and severe inflation, limiting households' purchasing power and increasing income poverty. In Lebanon, nearly 4 million people are living in multidimensional poverty including approximately 745,000 Lebanese national households. A Human

[19] OECD (2022), States of Fragility 2022, OECD Publishing, Paris.
[20]ttps://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-_multidimential_poverty_in_lebanon_-policy_brief_-_en.pdf
Human Rights Council. (2022) Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter. https://lebanon.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/FINAL%20SR%20Report%20on%20his%20Visit%20to%20Lebanon-ENG-Published%20May2022.pdf
[21] Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (*VASyR) 2019.*
[22] World Bank 2021 Compounding Misfortunes: Update. Estimate calculated using methodology related to income. WFP's Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), not yet published, ranking Lebanese households' deprivation across dimensions such as food, health, education, shelter, livelihoods and employment, as of September 2021, found that 46 percent of Lebanese households were severely deprived. ESCWA has estimated the multidimensional poverty for 2021 to have reached 82 percent. The estimates were produced doing simulations using the Labour Force and Household Living Conditions Survey (LFHLCS) 2018-2019 as the main data source.
[23] VASyr 2022.
[24] WAVE XI ARK UNDP Regular Perception Survey.
[25] LCRP (2022). P. 11. Tensions Monitoring System regular incidents and tensions monitoring UNDP.
[26]https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-_multidimential_poverty_in_lebanon_-policy_brief_-_en.pdf

Rights Watch survey found that 40 percent of Lebanese households earned approximately USD 100 or less per month and 90 percent of households earned less than USD 377 per month.[27]

With the protracted nature of the crisis, refugees are living in poverty, accumulating debt and making tough choices to reduce costs, with negative consequences for quality of shelter, access to health, clean water and education opportunities. Furthermore, areas with the highest concentration of refugees, North Lebanon and the Bekaa valley, are among the poorest and most underserved regions of Lebanon.

Even before the crisis, social services, infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities were inadequate. Now, increased refugee populations are putting enormous pressure on water, sanitation, education and health care systems, livelihood, and jobs competition, with critical consequences for Lebanon's natural and environmental resources.

Public services are overstretched, with demand exceeding the capacity of institutions and infrastructure to meet needs. The service sectors are also overburdened, with the public health sector accumulating debt as Syrian and vulnerable Lebanese patients are unable to cover their part of the bill. The conflict in Syria has significantly impacted Lebanon's social and economic growth, caused deepening poverty and humanitarian needs, and exacerbated pre-existing development constraints in the country.

In 2022, it is estimated that 332 localities in Lebanon host the highest number of displaced Syrians, Palestinian refugees, and deprived Lebanese (some 87% of Refugees and 74% of deprived Lebanese). The map of the 332 localities is therefore used to prioritise areas that will cover a high number of the vulnerable population.[28] Prior to 2022, the map as shown in Figure 1 was used. For the updated 2022 map see Annex 5.

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[27]https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/12/lebanon-rising-poverty-hunger-amid-economic-crisis#:~:text=Lebanon%20has%20a%20population%20of,economic%20crisis%20started%20in%202019.

[28]https://reliefweb.int/map/lebanon/lebanon-inter-agency-coordination-332-localities-lebanon-host-highest-number-displaced-syrians-palestinian-refugees-and-deprived-lebanese-2022

MOST VULNERABLE CADASTERS

251 Most Vulnerable Cadastres host

87% Displaced from Syria
67% Deprived Lebanese

Most Vulnerable Cadastres
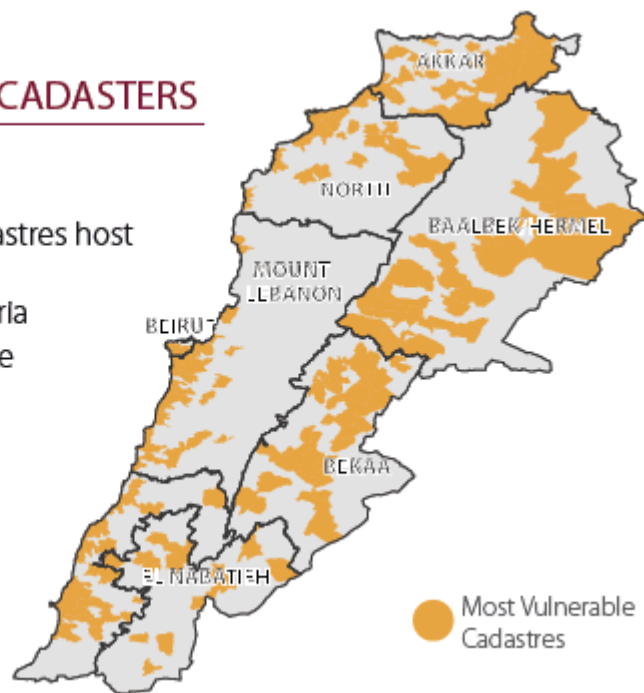
Figure 1: Map of the 251 most vulnerable cadasters in Lebanon.

The protracted displacement crisis has impacted different segments of the population differently, due to their particular vulnerabilities, coping capacities and susceptibility to threats. Socio-economic vulnerabilities, exacerbated by the protracted emergency, are worse amongst female-headed households, and even higher for those living in families with disabilities, who are also less food secure, have worse diets, adopt severe coping strategies more often and have higher poverty levels. This shows that the impact of the crisis has had strong implications on conditions for women.[29] This situation is similar among Lebanese whereby both households with children and female-headed ones were more likely than others to say that there was sometimes or often not enough to eat. Lack of money or other resources was the key driver of households missing meals or running out of food.[30]

Gender gaps are significant in Lebanon. Indeed**,** the country maintains one of the highest overall gender gaps in the world, ranking 145 out of 153 countries in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap report 2020, and one of the lowest global rates of women's labour market participation, 29 percent for women as compared to 76 percent for men.[31] These gender inequalities are strongly present in refugee and migrant communities across both the formal and informal labour market. This

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[29]https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2019-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon
https://lebanon.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/LCRP_2021%20Update_FINAL_v1.pdf
[30]https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/12/lebanon-rising-poverty-hunger-amid-economic-crisis#:~:text=Lebanon%20has%20a%20population%20of,economic%20crisis%20started%20in%202019.
[31] World Economic Forum. 2020. Global Gender Gap Report.

gender-based division of labour restricts women's opportunities for economic participation and empowerment. As the economic challenges and political instability intensify, the vulnerability of women and girls in Lebanon is exacerbated. Domestic violence, child labour, foregoing education and child marriage have been increasing in recent years in parallel with socioeconomic upheavals. The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in more women losing their jobs or facing salary reductions and being exposed to domestic violence.[32]

The crisis is not only challenging the country's existing social and economic infrastructure, but also security and social tensions. Tensions are rising and can be especially observed in the most under-served parts of the country. Across Lebanon there is an observed increase of violent riots, armed robberies, and intra-communal tensions[33]. UNDP's – ARKs Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon indicate precarious relations between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees. Competition for low skilled jobs has remained the most-frequently cited source of inter-communal tensions, by both Lebanese and Syrians. WAVE XIV report highlights that both the Lebanese and Syrian outlook on the future has continued to decline over successive waves of the survey. The report also highlights that Lebanon's compounded socio-economic crisis continues to exacerbate social tensions, both in relations between Lebanese host-communities and Syrian refugees and within and between Lebanese groups. Lebanese relations with Syrian refugee communities remain fragile, most notably in Bekaa, Akkar and Baalbek-Hermel. Nationally, the fraction of Lebanese rating the quality of host community and refugee relations as 'negative' or 'very negative' increased from 35.3% in Wave XIII (April 2022) to 40.% in Wave XIV (July 2022).[34]

Responding to these contextual challenges requires a multi-pronged approach. Indeed, addressing conflicts in Lebanon in a comprehensive and systematic manner should be based on addressing both the root causes of conflict in the country – mainly the troubled history of sectarian tensions and geographic imbalances – as well as the more proximate causes, with the Syrian crisis and economic crisis. The conflicts are affecting the country's stability and are having effects on from one side, the way Lebanese deal with each other, and from another side, on how Lebanese deal with "newcomers" or Syrian refugees more specifically.

At the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in London in February 2016, participants agreed to reduce the pressure on countries hosting refugees by supporting them in providing access to jobs

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[32] WFP. 2020. Assessing the Impact of the Economic and COVID-19 Crises in Lebanon.
[33] Based on an initial review of UNDP – ARK Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon. Narrative reports between 2019 and 2022.
[34] UNDP. ARK (2022). WAVE XIV Narrative Report.

and education that will benefit both refugees and host communities. Through linking relief and development efforts, there will be a lasting benefit for those countries as well as the tools needed for Syrians to re-build their own country once they are able to return. Syrians are restricted from working in specific sectors. This is a challenge that most organisations are facing when it comes to livelihoods programmes.

Lebanon has been grappling with a presidential vacuum since November 2022, and currently operating under a caretaker government. This situation makes it even less likely that the country will undertake necessary reforms or receive assistance from the international donor community to stabilise its ongoing financial crisis.

Twelve years on and the reality of the response on the ground in most affected regions indicates that the municipalities have played a critical role. However, their effectiveness in responding to the presence of large numbers of Syrian displaced has been hampered by a number of external factors including the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of financial resources, absence of central government, and the economic and financial crisis.

4.0 Methodology

This section details the evaluation's 1) constraints; 2) methodological framework; 3) analytical approach; 4) sampling methodology; and 4) data collection methods.

4.1 Evaluability Assessment & Constraints

This evaluation has dealt with several constraints at a Project-specific and contextual level. These constraints are summarised here and dealt with more systematically in the output effectiveness section of the findings. The evaluation constraints were effectively managed through several mitigation measures, which included addressing identified data gaps in consultations with stakeholders and obtaining from the LHSP project team additional data sources. The main mitigation measure has been to address information gaps around the results of the project through consultation with internal and external stakeholders, focus group discussions with beneficiaries and site visits.

► **Adaptation to contextual constraints:** The context in which UNDP has implemented LHSP has changed since 2019, with multiple shocks occurring over a short time (COVID-19, Beirut port explosion, economic and financial crisis, political crisis and protracted refugee crisis). This operating environment was considered by the evaluation team, focusing on how far LHSP was able to evolve to meet contextual challenges in its operations.

► **Comprehensiveness of data:** At the inception phase and during findings triangulation, the ET found multiple barriers around data availability at output, outcome and impact level. The challenges around availability of data were initially identified in the inception report. Further discussions with the LHSP M&E team were required to determine and gather what coherent data sets for the LHSP project were available. Several output targets were found to be out-of-line with actual Project activity and there was very limited qualitative internal LHSP-wide internal analysis attached to output/outcome indicators.

► **Data availability:** LHSP does not have its own project-wide M&E framework and MEAL plan in place, capturing not only the monitoring and tracking of delivery of services/infrastructure activities but also aspects of capacity building, social cohesion, gender dynamics and reduced tensions which requires a more qualitative approach to data collection.

► **Theory of Change.** From the current underlying Theory of Change it was difficult to determine what the added value of LHSP is in comparison with other similar development interventions (with the exception of the MSLD committee process). It was also not evident to what extent the Theory of Change included in the project document is guiding the implementation and

reporting. Through the in-country data collection the evaluation team aimed to understand the added value of LHSP, and the linkages between the outputs and the outcomes with the aim of constructing a new Theory of Change (see Annex 10).

► **Contribution analysis**. Many factors beyond LHSP's interventions will have contributed to changes – or lack thereof – at the community level. In this context the evaluation team was able to undertake a limited form of contribution analysis, exploring observed changes and seeking to understand the factors that have contributed to changes.

► **Limitations due to the size of the site projects/sites sample.** The resources for this evaluation only allowed the team to cover a small sample of project activities across the four regions of Lebanon. Nonetheless, while small, these sites were selected completely independently and are thus likely credible examples of LHSP outputs. KIIs and FGDs also covered a limited range of stakeholders and beneficiaries as compared to the total of communities targeted by LHSP.

4.2 Methodological Framework

The overall evaluation approach was guided by OECD DAC criteria.

► **Relevance:** The degree to which the project objectives, design and Theory of Change consider the local context and conditions in which it takes place. The extent to which the objectives of LHSP are consistent with beneficiary requirements.

► **Effectiveness:** The extent to which LHSP results have been achieved. Considering: 1) if the activities were coherent with the overall objectives and project purpose; 2) if the analysis of principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objective was sound.

► **Efficiency:** The extent to which resources are used appropriately and economically to produce the desired outputs.

► **Impact:** Expected significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, higher-level effects.[35]

► **Sustainability**: The project capacity to produce and to reproduce benefits over time. Considering to what extent intervention benefits will continue even after the project is concluded.

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[35] Including but not limited to: (i) Agulhas Perception Surveys (2020-2022) (ii) joyn-coop Mid-term evaluation of the German Contribution to the LHSP in Lebanon (iii) ARK (2017-2018): Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon; (iv) AKTIS (2016): Impact Evaluation Report: Lebanon Host Communities Support Project; (v) Dylan O'Driscoll (2018): Donor Response to Refugee Tensions in Lebanon

The Evaluation Matrix, including main questions and sub-questions, against which these criteria were assessed, is included under Annex 6. The main questions under each OECD-DAC criteria include:

Relevance

EQ 1: The degree to which the project objectives, design and Theory of Change consider the local context and are sensitive to the economic, environmental, equity, social, political economy, and capacity conditions in which it takes place.

EQ 2: The degree to which the objectives of LHSP are consistent with beneficiary requirements and needs.

Effectiveness

EQ3: Extent to which LHSP planned outputs have been achieved and contributions to outcomes have been made.

EQ4. Extent to which targeting of interventions was appropriate.

EQ5. Strength of the M&E system to assess results and contributions toward outcomes and impact.

EQ6. To what extent were principal factors influencing progress toward achieving objectives effectively managed?

Efficiency

EQ7: Extent to which LHSP used its resources appropriately to produce the desired results.

EQ 8. What are the observed changes observed that can be attributed to LHSP's support linked to resilience, stability and social cohesion?

Sustainability

EQ 9. What have been the factors influencing intervention benefits continuing after the completion of the project?

The ET's approach also gave particular attention to inclusion of vulnerable groups, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and gender responsiveness. On gender, the evaluation assessed the degree to which LHSP embraced a gender responsive and gender transformative approach in planning and implementation. While setting up interviews and FGDs, there was emphasis placed on speaking with women and girl beneficiaries across all four areas. Beneficiaries were asked questions related to

employment, social and cultural norms, and power dynamics. Attention was paid to issues on mobility and access, and the extent to which projects may have served women, men, and youth – from different nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds – differently. Moreover, during interviews with staff (including the gender focal point) and donors, questions were asked on gender mainstreaming, disaggregation, and analysis. The evaluation put emphasis on the ongoing relevance of LHSP in the changing and complex context and the effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions responding to the need to move toward sustainable interventions.

The evaluation can't possibly, in the time frame and budget, be statistically representative, but random selection and spread of field visits (detailed below) ensured broad enough findings that were useful. The evaluation cautiously aimed to translate findings – based on triangulation of evidence generated through field visits, KIIs and document review – at a more wide-ranging level. As detailed in the findings section, however, it is particularly challenging to make valid generalisable observations in a context like Lebanon, where there are particularly deep regional variations in political, economic, and social formations.

4.2 Analytic Approach

The evaluation is theory-based and relies on a mixed-methods approach using a combination of primary and secondary data. The evaluation team adopted an iterative, consultative approach with regular exchanges with LHSP staff members. This approach hopefully has enhanced ownership of the evaluation by key stakeholders and enriched LHSP's evidence base.

This report's primary analysis tool is the evaluation matrix. Team members assessed collected data against each EQ and sub-EQ. Throughout the analysis process, the ET ensured that all information feeding into the evaluation process came from credible sources and was triangulated with other primary or secondary sources. The evaluation team used MAXQDA as the software tool to support analysis. In particular, the responses given by key informants and beneficiaries, together with information gathered during the collection of secondary data and information, was triangulated using a thematic analysis approach arising from the different sources of information. The analysis process was iterative, with different sources clustered in relation to each EQ, sub-EQ and key themes were identified and recategorized until a clear pattern emerged.

As aforementioned, given data, time, and resource limitations, it was not possible to conduct a fully-fledged and analytically robust contribution analysis. However, with the resources available, the ET undertook a limited contribution analysis and has pinpointed where it is feasible that LHSP contribute

towards an observed change. The team has sought to thus build a credible story that connects outputs to outcomes to impact. However, the limited internal project-wide analysis conducted by LHSP, as well as the very notable regional variation in socio-political and economic conditions across Lebanon, has made it a challenge to produce any definitive narrative.

4.2.1 Evaluation Matrix

The central tool used by the team during both data collection and analysis is the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 6). The evaluation matrix addresses five main evaluation criteria and sets out relevant approaches, including sub-questions, indicators, data sources and data collection methods.

The ET grouped certain EQs or sub-questions together for the purpose of cohesive and intersectional analysis, where appropriate. This ensured a more comprehensive, interconnected, and analytically useful exploration, while also avoiding an overly granular repetitive assessment.

Responses to EQs are evidence-based, combining qualitative and quantitative data where available. This included analysis of information gathered through semi-structured interviews, FGDs, desk reviews of available reports, and quantitative analysis of output data where available. Information was triangulated across various sources to validate the findings. Evidence from desk review, interviews and FGDs was systematically captured against the EQs and sub-questions. The evaluation matrix has also informed the data collection instruments, interview and FGD guides.

There were no major deviations between the evaluation questions included in the ToR and the evaluation matrix prepared by the evaluation team. The main alterations focused on:

► Putting together the sub-questions on M&E capacity at output, outcome, and impact level

► Highlighting that impact EQs responses are not conclusive as this is not an impact evaluation

► Highlighting that outcome level analysis, on the basis of documents reviewed during the inception phase, will be a challenge and that the ET will undertake a *limited* form of contribution analysis

► Grouping together responses to certain sub-Eqs to ensure comprehensive and intersectional analysis

4.3 Data Collection Approach

The ET collected an array of quantitative and qualitative data inputs. During an in-country data collection the evaluation team visited project sites and conducted extensive consultations in communities (See Annex 11 for in-country schedule). The main data sources informing this evaluation were:

- ► Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries
- ► Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with internal and external stakeholders
- ► Field visits to a selection of LHSP projects
- ► A desk review of relevant documents, including UNDP reports, donor reports and monitoring spreadsheets.

As aforementioned, data was crosschecked across sources. Statements and opinions made during interviews and discussion are not directly attributed to ensure anonymity. Field observation guides as well as interview and FGD prompts are included in Annex 8.

The ET used semi-structured interview techniques. The ET used guides as prompts to ensure all relevant areas were considered while permitting divergences where information is relevant and rich. This allowed evaluators to tap into the knowledge and learning of those most closely linked to the Project. Questions from prompts were adjusted and further contextualised prior to each discussion or meeting. Interviews focused on key issues within the remit of each person or group interviewed. FGDs with beneficiaries (residents, refugees, and PwDs) and other stakeholders were an important element in seeking the views of the affected population and those with knowledge of how their situation was altered through LHSP interventions.

4.4 Data Sources

4.4.1 Document Library

A document library was assembled by UNDP Lebanon. (Annex 2) This was reviewed during the inception phase and data analysis phase. Further documents or articles were identified and requested from UNDP on the basis of emerging analysis. Further documents were provided on the basis of gaps identified during the drafting phase of the evaluation.

4.4.2 Selection Criteria for Field Visits

The ET visited 26 projects across Lebanon divided between the four regions: North, South, Mount Lebanon and Bekaa. The selection was independent and purposive, with the intention of visiting a

selection of projects in 'rural, 'urban' and 'peri-urban settings.' The ET further subclassified projects according to broad thematic areas of intervention: 'energy,' 'wash,' 'economic asset,' 'other infrastructure' and 'protection.' Some projects overlapped across themes. The ET did not select for sectoral factors (confessional denomination, etc) as this emerges through the geographic spread given Lebanon's political geographies.

The sites were all independently selected by the evaluation team using LHSP's project master sheet. Given independence in selection, the broad sweep of projects, and the thematic areas covered, the ET is confident that the selection is qualitatively representative. Nevertheless, LHSP is a large Project, with hundreds of projects falling within the evaluations time scope. Findings from field visits were thus further triangulated by rounds of interviews at the country-office level and adequate data, where available.

LHSP's regional teams occasionally added on projects where they were nearby to the selected site, as this maximised time and efficiency in the evaluation and did not impact the independence of the evaluation.

The site selection grid is included in Annex 4.

4.4.3 Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

The evaluation was also informed by an extensive array of FGDs and KIIs. 20 Interviews were conducted with all relevant LHSP staff at country level; 5 donors; 3 national government ministries; 15 sub-governors, mayors and municipal workers; and other project-specific stakeholders. 21 FGDs took place with members of 3 MSLD committees, NGO partners, and beneficiaries (144 beneficiaries consulted through FGDs including 68 women). Where possible, KIIs or FGDs took place 'on site,' giving the opportunity to use the physical environment as a prompt for questions and discussions.

Before commencing the key informant interviews and FGDs, participants were asked to provide informed consent, confirming their willingness to participate in the discussions. All participants were assured that the conversations were confidential and not recorded; notes taken during the interviews were solely for the use of the evaluation team and would not be shared with anyone else. Furthermore, participants were informed that all interviews would be anonymized, with no reference to individual entities. Further details on interviews conducted are included in Annex 12.

5.0 Findings

5.1 Relevance

Relevance findings are divided into two areas. The relevance of LHSP's design and the relevance of LHSP to needs.

5.1.1 Relevance of Design

This section responds to the following EQs:

► **EQ 1: The degree to which the project objectives, design and Theory of Change consider the local context and are sensitive to conditions in which it takes place.**

Key Points

► The LHSP objectives – included at the design stage in the Theory of Change and the Results Framework – to mitigate tensions and support economic opportunities have remained relevant.

► The Results Framework and Theory of Change lacked updating to reflect the worsening socio-economic and political situation in Lebanon.

► There is a solid understanding of conflict dynamics and drivers of tension at area level, contributing to the relevance of LHSP at the local level.

► Capacity building of local institutions and support for stabilising income and supporting economic opportunities are relevant to the context, but opportunities were not sufficiently maximised and brought to scale.

► The LHSP Project modalities allowed it to consider the local context, mainly through the MSLD process.

Relevance of Frameworks to Context

This section answers the following Sub-Evaluation Questions:

► **EQ 1.1: Relevance in the context of a protracted crisis to foster stability and reduce tension.**

► **EQ 1.2: Relevance to stabilisation priorities and ability to respond to changing and emerging development priorities and needs.**

At the initial design phase, the ET found that LHSP's purpose, outputs, outcomes, and Theory of Change were relevant to the context of a multi-layered protracted crisis in Lebanon. Its design focuses on enhancing social stability and promoting local development, both areas evidently in need of support in Lebanon. This relevance-to-needs was confirmed in KIIs with a wide variety of

stakeholders, including municipality representatives and community members. LHSP's design also coheres well with the national strategy to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon as reflected in the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) for Lebanon.

LHSP's expected outputs in the Results Framework (Annex 7) are considered relevant to the context. The results against the outputs and the strength of the performance indicators used are further discussed under the effectiveness of results and the strength of the monitoring and evaluation. *(See EQ2 and EQ5).*

The ET found that the Theory of Change (Annex 9) developed during the design phase was relevant and included assumptions and pathways to achieve change. However, no consistent reporting has been prepared against the Theory of Change to test and adjust assumptions throughout the implementation cycle. As there has not been any regular comprehensive reporting on the Theory of Change, it is a challenge to assess to what extent the Theory of Change has maintained its relevance during project implementation. *(See further under EQ3, EQ5).* The evaluation team has developed a new Theory of Change to align with the current comprehension of the different pathways. (See Annex 10)

LHSP project documents considered the local context during the design phase. The design demonstrated a good understanding of the root causes of the tensions between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese host population. During the data collection, the ET found that understanding of local context and conflict dynamics was especially strong among the UNDP staff in the area offices.

However, both the Results Framework and the Theory of Change were not updated to reflect the significant changes that have taken place in Lebanon since 2019. On paper, the Results Framework and Theory of Change remained static over the course of implementation. No adaptations of the Theory of Change and the Results Framework took place to reflect contextual changes and ensure continued relevance of either document. Examples of substantial contextual shifts include the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic and financial collapse of the country, the Beirut port blast, the dramatically increased hate speech, and increased tensions in communities between Lebanese nationals and Syrian refugees. While UNDP did respond to these contextual changes through separate crisis response plans for COVID-19 and the Beirut port blast, these were not reflected in the Results Framework or the Theory of Change.

There are both advantages and distinct disadvantages with LHSP's direct project implementation modality as it relates directly to stabilisation priorities. LHSP identified communities using the list of 332 localities in Lebanon pinpointed by the inter-agency coordination unit. The localities host the highest number of displaced Syrians in some of the most vulnerable Lebanese communities.

The 332 localities identified hosting 87% of the displaced Syrians and Palestinian refugees and 74% of deprived Lebanese. Other criteria include – but are not limited to – resources pressures and donor priorities. The evaluation team found that selecting municipalities for intervention has been relevant in the context of LHSP.

The knowledge of the area managers was also a significant contributing factor to ensuring the relevance of the selected municipalities. While the ET supports the identification modality, during the field visits, it was evident that selecting the municipalities in isolation from their surroundings is not always appropriate and raises its own challenges. On several occasions during the field mission, community members pointed out that villages hosting the Syrian refugees will receive the attention of the donor community, but surrounding villages that do not host a high number of refugees, are often equally vulnerable. It was also noted that certain municipalities seem to receive much more attention from donors. In sum, there is a perception that a fair distribution of international assistance is not always the case. This situation is outside of the control of UNDP because it is not always linked to LHSP funding. However, a perceived lack of fairness in assistance was evidently contributing towards tensions between communities.

UNDP has kept a focus on social stabilisation through a regular perception survey on social tensions throughout Lebanon conducted by ARK. Stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation – especially donors – found these reports valuable. These perception surveys influenced decisions on selecting geographic areas for interventions and were considered in the preparation of donor proposals.

While the Results Framework and ToC remained unchanged, at the implementation level LHSP took steps to maintain relevance by considering changes in context. During the LHSP implementation, the competition for jobs became an increased driver of tension between Syrian refugees and the Lebanese population. The economic and financial downturn of the Lebanese economy pushed many Lebanese into poverty. LHSP responded with an increased focus on cash-for-work during the COVID-19 pandemic and supported several community-level productive assets. The increased focus on livelihood opportunities providing opportunities for Lebanese communities to earn a living has been very relevant to the changes in the context with a deteriorating economic context during the period under review.

Some FGDs highlighted that by providing access to income-generating activities, vulnerable Lebanese people could meet their basic needs. These interventions, stakeholders noted, also decreased tensions in communities with a high presence of Syrian refugees. However, in other discussions there were concerns expressed that these jobs should *only* be going to the Lebanese as the Syrians '*have a lot of support already.'*

However, the project did not sufficiently consider the recommendations made in previous evaluation reports regarding supporting local economic development and livelihood opportunities through a more sectoral focus and trying to reach scale. The 2018 evaluation recommended a locally based area approach to scale up LHSP and to develop more comprehensive livelihood projects. The scaling-up and increased focus was also a recommendation in the 2016 evaluation. It was found that a stronger area-based approach to development – through working in clusters or with unions of municipalities – would have further increased the relevance of the economic development interventions. This was also indicated by several government and non-government stakeholders consulted during the data collection mission. While the evaluation team recognizes the progress made in this direction, it is the team's perspective that the area-based approach or working in clusters of municipalities was not strategically pursued.

LHSP's outcomes are closely aligned with the objectives of the LCRP to support vulnerable Lebanese households and communities and address the Government's concerns and priorities. However, during KIIs with Government, it was indicated that, considering the deteriorating economic situation and the increase in tensions, the project may need to consider how it will adapt to sustain its relevance.

The project made also important **contributions to several SDG goals**, with the most noteworthy being: SDG1 – No poverty; SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth; and SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Relevance of Projects to Conflict Sensitivity

This section answers the following Sub-Evaluation Questions:

► **EQ 1.3: To what extent has the project managed been conflict sensitive and contributed to promote conflict sensitivity.**

Under this EQ, the evaluation team considered the selected communities' relevance and the Mechanism for Stability and Local Development (MSLD) promoting conflict sensitivity.

The LHSP design incorporated sufficient flexibility, allowing LHSP interventions to adapt to changes in context. This flexibility to adapt and remain contextually relevant at the local community level is mainly driven by the MSLD approach, where it is owned at the local community level. The evaluation team found that the MSLD process is a well-developed mechanism for community members to collectively reflect on issues they face, assess challenges and propose solutions. In a context of limited political involvement and low levels of governance transparency, the MSLD committees are a welcome

attempt at providing space for political participation that, furthermore, embeds accountability objectives within UNDP itself.

The MSLD process is based on a methodology that includes several steps to ensure an inclusive and participatory process. Steps include a stakeholder mapping process; composition and selection of the MSLD committee members, based on established selection criteria; mapping and analysis to draw out factors driving conflict and tension; and identification of priorities and implementation of the activities. [36]

The MSLD process is focused on responding to development priorities and needs through a community participatory approach. As one of the MSLD committee members in Saida stated:

> It is a strong participatory process and a way to bring together a range of different community members to assess problems and propose solutions for the future.

The MSLD process allowed people to identify the most relevant projects for their communities. This is based on a mapping analysis of the community's contextual needs while taking into consideration donor requirements and obligations. Because of donor requirements LHSP could not always support the projects identified as the most relevant by the communities. When donor funding is earmarked for specific sectors, population groups or geographic areas, LHSP will need to seek alignment between the results from the MSLD process and donor preferences. This concern was highlighted on several occasions by LHSP staff members and MSLD committee members interviewed *(See also EQ3)*. The UNDP area managers have played a critical role in working with the MSLD committee members to clarify donor preferences.

It was found that the composition of the MSLD committees largely determines the relevance of the MSLD process outputs. The evaluation team found the MSLD process had more obstacles in terms of relevance, when the municipality was small and had clan-based or tribal tendencies. During the field visits, the evaluation team came across certain villages and towns where the MSLD committee comprised mainly family members or relatives. This made interventions more susceptible to being self-serving in comparison with locations where there was a more diverse representation. This was also found to be more likely when committees were relying on word-of-mouth and snowballing for participation. [37] While there are established selection criteria for committee members, the evaluation revealed that contextual realities sometimes hindered the ideal representation aligned with these criteria. This was also confirmed in the majority of interviews at the area and country level.

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[36] UNDP. Stability and Local Development Plans (SLD). Background Information. Mechanisms for Stability and Local Development (MSLD). PPT provided by UNDP CO.
[37] Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews.

5.1.2 Relevance to Needs

This section answers the following EQ:

► **EQ 2: The degree to which the objectives of LHSP are consistent with beneficiary requirements and needs.**

Key Points

► LHSP objectives linked to livelihoods and social stability remain relevant to the priority needs of the host communities affected by the influx of displaced Syrians.

► LHSP has addressed gender equality through its livelihood activities, infrastructural interventions, and its work with local authorities to promote women's engagement in public and political decision-making. There is room for LHSP to increase its commitment to gender advocacy and gender-related research, particularly on an outcome-related level.

This section answers the following Sub-Evaluation Questions

► **EQ 2.1: How has the project identified and addressed communities' needs and priorities?**

► **EQ 2.3: What are the challenges moving from implementing transition to longer-term interventions?**

► **EQ 2.2: To what extent has LHSP addressed gender equality, empowerment of women and broader inclusion of youth and marginalised groups?**

Community Needs and Priorities

LHSP objectives linked to livelihoods and social stability remain relevant to the priority needs of the host communities affected by the influx of displaced Syrians. Community beneficiaries expressed to the evaluation team that LHSP is meeting their priority needs. LHSP responded to the need for infrastructure and basic service provision in Lebanese host communities to alleviate suffering and promote stabilisation. However, to what extent the peacebuilding measures were relevant to addressing tensions in Lebanese Syrian relations through local-level community engagement could not be ascertained.

The move of LHSP to incorporate more socio-economic measures responded to communities' needs. The financial and economic crisis continues to have a devastating impact on the Lebanese population, causing unemployment and poverty rates to rise sharply while Lebanese businesses are also struggling for survival. With income opportunities declining, competition for jobs has emerged as one of the most important sources of tension between the refugee and host populations in Lebanon. In this

context, the inclusion of socioeconomic components such as Cash for Work (CfW) and support to SMEs in the LHSP can be regarded as highly relevant to the priority needs of communities. However, the economic recession has shifted the most urgent needs in the country and could lead to decreasing Project relevance without further adaptations, such as a more area-based economic development approach.

Challenges moving from implementing transition to longer-term interventions.

This evaluation question implies that the currently implemented interventions should be considered 'transition' projects. Based on the projects visited and the reports consulted, it is not evident why the current projects implemented should be regarded as 'transition' projects. The absence of a strategy explaining the vision of LHSP of what is understood as transition and longer-term interventions under LHSP makes it challenging to assess.

Scaling up interventions through a sector focus or cluster approach would support longer-term interventions. To achieve this, the identification process for LHSP-supported projects must be altered. Now, the selection of the projects is linked to the community driven MSLD process. What is selected for funding by communities responds to the priorities identified by the communities. Longer-term interventions will require a different planning and coordination process and should be ideally better linked with local economic development plans. More longer-term interventions will also require a different engagement with local and national government institutions with more emphasis on capacity strengthening.

Gender Equality & Empowerment of Women

LHSP's gender equality strategy is an ambitious document, developed in 2021 and is strongly aligned with UNDP's 2018-2021 gender equality strategy[38]. The strategy emphasises the importance of placing gender equality at the core of its work and identifies its priority areas as:

- ► Livelihoods: women's economic empowerment and participation
- ► Empowering women in infrastructure
- ► Strengthening gender-responsive local governance
- ► Promoting strong GBV prevention.[39]

LHSP engaged women in project activities' design and decision-making processes. This was observed during the Saida and Ablah MSLD sessions, where women made up around 50% of attendance. Area

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[38] As per LHSP's Gender Strategy, all projects have to be gender mainstreamed. Moreover, all procedures and policies must not be signed until they are overseen from gender focal points or analysts. However, according to interviews with staff, the latter – i.e. active involvement of gender staff – is not always the case.

[39] Although included in the gender strategy, GBV prevention was not a part of the evaluation matrix for this report and will therefore not be discussed in detail.

managers reiterated that this is standard practice across MSLD meetings, and that this inclusion ensures strong input from women in project identification. For instance, during the Saida MSLD workshop, women debated the most effective and efficient way to address problems related to water and sanitation, youth anxiety, disenfranchisement, and waste management. They referenced the ways in which WASH issues might affect women and young girls specifically. Women from the Ablah MSLD committee also noted that their strong presence had ensured that community members receiving support for the urban farming project would include vulnerable women such as widows. One woman from the Ablah MSLD committee noted:

> It is important for us to be present during decision-making processes because we know how to identify women struggling and how to support them best.

In terms of women's economic empowerment and participation, it was observed that several livelihood activities strongly involved women. One donor, whose funding focuses mainly on feminist assistance, reported that the flexibility within LHSP allowed for multiple gender-related interventions, from women's economic empowerment to GBV-related projects. This donor said that joint programmes and umbrella funds could be particularly conducive to feminist assistance.

The gender focal point gave an example of an LHSP project that was gender transformative, under this donor. The project created networks of women groups to create safe spaces, working with 52 women-led and owned businesses to support them with capacity building and leadership skills, as well as access to finance and markets. The project was comprehensive because it involved working with the private sector on policies and laws, training all relevant staff and employers on PSEA, and working with municipalities to raise awareness on gender. Within municipalities, committees were formed with at least 50% women members to work on economic plans for their area, and support the creation of linkages between businesses, municipalities, and women.

Moreover, area managers noted that when livelihood projects are selected, there are specific requests from LHSP regarding the **gender disaggregation of the labour force**. However, for physically arduous projects such as construction, women are given the choice to join the workforce – if women don't fill up the quota, these spaces are replaced by men. An area manager said that certain physically demanding projects that men have historically dominated were filled up by the women quota quickly. One such example was the cleaning of a forest in the Bekaa and Chouf areas. "The number of women who signed up for forest management and cleaning even surpassed the 50% quota," he said.

Women involved in the Abbasieh greenhouse production project reiterated that the project greatly impacted their lives. One woman said:

My life has changed [because of the project] – I have a deep understanding of the land, I feel rooted here, in my hometown, and see myself switching fully to agriculture at some point, especially once I can earn enough money from it. I would've never thought I'd know this much about types of soils, pesticides, and the different ways to grow tomatoes!"

She attended multiple trainings – capacity building and soft skills, technical and organic approaches to agriculture, and management. Another woman, a long-term farmer, said the project widened her agriculture network and helped connect her to other producers, distributors, and sellers. All women in the FGD said they benefited greatly from the coaching sessions included in the project. They plan to upgrade it into a more eco-touristic project whereby people from other villages and cities visit and shop in their area.

Another livelihood project, a cooperative in Qaa, also included a group of women working as agricultural workers and administrative staff. According to the cooperative director, women comprise up to 50% of agricultural workers. During FGDs, some of these women – two of whom have a disability – expressed that this was their first income-generating job, and they have developed transferable technical and agricultural skills through it.

These examples strongly align with LHSP's gender strategy on ensuring meaningful women's economic empowerment, particularly regarding facilitating productive and resilient smallholder agriculture among women and promoting better quality assets and innovation. Indeed, it appears that the livelihood projects selected have served as key entry points for women. However, it remains unclear how effectively linked these livelihood activities are "with other relevant programmes working across the different dimensions of women's empowerment" (LHSP Gender Strategy). For example, there appears to be a weak link between LHSP's Cash for Work and its long-term development for increased resilience and sustainable livelihoods. While the skills developed through these projects are transferable and have been critical for their economic empowerment, **several women reiterated that they have not had sufficient linkages to the labour market through LHSP.** Interviews with several women farmers under the Abbasieh greenhouse project, the Ablah urban farming project, and the Qaa cooperative indicated a dependency on the project for self-sustenance.

With regards to infrastructure, a lot of LHSP's projects appear to have positively impacted women's sense of safety, agency, and empowerment. Where possible, infrastructure incorporates gender inclusive design elements such as restrooms, changing areas, and waiting rooms that are accessible and comfortable for all individuals.

For instance, representatives from local authorities in the North, two of whom were women, reiterated that providing streetlamps and rehabilitating public facilities has been conducive to both

women's safety and increased involvement in income-generation activities. At a medical facility in Arsal, women doctors and nurses noted that the machinery provided, one of which is a mammogram, has empowered their practice and been crucial for women in and surrounding Arsal. According to staff, over half of the attendants at the medical facility are women, including Syrian refugees as well. Moreover, during MSLD meetings, it was clear that women are involved in decisions about the infrastructure within their communities. For instance, two women committee members in Saida noted that building a library could positively impact adolescent girls' access to recreational activities.

Although women remain a minority in the infrastructure workforce, area managers note that where possible, women in a more technical capacity are often targeted. In Ferzol, an interview was conducted with a female engineer who oversaw the rehabilitation of a public school in the area. However, overall, there doesn't appear to be any systematic monitoring or analysis of how women may either benefit from or be harmed by LHSP's infrastructure projects.

Fieldwork indicates that LHSP has positively impacted municipalities concerning gender-inclusive policies. Mayors and governors interviewed said that UNDP pushed them to consider how to engage women in projects more thoughtfully. This aligns with a key component of LHSP's strategy: the realisation of women's labour rights and access to decent work. This is through the engagement of both the business sector and governments "to pay living wages, adopt gender-inclusive policies, support collective bargaining, combat occupational and gender segregation and support organisations of informal workers, including domestic and care workers." Mayors interviewed reported that UNDP area managers often targeted women and other vulnerable groups when and where possible. However, local authorities do not seem to understand LHSP's gender strategy, nor do they appear to have adopted an internal policy with clear gender-related goals.

Moreover, while many of the projects appear to be designed contextually for the various geographical locations, there do not seem to be assessments or analyses specifically looking at gender dynamics or GBV risks. Staff interviewed recommend in-depth studies that particularly focus on how LHSP projects may or may not have gendered impacts on an individual level or within households and communities.

Projects are designed contextually for the various geographical locations, but there do not seem to be assessments or analyses specifically looking at gender dynamics or GBV risks. Staff interviewed recommend in-depth studies that particularly focus on the risk of abuse and exploitation women face within the agriculture sector. It is positive that LHSP projects do integrate gender awareness and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) among project beneficiaries, along with safety and technical trainings. Female focal points are often in the field as well as supervisors and field monitors

in case women beneficiaries may need support. Moreover, although LHSP does not have its own internal referral systems for GBV, it does provide beneficiaries with needed contacts in case they need to refer a situation. LHSP should also seek to map GBV service providers in areas of intervention and support stronger referral systems within MSLD committees.

Overall, staff reported that while some LHSP projects do have a gender transformative approach all throughout, many other projects incorporate gender simply as a statistic or a disaggregation, failing to integrate it within projects as an intrinsic and systematic part of the project design and implementation. It was thus recommended by interviewees that UNDP's gender experts be involved from the beginning across all LHSP projects when and where possible, with the aim of being more gender transformative and responsive. Gender indicators, as well, should be adapted and incorporated with more thoughtfulness to different LHSP projects. Finally, to better understand the gendered impact of LHSP projects, it is recommended that qualitative and focused gendered and social inclusion analyses be conducted.

Inclusion of youth and marginalised groups

LHSP has demonstrated deliberate effort to actively engage youth and vulnerable groups. Through the review of the MSLD and SLD plans, it is evident that a substantial emphasis has been placed on identifying and addressing the needs of youth within project activities. While there is a good degree of consideration given to the needs of Persons with Disabilities and other vulnerable groups, it was found that there is still room for improvement in ensuring that the concerns and requirements of these marginalised groups are more comprehensively integrated into activity planning. Examples include: The Stability and Local Development Plan Bchamoun (Mount Lebanon) promoting youth's involvement and participation in public affairs. The plan identified the absence of a local mechanism to support Persons with Disabilities and build their capacities.[40] The Stability and Local Development Plan for Abbasiyeh identified drug use among youth as a major concern and the lack of employment opportunities in the area.[41] The MSLD Action Plan for Amioun (Northern Lebanon) identified priorities linked to youth and the elderly including lack of employment opportunities and inclusive social activities.[42]

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[40] Stability and Local Development Plan. Mount Lebanon – Bchamoun – UK5-2020-2021.
[41] Stability and Local Development Plan. Mount Lebanon – South-Abbasiyeh-KFW-2019-2021.
[42] MSLD Action Plan. North-Amiouis-UK5-2021.

5.2 Effectiveness

This section answers the following EQ:

► **EQ3.0: Extent to which LHSP planned outputs have been achieved and contributions to outcomes have been made.**

Effectiveness is divided into Five sections: Outputs; Outcomes; Accountability; M&E; and Constraining Factors

5.2.1 Outputs

This Subsection answers the following EQs:

► **EQ 3.1: To what extent were outputs achieved?**

► **EQ 3.3: What unforeseen and foreseen factors have contributed to achieving (or not achieving) the intended outputs?**

Key Points

► The majority of the individual project outputs examined by the ET were considered by beneficiaries and stakeholders to be of high-quality. However, fieldwork visits suggest that output implementation often met a bricolage of varied challenges, caused for example by a lack of municipal capacity, limited stakeholder buy-in or various bureaucratic hurdles. While the Country Office carries out internal quarterly monitoring, this process could be strengthened with more cohesive reporting and analysis that track and monitor these challenges across LHSP and form a Project-wide strategy to improve effectiveness.

► LHSP's outputs have changed substantially during the period under evaluation, with many targets effectively misaligned with actual LHSP activity. While related to various unforeseen factors, the absence of updated Project-wide targets limits the ET's ability to triangulate evaluative analysis regarding output effectiveness.

► Project-wide output monitoring was found by the ET to be inconsistent, suggesting limited systematisation and recording of lessons learned, which would improve output implementation effectiveness. Monitoring is largely based on quantitative reports, with no routine recorded descriptive or qualitative analysis.

► The ET was provided with LHSP-level reporting documents or progress reports, including monthly progress reports and donor reports. Many existing reports are often donor specific and do not provide an overall LHSP picture. Portfolio reviews are likewise largely quantitative with limited analysis.

LHSP outputs have shifted in response to changing contexts in Lebanon as well as changes in main donor priorities. As a result, a significant number of LHSP's results framework targets are effectively misaligned with actual Project activity. To some extent project outcomes, such as enhanced economic resiliency and social cohesion (returned to below), were still relevant despite output changes. However, because targets were not updated to match a changing context in Lebanon and donor priorities, the ET is unable to triangulate the extent to which many (but not all) output targets were met.

It is worth underscoring that, upon inquiry from the ET, it does appear that UNDP has a process for amending Project targets; in LHSP's case, changes would need to be signed off by the project board. Given the significant changes in Lebanon's socio-economic and political situation, is not clear why this was not pursued, at least for areas of activities that were clearly no longer being carried out. In sum, where outputs lack relevant targets, it is self-evidently not possible to assess the extent to which outputs were achieved. As outlined further below, while these numbers might be 'high,' without a measure, they are, in essence disconnected from actual project activity and therefore not helpful when it comes to evaluation analysis.

Improving LHSP output effectiveness is constrained by inconsistent data and substandard monitoring. As noted under the monitoring section, reporting is patchy at best. UNDP explained this through M&E staff turnover. However, facing such issues during handover is, itself, indicative of limited institutionalised learning. Instead of Project-wide monitoring, LHSP staff reported to the ET that lessons are shared through meetings and donor reports. Yet donor reports and meetings are not a substitute for monitoring, where the former is a not analytic and the latter is transitory. A lack of institutionalised learning has likely hindered monitoring and thus strategizing around how to improve output effectiveness, especially in a context of staff turn-over.

This issue was flagged by the ET during the inception phase of this evaluation, where it was noted that:

> Based on the document review the Project is expected to have a strong project level monitoring and reporting as well as annual and final reporting to donors. Less clear is the strength of data and analysis at the level of impact and outcome. It is also not yet evident to what extent LHSP has a full operational M&E framework and MEAL plan in place capturing not only the delivery of services/infrastructure activities but also aspects of capacity building, social cohesion, and reduced tensions.

The ET was not initially presented with any datasets or excel documents tracking targets. Instead, the team was sent various output numbers in tables, which were either inserted into email exchanges or

PowerPoint presentations. These numbers, moreover, had no associated explanatory information that would have help make sense of reporting and they were not coherent with the evaluation time scope.

Finally, the ET was sent a word document that had been circulated within the UNDP office to add output results added to the 2019 – 2023 Results Framework with some explanatory notes on methodology. While helpful, the fact this had to be pulled together for the evaluation suggests serious and significant gaps in monitoring where there is no centralised system in place.

LHSP progress reports and donor reports predominantly contain quantitative data with minimal qualitative analysis. LHSP reports for individual donors and progress reports mainly emphasize quantitative aspects and lack comprehensive analysis. Unfortunately, there is no systematic reporting on LHSP's overall achievements or a structured approach to learning lessons from the project as a whole. This has immediate consequences for effective implementation since regular documentation and discussion of both successes and challenges are essential for institutionalizing lesson-learning. Moreover, it becomes challenging to ongoing effectiveness, relevance, sustainability and impact of LHSP's Theory of Change without a well-rounded reporting and analysis framework.

Quantitative data provides only a cursory understanding of LHSP. For example, reporting on attendance figures within MSLD committees does not tell us anything about the quality, contribution, or representativeness of those committees; or reporting on numbers of media campaigns launched does not tell us about how effective those campaigns were. There appears, then, to be a lack of substantive internal Project-wide analysis.

Fieldwork visits confirmed that many outputs faced challenges in implementation; however, triangulation with provided data and reporting was not sufficient enough to offer broader explanatory analysis. While an example of a 'tracking sheet' documenting implementation progress for 2023 was provided, this falls outside the scope of the 2019-2023 evaluation period. In addition, LHSP's overall project document was also shared, but this contains only descriptive data on projects – costs, location, donor, type of project, but it does not show any documentation of output implementation issues.

Achieved Outputs

Where targets and outputs have remained relevant within the results framework, there are some signs of effective implementation. Three outputs exceeded (their still relevant) targets:

▶ **Output 3.1** 13/5 projects that support income generation have been supported at a municipal or cluster level.
  o These projects include Covid-19 response, forest management, cash for work, Women's Involvement in EIIP, and USBPRM

► **Output 4.3.** Projects have supported 20/10 value chains. This support is over 5 sectors (agriculture, agro-food, light manufacturing, rural tourism and services).

- o The ET observed an example of this work in two sectors: apple farming and honey production. The apple processing centre was well constructed and evidently, clean, and an asset to the farmers, who had likewise benefited from capacity-building in agriculture techniques and new seed varieties.
- o However, the honey production facility appeared underutilised and rundown.
- o With the honey production centre, there was no clear evidence of consistent value-chain analysis other than some marketing training and branding.

Missed Outputs

Some (still relevant) targets have been missed. On the basis of fieldwork visits and KIIs, these misses are likely due to bureaucratic impediments, funding restrictions, or delays caused by local-level disagreements. However, given an absence of project-wide reporting, it is not possible for the ET to draw a broader hypothesis as to why these targets were missed.

► **Output 1.1.** 61/251. Number of integrated MSR activities. No explanation was given for this result.

- o It is not clear what constitutes an "activity".

► **Output 1.2.** 61/251 communications plans developed.

- o The ET saw examples of communication strategy presentations and documents, which helpfully analysed questions of audience, reach, and engagement strategy. It is not clear, however, how these strategy documents relate to 'communication plans.'

► **Output 1.3.** 1308/7894 participants (in peacebuilding projects) disaggregated by sex, nationality, and age.

- o To this number, the LHSP team added 329 teachers given that they had participated in violence free schools training (VFS).
- o "Females" is not disaggregated by nationality or age, but presented as a separate category, so it is impossible to know if females tend to be younger, old, Lebanese, or Syrian.
- o The reported number of MSLD committee members is 979, which is the number who remained committed throughout all four phases of the MSLD process. There is no information on how often members drop off, and whether this drop off is being monitored and addressed effectively.
- o No explanation was given for these missed targets with regards to MSLD committees.

- o The lower teaching numbers were explained through the public sector teachers strike, the country's socio-economic crisis, challenges within the educational sector, and the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic. This informed a transition to VFC. The primary focus of these activities was on students, teachers, especially the youth, and their parents within the communities, conducted in community and/or educational centres.

► **Output 2.1.** 147 out of a targeted 200 projects supporting social and basic services have been completed.

- o No explanation was given for this under achievement.

► **Output 2.4.** LHSP has supported 80 out of a targeted 200 municipalities. In information provided by UNDP, the underachievement is explained through reference to a "move to work at both the municipal and cluster level, which includes more than one municipality" but the current M&E Team does not know how many municipalities are in each cluster and the ET did not see any examples of cluster-level programmes.

Inappropriate Output Targets or Reporting

Multiple results framework targets are no longer relevant. The majority of output data shared with the ET are strongly lacking given of the dearth of updated targets despite transformations of LHSP in relation to the crisis. For example,

► **Output 1.4** The target is "12" and the reporting is "4 fake news campaigns, 1 national campaign, and 21 local campaigns." This reporting is inconsistent and indicative of the various aforementioned issues regarding the RF and changes in programming.

- o Reporting documents do not detail what constitutes a "local campaign" and how that is different to the "4 fake news campaigns." It was later clarified that local campaigns are locally run and offline whereas the 4 fake news campaigns are national level. Here it appears the indicators in the RF are here too broad to capture actual LHSP activity.

- o National campaigns were not mentioned to the ET during fieldwork visits. However, at one site, a local example of a community WhatsApp group that tackled fake news flagged as effective. This was part of a youth-led fact checking initiative supported by UNDP.

- o The ET viewed a sample of these campaigns which are of high-production quality and have substantial metrics in terms of views. As mentioned above, the communication strategy is well developed, and shows a strong analysis of how to generate impact through the media landscapes in Lebanon.

- o However, beyond tracking, which already gives an incomplete picture, there is little systematic analysis or reporting that explores the effectiveness of communications as

a whole. This is a missed opportunity given the excellent quality of the communication strategy itself.

► **Output 2.2**. Projects supporting social and basic services are reported to have had a direct beneficiary count of 1,522,157 Lebanese and 720,545 Syrian refugee beneficiaries.

  o The *total target* is 1,500,000. Presumably, then, the number of LHSP beneficiaries for 2019 – 2023 is 2,242,702.

  o On this datapoint 51% are female. This percentage is just the demographic breakdown of Lebanon and not something actually recorded by LHSP.

  o This data is generated through population figures, thus if LHSP renovated a park, the direct beneficiaries are all those who live within the area of that park. While in theory, they *could* visit the park, this information tells us little about *actual* usage.

  o Moreover, Lebanese population data is likely unreliable despite being reported by UNDP as crosschecked municipal authorities (who do not have the capacity to carry out population surveys themselves, so it's not clear how exactly they cross check it).

► **Output 2.3.** 3/120 Social Development Centres (SDC) have been supported.

  o The reason for is the "reduction in support is due to the financial and economic and political crises which led to decreased engagement by the Ministry of Social Affairs."

  o It is not clear why this target was not adjusted in relation to this change.

► **Output 3.2.** 17,351/145,000 project direct beneficiaries of income generation schemes.

  o The first results framework target the ET saw stated that the target 58,000. It is not clear why the data submitted to the ET notes that this target is 145,000.

  o Data is reported as "10,699 males; 6,652 females; 11,741 Lebanese; 5,485 Syrian; 125 Other." There is, again, no disaggregation of gender by nationality.

  o No explanation is given for this substantially missed target.

► **Output 3.3.** 712,636/66,000 worker days created.

  o 484,100 Lebanese; 223,6169 Syrian; 5,367 Other

  o This data is not at all disaggregated by sex (but comment notes that it is disaggregated "in reports").

  o No explanation is provided as to why this reporting is substantially higher than the target, but the assumption is that it's due to prioritisation of Cash for Work.

► **Output 4.2.** 4587/100 M-SMES supported.

  o This is reported as, "Data collection through partners on all selected MSMEs, Coops, Farmers and CBOs for receiving in-kind assistance**."**

- - This collapsing together of multiple outputs into a target relating to M-SMEs renders the data largely insufficient.
  - An earlier version reported 908 M-SMES were supported.
  - No explanation is given as to why these outputs are not substantially above the 2019-2023 target.
- ► **Output 4.4.** Number of beneficiaries (economic opportunities) is reported as 10,702/900,000
  - 5607 males and 5095 females.
  - The target stipulates disaggregation by age; this has not been provided.
  - No explanation is given as to why this target is significantly missed, but the ET assumes project/donor change.
- ► **Output 4.7.** 4,250/14000 jobs maintained. Data submitted to the ET increased the target here from the 8000 located in the results framework (it is not clear why). This data is not disaggregated by sex and age (despite the RF noting that it should be).

Missing Data

No data was provided to the ET under two output results frameworks. This data is marked as "N/A" in the information provided. No further details were provided to the ET.

- ► **Output 3.4.** Number of people employed (disaggregated by sex, nationality)
  - No explanation is given as to why this is N/A.
- ► **Output 4.6**. Number of short-term jobs created (by sex, nationality)
  - This is "N/A" because, "we are not able to measure this since it requires post-implementation follow-up with businesses." No further explanation was given as to why that is not possible.

5.2.2 Outcomes

This subsection answers the following EQ:

- ► **EQ 3.2. To what extent have planned contribution to LHSP outcomes been made?**

The analysis below is divided between economic and peacebuilding outcomes.

Key Points

- ► The ET found some examples of positive contributions towards tension reduction through both LHSP processes (the MSLD committee itself) and LHSP outcomes (where projects have positively contributed towards communal solidarity). However, most of this is anecdotal and could not be triangulated against internal systematic monitoring. A perception survey carried

out by Agulhas for UNDP notes a total decline in tension perception from 31% (2021) to 28% (2022), though with very significant regional variation.

► In multiple KIIs (at various levels) it was felt LHSP has been unable to counter the rising tide of anti-Syrian racism and rhetoric. As a result, LHSP's ToC now reads as too ambitious for the current context. The ET did not see any documents suggesting there were attempts to follow-up on the ToC and check its continued relevance.

► In FGDs and KIIs there was a stronger preference for infrastructure over shorter term cash for work or SME support. While livelihood opportunities were also appreciated, there was a perception that this is more likely to indirectly risk contributing towards tensions whereas infrastructure is more communal and collective.

► Switching LHSP from a more longer-term development Project into a shorter-term assistance made sense given the fiscal collapse and sudden spike in vulnerability. Cash for Work schemes, when linked to productive assets, also have longer-term effects and was in general more appreciated by beneficiaries. Yet there is a perception among UNDP staff that this is not their most effective way of operating and LHSP should endeavour, where possible, to act as a development agency and not humanitarian.

► LHSP's localised community-level approach might produce geographically specific positive economic outcomes, but it is unable to address Lebanon's more systemic challenges.

It is challenging to make any valid observations on LHSP's outcome effectiveness at a broad national scale. Instead, effectiveness is highly dependent on (or even over-determined by) varied contextual factors. A sample of factors cited in FGDs and KIIs include:

● Municipal strength and capacity
● Strength and engagement of MSLD committees
● Degree of buy-in from key local stakeholders
● Overarching levels of poverty
● Local political composition
● Donor funding priorities

LHSP's regional managers and teams are a crucial asset for ensuring LHSP effectively navigates those multiple barriers. Much of LHSP's success and its ability to navigate difficult circumstances depend on the evident strength of local-level management. All regions have benefited from a highly competent and contextually sensitive regional managers. On the basis of KIIs and fieldwork observations, it was evident this was achieved by regional managers with strong local knowledge and personal relationships built over time. However, they are occasionally hindered by a remote and distant

national office. The Area Teams mainly consist of Lebanese nationals, who are highly skilled and professional. However, their status as local service-contracted staff exposes them to unique pressures. In situations when there are tense political dynamics, increased direct support from international staff could help alleviate some of these challenges. However, it is worth noting on this point that during consultations with UNDP senior management, it was emphasised that changes have been made to establish more systematic communication and exchanges between senior management and area managers.

Many projects visited by the ET were, in and of themselves, high-quality, and likely had made positive effects for the local communities' livelihoods and quality of life. However, the highly fragmented nature not just of Lebanon, but also of LHSP itself, makes forming any overarching remarks at a national or programme-wide level particularly difficult.

The ET encountered few examples of effective outcomes *directly* relating to conflict mitigation or social cohesion. While the context against which the data collection was carried out was one of high-level anti-Syrian rhetoric, the ET came across only a few projects that clearly had a direct positive impact on mitigating social tensions.

A lack of donor flexibility has hindered effective outcomes when new challenges in Lebanon emerged. A persistent demand and cocnern heard by the ET during data collection was rigidity in donor funding when it comes to project modifications. The most frequent example was the demand for solar panels to mitigate the impact of fuel shortages.

Peacebuilding Outcomes

This section responds to: "outcome 1: Local Communities and institutions' ability to mitigate tensions and prevent conflict are strengthened, and the overall response on the evolution of tensions informed".

In some cases, the MSLD process is, in and of itself, a positive contribution to peacebuilding in Lebanon. One of LHSP's most significant contributions to governance and conflict mitigation is the MSLD committee process. In municipalities where these committees are operational, well-attended, and broadly representative of the community, they can embody aspects of participatory democracy. A well-managed deliberative process in selecting projects means that both the process and outputs reflect directly local needs. However, interviews with LHSP staff also suggested that while the MSLD process is strong at the design phase and relevant to both the peacebuilding needs of Lebanon, as well as various international frameworks that stress the need for greater community involvement with development work, the process is highly context-specific. In some cases, the MSLD committees are active, engaged, and select projects that align with their priorities. In other cases, the process is

hindered by aforementioned obstacles, such as donor priorities, a lack of municipal capacity to support selected projects, among others.

In one example of an effective MSLD committee meeting, directly observed by the ET, there was an evidently lively and engaged discussion. The meeting lasted approximately two hours and was attended by around 26 participants, 11 of whom were women. The main content of the workshop was to agree on priorities in terms of different sectoral interventions: WASH, electricity, gender and protection, solid waste management, youth, etc

While there were a lot of different sectoral groups – and varying perspectives – the MSLD meeting was well organised. Indeed, participants were known to be associated with various 'traditional' Lebanese political parties as well as secular civil society activists. In and of itself, this mixture is no bad thing. Infrastructure is, in essence, political and one would not expect discussions to be conducted in an entirely technocratic and detached manner.

For instance, the group focused on youth issues, discussing the importance of youth-centric interventions, mental health and drug usage awareness, the high costs of sports and activities, and the increase of suicide. Some of the solutions offered included engaged citizenship, public spaces, training and employment linkages, awareness, etc. When probed about specific solutions, the youth sectoral committee suggested using a municipal space (the old justice palace) as an exhibition space, whereby a public library could be launched by and for the youth themselves.

The MSLD committees, through their selection mechanism, necessarily contain individuals with various political, social, and religious backgrounds. At the country-office level, the ET encountered varying perspectives on the awareness of political affiliations and potential influence within the MSLD committees. **Although there are formal selection criteria for ensuring committee participants have diverse religious and political backgrounds – and a commitment to peace, inclusivity, and active engagement – there is a prevailing perception that in practice, these criteria may not always be fully met.** Interviews conducted at both the area and country-office levels supported the notion that many participants join MSLD committees through informal channels like "word of mouth" or "snowballing" and that the apparent selection criteria may not consistently guide their composition.

Given the fragmented and diffused nature of Lebanon's political structures there is an inherent risk committees could tend towards reproducing certain communal power balances. **Failing to acknowledge this potential scenario risks impeding efforts to promote transparency and accountability.** However, it is an asset to LHSP that those with a closer view on the field, in particular UNDPs Area Managers, are very much aware of who is who within the committees and thus able to navigate certain situations where, for example, a proposed project would benefit only their communal

group and not others. Members of the peacebuilding team are also aware of these challenges. Area Managers, through their local networks, also monitor and deal with attempts at "prestige capture," whereby local political leaders seek to 'inaugurate' new projects and associate UNDP work with their own efforts.

The ET thus finds nothing in and of itself *wrong* with the committees involving representatives with political affiliations – it is only a problem when and if those affiliations overly dominate committees, determines project proposals, or permit prestige capture.

The low number of attendances within MSLD committees, as reported under Output 1.3 is also a concern. There have been no systematic monitoring, research, or investigation into what motivates and demotivates participants. In FGDs, it was very evident that frustration at a lack of funding for selected project priorities was generating some degree of reluctance. Projects are also sometimes not selected due to legal issues, lack of public land, or on the basis of capacity assessments of the municipality. Some members of staff interviewed for this evaluation also expressed concern that not only is 'drop off' an issue but also that the MSLD process is project-focused and once a project is implemented there is little-to-no effort made to continue to sustain the committees and ensure consistent involvement.

The ET encountered some examples of context-specific contributions for mitigating tension. In the Bekaa, the ET visited a renovated football facility that had evolved, through community effort, into a flagship example of how sports can contribute towards peacebuilding. The two coaches were Lebanese and Syrian; teams were mixed and included opportunities for both men and women. The coaches reported that the friendship of the children had led to friendship among Syrian and Lebanese parents. Initially there were tensions but now the parents have dinners at each other's houses.

In South Lebanon the ET visited an agricultural facility where Syrians were working alongside Lebanese. There were no reports of wage disparity. With the economic crisis and increased cost of food imports, agricultural production is an increasingly successful part of the economy. Syrian workers who come from rural backgrounds often possess knowledge around framing that is increasingly valued by Lebanese hosts. This was true across the country where the team visited agricultural interventions.

Where there were existing bonds of solidarity and support, some projects had also strengthened them. For example, in SMEs visited by the ET, especially those involving food production, there was evident joy at sharing of recipes and techniques.

Some projects showed few relationships with peacebuilding and some interviewees were concerned that in some instances LHSP might *contribute* to tension. For example, it was reported that landlords, following a beautification project in Tripoli that had resulted in painting old houses,

were "happy as they can increase their rent." It is difficult to understand why private landlords had their houses painted by UNDP, or why increasing the value of their assets would result in conflict mitigation.

For a group of national stakeholders, there was also a concern that LHSP – while adhering to the vulnerability criteria for municipality selection (i.e. the list of municipalities, currently at 332) - might be fuelling tensions in certain geographic areas. As noted by one of the interviewees,

> The reason why LHSP can be tricky is that when you work with municipalities hosting refugees only, or municipalities that fit into some criteria, other municipalities may end up feeling disenfranchised, and this leads to tensions between municipalities and the communities within them.

That same interviewee gave an example of a village in Akkar that had received a lot of infrastructural support because of LHSP, while the villages surrounding it did not. He noted:

> So [the village] has improved tremendously, but those surrounding it have nothing – no roads or infrastructure, barely any electricity or wastewater. This then leads to tension.

While the evaluation team acknowledges the importance of adhering to transparent selection and vulnerability criteria, it was observed that LHSP should also take into account the potential impact on neighbouring municipalities that are not selected for support. These concerns could be more effectively addressed through an area-based approach.

In other cases, the ET observed how LHSP's area managers are effective and trained on such conflict management. While speaking with them, they gave several examples of cases where tensions increased due to LHSP interventions and how they swiftly dealt with them. For instance, two municipalities in the Bekaa had tensions because one received support for solar panels, and the other didn't. The area manager ensured that funds were allocated immediately for the other village, and a series of discussions were held with both municipal heads.

LHSP is unable to effectively address or mitigate current levels of anti-Syrian rhetoric in Lebanon. Other than the above cited examples, the ET heard consistent anti-Syrian rhetoric among Lebanese beneficiaries, mayors, municipal workers, and MSLD committee members regardless of the communal composition of the area. It is important to reiterate that the evaluation's primary data collection phase took place against a context of heightened anti-Syrian rhetoric from Lebanese political elite. While this likely informs many of the findings, other indicators of tension are more long-standing, for example curfews against Syrians have been in place certain village since 2014 and expanded since.

An example of these tensions emerged during a discussion with members of a municipality in Mt Lebanon. The ET began asking about general needs in the area. The discussion connected the various ways in which electricity and water are interlinked, and that without power, there are no pumps or water. Curious as to whether the municipality had a plan or idea on how to address these various intersecting challenges, e.g., more solar panels, the ET asked, "what is the solution then?" To which the reply was, "return all the Syrians back to their country."

Incidents like this were widespread and heard by all members of the ET. These views were repeated and agreed to by members of the MSLD committees as much as by mayors and municipal workers, and misinformation was repeated consistently. Nevertheless, Area Managers, via LCRP and inter-agency coordination, have also had some notable successes in influencing mayors and municipal councils, encouraging them to amend anti-Syrian decisions (e.g., in Ferzol in the Bekaa).

Many of the factors driving this situation are beyond the reach of LHSP, where political forces in Lebanon are driving up the rhetoric for their own short-term gains. There was a frequent view that "Lebanese now have it worse than Syrians" and a certain degree of aggravation that LHSP is framed around "supporting hosts of Syrians" rather than simply supporting the Lebanese. Certain aspects of other UN programming designed to directly support Syrians was also driving tension. For example, the UNHCR and WFP-back cash assistance programme for Syrian refugees is distributed via ATMs. Lines of Syrians lining up to get cash out of machines, when Lebanese are unable to access their own bank accounts, is clearly acting as a tension driver. It is important to note that this is despite the fact that the most vulnerable Lebanese households are also receiving cash assistance via the National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP) and the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN).

Against this context, LHSP has struggled to effectively live up to its rather ambitious (and static) Theory of Change. On the basis of fieldwork data collection, there was very little evidence that LHSP has encouraged a perception that assistance is distributed in a transparent and impartial manner. Even in contexts where a number of the assumption within the ToC were met – such as investment in basic services – the ET encountered the same anti-Syrian rhetoric. Potentially, by improving infrastructure in some locations, LHSP lowered the possibility of worsening tensions while being unable to effectively counter the current nation-wide tensions.

There is also a difference between MSLD as it was designed and MSLD in practice. For instance, several projects visited by the ET were not selected through the MSLD committee approach but were more rapidly identified bilaterally between UNDP and municipalities with often some degree of 'add on' community consultation or focus group. This was often explained through context and necessity, and indeed the MSLD is one tool for project identification, but it is not the only one.

This section responds to outcome 3: To improve the ability of vulnerable groups, especially women and youth, and of micro, small and medium size enterprises, to cope with and recover from the economic shock through stabilizing and improving income and revenues.

Field visits and interviews with community members illustrated a clear preference for infrastructural interventions. Although host communities positively viewed livelihood generation activities, there were concerns such activities might lead to tension or competition, whereas improving infrastructure – be it public or economic – is a shared good for inhabitants across municipalities. In other words, given (mis)perceptions that the situation of Lebanese citizens has degraded to the same level as Syrian refugees, there was a sense in several FGDs that livelihood projects should *only* target Lebanese because Syrians have many NGOs and programmes supporting them already. However, in terms of infrastructure preference, it is important to note that LHSP is often constrained by various factors, including what is legally possible, the lack of public property or land, and the inability of the local community to maintain and operate a project.

In some cases, projects observed by the ET contributed towards improving income and revenues while risking community tension. One example was a home-farming project in a village that supports many households with tools, technical know-how, and financial support to turn their backyards into plots for vegetables and fruits. Beneficiaries of this programme reiterated how this contributed to a growing sense of self-sufficiency. However, when MSLD committee members were probed about how such project may or may not contribute to social tensions, they reported that in some cases households left out from this programme felt angry and betrayed – especially because the criteria for selecting beneficiaries was not very clear. Members of the MSLD committee gave an example of two brothers fighting over this – 'why did you receive support, and I didn't?' Indeed, one of the criteria is that LHSP must not support more than 1 family member, to cover the widest range of vulnerable families.

The shift in LHSP to more emergency and livelihood support programming helped some people cope with economic shocks, but 'recovery' is harder to identify. Where donors supported larger scale infrastructure projects, there was stronger evidence for effective economic outcomes. The Saida fish market is a flagship example visited by the ET. According to the Head of the Fishermen's Union it has *"fundamentally changed his and other fishermen's lives; and it has also brought in more traffic from buyers within and surrounding Saida."* In this case, LHSP also adapted to the changing circumstances, by also adapting the project to include solar panel installation. This shows scope for flexibility. Indeed, the Syndicate Head noted that without solar panels the fish market would be completely ineffective,

as they would not be able to fund fuel for generators and they barely receive any electricity from the state.

LHSP's local-level approach has both strengths and weaknesses. While LHSP has strengthened municipalities and contributed positively to decentralization, there remain a lot of question marks surrounding work with municipalities. Municipalities in Lebanon are highly politicised and often just as susceptible to elite capture as national state institutions. An interviewed Area Manager, for instance, noted:

> It's easy for cartels to benefit from infrastructure rehabilitation if we don't ensure proper supervision. There have been countless examples of political parties, via municipalities, trying to draw in support because of an LHSP project.

While Area Managers cited several ways, they try to prevent that – i.e., ensuring their communication is clear; prioritizing the needs of community members via the MSLD process; remaining impartial to any pressure from political parties – it remains to be the case that municipalities may use LHSP interventions as a means of garnering support.

There is also evidence of what might be called "benign capture." Fragmentation and political splintering are a reality of Lebanon, and some interventions appear to have channelled this context into *relatively* positive outcomes. For example, in a small village in the South, LHSP renovated a water system to rehabilitate the pump. The (absentee) mayor of that village was happy with the results and decided to use his own resources to strengthen the intervention by installing a vast solar panel array that can power the pump in periods without state electricity. He also installed fences and employed a guard. The result is that the entire village now has access to water. Without that intervention, the mayor could (possibly) have sought to shore-up his local base by distributing support to loyalists whereas thanks to the intervention and careful engagement from the area manager, he instead decided to enhance a community asset. However, this also illustrates the highly contextually varied nature of Lebanon's municipalities, where this village benefits from a wealthy mayor.

LHSP's support to municipalities is not conditional or accountable in cases where support is one-off and there is no capacity for proper supervision. For instance, in Tripoli the corniche was rehabilitated. However, a lot of the shops that opened on the corniche, making good trade thanks to the rehabilitation, do not pay tax, or are not bound by conditions such as opening hours, cleaning up, etc. Moreover, some interviewees questioned whether the shop owners allowed to open in the corniche have 'wasta', or some form of nepotism-based connection, to the municipalities. In this case, an infrastructure project had helped improve local SMEs. However, political fragmentation meant that the municipality was unwilling to capitalize on that improvement by collecting taxation revenue.

Lebanon's economic crisis is risking undoing outcomes. In some cases, costly yet clearly successful infrastructure projects have been weakened by the ongoing broader economic crisis. In an apple processing and packing facility visited by the ET in the South, the onset of the fiscal collapse meant that the power supply was interrupted and fuel for the generators became very expensive. The project removes middlemen from the apple industry, allowing farmers within the syndicate to process their harvest themselves. During the worst periods of the crisis, the farmers made a loss due to increased fuel costs. It is likely the loss they made was still less than processing via middlemen. Nevertheless, if the project could be adapted to make greater use of solar panels, then it would be more effective. As with the apple processing facility, the ET visited other examples of well-designed, economically effective, and highly-strategic livelihood interventions which are likely to have a long-term stabilizing effect, ranging from the renovated fish market in Saida to the potato processing facility in the Bekaa. The potato facility, operated by the Agricultural Union, will also strengthen the union itself, which is the main social protection provider for Lebanese farmers (who did not have access to the formal state-run contributory system, even when that system was operation).

5.2.3 Accountability

This subsection answers the following EQ:

> ► **EQ 4.3: How did the project mainstream accountability to affected populations?**

Key Points

> ► Community members and municipality workers felt that they could comfortably raise any issues they have with LHSP to the relevant authorities.
>
> ► One of the central tenants of AAP is enhancing the decision-making power of communities affected by crises; in this sense, where the MSLD committee is functioning, representative, and consultative it is to some extent 'accountable.'
>
> ► However, there appears to be limited formalization of grievance handling from beneficiaries, and the implementation of AAP is unclear.

LHSP through its decentralized approach and strong area approach maintains effective accountability on an interpersonal level. In FGDs and KIIs it was evident to the ET that all those involved in LHSP projects felt able to raise complaints or problems with staff. Indeed, while in the field, the ET witnessed numerous examples of direct problem solving and accountability between Area Managers, mayors, municipal workers, and committee members.

LHSP adheres to the "do no harm" principle and during implementation signage is installed in the community and at project sites with LHSP hotline numbers for receiving complaints. Guidelines and processes are established to manage and implement hotlines within communities. The evaluation team reviewed records related to how UNDP addresses and resolves complaints from workers and beneficiaries associated with contractors. However, whether hotlines represent the most effective and approachable means for community members and beneficiaries to voice their concerns could not be confirmed. Beneficiaries seemed to prefer a more direct personal connection with area-based staff and MSLD committee members.

The MSLD Process embodies, at a design level, the core rationale behind AAP. While AAP is sometimes operationalized as 'complaint hotlines' and 'complaint boxes,' the strategy is broader. AAP encourages UN Agencies to directly involve community members within decision-making processes. Doing-so makes a response 'accountable' in so far as it is shaped by the community itself. However, the degree to which this accountability is realized depends largely on the committee, who is attending, and to what extent they can said to be truly 'representative' of the local population**. Nonetheless, it is an asset of LHSP that they have attempted to integrate a more holistic vision of accountability in a difficult politico-economic context.**

5.2.4 Targeting

This subsection answers the following EQs:

► **EQ 4.1: How effective was the LHSP's beneficiary selection and targeting?**
► **EQ 4.2: How effective was the LHSP's project identification process?**

Key points:

► Project identification is highly dependent on several factors, including MSLD committees and donor priorities.
► While many projects did reflect the projects identified by the MSLD committees, it is not possible for the ET to assess the extent to which this selection reflected the needs of the community as a whole.
► There does not appear to be any rigorous LHSP-wide approach to selected beneficiaries.

LHSP carries out interventions in the most vulnerable areas, villages, municipalities, and neighbourhoods that host a high ratio of Syrians displaced to the Lebanese population. LHSP is implemented in what is defined as 'vulnerable cadastres:' previously 251, today 332 (See Annex 5).

When an area is identified, the community's priorities are identified through the MSLD process. This identification process allows for strong engagement by the community members in identifying the problems, needs and priorities of their communities.

This identification process has a strong potential to be effective, largely because of its comprehensive form of community engagement thanks to the MSLD committees. However, at the same time, this means that the effectiveness of project identification process is directly linked to the composition of the MSLD committee. Therefore, in instances where the MSLD committee are inclusive, members are representative of their communities, and are also actively consulting with other non-committee community members and institutions, the selection process will be at its most effective.

The projects visited by the ET that were identified through this process were found to be responsive to the needs identified by the MSLD committee. However, to what extent these projects genuinely reflected the priority needs of the wider community could not be verified. The ET did not access minutes of MSLD meetings during which projects were identified and prioritised. The ET could also not assess the quality of the composition of the MSLD committees. Based on the feedback from community stakeholders (beneficiaries, MSLD committee members, mayors), received during data collection, UNDP Area Managers continuously engage with the MSLD committees to ensure the quality of the MSLD process.

The identification of the municipalities is based on several elements, including the identification of vulnerable communities and evidence from local tension monitoring. Donors also play a significant role in identifying localities since their priorities, selection criteria, and timelines have to be considered.

The process of selecting beneficiaries after project identification and the systematic conduct of vulnerability assessments remained less clear. LHSP uses for the selection of beneficiaries' socio-economic vulnerability assessments, and based on the vulnerability criteria scoring results, the beneficiaries are selected. The feedback received from community beneficiaries by the evaluation team indicated that selection process does not always follow this very structured approach. For instance, for selecting beneficiaries of a home farming project, beneficiaries were identified based on 'spreading the word in the community'. To what extent vulnerability criteria were fully considered in this instance could not be verified. It should be noted that timeframe pressures can also play a role in having a less comprehensive approach through for instance a survey.

5.2.5 M&E System

This subsection responds to the following EQs:

► **EQ 5.1: To what extent has the M&E system contributed to measuring outputs and outcomes?**

► **EQ 5.2: To what extent has LHSP systematically included knowledge management for relevant projects during project implementation?**

► **EQ 5.3: How has the M&E system contributed or not contributed to measuring impacts? To what extent is the M&E system gender-sensitive?**

Key points:

► There is no comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system underpinning LHSP that provides a detailed view on results covering all outputs and outcomes.

► While tracking and monitoring of activities takes place, there is no analysis of how LHSP interventions contribute to outcomes or impact.

► Integration of gender in the M&E system could be further improved.

Evaluating the M&E system

Given that the M&E system is built around the Results Framework and the Theory of Change, the evaluation team is first considering the quality of both instruments.

For the Results Framework (Annex 7), the performance indicators <u>at the output level</u> are limited to quantitative indicators. Quantitative indicators alone are not able to support the assessment of qualitative aspects of an intervention. The evaluation team found that there was a lack of systematic qualitative evidence gathering and analysis at the output level.

The performance indicators <u>at the outcome level</u> are also limited to quantitative indicators. In this respect, a number of the outcome performance indicators are the same as the indicators at the output level. For example: (i) Number of projects supported (livelihoods) – at both outcome and output level; (ii) Number of improved infrastructure and quality basic services completed – at both outcome and output levels.

The evaluation team found that the LHSP team seems not to be responsible for monitoring the data against all the output indicators. For example, for Output 1: since the peacebuilding team collects and holds the data, any request for data against Output 1 should be provided by the peacebuilding team. Similarly for Output 4, where the livelihoods team are keeping track of the data against livelihoods indicators. This contributes to a fragmented overview of results.

The Results Framework does not sufficiently reflect the assumptions included in the Theory of Change. While the pathways and assumptions of the Theory of Change are seen as valid, it was

observed that the data collected against the Results Framework may not comprehensively examine all the assumptions embedded in the Theory of Change, mainly at the Outcomes to medium- and long-term impacts. Assumptions do not have to be explicitly captured in the Results Framework, but indicators and targets should be relevant and aligned with the project's Theory of Change. Assumptions at the outcome to impact level include *Positive changes in the perceptions related to the competition for jobs; strengthening local and national authorities' legitimacy contributes to social stability*.[43]

Reporting

The evaluation team found that there has been no comprehensive reporting for LHSP in its entirety. The reporting on LHSP has been limited to progress or final reports to donors. Reporting to donors reflects only the results against the donor funding received. This means that in terms of reporting on LHSP, there has been no comprehensive reporting against the LHSP Results Framework and Theory of Change. There are several reporting mechanisms such as the SLD Quarterly Programme Review, Social and Local Development Portfolio Reviews, and the UNDP CPD Annual Review Presentations. These were reviewed by the Evaluation Team, and it was found that while they give good data at the output level, there is no analysis of the quantitative data or how output data have contributed to outcomes.

The evaluation team is of the opinion that the quality of the reports to donors is varied. This was also an observation made by donors who the evaluation team met during the data collection process. Two main elements were raised by donors as important areas for improvement in terms of results reporting:

► **Reporting on stabilization and reduction of tensions.** The inability to measure whether LHSP does indeed contribute to reducing tensions has, in the words of one donor, "*become really frustrating".* Another donor wondered whether it would be possible to do an exercise or an outcome-driven study that investigates the question of social tensions in order to make comparisons between areas receiving support and areas not receiving support. In terms of the higher-level results, this is where analysis becomes more challenging, especially with regards to LHSP's impact on tensions in communities where activities are implemented. It is very difficult – perhaps even impossible in the complex context of Lebanon – to analyse this. But the stabilization of tensions is very important, and donors need to understand the link between stabilization and the reduction of tensions, especially in the communities where projects are implemented.

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[43] LHSP Project Document. Theory of Change.

► **Reporting on local economic development and generation of income**. Donors indicated that reporting on the sustainability of the livelihood interventions and the effect these are having on local economic development is supported with only limited analysis. The reporting on sustainability of assets supported under the LHSP is also very limited.

Gender

A number of outputs received a Gender Marker at the Project design stage. However, it was not evident from the document review how these ratings were determined and how progress against the various gender markers was being monitored. LHSP has targets for gender-/sex-disaggregated results included in contractual arrangements with all partners. The expectation is that interventions will integrate over 51 percent of women in all activities. The evaluation team found that setting one target for all is not practical since this does not consider the nature of the different activities or contextual realities.

Donors as well as LHSP project staff reported that LHSP has yet to systematically integrate gender in an in-depth manner and within its overall design and monitoring. Two staff members pointed out that there is an opportunity for gender reporting to be more comprehensive, as it currently tends to be on a surface level. Indeed, the evaluation team found that a gender analysis of LHSP's interventions – to understand the effects, opportunities and gaps at an outcome-level – is currently missing. Measuring gender outcomes – and not simply gender outputs – is key for a more profound understanding of how LHSP's interventions affect power dynamics, and the implicit and explicit ways it may contribute to or alleviate gender tensions.

Strength of the M&E system

The evaluation team is of the opinion that there is good tracking and data collection at the output level but there is room for improvement to establish systematic methods and tools for analysis of these data to support knowledge management and learning. These tools can include surveys, key informant interviews, field observations, focus groups discussions, or utilising data from other existing sources. These M&E tools could be further integrated in the Results Framework and included in an M&E approach further tailored to the LHSP interventions. It is important that the M&E staff at the country office level take a lead on this through regular field visits and monitoring interventions. The LHSP M&E system needs to cover the Results Framework and Theory of Change in their entirety.

Based on good M&E practice, every indicator included in a Results Framework should have a supportive M&E activity behind it. It is not clear from the reports shared with the evaluation team which M&E methodology was used to collect data to feed into the progress reports. Because of staff

turnover it is even more important to have an M&E system and M&E practices underpinning LHSP that is institutionalised and integrated into regular Project operations.

5.2.6 Constraints

This subsection answers the following EQs:

► **EQ 6.1. What have been the main challenges and constraining factors faced by the project? How has LHSP sought to overcome them?**

► **EQ 6.2. To what extent has the project managed the risks identified in the risk analysis matrix effectively? How was the matrix translated into practice?**

Key Points

► The overarching challenges LHSP faced include the financial crisis, first and foremost, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut blast. This is in addition to long-standing issues of political insecurity and the protracted Syrian refugee crisis.

► LHSP aimed to address emerging challenges by broadening its mandate to encompass a greater number of vulnerable municipalities; updating its risk matrix to gauge rapid contextual changes; and redirecting its funds and efforts to both address immediate needs and implement longer-term interventions.

As noted in other sections, LHSP had to navigate external circumstances beyond its original design and control, from a deepening financial crisis to pandemic-induced lockdowns. The risk management measures in place enabled LHSP to recognize the risks associated with both the pandemic and the financial and economic crisis. The evaluation team reviewed the risk matrices, which accounted for uncertainties tied to LHSP's objectives, including social and economic and political risks directly affecting the project's ability to achieve its objectives. LHSP staff reported that the risk matrix enabled more strategic decision-making and the effective adaptation of certain interventions, allowing for considerations on how to execute them with the current context while minimizing negative impacts.

LHSP documents have identified both the risks and assumptions that could jeopardize the achievement of the project's strategic results, along with corresponding mitigation measures. The Theory of Change has also identified several assumptions. It was found that the identification of risks has been comprehensive, but the mitigation measures were found not to be always realistic or feasible. Examples include a resource mobilisation strategy involving the government or the diversification of implementation modalities, including engaging and contracting local authorities. The

risk matrix has been updated on an annual basis reflecting the changes in the context and associated risks. The annual updates included tracking of steps taken to address the risks.[44]

The financial crisis exacerbated both economic and political insecurity in the country, simultaneously worsening the state of infrastructure and daily functionality. Difficulties in obtaining essential resources such as food, water, fuel, or cash coupled with the daily fluctuations in local currency, ultimately intensified intra and inter tensions across the country. As was noted by an Area Manager:

> Working with LHSP over the past three years has been particularly challenging because of the emerging conflicts—from generator-related tensions among residents, to Lebanese traders and shops fighting with one another, to the weakening of municipal bodies and local intra-communal dynamics that didn't exist before.

Previously, the majority of donor support was primarily directed toward the refugee population. However, the economic crisis affected the entire population of the country. Although long subjected to economic and political insecurities, Lebanese host communities found themselves plunged into a financial crisis that affected their ability to access the most basic needs and made them more vulnerable. Many development agencies needed to recalibrate their strategies to effectively support both refugees and host communities. In this regard, LHSP maintains a distinct advantage. Because LHSP has focused not only on refugees but also on host communities since its inception, it has been able to respond relatively quickly to the emerging needs among vulnerable Lebanese.

Furthermore, the crisis presented a particularly challenging situation due to its overlapping and cyclical nature. The combination of the pandemic and the economic crisis had a severe effect on the country's healthcare system. Area Managers reported that a recurring need that surfaced during MSLD sessions, as well as in discussions with municipalities and community members, was the need to intervene immediately with support for primary healthcare centres and medical devices and equipment. Simultaneously, the fuel crisis had a direct impact on LHSP's infrastructure projects, primarily due to electricity shortages. To address this, LHSP responded by ensuring that all medical equipment and devices bought were compatible with solar power sources.

LHSP was relatively well positioned to respond to contextual changes because through its direct implementation UNDP was able to bring changes in its responses more rapidly. Direct implementation allowed LHSP to respond to emerging challenges identified by MSLD committees. One such example was when a wall in a public school in Saida needed immediate fixing. The MSLD swiftly

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[44] LHSP Risk Mitigation Matrix, 2021, 2022, 2023.

communicated this with LHSP's staff, and LHSP was able to respond quickly after getting the agreement from the donor.

The economic crisis increased the importance of focusing on livelihoods interventions and economic development. As a result of the economic collapse people found themselves cash-strapped and unable to find income-generating opportunities. In response to the economic crisis LHSP continued its cash-for-work and SME development activities and engaged further in economic development activities including engaging in some value chains.

The political and economic crisis in the country has resulted in the fragmentation of governmental institutions, which has had a direct impact on the budgetary capabilities of municipalities that face financial constraints. In Tripoli, for instance, LHSP staff had to adapt to the continuously changing municipal landscape. Previously, LHSP collaborated with the Union of Municipalities (UoM): Beddawi, Qalamoun, Mina, and Tripoli. Cleaning services, garbage collection, and fire brigade services were all under the umbrella of the UoM. However due to corruption allegations and political chaos, the municipality was dissolved. This vacuum led to fragmentation within the municipality, affecting LHSP's capacity to implement or carry on with its projects. The area manager mentioned that LHSP had to make quick and deliberate decisions on whom to engage withing this administrative vacuum. As a response, LHSP strengthened its coordination with sub-governors and caretaking authorities.

Finally, some Area Managers noted that the multi-layered crises necessitated cost-extensions from donors as LHSP staff generally had to work double hours to respond to the crisis. While some donors provided support for particular issues, such as the rise of GBV or healthcare systems, there was insufficient consideration given to reprogramming funds.

5.3 Efficiency

This section answers the following EQ:

► **EQ7: Extent to which LHSP used its resources appropriately to produce the desired results.**

Effectiveness is divided into two subsections: Staffing & Governance and Funding

5.3.1 Staffing & Governance

This Subsection answers the following EQs:

► **EQ 7.1: How efficient was the overall staffing, planning and coordination within the project?**

► **EQ 7.3: What was the role of the governance structure in the project implementation and achievement of strategic goals? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the governance structure?**

Key Points

► LHSP's decentralization and strong area management support shows efficient and effective engagement at the community level.

► The project documentation clearly outlines the governance structure's role in project decision making and implementation. However, consultations in the country have revealed an opportunity to enhance ministerial ownership and satisfaction with LHSP.

► It was identified that there is room for improvement in the functioning of the governance structure and institutional arrangements at the national level. Some of these concerns can be attributed to opportunities for strengthening communication and engagement strategies between UNDP and the ministries.

► The UNDP area offices have played a crucial role in effectively coordinating local and regional initiatives, contributing significantly to the project's achievements. However, there is room for further clarity and definition regarding how 'localisation' is envisioned and put into practice within LHSP's governance framework.

Staffing

Based on feedback from both the Country Office and the Area Offices, there appears to be agreement that at the Area Office level there is insufficient staffing resources allocated for the LHSP considering the workload involved. While some stakeholders mentioned that the engineering unit was not sufficiently staffed, there was not a majority agreement among those consulted on whether

this was indeed the case. Therefore, the evaluation team was unable to establish an evidence-based informed opinion on this.

LHSP implementation and follow-up of interventions is partially decentralized, with some responsibilities being delegated to Area Offices, which hold relevant local expertise and knowledge. This allows for close interaction between UNDP Area staff and communities in which LHSP is implemented. This close interaction is a pre-requisite for the success of LHSP since the nature of the work requires intimate collaboration and follow-up with communities.

In-country consultations with community members and UNDP staff at the area level highlighted high quality, well-organized and committed Area management staff across the four geographic areas where UNDP has Area Offices. The evaluation team found that Area Managers showed a deep understanding of the communities they work in, particularly in relation to local conflict dynamics and the underlying causes of tensions in the communities. All Area Managers have been able to establish strong ties with local government officials, including mayors, governors and sub-governors. Based on consultations with participants in the Mechanisms for Stability and Local Development (MSLD) it is evident that Area managers have the confidence and trust of MSLD committee members and other community stakeholders. Donors recognize this, and donors who were interviewed by the evaluation team noted that one of LHSP's strongest assets are the teams on the ground given how well they manage situations within a very complex and constantly changing environment.

Strong area management has also contributed to a growing network between local NGOs, municipalities, and community members. This has contributed to the efficient implementation of LHSP at the community level. NGOs who have worked with LHSP confirmed, during a focus group discussion (FGD) in Tripoli in North Lebanon, that working with UNDP in the area had been positive. They stated that the Agency is flexible and well-aware of the city's political make-up and history, unlike other agencies, and is diplomatic whilst also being unwavering on its own operational principles. As aforementioned, they also applauded UNDP's ability to encourage good relations and the development of a network between local NGOs who have historically competed with each other. Strengthening further the work with and through NGOs also has the potential for further efficiencies and cost-effective gains.

Area Managers have also been critical in maintaining relationships with various stakeholders and ensuring an open feedback mechanism across areas. One Area Manager noted:

Like my other Area Manager colleagues, I have to put on several hats – one of them is to follow-up on all LHSP projects, which takes 50-60 percent of my time, and the other is having to dedicate another 40 percent to inter-agency coordination with other UN agencies and NGOs operating in the area. Added to this is coordinating with other UNDP portfolios, such as energy, as well as with the municipal police". This strong engagement at the community level is an efficient way of working, but also contributes to effectiveness and sustainability.

Currently, LHSP full covers the salaries of Area Managers. Nevertheless, it became apparent during consultations that Area Managers undertake responsibilities extending beyond LHSP implementation. Feedback from consultations indicated that Area Manager costs are not distributed among other budget lines. The evaluation recommends addressing this situation for improvement.

Based on consultations with UNDP stakeholders there is strong decentralization as per the Area Offices. When comparing the number organisational charts from 2019 to 2023, it's evident that there has been a consistent allocation of staff at the Area Office level. At the Country Office level, a comparison of the organisational charts from 2019 to 2023 reveals some structural adjustments. These changes primarily involve a reduction in staff numbers within the communication and engineering units. The livelihood unit maintained a similar staffing level and there was the addition of a specialist focusing on the Lebanese regulatory framework.

Governance

The LHSP project document outlines a clear direct implementation modality. This would involve UNDP partners with key Lebanese government entities, including Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Ministry of Interior and Municipality (MoIM), the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), as well as municipalities and Union of Municipalities.[45] This direct approach can expedite project implementation.

The establishment of a Project Board, involving MoSA, MOIM, CDR, and donors, provides a high-level oversight mechanism for project activities. Additionally, the Technical Group, comprising technical representatives of relevant line ministries and donors, ensures a more focused approach to addressing technical aspects of the project.

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[45] LHSP Project Document. P. 26.

LHSP is implemented in coordination with municipalities at the local level, allowing for engagement with local communities and addressing their specific needs. This approach aligns with the principles of decentralization and local governance.

LHSP recognizes the need to adapt its approach based on the context of the area, whether through collaboration with municipalities, other local institutions such as the Social Development Committees (SDCs), local NGOs or private sector.

However, over the period considered for this evaluation, there is a notable decrease in government engagement. Consultations with government stakeholders revealed a decreased sense of engagement and partnership over recent years. The observation of a weakened sense of ownership among the national stakeholders, at the strategic and implementation level, was also highlighted in the 2018 LHSP evaluation. Consultations with government indicated an interest in being more actively involved during the planning and implementation phases. The evaluation team believes that government involvement at the national level is most effective when focused on strategic aspects, while local government structures are better suited for engagement during the planning and implementation phases at local community level.

There is also limited consultation with line ministries. Line ministries at the national level reported insufficient consultation during the implementation of LHSP. This viewpoint mainly emerged due to what was perceived as inadequate interaction in the past between the line ministries and the CTA as well as UNDP in a broader context, rather than having a direct correlation with the project board. The evaluation team recognises the inter-ministerial sensitivities and the governance challenges in Lebanon. However, it was noted that more regular communication between UNDP and the relevant ministries would go a long way to address concerns raised by the line ministries.

Government stakeholders also highlighted the importance of LHSP to reach scale and to work more in a cluster-based approach or through the Union of Municipalities. The evaluation team found that working with the Union of Municipalities, as highlighted in the project document, would support reaching scale. Based on the consultations in-country, this approach would also contribute to reducing tensions between municipalities.

5.3.2 Funding

This Subsection answers the following EQs:

► **EQ 7.2. To what extent has the project been effective in avoiding duplication of funding? How has coordination with different actors contributed to this?**

► **EQ 7.4. Have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner? How do the implementation modalities impact upon the results achieved (with a focus on timely responsiveness and project management)?**

Key Points

► Time efficiency has been negatively impacted by the current crises and at times by lengthy contract procedures.

► There are multiple concerns over the degree to which LHSP is adaptable to a rapidly changing environment and, in particular, the fact the MSLD process is quite lengthy.

► LHSP works toward avoiding duplication of funding in communities through engagement at the community level and relevant coordination structures.

Differing opinions were expressed on the timeliness of UNDP's tendering and contracting processes. During local data collection no significant delays were found, but interlocutors indicated that the economic and financial crises in Lebanon, together with the impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns, has had a significant impact on the procurement and supply chain of certain goods, exacerbating the shortages in the local market. For certain projects some delays did occur and required additional preparatory work. However, no comprehensive data on supply delays impacting the project was available to the team.

Several interlocutors raised concerns around the adaptability and flexibility of UNDPs processes when working in a rapidly changing environment. At the Area level it was mentioned that the bottle neck is in the implementation of projects. In every project there are different types of unplanned events (often due to security issues) that cause delays or require variation orders, and when the variation budget is above 20 percent then the approval process will require several months.

The main concern raised in communities was that the MSLD process can take up to a year. During this period no projects are implemented because the identification of the project is part of the MSLD process. This is well understood by the evaluation team. However, it does cause concern within communities because, in response to tensions within communities, timeliness is crucial and therefore the efficiency and effectiveness of the project is undermined by these delays.

Avoiding duplication of funding is mainly achieved through UNDP's participation in the relevant coordination mechanisms, including LCRP inter-agency working groups. At the local level, Area

Managers coordinate with municipalities to avoid duplication. Municipalities are well placed to have a good view of the activities implemented in their communities.

UNDP is the leading agency on stabilisation within the LCRP and coordinates the two sectors most LHSP projects fall under: the social stability and livelihoods sectors (Project Document, p.10). The position of UNDP in both sectors enables a view on what is happening at the level of implementation in the different geographic areas. This role will contribute to avoiding duplication. During the community consultations, no examples of duplication were identified. However, this could not be triangulated with other evidence.

Moreover, what was noticed and raised during the community consultations was that certain municipalities may receive more attention than others, causing tension between municipalities. This higher concentration of funding in certain geographic areas was often linked to donor preferences. It was found that at the area level, UNDP strongly coordinated with other UN agencies through its area offices.

In terms of efficiency in delivery the primary concerns raised involve timeliness. Based on the review of project documentation and stakeholder consultations, the evaluation team notes that there hasn't been a comprehensive analysis of the nature and causes of the implementation delays. It was confirmed through consultations with donors and UNDP stakeholders that delays indeed occur in the implementation of the project. The matter of implementation delays is also further discussed in the effectiveness section. Additionally, several donor stakeholders mentioned delays in communication and reporting. UNDP's lengthy procurement procedures were cited by stakeholders as a contributing factor to some of the activity delays. However, it's important to note that some stakeholders also emphasized that while these procedures may contribute to delays, they are comprehensive and support confidence in ensuring accountability.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the government measures to contain the virus is cited in various donor reports, necessitating a re-planning of the project's timeframe. Periodic lockdowns in areas and national total lockdowns significantly restricted in-person activities. The Beirut port blast also had an effect on the implementation of LHSP, with UNDP taking on an important role in assisting the population affected by the explosion. Discussions regarding any delays were held with donors, and project extensions were initiated where necessary.

The evaluation has examined 16 feasibility studies conducted by LHSP, and it has determined that these studies are of high quality. They encompass evaluations of various aspects, such as the institutional framework, sustainability considerations, investment expenses, operational costs and projected returns on investment. Furthermore, these assessments include an analysis of the potential

beneficiaries of activities. Moreover, LHSP conducted economic cost-benefit analyses for numerous infrastructure projects, including the Ghaze Potato Centre, the Saida Fish Market, and agricultural road rehabilitation projects. The results of these analyses demonstrated robust financial effectiveness for all completed infrastructure projects.

5.4 Impact

This section answers the following EQ:

► **EQ 8.0 What are the observed changes that can be attributed to LHSP's support linked to resilience, stability, and social cohesion?**

And the following Sub-Evaluation Questions:

► **EQ 8.1. What are the benefits to beneficiaries that can be plausibly attributed to LHSP? To what extent did all intended target groups, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, benefit from the intervention?**

► **EQ 8.2. Have the different LHSP projects contributed to resilience of beneficiaries?**

► **EQ 8.3. Have the different LHSP projects contributed to stability and decreasing tensions in targeted communities?**

Key Points

► At a local level, many of the projects visited by the ET were high-quality and likely having a positive impact on community resilience and stability. In some cases, positive engagement with LHSP has led to other local developments, such as establishing NGOs.

► Social cohesion was more mixed, with some examples of positive changes that could be plausibly attributed to LHSP. However, as aforementioned, in the present climate LHSP appeared to be having no real impact on current levels of anti-Syrian refugee hostility.

► Cash for Work offers short-term support; however, where it involved the rebuilding of a productive asset it likely had broader impact.

LHSP has impacted the emergence of positive links between NGOs, municipalities, and communities. Due to the MSLD process, as well as careful diplomatic engagement from regional teams, the ET heard many reports of positive working relationships emerging across different segments of society. In Tripoli, in an NGO FGD, the establishment of these relationships was thanks to the regional team's flexibility as well as strong awareness of the city's political structure. These assets were positively compared to other agencies.

Participants in the FGD also noted that the impact of LHSP can be observed in the creation of a durable network between the city's NGOs, who were historically competing with each other, and now report a good relationship. They argued that such collaborative relationships are essential for ensuring a more long-term vision for the city.

In cases where municipalities are active and engaged, LHSP can have a stronger impact on communities. As with much of LHSP, impact depends a great deal depends on the characteristics and indeed the characters involved in local-level politics. In some towns and villages, municipal heads are very receptive and responsive to the MSLD mechanism. They communicate regularly with LHSP staff as well as members of the committee. Some mayors interviewed for the evaluation maintained that while they were initially skeptical of the idea of community participation, having seen the benefits, they now believe it is a positive governance strategy. This was sometimes expressed through a political rationale. For example, a mayor in a southern village said that now, "when people curse me, members of the committee defend me because they understand the work of the municipality." In a sense, this demonstrates the positive impact of transparency, even where that impact is filtered through municipal realpolitik.

There are also examples where positive impacts are less assured. In the South at the apple processing facility, while there were positive impacts on local resilience thanks to sustained interventions on the value-chain, it was less clear how far the project was impacting social cohesion at a governance level. While the asset employs Syrians directly and Syrians work in picking, the municipality is nonetheless enforcing a curfew on Syrians and seeking to restrict work rights. It is not clear how LHSP strategically responds to such situations, and what lobbying for dropping those restrictions is being conducted, if at all.

The ET learned how some small-scale interventions have had the impact of encouraging better governance this has had an overall positive impact within an area. In one town in the Bekaa, a livelihood project led to an NGO being formed, based largely on the town's active MSLD committee members. The NGO focuses on youth empowerment and sustainable practices within the village. One of its founders said, "If it weren't for this project, we wouldn't have become this active, and this NGO wouldn't have come to be." They added that there are barely any work opportunities in Ablah, and such an NGO would help bring local youth together to brainstorm ways of improving their livelihoods.

Basic services renovation, provided it remains operational, is having a positive impact on resilience for various communities. The ET visited numerous impressive WASH projects which are evidently much needed in many communities across Lebanon. For example, in Mt Lebanon, an entire network had been repaired and rebuilt, with ongoing attempts to interlink aspects of the water system repaired by UNICEF with those repaired by UNDP. However, in the Impact Analysis of LHSP conducted by Agulhas a bleaker picture is painted, where across all communities studied there is a sharp increase in perception of economic decline and loss of livelihood. Again, this is a context well beyond the scope of LHSP, which simply does not have the resources or indeed mandate to reverse one of the worst final crises in the world.

While it is difficult to measure the longer-term impact on reducing tensions the ET found that while some projects had encouraged a mitigation of tensions, any mitigation achieved earlier has struggled to prevent current levels of anti-refugee rhetoric and sentiments. As aforementioned, in the vast majority of KIIs and FGDs with community members, Syrian refugees were understood as being primarily responsible for the current stresses and strains on Lebanese infrastructure and the economy. While some projects had produced local-level solidarity – I.e., Syrians and Lebanese working together and developing positive relationships – it is not possible to evaluate the degree to which this has made any larger impact on the current situation. As stated earlier, the Agulhas perception survey notes a slight decline in intra-community tension but this is also a highly geographically varied result.

One interesting area of potential found during fieldwork concerns agricultural projects. The Lebanese financial crisis has caused a resurgence in agricultural production, where imports have increased in value. In agricultural and food production projects, both farms and SMEs, Syrians were highly valued by interlocuters for their skills in those areas. This represented, according to some area staff, a strong area of intervention to explore further which could assist in both Lebanese food security and mitigate tensions.

5.5 Sustainability

This section answers the following EQ:

▶ **EQ 9.0: What have been the factors influencing intervention benefits continuing after the completion of the project?**

The section is divided into 'Factors influencing sustainability' & 'Governance & Buy-in''.

5.5.1 Factors influencing Sustainability.

This sub-section answers the following Evaluation Questions

▶ **EQ 9.3: What are the main risks (internal and external) hindering sustainability of interventions implemented?**

Key Points

▶ The MSLD Process, ideally, has in-built advantages for sustainability. By ensuring that projects are selected by, and reflect, the needs of the local community those projects are more likely to continue after completion due to a combination of 'buy-in' and 'necessity.'

▶ However, a range of factors and risks influence the degree to which projects enjoy sustainability after completion; the most significant being the continued deterioration the Lebanese economy.

▶ Externally, for infrastructure projects, many Lebanese municipalities lack the fiscal space to carry out routine repair & maintenance and this is the primary sustainability concern among local actors.

▶ Internally, are-based teams lack the capacity to carry out routine sustainability follow-ups.

LHSP, through the MSLD committees, has an inherent advantage for ensuring suitability by ensuring that projects reflect community needs and are arrived at via a community-led participatory approach. While the MSLD can positively influence sustainability through trust-building and by helping communities take ownership of projects, this of course depends on the strength of the committee itself, the degree to which it is representative, as well as other local factors.

In one interview with a mayor in a Southern town, he stated that the committee had helped people understand the work of the municipality, that they feel able to talk to him and advise on local issues. By enhancing these forms of 'relational accountability,' and transparency, local citizens are able to ensure that powerholders maintain basic services that they themselves identified and requested.

This observation was reflected in interviews with donors, where interviewees noted the 'direct connection' between municipalities and constituents (in contrast to national government).

> Today, municipalities are responsible for solid waste management, water supply and waste water because water establishments cannot fund fuel. Today it's largely up to municipalities to find solutions; they have a lot on their shoulders. Although it's not ideal for municipalities to have to work on this, it's important that they be equipped financially, and ready to act quickly as they are the key interlocutors across the country.

However, as was confirmed in various interviews with LHSP staff, these sustainability advantages also depend on the quality of the MSLD process itself and, moreover, whether or not committee members remain engaged post-project. One interlocutor at the CO level felt the underutilisation of MSLD committee at the close of projects is a major challenge for LHSP

LHSP is unable to address broader institutional-level problems within Lebanon's political- economy. The single most frequently cited sustainability challenges for LHSP are the varied negative impacts of Lebanon's fiscal collapse. Indeed, a range of infrastructure projects visited by the ET faced a significant challenge, where the state stopped being able to supply electricity and the cost of fuel hindered the running of diesel generators. The devaluation of the Lebanese Pound also has severe negative implications for municipality budgets (explored below).

Area managers confirmed that the most common requests from MSLD committees, and from municipal authorities, was for solar panels. However, at the same time, solar panels are not necessarily a straight-forward fix where they also need routine maintenance and repair. LHSP staff are also cautious about the future necessity of disposing of toxic batteries at the end of their life cycle.

To try and circumvent that fact as best as possible, LHSP staff are attempting to extend the warranty on solar panels, as well as more frequently including them as part of project design. Multiple projects visited by the ET were equipped with solar, providing a secure energy supply that ensures continued function regardless of the broader context. In addition to this LHSP took the wise decision of developing a strategy to help municipalities with capacity challenged around maintenance, providing them providing additional relevant equipment, such as bucket trucks for the maintenance of streetlights, bulldozers for the maintenance of agricultural roads, and in some cases finding means to provide solar energy for decreasing fuel costs, especially in the case of food processing centres.

The changing nature of Lebanon's economic crisis also prompted changes in donor priorities, with more shifting towards cash for work programs rather than longer-term programming. While this might provide short-term relief, it is not necessarily sustainable given these work opportunities do little to address the long-term systemic development challenges in Lebanon.

The major barrier to sustainable localisation in Lebanon is the significant variation in staffing and their access to funds. Even before the crisis, Lebanon's municipal finance system had many gaps. For decades, the majority of municipal funding was distributed via a centrally administered "Independent Municipal Fund." This fund was based on unfair distributional criteria, including outdated population statistics; it was not distributed in a timely manner; and its mechanisms were not transparent.

In the contemporary crisis, even where it is distributed, the allocation is based on an exchange rate that does not reflect current "black market" value for the Lebanese pound. As a consequence, municipalities that heavily rely on the Municipal Fund are unable to pay their staff or ensure basic services continue.

While municipalities have the right to raise various taxes, these were not collected systematically. An expert interviewed for this evaluation, even before the crisis, estimated that independently raised local taxes accounted for less than 50% of budgets in a typical municipality.

As a result, municipal capacity now depends largely on patronage networks and support from international organisations or NGOs. LHSP does not address these governance challenges. As one donor interviewed for this evaluation noted:

> Are we contributing to building national institutions? Are they redeemable? I'm not sure anymore. If we go back to the TOC, the assessment is transparent, and the delivery is inclusive, but this assumption – of stabilisation – is far from what's actually happening. We're not able to influence it; maybe we're stabilising, but stabilising what, exactly? From our side, we don't dictate what to do – not to UNDP, nor others. We just say: show us where the needs are, how things can be sustainable, without turning a blind eye to the structural issues that are there, but it's not easy.

There was a mixed opinion among donors on the localisation approach. Another major donor felt that, in the context of Lebanon's current political malaise, working at the municipal level is ultimately the best of a series of bad options.

While the external context influences sustainability the strongest, there are also internal capacity and funding issues. Two major issues inhibit sustainability within current LHSP approaches. First, regional teams, the strongest asset within LHSP, lack the capacity to carry out systematic and continuous follow-ups on projects. Across all four locations, managers felt they needed staff whose explicit role is following-up on projects to ensure any emerging issues can be resolved.

The second issue is one of funding. LHSP staff reported difficulty in securing project modifications or additional funding when needed to adapt projects to emerging need. Given the rapid changing nature

of Lebanon's various crises, a separate and distinct "sustainability fund" would allow for project modification. Nonetheless, it is important to note that even within these confines, regional teams often find ways to make projects work. For example, during a field visit to a village with a renovated water system, the ET observed the regional manager advise the municipality on how to request an additional pipeline to address a problem that had emerged in the water system.

5.5.2 Governance Buy-In

This subsection answers the following EQs:

► **EQ 9.1. To what extent has the project ensured buy-in, ownership and/or political will of a) the municipalities and b) beneficiaries (communities) for the uptake, maintenance, and use of project outputs?**

► **EQ 9.2. What is the likelihood that the benefits that resulted from the LHSP interventions will continue at national and subnational level through adequate ownership, commitment, willingness displayed by the government and other stakeholders.**

Key Points

► LHSP shows, overall, good buy-in from municipalities and communities and this was largely thanks to skilled regional teams and their interpersonal relationships as well as strong support for, and need of, infrastructure projects.

► If municipalities had the funding, they would ensure maintenance of projects; however as aforementioned this is the primary sustainability challenge for a number of projects.

► At the national level, there is significantly more scepticism towards LHSP in terms of its fragmented approach, and lack of broader development strategy.

LHSP has strong buy-in at a sub-national level among municipalities and communities. In a context where municipal finance systems were already weak and political control heavily centralised, municipalities were largely very supportive of LHSP. In KIIs with mayors and municipal workers there were rarely any substantive complaints about LHSP itself. Rather, most issues were with particular aspects of implementation or project selection.

Overall, municipalities valued infrastructure projects over Cash for Work programming, where they were concerned that the selection of Cash for Work beneficiaries can pose issues not only between Syrians and Lebanese but also inter-Lebanese tension.

Their primary concern, as stated above, was their lack of funding to ensure the continued operation of projects. Regional managers also play an important function in ensuring municipal buy-in, through strong contextual knowledge and persistent engagement with local decision makers.

Overall, the ET observed positive local government buy-in with just a few exceptions. For example, in the South, the ET visited a community centre that the absentee mayor refuses to open. He believes it needs to be changed into a workshop for SME activity. The mayor appears sceptical of the idea that the MSLD committee must verify his idea that this a need and believes he is, himself, ultimately responsible. While visiting the site, the ET observed the regional managers careful engagement and explanation of the situation to his representative, and it appears a solution could be forthcoming.

At the community level, the MSLD committee process, where operational and high-quality, was also evidently contributing towards a sense of community ownership. The major issue that could discourse community ownership is if projects selected cannot be funded due to donor priorities or issues of legality and permission. The ET encountered one such example in the North where a public garden did not get funding, and this caused some anger at LHSP within the municipality.

At other times, these funding constraints are navigated. One such example of cross-stakeholder liaising took place in 2022 a Southern town. A committee was implementing the MSLD process and identified water provision as a key need. However, the donor at the time made it clear that funding water activities was not a priority for them. LHSP had to be very transparent and clear with the committee about what they can do, how they can do it, and what their criteria are. So, they had to design a new project with municipalities on a cluster level, with the donor's priorities in mind, and they had to manage the committee's expectations during the workshop. And yet, this was in 2022, which was one of the hardest years in terms of water scarcity – particularly due to the crisis and the electricity outage affecting the water infrastructure – and so renewable water pumping and rehabilitation of a water station were reiterated as the key needs. After a lot of brainstorming, a middle-ground was established. The donor was convinced about the necessity of intervening in the water sector, but not under the umbrella of water infrastructure but renewable energy operations. This example indicates not only the relevance of LHSP's interventions but also that by slowly ensuring community engagement can enhance sustainability. Moreover, this example underscores the critical role area managers play in trying to complement and coordinate the needs of beneficiaries and donors.

At the national level government stakeholders expressed their support for LHSP but found that government level priorities or approaches were not sufficiently considered. Government interlocutors found that the LHSP approach had not sufficiently evolved in terms of reaching scale and

supporting local economic development. One important aspect for government representatives was the need to achieve scale through working through the union of municipalities.

6.0 Lessons

▶ **Project Relevance and Adaptation.** The LHSP project should regularly reassess their Theory of change and objectives to ensure alignment with changing circumstances.

▶ **Balancing Donor Preferences and Community Priorities.** Striking a balance between donor expectations and community needs is essential for project success.

▶ **Gender Equality and Inclusion.** Ensuring the active involvement of underrepresented groups, like women and youth, can enhance a project's impact.

▶ **Project Effectiveness and Adaptability.** LHSP project should remain flexible and be prepared to adjust strategies based on changing conditions.

▶ **Efficient Decentralization.** Decentralized project management with strong area-level support can enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

▶ **Sustainability Challenges.** Ensuring long-term sustainability requires considering economic and financial conditions at the national and local level and planning for post-activity maintenance.

▶ **Localized Approach for Economic Development.** Focusing on localized economic development strategies can have a positive influence on communities.

7.0 Conclusions

The LHSP has been implemented during a period when Lebanon has been confronted with several overlapping crises, including a deep political and governance crisis, a financial and economic collapse, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a major explosion in Beirut port in 2020. These events have all contributed to escalating poverty levels, high unemployment, increased vulnerability amongst the majority of the Lebanese population, and a rise in outward migration. In parallel, Lebanon has been affected by the protracted large-scale Syrian refugee crisis with the country hosting the largest number of refugees per capita.[46] While the international community has largely been supportive to neighbouring countries in the region who are hosting Syrian refugees, the scale of the refugee crisis is having an impact in Lebanon in terms of availability of services and resources, especially in local communities hosting large numbers of refugees. As a consequence, anti-Syrian refugee rhetoric has been on the rise, fuelled by perceptions that Syrian refugees are better supported than the Lebanese population who are facing the worst economic downturn in a century. The narrative against the refugee presence is creating a false impression that the Lebanese must compete with Syrian refugees for resources.

> **Conclusion 1 – The objectives of the LHSP project focusing on tension mitigation and support for economic opportunities have maintained their relevance. Adjusting the Theory of Change in response to shifting contextual realities would have contributed to stronger project planning and implementation.**

Overall, the evaluation team found that the LHSP design – its intended outcomes and Theory of Change – were relevant. However, the Theory of Change did not evolve to reflect changes in contextual realities and how these changes impacted the higher-level objectives, and LHSP's underlying assumptions, as they relate to promoting stabilisation and economic development.

LHSP was relevant in so far as it both supported vulnerable Lebanese host communities affected by the large-scale presence of Syrian refugees and the overlapping economic crises in Lebanon. In some cases, it has allowed Lebanese community members to identify and address – through a community-led process – challenges in their areas. The MSLD process and local knowledge amongst the area-based staff allowed LHSP to adapt to the evolving contexts in the specific areas where it is being implemented.

However, LHSP's relevance could have been stronger if it had moved to reach scale by working more systematically through a cluster or area-based approach. LHSP did not develop a strategy to support

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[46]https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2023/01/UNHCR-Lebanon-Operational-FactSheet-Year-end-2022_Final-rev..pdf

a more relevant focus on longer-term and large-scale interventions. Working with local authorities is considered relevant noting the limited capacity of the government and low confidence of communities in their political institutions.

In terms of remaining relevant with regards to tension mitigation, LHSP through the MSLD process supported local communities to identify tension drivers and needs in their communities. The MSLD committees created platforms to enable joint decision-making in local communities. Where the committees worked in an inclusive and transparent manner, the process was relevant to mitigating *some* tensions at a local level. At the same time, the quality of the MSLD process inevitably determines its relevance.

In terms of cross-cutting issues, LHSP has been able to largely mainstream gender with women participating in the MSLD process and in the implementation of projects. Moreover, the presence of an LHSP gender strategy supported a sustained focus on gender considerations and engendered some projects with a gender transformative approach. There, however, remains room for more in-depth gender analysis on LHSP projects.

> **Conclusion 2 – The effectiveness of LHSP was hindered by the absence of a cohesive project-wide strategy to analyse results and identify overarching lessons. LHSP's effectiveness and ability to adapt has been impacted by the absence of a comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis.**

The Theory of Change and the results framework were not adjusted to reflect actual Project activities during implementation. Project staff, including M&E staff, have been affected by recent staff turnover. However, strong M&E capacity underpinning a Project should not be linked to individual staff presence at the Country Office level but should be based on institutionalised systems and approaches supported with solid monitoring presence in the field.

An evaluation assesses results against the results framework and the Theory of Change based on evidence collected throughout the implementation period by the Project team. Inconsistent data collection and monitoring has prevented systematic learning within LHSP. Not having this systematic data collection and learning hinders any adaptation of the Theory of Change. This assessment is applicable to all output data. Moreover, there has been no analysis provided where targets or outputs were not achieved. Diversions from important outputs were not sufficiently explained. An important example of this is that no substantive explanation was provided on why LHSP no longer engaged with social development committees.

The results framework includes only quantitative performance indicators. These indicators are not able to reflect the quality of the MSLD process or answer whether tensions in targeted communities have been mitigated. This has limited the assessment against the current outcome statements. No

longer producing comprehensive annual reports has hindered a programmatic and comprehensive view on results. It has contributed to a fragmented view on the performance of the programme and makes is difficult to assess LHSP's overall effectiveness and efficiency.

Conclusion 3 – A localised approach has contributed to economic activities that generated income for several community members. But not having the interventions placed in or linked to a more area-based economic development approach reduces broader impact.

LHSP adapted to Lebanon's deteriorating economic context by increasing support for Cash for Work interventions for vulnerable communities. This is considered relevant, especially when linked to strengthening community-level productive assets or infrastructure. Moving forward, analysis of monitoring data will be important to ascertain to what extent these livelihoods interventions provided a sustainable source of income at the household or local level. The fact that the projects were identified through the MSLD process also means that the projects selected do not necessarily support a local or area-based economic development plan. It also implies that not all selected projects are economic in nature.

Scaling-up of interventions through increasing the number of municipalities to be supported as well as to cover inter-municipal areas (through clusters and union of municipalities) will increase the effectiveness of LHSP. LHSP should scale-up and go beyond small-scale interventions and focus on livelihoods and income generation in areas with sustainability in mind. Importantly, any scaling-up should integrate an MSLD process adapted to this approach.

Conclusion 4 – This evaluation has identified positive contributions made by the LHSP project toward tension mitigation, particularly in instances where the MSLD process was executed in an inclusive and participatory manner. The extent of tension mitigation could not be ascertained through this evaluation and will require, moving forward, a more systematic research and analysis by the LHSP project team.

The evaluation team encountered some challenges when assessing the MSLD process and its effect on tension mitigation. The LHSP project does not have a comprehensive M&E approach to assess the effects or impact of the MSLD process. Evidence gathered directly by the evaluation team presents a mixed picture. There were indications that a robust MSLD process and project selection based on community priorities supports tension reduction when the project identification process and selection of beneficiaries is based on transparent criteria and the MSLD committee functions in a clear and participatory manner. Hence, being accountable to communities in terms of targeting is critical if a programme such as LHSP aims to contribute to mitigation of tensions.

Addressing triggers of tensions requires a quick response to grievances. The duration of the MSLD process combined with UNDP's contracting procedures do not always enable a quick response to context-specific increases in tensions.

Conclusion 5 – Reduced funding will require LHSP to engage in strategic dialogues= with donors and national government stakeholders on the future direction of the project.

LHSP has been confronted with reduced funding and will increasingly be reliant on a very limited number of donors. In light of this, LHSP's management and implementation costs need to be reconsidered and cost-sharing with other programmes should be done in a transparent manner. Relying on a very limited donor base will also mean that there is limited ability for LHSP to implement activities outside of the priorities of the main donor. This is an important consideration for a programme such as LHSP that has a strong soft component.

The changed funding base will require strategic dialogues with government counterparts on the programme's future direction and priorities. These dialogues will be an opportunity to strengthen LHSP's governance structure ensuring that the relevant government stakeholders involved are sufficiently informed and consulted.

Conclusion 6 – The programme's decentralised approach has proven to be effective to support a contextualised implementation of LHSP. UNDP area-level staff resources are not sufficient to maximise the strengths of a decentralised and localised approach. Diverse and collaborative partnerships have contributed to identifying effective development solutions in communities.

Conflict sensitive programming and mitigation of tensions at the local level requires a continued presence in communities. This presence can build on the existing knowledge of local actors and tension dynamics. LHSP, through its area-based managers and staff, has been able to achieve this. Community presence, interaction and knowledge of contextual dynamics are critical for a community-based approach to reduce tensions. The evaluation recognises the value of the approach of having a strong focus working with municipalities to support trust and confidence in local government institutions as included in the Theory of Change. Where LHSP has engaged with multiple actors this has contributed to a network of organisations collaborating in a more effective manner.

8.0 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Update the LHSP design and allow for annual updates to reflect contextual and programmatic changes. (Strategic).

► Develop a Theory of Change – with a clear vision and long-term goals - to underpin the next phase that is contextual relevant, describing the change process and is realistic in what can be achieved through LHSP.

► Clarify in the Theory of Change how development interventions are addressing vulnerabilities in Lebanese communities and contributing to tension mitigation.

► Complement the Theory of Change with a Results Framework including strategic outcomes, targets, outputs, measurable quantitative and qualitative performance indicators.

► Develop the Theory of Change and the Results Framework in a participatory and consultative manner involving UNDP staff members, consulting with other development and humanitarian actors and donor agencies.

► Ensure ownership of the Theory of Change and the Results Framework from government counterparts.

► Update on an annual basis the LHSP Theory of Change and Results Framework to reflect changes in the context, priority needs and financial resources.

Recommendation 2 – Strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning to inform programme decisions combining a systems-based M&E approach with strong field monitoring. (Strategic).

► Develop a comprehensive M&E system that is aligned with the Theory of Change and Results Framework, and that supports accountability.

► Combine both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to capture the complexity, results and learning of the programme covering both development and peace-building outcomes.

► Collect data that takes into account the specific needs of women, youth, and marginalised groups.

► Conduct analyses focused on gender and social inclusion to understand more clearly the gendered impacts of projects within communities.

► Avoid fragmentation through having:

  o One M&E system owned by the LHSP Project team covering all outcomes and outputs.

- One annual results report covering the full project instead of fragmented individual donor reports.

► Under the leadership of the CTA, adjust strategies and interventions based on ongoing programmatic learning encouraging continuous reflection and adaptation.

► Invest in M&E capacity at both the Country Office and the Area Office level to maintain quality of the Project.

► Support regular monitoring by CO based M&E and Project staff in the different areas to ensure understanding of the contextual complexities, the strengths and weaknesses of the Project.

► Develop learning strategies and knowledge sharing with government stakeholders, UN agencies and NGOs.

Recommendation 3 – Transition to an area-based intervention approach addressing the needs of a geographic locality rather than targeting individuals or groups. (Strategic).

► Continue to select the geographic areas based on Lebanese vulnerability, Syrian refugee presence, tensions, or other specific challenges.

► Where not existing, support municipalities in developing local economic development plans.

► Align projects identified through the MSLD process with local economic development priorities.

► Incorporate gender-transformative approaches and focus on engaging youth in economic opportunities.

► Work with Unions of Municipalities or group municipalities in a cluster-based approach to address development priorities.

► Identify priorities through the MSLD process with clarification to MSLD committees to consider interventions that have a longer-term effect and a reach beyond their own locality.

Recommendation 4 – Maintain the MSLD process supporting a participatory conflict sensitive approach for mapping priorities and triggers of instability but shorten the process for project identification. (Operational).

► Shorten the process for project identification and implementation to maximum six months.
► Clarify the role of the MSLD committees in mitigating tensions beyond project implementation.
► Support greater transparency on composition of MSLD committee members and selection of beneficiaries through community feedback mechanisms.

- ► Support 'Town Hall' sessions to provide a platform for community members to come together and express their opinions and promote an open dialogue.
- ► Support quick interventions to address acute drivers of tensions identified through the MSLD process.

Recommendation 5 – Support efficiency in resource use to optimize Project outcomes. (Operational).

- ► Set up an 'Adaptability Fund' to respond to different crises emerging in communities and support sustainability of interventions where required for a short period of time.
- ► Advocate for non-earmarked and multi-year funding with donors expressing interest in supporting LHSP.
- ► Determine correct cost allocation methods between LHSP and other UNDP Projects for jointly used resources. Regularly review and assess the allocation process by senior management.
- ► Allocate sufficient resources to support effective decentralisation to area offices including recruitment of an area-level community engagement officers and M&E officer.
- ► Avoid fragmentation and support a collaborative team approach between country office and area offices.
- ► Consider other approaches than direct UNDP implementation to support cost-efficiency, local ownership, and local capacity building.

Recommendation 6 – Enhance the engagement of government stakeholders and collaboration with other development and humanitarian actors. (Operational).

- ► Strengthen engagement of national government counterparts through more regular dialogue with government stakeholders to ensure interventions are aligned with national and local plans, if existing.
- ► Offer technical assistance and capacity building to local government institutions, linked to strengthening their ability to design and implement interventions.
- ► Identify the most relevant organisations to implement the project interventions (municipalities, contractors, NGOs, SDCs, etc).
- ► Liaise actively with other development and humanitarian actors to provide complementary support based on MSLD prioritisation.

Annexes

(Separate Document)