EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE UNDP PROJECT IN PALESTINIAN GATHERINGS (2016 – 2023) – LEBANON

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
APRIL, 2024

Undertaken by the Consultation and Research Institute (CRI)
Commissioned by UNDP LEBANON

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Project/outcome Information		
Project/outcome title	Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities - Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions	
Country	Lebanon	
Region	Middle East	
Date project document signed	2015	
Project dates	**Start**	**Planned end**
	Jan 1st, 2016	Dec 31st, 2023 (extended till 31 December 2024)
Total budget	USD 40,354,664	
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	USD 32,553,288	
Funding source	KFW-Germany, BPRM-USA, Norway, Netherlands, Japan, and SDC-Switzerland	

Evaluation information		
Evaluation type (project/ outcome/thematic/country programme, etc.)	Project evaluation	
Final/midterm review/ other	Final review	
Period under evaluation	**Start**	**End**
	2016	2023
Evaluators	Consultation and Research Institute (CRI)	
Evaluator email address	redha@crilebanon.com; jinane@crilebanon.com	
Evaluation dates	**Start**	**Completion**
	January 5th, 2024	April 8th, 2024

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AUB – American University of Beirut
APR – Annual Progress Report
AWP – Annual Work Plan
BPRM – Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration- United States
CBO – Community Based Organization
CO – Country Office
CPD – Country Programme Document
CPI – Consumer Price Index
CPR – Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CRCP – Crisis Response and Crisis Prevention
CRI – Consultation and Research Institute
CWD – Children with Disability
EDL – Electricite du Liban
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GWG – Gatherings Working Group
ICT – Information and Communication Technology
KFW – German Investment Bank
LCRP – Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LGLD – Local Governance and Local Development
LHSP – Lebanon Host community Support Program
LPDC – Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee
LRA – Litani River Authority
M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation
MSC – Most Significant Change
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
OECD-DAC – Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PG – Palestinian Gatherings
PRODOC – Project Document
PRL – Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon
PRS – Palestinian Refugees from Syria
PV – Photo Voltaic
PWD – Persons with Disability
RNA – Rapid Needs Assessment
RRF – Results and Resources Framework
SLD – Social and Local Development
SRS – Syrian Refugees from Syria
TOC – Theory of Change
TOR – Terms of Reference
TOT – Training of Trainers
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency
WASH – Water Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

The Consultation and Research Institute (CRI) is undertaking an evaluation study for the UNDP project in Palestinian Gatherings "Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities- Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions", covering the period 2016 till 2023.

With the end of this cycle of the Project Document in 2023, and after more than ten years of work in Palestinian Gatherings, UNDP aims at undertaking an independent evaluation to the project (2016 – 2023) in order to inform the next phase of its programming, especially in light of recent developments. These mainly include: a) the multi-faceted crisis, mainly the economic- financial crisis, facing the country; b) the impact of the crisis in Palestinian Gatherings as captured by the household survey (UNDP, 2022) and project's needs assessments; and c) the newly developed UNDP Lebanon Country Strategy Note including on local development approach. The evaluation will cover the project implementation between 2016 and 2023 (with focus on the last three years); b) all outputs with focus on outputs 1, 3, 5 and 7; and c) all 45 geographic areas to be selected from (with focus on areas where multi-sectoral interventions were applied).

As such, the evaluation purpose is to assess the project approach and impact with the aim of informing UNDP on the best programming strategy in Palestinian Gatherings and the design of the next phase of the project reflected in a new Project Document (ProDoc). The evaluation's specific objectives are as follows:

1. Assess the impact of project activities towards achievement of the project outcome and objectives.

2. Capture lessons learned and best practices from the implementation of the project with special focus on interventions that address the implications of the current multi-faceted crisis, and also those contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment.

3. Provide concrete and actionable strategic and operational recommendations based on the evaluation's findings; that respond to the crisis context in the country and the reality and situation in Palestinian Gatherings and that aligns with the new UNDP Lebanon Country Strategy Note. Recommendations shall mainly:

- Propose priorities for UNDP's investment and work in Palestinian Gatherings in the next phase, including activities to be expanded and / or scaled-up;

- Accordingly review project objectives and outputs to be reflected in the new ProDoc and propose measurable indicators to capture impact at outcome level;

- Better adopt Gender Transformative Programming and approaches and include gender related indicators into the project design.

The approach of this evaluation is a mix between a realist evaluation and a developmental evaluation.

The methodology adopted by the study team includes a desk review and qualitative data collection. Indeed, based on the desk review, and after discussions with the UNDP team, the evaluation team and UNDP team identified a list of diverse stakeholders to be interviewed. This list was developed based on several criteria that ensure representativity: the profile of the stakeholders; the sector of activity; the different interventions, and the geographical areas covered by the interventions.

The evaluation matrix (list of questions and sub-questions under evaluation criteria, including cross-cutting topics) constitutes the backbone of the analysis process. The matrix is composed of the following standard evaluation dimensions: relevance/coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and cross-cutting topics (human rights, gender equality, youth, disability). Providing answers to these questions will lead to serving the objectives of this evaluation.

The analysis has also integrated gender considerations whenever possible through data disaggregation, and addressed to the extent allowed by the data collected the topics of gender equality, disability, vulnerability and social inclusion.

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluation has resulted in the following findings, conclusions and relevant recommendations:

RELEVANCE:

   a. The project is designed in a way to be highly relevant to the context in which it operates. It follows a bottom-up and inclusive approach, and its activities are serving exactly the needs and priorities of vulnerable households living in Palestinian Gatherings.
   b. Moreover, the interventions are being continuously adapted to the changing environment and emerging needs and priorities, maintaining urgent response interventions in parallel with development interventions.
   c. The project is also consistent with national priorities; the UNDP Country Strategy Note; the SDGs; the UNDP Country Programme Document; and the UNDP strategy on local development approach, especially given the current crisis and circumstances.

CONCLUSION: The project is highly relevant in its design, methodology and flexibility in adapting to context changes to the needs and priorities of the PG and to national and UNDP priorities and approaches. Overall, there are no clear inclusion or exclusion errors pointed out during the assessment. The outputs clearly took into consideration the cross-cutting topics (gender, youth and disability). Moreover, there are no uncovered needs for the target groups of the project; although the study team has identified – based on the interviews with the partners, local actors, and beneficiaries – new sectors of activities, types of interventions and population groups that can be focused on.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

   1. Priority areas: The assessment has identified the following main areas to focus on for the next cycle:
      a. Livelihood interventions: Livelihood interventions can be expanded to encourage the creation of productive economic units[1] (building on existing ones like SEAC and Sawaed), and income generating activities such as business development support, startup incubation and funding, linking VTE with entrepreneurship projects, linking implementing partners with the private sector, etc.

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[1] Productive economic units consist of all economic activities that create employment and added-value in opposition to the rentier economy that generates revenues from interest and real estate transactions (buy-sell, rent). In this context, productive economic units could be MSMEs.

b. Education based activities: Although school-based education activities are under the mandate of UNRWA, the project could cover educational support and education-related activities such as tutoring with the objective to decrease dropout rates and increase technical and vocational abilities of the youth. Scholarship programs and university tuition support are also essential for those who broke through and succeeded reaching this level despite all obstacles.

c. Health care: Health care providers can also be supported with additional capacity building activities and trainings to respond to emergency cases given the current context. More specific technical trainings are also needed, especially related to intensive care, nursing, and Xrays and lab technicians. The project can provide special attention to the emergency situation in the South of Lebanon and cater for the emerging health needs in regards to primary health care and the equipment and training for a mobile clinic.

d. Elderly care: Elderly and elderly care could be a priority for the project's next phase. This population is a burden on the household on several levels whether financial, psychological or physical. The elderly care can be very wide in terms of services (especially for those living alone), spanning from day-to-day care, nursing, psychological, medical and palliative.

e. Persons with Disability (PWDs): The project may address many needs for children with disabilities such as: mental health illness and referral for psychiatric cases, access of Children with Disability (CwDs) to schools and nurseries, home improvements.

f. Youth: Youth risky behaviors and drug use are also an important topic to address in the project's soft component.

g. Gender: Design interventions addressing Gender Transformative Programming and approaches such as building coalitions, creating community conversations about gender norms in PGs, engaging men as allies in women empowerment activities, etc.

EFFECTIVENESS:

a. The project has proven to be successful in improving Palestinians' living conditions and increasing their livelihood opportunities in the Gatherings.

b. The project was effectively able to reach its targets in terms of coverage of all the different profiles of beneficiaries, while maintaining excellent coordination and communication with its partners and local stakeholders.

c. The project's human capital has been a critical factor for success.

d. While the used quantitative indicators are vital to measure the UNDP's effectiveness for each intervention in comparison to the preset targets, a qualitative tool is important to better visualize the non-tangible effectiveness of the interventions.

e. Some challenges related to the short timeframe and the selection of some contractors have been faced during implementation. Indeed, according to the majority of the interviewed stakeholders, the duration of the initiatives implemented under the UNDP project in PG is only a few months, in line with donors' one-year agreements, which is very short and should be prolonged. For many, the longest they've operated on an initiative in this project is 6 months, which in their opinion is not sufficient for many reasons. Moreover, although

the majority of the interviewed stakeholders reported satisfactory results related to the hard component (shelter rehabilitation or infrastructure and improvement works), another opinion was also present that criticized the services provided by the contractors, stating that they were not of good enough quality. This situation further emphasizes the importance of introducing (at county office level) some changes to the process of selection of the contractor, that currently does not include earlier performance evaluations but relies mostly on a rigid scoring according to a set of criteria as per corporate procurement procedures.

CONCLUSION: The project is to a large extent effective in covering the needs of the beneficiaries by achieving and mostly overachieving its targets. The RRF and related indicators are adequate to measure the effectiveness, but a qualitative aspect could be introduced to measure important non-tangible aspects of the project. The operations and management of the project is challenged by the short timeframe of the interventions and the selection process of contractors for the hard component, as detailed above. A more effective approach would be program-based, whereby UNDP would set a multiyear program (which could be phased out to be flexible with the duration of donors' agreements) consisting of multiple interconnected projects/interventions involving multiple partners/NGOs. This would create synergies between projects and partners for a longer duration and achieve higher impact and higher sustainability. This program-based approach was well received by the interviewed donors (2).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Program-based approach: The project may adopt a program-based holistic approach in its interventions, to the extent possible, increasing the length of the activities and engaging the stakeholders and beneficiaries for a longer period of time in a variety of complementary activities, both soft and physical. Suggested period for such initiatives would be an average of 2 years. While this seems hard given the different cycles of the fundings by the donors, it was not rejected by interviewed donors and multiyear agreements seem to be an option to discuss.

2. Synergies with LHSP: The project is coordinating closely with the LHSP being part of the same LGLD portfolio and given the joint proposals between the two. Intensifying and building on this coordination is important to prevent overlap of activities and missed opportunities. Indeed, this coordination will strengthen the complementarity of activities between the different projects and increase the impact on beneficiaries, especially for the host communities that could benefit from a system of referral between the two projects. It is however important to indicate, that it is also essential that the project remains as a separate unit with some level of independence for three main reasons: respecting during the planning and the implementation the specific characteristics of the Gatherings which only the PG team have extensive experience and knowledge in; the pace and timelines for the design of the activities is separate between the different projects (PG and LHSP for example) and it is important that one does not affect/delay the other; and the UNDP project in PG has of scope the 45 Gatherings, and therefore, even under an area-based approach where some activities should be done with joint planning and coordination with the LHSP, the UNDP project in PG should remain operational at the level of all Gatherings.

EFFICIENCY:

    a. In terms of cost efficiency, the project is successful in terms of budget allocation to the different outputs and activities, although there are only two main donors funding the project currently. Indeed, while seven different countries/donors have actually funded this project through its lifetime, two main donors (Germany and USA) have financed around 75% of total expenditures. .

    b. In terms of time efficiency, although none of the interventions have faced substantial delays in terms of implementation, some procurement delays and payment delays have been reported by partners.

    c. The project was found efficient in terms of quality and quantity. Indeed, the quality is preserved by the diligent procurement process of the UNDP and the multiple evaluations that the project has been subject to. Moreover, the quantity efficiency is adequate given the allocated budget and can be increased with the increase in funding or with integration of beneficiaries in different cycles of the same intervention.

CONCLUSION: The project has proven to be successful in terms of cost efficiency and budget allocation, although the UNDP team should consider diversifying its sources of funding to ensure continuity and increase resilience. The project was found to be efficient in terms of quality and quantity. Indeed, the quality the services provided is ensured through several channels, of which is the procurement and contracting of implementers, in addition to the lessons learnt and amendments made based on the multiple evaluations that the project has been subject to. Moreover, the quantity efficiency is also adequate considering that the budget is well distributed and accurately allocated across the different activities; although additional funding or the integration of beneficiaries in different cycles of the same activity may also increase more the quantity efficiency of the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Donors and funding management: The project should consider diversifying its sources of funding to avoid a high risk of dependency on less donors. Potential areas to explore are: increasing the number of donors by including new countries such as Arab funds or other institutions, involving the private sector as an investor or funding partner in joint activities. Moreover, the project could also consider discussing with the donors the possibility of financial and narrative reporting standardization and the alignment of the reporting period, timeline and format.

2. Beneficiary integration in the interventions: The project could explore the possibility of engaging current end-beneficiaries in new planned activities. This approach would consist of the following steps: i) identifying key skills and competencies in certain beneficiaries from existing activities that can be invested in; ii) designing new activities in which these skills and competencies can be used and are needed; iii) re-establishing contact with these identified beneficiaries who have these skills to include them as actors in this new designed activity. Therefore, the beneficiaries are transformed from recipients in the first project to provider of services in the next project. The advantages of this approach are multiple: end-beneficiaries become actors rather than receivers only, accumulation and transfer of knowledge into the community, built trust and confidence in the project and its activities, and sustainability of the impact created on the beneficiaries and their communities.

IMPACT:

  a. The findings have showed a high level of impact on local communities for both physical and socio-economic interventions. This impact range from great reputation at project level, to high engagement of partners and other actors, to alleviation of burdens on municipalities, to reduction of tensions at community level, and to improvement of lives of beneficiary level.

  b. The noticed significant impacts resulting from the project are positive and serving successfully the project's Theory of Change, which desired state would be to improve living conditions in Palestinians Gatherings and reduce tensions and increase stability in the gatherings. Some positive and negative externalities were the results of the project. The UNDP has been addressing the negative ones to the extent possible and allowed by its scope of work.

  c. Important qualitative effectiveness and impacts related to the changes in the lives of the beneficiaries are hardly evaluated and translated into measurable indicators, although this aspect is important to understand the role of the project in shaping the changes in the community.

CONCLUSION: The project has showed important positive impact on several levels related to both the physical and socio-economic interventions. Its importance in the community has been growing with each activity implemented and the resulting externalities are being mitigated in a proper manner. Additional positive impact would be possible through increasing the length of the timeframe and strengthening NGO networking to design complementary interventions and exchange knowledge and information.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Prodoc design: The new Prodoc should consider decreasing the number of outputs and restricting them to the following four as some of the current outputs be combined to include complementary activities: Livelihood with focus on youth and women, basic services including health and education with focus on elderly (this output would include the hard component of the project i.e. civil works, infrastructure and upgrading activities), psychosocial wellbeing with focus on vulnerable groups such as PWDs and youth, and basic services for other WASH and infrastructure upgrading activities. It may also include a qualitative tool at outcome level to better visualize the non-tangible effectiveness of the interventions such as the Most Significant Change approach, which can be implemented within a reasonable budget and timeframe, to measure soft indicators such as social cohesion, tension reduction, improvement of lives of beneficiaries, women empowerment, social wellbeing, hope and motivation, etc.. The RRF data could potentially to the extent possible be further disaggregated by disability and age category (youth, adult, elderly) to ensure coverage of beneficiaries throughout the life cycle.

2. Partners' directory: The project can invest in creating a partners' directory that includes a list of all active implementing partners and relevant actors with their locations and geographical coverage, sectors of activities, types of interventions, previous experiences, etc. This platform could become a reference for any partnership that this project or other project wants to create. It could also allow partners networking and collaboration. This platform can also allow unifying capacity building

material across all interventions to ensure a better quality of deliverables. In addition, the platform would allow the project to establish a systematic mechanism for collecting opinions and suggestions (even outside implementation of activities). The formalization of such system creates confidence with the UNDP and ensure perpetual improvement of the delivery of the services.

SUSTAINABILITY:

a. The interventions of the UNDP project in PG are to a large extent sustainable: links with relevant and effective local, regional, and national stakeholders through their engagement in joint projects; engagement of municipalities and public service agencies in the planning, decision making and implementation phases of the project; area-based approach that the project has been adapting is very important and was considered to be a highly needed; in the soft component of the project: transfer of knowledge through capacity building, translating training material into internal protocols, scholarships, online platforms, etc.

b. Aspects such as the short-time frame of the activities that is linked to the one-year donors' agreements and the lack of capacity of local actors to fund maintenance works, should be addressed to increase sustainability of the activities.

c. Other constraints are structural and are outside the control of the project itself.

CONCLUSION: The project has been successfully sustainable in many aspects related to its design, implementation and interventions (, etc). Obstacles to sustainability such as the lack of resources of local actors to carry out maintenance works, and the duration of the initiatives can be addressed in the next cycle of the project. The area-based approach that the project has been adapting in some gatherings with multiple vulnerabilities is very important and was considered to be a highly needed approach by all interviewed stakeholders when it comes to the sustainability of the interventions. Indeed, with a mindset of local development, multisectoral activities were implemented under three improvement plans (Taamir, Beddawi, and Maachouk), and these were considered as success stories given the comprehensive work that has been done. This approach allows the UNDP to address more types of vulnerabilities, on a larger scale, and observe noticeable changes and impact in the community as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Integrated multisectoral approach: The integrated multisectoral approach (such as Improvement Plans) may be prioritized for the next cycle, as it constitutes an opportunity for both the targeted Gatherings and the UNDP: Indeed, this approach has been proven to be highly needed by the communities and important to increase impact and sustainability by providing multisectoral and complementary set of activities. Moreover, it is in line with the process of portfolio integration within the UNDP. This approach is also a good selling points to donors as it allows attracting more funds under different types of projects and interventions. However, the PG should remain operational in all 45 Gatherings under its mandate to serve the needs of specific sectors, as it constitutes an opportunity for both the targeted Gatherings and the UNDP: Indeed, this approach has been proven to be highly needed by the communities and important to increase impact and sustainability by providing multisectoral and complementary set of activities. Moreover, it is in line with the process of portfolio integration within the UNDP and serves as an internal mechanism to

reduce costs by combining operational units such as procurement, engineering, etc. This approach is also a good selling points to donors as it allows attracting more funds under different types of projects and interventions. However, the PG should remain operational in all 45 Gatherings under its mandate to serve the needs of specific sectors.

2. <u>Maintenance</u>: Infrastructure work and rehabilitation remains a priority, especially when it comes to electricity, water, and sewage. It would be beneficial that all physical activities in the project systematically address the lack of resources of local actors to carry out maintenance works, by introducing the idea of maintenance for a period of time in contractors' contracts, and linking maintenance to other cash-for-work existing projects.

<u>CROSS-CUTTING TOPICS</u>:

    a. The project pays particular attention to disadvantaged groups by designing and implementing a variety of interventions that target women and youth (livelihood support) and PWDs (equipment, infrastructure, mental health support).

    b. These disadvantaged groups benefited from the project similarly to other Palestinians and hosting communities in the Gatherings: identification of their needs was also a bottom-up and inclusive approach, the design of the interventions was also relevant to their needs, and the implementation of the activities took into consideration the specificities of these groups.

CONCLUSION: The project has integrated successfully cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, poverty alleviation, and disability and human rights to various degrees in planning and implementation phases.

Introduction

On January 2024, the UNDP commissioned the Consultation and Research Institute (CRI) to conduct an evaluation study for the UNDP project in Palestinian Gatherings: "Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities - Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions", covering the 2016-2023 Project Document. While several evaluation studies were undertaken during the project's implementation, this specific evaluation serves the UNDP differently as it aims at assessing the project at a macro-level in way to learn from this experience and therefore provide recommendations for the design of the new project document.

This final evaluation report is the last written deliverable for CRI. It serves as a guiding tool for the UNDP as it is kicking off its next project cycle.

This report follows the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines structure and outline and consists of:

1. The evaluation scope and objectives;
2. The evaluation approach and method;
3. A consolidation of the evaluation findings;
4. The overall conclusions and lessons learnt from the evaluation exercise; and
   The recommendations for the next project document.

COUNTRY CONTEXT:

Lebanon has been suffering from multiple ongoing crises since 2019: the economic and financial collapse including a hyperinflation and a huge currency devaluation; the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting lockdown affecting even further the economy; and finally, the August 2020 Beirut Port blast that destroyed many neighborhoods in the capital and increased vulnerabilities even more. In addition, the South of Lebanon has been at war with Israel since October 8th, 2023, following the Gaza War that has started on October 7th, 2023.

Negative GDP growth rates since 2018: As it is shown in Figure 1, the real GDP growth rate appeared to be negative since 2018, with a significant negative peak in 2020 estimated at -21%. Lebanon is noticing an economic contraction for the last five years.
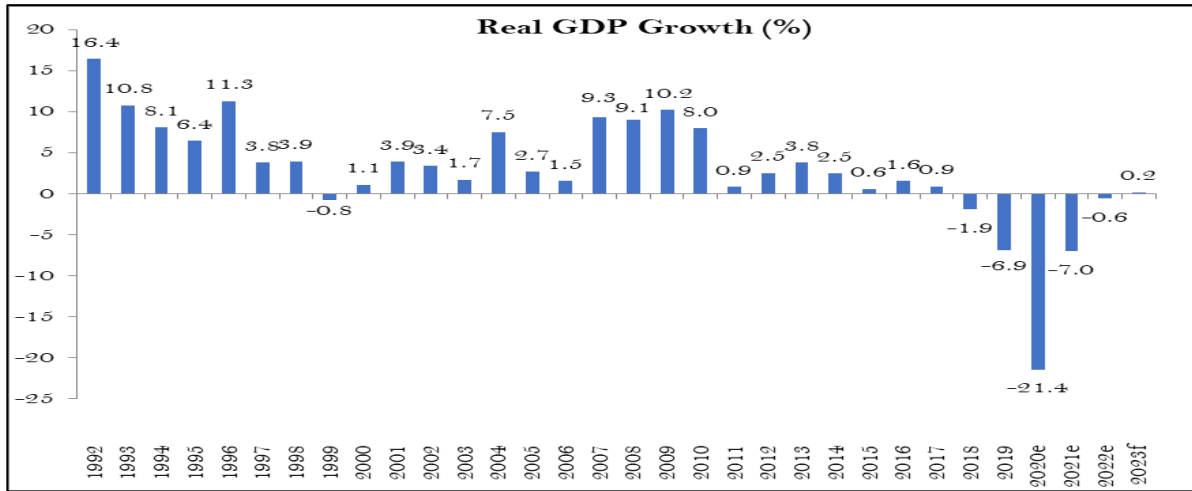
Source: The World Bank, Lebanon Economic Monitor 2023

Exponential depreciation of the LBP vs. USD and loss of purchasing power: The fact that Lebanon is largely reliant on imports for its consumption needs caused additional demand for foreign currency by importers and sharp rises in commodity prices. Given that the earnings of a significant share of the workforce in Lebanon are in the domestic currency, this situation has led to a decrease in the purchasing power of residents as a combined result of the rising commodity prices and the increasing wedge between the official and market exchange rates. The LBP/USD exchange rate increased drastically from 1500 LBP/USD in 2019 to 90'000 LBP/USD in end-of-year 2023. In other terms, the exchange rate index was multiplied by 60.

FIGURE 2: EVOLUTION OF THE EXCHANGE RATE (LBP/USD) 2019-2023
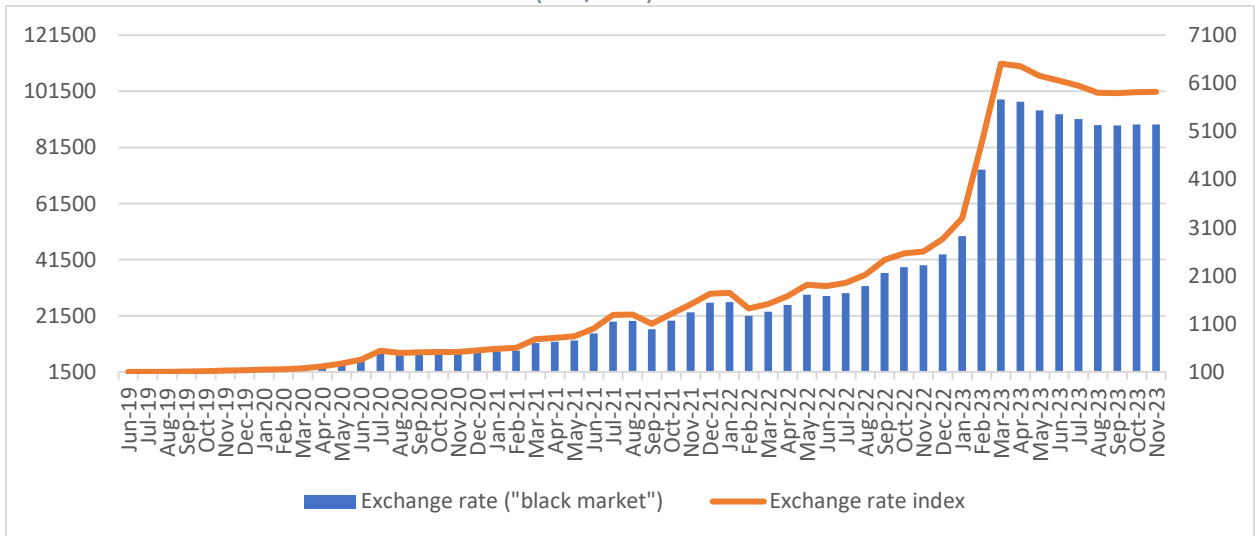
Source: CRI data collection, BDL

Exponential inflation rates: Inflation rates based on the CPI produced by CRI significantly increased since 2019 (Figure 2). As of November 2023, the CPI increased by around 53 times for Total CPI and around 56 times for the Food CPI. Although this increase remains slightly below the increase of the exchange rate index (60 times) for the same duration, Figure 3 shows that the gap is shrinking gradually. CRI estimates that the CPI will continue to increase in 2024 till reaching the level of the exchange rate index.
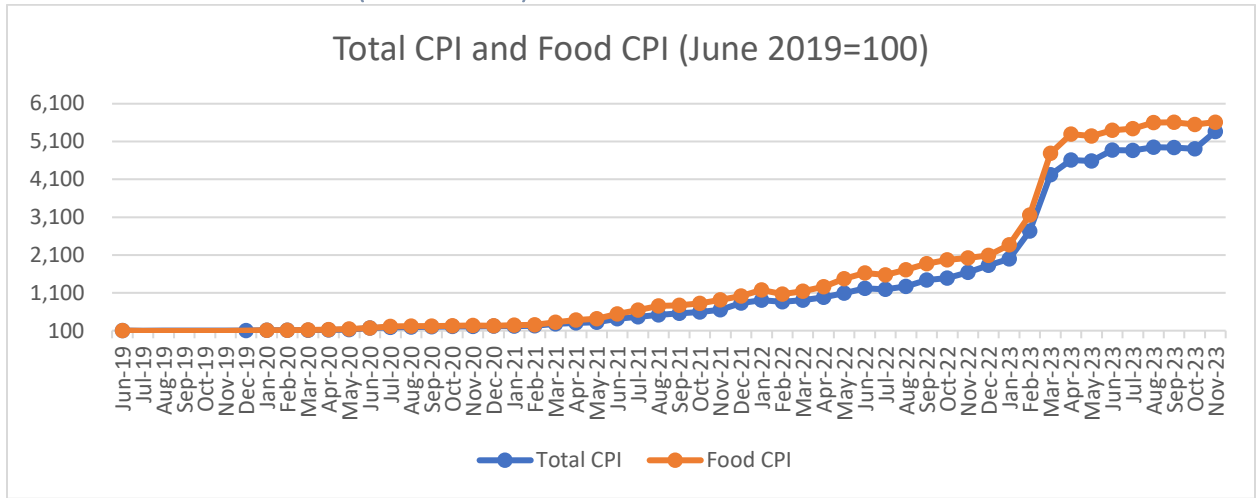
Source: Consumer Price Index (CPI) produced by CRI.

With this difficult situation, the pressure on public services and infrastructure increases considerably, and this casts the heaviest responsibility on the municipalities. Due to limited municipal funding, the financial crisis and increase in number of dwellers, municipalities are struggling to deliver services and cover operational and maintenance costs. This has been contributing to loss of trust in public institutions and local authorities as well as to increasing inter and intracommunal tensions.

In fact, the country hosts the largest refugee per capita population in the world since the onset of the Syrian crisis more than twelve years ago. The implications of this context have been severe on the host and refugee communities in Lebanon, which manifested in the sharp increase in socio-economic needs and limitations on access to basic commodities such as food, fuel/transportation, employment, healthcare, education and other basic services. Indeed, these crises are only amplifying pre-existing problems in the country and vulnerable communities are always the first to lose the most.

The World Bank estimates that more than 50% of the Lebanese population lives below the poverty line (WB, 2021); poverty rates among Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS) and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon (PRL) are at 87% and 65% respectively (LCRP, 2022).

PALESTINIAN CONTEXT:

According to the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), 55%[2] of the Palestinians in Lebanon live in Gatherings[3], in areas adjacent to Palestinian camps or in other locations. These already vulnerable

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[2] Detailed Report of the "Population and Housing Census in the Palestinian Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon, survey 2017". Total Palestinian population in the census:183,255 (PRL and PRS), of which 83,174 lives outside camps (i.e. 55%).

[3] The LPDC identified in 2017 168 gatherings based on a minimum of 15 households per gathering. Other sources such as FAFO 2003 or the UNDP Palestinian Gathering Project identified 45 gatherings that combine a minimum of 25 households per gathering.

Gatherings have also become since 2013 the host communities to more refugees displaced from Syria, representing 10% of their total population[4].

The UNDP's 2022 household survey carried out in Palestinian Gatherings by CRI reveals that while certain vulnerabilities pre-existed the economic crisis, other vulnerabilities have been severely exacerbated by the crisis reaching the level of what may be called a humanitarian emergency. One indicator is underemployment rates that ranged from 72% to 95%; underemployment for women was at 76% (compared to an average of 53% for males); and the share of families who had no single member working reached 33%[5]. Food and health were among the components most impacted by the crisis in Palestinian Gatherings; more than 60% of households have struggled to pay for food and more than 50% of households have been unable to pay for medication and health services.

All of these factors have been contributing to rising tensions within the Gatherings themselves as well as with the neighboring Lebanese communities. According to UNDP's Tension Monitoring System (Tension Task Force Second Quarterly Update, 2021), increased competition over jobs within the gatherings as well as their wider contexts was cited as one of the key drivers of tensions. Palestinian refugees referred to their poor economic situation, derived by lack of employment and exploitation, as the main driver for tensions in their communities.

The deteriorating community relations are accompanied with rising feelings of insecurity and unprecedented levels of reported incidents among household respondents in the Gatherings, which have increased from 20% to 40% and from 5% to 10% respectively, as per the results of CRI's household survey. In conclusion, competition over limited jobs and resources, lack of service provision and informal alternative methods of access, decline in safety and increase in incidents have all contributed to negative consequences on social stability and community relations.

Moreover, the great majority of Palestinian Gatherings are located in South Lebanon, accommodating for more than half of the population living in the gatherings. The South has been struggling from a) the ongoing conflict at the Southern borders of Lebanon following the Gaza War 2023; and b) armed clashes that erupted in Ein Helwe Camp, the largest in Lebanon, and its nine adjacent Gatherings in July 2023. A fragile ceasefire was reached in September, following the displacement of some 4,000 refugees, the destruction of 250 shelters, and substantial damage to more than 750 shelters as well as small businesses in the camp and its adjacent gatherings[6].

Meanwhile, service providers are struggling to provide health, education, and social services to the host and displaced families in the South. The recurrent conflicts have caused severe psychological impact causing traumas for people who have lived through armed conflicts and displacements as well as for front-line health and social workers. Implications are particularly severe for more vulnerable groups such as children, youth, the elderly and People with Disabilities.

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[4] According to the LPDC in 2017 (refer to footnote 1). However, this figure seems to be underestimated. Since 2017, more PRS displaced from Syria moved to Lebanon (in Palestinian camps and outside camps).
[5] It should be mentioned that Palestinians are already constrained by the Lebanese law to access the majority of economic sectors. This explains the high rates of underemployment and the high rates of informality, both leading to an increase in vulnerability.
[6] These figures are extracted from the donor report for France 2023.

UNDP PROJECT IN PALESTINIAN GATHERINGS:

The UNDP has been an important actor in Palestinian Gatherings for over 10 years. In fact, the UNDP has been working since 2013 in an estimated 45 Palestinian gatherings and their 27 host municipalities under the project "Improving Living Conditions in Palestinian Gatherings Host Communities: Towards More Comprehensive and Sustainable Solutions". The project started with activities related to improving WASH/ infrastructure and shelter conditions and has been growing to cover more needs and accommodate for developments. In 2016, a socio-economic component was added mainly targeting youth, but also women, men and small businesses. In 2020, a health and wellbeing component was added after the eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. Special attention was also given to mainstreaming gender and including women groups, youth groups and persons with disabilities in the various stages of the project.

According to the Project Document 2016-2023, the Palestinian Gatherings project has a required budget of 35 million USD to cover activities between 2016 and 2023. The budget raised by end of 2023 to cover the period 2016-2026 reached USD 40,354,664. During the ProDoc period 2016-2023, the project expenditure was USD 32,553,288. The funds were received from a variety of donors: KFW-Germany, BPRM-USA, Norway, Netherland, Japan, and SDC-Switzerland.

The project is designed based on a Theory of Change[7] that supposes that ameliorating living conditions of Palestinian refugees and host communities amid the deteriorating socio-economic situation will improve their stability and therefore, inter and intra communal tensions will decrease and coexistence will be strengthened.

The project's specific outputs[8] are:
- Output 1: Provide environmentally and economically sustainable WASH services at community level in the gatherings.
- Output 2: Improve environmental and structural conditions of shelter units in the gatherings.
- Output 3: Promote inclusive and safer environments in the gatherings though comprehensive
- neighborhood upgrading interventions.
- Output 4: Improve hygiene conditions for host and new refugee communities in the gatherings.
- Output 5: Reduce youth risky behaviors in the gatherings through livelihood interventions.
- Output 6: Develop a national coordination and planning platform for response and development in
- Palestinian Gatherings.
- Output 7: Local communities and institutions supported to respond to COVID-19 in the gatherings.

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[7] Developed in relevance section below.
[8] Outputs, interventions/activities and results indicators will be further detailed in the final report of the evaluation as part of the assessment of the Resources and Results Framework 2016-2023.

FIGURE 4. DISTRIBUTION OF THE INTERVENTIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY
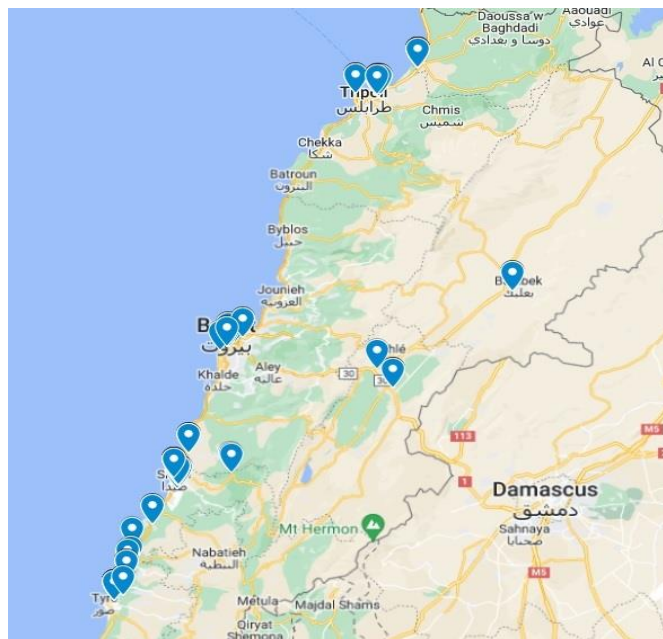
Source: Produced by CRI based on the database provided by the UNDP detailing the interventions and their locations since 2016. National-level interventions are excluded from this map.

The project was designed to be in line with UNDAF / UNSF Outcome 49; UNDP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) Outcome 610; UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) Outcome 1.1.211; and the LCRP Objective12. Indeed, the Palestinian Gatherings project, prior to 2023, was considered to be part of the Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) programme of the UNDP Lebanon Country Office 13. In mid-to-end 2023, a restructuring was done to be in line with the new 2023-2025 Country Programme Document (CPD) and programmes were merged, shifting the Palestinian Gatherings project to the Crisis Response and Crisis Prevention (CRCP) programme with other interventions related to Social and Local Development (SLD). This shift also comes in concordance with the integrated approach to local development introduced in 2023, as part of the Local Governance and Local Development Portfolio. This is an area-based approach that allows to address multi-sectoral vulnerabilities in selected areas, in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

It is important to mention that the UNDP project in Palestinian Gatherings involves various profiles of stakeholders. The involvement of these stakeholders is an essential aspect for the success of the UNDP

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[9] By 2014, the socio-economic status of vulnerable groups and their access to sustainable livelihood opportunities and quality basic social services are improved within a coherent policy framework of reduction of regional disparities.

[10] Early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

[11] Marginalized groups, particularly the poor, women, people with disabilities and the displaced, are empowered to gain universal access to basic services and financial and non-financial assets to build productive capacities and benefit from sustainable livelihoods and jobs.

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

[13] A total of 4 portfolios existed in the Country Project Document prior to 2023: Energy and environment, Social and local development, Crisis prevention and recovery and Governance.

project in PG. Indeed, the project uses a participatory and inclusive approach for the design and the implementation of the interventions. The main stakeholders in Palestinian gatherings could be classified under the following groups:

Local / Popular Committees: These are semi-official entities that act as the local authorities administering the gatherings. These committees are usually formed of representatives of the different political factions in one gathering and could act under the umbrella of a larger popular committee in a gathering or camp. Local and popular committees carry out tasks related to keeping peace and security, developing a housing registry, operating and maintaining infrastructure networks and WASH services and communicating with other national and local entities to seek financial support for small scale projects. UNDP actively engages these committees in decision-making and follow-up on project implementation on a non-exclusive basis. It also supports them to resume their roles as the local WASH actors in the gatherings through technical support and capacity building. The gatherings also host active community-based organizations such as women or youth groups, community empowerment groups, water committees, etc. UNDP empowers and supports such groups to take part in decision making as well as project activities. It builds their capacities and links them to other stakeholders to fulfill their plans in hygiene promotion, solid waste collection, management of water systems, etc.

Local NGOs and CBOs: A number of Palestinian and Lebanese NGOs are active in Palestinian gatherings. The most prominent NGOs such as PARD, Nabaa and NISCVT provide services mainly related to health, pre-schooling and education support, vocational training, psycho-social support, women empowerment, WASH and most recently relief to PRS. In addition to involving local NGOs in identifying needs and suggesting solutions, UNDP partner with local NGOs mainly for implementation of activities under the output 5. UNDP has supported a number of NGOs technical assistance, training and capacity building to carry out activities in the context of is project in Palestinian gatherings.

Municipalities: In 2012, UNDP carried out bilateral meetings with all municipalities to explain the intervention and raise awareness on living conditions in Palestinian gatherings, correcting misconceptions that Palestinian gatherings are served by UNRWA. Since then, municipalities have been involved depending on each case to take part in needs appraisal and prioritization, taking impact on their domains into consideration, provide permits and implement projects through grants from UNDP that benefited both Lebanese and Palestinian refugee communities living within their domains. The involvement of municipalities varies according to a number of factors such as the level of cooperation and collaboration of the mayor, availability of financial and human resources and political affiliation.

Public Service Agencies: Agencies such as Electricite du Liban (EDL), the Water Authorities and the Litani River Authority (LRA) represent in many cases the source of services in the Gatherings. In 2014, UNDP coordinated with EDL offices in South Lebanon to finalize an electricity study for the South gatherings and started implementing electricity rehabilitation projects. Similarly, Water Authorities are involved in engineering studies and approval of water projects that aim at diversifying water sources in the gatherings. An MOU with the LRA organizes Operation and Maintenance of small wastewater treatment plants in the Gatherings.

The project organizes and chairs the 'Gatherings Working Group', a planning and coordination platform that brings together UN agencies and international and national NGOs active in the Gatherings. Outcomes of the Gatherings WG are shared with the various sectors operating in the current context of response to the crisis in Lebanon (LCRP). As a coordination platform, the Gatherings WG contributes to sustaining and scaling up results through linking implemented projects and interventions to the operational programmes of local NGOs.

The project aims at integrating Gender Transformative Programming into the planning of activities by adopting strategies that aim to challenge and change gender norms and power relations that perpetuate inequality and discrimination. Such strategies include empowering women through capacity building and livelihood activities. Moreover, since 2021, interventions addressing the needs of people with disabilities have been designed to increase the inclusion of PWDs in society and address their specific vulnerabilities in terms of access, health, etc.

Evaluation Scope and Objectives

In order to remain relevant to the changing context, and in order to learn from previous experiences to be able to keep iterating its interventions to be more effective, efficient, impactful and sustainable, the UNDP finds it necessary to undertake an evaluation to the project between 2016 and 2023.

The users who will benefit from the evaluation are:

1. Primary users: UNDP Palestinian Gatherings team, UNDP management, and donors. These primary users are expected to benefit from the results of the evaluation in order to improve their approach while designing the next project document, amend their methodologies and redirect their priorities in terms of sector/type of intervention and target groups.
2. Secondary users: implementing partners, local communities, beneficiaries. These secondary users are expected to consequently benefit from the evaluation as it will feed into the next project documents, and therefore their challenges, constraints and needs will be better addressed, and their recommendations will be taken into consideration.

OBJECTIVES:

This is indeed the fifth independent evaluation undertaken by the UNDP for its Palestinian Gatherings project[14]. This evaluation's objectives as per the ToR are the following:

1. TOR Objective 1: Assess the impact of project activities towards achievement of the project outcome and objectives.
2. TOR Objective 2: Capture lessons learned and best practices from the implementation of the project with special focus on interventions that address the implications of the current multi-faceted crisis, and also those contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment.
3. TOR Objective 3: Provide concrete and actionable strategic and operational recommendations based on the evaluation's findings; that respond to the crisis context in the country and the reality and situation in Palestinian Gatherings and that aligns with the new UNDP Lebanon Country Strategy Note.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

According to the Terms of Reference, the more specific objectives of the evaluation study that would serve to achieve the above:

i. Evaluate the extent to which the goals of the project and its components as presented in project documents are relevant to Palestinians and host communities' gender-differentiated needs, and related to overall goals and objectives;

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[14] The UNDP has already conducted 4 evaluations studies for its Palestinian Gatherings project: in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2021-2022.

ii. Assess whether the project and its components were effective in achieving their goals and objectives;

iii. Assess whether resources were used efficiently; and assess the process of project implementation in terms of administration and field implementation;

iv. Assess the direct and indirect, qualitative and quantitative/measurables impacts of the project on the targeted populations (such as intended or unintended impact on gender equality), with special attention on interventions that address the implications of the current multi-faceted crisis;

v. Assess the sustainability of the project and level of institutional arrangement for continuity; and

vi. Highlight the areas of improvements of the project in order to derive lessons learned and concrete and actionable recommendations for similar future interventions, and more specifically for the new Project Document.

The first five points mentioned in the specific objectives of the evaluation above will allow the team to perform the macro-level assessment (Objective 1). The outcome of this assessment will serve as basis for the last point which is in fact the recommendations for the next phase (Objective 2).

The results of the evaluation will be used to ensure accountability on the impact of the project, to inform stakeholders of the findings and lessons learned, and to inform the planning and designing of the future project phases.

SCOPE:

In order to successfully reach the above objective in a clear and tangible manner, it is important to define the scope and delimitation of the evaluation:

i. Time coverage: 2016 to 2023 time period, relevant to the current Project Document, with focus on the last three years.

ii. Geographic coverage: While the UNDP interventions touched 45 Palestinian Gatherings in Lebanon and their host municipalities, the geographical scope of the evaluation will rather focus on specific areas selected based on several criteria developed in section 4 "Evaluation methodology". Specific representation and case studies will be selected for a deeper analysis, from which global/general trends and lessons learnt will be drawn.

iii. Project coverage: The evaluation will be holistic in a way to cover the different points of view of the parties involved in the design, management, implementation (including beneficiaries), and coordination of the project, while also covering the various sectors and types of interventions.

This scope was set based on the Terms of Reference and the first kick-off meeting with the UNDP team.

FRAMEWORK:

The Consultation and Research Institute will carry out the evaluation of the UNDP project in the Palestinian Gatherings based on a framework which is expected to overarch the complete assessment study, and that is composed of the following premises:

i. Be evidence-based and derived from, or validated against, evidence (in particular independent sources, documented or otherwise). More specifically, the evaluation is based on an extensive and exhaustive desk review as well as a series of individual interviews, group meetings, and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders and involved parties, as well as field visits.

ii. Analyze the findings in relation to an earlier-established baseline and to an actualized end-status, while taking account of any significant factors that may have influenced the desired outcome in the course of the project. The evaluation looked into the amendments that have occurred to its activities given the changes in context and lessons learnt. It will also analyze previous evaluations and conclusions/recommendations.

iii. Assess against a preset programmatic framework that clearly specifies the objectives and strategies, as well as pre-set targets/indicators to measure progress. In fact, the updated Project Document 2016-2023 – including the Results and Resources Framework (2016-2023) – was an essential document of reference for the assessment as it details the project's objectives and measurable targets/indicators.

iv. Adopt a utilization-focused approach that is premised on the basis that "evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use". Thus, this evaluation study steers away from generalizations and generic recommendations and will focus on highlighting what lessons can be learned. Indeed, as explained above, this evaluation pays special attention on providing practical and useful recommendations for the design and implementation of the next Project Document.

EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT:

The project in question offers a clear opportunity for evaluation for the following reasons:

i. The project is operating in a context that suffers from valid problems and weaknesses that should be addressed;

ii. The project has a clear and detailed Theory of Change that visualizes the initial state, the desired state and how the project intends to move from one to the other;

iii. The project has substantive accessible data to be analyzed and reviewed among which is a results framework that include clear and measurable indicators;

iv. The project is composed of a high number of stakeholders and partners involved, each of which hold history, experience and lessons learnt to be shared;

v. While the political, social and economic context in which the project operates is complicated, the evaluation methodology is flexible enough to allow implementation of the evaluation.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

The evaluation process and its deliverables will be in line with the international guidelines and standards for any evaluation assignment:

- The UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016)[15];
- The OECD/ DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance; and
- The UNDP evaluation guidelines.

The evaluation will look at the project in a manner that underscores:

i. The relevance of the project to the overall needs of different population groups (women/men, youth, disabled) and the degree of which the different components are contributing towards achieving the relevant goals, including the consistency of the initiative with national priorities given the current crisis and different UN Strategy documents;

ii. The effectiveness of the project in achieving its stated objectives/outputs, more specifically in covering the needs and improving lives in Palestinian Gatherings particularly those of women, youth and marginalized groups;

iii. The efficiency of the use of resources and inputs while implementing the activities, in terms of quality, quantity, time and cost;

iv. The impact of the different interventions on the targeted populations, whether intended or unintended, positive or negative, with special attention to the ability of the project to reduce gender-based inequalities;

v. The sustainability and continuity of the project and the degree of ownership of local communities and stakeholders.

vi. Gender and other cross-cutting issues are also mandatory requirements to assess as part of the TOR.

EVALUATION MATRIX:

Typically, the evaluation matrix[16] should systematically identify for each of the evaluation criteria above: the main questions that need to be addressed by the study team in order to evaluate each of the evaluation criteria, and the data collection methods and sources. Gender and other cross-cutting issues are also mandatory requirements to assess as part of the TOR.

In this case, the entirety of the assessment was done based on two data collection methods be it the desk review and the qualitative component (in-depth interviews, group meetings, focus group discussions and field visits). Therefore, in Annex 1 the Evaluation Matrix includes a series of questions and sub-questions – per criteria – that guide the evaluation team into developing more adapted questionnaires/discussion guides[17] for the selected stakeholders to interview during the implementation phase. Most – if not all –

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[15] https://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787
[16] Refer to Annex.
[17] Refer to Annex.

questions were asked to all the interviewed stakeholders with minor amendments/modification according to his/her profile, role, and level of involvement in the project activities.

It is important to mention that the study team made slight modifications in the structure of the evaluation questions as they were mentioned in the TOR, but without losing any important content (moving a question from one criterion to another, adding a question, removing a question, etc.). These changes were made to allow more fluency in the assessment and analysis of data. The changes are the following:

- Evaluation Question "Were the result indicators and their means of verification adequate?" was moved from efficiency to effectiveness,

- Evaluation Question "Any propositions for potential improvements in the next evaluations" was added to effectiveness.

- Evaluation Question "How can indicators be improved to capture outcomes through the M&E system? What further data sources are needed to capture impact?" was merged with question on indicators in the effectiveness.

- Compared to the ToR, added an own section on questions related to recommendations.

Evaluation Approach and Method

While the sections above in this report were dedicated to explaining **"What should be done"** during this evaluation exercise, this methodology section will be dedicated to detailing **"How it was done"**.

HOW IT WAS DONE
Starting point: find answers to the evaluation questions
Step 1 – Desk review: exhaustive use of the documents provided to collect evidence for each question of the evaluation matrix
➔ **Result 1**: partial answers to the evaluation questions
Step 2 – Data collection: in-depth interviews and site visits to confirm the findings from the desk review (Result 1), complement the gaps in the answers to the evaluation questions and address lessons learnt and recommendations
➔ **Result 2**: final answers to the evaluation questions
Step 3 – Analysis: draw conclusions (evidence based, triangulation, cross-checked, validation) and practical recommendations from the desk review and the final answers to the evaluation questions (Result 2)
➔ **Result 3**: partial recommendations for the new ProDoc
Step 4 – Validation: confirm and complement the practical recommendations (Result 3) with relevant stakeholders (such as the UNDP team)
➔ **Result 4:** final evaluation report

The approach of this evaluation is a mix between a realist evaluation and a developmental evaluation.

Indeed, a realist evaluation focuses on understanding what works better for whom, under what circumstances and, in particular, what it is within a programme that makes it work. This is done by answering three main questions: What contextual conditions are needed for a given mechanism to work? Why is the achievement of the outcome dependent on the context? What mechanisms are triggered in different contexts to produce the outcome (or fail to)?

Moreover, a developmental evaluation assesses ongoing programme development, innovations and rapid response in crisis situations and organizational change. It focuses on three key features: Development and adaptation, coping with complex and dynamic environments and providing rapid feedback, and working co-creatively with implementers to design and test new approaches in a long-term, ongoing process of adaptation.

KICK OFF:

During the first kick-off meeting between the evaluation team[18] at CRI and the UNDP project team, the evaluation exercise was contextualized and important matters and concerns were discussed from both sides in order to manage expectations and plan things forward in a clear and visible manner.

DESK REVIEW:

The UNDP started by sharing with the CRI team an exhaustive well-organized folder containing all relevant and useful documentation and data pertaining to the project[19]. This documentation consisted of 84 documents totaling around 1,000 pages and 10 excel sheets, and they can be categorized as follows:

   i.   Standards documents (Evaluation standards, Evaluation Code of conduct, Evaluation report checklist, etc.) and UNDP documents (Country Programme Document, Country Strategy Note, Strategy on local development approach);
   ii.   Support documents (projects related surveys or assessments, improvement plans, manuals);
   iii. Project documents (project proposal, project document including Theory of Change and results framework, annual donor reports, financial reports, relevant data on budget allocation and expenditures, annual workplans, progress reports, administrative data, monitoring and evaluation reports, etc.);
   iv.   Relevant statistical/quantitative data; and
   v.   Other related material pertaining to the immediate objectives and outputs of the implemented project.

CRI reviewed all documents provided in order to have a more in-depth analysis of the objectives and outputs of the UNDP project.

Although the desk review phase will be transversal to all the phases of the evaluation, an initial review of the documents allowed the team to determine the key issues that are to be the focus of the evaluation process and to identify major indicators for measuring the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project.
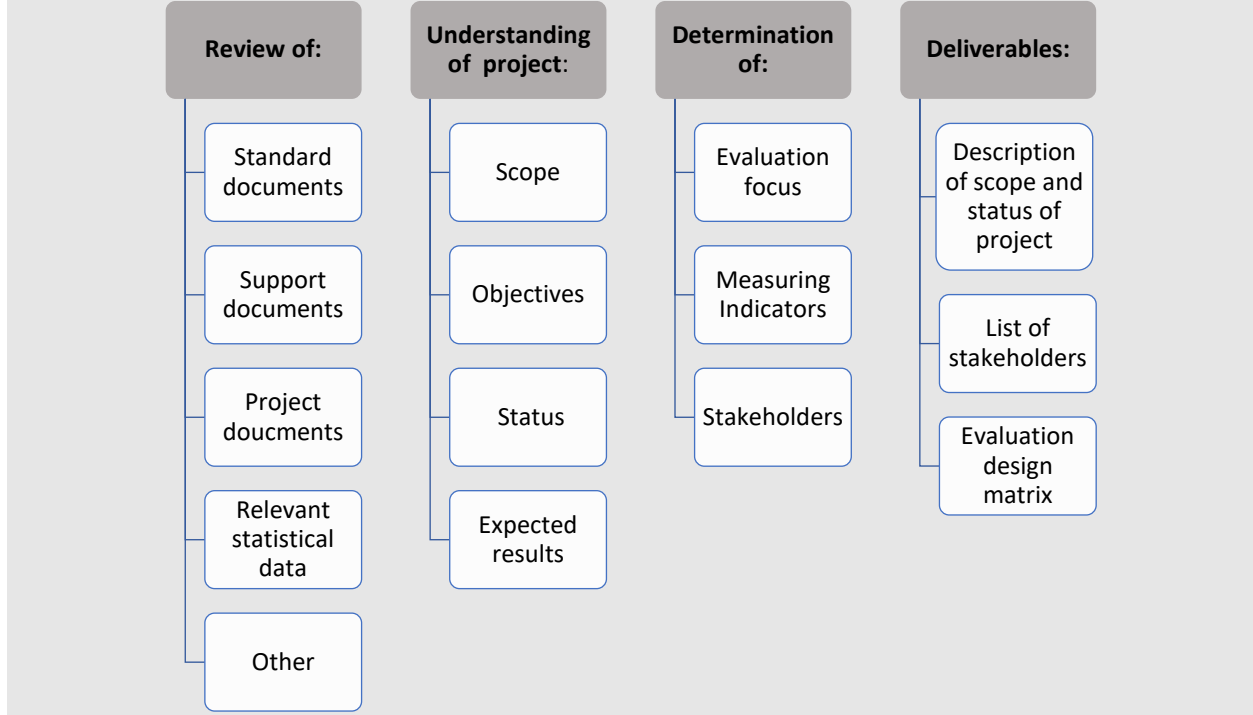
Thus, based on the above, the evaluation team designed the **evaluation matrix** that will be the main roadmap for this assignment.

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[18] Refer to the team composition and information about the evaluation team in Annex 3.
[19] Refer to Excel attached for more details.

Review of:	Understanding of project:	Determination of:	Deliverables:
Standard documents	Scope	Evaluation focus	Description of scope and status of project
Support documents	Objectives	Measuring Indicators	List of stakeholders
Project doucments	Status	Stakeholders	Evaluation design matrix
Relevant statistical data	Expected results		
Other			

DATA COLLECTION:

Based on the desk review, and after discussions with the UNDP team, the evaluation team and UNDP team identified a list of diverse stakeholders to be interviewed. This list was developed based on several criteria that ensure representativity:

1. Profiles of stakeholder: It is important to cover during the evaluation the various "points-of-views" of the stakeholders, which will allow to identify the converging beams and the distortions between the opinions. The covered profiles are project donors, designers, implementers, managers, coordinators, and beneficiaries. The gender-balance is also respected in the selection of the stakeholders.
2. Sector of activity: It is important to diversify the sector of activity, in order to cover both the hard and soft components of the project. The covered sectors are civil works (WASH/upgrading), livelihoods, and health/well-being. These sectors are in line with the different outputs of the project.
3. Interventions: Within each of the above-mentioned sectors, the covered interventions are new (not extensively tackled in previous evaluations), relatively large and impactful in terms of scale and coverage.
4. Geographic areas: The study team ensured that the selected interventions/stakeholders are covering a diversity of geographical areas across Lebanese governorates and not concentrated in a specific region. The selected areas (mentioned in the stakeholders table below) took into

consideration the high concentration of Palestinian dwellers, the urban/rural dimension, as well as the number of interventions that were made in a specific area. More specifically, North and South are more covered due to the high number of interventions in these two areas[20].

In fact, the study team met first with the UNDP team involved in this evaluation (Project Manager, Communication and Community Engagement Officer, and M&E specialist) as the first step towards understanding more the umbrella under which this project exists, the main scope and vision for this project and the plans for the next phase.

Based on the outcomes of the desk review, the selection criteria presented above, and the working session with the UNDP team, CRI designed the following plan for the qualitative fieldwork.

1- Meetings were online or face-to-face. In case the meeting is in-person, CRI team did a site visit and organize (with the assistance of the local partner/implementing agency) a focus group session with end-beneficiaries or other partners related to the intervention (grouped meeting). Overall, CRI team has conducted 18 in-depth interviews, 2 site visits, 2 focus group discussions with beneficiaries and 4 working sessions with the UNDP team (including the attending of a GWG).

2- CRI developed several discussion guides[21] that were used during the implemented interviews, depending on the profile of the interviewee and the objective of the interview. Indeed, three discussion guides (tools, refer Annex 1) were developed, the first one was used during individual in-depth interviews, while the second addresses working sessions discussions, and the third one was used during the focus group discussions with end-beneficiaries. It should be noted that these tools are only guidelines for the discussions and hence were adapted to the context of the interview.

3- The discussions tackled a number of topics that are in-line with the evaluation matrix, such as: a) Overall design and implementation of the project; b) Project management; c) Status of objectives, outputs and activities; d) Monitoring and evaluation procedures; e) Use of resources; f) Feedback of stakeholders and beneficiaries; g) Overall success; h) Gaps that need to be filled, etc.

4- The table in the Annex shows that all profiles of stakeholders were covered, as well as all sectors of interventions. The geographical coverage criterion is also respected, in terms of diversity. The table presents the various methods of data collection that were applied for each stakeholder.

CRI required the assistance of the UNDP team in order to facilitate the contacts, and the help of implementing agencies to invite beneficiaries to participating in a focus group). However, UNDP staff was not present during all interviews, for ethical reasons. The content of the meetings remains confidential and once incorporated in this final report it remains anonymous.

Minutes of meeting were taken during/after each contact and constituted an important input for the analysis phase. The updated list of conducted interviews is found in Annex 4.

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[20] Based on the Project's dashboard, 46% of the interventions are in the South and 27% are in the North.
[21] Refer to Annex.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The evaluation matrix (list of questions and sub-questions under evaluation criteria, including cross-cutting topics) constitutes the backbone of the analysis process. The matrix is composed of the following standard evaluation dimensions: relevance/coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and cross-cutting topics (human rights, gender equality, youth, disability). Providing answers to these questions will lead to serving the objectives of this evaluation.

Practically, CRI team gathered inputs from two different sources of information: primary and secondary. The desk review (secondary source) of all relevant project-related documents constitutes the first source. Indeed, the study team extracted from these documents the necessary information that will help answering the questions included in the evaluation matrix. Desk study was complemented by a qualitative fieldwork, composed of a series of in-depth interviews and/or working sessions with various profiles of stakeholders, as well as focus group discussions with beneficiaries and site visits, as described in the previous section. The qualitative data collection (primary source) used the tools developed in this report and conduct interviews/discussions accordingly. UNDP facilitated the contacts with the selected stakeholders, and CRI team conducted the interviews (online or face-to-face). The minutes of meeting were integrated in an Excel matrix showing answers of each respondent to each question (i.e. coding scheme).

The scheme below illustrates how the analysis was performed.

1- Step 1: Linking the evaluation matrix structured according to the standard evaluation criteria (including the cross-cutting topics) to the evaluation objectives.
2- Step 2: Conducting the desk review, extracting inputs from the documents and providing answers to the questions listed in the evaluation matrix per criteria.
3- Step 3: Selecting the profiles of the stakeholders and the methods for conducting the qualitative fieldwork.
4- Step 4: Developing the adequate technical tools.
5- Step 5: Conducting the qualitative fieldwork, producing minutes of meeting, and integrating these minutes into the matrix (using Excel), in order to provide answers to the questions related to each criterion.
6- Step 6: Performing analysis, criteria per criteria, question per question. This includes: assessing the various inputs collected through the desk and the field, evaluating their convergence or divergence, performing cross-checking and triangulation, and final drawing conclusions and recommendations.

The analysis has also integrated gender considerations whenever possible through data disaggregation, and addressed to the extent allowed by the data collected the topics of gender equality, disability, vulnerability and social inclusion.

It is important to mention that as is the case in any qualitative data collection, one limitation could be participants not being fully transparent and skewing answers to reflect their personal interests. However, this is where triangulation with other data sources (e.g. other respondents and desk review), were useful in validating or rejecting these findings.
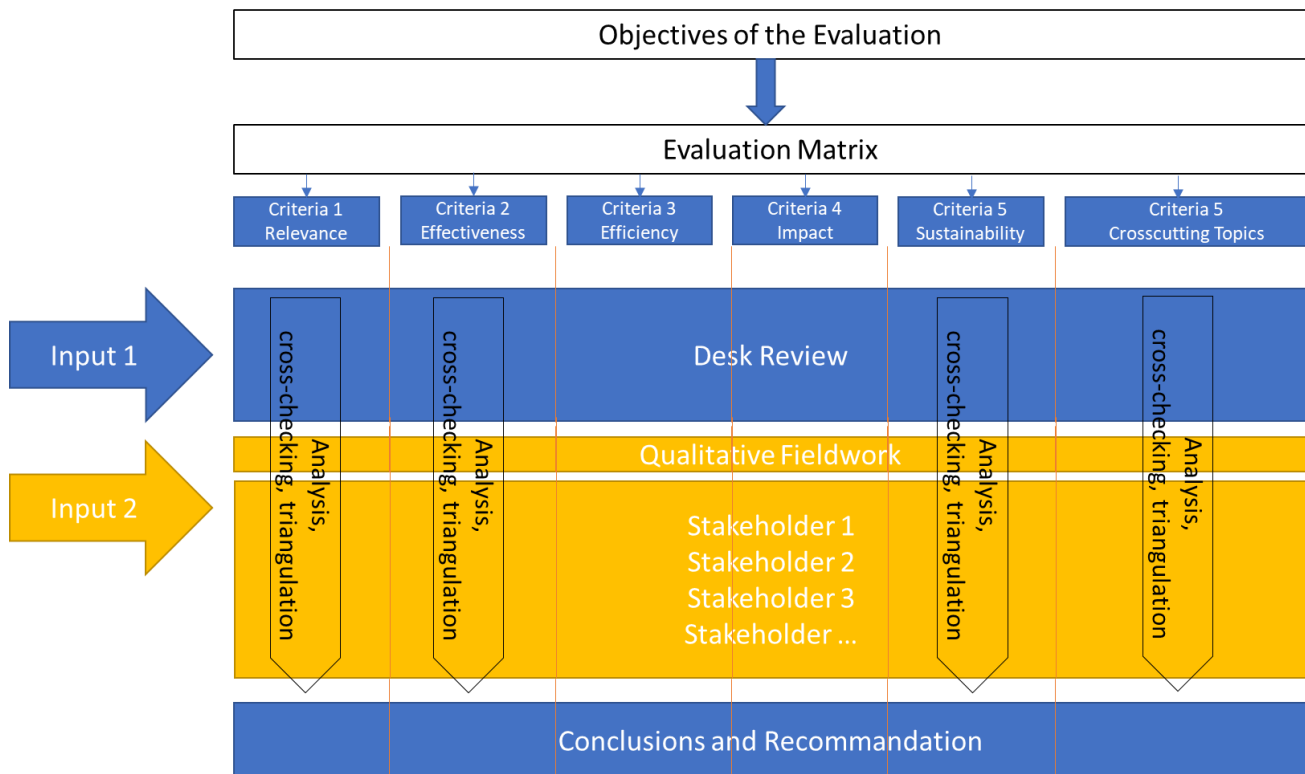
In conclusion, the qualitative fieldwork has as objectives to first, confirm the conclusions reached by CRI from the desk review for each of the evaluation criteria, assess the new interventions of the UNDP, and draw specific and practical recommendations and objectives for the next Project Document.

The methodology did not include a quantitative survey for the following reasons: i) as specified in the objectives section, this evaluation is being done at a high strategic level covering almost 10 years of activity, a quantitative approach will not provide a significant added-value; ii) the elaboration of a sampling methodology that covers the high diversity of statistical units (multiple regions/areas, multiple profiles of respondents/beneficiaries, multiple sectors of interventions, different periods of time) would have required a very large sample size which would have increased significantly the budget and time-table of this assignment, with low value-added; and iii) the instability of the security situation in the country following the war in Gazza and the subsequent war in the South of Lebanon.

The evaluation matrix as well as the Results and Resources Framework helped organize the different findings and draw conclusions on the different questions of the evaluation exercise, while covering all outputs of the project and looking into the Theory of Change of the project. The analysis also adopted the different lenses: human rights, gender equality, youth, and disability. Also, the data was disaggregated – to the extent possible – by gender, age, disability, nationality, and other relevant differences, if any.

In this regard, the different data sources fed into the analysis of the evaluation criteria as follows:

i.   Relevance: Project Document 2016-2023, the CRI implemented household survey on Palestinian Gatherings in 2022[22], and the interviews with UNDP core team, donors, UNRWA, and local stakeholders such as beneficiaries, local committees and the municipalities.

ii.   Effectiveness: Results and Resources Framework 2016-2023, the consolidated target indicators (2016 – 2023) in Excel, donors reports and presentations, UNDP publications, previous evaluations, and the interviews with the UNDP core team and the implementing partners.

iii.   Efficiency: Annual Workplans from 2016 to 2023.

iv.   Impact: Previous evaluations, Annual Project Reports, Donors' reports, UNDP publications, and the interviews with the UNDP core team, the municipalities and the implementing partners.

v.   Sustainability: Country office document on integrated approach to local development, and the interviews with the UNDP core team, donors, UNRWA, and local stakeholders such as beneficiaries, local committees and the municipalities.

vi.   Recommendations for next phase of the project: Country office document on integrated approach to local development, and the interviews with the UNDP core team, donors, UNRWA and the municipalities, as well as all other stakeholders interviewed.

RISKS AND MITIGATION:

This section pertains to detailing any risk that CRI expects to be facing during the undertaking of this evaluation study, as well as proposed mitigation measures.

Given the timing and context of this evaluation, CRI identifies three major risks that should be highlighted

1.   Security: The unstable security situation in Lebanon especially with the war on the Southern borders and the security concerns and restrictions in other areas of the country.

2.   Weather: Since the implementation phase is expected to be ongoing in February-March, the weather may be an obstacle for reaching far areas.

3.   Stakeholders' collaboration: There might a chance that some stakeholders refuse to participate in this study or are simply late in responding to CRI's request for an interview. Indeed, one interview was canceled after several attempts of contacting a stakeholder who have first refused then kept postponing the meeting with little efforts to schedule a fixed appointment.

However, many flexibilities / mitigation methods were adopted for implementation such as:

1.   Pre-scheduling field visits and interviews: CRI did not visit any region without prior notice and agreement with the concerned stakeholders, and took all necessary measures to respect all parties involved.

2.   Ability to conduct online interviews/meetings: The methodology of this evaluation allowed CRI to conduct whenever preferable online meetings and interviews with the stakeholders instead of face-to-face and field visits[23].

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[22] Assessing Vulnerability in Palestinian Gatherings in Lebanon, June 2022.
[23] The list of stakeholders interviewed in Annex details the way the interviews were conducted, as well as any related comments.

3. Ability to substitute interviews: The selection of the stakeholders to interview maybe modified should the situation arise where the stakeholder concerned does not want to conduct an online meeting and reaching that stakeholder on field is not feasible due to the risks explained above.
4. Close coordination and assistance of the UNDP team: The help of the UNDP team throughout the evaluation facilitated CRI's work and allowed easier access and responsiveness with the targeted stakeholders.

In the end, the following risks materialized:

1. Collaboration of stakeholders: One interview was canceled. However, the profile was covered by other interviews.

2. Site visits: One site visit to Adloun in the South of Lebanon was substituted by online meetings due to the unstable security situation.

The above two events did not negatively impact the validity of the evaluation findings.

DO NO HARM PRINCIPLE:

Given the fact that this is an evaluation study that involves a variety of stakeholders and actors and may be sensitive when addressing certain topics of discussions, CRI made sure to undertake the fieldwork (i.e. interviews, meetings, focus group discussions and field visits) in a way to respect the "Do no harm" principle, by taking the following steps:

1. The CRI team introduced the evaluation and its objectives to all stakeholders in a clear and transparent manner.
2. The meetings with the stakeholders were only conducted after receiving proper and honest consent for participation. The stakeholders were also allowed to stop the interview at any point in time and/or refuse to answer certain questions.
3. The meetings with the stakeholders were completely confidential; the team did not record any interview.
4. Women beneficiaries were interviewed by female researchers to allow easier discussions of gender sensitive topics. The analysis of the evaluation findings also included a gender sensitive approach (whenever relevant and applicable).
5. The analysis of the data did not mention individual opinions, but rather a consolidation of the findings.

Key to Understanding Findings

For a proper, more strategic and exhaustive evaluation of the project, CRI has adopted a methodology whereby the assessment is structured around the evaluation questions, while covering the entirety of the project's life-cycle.

More specifically, to the extent possible, CRI will look into the different levels of the project:

1. Design: This stage consists of the creation of the ideas, processes, resources and deliverables. It comprises both the initiation and the planning of the activities.
2. Implementation: This stage consists of putting the plan into action. It comprises the methodologies put in place to undertake the decided initiatives, the coordination between the different actors, and the monitoring and control of the activities.
3. Closing: This stage consists of finalizing all activities and ensuring that all objectives were met and deliverables were submitted. It comprises the hand-over of the activities and the lessons learnt.

While not every criterion can include the above-mentioned three levels, the entirety of the assessment will be done in way to eventually cover the three life-cycle stages of the project as per below.

1. The relevance of the project will tackle mostly the design phase based on one main question:
   To what extent was the design of the project relevant to the context in which it operates?

This question is actually dissected into four main topics to be addressed:

   i) *Relevance of the role of the UNDP in the Palestinian Gatherings*
   ii) *Coherence of the project with the UNDP strategies and priorities*
   iii) *Relevance of the initiatives to the targeted communities needs*
   iv) *Relevance of the methodology adopted to the objectives of the project and to the needs of the beneficiaries*

2. The effectiveness of the project will tackle mostly the implementation based on one main question:
   To what extent was the implementation of the project effective in reaching the pre-set targets?

This question is actually dissected into four main topics be addressed:

   i) *Overall success of the initiatives in covering the needs*
   ii) *Adequacy of the used results indicators*
   iii) *Operations and maintenance of the project*
   iv) *Challenges and constraints*

3. The efficiency of the project will tackle design, implementation and closing of the project based on one main question:
   To what extent were inputs been converted into activities efficiently?

This question is actually dissected into four main topics be addressed:

    i)   *Cost efficiency*
    ii)   *Quality and quantity efficiency*
    iii)   *Time efficiency*

4. The impact of the project will tackle implementation and closing of the project based on one main question:

   What was the overall impact of the project on beneficiaries and relevant communities?

This question is actually dissected into three main topics to be addressed:

    i)   *Most significant measurable impacts*
    ii)   *Unintended externalities*
    iii)   *Obstacles to creating additional impact*

5. The sustainability of the project will tackle the closing of the project and the handover of the interventions, based on one main question:

   To what extent are the project's interventions sustainable?

This question is actually dissected into two main topics to be addressed:

    i)   *Success in sustainability*
    ii)   *Obstacles to sustainability*

TABLE 1: ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS BY EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROJECT LIFE CYCLE

Project life cycle/Evaluation criteria	Design	Implementation	Closing
Relevance			
Effectiveness			
Efficiency			
Impact			
Sustainability			
Cross-cutting			
Conclusions and lessons learnt			
Recommendations			

Findings

Relevance/Coherence

i) Relevance of the UNDP role in the Palestinian Gatherings

According to the UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of December 1949, the UNRWA was established to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestinian refugees. The agency provides humanitarian assistance and contributes to protection of the refugees through essential service delivery, primarily in the areas of basic education, primary health care and mental health care, relief and social services, microcredit, and emergency assistance, including in situations of armed conflict, to millions of registered Palestinian refugees located within its five fields of operations (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza).

Therefore, in Lebanon, UNRWA caters for all Palestinian refugees, irrelevant of where they reside (inside the camps or gatherings), within the mentioned sectors of activity, as long as they are registered with UNRWA. While UNRWA's presence in the 12 official camps is historical, its mandate is not restricted to those only. In fact, UNRWA schools and health centers are also outside these camps. However, UNRWA does not conduct physical interventions (such as upgrading, shelter and infrastructure activities) outside the boundaries of the 12 official camps.

Due to several reasons mentioned below (gathered from the desk and interviews with UNRWA and UNDP team), other international agencies need to operate through projects and programmes to provide assistance and support to Palestinian refugees outside camps:

1. A significant share of Palestinian refugees (55%) reside outside the 12 official Palestinian camps.
2. A minor share of Palestinians in Lebanon are not registered with UNRWA;
3. The UNRWA's sectors of intervention in Lebanon according to its mandate (stated above) do not explicitly mention shelter and infrastructure;
4. The limited capacities and funding of UNRWA make it restraining for the agency to cater for all camps and Gatherings and therefore it prioritizes the official camps in its assistance; and
5. The Palestinian Gatherings are excluded from development plans and municipal services; and as such constitute invisible grey areas that suffer from lack of channeled support.

The UNDP's mandate is to end poverty, build democratic governance, rule of law, and inclusive institutions. Within this mandate, the UNDP caters for vulnerable groups in Lebanon whether refugees or host communities by designing projects and activities that are consistent with its overall country strategy and objectives. In this regard, the UNDP plays a major role with Palestinians in terms of responding to emerging needs and/or developmental activities.

Based on the interviews, there is a misconception on UNRWA's mandate regarding Palestinian Gatherings. Hence, it is important to reclarify that UNRWA provides some services to all registered Palestinians, however these services are limited to health and education sectors and cannot include work on the built-
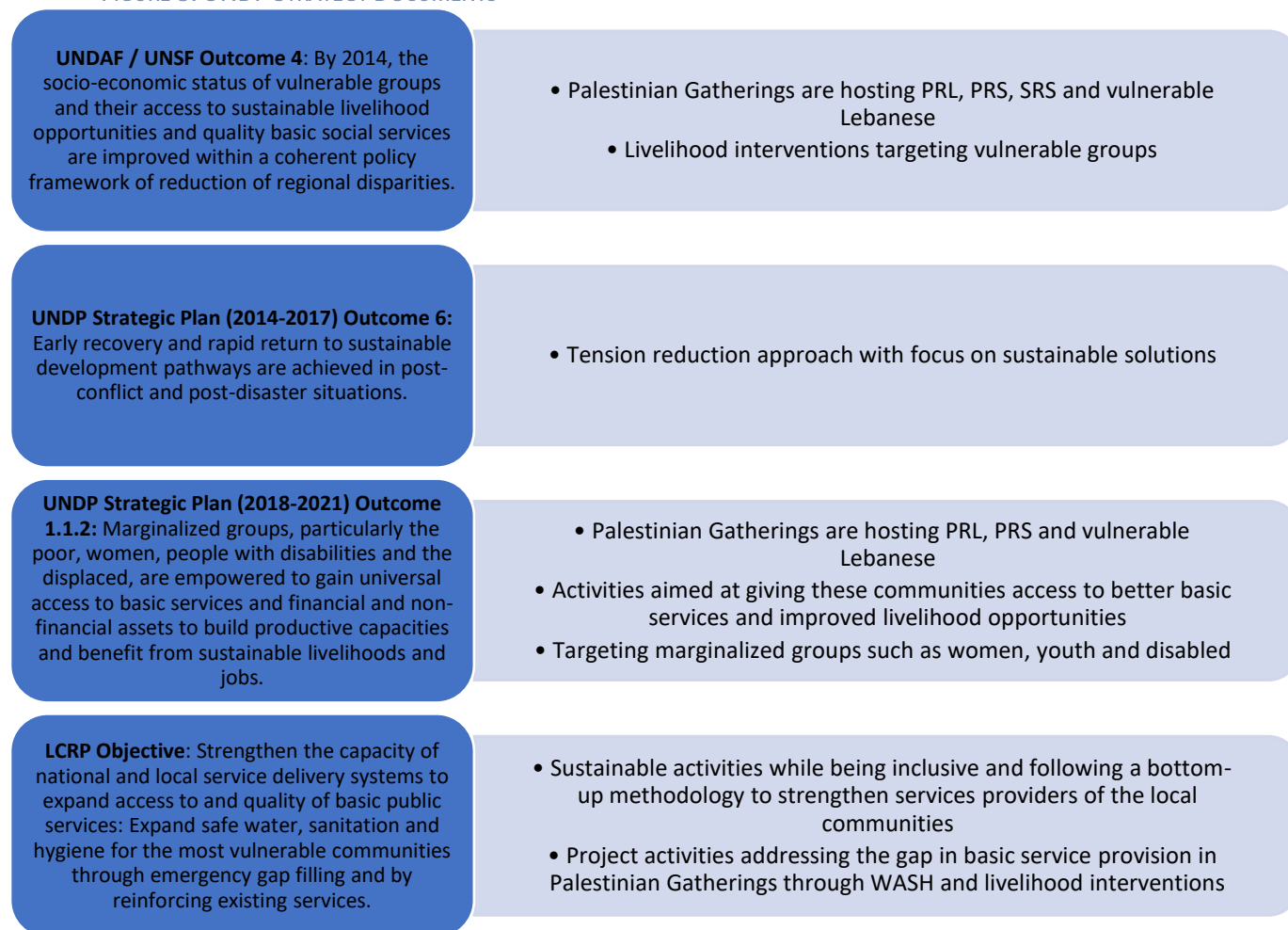
environment.   Therefore, the UNDP's interventions are critical and complementary to serve the Palestinians outside the camps.

In conclusion, the UNDP's role in Palestinian Gatherings is important to complement the role of the UNRWA where UNRWA's mandate in terms of services is limited. However, it is important to better clarify the different mandates and strengthen coordination between the two agencies. Moreover, these areas (PG) are part of the municipalities whose capacities are also limited to serve the PGs.

ii)   Coherence of the project with the UNDP strategies and priorities

According to the desk review, the project was designed to be in line with UNDAF / UNSF Outcome 4; UNDP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) Outcome 6; UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) Outcome 1.1.2; and the LCRP Objective. In fact, it includes livelihood interventions targeting the vulnerable groups; it addresses post-conflict and post-disaster situations with its tension-reduction approach while focusing on sustainable solutions, it covers in its targeting marginalized groups such as women, youth and disabled, and it concentrates on sustainable activities while being inclusive and following a bottom-up methodology to strengthen the capacities of services providers of the local communities.

FIGURE 8: UNDP STRATEGY DOCUMENTS

UNDAF / UNSF Outcome 4: By 2014, the socio-economic status of vulnerable groups and their access to sustainable livelihood opportunities and quality basic social services are improved within a coherent policy framework of reduction of regional disparities.	• Palestinian Gatherings are hosting PRL, PRS, SRS and vulnerable Lebanese • Livelihood interventions targeting vulnerable groups
UNDP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) Outcome 6: Early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.	• Tension reduction approach with focus on sustainable solutions
UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) Outcome 1.1.2: Marginalized groups, particularly the poor, women, people with disabilities and the displaced, are empowered to gain universal access to basic services and financial and non-financial assets to build productive capacities and benefit from sustainable livelihoods and jobs.	• Palestinian Gatherings are hosting PRL, PRS and vulnerable Lebanese • Activities aimed at giving these communities access to better basic services and improved livelihood opportunities • Targeting marginalized groups such as women, youth and disabled
LCRP Objective: Strengthen the capacity of national and local service delivery systems to expand access to and quality of basic public services: Expand safe water, sanitation and hygiene for the most vulnerable communities through emergency gap filling and by reinforcing existing services.	• Sustainable activities while being inclusive and following a bottom-up methodology to strengthen services providers of the local communities • Project activities addressing the gap in basic service provision in Palestinian Gatherings through WASH and livelihood interventions

Based on the documents reviewed and discussions with the UNDP, prior to 2023, the Palestinian Gatherings project was considered to be part of the Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) portfolio of the UNDP Lebanon Country Office [24]. In mid-to-end 2023, a restructuring was done to be in line with the new 2023-2025 Country Programme Document (CPD) and portfolios were merged, shifting the Palestinian Gatherings project to the Crisis Response and Crisis Prevention (CRCP) with other interventions related to Social and Local Development (SLD).

The new CPD 2023-2025 has three priorities:

PRIORITY 1 - Advocate for and support the country's reform agenda. This priority is set to strengthen inclusive social contract grounded in human rights to enhance good governance, effective and accountable institutions, and women's participation.

PRIORITY 2 - Support short to medium-term crisis response and crisis prevention. This priority is set to act firmly in mitigating the multi-faceted national crises, by building resilience to systematic uncertainty and risk (strengthening security, justice and social peace).

PRIORITY 3 - Building on the crisis response, support the country's longer-term aspirations towards green and inclusive development; i.e. set Lebanon on a path to sustainable development. This priority is set to reduce vulnerabilities and environmental risks, including through enhanced competitiveness and business environment of sustainability-oriented MSMEs and high potential green productive sector values chains; leaving no one behind and focusing on an equitable access to opportunities and a rights-based approach.

While the Palestinian Gatherings project serves all these 3 priorities in its interventions, Priority 2 is more overarching in all the project's activities. More specifically, it responds to Outputs 2.2. and 2.3:

Output 2.2. - Inclusive, risk-informed, and gender and youth-responsive recovery solutions, including stabilization, social cohesion and peace-building efforts and mine action, implemented at national and subnational levels. Under this Output, the Palestinian Gatherings project' main indicator is the number of people (refugees and host communities) benefiting from jobs and improved livelihood in crisis or post-crisis settings (with focus on both genders and youth).
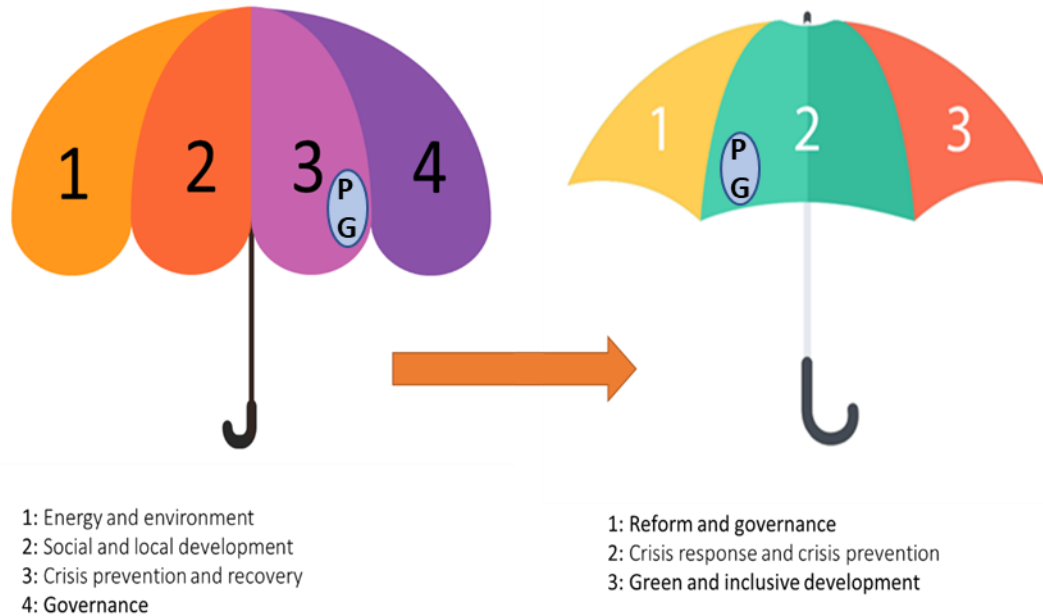
Output 2.3. - Integrated conflict-sensitive and gender-responsive development solutions provided in municipalities hosting the country's most vulnerable communities to enhance their resilience (including in host communities). Under this Output, the Palestinian Gatherings project' main indicators are i) the number of people (refugees and host communities) benefiting from integrated and targeted interventions, including on strengthening social cohesion (with focus on both genders and youth); and ii) the number of people (refugees and host communities) benefiting from improved infrastructure for recovery in crisis or post-crisis settings (with focus on both genders and youth).

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[24] A total of 4 portfolios existed in the Country Project Document prior to 2023: Energy and environment, Social and local development, Crisis prevention and recovery and Governance.

FIGURE 9: UNDOP PROJECT IN PG SHIFT IN UMBRELLAS

1: Energy and environment
2: Social and local development
3: Crisis prevention and recovery
4: Governance

1: Reform and governance
2: Crisis response and crisis prevention
3: Green and inclusive development

This shift in program umbrellas also comes in concordance with the integrated approach to local development introduced in 2023, that is an area-based approach that allows to address multi-sectoral vulnerabilities in selected gatherings, in a comprehensive and integrated manner. As per the UNDP team, the introduction of this approach was needed after realization of the larger impact such interventions can lead to, instead of the scattered numerous interventions in several locations. Focusing on one area and addressing several dimensions in one place can create a more solid and more sustainable change that can be replicated in other locations with modifications according to the locations' characteristics.

The documents reviewed reveal that the UNDP project in PG fits under the framework for action on local development especially in regards to the following[25]:

o Following an area-based development management by empowering local stakeholder and actors using a bottom-up approach and involving them in the design and the implementation of the multi-sectoral interventions;
o Focusing on essential infrastructure services such as WASH;
o Maximizing on available economic opportunities through livelihood interventions in order to increase stability of the targeted vulnerable groups;
o Reducing tensions and creating activities to strengthen community-based conflict prevention and responding to emerging needs; and
o Being inclusive of all community groups including refugees, host communities, women, youth and disabled.

[25] Three improvement plans were implemented as part of the Palestinian Gatherings project: Beddawi, Maachouk, Taamir.

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Integrated Approach to Local Development

According to the UNDP definition, an integrated approach to local development capitalizes on the comparative advantages of local areas (physical, economic, cultural, social, or political), is endogenous and spatially integrated, leverages the contribution of actors operating at multiple levels and brings incremental value to national development efforts. In fragile settings, integration is also about bringing together three key workstreams for securing the social contract: making local institutions more responsive, local politics more inclusive, and communities more resilient to tension and conflict risks. It comprises six main pillars:

1) Area-based development management: Empowering municipalities, unions, the public administration, civil society, private sector, communities to understand their shared territory and use this knowledge to build, implement, monitor and inform recovery-to-development plans that respond to populations' needs in an inclusive, conflict-sensitive and environmentally sound manner.
2) Essential services: Providing immediate solutions to service breakdowns, including energy supply, affecting vulnerable populations while laying the ground with technical, financial, governance and institutional capacity support for transformative public service models that can deliver higher access for vulnerable groups (including displaced populations) and effective climate change mitigation and adaptation, in particular through increasing affordable renewable energy sources and energy efficiency of public services.
3) Agriculture & Food Security: Contributing to realize the full agricultural potential of Lebanon in order to increase resiliency of the country's food security, diversify avenues of economic recovery and secure decent income for vulnerable rural communities, through an area-based farm-to-fork approach driven by imperatives of green transition, national autonomy and gender-sensitive livelihoods creation.
4) Local economic recovery: Maximizing economic opportunities that can create decent jobs and incomes for vulnerable groups, accelerating women's empowerment, while reducing the environmental footprint of economic growth, and providing essential private sector development services (finance, innovation, market access, skills development).
5) Social peace and social capital: Preserving peaceful and safe environments in local communities by strengthening community-based conflict prevention and early response mechanisms, enhancing community policing, reducing inter- and intra-group tensions (including related to political contests), promoting reconciliation and tolerance, and activating grievance-handling and accountability mechanisms that can contribute to rebuilding trust between communities and local authorities.
6) Supportive financial and policy environment: Facilitating better connection between national duty bearers, investors and innovators to local governance and local development systems and their needs, in a demand-driven approach, and facilitating central-local compacts for solving immediate stabilization and recovery issues and charting long-term context-specific development pathways.

On another note, it is important to mention that the UNDP's Lebanon Host Community Support Project (LHSP) was established to strengthen social stability, support livelihoods, and mitigate inter and intra communal tensions and conflicts at the level of vulnerable communities affected by the crises. While this project targets more vulnerable Lebanese and Syrians, its activities can intersect with the UNDP project in PG which could result in either missed opportunities or duplication of activities if there is no proper communication and coordination between the two teams.

Indeed, according to the interviews with the donors, joint funding has been provided to the UNDP project in PG and the LHSP as part of a vision to support host communities/ municipalities hosting both Syrians and Palestinians. The synergies between the two teams seem to make more sense for donors and is important to strengthen the case for local authorities; and therefore, the shift in umbrellas of the UNDP project in PG as described above, and having the UNDP project in PG and the LHSP now under the same portfolio, will ensure that the work is being done in a comprehensive manner, and coordination is made with other UNDP projects having a similar approach.

It is however important to indicate, that while the ongoing coordination with the LHSP and other related projects within the same portfolio is effective and for the UNDP project in PG in terms of joint planning,

joint funding and local development approach, it is also essential that the project remains as a separate unit with some level of independence for three main reasons:

i)   respecting during the planning and the implementation the specific characteristics of the Gatherings which the PG team have extensive experience and knowledge in;

ii)   the pace and timelines for the design of the activities is separate between the different projects (PG and LHSP for example) and it is important that one does not affect/delay the other; and

the UNDP project in PG has of scope some 45 Gatherings, and therefore, even under an area-based approach where some activities should be done with joint planning and coordination with the LHSP, the UNDP project in PG should remain operational at the level of the 45 Gatherings.   Finally, the project is also coherent with "leaving no one behind" as a central transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. In fact, the UNDP is indeed prioritizing its programmatic interventions to address the situation of the most marginalized, discriminated and excluded in order to empower them as active agents in the development process.

In conclusion, the Palestinian Gatherings project is highly relevant and consistent with national priorities; the UNDP Country Strategy Note; the SDGs; the UNDP Country Programme Document; and the UNDP strategy on local development approach, especially given the current crisis and circumstances. The project is indeed in line with the objective of the UNDP of "leaving no-one behind", responding to the unmet needs in the PG.

iii)   Relevance of the initiatives to the targeted communities needs

The Palestinian Gatherings project targets all dwellers of the 45 Gatherings. These Gatherings are indeed home to Palestinians (over 90%) but also other nationalities such as Syrians and Lebanese. The project also pays special attention to vulnerable groups such as women, youth and people with disabilities.

Moreover, within the scope of the project, the hosting municipalities are covered even outside the Gathering itself, stretching its interventions to the adjacent Lebanese areas and host communities.

Based on the desk review, the projects interventions are various and multisectoral with focus on health, education, agriculture, water and energy, solid waste, and livelihoods sectors. They can be divided into two main components:

1.   Hard component: civil works for shelter, rehabilitation works, and WASH/ municipal services and infrastructure.
2.   Soft component: livelihood activities, business support, training and capacity building, and health and wellbeing

Design and identification of the interventions:

Deciding on which project/intervention to introduce in which area/gathering is a critical step that involves many actors depending on the process followed for these decisions. Based on the interviews and meetings with the UNDP, donors, NGO partners, and local actors, the UNDP initiates the identification of needs from several entry points:

1. Desk research and analysis: This consists of conducting and/or reviewing recent and relevant studies pertaining to Palestinians and Gatherings in order to identify different types vulnerabilities (including women-specific), weaknesses and areas of intervention (geographically or by sector). The UNDP relied on several studies mentioned in footnote below. [26]

2. Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) and field contact: The UNDP team is in direct daily contact with the field in all 45 Gatherings and are touching concretely their vulnerabilities by witnessing the lives of the communities living there and listening to their complaints. The close coordination with local actors- whether municipalities, public entities, local committees, NGOs or other stakeholders- is also important in identifying the needs on a more strategic community-level and also institutional level. Thus, this team is performing regular rapid needs assessments (updated on annual basis) to update the needs and priorities of these Gatherings based on what they hear and see. This contact with the ground is very reliable and can allow the differentiation of proposed interventions by group/profile (gender, youth, disability).

3. Gatherings Working Group (GWG): This group meets quarterly and includes nationwide stakeholders/actors that are involved in the Palestinian Gatherings such as, the UNDP, UNRWA, UNICEF, and all NGOs involved the coordination and joint planning of the projects. These meetings allow all relevant actors to update the needs of the Gatherings and highlight areas of intervention and priority for which activities are need and may not be able to implement/operate in.

4. Donors: Some donors have specific priorities in terms of areas of operations, sectors of activity and targeted population group (such as women, youth or persons with disability for example); which translates in a need to prioritize these while identifying the needs in the Palestinian Gatherings. In other terms, the UNDP tries to the extent possible to remain relevant and impactful while designing its intervention, while also respecting donors' demands in order to be able to use the funds they are providing.

5. External factors: Given the constant changing context of the country, the selection of interventions is highly impacted by the emerging of new/emergency needs in the Palestinian Gatherings, resulting from an economic crisis[27], a health crisis, etc. The UNDP takes into account as well several feasibility factors as well as legal and regulatory constraints pertaining to Palestinians specifically.

6. Area-based approach: When an area-based approach is being implemented in a certain Gathering, the selection of the interventions is related to tackling all addressable need in this area as part of an improvement plan / neighborhood approach. Through this approach, many focus groups and interviews are conducted in a participatory manner for needs and priorities identification.

Both the desk and the interviews have proven that this methodology for identifying the needs and the selection of the project's interventions is bottom-up and allows a certain flexibility which is needed given the continuously changing context. It also involves a variety of relevant parties from different profiles and
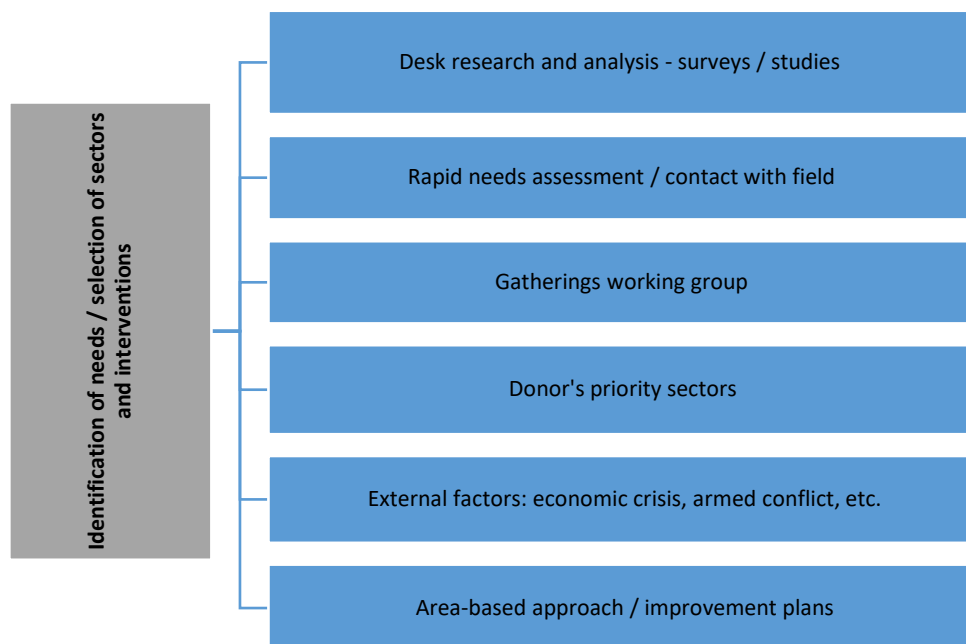
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[26] UNDP commissioned to UN-Habitat. 2014. "PROFILING DEPRIVATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN PALESTINIAN GATHERINGS HOST COMMUNITIES IN LEBANON." - AUB and UNRWA. 2015. "SURVEY ON THE SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF PALESTINE REFUGEES IN LEBANON." American University of Beirut. - - UNDP commissioned to LCPS. 2017. "ASSESSING VULNERABILITIES IN PALESTINIAN GATHERINGS IN LEBANON. - UNDP commissioned to CRI. 2022. "UPDATING RESULTS OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEY IN PALESTINIAN GATHERINGS." -

[27] The focus on agriculture as a productive sector was initiated as an initiative in the Gatherings after the economic crisis in Lebanon was shifting the demand towards local products as a substitute for imported more expensive ones.

genders and is highly participatory and in touch with the ground. The interviewed actors and partners have highly appraised UNDP's methodology in designing its interventions and felt that they were very much engaged in every step, which is something they don't experience in other projects or with other international organizations.

FIGURE 10: METHODOLOGY FOR NEEDS IDENTIFICATION

Identification of needs / selection of sectors and interventions

- Desk research and analysis - surveys / studies
- Rapid needs assessment / contact with field
- Gatherings working group
- Donor's priority sectors
- External factors: economic crisis, armed conflict, etc.
- Area-based approach / improvement plans

The project has identified during its lifetime several needs in the PGs that were updated progressively based on changes in context. The below table summarizes the major ones and the compatibility of these needs with the relevant outputs from the Prodoc 2016-2023.

TABLE 2: COMPATIBILITY OF THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS WITH THE PROJECT'S OUTPUTS

NEED	OUTPUT
Inadequate access to water and sanitation and hygiene facilities	Output 1: Provide environmentally and economically sustainable WASH services at community level in the gatherings.
	Output 4: Improve hygiene conditions for host and new refugee communities in the gatherings.
Inadequate shelter conditions	Output 2: Improve environmental and structural conditions of shelter units in the gatherings.
Deteriorated physical environments at community level	Output 3: Promote inclusive and safer environments in the gatherings though comprehensive neighborhood upgrading interventions.
Deteriorated living conditions due to poverty	Output 5: Support socio-economic empowerment in Palestinian Gatherings with focus on youth and women.
Lack of proper coordination and communication between different actors	Output 6: Develop a national coordination and planning platform for response and development in Palestinian Gatherings.
Low commitment to COVID-19 preventive measures	Output 7: Strengthen communities' preparedness and response to COVID-19.

As explained above, external factors are taken into consideration while identifying the needs of the Gatherings and consequently the interventions of the project. Therefore, the change in the country's context is very much accounted for in the design phase of the project:

- ✓ Since September 2013, the project has implemented infrastructure and shelter interventions, responding to the urgent needs increased by the displacement of new refugees into the gatherings with the emerging of the Syrian crisis. à
- ✓ In 2016, the UNDP listened to stakeholders requiring more work with people and launched the soft component of the project (including projects related to gender equality and women empowerment). à
- ✓ In 2019, new COVID-19 interventions were introduced to address the pandemic as national priority at the time and then this was built on to develop a health and wellbeing sector to support NGOs operating in this context. à
- ✓ The impacts of the economic crisis were captured in the 2022 household survey and related interventions were introduced to alleviate burdens on targeted communities. à
- ✓ Following the war in Gazza in October 2023 and the relevant conflict at the Lebanese Southern borders, service providers in Palestinian Gatherings (UNRWA; UNDP; UNICEF; international and local NGOs) who were part of a response platform hosted by the municipality of Saida, became part of a wider emergency response group in the South Governorate, joining efforts to support all actors and work on preparedness in case of escalation and respond to the humanitarian needs in Ein Helwe Camp and Adjacent Areas.

This approach is important as it combines both ad-hoc responses and development work in parallel which is highly relevant to the country's context. Indeed, Lebanon's needs of support keep changing from responding to emerging needs to development and then back to response (to emerging needs due to continuous external shocks the country has been subject to over the past years.

In conclusion, the Palestinian Gatherings interventions are highly relevant to the needs of the communities as the design of these interventions and the process of needs identification follow a bottom-up and inclusive approach, as confirmed both by the desk review and all the interviewees. The different sectors in which the project operates are indeed the sectors of need for most of the Gatherings' populations. Moreover, the interventions are being continuously adapted to the changing environment and emerging needs and priorities, while maintaining urgent response interventions in parallel with developmental interventions.

iv) *Relevance of the methodology adopted to the objectives of the project and to the needs of the beneficiaries*

Based on the overall view of the project, the desk research and the interviews with the UNDP, it seems that the methodology of the project is founded on two key elements:
- A comprehensive Theory of Change; and
- A participatory approach for the design and the implementation of the interventions.

In terms of Theory of Change (ToC), this tool elaborated in the Prodoc provides a comprehensive description of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a specific context. It is actually a method that explains how a given intervention, or set of interventions, are expected to lead to a specific development change, drawing on a causal analysis.

For the Palestinian Gatherings project, the ToC supposes that ameliorating living conditions of Palestinian refugees and host communities amid the deteriorating socio-economic situation will improve their resilience and therefore, inter and intra communal tensions will decrease, coexistence will be strengthened and thus more stability is created.

The TOC diagram below visualizes this shift from the current state to the desired state. The current state is in fact a description of the vulnerabilities of the Gatherings which takes into consideration the context and the needs. The desired state is mirroring the objectives of the project and the outcomes of the initiatives.

This means that the ToC is relevant to the objectives of the projects and the needs of the beneficiaries as it is initiated from the current state which is a list of needs, and it defines a certain desired state that is in line with the objectives of the project.

FIGURE 11: THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM
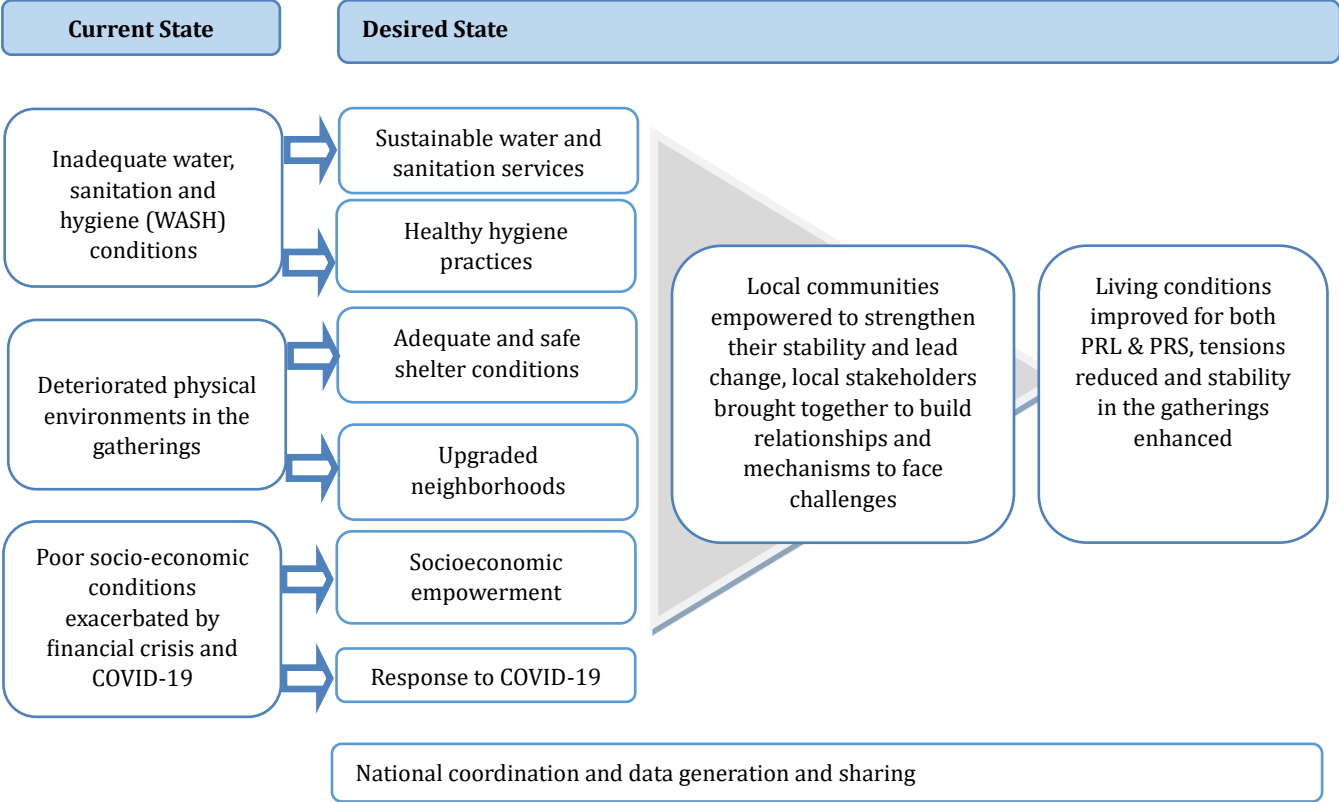
Moreover, it is important to indicate that the current state and vulnerabilities identified are actually dissected into problems and then causes in order to understand more concretely what is the link between

these issues and the overall consequences on these targeted communities (visualized below). The project designed the interventions to be in line with each of the dissected causes.

FIGURE 12: CAUSE-EFFECT SCHEMA
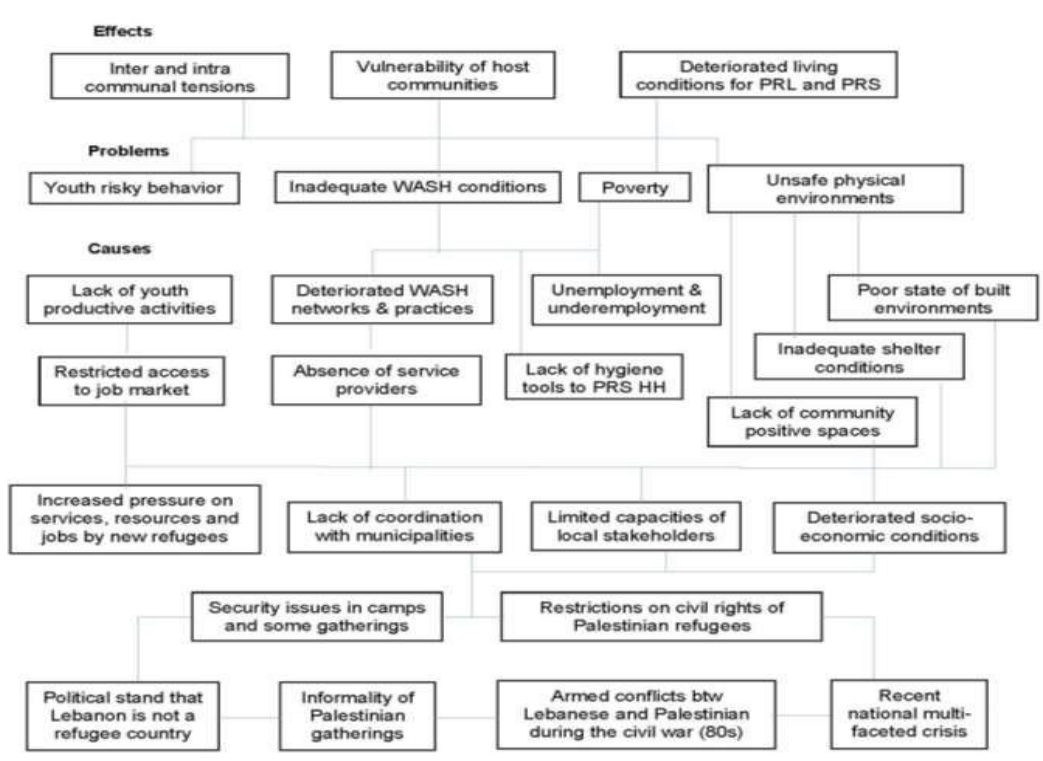
On the other hand, in terms of approach, the project uses a participatory and inclusive approach for the design and the implementation of its interventions. In fact, while one of the main objectives of the project is to empower local communities in these vulnerable areas, this requires a certain level of commitment and ownership, which the UNDP promotes through the active engagement of communities in planning, prioritization and decision making. The involvement of the municipalities, local actors and committees makes the interventions more and more relevant being bottom-up and in line with the needs of the community.

The TOC and the participatory approach are also evolving with the changes observed in the Gatherings given several external factors impacting the situation in the Gatherings and modifying the priority needs and vulnerabilities that need to be addressed, as mentioned above.

Selection of implementing parties:

According to meetings with the UNDP team there is a difference between hard and soft components in terms of design and implementation. The assessment, design and supervision of the hard component are being done by the UNDP engineers. The implementation of this component is being done by UNDP through a hired contractor. For the soft component, the design is the responsibility of the PG team, whereas the

implementation is the responsibility of a partner NGO. Both the contractor and the NGOs are selected through a standard procurement process where several bids are evaluated based on certain specifications/requirement and budget.

The assessment of the NGO partners through the bidding process follows the standard procurement criteria set for all bids, but also take into account: the history of the implementing partner in terms of establishment and experiences (successful or not), compatibility in terms of vision and work methods, its ability to select relevant beneficiaries (outreach potential or existing databases), and its ability to sustain certain interventions.

As witnessed throughout the interviews with stakeholders, this assessment has been in fact highly successful as the partners selected cover the majority if not all the important actors that fit the criteria listed above. The mix of partners is also interesting and has been appraised by donors who explained that most of the selected NGOs are highly active, and have creative and innovative methods.

Selection of beneficiaries:

According to the interviewed implementing partners, the selection of beneficiaries for a certain initiative is usually done in one of two possible ways:

1. Outreach in the community to recruit illegible beneficiaries: An outreach campaign is launched by the implementing partner and/or by the UNDP using its media outlets whereby field officers visit the area to spread the word within the community (taking into consideration gender-specificities) and identify individuals who fit the pre-set criteria for the initiative in question. These individuals are invited to apply through filling a form or calling the NGO and then interviews are done face-to-face for the final selection. This process has shown a very high number of applicants, which confirms the adequacy of this method in terms of selection.
2. Database resourcing to select illegible beneficiaries: Sometimes, implementing partners have already updated databases comprising beneficiaries from different profiles of vulnerability. The selection process in this case initiates from the databases themselves, and based on the pre-set criteria and by elimination, a shortlist of individuals are selected to be then communicated with.

While the UNDP sets the criteria and quotas for beneficiaries, it is only partially involved in the selection process (sometimes only a witness).

The selection of beneficiaries also follows a bottom-up approach while respecting pre-set criteria, making this methodology relevant.

Design of tools:

In terms of design of the materials used during the implementation of a certain initiative, or more specifically the tools i.e. curriculum for capacity building activities and trainings, the involvement of the UNDP PG team differs depending on the initiative. According to the interviews with the partners, while in some cases the training material is already developed by the NGO and only reviewed by the UNDP, in other

cases it is developed with the NGO (like in the case of the electronic guide that was designed in a collaboration between the UNDP PG team and Seed in a Box team).

In both cases, the experience of the NGO in the field of activity and its knowledge of the targeted beneficiaries are highly accounted for while designing the tools, which makes this process relevant and ensures the technicalities, and the compatibility of the material with the targeted audience.

In conclusion, the methodology adopted consisting of a TOC and participatory approach is highly relevant to the objectives of the project and the needs of beneficiaries, as it consists of a bottom-up method that is very engaging, and that ensures pertinence from design of tools to beneficiary selection. The contractor selection process can be further improved by taking into consideration the UNDP team's previous experience with the contractor and its assessment of its performance.

> **RELEVANCE: THE DESIGN OF THE UNDP PROJECT IN PG IS HIGHLY RELEVANT TO THE CONTEXT IN WHICH IT OPERATES. THE UNDP PROJECT IN PG CAN BE CONSIDERED AS A SUCCESS IN TERMS OF ITS RELEVANCE TO THE CONTEXT AND NEEDS OF THE TARGETED COMMUNITIES.**

Effectiveness

As stated in the objectives, this evaluation is strategic and macro-level assessment that does not look into all interventions one by one. The analysis of the outputs was done in terms of achievement rate and to the extent allowed by the fieldwork. The effectiveness section covers all indicators from the Prodoc. In addition, key important products and interventions were analyzed where relevant as they were the substance of the interviews, as well as inclusion errors (not found). The inclusion of the cross-cutting topics were also addressed separately.

i)   *Overall success of the initiatives in covering the needs*

The study team has analyzed the Results and Resources Frameworks 2016-2023 and the indicators for the 7 outputs of the project in order to assess the extent to which the initiatives were successful in covering the needs of the targeted populations. The indicators from the Project Document were compared with those of the monitoring provided by the UNDP in terms of targets and achieved numbers. The table on which the analysis was made is added in Annex 5.

The analysis has showed, that the UNDP was able to overachieve in all targets. In fact, as shown in the figure below, for all the indicators related to the project's output, the PG team was able to at least meet all its targets and, in many cases, reach even more. This is probably due to the high effectiveness of the project team and implementing partners in undertaking the activities.
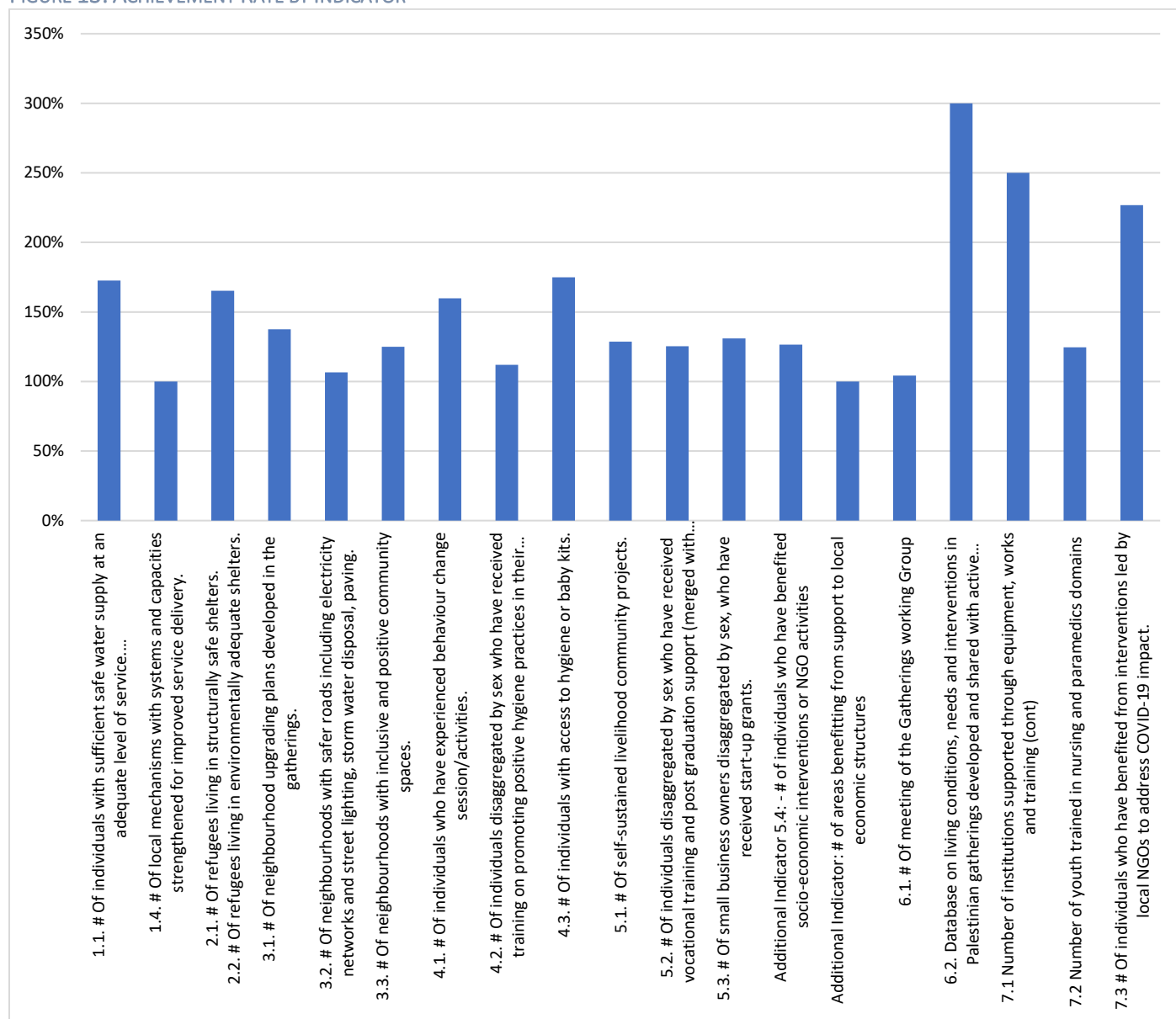
According to the interviews with stakeholders, the various initiatives were able to cover the needs as follows:

1. In terms of rehabilitation works: Public rehabilitation works are usually voiced by public actors to the UNDP, who therefore do site visits and checks to evaluate the status of the infrastructure in question and decide on the measures to follow. For shelter rehabilitation: a) UNDP could carry a full shelter assessment covering all shelters in one focus area or work or b) a preliminary list of potential beneficiaries who have issues with their houses is provided by local committees to the UNDP team. The UNDP followingly conducts a wider assessment related to the conditions of the shelter and the household and then prioritize selected households based on the number of shelters to rehabilitate that is declared according to the budget allocated for the initiative. The

2. In terms of capacity building and technical support: The types of trainings provided and technical support is decided on through a discussion with the implementing partner based on the priority needs identified, in order to be able to cover to the extent possible all topics that should be included as part of the capacity building/training.

3. In terms of equipment provision: The UNDP identifies the type and specifications of the needed equipment after making a site visit and discussing the need with the beneficiary/partner. Mostly, the equipment procured were assessed to be of high quality and within the required specification. However, the maintenance of the equipment remains a problem as the provider is not always willing to enter the Gatherings and do the maintenance check. The UNDP has been taking this into consideration during the procurement process to prevent such issues on the long term.

Overall, there are no clear inclusion or exclusion errors pointed out during the assessment. The outputs clearly took into consideration the cross-cutting topics (gender, youth and disability) as will be mentioned in a separate section below. Moreover, there are no uncovered needs for the target groups of the project; although the study team has identified – based on the interviews with the partners, local actors, and beneficiaries – new sectors of activities, types of interventions and population groups that can be focused on for the next cycle and that are mentioned in the recommendation section below.

However, it is important to mention that, according to the UNDP team, sometimes certain needs are identified but cannot be addressed either because they are not within the scope of the UNDP work or are not feasible for legal or regulatory constraints related to the Palestinian context in Lebanon per se (such as ownership of a house/building, freedom of association, etc.).

Thus, overall, the initiatives have been successful in covering the needs of the beneficiaries, as per the analysis of the Results and Resources Framework as well as the interviews with the stakeholders.

ii) *Adequacy of the Results and Resources Framework (RRF) and the used results indicators*

The RRF is designed in a way to properly link the outcomes with the outputs and the indicators while also covering potential risks and mitigation measures. Moreover, the reporting of the RRF is consolidated by the PG team in one matrix showing the results of the indicators by intervention, by region, per year, by sector of activity, and by source of funding. This consolidated RRF matrix is a useful tool for monitoring and analysis of the interventions. In addition, the beneficiary data included is segregated by gender and nationality whenever relevant. This data could potentially to the extent possible be further disaggregated by disability status (PWDs) and age category (youth, adult, elderly) to ensure coverage of beneficiaries throughout the life cycle.

The results indicators set by the UNDP in the RRF are mostly based on the objectives of the outputs themselves and on the expectations of the donors from the various interventions. They are in fact related to the number of beneficiaries for each intervention, taking into account the different profiles of beneficiaries and target groups.

These indicators are by nature very concrete and can show tangible proof to the effectiveness of the interventions. However, the quality of the delivery is not sufficiently covered as well as other types of results that cannot be necessarily quantified.

While the success of the implemented initiatives is usually measured quantitatively by a specific set of indicators comparing numbers to numbers i.e. "targets" to "reached", other types of successes are very important and can only be touched qualitatively.

Indeed, the interviews conducted by the study team have showed a variety of points that can only be measured by listening to the stories of the beneficiaries or the experiences of the partners. For example:

1. The quality of the services delivered, the works conducted or the equipment provided, with the ability to maintain this quality;
2. The satisfaction of the beneficiaries with the support they received which is important as part of tension relief;
3. The changes occurred in the lives of the beneficiaries and their families;
4. The mental and emotional status of the beneficiaries after benefiting from the intervention (optimism, personal appreciation, confidence, etc.);
5. The sense of security and safety that is created in the community as a result of the intervention;
6. The confidence of the community towards public institutions and service providers;
7. The resulting inter and intra communal connections, interactions and friendships creating a sense of belong and willingness to support one another (motivation for community support)
8. The improvement in coordination between the different actors in the community, whether public institutions, local committees, etc.
9. The reputation of the project and its outcomes, and that of the implementing partner and people involved in the intervention.

The above-mentioned points are as important as the quantitative indicators, especially when both the impact and sustainability are factored in and a longer-term vision is included. One way of incorporating these points in the results framework of the project could be "the Most Significant Change (MSC)" approach that is founded on individual experiences and stories. This tool can allow measuring soft indicators such as social cohesion, tension reduction, improvement of lives of beneficiaries, women empowerment, social wellbeing, hope and motivation, etc. This point is further being analyzed in the impact section below.

In terms of risk, the Prodoc and the RRF include a risk log for the project developed by the UNDP and updated on yearly basis and as applicable (depending on events). The risk assessment also includes a social and environmental screening template for the project as well as other tools (checklist) that are completed before each activity (mainly for WASH activities and civil works).

These elements (risk log, environmental and screening template and checklists) increase the adequacy of the Prodoc and the RRF as they are to a large extent exhaustive and detailed and accurate. Indeed, different types of risks are evaluated (operational, political, social, environmental, etc.), with for each a probability for it to happen, the expected impacts, and the planned mitigation measures. The environmental and social screening template also takes into account all relevant aspects to evaluate such as related expected risks from the project and mitigation actions, ways the project could strengthen social and environmental

sustainability with specific attention to human rights, gender equality, health and safety, climate change, etc. The tools related to each activity are also tailored and specific (solar pumping, irrigation, water network, etc.).

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Most Significant Change Technique

The Most Significant Change (MSC) is a participatory approach to monitoring and evaluating change. It involves the collection and selection of stories of change produced by programme or project stakeholders. The technique helps monitor and evaluate the performance of projects and programs. Important steps in the MSC process include identifying key themes to explore through stories, gathering the stories, selecting the most significant stories, and reporting back the results.

- Monitoring-without-indicators: MSC does not make use of pre-defined indicators, especially ones that have to be counted and measured.
- The 'story' approach: The answers to the central question about change are often in the form of stories of who did what, when and why – and the reasons why the event was important (Dart 1999a, 1999b).
- Impact monitoring: Unlike traditional monitoring techniques that focus largely on monitoring activities and outputs, MSC focuses on monitoring intermediate outcomes and impact.

This approach is usually used to evaluate projects that are:
- Large with numerous organizational layers;
- Focused on social change;
- Participatory in ethos;
- Designed with repeated contact between field staff and participants;
- Struggling with conventional monitoring systems;
- Highly customized services to a small number of beneficiaries.

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In conclusion, while the used quantitative indicators are vital to measure the UNDP's effectiveness for each intervention in comparison to the preset targets, a qualitative tool at outcome should be developed to better visualize the non-tangible effectiveness of the interventions.

i) *Operations and management of the project*

Clear roles and tasks distribution, coordination between all members and parties, as well as systemic monitoring processes play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of any project.

Based on the desk research (and confirmed by the interviews), the implementation of the Palestinian Gatherings project involves a variety of stakeholders and actors on several levels. While all of these actors were listed previously; the section here below details the stakeholders and actors for whom additional findings from the field were noted.

1. UNDP Palestinian Gathering team:

This team is composed of 10 members (a project manager, a communication and community engagement officer, an economic empowerment associate, a lead engineer with 3 other engineers, finance officer, an administrative officer and a driver).
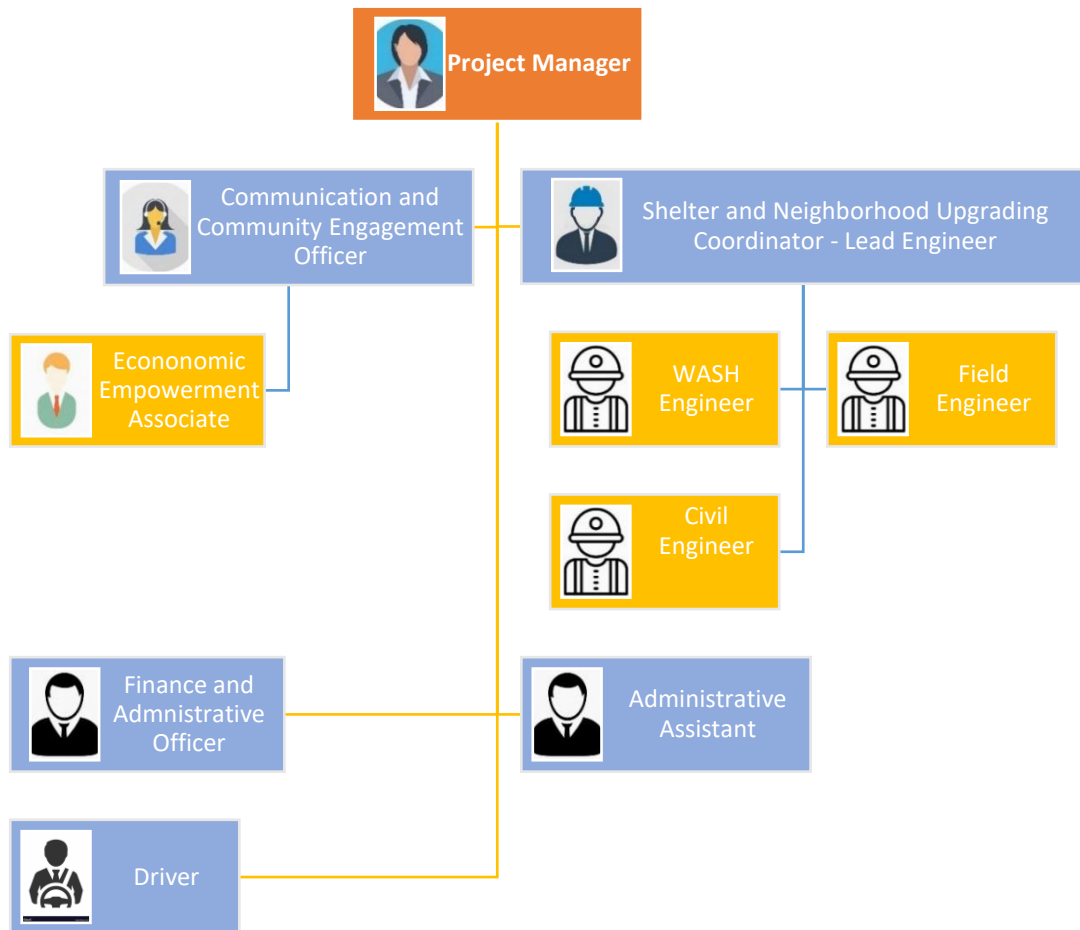
While the project manager and the communication officer have been part of the project for almost its beginning (around 10 years), other members have only been involved for 2-4 years. However, these members have all previous on-hand experience working either with the UNDP or other UN agencies and NGOs. Thus, while the majority are in fact engineers, they have acquired knowledge in the fields of socio-economic, local development and vulnerable communities which makes them a good fit for their role. Although this has been successful so far, the engineers in the team consider that relevant formal training would allow them to perform better in this area and synchronize their knowledge with the socio-economic objectives of the project.

The distribution of tasks between the different members seems reasonable. In fact, there's a sectoral distribution between them as they work separately on the different components of the project (physical/hard and soft/livelihood/socioeconomic components), with some common tasks when a certain initiative includes both components; and this is where the role of the economic empowerment associate (who is in fact a agricultural engineer), is very important. Thus, the project manager is being reported to

through two different lines: one for the hard/civil work component, and another one for the soft/livelihood component.

The structure of the team and the distribution of tasks between the members is effective in its current state, because the role assignment is clear and the small size of the team allows each team member to be aware of what other team member is doing which facilitates the coordination, especially for common interventions. Moreover, having the engineers as part of the core team – and not only consulted while being in a separate engineering unit – is also an added value as their accumulated experience in the Gatherings give them an advantage in terms of knowledge of the characteristics of these Gatherings, which is crucial for this project specifically given the sensitive context.

The small size of the team and the simplified direct lines of reporting are also important in decreasing delays when it comes to internal planning and decision making, while also increasing adaptableness to any change that can occur. In addition, a lot of harmony, positive dynamics and good and team work spirit are noticeable among the team members, accentuating the effectiveness of the management.

Therefore, overall, the current Palestinian Gatherings team is robust and capable in ensuring effective implementation of the operations.

It is important to mention that the project also includes a Project Board that meets once a year and whenever needed. This board includes the UNDP, Government representatives, UNRWA, partner NGOs as well as the donors. The project manager act as secretariat of the Project Board with the responsibility to call for meetings, distribute information and follow up on their recommendations. The Project Board performs the following responsibilities:

i. Ensure that adequate mechanisms are in place to guarantee the transparency and accountability as well as the efficiency of project operations;
ii. Build consensus around the project's strategies and planned results, including the links between its output and the intended outcome;
iii. Provide advice when substantive changes are needed in the project's planned outputs, strategies or implementation arrangements;
iv. Oversee progress, participate in field visits to project sites, consult with beneficiaries, and ensure that potential opportunities and risks, including lessons learned from experience, are taken into account by the project management;
v. Assess performance and approve project work-plan and budget revisions;
vi. Provide guidance to the project manager.

This board therefore provides assurance complementing the CPRP roles of following up on management actions, keeping track of progress benchmarks, visiting project sites to contact beneficiaries and contractors, interpreting progress and technical reports, processing budget revisions, and making arrangements for evaluation and audit.

In this regard, the management of the project reports to:

      i.   The country office / programme on quarterly basis;

    ii.   The LCRP on Activity Info and Lebanon Aid Tracking on quarterly basis; and

   iii.   Provides annual contribution to CO Results-Oriented Analysis Report ROAR (includes the CPD indicators).

2. <u>Local NGOs and CBOs</u>:

A number of Palestinian and Lebanese NGOs are active in Palestinian gatherings. The most prominent NGOs such as PARD, Nabaa and NISCVT provide services mainly related to health, pre-schooling and education support, vocational training, psycho-social support, women empowerment, WASH and most recently relief.

In addition to involving local NGOs in identifying needs and suggesting solutions, UNDP partner with local NGOs. UNDP has supported a number of NGOs technical assistance, training and capacity building to carry out activities in the context of this project.

All interviewed implementing partners considered that the coordination and relationship with the UNDP team is more than excellent, stating that they felt that the project was more of a partnership rather than a funder-implementer kind of commitment. In fact, the NGOs explained that their collaboration with the UNDP PG team is one of the best they had when comparing to other collaboration with other teams or other international agencies/donors. Several success points were raised on this matter:

      i.   The UNDP PG team is implementing very effectively its participatory approach with its partners;

    ii.   The UNDP PG team is very responsive and one call away to resolve any obstacle or answer any concern from the partners;

   iii.   The UNDP PG team provides constant support and follow-up and is present on the ground to supervise the implementation of the initiatives;

   iv.   Frequent meetings, communication emails or calls are scheduled between the UNDP PG team and the partners;

    v.   The UNDP PG team is always very friendly, flexible and helpful and addresses any issues faced with open heart.

3. <u>Municipalities</u>:

In 2012, UNDP carried out bilateral meetings with all municipalities to explain the intervention and raise awareness on living conditions in Palestinian gatherings, correcting misconceptions that these areas are served by UNRWA. Since then, municipalities have been involved depending on each case to take part in needs appraisal and prioritization, taking impact on their domains into consideration, provide permits and implement projects through grants from UNDP that benefited both Lebanese and Palestinian refugee communities living within their domains.

The involvement of municipalities varies according to a number of factors such as the level of cooperation and collaboration of the mayor, availability of financial and human resources and political affiliation.

While the majority of the stakeholders considered that the municipalities are engaged in the UNDP project to the extent possible and needed, a minority believed that more efforts can be done in this area.

4. Donors:

The funds were received from a variety of donors: KFW-Germany, BPRM-USA, Norway, Netherland, Japan, and SDC-Switzerland.

The PG team submits to these donors' regular updates and reports in different frequencies and according to different timeframes as per the donor's requirements. The donors are also in close coordination and follow-up with the PG team.

The coordination between the different actors is ensured through several pathways, such as field presence, daily contact with local actors, regular reporting, common publications, etc. The most important pathway that is used for joint planning and coordination is the 'Gatherings Working Group'.

Indeed, as previously mentioned, the project organizes and chairs the 'Gatherings Working Group', a national planning and coordination platform that brings together UN agencies (UNDP, UNRWA, UNICEF) and international and national NGOs active in the Gatherings. As a coordination platform, the Gatherings WG contributes to sustaining and scaling up results through linking implemented projects and interventions to the operational programmes of local NGOs. It also allows preventing work duplications and/or contradictions in interventions.

The GWG constitutes a platform of communication between the different implementing partners and actors, where different partners with a similar mindset and type of activities can engage in joint initiatives. This aspect of the GWG creates more synergy between the different entities, higher impact for the project and more sustainability of the interventions.

The UNDP PG team demonstrates a high level of commitment and professionalism when it comes to operating, managing and supervising the interventions. The team's methodology and approach has been proven to be very effective and should remain as is.

ii)   Challenges and constraints

During the evaluation exercise, the study team has identified, based on the interviews with stakeholders, three main challenges and constraints that may weaken the effectiveness of the project.

Timeframe allocated for implementing the initiatives:

According to the majority of the interviewed stakeholders, the duration of the initiatives implemented under the UNDP project in PG is only a few months, in line with donors' one-year agreements, which is very short and should be prolonged. For many, the longest they've operated on an initiative in this project is 6 months, which in their opinion is not enough for several reasons:

a) The delivery of the requested tasks is rushed and done under pressure – even if the quality is preserved;
b) The impact of the initiative could be higher if more time is provided and more beneficiaries are recruited;

c) Meaningful impact is more practically assessed with a duration of at least 6 months; and

d) Gathering feedback from the beneficiaries in order to properly assess the successfulness of the intervention is not possible within this short timeframe.

A more effective approach would be program-based and not project/initiative-based. In essence, the UNDP would set a multiyear program, which could be phased out to be flexible with the duration of donors' agreements, aiming to achieve an ambitious objective and consisting of multiple interconnected projects/interventions involving multiple partners/NGOs. This would create synergies between projects and partners for a longer duration and will achieve higher impact and higher sustainability. This program-based approach was well received by the donors.

Contractor service delivery:

Although the majority of the interviewed stakeholders reported satisfactory results related to the hard component (shelter rehabilitation or infrastructure and improvement works), another opinion was also present that criticized the services provided by the contractors, stating that they were not of good enough quality.

This situation further emphasizes the importance of introducing (at county office level) some changes to the process of selection of the contractor, that currently does not include earlier performance evaluations but relies mostly on a rigid scoring according to a set of criteria as per corporate procurement procedures.

Opinion/suggestion collection mechanism:

Although feedback from partners is currently being gathered during the implementation and after completion of activities, there are no institutionalized channels through which suggestions and ideas are collected from partners or beneficiaries beyond the duration of specific projects. Even if the team is doing regular follow ups and checks, such large projects should include a parallel path for comments and suggestions, and this path should be well communicated to all relevant actors, easily accessible and highly responsive.

The effectiveness of the project would be improved by addressing three main points: i) the short timeframe allocated to the interventions, ii) the selection of some contractors who cannot be excluded due to earlier unsatisfactory performance, iii) regular data collection of partners' ideas and suggestions.

> **EFFECTIVENESS: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNDP PROJECT IN PG IMPLEMENTATION HAS BEEN OVERALL EFFECTIVE IN REACHING THE PRESET TARGETS. SOME AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT WERE IDENTIFIED TO INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS, MAINLY IN REGARDS TO THE TIMEFRAME OF THE ACTIVITIES.**

Efficiency

i)   Cost efficiency

Project budget and funding sources:

According to the Project Document 2016-2023, the Palestinian Gatherings project has a required budget of 35 million USD. The budget raised by end of 2023 covering the period 2016-2026 reached USD 40,354,664. During the ProDoc period 2016-2023, the project expenditure was USD 32,553,288.

While seven different countries/donors have actually funded this project through its lifetime, two main donors (Germany and USA) have financed around 75% of total expenditures.
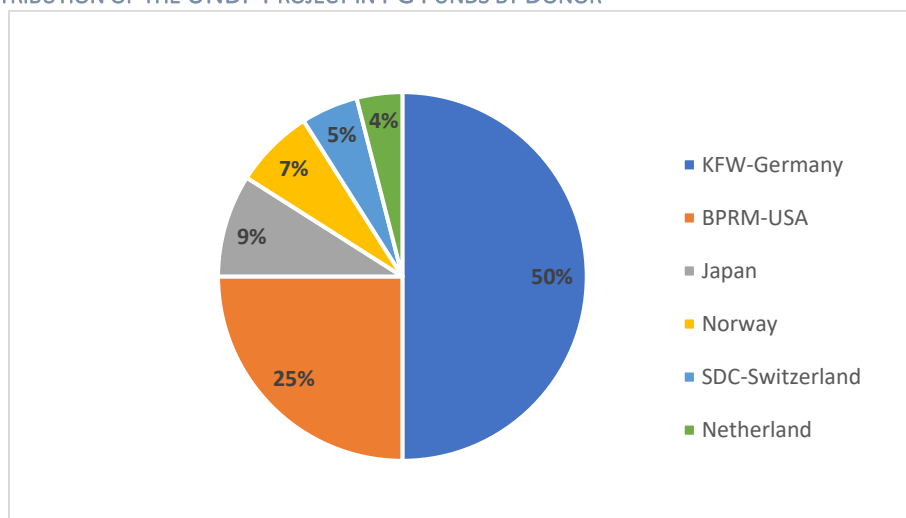
In terms of change in the funding over time, out of six donors, four have stopped financing this project, whereas three remained involved till 2023.

The origins of the funds are described in the table below:

TABLE 3: ANALYSIS OF THE UNDP PROJECT IN PG FUNDS BY DONOR AND PER YEAR

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total	Share
KFW-Germany	473,472	1,331,859	797,490	2,030,058	2,616,062	4,667,354	4,679,126	1,477,154	18,072,575	50%
BPRM-USA	1,232,020	1,422,888	-	-	1,766,552	2,000,852	659,578	1,928,827	9,010,717	25%
Japan	870,167	1,787,453	598,208	-	-	-	-	-	3,255,828	9%
Norway	-	-	79,588	599,512	518,340	327,460	445,211	412,299	2,382,410	7%
SDC-Switzerland	837,540	583,638	258,528	-	-	-	-	-	1,679,706	5%
Netherland	540,000	399,881	142,220	488,483	-	-	-	-	1,570,584	4%
UNDP funding window	-	-	210,108	55,892	-	-	-	-	266,000	1%
Total	3,953,199	5,525,718	2,086,142	3,173,945	4,900,954	6,995,666	5,783,916	3,818,280	36,237,819	100%

The UNDP PG team's yearly capacity of "absorption" is estimated on average at USD 4.5 million per year, with a peak in 2021 of almost USD 7 million. This reflects the capacity of the UNDP project team to manage, design and implement initiatives of around USD 7 million to USD 10 million on yearly basis. In other terms, should there be any larger amounts in the future, more human resources are required to be able to manage the increased fund and consequently workload/activities.

Considering the fact that the UNDP was able to increase the total budget and find the necessary additional funds (USD 1.2 million) to continue the project's activities (i.e. UNDP has succeeded in mobilizing additional funds when needed), reflects two things:

1. The good capacity of UNDP to convince donors; in other terms the success of the activities and the good results that the project has been showing over the years.
2. The willingness of donors to fund projects related to Palestinian Gatherings; in other terms the acknowledgment of the relevance of the project and the needs for such initiatives.

Use of budget by output:

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF THE BUDGET BY EXPENSE GROUP

	2016-2023	Share	Grouped shares	Prodoc Budget	Share
General UNDP costs (Salaries, M&E, OPEX, ISS/DPC, GMS)	8,098,913	22%	39%	12,400,000	35%
of which Salaries Only	*3,677,804*	*10%*			
Output 1	5,989,904	17%			
Output 2	8,395,106	23%	23%	9,300,000	27%
Output 3	3,111,848	9%	9%	3,000,000	9%
Output 4	3,014,063	8%	8%	3,400,000	10%
Output 5	4,526,813	12%	12%	4,500,000	13%
Output 6	399,277	1%	1%	400,000	1%
Output 7	2,701,895	7%	7%	2,000,000	6%
Total	36,237,819	100%	100%	35,000,000	100%

After analyzing the distribution of the budget by output[28], the allocation seems accurate and well-planned in the ProDoc given the size of the output and the number of interventions that compose it. Yet, it should be noted that most of the interviewees considered that activities were very limited in terms of budget (and time, as explained above).
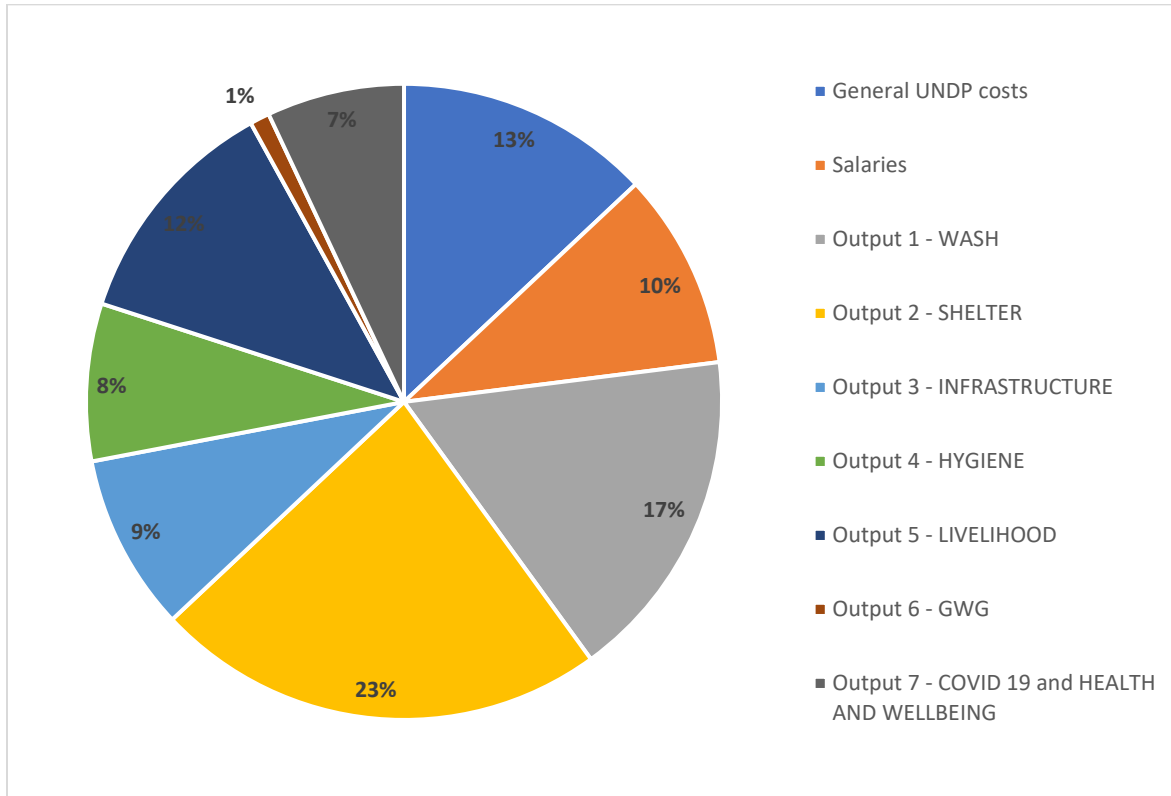
Overall, the project is successful in terms of cost efficiency and budget allocation, although the UNDP team should consider diversifying its sources of funding to ensure continuity and resilience.

ii)   Quality and quantity efficiency

Quality efficiency:

Efficiency is the output you get for a unit of input. Quality is the value of products and services provided. Efficiency and quality are a common tradeoff as it is often possible to make short term gains in efficiency by cutting quality. Therefore, assessing quality efficiency is understanding to what extent the project was able to efficiently use its resources in order to preserve a certain level of quality in the services provided.

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[28] This analysis was done based on the project's Annual Workplans. According to the workplans, the effective total budget spent on this project during the period 2016-2023 reached USD 36.2 million.

When it comes to the quality of the deliverables, the main conclusion from the interviews with the partners and local actors is that the quality of services in view of the allocated budget is excellent in general. Moreover, although the current procurement process provides a strong foundation for the commissioning of quality services in a transparent manner, this process could benefit from the inclusion of important criteria related to the delivery of hard component services such as: timeliness of delivery, conformity with specifications set by the UNDP, previous experience with the partners and the UNDP. This type of change is related to structural UNDP processes that go beyond the scope of the UNDP Project in PG.

It is also important to mention that the UNDP project in PG was subject to multiple previous evaluations that were important resources for the team to learn from, and amend their operations accordingly. While the results of these previous evaluations were mostly positive, the team made sure to increase its quality efficiency by taking into account the findings and conclusions of these evaluations and adopting the recommendations to the extent possible. This ongoing M&E process has been of great value the team and to the project itself.

Quantity efficiency:

Assessing the quantity efficiency is understanding to what extent were resources used in order to efficiently serve a number of beneficiaries. While the quantity efficiency is considered adequate given the budgets allocated for the different activities, needs in the PG remain much higher. Certain partners have raised an issue whereby the obligation to select some out of the total identified beneficiaries is causing a sense of frustration among those who were not selected. The UNDP has been trying to maximize the use of its resources to benefit a higher number of individuals, while also making sure that the selection process of beneficiaries is fair, transparent and objective (scoring mechanisms) in selecting the most vulnerable and needy. Therefore, although needs are much higher, the project is efficient in terms of quantity given the compatibility of the use of its resources with relevant outputs. Mitigating the frustration of the population given the high needs necessitates an increase in funding or an integration of the beneficiaries in different cycles of one same intervention.

The project was found efficient in terms of quality and quantity. Indeed, the quality is preserved by the diligent procurement process of the UNDP and the multiple evaluations that the project has been subject to. Moreover, the quantity efficiency is adequate given the allocated budget and can only be increased with the increase in funding or an integration of the beneficiaries in different cycles of one same intervention.

iii) Time efficiency

Delays:

Although none of the interviewees reported any delays in the implementation of the project, many reported delays in everything that is related to the procurement process that is very slow, whether to launch the initiative, or buy and equipment for example. In some cases, this is very critical as it affects the intervention itself (agriculture season vs. agriculture activity delay).

In addition to the delays in procurement, some of the stakeholders reported delays in funds disbursement. In few cases, payments were only made after several deliverables (after 8 months for example) even though the contract stated otherwise. This was partially due to the economic and banking crisis which complicated the transfers of money and account management, and also to the bureaucratic system that is in place. This is problematic for the partners as it impacts their ability to pay their counterparts and/or beneficiaries and therefore affects their reputation and trust of the community.

The UNDP has been addressing these issues to the extent possible and incorporating this risks and potential mitigation measures in its regular risk assessment done at project level and at intervention level.

Use of time:

As shown above, the PG team is excelling in terms of coordination and follow-up with all actors involved in the project. However, a significant amount of time is currently being dedicated to bureaucratic processes and errands, which is not optimal in terms of efficiency.

The study team has noticed during the evaluation exercise that the number of reports that are submitted to various donors of the project is surprisingly high. In fact, each donor has a different cycle of reporting as well as different requirements, although the same type of information is included in all reports. In this regard, standardizing the reporting process after agreeing with all donors on a "one for all format" would facilitate the work of the team and would create more efficiency overall.

Even though minor delays have been faced in the implementation of the project's activities, the time efficiency of administrative tasks is not optimal (procurement delays, payment delays) and could impede the time-efficiency of project staff.

> **EFFICIENCY: THE UNDP PROJECT IN PG IS EFFICIENT WITH SOME OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSIFYING DONORS, AND BUILDING DIFFERENT PHASES FOR A CERTAIN ACTIVITY TO BENEFIT MORE PEOPLE.**

Impact

i)   Most significant measurable impacts:

The evaluation team was able to touch from the interviews with stakeholders, discussions with beneficiaries, and previous evaluations/assessments a number of valuable impacts at different levels:

1. At project level: The project has been gaining a great reputation among donors for its success, as well as in the Gatherings and among Palestinians for the work that is being done, especially given the fact that these communities are in need of constant support.

2. At partner level: Several positive points resulted from the UNDP project in PG when it comes to partner NGOs, local actors, municipalities, etc.
    a. The NGOs have been feeling more valued and their voices heard for being involved in the design process of the activities, and therefore they are being more engaged and dedicated towards achieving positive impact.

FIGURE 17: IMPACT CYCLE

    b. The perception of the Gatherings and popular committees towards municipalities (as per the local authorities) have changed to the better, after seeing that these municipalities are involved in a project that takes care of their needs and work towards social cohesion and community development.

    c. According to local authorities, by addressing needs in the informal Palestinian Gatherings, the project has alleviated part of the burden from local authorities and municipalities (mainly Saida and Tyre in the South and Muhammara in the North), which have been unable to respond to the needs of all population on their municipal domain with the current multifaceted crisis.

3. At community level: The project has addressed and resolved a variety of communal problems that were faced due to weaknesses in infrastructure, pollution, etc. For example, the irrigation system and sewage management activities implemented in Adloun have actually alleviated increased social tensions. In fact, pre-implementation, many individual conflicts and complaints were occurring among the households due to the problems in the sewage system and consequent pollution caused. Moreover, the project livelihood interventions were successfully able to create and maintain social relationships among the beneficiaries and their families from different nationalities

and increase social cohesion and peacebuilding in its various activities. Indeed, one example is the close family friendships that developed between the household of women who participated together in a capacity building activity.

4. <u>At beneficiary level:</u> The assessment has showed many positive impacts on the beneficiaries and their lives. In fact, beside the direct benefit from the interventions whether technical and financial support, shelter improvement, infrastructure improvement, health support, livelihood opportunity, etc; the beneficiaries have indeed witnessed a change in their lives in terms of better living conditions and increased stability. Many of the interviewed beneficiaries have also stated an increase in their self-confidence, optimism, improved mental health, and sense of communal support and communal belonging. Livelihood interventions were especially successful in this regard. One interesting case is a woman who is separated from her husband and is taking care of a child without any financial support or ability to find a job. After attending the kitchen and food preparation training as part of the initiative implemented by Ward el Makased in Beirut, she is now working a full-time job in one of the kitchens and able to financially sustain her life and feel safe and stable. This reflects the longer-term and more sustainable value added of livelihood interventions. This woman has stated that:

"Before the training I was lost and unable to achieve anything, I felt scared and worried about how to make a living, especially being divorced and caring for my daughter all by myself. Now, with my new work, I more confident about my abilities and feel much more secure financially. I have also gained respect in my surrounding and made friendships in the community."

The impact of the project is significantly positive and in line with the Theory of Change's desired state which is "improved living conditions for Palestinians, reduced tensions, and increased stability in the gatherings."

ii) Unintended externalities:

During the evaluation exercise, the study team has identified few externalities (indirect impacts) that were not intended by the project, but came as a result of a specific context:

1. According to stakeholders, while the economic crisis has created some obstacles regarding the implementation of the project, it has also benefited many of the interventions with the increase in the needs and therefore relevance to a larger group of beneficiaries in the community. Moreover, the electricity problems and high electrical bills that peaked during the crisis have also led to adopting more eco-friendly and sustainable solutions such as the solar system (PV).

2. According to a meeting with the UNDP team, the rehabilitation works done in the neighborhood could lead to an unexpected increase in the rents. In fact, the LCRP Shelter Sector has met to discuss this risk.[29] This has been coped with by suggesting rent freezing agreement for the rehabilitated shelters, however these agreements cannot be legally enforced. Another related issue is the gentrification whereby these vulnerable households are no longer benefiting from the improved

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[29] In line with risk log and social and environmental screening process adopted by the UNDP.

living conditions in the rehabilitated shelter, but move to a different one with lower conditions, and another better-off family takes place of the rehabilitated one.

3. Local actors have explained that the process of selecting beneficiaries for shelter interventions could cause some complaints, which is natural for any beneficiary selection process where the needs exceed the allocated budget. This is also similar in other types of interventions where the NGO is requested to distribute in-kind kits or support and has to select beneficiaries based on a set of criteria whereas as the need is very high and the quantity of the support is limited. The UNDP has been addressing to the extent possible this matter by establishing a proper criteria for the selection.

As is normally the case, the project resulted in a number of positive and negative externalities. The UNDP has been addressing the negative externalities to the extent possible within their mandate and scope of work.

iii) *Obstacles to creating additional impact*

The interviewed stakeholders mentioned several aspects that constitute obstacles to creating additional impact by the project activities, mainly:

1. The duration of the initiatives that is extending over only few months and negatively impacts the effectiveness of the interventions, also creates some difficulties in i) spreading the impact to more beneficiaries; and ii) measuring the real impact accurately.

2. Although stakeholders suggested that the limited geographical scope dictated by the mandate of the UNDP project in PG reduces the potential impact of certain interventions, the project mitigates this issue by collaborating with the host municipalities from the beginning (design phase) and targeting them in their activities.

3. While there is coordination between the different NGOs and regular meetings as part of the GWG, the introduction of joint projects represents an opportunity especially among NGOs who have similar visions and scope of work. Involving NGOs together as part of a larger programmatic initiative would increase the scale of the interventions and generate larger impact.

Additional positive impact would be possible through amending a number of project design aspects such as increasing the length of the timeframe. Moreover, strengthening NGO networking can also further increase the impact of the work by designing complementary interventions and exchanging knowledge and information.

> **IMPACT: OVERALL, THE UNDP PROJECT IN PG IMPACT ON THE TARGETED BENEFICIARIES AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES HAS BEEN VERY POSITIVE AND EXTERNALITIES HAVE BEEN MANAGED TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE. SOME OPPORTUNITIES IN PROJECT DESIGN CAN BE ADDRESSED IN THE NEXT CYCLE BY INCREASING THE LENGTH OF THE TIMEFRAME. STRENGTHENING NGO NETWORKING CAN ALSO FURTHER INCREASE THE IMPACT OF THE WORK BY DESIGNING COMPLEMENTARY INTERVENTIONS AND EXCHANGING KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION.**

Sustainability

i) *Successes in sustainability*

The evaluation exercise (both interviews and desk research) has showed that the project activities are designed and implemented with a large focus on sustainability. In fact, several factors have been taken into consideration by the PG team that ensure sustainability of the interventions, whenever possible and relevant, such as:

1. The project has successfully established links with relevant and effective local, regional, and national stakeholders through their engagement in joint projects and assembling them frequently as part of the Gathering Working Group to open the discussion between about common challenges, concerns, and potential coordination. Moreover, engaging municipalities and public service agencies in the planning, decision making and implementation phases of the project have contributed to recalling their responsibilities and creating a sense of ownership in the vulnerable Palestinian Gatherings (form of political sustainability). This methodology and the GWG platform ensure a level of sustainability and long-term collaboration. However, additional work and planning should be made between the implementing partners/NGOs for a larger and more sustainable impact of their activities.

2. The area-based approach that the project has been adapting is very important and was considered to be a highly needed approach by all interviewed stakeholders when it comes to the sustainability of the interventions. Indeed, with a mindset of local development, multisectoral activities were implemented under three improvement plans (Taamir, Beddawi, and Maachouk), and these were considered as success stories given the comprehensive work that has been done. This approach allows the UNDP to address more types of vulnerabilities, on a larger scale, and observe noticeable changes and impact in the community as a whole. The interviewees have all urged moving the interventions to cover not only a specific Gathering, but also its surroundings. Yet, the UNDP should find the right balance between adopting this new approach, while also continuing to cover all 45 Gatherings that are the scope of the UNDP project in PG.

3. The soft component of the project has showed sustainability in a variety of areas. In terms of capacity building, the transfer of knowledge by itself is considered sustainable, especially that in many cases, this knowledge was invested into the community. For example, after receiving training related to waste management, a field team started disseminating the info through awareness campaigns and visits to the household as a way of transferring knowledge to the community. Another example of sustainability related to capacity building is the use of training material that were provided to medical and administrative staff to develop internal protocols for the hospital. Medical and nursing committees were also formed to transfer knowledge to the remaining staff in the hospital (Training of Trainers concept).

4. The community centers that were implemented in Kharayeb, Maachouk and Shabriha, managed by national NGOs, are considered sustainable interventions for being comprehensive and allowing a one-stop-shop for community engaging activities and capacity buildings.

5. Shelter rehabilitations, public infrastructure works, and waste management interventions are also considered sustainable interventions should be well maintained by local authorities. Environmental sustainability was also ensured by the utilization of PV and solar solutions in many of the interventions.

6. The launched on-line platforms as part of several interventions (Sawa3ed, Senbleh, and Foursa) are also a way for ensuring sustainability for beneficiaries.

7. The success of the project and the good reputation the UNDP team has gained in the Gatherings is also a form of sustainability, as building trust and confidence in the community is essential for future activities and interventions.

8. As explained in the impact section, the positive impacts that the community and beneficiaries were subject to is being translated into communal support and a sense of cohesion that is sustainable due to social relations and the unified vision of common benefit.

Many aspects of the project's methodology and the interventions themselves have been proven to be successful in terms of sustainability.

ii) *Obstacles to sustainability*

Given the above-mentioned success, it should be highlighted that some obstacles (as per discussions with partners and beneficiaries) may hinder the sustainability of the project's interventions:

1. Inability of local authorities to undertake maintenance works: The maintenance of the deliverables under the hard component of the project has been a subject of discussion and complaint during the interviews. Many of the local community stakeholders who were handed over the project declared not being able to do the maintenance on their own for lack of funds given the current financial crisis. The UNDP has started mitigating this issue by discussing internally the possibility of including in the contractor's contract a mandatory paid period for maintenance work for 1 year beyond the implementation of the works.

2. Limited budgets for platform development: Although the platforms developed as part of the various interventions were indeed successful and are still operational, the budget for the development was limited and did not allow additional work for enlarging its scope, making it more attractive or promoting it through social media.

3. Absence of financing for rotational costs: In compliance with the UNDP policies, the project does not account in its budget for rotational costs for operational matters (such as salaries and logistic funds). However, this is needed as per the interviewed stakeholders, not only to operate the

provided equipment, but to provide income for the workers in addition to good service for the beneficiaries. This goes in line with the program-based approach that is being requested by the partners.

Some obstacles related to sustainability were identified by the evaluation team during the assessment. The evaluation team is aware that some of these obstacles are structural to UNDP and beyond the scope of the UNDP Project in PG (point 3).

SUSTAINABILITY: THE UNDP PROJECT IN PG INTERVENTIONS ARE TO A LARGE EXTENT SUSTAINABLE, ALTHOUGH SOME ASPECTS SUCH AS PROJECT DURATION AND THE INABILITY OF LOCAL ACTORS TO UNDERATKE MAINTENANCE WORKS CAN BE IMPROVED TO INCREASE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ACTIVTIES.

Cross-cutting topics

The following section consists of addressing the extent to which the project took into consideration several aspects related to human rights, gender equality, youth and disability, in its targeting, design and implementation.

i) Human rights:

The project pays particular attention to disadvantaged groups as they are considered the most vulnerable and prone to additional vulnerability amid exogenous shocks. In this regard, the project designed and implemented a variety of interventions that target women (capacity building and training), youth (livelihood support) and PWDs (equipment, infrastructure, mental health support). The evaluation has shown an additional vulnerable group that needs special attention and care that was not targeted by the project and that is the elderly.

In general, these disadvantaged groups benefited from the project similarly to other Palestinians and hosting communities in the Gatherings. Indeed, the identification of their needs was also a bottom-up and inclusive approach, the design of the interventions was also relevant to their needs, and the implementation of the activities took into consideration the specificities of these groups.

ii) Gender equality:
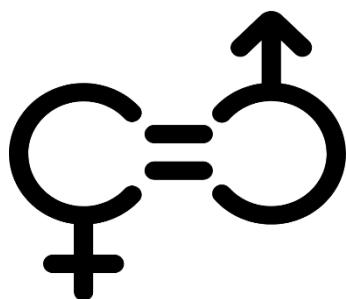
The UNDP project in PGs was highly inclusive in terms of gender equality in two main aspects: i) the design and implementation of women-focused and women-related interventions such as capacity building and livelihood activities, health related activities and psychosocial support; and ii) the targeting of beneficiaries took into consideration the respect of gender parity to the extent possible and whenever relevant as data shows an average of 51% vs 49% rate of females vs. males.

Moreover, gender related constraints were specifically looked into during the project as per the type of activities and work women can do in the context of the Gatherings the duration and the timing of the trainings provided, among other aspects. These measures have been effective as many women beneficiaries declared a gain in personal confidence and appreciation as well as community respect. Thus, the project activities were gender responsive and gender transformative as much as the context and activities allow.

It is also important to mention that it was noticeable by the evaluation team that the NGOs and partners that were involved in the project include a large number of women, which shows their involvement and presence in terms of design, planning and coordination of the project's activities.

The project would benefit from additional efforts as to raising awareness about gender equality and its significance within the context of Palestinian Gatherings in order to break the norms and gender mainstreaming.

iii)   Youth:
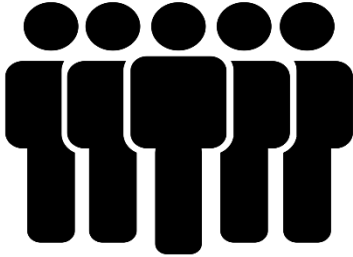
The project has proven to be effective and responsive in the design of the activities targeting the youth. Several interventions were implemented as youth specific, such as livelihood activities, income generating opportunities, support and scaling up small businesses, technical and financial support, community engaging activities as part of the community centers, mental health support and sexual awareness, etc.

Based on the interviews with relevant implementing partners, it is safe to say that these interventions were to large extent successful given the high rate of operational growing businesses that are in place due to the project, and to the high rate of employability among youth who attended the activities. Moreover, beneficiaries have declared being more motivated, more confident of their capacities and more optimistic in succeeding professionally even in the current challenging context.

The assessment has identified two areas in which the project can further dwell in: encouraging the transfer of knowledge and sense of communal support, psychosocial support and mental health support with special attention to awareness about drug use.
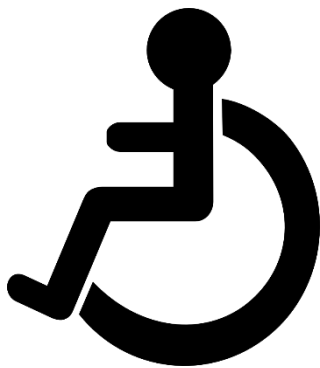
iv)   Disability:

The project paid special attention to PWDs in the Gatherings and designed interventions that cater specifically to them: sensory rooms, assistive devices, IMS, essential equipment, mental health and psychosocial support.

According to the interviews, while these interventions have covered over a large number of the the PWDS in the targeted communities, their needs are still high. The PWDS in the Palestinian Gatherings are a group that should be kept under attention for the future. Important issues to focus on are:

- Children with disabilities and their access to education facilities and nurseries;
- Elderly especially those with hearing problems;
- In-house modifications and home improvements for PWDs; and
- Mental health illnesses and psychiatric cases.

Conclusions

Based on the evaluation findings, the study team presents here below the major conclusions and lessons learnt related to each evaluation criteria, and to the project as whole.

Relevance/Coherence:

The project is highly relevant in its design, methodology and flexibility in adapting to context changes to the needs and priorities of the PG and to national and UNDP priorities and approaches. Overall, there are no clear inclusion or exclusion errors pointed out during the assessment. The outputs clearly took into consideration the cross-cutting topics (gender, youth and disability). Moreover, there are no uncovered needs for the target groups of the project; although the study team has identified – based on the interviews with the partners, local actors, and beneficiaries – new sectors of activities, types of interventions and population groups that can be focused on.

Effectiveness:

The project is to a large extent effective in covering the needs of the beneficiaries by achieving and mostly overachieving its targets. The RRF and related indicators are adequate to measure the effectiveness, but a qualitative aspect could be introduced to measure important non-tangible aspects of the project. The operations and management of the project is challenged by the short timeframe of the interventions and the choice of some contractors for the hard component, as detailed above. A more effective approach would be program-based and not project/initiative-based. In essence, the UNDP would set a multiyear program (which could be phased out to be flexible with the duration of donors' agreements) aiming to achieve an ambitious objective and consisting of multiple interconnected projects/interventions involving multiple partners/NGOs. This would create synergies between projects and partners for a longer duration and will achieve higher impact and higher sustainability. This program-based approach was well received by the donors.

Efficiency:

The project has proven to be successful in terms of cost efficiency and budget allocation, although the UNDP team should consider diversifying its sources of funding to ensure continuity and increase resilience. The project was found to be efficient in terms of quality and quantity. Indeed, the quality the services provided is ensured through several channels, of which is the procurement and contracting of implementers, in addition to the lessons learnt and amendments made based on the multiple evaluations that the project has been subject to. Moreover, the quantity efficiency is also adequate considering that the budget is well distributed and accurately allocated across the different activities; although additional funding or the integration of beneficiaries in different cycles of the same activity may also increase more the quantity efficiency of the project.

Impact:

The project has showed important positive impact on several levels related to both the physical and socio-economic interventions (ranging from great reputation at project level, to high engagement of partners and other actors, to alleviation of burdens on municipalities, to reduction of tensions at community level, and to improvement of lives of beneficiary level). Its importance in the community has been growing with each activity implemented and the resulting externalities are being mitigated in a proper manner. Additional positive impact could be possible through increasing the length of the timeframe and strengthening NGO networking to design complementary interventions and exchange knowledge and information.

Sustainability:

The project has been successfully sustainable in many aspects related to its design, implementation and interventions (links with relevant and effective local, regional, and national stakeholders through their engagement in joint projects; engagement of municipalities and public service agencies in the planning, decision making and implementation phases of the project; area-based approach that the project has been adapting is very important and was considered to be a highly needed; soft component of the project: transfer of knowledge through capacity building, translating training material into internal protocols, scholarships, online platforms, etc). Obstacles to sustainability such as the lack of resources for local actors to undertake maintenance works, and the duration of the initiatives can be addressed in the next cycle of the project. The area-based approach that the project has been adapting is very important and was considered to be a highly needed approach by all interviewed stakeholders when it comes to the sustainability of the interventions. Indeed, with a mindset of local development, multisectoral activities were implemented under three improvement plans (Taamir, Beddawi, and Maachouk), and these were considered as success stories given the comprehensive work that has been done. This approach allows the UNDP to address more types of vulnerabilities, on a larger scale, and observe noticeable changes and impact in the community as a whole.

Cross-cutting topics:

The project has integrated successfully cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, poverty alleviation, and disability and human rights to various degrees in planning and implementation phases.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation elements	Maintain	Improve	Modify
Relevance	*Relevance of the UNDP role in the Palestinian Gatherings*	X		
	Coherence of the project with the UNDP strategies and priorities	X		
	Relevance of the initiatives to the targeted communities needs	X		
	Relevance of the methodology adopted to the objectives of the project and to the needs of the beneficiaries	X		
Effectiveness	*Overall success of the initiatives in covering the needs*	X		
	Adequacy of the used results indicators		X	
	Operations and management of the project	X		
	Challenges and constraints			X
Efficiency	*Cost efficiency*		X	
	Quality and quantity efficiency	X		
	Time efficiency		X	
Impact	*Most significant measurable impacts:*	X		
	Unintended externalities:	X		
	Obstacles to creating additional impact		X	
Sustainability	*Successes in sustainability*	X		
	Obstacles to sustainability		X	

Lessons Learnt

In addition, the evaluation presents the following lessons learnt:

1. The inclusive and bottom-up approach adopted by the project in its design, implementation and coordination is a success and increases the project's relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact.

2. Preserving the project's two-speed methodology (responding to emerging needs and developmental work) is important to cover all the needs of the Palestinian Gatherings while conforming with the integration with other projects, the area-based approach, and remaining operational in all 45 Gatherings.

3. The UNDP PG team demonstrates a high level of commitment and professionalism when it comes to operating, managing and supervising the interventions.

4. The short time frame of the interventions related to annual funding cycles and donors' agreements constitutes an important bottleneck that if addressed can improve the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project.

5. Important qualitative effectiveness and impacts related to the changes in the lives of the beneficiaries are hardly evaluated and translated into measurable indicators, although this aspect is important to understand the role of the project in shaping the changes in the community.

6. Some problems faced by the project are structural as they are related to UNDP policies and processes such as: procurement limitations for the hard component, the inability to cover HR costs during operation, etc.

7. The consistently increasing needs of the communities in the PG make the project more and more needed and make any intervention in any sector important and beneficial.

Recommendations

As a result of the conclusions and lessons learnt stated above, the following is a list of practical, actionable and feasible recommendations that could be taken into consideration during the planning of the next cycle of the project and the design of the next Project Document.

All these recommendations come from a specific finding or series of findings that were tackled in this evaluation report. Many were also suggested by the stakeholders during the in-depth interviews, working sessions and focus group discussions.

<u>Design:</u>

1. <u>Program-based approach:</u> The project may adopt a program-based holistic approach in its interventions, to the extent possible, increasing the length of the activities and engaging the stakeholders and beneficiaries for a longer period of time in a variety of complementary activities, both soft and physical. Suggested period for such initiatives would be an average of 2 years. While this seems hard given the different cycles of the fundings by the donors, it was not rejected by interviewed donors and multiyear agreements seem to be an option to discuss.

2. <u>Integrated multisectoral approach</u>: The integrated multisectoral approach may be prioritized for the next cycle (has been already implemented by the project as part of the improvement plans), as it constitutes an opportunity for both the targeted Gatherings and the UNDP: Indeed, this approach has been proven to be highly needed by the communities and important to increase impact and sustainability by providing multisectoral and complementary set of activities. Moreover, it is in line with the process of portfolio integration within the UNDP and serves as an internal mechanism to reduce costs by combining operational units such as procurement, engineering, etc. This approach is also a good selling points to donors as it allows attracting more funds under different types of projects and interventions. However, the PG should remain operational in all 45 Gatherings under its mandate to serve the needs of specific sectors.

3. <u>Synergies with LHSP:</u> The project is coordinating closely with the LHSP being part of the same LGLD portfolio and given the high synergies between the two. Intensifying and building on this coordination is important to prevent overlap of activities and missed opportunities. Indeed, this coordination will strengthen the complementarity of activities between the different projects and increase the impact on beneficiaries, especially for the host communities that could benefit from a system of referral between the two projects. It is however important to indicate, that it is also essential that the project remains as a separate unit with some level of independence for three main reasons: respecting during the planning and the implementation the specific characteristics of the Gatherings which only the PG team have extensive experience and knowledge in; the pace and timelines for the design of the activities is separate between the different projects (PG and LHSP for example) and it is important that one does not affect/delay the other; and the UNDP project in PG has of scope the 45 Gatherings, and therefore, even under an area-based approach where some activities should be done with joint planning and coordination with the LHSP, the UNDP project in PG should remain operational at the level of all Gatherings.

4. <u>Donors and funding management</u>: The project should consider diversifying its sources of funding to avoid a high risk of dependency on less donors. Potential areas to explore are: increasing the number of donors by including new countries such as Arab funds or other institutions, involving the private sector as an investor or funding partner in joint activities. Moreover, the project should also consider discussing with the donors the possibility of financial and narrative reporting standardization and the alignment of the reporting period, timeline and format.

5. <u>Prodoc design</u>: The new Prodoc should consider decreasing the number of outputs and restricting them to the following four as some of the current outputs be combined to include complementary activities: Livelihood with focus on youth and women, social basic services including health and education with focus on elderly (this output would include the hard component of the project i.e. civil works, infrastructure and upgrading activities), psychosocial wellbeing with focus on vulnerable groups such as PWDs and youth, and basic services for other WASH and infrastructure upgrading activities. It may also include a qualitative tool at outcome level to better visualize the non-tangible effectiveness of the interventions such as the Most Significant Change approach, which can be implemented within a reasonable budget and timeframe, to measure soft indicators such as social cohesion, tension reduction, improvement of lives of beneficiaries, women empowerment, social wellbeing, hope and motivation, etc. The RRF data could potentially to the extent possible be further disaggregated by disability and age category (youth, adult, elderly) to ensure coverage of beneficiaries throughout the life cycle.

<u>Operation:</u>

6. <u>Maintenance</u>: Infrastructure work and rehabilitation remains a priority, especially when it comes to electricity, water, and sewage. It would be beneficial that all physical activities in the project systematically address the lack of resources of local actors to carry out maintenance works, by: ensuring quality of the works, introducing the idea of maintenance for a period of time in contractors' contracts, linking maintenance to other cash-for-work existing projects.

7. <u>Partners' directory</u>: The project can invest in creating a partners' directory that includes a list of all active implementing partners and relevant actors with their locations and geographical coverage, sectors of activities, types of interventions, previous experiences, etc. This platform could become a reference for any partnership that this project or other project wants to create. It could also allow partners networking and collaboration. This platform can also allow unifying capacity building material across all interventions to ensure a better quality of deliverables. In addition, the platform would allow the project to establish a systematic mechanism for collecting opinions and suggestions (even outside implementation of activities). The formalization of such system creates confidence with the UNDP and ensure perpetual improvement of the delivery of the services.

<u>Interventions:</u>

8. <u>Beneficiary integration in the interventions:</u> The project could explore the possibility of engaging current end-beneficiaries in new planned activities. This approach would consist of the following

steps: i) identifying key skills and competencies in certain beneficiaries from existing activities that can be invested in; ii) designing new activities in which these skills and competencies can be used and are needed; iii) re-establishing contact with these identified beneficiaries who have these skills to include them as actors in this new designed activity. Therefore, the beneficiaries are transformed from recipients in the first project to provider of services in the new project. The advantages of this approach are multiple: end-beneficiaries become actors rather than receivers only, accumulation and transfer of knowledge into the community, built trust and confidence in the project and its activities, and sustainability of the impact created on the beneficiaries and their communities.

9. Priority areas: The assessment has identified the following main areas to focus on for the next cycle:

   a. Livelihood interventions: Livelihood interventions can be expanded to encourage the creation of productive economic units[30] (building on existing ones like SEAC and Sawaed), and income generating activities such as business development support, startup incubation and funding, linking VTE with entrepreneurship projects, linking implementing partners with the private sector, etc.

   b. Education based activities: Although school-based education activities are under the mandate of UNRWA, the project could cover educational support and education-related activities such as tutoring with the objective to decrease dropout rates and increase technical and vocational abilities of the youth. Scholarship programs and university tuition support are also essential for those who broke through and succeeded reaching this level despite all obstacles.

   c. Health care: Health care providers can also be supported with additional capacity building activities and trainings to respond to emergency cases given the current context. More specific technical trainings are also needed, especially related to intensive care, nursing, and Xrays and lab technicians. The project can provide special attention to the emergency situation in the South of Lebanon and cater for the emerging health needs in regards to primary health care and the equipment and training for a mobile clinic.

   d. Elderly care: Elderly and elderly care could be a priority for the project's next phase. This population is a burden on the household on several levels whether financial, psychological or physical. The elderly care can be very wide in terms of services (especially for those living alone), spanning from day-to-day care, nursing, psychological, medical and palliative.

   e. PWDs: The project may address many needs for children with disabilities such as: mental health illness and referral for psychiatric cases, access of CwDs to schools and nurseries, home improvements.

   f. Youth: Youth risky behaviors and drug use are also an important topic to address in the project's soft component.

   g. **Gender**: Better adopt Gender Transformative Programming and approaches such as building coalitions, creating community conversations about gender norms in PGs, engaging men as allies in women empowerment activities, etc.

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[30] Productive economic units consist of all economic activities that create employment and added-value in opposition to the rentier economy that generates revenues from interest and real estate transactions (buy-sell, rent). In this context, productive economic units could be MSMEs.

Annexes

1. Annex 1- Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation criteria	Main questions	Main data collection sources

Relevance/Coherence	1. To what extent has the initiative met relevant gender-differentiated needs of the beneficiaries and contributed to improving their living conditions but also to strengthening coexistence and stability?
	    a. Define the beneficiaries of the project using intersectionality lens: Who are they? What are the beneficiary coverage of the project in terms of geographical location (*gatherings and surrounding host communities*), nationality (*mostly Palestinians but also surrounding Lebanese host communities*), different profiles and groups (*gender, disability, youth, etc.).* In other terms, who is eligible to benefit from the different initiatives?
	    b. How were the needs of the different beneficiaries identified?
	    c. What are these needs, considering the gender differentiated and intersectional needs?
	    d. Define the terms "coexistence and stability". Who are the different parties in question?
	    e. What are the different projects/initiatives that were undertaken by this program? *List the different projects/initiatives under each output and group them by type and match initiatives with needs. In what way are living conditions, coexistence and stability covered in the initiatives? How does each initiative serve the improvement of living conditions, coexistence and stability? What are measurable indicators?*
	    f. How were the implementing partners selected? What previous experience do they have in related initiatives?
	
	2. To what extent are the project outputs, results, Theory of Change and methodologies relevant in the context of a protracted crisis in Palestinian Gatherings?
	    a. Identify and list the project outputs, results, Theory of Change and methodologies.
	    b. Describe the crisis and its impacts on the different beneficiaries and initiatives, with a focus on women, youth and marginalized groups?
	    c. Did the crisis lead to the emerging of new needs/beneficiaries/priorities taking into consideration gender and intersectionality lens?
		Desk review:
		1. Project Document 2016-2023
		2. CRI implemented household survey on Palestinian Gatherings in 2022,
		Interviews/focus groups:
		1. UNDP team
		2. Local stakeholders such as beneficiaries, local committees and the municipalities
		3. Donors
		4. UNRWA

Evaluation criteria	Main questions	Main data collection sources
	d. How did the program adapt to the change in context (post-crisis). Were the initiatives amended or adapted to fit in the crisis context to remain relevant? *Analyze the changes occurred on the Theory of Change, the Resources and Results Framework in terms of outputs and objectives as well as the methodologies used and more specifically the need for the area-based approach for local development.*	
	3. To what extent is the initiative consistent with national priorities; the UNDP Country Programme Document; the UNDP Country Strategy Note; and the UNDP strategy on local development approach; and the SDGs especially given the current crisis? a. What are the UNDP strategic priorities for the upcoming 2023-2025 years? What about the country office priorities? b. Where does the Palestinian Gatherings project fit in? Is it coherent with the above mentioned documents? c. What is the new local development approach that was introduced in 2023? What does it consist of? Why was it needed? Is the project coherent with this new approach? *Identify the national priorities based on the above-mentioned UNDP documents; then match the initiatives with these priorities and identify if they are in line or in contradiction with the priorities.* d. What are potential ways to strengthen the program in order to improve the linkages between the Palestinian Gatherings projects, the Country Office vision and objectives and the UNDP overall strategy?	
Effectiveness	1. To what extent has progress been made towards covering needs and improving lives in Palestinian Gatherings? a. Overall, were the initiatives of the 7 outputs successful? Did they cover all targeted beneficiaries? How? What are the measurable indicators (quantitative or qualitative)? *Focus on the different identified needs and targets set in the Results Framework and compare with the consolidated indicators and analyze the evolution. Highlight any shortness and in which area in terms of need or coverage of beneficiaries? Special focus on the selected interventions.* 2. Were the result indicators and their means of verification adequate? What are the results indicators and how were they designed/placed? 3. What have been the main challenges and constraining factors faced by the project? How effective were the methods followed to overcome them?	Desk review: 1. Results and Resources Framework 2016-2023, the consolidated target indicators (2016 – 2023) in Excel 2. Donors reports and presentations 3. UNDP publications 4. Previous evaluations Interviews/focus groups: 1. UNDP team 2. Implementing partners

Evaluation criteria	Main questions	Main data collection sources

	a. What are the main challenges/constraints and bottlenecks faced by the project managers /project implementers to implement the different initiatives?
	    i. In terms of project design
	    ii. In terms of implementation (external context, partners, beneficiaries, etc.)
	    iii. In terms of coordination
	b. What were the mitigation measures for each? To what extent were they useful/effective?	

	4. What unforeseen and foreseen factors have contributed to achieving (or not achieving) the intended outputs and results? c. List unforeseen factors and their respective contribution (positive or negative) such as: change in context, change in methodology or design, relationship with implementing partners, relationship with donors, coordination between the different parties, the Gathering Working Group, etc.	
Efficiency	1. How well have financial inputs been converted into activities, in terms of quality, quantity, time and cost (value for money)? *Study the Annual Work Plans and budgets for the available years. Analyze the output indicators with initiatives budget and compare different weights and assess. How many UNDP staff were involved, shares of implementing partners, share of management budget vs. budget for beneficiaries, etc.*	Desk review: 1. Annual Workplans from 2016 to 2023.
	2. To what extent were the M&E systems utilized to ensure effective and efficient project management? What actions did the project take in response to the conclusions and recommendations drawn in these previous evaluations? *Refer to previous evaluations and highlight what was covered or was not covered.*	
	3. Any propositions for potential improvements in the next evaluations?	

Impact	1. What, if any, were the unintended impacts/ externalities of the project intervention, both positive and negative? Was the project able to monitor, mitigate and respond to any unintended negative effects?
	a. List the unintended impacts for each group of initiatives and evaluate whether positive or negative
	b. How did the project cope with the negative effects – where they addressed, how and what were the results?
		Desk review:
		  1. Previous evaluations
		  2. Annual Project Reports
		  3. Donors' reports
		  4. UNDP publications
		Interviews/focus groups:
		  1. UNDP team

Evaluation criteria	Main questions	Main data collection sources

	2. What are the benefits to beneficiaries that can be directly attributed to the project, including at outcome level? In other terms, what changed in the context/community due to this project?
	   c. Did the program initiatives lead to the improvement of living conditions for all targeted beneficiaries in Palestinian Gatherings? How?
	   d. Did the program initiatives lead to the strengthening of "coexistence" and "stability" for all targeted beneficiaries in Palestinian Gatherings? How?
	   e. Was the Theory of Change effectively observed? How?
		2. Municipalities
		3. Implementing partners

	3. To what extent did all intended target groups, including the **most disadvantaged and vulnerable**, benefit from the intervention?	
	4. To what extent did the M&E system or other data sources contribute to capture impact at outcome level?	

Sustainability	1. To what extent will the project's interventions and/or results be sustained, mainly in terms of Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of interventions, after the project ends, especially given the current crisis?
	   a. Who were the different parties involved? What was the level of their involvement (across all steps of the project including design and implementation?
	   b. To what extent was the project's approach indeed participatory (bottom-up)?
	   c. Discuss the hand-over process to local stakeholders. Was there one? How was it done? Was it enough/successful? Any weaknesses to highlight?
	   d. Was there any transfer of knowledge? What knowledge and how was the transfer done? To whom? Was anyone missed in this process?
	   e. What are the plans for continuing the project's operations and maintenance of the interventions, while keeping in mind the challenges and implemented measures?
	   f. Is there any sustainable financing/budget for project continuation? In what form? How is it sustainable?
		Desk review:
		1. Country office document on integrated approach to local development
		Interviews/focus groups:
		1. Interviews with the UNDP core team
		2. Local stakeholders such as beneficiaries, local committees and the municipalities
		3. Donors
		4. UNRWA

	2. To what extent did the project establish links with the most relevant and effective local, regional, national existing structures to ensure sustainability and to what extent are partners able to commit, especially given the current situation in the country?
	   a. What were the links created with them?
	   b. Any bottlenecks and how to overcome them?	

	3. What are the possibilities for replication and extension of the project's activities and outcomes? Which priorities should be addressed in the following phase?	

Evaluation criteria	Main questions	Main data collection sources
Cross-cutting topics	**Human rights:** 1. To what extent did disadvantaged groups (women, PWDs, youth, etc.) in the context of Palestinian Gatherings particularly benefit from this UNDP project? 2. To what extent were active measures in place to include them in the different project phases and are there extra steps that should be taken in this regard? **Gender equality:** 3. How were gender-specific needs and priorities identified and incorporated into the project's design including identification of gender-related constraints/gaps in the assessments phase? In what ways did the project address the distinct needs and priorities of women and men throughout its implementation, and what impact (intended and not intended) did this have on gender equality? 4. What specific strategies or actions were implemented to promote gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the project's lifecycle? To what extent were these strategies / actions gender-responsive or gender-transformative? 5. How did the project facilitate the meaningful participation of women and other marginalized gender groups in decision-making processes, including project planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation? What challenges were encountered in ensuring their participation, and how were these challenges addressed? 6. How did the project engage with local communities to raise awareness about gender equality and its significance within the context of Palestinian Gatherings? What impact did these awareness-raising efforts have on challenging gender norms and promoting gender mainstreaming? 7. In what ways did the project foster collaboration with relevant stakeholders and organizations working on gender-related issues to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to gender mainstreaming in Palestinian Gatherings? 8. What were the key lessons learned from integrating gender equality and gender mainstreaming in this project, and how can these lessons be applied to future initiatives to further enhance gender-responsive or transformative programming?	Desk review: 1. Project Document 2016-2023 2. Donors reports and presentations 3. UNDP publications 4. Previous evaluations Interviews/focus groups: 1. UNDP team 2. Local stakeholders such as beneficiaries, local committees and the municipalities 3. Implementing partners 4. Beneficiaries

Evaluation criteria	Main questions	Main data collection sources
	Youth: 9. To what extent did available and used assessments contribute to efficient and responsive design of activities targeting youth? 10. To what extent did project activities (specifically under output 5) improved youth livelihood and income generating opportunities? What was done well and why? What can be improved? Disability: 11. To what extent were specific challenges faced by PWDs in Palestinian Gatherings addressed? 12. What PWD- related institutional gaps, needs, and challenges need to be addressed in future interventions? 13. How can needs of and interventions targeting PWD be better integrated in programme planning and implementation?	
Recommendations	1. Are there any newly identified and/or unmet needs? What about newly identified and/or uncovered profiles of beneficiaries? Is there a need to review the scope of the project in terms of geographic coverage? 2. How will the Resources and Results Framework be revised in terms of outcomes and outputs? 3. Based on shortness identified or new context / newly identified profiles or needs – what indicators to use for effective measurements (at outcome and also "new" outputs levels)? How can indicators be improved to capture outcomes through the M&E system? What further data sources are needed to capture impact? 4. Based on previously faced challenges, any recommendations/ advice for a new methodology or project design? *new approach to local development – area based)* 5. What can be improved in terms of management? In coordination? *(new donors, donor reporting, relationship between different actors, human resources allocation and roles, etc.)* 6. Are the unforeseen and/or foreseen factors going to remain given the current context? What possible new factors may appear (risks)? How can we manage these factors in the next phase? 7. Is there any need for additional/different type of resources?	Desk review: 1. Country office document on integrated approach to local development Interviews/focus groups: 1. UNDP team, 2. Municipalities 3. Donors 4. UNRWA

Evaluation criteria	Main questions	Main data collection sources
	8. What are the success stories and possibilities for replication in terms of the project's activities and outcomes? *Discuss pilots and recent interventions that could be further built on or expanded.* 9. What are the potentials of new interventions to introduce for the next cycle. 10. Where should the focus be in the next phase? Which priorities should be addressed?	

2. Annex 2 – Discussion Guides

The below discussion guides are developed in a way to allow collecting data in order to answer all questions of the evaluation matrix, using a project life cycle dimension. These questions aim to open discussion about a variety of topics that need to be covered as part of this evaluation.

Working sessions

1. Introduction:
   o How long have you been working in the Palestinian Gathering Project?
   o What is your position/role/specific tasks?
2. Project overview:
   o How were the project's interventions selected? How were priorities identified? How are interventions decided on? How are the partners selected?
   o How are the tasks divided between the different actors? What about the different roles of the team members? How is the coordination done? To what extent is this distribution relevant, sufficient and useful for the effective implementation of the project *(address the challenge that engineers are more technical)*?
   o How was the monitoring of activities performed/implemented centrally and locally? What was the impact of this monitoring? How can it be improved in the future?
   o How do you evaluate the project management in terms of design, implementation, coordination? What should have been done differently? What were the positive sides of this management?
3. Main successes:
   o What are your proud of projects and why?
   o What were key factors in making them successful in terms of design, implementation, coordination, and external factors?
   o How do you measure this success? Are the measurement tools used enough/sufficient? How can they be improved?
4. Main challenges:
   o What were the main obstacles faced in terms of design, implementation, coordination (including reporting tasks and reporting lines) and external factors?
   o How were these challenges treated? What are the suggestions for better mitigation in the future?
   o Did the project implementation happen according to the timeframe? Which projects in particular faced delays and why? How can this be dealt with differently during the next phase of the project?
5. Main lessons learnt:
   o Based on above, what would you do the same? Why?
   o What would you do differently? Why?
6. Main projections for the future:

- o What should be the priorities for the next cycle be and why?
- o What are the main needs, priorities and sectors to be focus on in the future? Any particular group of beneficiaries? Why?
- o What successful interventions should the UNDP build on? How?
- o What are the potentials for new types of interventions? Why?
- o How should the partnerships and collaborations differ in the next cycle?
- o Should the UNDP approach/methodology be different in the next cycle? What are the pros and cons of having an area-based approach (integrated approach to local development)?

7. What are potential ways to strengthen the program in order to improve the linkages between the Palestinian Gatherings project, the Country Office vision, including the new Local Development Portfolio, and objectives and the UNDP overall strategy?

Implementing Partner/ NGO + Beneficiary/ Municipality/ Popular Committee (in-depth interviews, and grouped interviews)

1. Go through your history with the UNDP Palestinian Gatherings Project.
2. How was this projects identified? To what extent were you involved in the identification process of this intervention?
3. To what extent do this project stem from the needs of the community? How were these needs identified?
4. What are the most successful projects you undertook / benefited from under this project? What are the least successful ones? Why?
5. What are the main success points of the Palestinian Gatherings project in comparison with other similar projects you were part of?
6. What are the main challenges you faced during the implementation phase? How did you cope with these challenges?
7. Were all targeted beneficiaries successfully reached? Were there any inclusion or exclusion errors?
8. To what extent did the interventions include these lenses in their approach: gender, disability, youth? Please elaborate.
9. Were the interventions effective in reaching their objectives? How do you measure this effectiveness? What were the impacts of these interventions? What changes have occurred to the community/beneficiaries because of these interventions?
10. Please describe the coordination process between the different actors of the project (*whenever relevant*). What was the level of collaboration between all these actors? What is the reporting line?
11. Is there any complaint mechanism? Was the UNDP responsive enough when needed?
12. Did the project implementation happen according to the timeframe? Which projects in particular faced delays and why?
13. Did you observe any change in the context you operate? When did you notice this change? How did the project adapt to these changes? What about the changes in the needs of the beneficiaries?
14. Is there anything that should be improved in terms of relevance, implementation, and coordination? If yes, please elaborate.
15. To what extent are the project's interventions sustainable? Please describe how and why.

16. What are the main challenges you are facing post hand-over in terms of Operation and Maintenance? How are you addressing these challenges? What are potential actions to alleviate them?
17. In your opinion, what are the main needs, priorities and sectors to be focus on in the future? Any particular group of beneficiaries? Why? What successful interventions should the UNDP build on? How? What additional interventions you suggest having in the next phase of the project? Why?
18. ? What are the pros and cons of having an area-based approach (integrated approach to local development)?

<u>Focus Group Discussion Guide with Beneficiaries</u>

1. Tell us a bit about yourself (name, *note on gender,* nationality, age, household composition, education and employment) – *Demographic and socio-economic background.*
2. When did you first hear about the project and how?
3. How were you approached to benefit from the initiative?
4. Please tell us about your experience in this project? What happened? What are your overall impressions? What is your opinion of the overall management and delivery of the service/work provided?
5. To what extent was the initiative answering a need that you or your family have? Does this apply to many families like you in your community?
6. To what extent did the interventions include these lenses in their approach: gender, disability, youth? Please elaborate.
7. Can you list the main success points of the project?
8. What are the weaknesses and/or challenges you noticed? Did you witness any delays (if applicable)? Why?
9. To what extent is your counterpart / provider responsive? Are there any complaints mechanism? What is it? Did you had to use it? What was the situation? How was it dealt with?
10. Who is the main contact person/ referral in this project? How do you evaluate your relationship with him/her? What about your relationship with other parties involved in the initiative?
11. Please describe the impact of the project on: you, your family, your community, your views towards other communities.
12. Did you observe any change in the context since the project began? How did the project adapt to this change? *It could be a national change, community change or personal change.*
13. In your opinion, what can be done more? What can be done better?
14. In your opinion, what are important interventions that should be focused on that can improve the lives in your community?

3. Annex 3 – Evaluation Team

As explained in the technical proposal, the evaluation team is composed of two main experts in addition to ad-hoc support from other experts within CRI team with significant experience in Palestinian and refugee related topics and/or from a field team involved in site visits and interviews.

Name of Staff	Gender	Background and skills	Designation for this assignment	Main tasks
Redha Hamdan	Male	Statistics, Economics, Project Management, Sampling Design	Team Leader	Management and coordination, financial analysis, approval of deliverables
Jinane Chamseddine	Female	Economics, Evaluation, Questionnaire Design, Qualitative Research	Research Expert	Development of tools, development of evaluation matrix, moderation of interviews and focus groups, generation of results, data analysis, report writing
Rania Nader	Female	Public Finance, Quantitative and Qualitative Research	Research Expert	Data analysis
Zeinab Harkous	Female	Fieldwork Planning, Fieldwork Follow-up	Assistant	Scheduling interviews appointments, assistance during interviews

4. Annex 4 – List of Interviewed Stakeholders

Data Collection Method	Stakeholder	Profile	Sector of Activity	Interventions	Years	Location	Meeting Date	Meeting Method
Individual In-depth Interviews / Group Meetings	Makassed - Ward el Makassed	Implementing partner	Livelihood	Women training and income generation (online platform for home service)	2022-2023	Beirut	Monday 26th at 11 AM	Face-to-face
	Welfare Association - Taawon	Implementing partner	Health/ wellbeing	Support to PwDs, support to health care centers mainly through trainings	2022-2024	National	Thursday 15th at 3 PM	Online
	Palestinian Disability Forum	Implementing partner	Health/ wellbeing	Support to PwDs, support to health care centers mainly through trainings	2022-2024	National	Thursday 15th at 10 AM	Online
	SEAC	Implementing partner	Livelihood	Youth training, coaching and seed funds in Tripoli, "Foursa" directory management	2022-2023	Tripoli, North gatherings	Tuesday 20th at 10 AM	Face-to-face
	Seed in a Box	Implementing partner	Livelihood	Sustainable farming & agroproducts in Beddawi, Muhammara & Saida; online platform for producers in Saida	2020-2023	Beddawi, Muhammara, Saida	Friday 23rd at 1.30 PM	Online
	Jafra	Implementing partner	Livelihood	Food security in Beqaa	2023	Baalbeck		

Data Collection Method	Stakeholder	Profile	Sector of Activity	Interventions	Years	Location	Meeting Date	Meeting Method
	UNRWA	Coordination	NA	NA			Monday 19th at 2 PM	Face-to-face
	KfW	Donor	NA	NA			Friday 16th at 12.30 PM	Online
	Norway	Donor	NA	NA			Wednesday 21st at 1 PM	
	Injaz	Implementing partner	Livelihood	Incubation and support to start-ups	2023-2024	Beirut, Bekaa, North	Friday 23rd at 11 AM	Online
	Human Call Association	Beneficiary	Health/ wellbeing	Support to 3 health care centers in Adjacent Areas to Ein Helwe, Beddawi & Nahr el Bared camps	2020-2023	Beddawi, Muhammara, Saida	Friday 16th at 10 AM	Online
	Beit Atfal Assumoud - NISCVT	Implementing partner	Health/ wellbeing	Psychological first aid activities and psychosocial support with mental health referral in multiple areas	2016-2023	National	Wednesday 14th at 10 AM	Online
	Palestinian Red Crescent - PRCS	Beneficiary	Health/ wellbeing	Support to 4 health centers in Beqaa, Saida, NBC AA	2021-2024	Bekaa, Saida, Muhammara	Thursday 22nd at 10 AM	Online
	Saida municipality	Collaborator	WASH/ upgrading	Multiple activities in Old Saida: Shelter, market rehabilitation, upgrading, support	2016-2024	Saida	Thursday 22nd at 1 PM	Online

Data Collection Method	Stakeholder	Profile	Sector of Activity	Interventions	Years	Location	Meeting Date	Meeting Method
				to small businesses, etc.				
	Popular Committee in Maachouk	Collaborator	WASH/ upgrading	Operation of SW collection through truck provided by UNDP, operation of solar water pumping system installed by UNDP	2017-2024	Maachouk Tyre	Wednesday 28th at 12 PM	Online
Working Sessions	UNDP	Palestinian Gatherings Project team	NA	NA	NA	NA	Wednesday 31st January	Face-to-face
	UNDP	Palestinian Gatherings Project team	NA	NA	NA	NA		Face-to-face
	UNDP	Gatherings Working Group	NA	NA	NA	NA	Thursday 29th February	Face-to-face
	UNDP	Management, including programme, portfolio and M&E unit	NA	NA	NA	NA	Monday 11th March at 12 PM	Face-to-face
Focus Groups	Makassed - Ward el Makassed	Implementing partner	Livelihood	Women training and income generation (online platform for home service)	2022-2023	Beirut	Monday 26th at 11 AM	Face-to-face
	SEAC	Implementing partner	Livelihood	Youth training, coaching and seed funds in Tripoli,	2022-2023	Tripoli, North gatherings	Tuesday 20th at 10 AM	Face-to-face

Data Collection Method	Stakeholder	Profile	Sector of Activity	Interventions	Years	Location	Meeting Date	Meeting Method
				"Foursa" directory management				
	Litani River Establishment	Beneficiary and partner	WASH/ upgrading	Wastewater disposal and treatment through small biological plants (WWTP) in Adloun	2022-2023	Adloun	Wednesday 6th March at 12 PM	Online
	Zahrani UOM	Beneficiary						
	Popular Committee Adloun	Beneficiary						
	Kharayeb municipality	Beneficiary	WASH/ upgrading	Collaboration between the two entities to implement at-source sourcing of solid waste in Kharayeb town and its 4 gatherings; operation of community space (indoor and outdoor) on a municipal land in Kharayeb	2017-2020	Kharayeb town & Gatherings (Wasta, Itaniye, JimJim, Kfarbadda)	Wednesday28th h at 10 AM	Online
	PARD NGO	Beneficiary & Implementing partner						
Field/Site Visits	SEAC	Implementing partner	Livelihood	Youth training, coaching and seed funds in Tripoli, "Foursa" directory management	2022-2023	Tripoli, North gatherings	Tuesday 20th at 10 AM	Face-to-face
	Litani River Establishment	Beneficiary and partner	WASH/ upgrading	Wastewater disposal and treatment through	2022-2023	Adloun	Wednesday 6th March at 12 PM	Online
	Zahrani UOM	Beneficiary						

Data Collection Method	Stakeholder	Profile	Sector of Activity	Interventions	Years	Location	Meeting Date	Meeting Method
	Popular Committee Adloun	Beneficiary		small biological plants (WWTP) in Adloun				

5. Annex 5 – Analysis of Indicators

	Indicator as per project document 2016-2023	Baseline	Target (2023)	Indicator as per monitoring data	Effective number	Difference Target (2023)-Baseline
Output 1: Provide environmentally and economically sustainable WASH services at community level in the gatherings.	# Of individuals with improved access to WASH services	50000	165000	1.1. # Of individuals with sufficient safe water supply at an adequate level of service. 1.2. # Of individuals with access to wastewater/sewage systems. 1.3. # Of individuals with access to reliable solid waste services.	198,505	115000
	# of local mechanisms with systems and capacities strengthened for improved service delivery.	10	25	1.4. # Of local mechanisms with systems and capacities strengthened for improved service delivery.	15	15
Output 2: Improve environmental and structural conditions of shelter units in the gatherings.	# Of refugees living in structurally and environmentally improved shelters.	60000	68300	2.1. # Of refugees living in structurally safe shelters. 2.2. # Of refugees living in environmentally adequate shelters.	13708	8300
Output 3: Promote inclusive and safer environments in the gatherings though comprehensive neighborhood upgrading interventions.	# Of neighbourhood upgrading plans developed in the gatherings.	0	8	3.1. # Of neighbourhood upgrading plans developed in the gatherings.	11	8

	Indicator as per project document 2016-2023	Baseline	Target (2023)	Indicator as per monitoring data	Effective number	Difference Target (2023)-Baseline
	# Of neighbourhoods with safer roads including electricity networks and street lighting, storm water disposal, paving and).	10	40	3.2. # Of neighbourhoods with safer roads including electricity networks and street lighting, storm water disposal, paving.	32	30
	# Of neighbourhoods with inclusive and positive community spaces.	10	22	3.3. # Of neighbourhoods with inclusive and positive community spaces.	15	12
				# of individuals with access to safer roads and inclusive community spaces	37904	
Output 4: Improve hygiene conditions for host and new refugee communities in the gatherings.	# Of individuals who have experienced behaviour change session/activities.	10000	55000	4.1. # Of individuals who have experienced behaviour change session/activities.	71914	45000
	# Of individuals who have received training on promoting positive hygiene practices in their communities.	0	150	4.2. # Of individuals disaggregated by sex who have received training on promoting positive hygiene practices in their communities.	168	150
	# Of individuals with access to hygiene or baby kits.	15000	35000	4.3. # Of individuals with access to hygiene or baby kits.	35000	20000
Output 5: Reduce youth risky behaviors in the gatherings	# Of self-sustained livelihood community projects.	0	7	5.1. # Of self-sustained livelihood community projects.	9	7

	Indicator as per project document 2016-2023	Baseline	Target (2023)	Indicator as per monitoring data	Effective number	Difference Target (2023)-Baseline
through livelihood interventions.						
	# Of individuals who have received (vocational) training and post-graduation support.	0	1200	5.2. # Of individuals disaggregated by sex who have received vocational training and post-graduation support (merged with 7.2 in 2022)	1504	1200
	# Of small businesses that have received support.	0	400	5.3. # Of small business owners disaggregated by sex, who have received start-up grants.	524	400
	#Of individuals who have benefited from other socio-economic interventions.	0	4000	Additional Indicator 5.4: - # of individuals who have benefited socio-economic interventions or NGO activities	5061	4000
	# of areas benefitting from support to local economic structures	0	4	Additional Indicator: # of areas benefitting from support to local economic structures	4	4
Output 6: Develop a national coordination and planning platform for response and development in Palestinian Gatherings.	# Of meeting of the Gatherings working Group	20	68	6.1. # Of meeting of the Gatherings working Group	50	48

	Indicator as per project document 2016-2023	Baseline	Target (2023)	Indicator as per monitoring data	Effective number	Difference Target (2023)-Baseline
	Database on living conditions, needs and interventions in Palestinian gatherings developed and shared with active organizations.	0	1	6.2. Database on living conditions, needs and interventions in Palestinian gatherings developed and shared with active organizations.	3	1
t	Number of studies / reports issued.	0	5			5
Output 7: Local communities and institutions supported to respond to COVID-19 in the gatherings.	# of institutions supported through equipment, works and training	0	4	7.1 Number of institutions supported through equipment, works and training (cont)	10	4
	# Of youths enrolled in accredited educational and vocational training programs in needed paramedical domains	0	200	7.2 Number of youth trained in nursing and paramedics domains	249	200
	# Of individuals who have benefited from interventions led by local NGOs to address COVID-19 impact.	0	7500	7.3 # Of individuals who have benefited from interventions led by local NGOs to address COVID-19 impact.	17003	7500