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DECENTRALIZED EVALUATION FOR EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING



Decentralized Evaluation

WFP Livelihoods and Resilience Activities in Lebanon

2016 - 2019

Evaluation Report

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Disclaimer	ii
Executive Summary	1
Methodology	1
Key Findings	2
Overall conclusions	5
Recommendations	5
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Overview of the Programme in Lebanon	2
1.2. Evaluation Methodology and Limitations	4
2. Evaluation Findings	6
2.1. Evaluation Question 1 - Relevance and Appropriateness	6
2.2. Evaluation Question 2 - Relevance and Appropriateness	9
2.3. Evaluation Question 3 - Relevance and Appropriateness	18
2.4. Evaluation Question 4 – Effectiveness	20
2.5. Evaluation Questions 5 and 6 – Efficiency	25
2.6. Evaluation Questions 7, 8, 9 - Impact and Sustainability	28
3. Conclusions and Recommendations	39
3.1 Conclusions	39
3.2 Recommendations	41

Executive Summary

1. This report covers the decentralized activity evaluation of the World Food Programme's (WFP) livelihoods and resilience programme ("the Programme") targeting displaced Syrians and host communities in Lebanon. The evaluation was commissioned by the WFP Lebanon Country Office (CO) to achieve learning and accountability objectives and to produce evidence and lessons learned from the design and implementation of the Programme in the period between August 2016 and April 2019.
2. Key users of this evaluation are the CO; Cairo Regional Bureau (RBC); WFP Headquarters (HQ); and WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV). The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the Government of Germany, the sole donor of the Programme, the Government of Lebanon, Cooperating Partners (CPs), other UN agencies, and Programme participants have an interest in the evaluation findings.
3. Since the start of the Syrian conflict, Lebanon has been at the forefront of one of the largest humanitarian crises globally; alongside 1.5 million vulnerable Lebanese, the country hosts 1.5 million displaced Syrians¹. The Programme provides livelihoods support to around 12,500 vulnerable Syrian and Lebanese across Lebanon through Food Assistance for Training (FFT) or Individual capacity strengthening activities, and Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) or Asset creation and livelihood activities². Both FFT and FFA activities use conditional food assistance delivered through cash-based transfers (CBT) intended as remuneration or incentive for participation in the Programme.

Methodology

4. The evaluation was designed to assess the Programme against the following evaluation criteria: Relevance and Appropriateness, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. The main evaluation questions, as indicated in the Terms of Reference, were:
 - How relevant and appropriate is the Programme?
 - How effective is the Programme?
 - How efficient is the Programme?
 - What are the main impacts of the Programme and are they sustainable?
5. In order to respond to these questions, the Evaluation Team used a mixed-methods approach drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources. The team reviewed over 200 documents; interviewed over 70 key informants from a range of stakeholders; and conducted 28 Focus Group Discussions in sites derived from purposive sampling.

¹ Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2017-2020 (2019 Update).

² In 2018 the CO split FFA and FFT activities into four pillars representing the main areas of focus of the Programme: Pillar 1: Skills and vocational trainings, value chain development, market linkages; Pillar 2: Rehabilitation/construction of small-scale agriculture infrastructure; Pillar 3: Reforestation and forest management activities; Pillar 4: Construction/rehabilitation of farmers' markets.

Key Findings

6. The key findings of the Evaluation Team are summarized below.

Evaluation criterion 1: Relevance and Appropriateness

7. The evaluation found Programme objectives to be relevant and appropriate to the context. The CO is also suitably placed to complement its well-regarded large-scale cash response to displaced Syrians with livelihoods support and resilience-building.
8. The short-term nature of donor funding is not conducive to the adoption of long-term planning and implementation approaches, and to achieving inherently long-term resilience and livelihoods objectives.
9. The Theory of Change (ToC) and the livelihoods strategy underpinning the Programme are not clearly elaborated. The thinking behind the design and choice of activities, underlying assumptions, contextual factors influencing results, and the lasting change that the Programme ultimately expects to bring about are unclear.
10. The targeting approach does not lend itself well to reaching Programme objectives and is not harnessing the potential that complementary cash and livelihoods programming might have to synergistically strengthen food security, livelihoods and resilience outcomes in this context. In general, WFP Cooperating Partners (CPs) and participants interviewed showed limited understanding of the rationale underpinning targeting and of the overall goals of the Programme.
11. The CO has undertaken a number of positive measures to better understand the context and the different shocks and pressures confronting Syrians and Lebanese, men and women. Important efforts were also observed by the evaluation around greater involvement of CO and FOs in communities' consultations for selection of activities and identification of localities for implementation. Considering the highly politicized environment where the Programme operates this is a constructive step towards ensuring that livelihoods support is guided by impartial assessment of needs.
12. Mainly as a result of the dearth of labor market data in both Lebanon and Syria, FFT activities are not underpinned by country-wide labor market assessments. To redress this gap, the CO consults existing assessments conducted by other agencies and requests that CPs provide evidence of the link between training topics and market needs. That said, the evaluation has found that in some cases trainings (e.g. on photography or floriculture) are not aligned to market needs and their potential for equipping participants with marketable skills is limited. The design and implementation of FFT activities has also been challenged by the absence of a FFT guidance manual at corporate level.
13. Despite the high levels of social tensions in this context, there is no evidence of systematic conflict-sensitive assessments being conducted before the start of activities. The Programme has not developed a tailored strategic and programmatic approach which this evaluation finds could better and more appropriately respond to the different needs and harness the different capacities of Syrians and Lebanese.

14. The CO has undertaken positive steps to better tailor activities to the different needs of men and women, such as expanding the portfolio of FFT activities, which are considerably less physically demanding than FFA activities. The lack of provision of childcare facilities however, was found as an obstacle to the participation and retention of women in the Programme.
15. The bulk of Programme activities are geared towards supporting rural livelihoods. This is appropriate, given that the majority of displaced Syrians are concentrated in areas where agriculture, also for poor Lebanese, is the most important source of income. Building on ongoing programmatic efforts and joint initiatives with other actors however, more attention could be paid to the development of activities geared to the support of urban livelihoods as well.
16. This evaluation noted a high degree of alignment of the Programme with Government strategies and priorities, including with the Government strategy of response to the Syrian crisis and with initiatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and of the Ministry of Environment. The CO also closely liaises with the ILO, the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Social Affairs to align the targeting of Syrians displaced in FFA activities to existing national guidelines and legislation on employment.

Evaluation criterion 2: Effectiveness

17. Overall, the Programme has delivered its main outputs. The evaluation however noted significant departure from planned targets, in both activities implemented and participant numbers, highlighting a disconnect between planning and implementation, which might be partly explained by the compressed time for implementation.
18. The Food Consumption Scores and Coping Strategy Index slightly improved in 2017 and 2018 for Programme participants. This is consistent with findings from FGDs which pointed to very limited changes in the quality and quantity of food consumed mainly because of the small amount of cash transferred and the short duration of activities. In 2018 the proportion of targeted communities reporting benefits from an enhanced asset base improved significantly from 2017. Primary data echo this: the majority agreed that assets established were beneficial.
19. The Programme does not disaggregate outcomes for Syrians and Lebanese participants and does not systematically analyze outcomes by gender or by Persons with Disability. The monitoring framework also does not measure outcomes that are relevant for the objectives of the Programme, such as employment or self-employment attained following participation, increased agricultural production, or progress towards resilience-building, with repercussion on evidence-based programmatic decision-making. This is also symptomatic of a gap at corporate level: a recent Strategic Evaluation of WFP Support for Enhanced Resilience for example pointed out that current corporate tools do not enable

[Programme and monitoring staff to gather information on resilience] systematically or effectively”³.

Evaluation criterion 3: Efficiency

20. The lack of access to disaggregated financial data has limited the ability of the evaluation to analyze the efficiency of the Programme across the four pillars. Examples of positive measures to increase efficiency were found, but there is no evidence of an overarching strategy for managing efficiency. A range of factors were found to negatively influence efficiency including predominantly short-term FLAs resulting from the annual funding cycle; the administrative burden of reporting on CPs; data errors in cash payment processes linked to manual data collection and Excel-based management of records.

Evaluation criteria 4 and 5: Impact and Sustainability

21. The limited primary and secondary data available on outcomes has constrained the ability of the evaluation to answer questions on impact and sustainability.
22. Primary data collected by the evaluation indicate that increases in agricultural productivity might have occurred, but attribution to the Programme is difficult; secondary data is not available as this is not an outcome that the Programme monitors. The sustainability potential of assets created was found to be linked to interest, capacity and willingness of local authorities, which varied greatly from place to place. Examples of activities focused on improving market linkages and developing value chains were observed, but design and implementation are challenged by the short-term nature of donor funding.
23. Programme participation and cash injections for the duration of activities had positive effects on the well-being and self-esteem of participants, for Syrian women in particular. Participation also facilitated positive interaction between Syrian and Lebanese which can be seen as a positive contribution towards social cohesion. With competition for jobs a key source of tension in this context, the evaluation highlighted the risk that Programme activities seeking to enhance employment opportunities might further fuel social tensions. Whether social ties developed as a result of joint participation in Programme activities will be sustained over time remains an open question. A weak link between enhancing social interaction and its effects on broader perceptions on Syrians was found.
24. The limited primary and secondary data available is a key reason for the mixed results that the evaluation found around the ability of the Programme to enhance employment and economic opportunities. A survey conducted by the CO in 2018 shows that one quarter of participants of digital skills training had found employment. Primary findings however point to only marginal gains in this regard.

³ WFP. Strategic Evaluation of WFP Support for Enhanced Resilience. January 2019.

Overall conclusions

25. Overall, the objectives of the Programme are relevant and appropriate and the Programme is strongly aligned with Government strategies and priorities. However, the short-term funding mechanism, the short-term nature of activities and the limited articulation of the ToC and related livelihoods strategy are all negatively affecting the relevance and appropriateness of the Programme. The evaluation has also pointed to a number of programmatic features that could be improved including targeting, analysis and assessments, and better tailoring activities to the different needs of Syrian and Lebanese, men and women.
26. The Programme has delivered its intended outputs. With regards to outcomes monitored, slight improvements in food security and coping strategy indicators for participants were found and the asset base indicator improved significantly between 2017 and 2018. However, the Programme does not disaggregate outcomes for Syrians and Lebanese, does not systematically analyze outcomes by gender or PWD, and does not monitor relevant livelihoods and resilience outcomes. Some examples of efficiency gains were found, but the Programme lacks a systematic cost efficiency analysis and an overarching strategy for managing efficiency.
27. Programme participation and cash injections for the duration of activities had positive effects on participants well-being and self-esteem and positively increased interaction between Syrians and Lebanese. Mixed results were found in relation to greater employment opportunities as result of participation in the Programme. Support to market linkages and development of value chains was challenged by the short-term nature of the funding.

Recommendations

28. The findings and conclusions of this evaluation led to the Evaluation Team making the following five recommendations. Additional details on each recommendation are provided in section 3.2.
 - **Recommendation 1:** In collaboration with FOs and CPs and with support from RBC and HQ, the CO should review the Programme ToC to more clearly articulate the vision for change that the Programme seeks to bring about, its livelihoods and

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