

Evaluation Summary

Midterm external evaluation - Decentralized Evaluation Report Lebanon Field Office

Country: **Lebanon**

Sector: **Water and Sanitation**

Evaluator: **InfoPro and Difaf**

Date of the evaluation: **21st July 2023**

Key data on AFD's support

Projet numbers: CLB1103

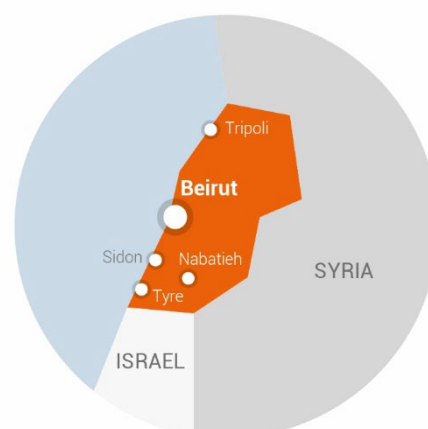
Amount: 21 000 000 EUR

Disbursement rate: 90,5%

Signature of financing agreement: 17 october 2019

Completion date: 16 october 2025

Total duration: 60 months + 12 months implementation



Context

The WAHET project aimed in 2019 to improve water, sanitation, hygiene, and infrastructure in 12 selected Lebanon's Palestinian Refugee (PR) Camps, to meet the increasing daily demand for PR in Lebanon, focusing on urgent needs, equitable services, environmental health, and education enhancement. By November 2022, AFD reallocated funds to focus on constructing/rehabilitating schools in Nahr el-Bared and Beqaa, extending schools in Beddawi, and potentially introducing solar panels in refugee camps for water wells and energy reduction, deviating from the initial LFO School construction and WASH projects.

Actors and operating method

The evaluation team adopted OECD DAC criteria, and focused on interviewing approximately 22 participants and more including parents of students, students, UNRWA staff through the following criteria: Relevance & Coherence, Effectiveness and Efficiency. To check the extent to which the intervention has achieved (until June 2022) and is expected to achieve its objectives and results on time. And is in synergy with UNRWA's other strategic priorities and international norms ensuring non-financial resources optimization.

The evaluation matrix and surveying tools used, including 8 KIIs and 5 FGDs incorporated crosscutting concerns such as gender, age, disability, inclusion, and human rights, alongside the OECD/DAC criteria mentioned earlier.

Objectives

This report is a mid-term evaluation of UNRWA's WAHET Project that assesses its relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness in PR camps, providing recommendations for ongoing and future projects, covering 2019 to June 2022 through various data sources and methods.

Expected outputs

- Assessing the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of UNRWA's ongoing WAHET Project interventions using OECD/DAC criteria in a systematic manner.
- Concentrate on the planning and implementation phases, offering an updated objective review of progress, results, and issues across project components, including the post-pandemic COVID-19 response.
- Regarding education, ongoing work on UNRWA school complexes prompted an overview of progress, challenges, and reprogramming rationale for the construction, rehabilitation, and extension efforts.
- Offering recommendations for enhanced activity implementation and achieving planned outputs and outcomes, grounded in observed findings.

Performance assessment

Relevance

Until June 2022, the WAHET project remained highly aligned with PRs needs, agency/donor priorities, and SDGs, effectively executing SMART objectives amid challenges; COVID-19 prompted work plan adjustments. The education component of WAHET project responded to demands for improved school infrastructure from both parents and students.

Coherence

The evaluation team noted gaps in the WAHET project's design and implementation, suggesting future attention to a well-structured theory-of-change, an updated needs assessment, a community engagement approach favoring bottom-up involvement, and increased focus on gender mainstreaming in project design and implementation.

Effectiveness

Until June 2022, the WAHET project showed notable effectiveness in achieving outcomes. WASH activities moderately improved water and sewerage access in PR camps, and effective storm-water risk reduction was observed.

Additionally, school rehabilitation and construction aimed to enhance education access in North and Beirut-Mount Lebanon; upon parents and students requests schools have been built with concrete materials and with better facilities, they also further asked for extracurricular activities, an improved curriculum, and school counseling.

Efficiency

Despite disruptions from national and global events, the WAHET project maintained relatively higher process levels, demonstrating efficient practices, effective M&E, and minimal hindrances from UNRWA bureaucracy until June 2022.

While donor-agency communication received praise, concerns about a top-down approach arose; addressing beneficiary communication challenges involved navigating political dynamics within Popular Committees, where UNRWA's conflict mitigation through formal and informal channels proved successful.

Amid global and country level challenges like currency crisis, fuel shortages, and COVID-19, WAHET project remained efficient by adapting and utilizing resources. UNRWA responded with a pandemic-focused project component, explored green energy for cost-efficiency such as the use of solar panels to run water wells and the construction of pumping systems, and maintained strong monitoring, quality control, and communication with donors.

Added value of AFD's contribution

The project's value lies in acknowledging the sensitivity of altering camp structures, while acknowledging present efforts at creating development chances for water management and resource conservation through empowerment and equitable resource use. Despite navigating complex power dynamics, external pressures, and implementation challenges, the WAHET project's achievement of its immediate technical goals is noteworthy given its emergency context.

Conclusions and lessons learnt

Amid external challenges, improving community engagement through participatory methods is recommended and considered crucial for WAHET future development project's success:

It is important to conduct a rapid content analysis for the WAHET project to anticipate emerging issues and contextual changes, ensuring proactive decision-making and effectiveness. Future activities should evaluate interventions' potential to enhance women's and girls' rights, as overlooking gender issues can reinforce inequalities, while integrating them can effectively address challenges and reduce tensions in communities marked by gender disparities.

Future and current interventions of involving representatives from Popular Committees, women, youth, and People with Disabilities can improve outcomes, contextualize needs, prioritize issues, and foster a sense of ownership and empowerment within Palestinian refugee communities, while facilitating monitoring, troubleshooting, and proactive issue mitigation by UNRWA staff and engineers.

In conclusion this improvement can contribute to finding a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches in project implementation. And considering the constraints posed by the participatory approach due to challenges in the political dynamics within the camps, UNRWA's internal protocols and organizational culture, and the prevailing crisis circumstances during implementation; while enhancing community engagement mechanisms could aid in addressing some of the inclusion concerns raised.

As for greener strategies, integrating environmental issues, despite their complexity, and the often missing baseline data in developing countries (i.e., Lebanon), is crucial. Replicating eco-friendly methods like solar panels from the WAHET project is valuable, but requires also continuous comprehensive environmental assessments. Because generally speaking, environmental indicators mainly focus on health and cost minimization, yet neglecting broader aspects could lead to unintended challenges; for instance, adopting solar pumping for augmenting water supply without proper management could exacerbate aquifer issues and energy needs.