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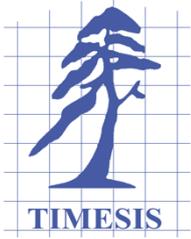
2022 | Summary Report

Lebanon

Evaluation of the initiative:

“Response programme to the Syrian crisis: assistance to the displaced population, refugees and host communities”.

AID 010030 - 010248/1 -
010248/2 - 010466 - 010671/1 -
010671/2



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The opinions expressed in this document represent the evaluators' point of view and do not necessarily coincide with those of the client.

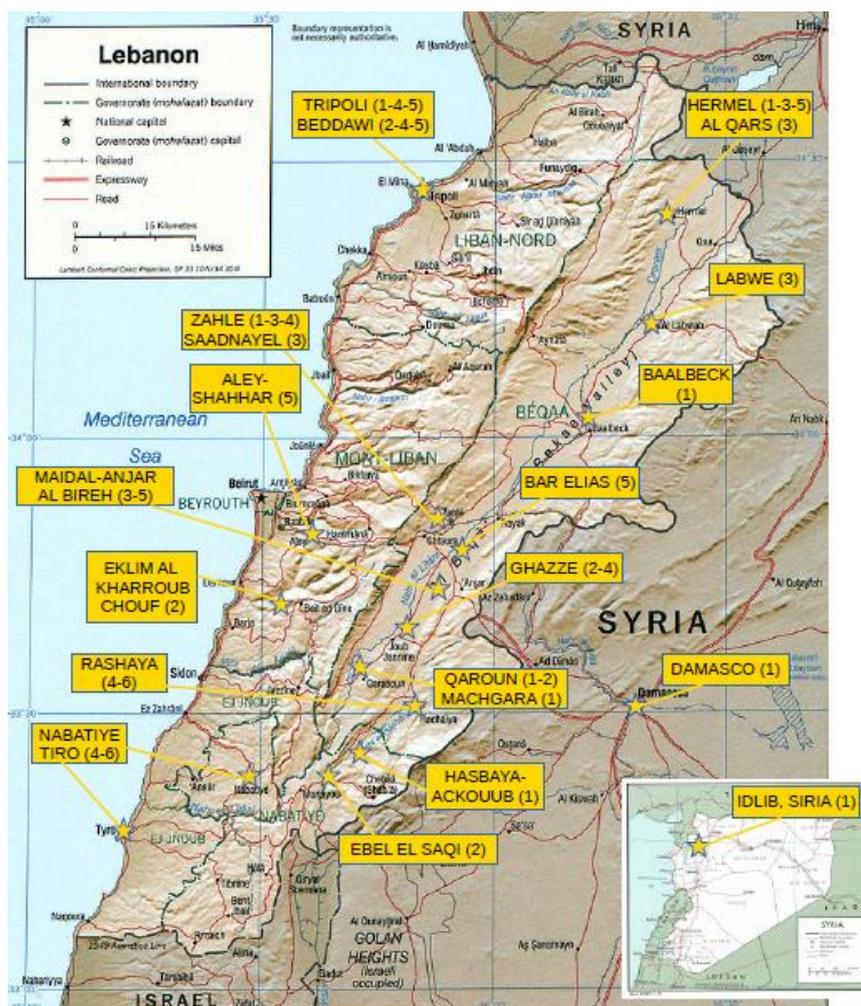
List of abbreviations

APP	Accountability to the Affected Population
CfW	Cash for Work
CTB	Cash-Based Transfers
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
HDN	Humanitarian Development Nexus
IcSP	Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace
ILO	International Labour Organization
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LF	Logical Framework
MDGs/SDGs	Millennium Development Goals and Sustainability Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MEHE	Ministry of Education of Lebanon
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
NPTP	Lebanese National Poverty Targeting Programme
GO	General Objective
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SO	Specific Objective
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
PCM	Project Cycle Management
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
RBA	Results Based Approach
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely (indicators)
SMEB	Survival and Minimum Expenditure Basket
ToR	Terms of Reference
3RP	Regional Refugees and Resilience Plan
ET	Evaluation Team
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
LTU	Local Technical Unit
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment Of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Map of initiative implementation locations

On the map, the numbers in the yellow boxes refer to the following:

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 □ AID 10030 | 2 □ AID 10248/1 | 3 □ AID 10248/2 |
| 4 □ AID 10466 | 5 □ AID 10671/1 | 6 □ AID 10671/2 |



Summary report

The **Programme under evaluation**¹ was designed in response to the Syrian crisis from 2013 to 2018 and took into account the progressive deterioration of the Syrian population's living conditions between the end of 2012 and 2016. This initially led to the need for pure emergency initiatives (distribution of basic necessities) and, progressively, initiatives in support of more complex needs (increase in income, educational services, improvement of infrastructure for basic services), which could not be resolved by mere emergency response initiatives.

In particular, the Programme's context was (and is) characterised by a protracted humanitarian crisis, mainly due to the Syrian crisis and the arrival of a substantial flow of refugees. According to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2015-16, the crisis's economic and social impact in Lebanon increased significantly in 2014, reaching 1.2 million Syrians registered with the UNHCR and many other unregistered refugees. The number of people residing in Lebanon at the time of Programme implementation is estimated to have increased by 30% since March 2011, with a consequent increase of two thirds of the poor and a doubled unemployment rate in Lebanon. Children and young people were (and are) the most affected groups, given the economic difficulties and limited access to essential services. In addition, the Lebanese health system, education, and infrastructure services were overburdened. For the most vulnerable communities, including displaced Syrian families and long-term Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, daily life was increasingly dominated by poverty and debt, fewer cooked meals, increased waste and pollution, long queues at health centres, overcrowded schools, disease outbreaks, declining water quality and increased competition for work.

In this framework, the LCRP defined the following strategic priorities:

- 1) guarantee assistance and humanitarian protection for the most vulnerable among those displaced from Syria and the poorest Lebanese;
- 2) strengthen national and local service delivery systems to increase access to and quality of basic public services;
- 3) strengthen Lebanon's economic, social, environmental and institutional stability by:
(i) expanding economic and livelihood opportunities for the benefit of local economies and the most vulnerable communities: (ii) promoting confidence-building measures within communities and horizontally among institutions to strengthen Lebanon's capacity.

The six initiatives under evaluation were financed with a total amount of €8,520,000.00, and each of them was divided into several projects, some implemented directly, others through the NGOs.

The Programme is consistent with all relevant national and international policies and strategies. At the international level, it is aligned with the Italian Three-Year Planning Period (2016-2018), the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative, European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid of 2007, EU approach to resilience (2014), Italian

¹ The "Response programme to the Syrian crisis: assistance to the displaced population, refugees and host communities" includes 7 initiatives: AID 10030-1, 10030-2, 10248-1, 10248-2, 10466, 10671-1 and 10671-2, however, AID 10030/2 was not included in the scope of the evaluation, as indicated in the ToR.

Guidelines for Humanitarian Aid (2012-2015), Guidelines for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2010), and the Istanbul World Humanitarian Summit 2016. At the regional and national level, the Programme is fully consistent with the Regional Refugees Resilience Plan (RRP) and the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). However, the Programme design as presented by AICS' Calls and the documents of the six initiatives does not always seem to reflect full adherence to the guidelines and requirements of these frameworks. The projects have a rather emergency approach, more vertical than coordinated and integrated, with a not always sufficient level of effective integration of gender, protection, disability, and climate issues.

The Italian Cooperation presence and position at the central level has been well established around the sectors of intervention concerned (Livelihood and Education). The Programme has contributed to strengthening the position and role of Italian Cooperation with respect to key partners such as MOSA and MEHE, with which AICS and the Italian Embassy in Beirut have a fruitful and solid collaboration. These excellent relations allow the Italian Cooperation to engage positively and raise awareness among the national authorities on specific issues or to successfully address problems and complications supported by its partners.

The regional and Lebanese strategic and operational framework of the Programme under evaluation is provided by the **LCRP and 3RP**. The "Livelihood" initiatives (AID10248/1-2 and AID10671/1-2) are strongly anchored to Strategic Result #1 and to the specific Output #3 of the Livelihood sector, which states that "*Job creation is favoured in vulnerable areas through labour-intensive investments for the construction of public infrastructures and initiatives for environmental protection*". The AID10466 initiative is also strongly anchored to the RACE strategy within the LCRP.

AID10030 is an emergency humanitarian initiative that aims to address urgent needs in the first phase of the crisis. The Initiative is a multi-sector action fully aligned to the international and national humanitarian first response guidelines and requirements in Lebanon. The Livelihood / Cash for Work (AID 10248/1, AID 10248/2, AID 10671/1, AID 10671/2) and Education Initiative (AID 10466) programmes appear to be fully aligned with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the Livelihood and Social Stability and Education sectors, ensuring a sufficient level of transparency and harmonisation among the different projects implemented by the 11 partner NGOs. The initiative within the Education sector has been coordinated centrally with key stakeholders (MEHE, UNICEF, RACE) and in line with other intervention channels in the education field.

The initiatives' **implementation modes** (via NGOs/direct implementation) appear to be consistent with the international and national political and strategic framework to which Italy adheres. The Programme has made extensive and increasing use of Cash for Work as its chosen methodology, in line with Round Table # 3 "*Leave No One Behind*" and the *Grand Bargain* commitments. The 11 NGOs that have implemented the Programme have extremely different profiles, capacities, resources, and skills. There is little evidence of genuine **coordination** among partners, which results in a lack of integration and positive synergies within the Programme. In general, NGOs have been correctly selected by AICS for essential grassroots work with communities. However, these organisations alone may not be the most appropriate partners for social stability, as they may not be adequately equipped in terms of capacity and resources to coordinate and manage stakeholders such as the Municipalities and the MOSA in an extremely fragile and unstable context. Indeed, while NGOs may be the

most relevant and capable partners available to AICS for work at the local community level, the Programme design, limited resources (funds and time), and the lack of real coordination and synergies have partly limited the relevance and effectiveness of their intervention.

The **intervention logic** and strategies of Italian Cooperation in Lebanon have evolved in the Programme implementation period in conjunction with the change in the external elements and the evolution of the humanitarian context. The increased use of cash CTB/CfW rather than in-kind assistance is one of the main positive changes identified during the evaluation. The Italian Cooperation succeeded in moving away from a purely short-term humanitarian response approach and increasingly developed a strategy focusing on resilience and on strengthening the local and national authorities' capacities in addressing the consequences of the crisis. However, a **Humanitarian, Development & Peace Nexus** (HDP Nexus) framework requires a number of approaches (multisectoral, integrated, long-term), capacities (joint efforts of United Nations agencies, international development organisations, civil society organisations, national and local authorities, etc.) and resources (a considerable level of multi-year and non-'humanitarian' funding) that do not appear to have been made available to the Programme and by the Programme.

AICS does not have a **national strategy document for Lebanon** and the link between the international and national regulatory framework and the Programme is ensured by the **AICS calls for proposal**. Below is an overview of the key elements and requirements of the different calls:

- All 6 initiatives expressly require the integration of gender issues, child protection, disability, and climate change;
- The *coordination and synergy* requirements are not uniform among the different AIDs. For instance, AID10248/1-2 and AID10466 clearly require that partners build links and synergies with other agencies and programmes present in the implementation area. AID10671/1-2 does not explicitly require such coordination efforts (instead, it focuses on specific coordination with the Municipalities).
- All the initiatives indicate that UTL/AICS Beirut is responsible for the *coordination* of the Programme (or the individual Initiative).
- *M&E*: AICS calls do not explicitly indicate specific MEAL requirements. The exception is the AID10248/1-2 Call, which expressively requests a results-oriented approach with indicators able to measure the projects' impact. While partner NGOs appear to have "supervisory" responsibility, UTL/AICS is formally responsible for monitoring activities.
- *Inclusiveness, Participation, and Accountability to the Affected Population (AAP)*: the Calls require the direct participation and inclusiveness of the beneficiaries, to different degrees. However, there is no evidence in the Program documents of a consistent approach by partners. With a few exceptions, partners did not have robust accountability approaches. Some of the beneficiaries interviewed expressed obvious difficulties in accessing information or a complaint mechanism.

Generally speaking, MEAL requirements are not consistently foreseen by the different calls and the evaluation team could not identify any considerable financial or operational investments in MEAL activities. The few exceptions identified are the result

of individual initiatives by partner NGOs to employ M&E tools based on their capabilities and resources.

The Program does not have its own general Objectives(GOs) and Specific Objectives (SOs), but is based on the GOs and SOs of the 6 different initiatives. Although the Logical Framework (LF) at the initiative level identifies some impact indicators referring to the SOs, all Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs) referring to the results are designed in terms of activity/output and not of results/outcome (final effects on the beneficiaries). The same goes for the Logical Frameworks of individual projects. At the same time, the data collected for quarterly and annual reports refer only to the output OVIs and not to those of the SOs OVIs. The analysis of the LF indicators shows that **all the expected results (expressed in terms of activity/output) have been achieved and in some cases exceeded**. Exceptions in which the expected targets have not been reached are very rare, not so much in the total amount, which has always been reached, but with respect to specific targets. In very few cases, there has been a remodulation of the activities/output compared to what was expected and these remodulations have been consolidated on the occasion of the non-costly variants. However, even if all the planned activities have been carried out and the results (in terms of output) achieved, the **data collected do not allow to express a comprehensive and solid evaluation of the impact that the initiatives have had on the beneficiaries in terms of strengthening their resilience or, in the case of the Municipalities, their capacities**.

On average, each project (including those directly managed) received an amount of **Euro 292,907** with a minimum of Euro 111,082 and a maximum of Euro 350,000.

This led to a certain level of fragmentation of the initiatives, which were implemented by a large number of implementing actors (11 NGOs, plus direct management by AICS Beirut/UTL), distributed in more than 26 different locations. While this has allowed Italian Cooperation to be present in (almost) all the Governorates of Lebanon, in some cases reaching places not covered by other donors, it has nevertheless led to a low amount available for each project, affecting the capacity for impact and, above all, the sustainability of the initiatives in the short-medium term.

The evaluation team (ET) did not find sufficient evidence to justify the **relatively high number of projects** implemented compared to the level of funds allocated. Fewer partners and projects would have made more technical resources available and made coordination requirements less burdensome. The different capacities of partner NGOs and the lack of common project baselines have led to uneven and inconsistent performance levels among partners and among the different projects implemented by the same partner. The ET could not identify sufficient evidence of positive synergies generated by the various projects. Projects appear to have been designed in a top-down approach and implemented in a vertical way with limited interaction and coordination among them. Indeed, the extremely large number of partners and projects, and the dense and complex operational environment of Lebanon, have resulted in a somewhat fragmented programme and have made it objectively difficult to establish genuine coordination and synergies. With a few exceptions, the ET failed to identify concrete evidence of synergistic effects or other additional effects as a result of the planned joint work.

Livelihood, social stability, and Cash for Work

Cash for Work (CfW) is a modality that fits into the broader category of Cash-Based Transfers (CBT) and should be considered a tool rather than a strategic approach that in itself improves the beneficiaries' resilience and self-sufficiency. CfW has the potential to (contribute to) deliver such results but is not always the most appropriate way to achieve different strategic objectives. Indeed, CfW approaches can be highly controversial and their use should be framed within a robust **risk analysis** and the **Do Not Harm** principle. CBT projects require an in-depth analysis of the benefits and risks associated with each modality, within a clear and solid strategic framework that clarifies the objectives and expected results and ensures adequate processes of monitoring, learning, and accountability. The ET failed to find evidence of such analyses and requirements in the assessed projects.

The different initiatives of the Programme under exam that make use of the CfW tool have comparable but not *equal* general and specific objectives. In fact, we have moved from the socio-economic well-being and living conditions of the beneficiaries to the capacity of the local authorities to mitigate and prevent social conflicts, thus ensuring social cohesion. The same strategic change is observed in the GOs, with an initial focus on the socio-economic vulnerability of the beneficiaries (resilience) that moves on the capacities of the Municipalities in terms of management of stability and social cohesion. The LCRP provides sufficient operational flexibility to justify all SOs listed in the 4 CfW initiatives (AID 10248/ 1 and 2 and AID 10672/1 and 2). However, while the SOs have changed over time, the design of the projects within these different initiatives has remained unchanged and based on the use of the CfW mode. While the strategic choices of AICS to redefine the SOs in line with the evolving context remain solid and justified in the context of its international and national commitments, the design of the aforementioned initiatives does not reflect the changed strategic priorities and maintains virtually the same approach, which seems to be inadequate to achieve all the objectives set. Importantly, **humanitarian and stabilisation projects require different types of partners, capacities, timelines, approaches, designs, and funding flows.**

In fact, the use of CfW and a substantially unchanged approach and design for the 4 CfW initiatives do not seem to fully take into account the different operational requirements required by each of the various SOs. For example, social cohesion and stabilisation projects require performing a solid risk and **Do Not Harm principle** analysis before, during, and after the initiative to identify threats and risks that may not generate negative results and damage to the beneficiaries. In addition, humanitarian assistance requires impartiality and centrality of needs, refusing to select beneficiary populations based on status or citizenship. There is no evident (humanitarian) justification for the different targeting quotas requested by AICS (the Lebanese beneficiaries quota reached 50% of the total beneficiaries over the years), which seem solely based on political and social stability considerations. It should be noted that status/citizenship quotas remain legitimate and justified according to a stabilisation approach and are in line with LCRP Social Stability Sector guidelines. Nevertheless, they remain questionable under a humanitarian approach and are somehow not fully coherent with the commitments taken by Italy at the international level (principle of Impartiality).

CfW and the inclusion of Lebanese beneficiaries have positively improved the **operational space** of the NGOs partners. NGOs were able to use the activities envisaged by the project to raise awareness among municipalities that were initially

hostile to NGOs providing assistance to Syrian refugees. CfW has in fact created a productive communication channel between some municipalities and the NGOs that provide assistance to the Syrian communities. However, there are also risks associated with such approaches, including the risk for partners to be “blackmailed” by stakeholders in future initiatives. There is no evidence of ex-post analysis or assessment of the long-term positive and negative impact of such an approach.

The CfW provided under the Programme was aimed at providing **limited and immediate humanitarian economic support** to vulnerable beneficiaries, rather than influencing income capacities. Given the projects’ nature (emergency and short-term), the lack of links and synergies with income or training opportunities and, also based on the evidence collected during the field visits, the beneficiaries’ income capacities do not seem to have been significantly influenced by the CfW provided. The Cash for Work methodology and the Programme design are therefore only partly considered adequate to strengthen the income capacities of Syrian refugees and host communities. While the Programme provided valuable and important support to the Municipalities during its implementation, most of the activities proved unsustainable for most of them, once the external support of the projects ended.

Education

In Lebanon, Education is a complex and multidimensional issue that **requires integrated, multisectoral, and multi-partner approaches**. Within the AID10466 Initiative, coordination has been assured at the central level in Beirut by AICS and its partners. The project of **educational intervention** AID10466 seems to be very consistent with the global international response, as it is fully aligned with the RACE strategy, in full coordination with other stakeholders. However, at the operational level, the evaluation team found no evidence of robust and systematic coordination efforts between partners. Projects implemented under this initiative seem to be conceived based on an isolated and vertical approach. For example, the list of schools and locations was provided by MEHE, and the set of activities was almost entirely defined by AICS, leaving little room for partner NGOs and the adoption of an inclusive and participatory approach based on needs. There is little evidence of effective synergies built with other programmes, projects, or activities implemented in the locations of implementation of the projects visited. Most of the refurbished schools that the evaluation team visited were not known to the partner NGO before the refurbishment work (the partner NGOs did not previously work in the same location). Similarly, in most cases and once the projects were terminated, NGOs partners did not have other projects or follow-up activities in the same location, forcing them to close down their initiatives in the selected communities. The design of the “Education” component of the Programme does not seem adequate to encourage real synergies between sectors and activities and solid coordination between different projects and agencies.

Local Authorities and capacity building

The Programme design has allowed strong **inclusiveness and ownership by local authorities** and the creation of valuable operational spaces for NGOs, with active engagement with municipalities and inclusion of Lebanese beneficiaries. However, the Programme structure does not seem entirely adequate to bring about structural and long-term changes, such as the expected improvement in the Local Authorities’ capacities to manage social cohesion and stability between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugee communities. The evidence gathered during the field

visits shows that the support provided has generally **contributed positively to the improvement of Municipalities' service provision** in a context of a sudden increase in needs and extremely limited resources. It is fair to assume that an improvement in service quality also resulted in an improvement in the beneficiaries' living conditions. Nevertheless, such improvements are not measurable nor verifiable. The projects' design (approach, duration, partnership, available funds, synergies, etc.) does not allow the Municipalities to significantly improve their governance skills in facing the **structural and systemic challenges** of a prolonged and complex crisis.

Cross-Cutting Aspects

The initiatives under evaluation include a basic gender perspective, which in some cases has contributed to the empowerment of the direct beneficiaries of Cash for Work, although it was not specifically focused on the prevention of sexual violence in emergency contexts. Overall in the Cash for Work initiatives related to AID 10248/1 and 2 and AID 10671/1 and 2 initiatives, 17% of the direct beneficiaries were women. In addition, in interviews with beneficiaries and FGDs, the women involved in the activities of CfW have confirmed that these activities have helped to make them aware of a different reality from the exclusively domestic one, strengthening their sense of belonging to a wider community beyond the family and of being able to contribute with their work to improve the living conditions of their village or municipality. With regard to the issue of disability inclusion, in the design of the initiatives, there is no explicit provision for the inclusion of people with disabilities. The data of the final reports do not allow a solid evaluation on the effects of the initiatives on the inclusion of people with disabilities, since there is no specific data on this aspect. However, there is no clear evidence that the initiatives have had a significant impact on these cross-cutting aspects (gender and disability).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Lebanese context is extremely complex and the impact of the Syrian crisis has created a protracted, multidimensional and prolonged crisis that requires the consistent use of resilience and HDP Nexus approaches. The design of initiatives does not appear to be fully consistent with achieving a lasting impact in such a protracted and complex crisis. The projects' short-term emergency nature, the relatively low project budgets (compared to the total amount of funds released by the international community into the crisis), and the absence of strong links and synergies with long-term livelihood and development programmes have had a considerable impact on the overall quality of initiatives. Given the above, the analysis of the Logical Framework (LF) indicators shows that all expected results (expressed in terms of activity/output) have been achieved and in some cases exceeded. However, even if all the planned activities have been carried out, with the rare exceptions mentioned in the report, and the results (in terms of output/activities) achieved, the data collected do not allow expressing a true evaluation of the effects that the initiatives have had on the beneficiaries in terms of strengthening their resilience or, in the case of the Municipalities, their capacities.

AICS's strategy has changed over time and adapted to the changing context. However, the strategy should be further developed and designed based on a *Nexus HDP* framework, with streamlined and harmonised GOs and SOs and with appropriately allocated necessary resources to achieve the identified results. The basic needs of beneficiaries (humanitarian approach) and social cohesion

(stabilisation approach) require different strategies and modalities which, with a sound and timely analysis of risks and compliance with the Do Not Harm principle, should guide the development of future programmes. AICS's Lebanon Country Strategy should be consolidated, formalised, and shared with all partners and concerned stakeholders.

Future Programmes should enhance the level of inclusiveness and participation of NGOs partners in the definition of the programmes' strategy and design. By providing a space for strategic and operational discussions with its partners throughout the Project Cycle Management (PCM), AICS can strengthen its needs-based approach, improve transparency, and further empower its partners in improving Programme quality. Capitalisation sessions and lessons learned at the end of each initiative (AID) should be systematically held in order to improve the design of future programmes.

Although coordination has been successfully ensured at the central level, the obligations of coordination at the operational level among all partner NGOs and UN agencies (AICS partners also not part of this Programme) should be further strengthened. Multisectoral and integrated activities with *referral systems* and links to long-term programmes (both livelihood and education programmes) should be considered. Similarly, closer consultations with the EU could further enhance synergies with ongoing EU-funded initiatives and thus improve the impact and sustainability of AICS-funded projects.

The use of cash based assistance has greatly improved the quality of the Italian Cooperation's response to the Syrian crisis. However cash for work remains one of many modalities of cash assistance and it should be the modality of choice only if justified by a solid risks and do not harm analysis. The design of such programmes should always provide for the integration of the 'protection' dimension and should facilitate the linking of CfW activities with training or long-term income-generating opportunities.

Minimum and harmonised MEAL requirements should be included in all projects. Similarly, a sound needs assessment and effective integration of gender, disability, age, and environmental aspects should be a prerequisite for the selection of future partners and projects.

Administrative constraints place a considerable burden on partners; their reduction, increased technical support and the use of the English language in all project documents should further improve future programmes' efficiency. Given the complexity of the context and the different capacity levels of its partners, it is appropriate to support and encourage the use of common resources, know-how, and operating methods (consortia, joint assessments, *peer reviews*, multi-agency protection expertise, etc.).

Without prejudice to the recommendations expressed, some of which are suggestions aimed at improving the overall approach adopted by the Programme under evaluation, the ET highlights the following specific aspects that can further improve the design and implementation of future initiatives.

- 1) *Encourage the development and use of studies, analyses, and drafting of guidelines*

Some aspects that need to be refined, with consequent positive repercussions also on the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the various initiatives, concern the initiative design. The lesson learned from the analysis of this Programme is that it is important to support the processes that encourage consolidation of the lessons learned, capitalization of *best practices*, and sharing processes to improve the design phase of future initiatives.

This type of exercises can offer valuable help in the initiatives' design phase, to better place them in the context of the real needs of the reference environment, so they should not only be developed but also better used in the phase of defining the general and specific objectives of the initiatives to be implemented, as well as in the choice of the tools to be used to implement them.

2) Require and include a rigorous needs assessment and a Do Not Harm analysis

In the context of the report, it was stressed that the gender, disability, and environment requirements needs to be addressed in a timelier manner. In this regard, a second lesson learned is that, in the design phase of the initiatives to be implemented, the inclusion of a needs assessment and a “do not harm” analysis is rigorously required to identify the best approaches for an authentic integration of gender, disability, and environment-related aspects. This type of evaluation and analysis should be foreseen for future initiatives to ensure that cross-cutting aspects are fully and appropriately addressed.

3) Making the evaluation more timely

In the recommendations, it was highlighted how the M&E systems, in anticipation of future initiatives, should be improved both in the context of individual implementation projects and at the initiative level, to allow evaluations aimed at measuring not only the activities carried out (outputs), but also the effects on the beneficiaries (outcome, impact). One of the lessons learned during this exercise is that the evaluation of a emergency initiatives should be carried out either during the implementation of the projects, to introduce any corrections during life cycle of the action, or no later than one year after their completion.

The **table on the next page** shows the recommendations related to the evidence (findings) that emerged from the evaluation exercise.

EVIDENCE	RECOMMENDATIONS
VISION & STRATEGY	
<p>F1 While the Three-Year Programming and Guidance Document is easily accessible to all partners, the Country Strategy Papers (Lebanon), if any, do not appear to be shared with them.</p> <p>F2 The evaluation confirms full alignment of the Programme with the LCRP and all national and international guidelines. However, key requirements such as a) protection, b) Do Not Harm c) conflict analysis, gender integration, disability and age were not consistently considered in the projects evaluated. There is insufficient evidence to justify the relatively high number of projects implemented compared to the level of funds allocated.</p> <p>F3 AICS's strategy evolved over time, adapting to the changing context (from emergency to protracted crisis). The design of the initiatives does not reflect the changed strategic priorities and maintains the same approach, which appears inadequate to achieve all the goals set.</p> <p>F4 Italian Cooperation demonstrated being willing and able to evolve and adapt an emergency humanitarian response strategy into a set of resilience-sensitive initiatives. However, the Programme is not consistently designed around an HDP Nexus approach and therefore does not seem adequate to address the structural needs of a protracted crisis.</p> <p>F5 The Italian strategic positioning at the level of central coordination (sectoral and sub-sectoral) seems aligned with the principle of complementarity between donors; however, this complementarity does not always translate into synergies and complementarities at the level of implementation (calls and projects).</p> <p>F6 The intervention strategy is very fragmented and doesn't seemingly favour a homogeneous approach to the issue to be tackled, that is to respond to the Syrian crisis (initiatives implemented by 11 NGOs, plus the direct management by AICS Beirut/UTL, over more than 26 different locations.)</p>	<p>R1 Develop an Italian Lebanon Country Strategy document, framed around a solid HDP Nexus framework and aligned to the EU Team Europe's priorities and resources allocation. Systematically consult the EU (DG NEAR, DG ECHO, IcSP) to foresee potential strategic and operational elements that can create synergies and maximise impact (Team Europe).</p> <p>R2 Constantly apply Nexus resilience requirements and HDP frameworks to strategy definition and implementation. Provide visibility on other (Italian) funding flows available and facilitate potential alignment and synergies to be built with multilateral partners and development funding (venues, approach, target beneficiaries).</p> <p>R3 Streamline and clarify the priorities of the different SOs in the strategy: economic vulnerability of the beneficiaries (humanitarian/resilience approach) with respect to cohesion and social stability (stabilisation/resilience approach) and design the intervention logic accordingly. If the objective of the initiative includes social stability, the methodologies and tools of a social stability approach should be systematically and coherently considered and integrated.</p> <p>R4 Ensure a structured strategic and operational dialogue with NGOs and other stakeholders during the different phases of Project Cycle management. To improve visibility on the development of the strategy, involve NGOs in the design phase of the Programme and to ask them to consider the appropriate level of inclusion (gender and disability) and the analysis of the Do Not Harm principle.</p> <p>R5 Reduce constraints and administrative burdens, provide greater technical and operational support, and use English in documents. By aligning (or complementing) the approaches of other donors (i.e., DG ECHO/DG NEAR), AICS can reduce duplication of administrative efforts and maximise the potential support that partners can receive from other donors.</p>

<p>F7 AICS is considered by partners as reactive and supportive. Regular introduction meetings were held during the opening periods of the calls. However, there is no evidence of a consistent dialogue with NGOs in the design phase of the different initiatives or during all phases of project cycle management.</p> <p>F8 NGO perceive AICS as one of the most administratively demanding donors. However, the funding allocation process is relatively fast. Implementing AICS administrative requirements is extremely consuming of time and resources, while NGOs could benefit from more support at operational/technical level. Efficiency was hindered and limited by the fact that the documentation was drafted in Italian.</p>	
PROGRAMMING & IMPLEMENTATION	
<p>F9 A livelihood project in a protracted crisis requires strong coordination, linkages and synergies with long-term livelihood initiatives and strong integration of the 'protection' aspect. These elements are largely absent in the design of the Programme and in the projects implemented by the various NGOs. Moreover, the amount of funds, the short-term nature of the projects, the uncertain timeframe of implementation, the lack of incentives, make it difficult to build genuine synergies in the Lebanon operations.</p> <p>F10 The M&E systems and project LFs include indicators referring to expected outputs and not to outcome/impacts. The reporting methods of the final reports are not homogeneous among the different initiatives, making it difficult to achieve a summary of the data that returns an overall picture of the intended and actually reached beneficiaries and their type.</p> <p>F11 The CfW is a form of cash subsidy, an appropriate tool in the presence of multiple competing objectives to be achieved and if used within a solid risk and Do Not Harm principle analysis. The Programme does not consistently account for these requirements.</p> <p>F12 CfW projects were only partially linked to income, livelihood or long-term training opportunities, actually compromising their potential impact and sustainability.</p>	<p>R6 Improve the quality of Logical Frameworks (LFs) using SMART indicators to measure results and impact rather than outputs. Introduce systematic M&Es in projects with baseline and monitoring procedures and require minimum standards for accountability requirements (e.g. complaint mechanisms, etc.).</p> <p>R7 Consistently and systematically apply the risk and the Do No Harm principle analysis to correctly assess the appropriateness of the chosen approaches, methods and tools (such as Cash for Work).</p> <p>R8 Streamline the operational response by considering fewer partners and/or incentivising other partnership models such as consortia. Encourage multisectoral and integrated projects by facilitating links with other existing projects implemented by the partner and with other long-term programmes, through strong links between activities, projects and programmes.</p> <p>R9 Provide adequate resources to partners so that minimum technical capacities are assured in each project (protection expertise). Encourage NGOs to share know-how and resources (joint efforts, peer reviews, coordinated reference systems, etc.). Incentivise projects and partners that build on previous projects in terms of achieved outputs/outcomes and mainstreaming of lessons learned.</p>

F13 The start-up period is on average 3 months behind what expected, often for reasons related to the improvement of administrative aspects. Delays in the implementation of the projects sometimes made the activities untimely (for example, support for education provided at the end of the year or the renovation work carried out in winter during school hours).

F14 Each NGO adopted a contextualised approach to the targeting process (of Lebanese beneficiaries), considering the requests and pre-conditions established by the various Municipalities. This approach undermined the harmonisation efforts of the process itself and raises questions about transparency and accountability.

F15 While the selection of beneficiaries positively involves the Municipalities, the Lebanese beneficiaries interviewed did not show a high degree of vulnerability (principle of impartiality).

F16 Given the nature of the projects (short-term, independent), the lack of long-term livelihoods and income opportunities, we can assume that the income capacities of the affected population were not significantly influenced by the CfW provided.

F17 The fact that the projects were designed in a vertical and stand-alone manner (without links to livelihood, skills and other income generating opportunities), considerably reduced the expected impact and sustainability of the CfW initiative.

F18 Education projects (AID-10466) appear to have a top-down approach with limited evidence of linkages and synergies created at the field level between different agencies or programmes. One-time school restructuring activities have a limited impact if not integrated into a broader response to co-ordinate the different assistance inputs and services provided in the field of education and beyond.

F19 The strong inclusiveness of the Municipalities in the Programme(s) allowed a high degree of ownership. However, the support provided by the Programme, while always highly appreciated by the stakeholders interviewed, appears to be output-oriented rather than aimed at

<p>strengthening capacities and systems at the municipal level.</p> <p>F20 Most of the activities have returned to being unsustainable for most of the Municipalities once the external support of the projects ended. Some specific activities such as waste recycling could be partially sustained over time, but they were mostly all suspended.</p> <p>F21 There is little evidence of genuine coordination between partners resulting in lack of cross-fertilisation and positive synergies within the Programme.</p>	
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