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2022 | Evaluation 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.

Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Background of the Initiative	8
3	Objectives and usefulness of the evaluation	9
4	Theoretical and methodological framework	11
5	Presentation of the results	15
5.1	Relevance and design	19
5.1.1	Analysis of the Policy, Strategy and Operational Frameworks	19
5.1.2	Cash for work and strategy coherence	23
5.1.3	Adequacy of CfW to strengthen Syrian refugees and host communities' income capacities	25
5.1.4	Partnerships and implementation mechanisms	26
5.2	Coherence	27
5.3	Efficiency	28
5.4	Effectiveness	33
5.5	Sustainability	36
5.6	Impact	37
5.7	Cross-Cutting Aspects	39
6	Conclusions	40
7	Recommendations	44
8	Lessons learned	48

Attachments

Annex 1 – List of documentary sources

Annex 2 – Evaluation matrix (evaluation questions)

Annex 3 – List of activities carried out (interviews, focus groups, etc.)

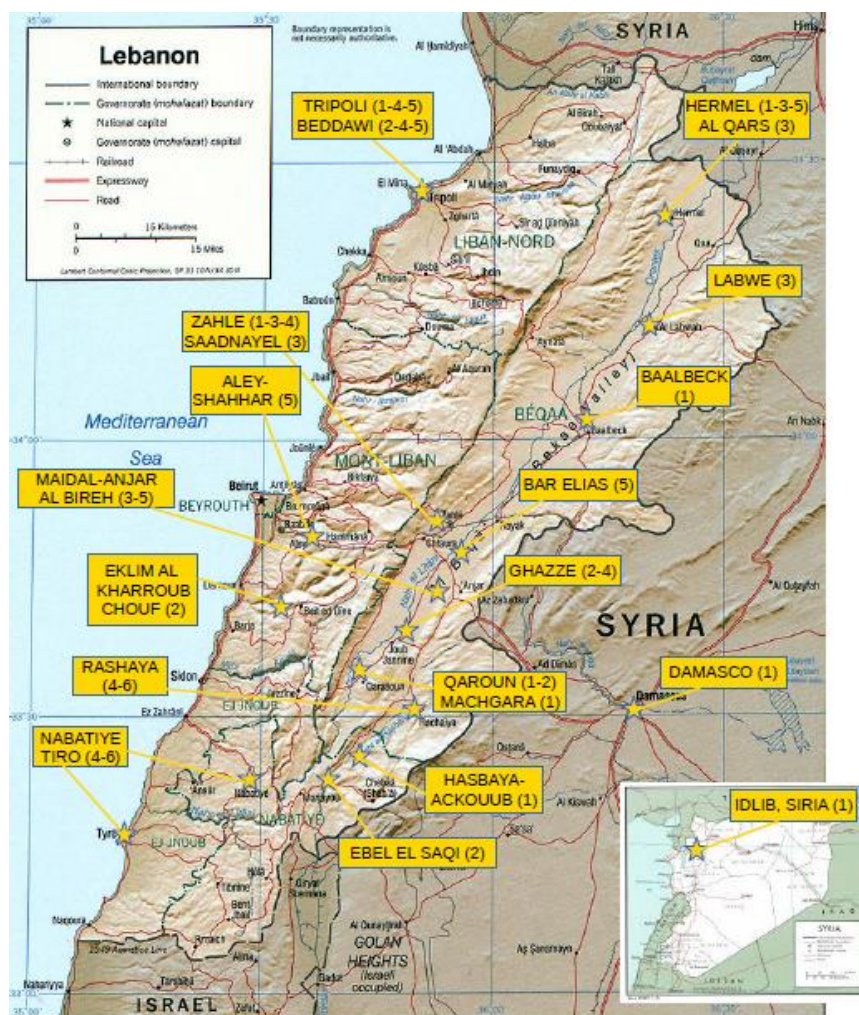
List of abbreviations

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 Organisation
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
3RP	Regional Refugees and Resilience Plan
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 Refugee 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 |



1 Summary

The **Programme under evaluation**¹ was designed in response to the Syrian crisis from 2013 to 2018. It considered 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. The six initiatives under evaluation were financed with a total amount of euro 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 international level, it aligns with the Programmazione Triennale Italiana (2016-2018), the Good humanitarian Donorship Initiative, the 2007 EU Humanitarian Consensus, the EU approach to Resilience (2014), the Italian Guidelines for Humanitarian Aid (2012-2015), the *Linee Guida per l'uguaglianza di genere e Empowerment delle donne* (2010) and the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 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 was 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 "*La creazione di posti di lavoro è favorita in aree vulnerabili mediante investimenti a forte intensità di manodopera per la realizzazione di infrastrutture pubbliche e interventi per la tutela ambientale*" (*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

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.

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 was 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 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 were correctly selected by AICS for essential grassroots work with communities. However, these organisations alone may not be the most appropriate partners for social stability. 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. 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 partly limited their intervention's relevance and effectiveness.

The **intervention logic** and strategies of Italian Cooperation in Lebanon 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**. The link between the international and national regulatory framework and the Programme is ensured by the **AICS calls for the assignment of initiatives to the implementing bodies**. 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.
- *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):* Calls require the beneficiaries’ direct participation and inclusiveness, to different degrees. However, there is no evidence in the Programme 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.

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 Programme is based on the 6 different initiatives’ General Objectives (GOs) and Specific Objectives (SOs). 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) were achieved and in some cases exceeded**. Exceptions in which the expected targets were not 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 was a remodulation of the activities/output compared to what was expected and these remodulations were consolidated in non-costly variants. However, even if all the planned activities were carried out and the results (in terms of output) achieved, the **data collected do not allow expressing a true evaluation of the initiatives’ effects 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 carried out by many implementing actors (11 NGOs, plus direct management by AICS Beirut/UTL), distributed in more than 26 different locations. While this allowed Italian Cooperation to be present in (almost) all the Governorates of Lebanon, in some cases reaching places not covered by other donors, it 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 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 designed in a top-down approach and implemented in a vertical way with limited interaction and coordination among them. The extremely large number of partners and projects and Lebanon’s dense and complex operational environment resulted in a somewhat fragmented programme and 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 mode that fits into the broader category of Cash-Based Transfers (CBT) and should be considered a tool rather than a strategic approach that 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. 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 mode, within a clear and solid strategic framework that clarifies the objectives and expected results and ensures adequate monitoring, learning, and accountability processes. The ET failed to find evidence of such analyses and requirements in the assessed projects.

The different Programme initiatives under exam that make use of the CfW tool show comparable but not *equal* general and specific objectives. In fact, we moved from the beneficiaries' socio-economic well-being and living conditions to the local authorities' capacity 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 beneficiaries' socio-economic vulnerability (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 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.**

The use of CfW and a substantially unchanged approach and design for the 4 CfW initiatives do not seem to fully consider 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 obvious (humanitarian) justification or needs assessment for the different targeting shares required by AICS (the Lebanese share has reached 50% of the total beneficiaries over the years), which seem to be based on political or 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 positively improved the partner NGOs' **operations**. 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 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 post-mortem 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, short-term, and independent), 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 significantly influenced by the CfW provided. The Cash for Work methodology and the Programme design are therefore only partly considered adequate to strengthen Syrian refugees and host communities’ income capacities. While the Programme provided valuable and important support to the Municipalities during its implementation, a majority of activities proved unsustainable for most of them, once the projects’ external support ended.

Education

In Lebanon, Education is a complex and multidimensional issue that **requires integrated, multisectoral, and multi-partner approaches**. Within the AID10466 Initiative, AICS and its partners ensured coordination at the central level in Beirut. The project of educational initiative 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 among partners. Projects implemented under this initiative seem to be conceived based on an isolated and vertical approach. For example, MEHE provided the list of schools and locations, 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 place). 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 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 contributed to 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 CfW activities testified that these activities 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 improving their village or municipality's living conditions. Regarding 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 an evaluation to be expressed on the effects of 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 Programme initiatives had a significant impact on these cross-cutting aspects (gender and disability).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Lebanese context is extremely well articulated and the impact of the Syrian crisis has created a complex, 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 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) were achieved and in some cases exceeded. However, even if all the planned activities were carried out, with the rare exceptions mentioned below in the report, and the results (in terms of output/activities) achieved, the data collected do not allow expressing a true evaluation of the initiatives' effects 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 beneficiaries' basic needs (humanitarian approach) and social cohesion (stabilisation approach) require different strategies and modes 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 partner NGOs 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 to improve the design of future programmes.

Although coordination was 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 CfW in cash has greatly improved the quality of the Italian Cooperation's response to the Syrian crisis. However, Cash for Work remains one of the many cash subsidy options and should be justified by a sound risk and *Do Not Harm* principle 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 homogeneous 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.).

2 Background of the Initiative

During the 2013-2018 implementation period of the Programme under evaluation, the main reference documents used to harmonise and coordinate aid from international donors were the Regional Refugees and Resilience Plan (3RP), the LCRP (since 2015) and the Vulnerability Assessment Of Syrian Refugee in Lebanon (VASyR).

According to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) 2015-16, considering both the VASyR and the 3RP, 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 LCRP estimates that the number of people residing in Lebanon had increased by 30% since March 2011, with a consequent increase of two thirds of the poor and a doubled unemployment rate in Lebanon. The LCRP estimates that children and young people were, at the time of Programme implementation, the most affected groups given the economic difficulties and limited access to essential services. The Plan also highlights that the Lebanese health system, education and infrastructure services were overburdened and that the daily life of most vulnerable communities, including displaced Syrian families and long-term Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, 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.

The figure on the side (Figure 1) shows how the LCRP 2015-16 estimated the population in need at approximately 3.3 million, the vulnerable Lebanese population at approximately 1.5 million and the Syrian refugee population at another 1.5 million, in addition to approximately 313,000 Palestinian refugees.

In view of this situation, the LCRP 2015-16 identifies a strategy based on the transition to an integrated humanitarian plan and a stabilisation strategy, meaning strengthening national capacities to address long-term poverty and social tensions, also meeting humanitarian needs. Therefore, the following **strategic priorities** are identified:

- 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 responses sought by the humanitarian initiative to this multiannual crisis are manifold. Also, according to the LCRP, Lebanon has received about 8.8 billion dollars since 2011 to support aid initiatives, including: support for crucial infrastructure (water, waste, etc.); initiatives targeting municipalities to support livelihoods and community services; support to health centres and hospitals; support to the Government to increase the number of children enrolled in public schools.

Furthermore, to obtain a complete picture of the situation, we need to consider the fact that, during the period considered, international aid supported over the years has favoured the presence in the country of an extremely large number of international actors, both governmental and non-governmental. The large number of United Nations agencies (sometimes competing), the presence of countless international and national NGOs, in

conjunction with other factors, led to the development of a globally deficient humanitarian response in terms of cohesion, coordination and harmonisation, as we will describe better in the next chapters of the report.

This framework briefly represents the reference context in which the initiatives under evaluation were designed. However, to put many of the recommendations expressed in this report into context, we also consider it useful to provide some elements of the current context below.

The LCRP, 2017- 2021 (2021 Update), confirms that Lebanon has experienced the most serious humanitarian crisis of our time in the last 10 years, with the highest number of displaced persons per capita in the world. According to estimates by the Government of Lebanon up to November 2020, the country hosted 1.5 million Syrian refugees (including about 879 thousand registered with UNHCR) as well as about 257 thousand Palestinian refugees, representing an increase of about 25% of Lebanon's total population.

The update also confirms the following strategic priorities:

- ensure the protection of the vulnerable population;
- provide immediate assistance to the vulnerable population;
- support the provision of services through the national system;
- strengthen Lebanon's economic, social, and environmental stability.

The Syrian conflict has contributed to a severe economic, environmental and social crisis. For example, it has led to a decrease in trade in transit through the country (*trade shock*) and in tourism. The LCRP estimates that between 2012 and 2018, the marginal effect of the trade shock on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was -2.9%. This already compromised picture became even more critical after the explosion of the port of Beirut in 2019, with a further decrease in GDP of -18.6% and a serious fallout also on natural resources (water, air, land and ecosystem). To this was added the dramatic COVID-19 emergency in 2020.

In this situation, the local currency (Lebanese Pound) has lost its purchasing power by about 80%² and, as a result, the overall poverty level has grown enormously. The LCRP estimates that to date, about 23.2% of the Lebanese population lives in conditions of extreme poverty and 91% of Syrian refugees live on less than \$3.8 per day. Malnutrition is on the rise, as is the number of vulnerable people (see Figure 2) Thus, among the LCRP priorities for 2020 and beyond is the protection of women and children and the fight against sexual violence, marriages involving minor girls and child labour, making these areas also strategic priorities for future initiatives.

3 Objectives and usefulness of the evaluation

The evaluation basically followed the indications provided in the Terms of Reference (ToR). The evaluation, according to the ToR, was aimed at the "Response Programme to the Syrian crisis: assistance to the displaced population, refugees and host communities" and aimed to highlight:

- the adequacy of the cash assistance and Cash for Work (CfW) instruments;

² Source: LCRP 2017-2020 (update 2021).

- the adequacy of the sectoral strategy of humanitarian programmes in Lebanon and the added value of Italian cooperation with a view to the link between humanitarian aid and development (Humanitarian Development Nexus – HDN)
- the adequacy of the procedures with specific reference to the use of Call for proposals for the selection of CSO projects;
- the results achieved in relation to the commitments made by Italy at the World Humanitarian Summit (Istanbul 2016) on Lebanon and the Syrian crisis (Round table no. 3 “Leave no one behind”);
- on the cross-cutting aspects (gender and disability), the coherence of the initiatives with the commitments made under the Call to Actions on sexual violence in emergency contexts and in the Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Aid.

In addition, the following objectives were also considered:

- to what extent the action of Italian Cooperation has influenced national policies, strategies and programmes, contributing to the achievement of MDGs/SDGs;
- how and to what extent the initiatives changed the context towards greater equity and social justice and influenced cross-cutting issues (including human rights, gender equality, environment and disability);
- to what extent the activities were carried out in coordination with other initiatives in the sector within the same country and in accordance with the principle of complementarity;
- the synergistic effects, both positive and negative, between the various projects under evaluation, to highlight any additional effects created thanks to their joint work;
- the degree of logic and coherence of the project design and its overall validity.

During the *inception* phase, following the documentary analysis and the first contact with the operational contacts of the MAECI and AICS and the implementing NGOs, the following aspects emerged, which contribute to further defining the objectives and the usefulness of the evaluation.

First, it emerged that the initiatives, and the related projects carried out in the period considered (2013-2018), increasingly aimed at strengthening resilience, thus being oriented towards a perspective of support for development. However, they maintained their emergency nature and, therefore, in their formulation, did not provide for a real exit strategy and a sustainability plan except for the delivery of the work carried out with the cash for work to local and national authorities. According to the AICS’ Guidelines for bilateral humanitarian aid initiatives (2016):

- initiative 10030 is part of the “very first emergency” initiatives (Relief);
- initiative 10466 is part of the “emergency” initiatives (Recovery and Rehabilitation);
- initiatives 10248/1, 10248/2, 10671/1 and 10671/2 are part of the “LRRD” (Linking Relief and Rehabilitation to Development) initiatives, which include integrated, simultaneous and complementary emergency and development activities.

Secondly, in Lebanon, from 2013 to today, humanitarian intervention has mobilised an extraordinary amount of economic resources and the involvement of numerous international and local actors. Although humanitarian action refers to a well-known and well-defined governance strategy, mainly contained in the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, there is still a high degree of fragmentation of the various intervention strategies, due to the multiplicity of donors and implementing entities.

At the same time, the very nature of the initiatives' beneficiaries makes it difficult to identify them. In fact, not all refugees are registered (an issue mainly – but not exclusively related to the costs for the residence permit) and this population is characterised by high mobility.

Together, these elements make it difficult to measure the Programme “impact,” as stated in the ToR, as this impact could only be read in terms of short-term effects, which are difficult to measure after many initiatives were completed.

It seems significant, therefore, to orient the evaluation also towards these additional aspects:

- the evolution over time of initiatives from mere “emergency” to “development” (specifically, to strengthen resilience): effectiveness, lessons learned, obstacles, best practices;
- the implementation procedures' validity and their possible duplicability in the future (limits and opportunities).

Therefore, the evaluation provides a response to both the usefulness and the objectives indicated as above and adds a further perspective, focused on the two aspects just mentioned, useful for the future of Italian Cooperation activities in the Country and for the political planning of public development aid.

4 Theoretical and methodological framework

The evaluation was based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria; i.e., Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability, as described in the technical offer submitted during the tender and as better indicated in the next chapter.

The data collection was guided by the Evaluation Questions (EQs) referred to in the evaluation matrix reported in Annex 2, which were formulated according to the usefulness and objectives of the evaluation exercise and organised according to the OECD-DAC criteria.

The Evaluation Team (“ET”) used a method based mainly on the Results Based Approach (RBA) that includes analysis of various information and data sources derived from the Programme's documentation, monitoring reports, and interviews with government counterparts and direct beneficiaries, both individually and aggregated in focus groups, which allowed analysis of the results achieved by the Programme.

The following **assessment tools** were used for data collection:

(i) *Analysis of documentation* (planning documents, Programme documentation, monitoring reports), with the aim of analysing the relevance, design and consistency of the Programme with the strategic framework of humanitarian intervention in Lebanon (see Annex 1 the list of documentary sources);

(ii) *Focus Group Discussion* (FGD): in the Programme implementation locations, groups of beneficiaries were interviewed, selected with the help of the implementing NGOs and the Municipalities to understand the perceptions, the beliefs related to the results obtained and their impact, the best practices, the factors that favour or affect the effectiveness and the potential impact, and the validity of the implementation methods. In the identification of the participants in the focus groups, the criteria of representativeness of the vulnerable categories were considered, as far as possible, considering that there were limitations in their availability due to the time elapsed between the project implementation and evaluation and the beneficiaries' high mobility.

(iii) *Visit to the implementation locations* for a visual verification of the effects of initiatives in support of basic infrastructures and services based on a Standard Visit Protocol that included for each area the list of subjects to be met and the instruments to be used, regarding the type of initiative to be evaluated and the people to be interviewed.

(iv) *Semi-structured interviews* with the staff of the implementing NGOs, the Municipalities involved in the Programme, the principals of the schools that benefited from the Programme, the staff of other NGOs operating in the area and civil society stakeholders, to understand the level of synergy between the various subjects. Finally, key local figures that may be present, such as *Shawish* and representatives of the host communities, were interviewed;

(v) *Semi-structured interviews* with the national reference authorities (mainly the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs), international agencies, other local entities (e.g., LRD) and civil society meanings (e.g., Caritas).

For a detailed and complete picture of the activities carried out, please refer to Annex 3.

Data collection during the field visit was implemented considering these assessment context factors:

1) the validity of the data on Syrian refugees in Lebanon, in particular those relating to the initiatives' final effects/impacts, is conditioned by the difficulty of reaching the direct beneficiaries because many live in non-residential or clandestine conditions and due to lack of mobility;

2) the projects to be evaluated were implemented several years ago (the first began in 2013) and some of them were focused on the first emergency initiatives, the effects of which cannot be seen today;

3) total humanitarian investment in the area is one of the highest ever seen (UNHCR estimates at about USD 1.5 billion per year the amount of funds allocated by donors to address the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon), with a large concentration of donors and international organisations operating at the local level. Considering that the total investment of the Programme under evaluation is about 9.5 million Euro, it is clear that this amount is significant in terms of impact and final effects only if related to the other initiatives present in the Programme intervention areas and sectors.

These context elements led the Evaluation Team to adopt a triangular data collection approach that would relate the aggregated data made available by international agencies with the data available to NGOs and interviews with relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries. The collection approach was, therefore, more qualitative than quantitative, since the use of surveys based on statistical samples was not considered effective, given the high mobility of refugees (those who benefited from the Programme in the first two or three years, may no longer be in the same area) and the difficulty of identifying them, especially in urban or semi-urban areas, where Syrian refugee communities overlap and mix with the most vulnerable Lebanese ones.

The assessment tools were also adapted to the diversity of the initiatives implemented: for example, for projects with the main objective of responding to the immediate emergency with the distribution of basic food and non-food goods, the focus was on collecting data relating to the timeliness of intervention, the number of beneficiaries reached as well as coordination with other support activities present at the same time in the area.

For projects aimed at supporting municipalities and improving basic infrastructures and services (electricity, sanitation, waste, etc.), as well as for those aimed at promoting access

to education and an increase in the income of host families and communities, reference was also made to the current refugees present, although not directly beneficiaries, as it was assumed that they could have a direct perception of the actual prolongation of the initiatives' positive effects. In addition, particular attention was paid to those initiatives implemented by the 11 NGOs that were followed and supported by successive initiatives over the years in the same locations, both with AICS funding and from other donors.

A total of 17 interviews were conducted during the Initial Report phase. All preliminary interviews in the Inception phase were conducted remotely (skype, Zoom, Teams).

The semi-structured stakeholder interviews and FDGs were conducted during the field mission to the country in the period 19 October-10 November 2021 (see Table 1), however, some interviews were held remotely.

The data collection tools (format for semi-structured interviews and for focus groups) are those already presented in the Initial Report.

As foreseen in the technical offer, the evaluation was carried out in **four phases**:

Phase 1. Desk analysis

Phase 2. Initial Report, approved on 15 October 2021

Phase 3. Field visit in Lebanon, carried out during the period 19 October-10 November 2021

Phase 4. Evaluation report and final presentation workshops, November 2021-January 2022.

Table 1 - Activities carried out during the field mission

Activities carried out during the field mission				
Governorates visited	5			
Locations visited	16			
Interviews with local authorities	10			
Interviews with school principals	5			
Focus Group Discussions with beneficiaries	9			
Individual meetings with beneficiaries	3			
Visits to refurbished infrastructures	10			
Meetings with NGO Staff	11			
Interviewed beneficiaries	60			
		Women	Men	
Syrian beneficiaries		8	13	35%
Lebanon beneficiaries		16	23	65%
		24	36	

The **products** of the evaluation exercise are as follows:

- Initial Report;
- Final Report;
- Summary report of up to 15 pages;
- capacity building workshops on evaluation (in Beirut);
- presentation workshop of the final report draft (Rome);
- presentation workshop of the final report (Beirut);
- two additional meetings were held in Beirut at the end of the field mission for the return of the main preliminary considerations: one bilateral meeting with AICS and Embassy and one meeting with AICS, Embassy and implementing organisations (11 NGOs).

Regarding the **stakeholders' involvement**, the following categories were heard:

- **Direct beneficiaries:** Syrian refugees and Lebanese beneficiaries of host communities, both men and women.
- **Implementing organisations:** the Italian NGOs that implemented the projects (AVSI, CISP, GVC, INTERSOS, OXFAM Italia, CESV, COOPI, CTM, ICU, TdH Italia).
- **National authorities at central level:** the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA).
- **Local authorities**, in particular the Municipalities that benefited from the initiatives implemented by the Programme and the principals of the schools, who participated in the rehabilitation initiatives of the school complexes.
- **International agencies/coordination structures:** LHIF, Education Sector Working Group, Livelihoods Sector Working Group, echo, FCDO, Expertise France.
- **Civil Society:** URDA in the Beqaa Valley.

Throughout the evaluation exercise, the ET, through the team leader and the head of the Timesis contract, maintained constant contact with the DGCS in Rome, with the Embassy of Beirut and with AICS Beirut, to inform it of the progress of the various phases. The DGCS was directly involved in the initial phase (kick-off meeting, Initial Report presentation meeting and its approval) and in the final phase (feedback on the final report, its approval, workshop in Rome). The Embassy and AICS in Beirut were directly involved in an initial meeting at the start of the field phase and in the two additional meetings to return the main preliminary considerations.

5 Presentation of the results

The Programme under evaluation³ was implemented in response to the Syrian crisis from 2013 to 2018 and considering 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. These needs also led, in some areas, to a progressive increase in social tensions between host Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees, due both to increasing labour competition in certain market segments (agriculture, construction, retailing) and to an overall increase in the cost of housing and prices of basic necessities that affects the entire population.

To respond to the priorities indicated in the LCRP 2015-16, the Programme's formulation aimed, on one hand, to provide humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon with particular attention to the most vulnerable groups (including children, women and the elderly) and, on the other hand, to strengthen the population's resilience through the promotion of labour-intensive projects aimed at creating income opportunities, with a view to favouring the local economy and social cohesion between the Lebanese population and Syrian refugees.

The six initiatives under evaluation were financed with a total amount of euro 8,520,000.00, and each of them was divided into several projects, some implemented directly, others through the NGOs. A total of 11 NGOs were called upon to implement the various initiatives and the initiatives implemented can be grouped into the following areas:

- (i) Protection of refugees and displaced persons (AID 10030);
- (ii) Education (AID 10466);
- (iii) Livelihoods and Social stability (AID 10248/1, AID 10248/2, AID 10671/1, AID 10671/2).

See Table 2, which summarises the main characteristics of the initiatives and related projects.

The Programme, as a whole, seems to be based on an intervention logic that considers the evolution of assistance and aid needs that progressively materialised with the increasing stabilisation-rooting of refugees both in informal camps and in urban realities, also in

³ 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.

alignment with the priorities identified by the Regional Refugees and Resilience Plan and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan.

The projects targeted by the Programme started by initially providing an immediate response to the emergency, thus identifying actions aimed at meeting basic needs (food and health), to move to a response that, while remaining in the context of the humanitarian emergency, has tried to address the increasingly complex needs that emerged for refugees and Lebanese communities and including, over time, not only Syrian refugees but also Municipalities, as recipients to be strengthened to improve access to and the dissemination of basic services, as well as Lebanese schools and citizens with high socio-economic vulnerability.

Since 2013, the Programme has initially focused on the emergency situation (AID 1030) with the distribution of basic necessities (No-Food and *Food Items*), as well as on the implementation of actions aimed at improving hygiene and sanitary conditions (distribution of hygiene kits, construction of civil work, such as latrines, solar panels, etc., and awareness-raising actions) and the supply of hydraulic equipment and structures (wells, pumps, etc.).

Two successive initiatives, initiated respectively in 2014 and 2015 (AID 10248/1 and 2), focused on initiatives aimed at increasing income (*cash for work*) and access to basic services, as well as support to local authorities (improvement of local public services, such as waste management, rehabilitation of public facilities, works to improve the road drainage network and the sewerage network, training of municipal staff on project management and selection of beneficiaries, etc.).

A fourth initiative (AID 10466), started in October 2015, then tried to improve the quality of formal and non-formal educational activities, to adapt the structures and spaces used for education, through the rehabilitation of 18 schools and the equipping of 8 others.

Finally, to reduce the growing social tension between host Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees, a fifth and sixth initiatives (AID 10671/1 and 2), from June 2017, intervened to increase the capacities of Lebanese Municipalities in the provision of services and support to the most vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian communities, both through an improvement in access to public services and with an increase in available income through temporary employment activities (*rapid employment initiatives*).

The projects supported public infrastructure initiatives carried out with forms of *cash for work* and temporary work, also involving the communities, thus trying to achieve the dual objective of strengthening the Municipalities' response capacity and increasing the host communities' income opportunities. In addition, the sixth project, specifically, contributed to result 3 of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan concerning the creation of jobs in vulnerable areas through investments in public infrastructure and environmental redevelopment, as well as to result 1, aimed at increasing municipalities' capacity to manage social tensions through the implementation of projects in support of municipal services.

At the time of evaluation, all the initiatives were completed and the final reports approved.

Table 2 - Summary of initiatives under evaluation and related projects (sources: General Operational Plans and Final Reports of the initiatives)

Initiative	Objectives	Implementation modes	Implementation location	Amount
AID 10030/1	<p>GO: Contributing to the improvement of the living conditions of the displaced population in Syria, the Syrian refugee population and the poorest layers of the population in Lebanon.</p> <p>SO: Providing assistance and humanitarian aid to the Syrian population displaced in Syria and to Syrian refugees in Lebanon through initiatives that improve their incomes and access to essential services, in particular health, hygiene and education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct management • CSO: AVSI, CISP, GVC, INTERSOS, OXFAM Italia, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>North Lebanon:</i> Wadi Khaled (Akkar) • <i>Beeqa:</i> Hermel, Baalbeck, Bar Elias • <i>Mount Lebanon:</i> Baysoour • <i>Beirut:</i> Burj al Barajneh Palestinian camp, Jnah • <i>South Lebanon:</i> Chabaa, Mais el Jabal, Kharayeb 	<p>euro 1,500,000.00</p> <p>(including operating and monitoring costs euro 150,000)</p>
AID 10248/1 AID 10248/2	<p>GO: Strengthening the resilience of Syrian and Lebanese communities in dealing with the consequences of the Syrian crisis.</p> <p>SO: Improving the living conditions of Syrian refugee populations and host Lebanese communities through initiatives aimed at increasing income, access to basic services and support to local authorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct management • CSO: AVSI, CESVI, COOPI, CTM, OXFAM Italia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>North Lebanon:</i> Tripoli and Beddawi • <i>Beeqa:</i> Ghazze and Karoun • <i>Mount Lebanon:</i> Eklim al Kharroub south • <i>South Lebanon:</i> Ebl El Saqi 	<p>euro 2,000,000</p> <p>(including operating and monitoring costs euro 200,000)</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSO: ARCS, GVC, ICU, INTERSOS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beeqa:</i> Zahale, Saadnayef, Al Qasr, Hermel, Moidal Anjar, Al Bireh, Labwe and Al Fikha 	<p>euro 1,320,000</p> <p>(including operating and monitoring costs euro 74,553)</p>

AID 10466	<p>GO: Improving access to the public education system to ensure school education with equal opportunities for the population victim of the Syrian crisis residing in Lebanon.</p> <p>SO: Increasing the number of children and young people using the public education system and improve the quality of formal and non-formal educational activities, facilities and spaces used for education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSO: COOPI, TDH Italia, ICU, INTERSOS, OFXAM Italia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>North Lebanon:</i> Tripoli and Beddawi • <i>Beeqa:</i> Zahle, Rashaya and Ghazze • <i>Mount Lebanon:</i> Sahl Aalma, Sed Al Bochriyi, Aramoun • <i>South Lebanon:</i> El Qlaile Kfar Fila, Jbaa Kfar, Roummane, Nabatieh 	<p>euro 1,000,000</p> <p>(including operating and monitoring costs euro 100,000)</p>
AID 10671/1	<p>GO: Contributing to strengthening the resilience of local communities and the management capacity of Lebanese municipalities to cope with the consequences of the Syrian crisis.</p> <p>SO: Improving the capacities of Lebanese municipalities to provide services and support to the most vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct management • CSO: COOPI, GVC, INTERSOS, OXFAM Italia, TDH Italia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>North Lebanon:</i> Tripoli, Beddawi, Kalamoun • <i>Beeqa:</i> Hermel, Qaa, Al Ain, Elias Bar, Rashaya (Jeeb Jennine), Zahle (Maidal Anjar, Terbor) • <i>Mount Lebanon:</i> Shahhar • <i>South Lebanon</i> 	<p>euro 2,000,000</p> <p>(including operating and monitoring costs euro 200,000)</p>
AID 10671/2	<p>GO: Helping mitigate the destabilising effects of the Syrian crisis and responding effectively to the needs of Syrian refugees and the host population in Lebanon.</p> <p>SO: Strengthening the capacities of municipalities to mitigate social tensions and prevent conflicts between the local population and Syrian refugees through greater employment opportunities and income generation for the most vulnerable groups of Syrian refugees and host population.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AVSI, CTM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beeqa:</i> Rashaya • <i>South Lebanon:</i> Nabatieh 	<p>euro 700,000</p> <p>(including operating and monitoring costs euro 202.82)</p>

The Programme is part of an overall framework of Italian cooperation in the following areas⁴:

A) Multilateral channel, for a total of 34.8 million Euro:

1. Contributions to ICRC (International Committee of Red Cross)
2. Contributions to ILO (International Labour Organisation)
3. Contributions to IOM (International Organisation for Migration)
4. Contributions to UNDP (United Nation Development Programme)
5. Contributions to UNHCR (United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees)
6. Contributions to UNICEF (United Nation Children Fund)
7. Contributions to UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency)
8. Contributions to WFP (World Food Programme)

B) Bilateral channel, for a total of EUR 6.6 million:

1. *Dalla vulnerabilità alla resilienza: interventi per migliorare le condizioni di vita dei rifugiati siriani e della popolazione ospitante in Libano e Giordania (From vulnerability to resilience: initiatives to improve the living conditions of Syrian refugees and the host population in Lebanon and Jordan)* (AID 10805), activities carried out in 2017 and 2018 by NGOs ARCS, AVSI, GVC, TdH and ICU.
2. *TUTTI A SCUOLA. Accesso ai servizi scolastici per i minori in età scolare in Libano e Giordania (EVERYONE AT SCHOOL. Access to school services for school-age children in Lebanon and Jordan)* (AID 10804), activities carried out in the period 2018 - 2020 by NGOs ARCS, AVSI, GVC, TdH, ICU, COOPI, ARCS, UPP.

The presentation of the results follows **the order of evaluation questions (EQs), organised by evaluation criterion**, according to the ToR.

5.1 Relevance and design

EQ 1. Is the Programme consistent with international intervention policies and strategies in the region and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan?

5.1.1 Analysis of the Policy, Strategy and Operational Frameworks

The programme makes specific reference to the Programmazione Triennale Italiana (2016-2018), the Good humanitarian Donorship Initiative, the 2007 EU Humanitarian Consensus, the EU approach to Resilience (2014), the Italian Guidelines for Humanitarian Aid (2012-2015), the *Linee Guida per l'uguaglianza di genere e Empowerment delle donne* (2010), the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul 2016, the LCRP and the Livelihood and Social Stability sectors and working groups, the RACE Initiative.

a) International Framework

The **Three-year programming and policy planning document 2016-2018** provides the strategic and normative framework for AICS' initiatives in the Syria crisis and in Lebanon. The document lists guidelines and requirements resulting from the commitments and engagements taken by Italy at international level. In the chapter "*Humanitarian aid, the first priority*" (page 24) the document states, with regard to the Italian contribution: "*with regard*

⁴ Source: internal document "*Iniziativa di assistenza umanitaria*" (Humanitarian Aid Initiatives) made available by AICS Beirut.

to the effectiveness of humanitarian aid, Italian participation in the UN and EU coordination mechanisms will be strengthened, representing concrete implementation of the commitments deriving from approval of the **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** in December 2007 and the 2012-2015 **Italian Guidelines for Good Humanitarian Donorship**⁵, while also updating them and monitoring their implementation. In line with the objectives of **the World Humanitarian Summit**, our contribution “aims to comply with humanitarian principles and strengthen the effectiveness of the aid provided via greater accountability, **adopting a results-based approach** and recourse to technological innovation to strengthen the systems for preventing, mitigating and responding to the risk of catastrophes.”

The Programme under evaluation appears to be strongly structured around the principles and commitments mentioned in the programming policy and recalled systematically in all evaluated Initiatives (AIDs). For example, the **Italian Guidelines for Humanitarian Aid**⁶ (2012-2015) and the **EU humanitarian consensus**⁷ require that *humanitarian assistance is impartial and solely based on needs rather than status and citizenship*. Furthermore, the **Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative** underlines the respect for humanitarian principles and the obligation to allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and based on needs assessments (impartiality). The livelihood (Cash or Work-CfW) projects included in the Programme largely adopt a needs-based targeting approach based on socio-economic vulnerability. However, these projects also include a quota for Lebanese citizens (reaching up to 50% of the total number of beneficiaries), which undermines the principle of impartiality since excluded Syrian refugees were, most probably, more vulnerable than the selected Lebanese beneficiaries.

The **EU approach to resilience**⁸ stresses the need for a *comprehensive approach through integrated and multi-sectoral initiatives, based on vulnerability analysis, with solid protection mainstreaming and with genuine efforts in terms of beneficiaries’ inclusion and participation*. The Programme, at design phase (AICS Calls and AIDs internal documents) recalls the need for a comprehensive approach and to build solid links and synergies with other longer-term programmes and projects implemented by different agencies, also at (bi)multilateral level. However, project documents and evidence collected during the field work indicate that the actions implemented by the different NGOs (and also those at ‘*gestione diretta*’-direct management) were designed and implemented taking an emergency humanitarian approach with vertical and stand-alone initiatives. Cash for Work projects were found to be largely disconnected from livelihood, income, skill or capacities generating opportunities, undermining their potential impact and sustainability. *Education projects (AID10466)* also appear to have a vertical approach with missing links and synergies at the operational level among different agencies or programmes.

The **World Humanitarian Summit 2016**⁹ and specifically the commitments taken by Italy under the *Round Table #3*, also provide strong justifications for the strategic approach taken by the Programme: “*Italy [...] fully share the proposal to put the dignity of affected people at the heart of humanitarian action. In this context we will focus our humanitarian projects –*

⁵ <https://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/home-page.html>

⁶ https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Guidelines-for-humanitarian-aid-GHA_EN.pdf

⁷ EU Humanitarian Consensus, EC 2007, https://ec.europa.eu/echo/who/humanitarian-aid-and-civil-protection/european-consensus_en

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/resilience_africa_en.pdf

⁹ World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul 2016 <https://www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Gli-impegni-italiani-a-Istanbul.pdf>

*wherever possible – on the resilience and self-reliance of IDPs and refugees, using the **cash-for-work tool**.*” Moreover, under core commitment #3, “*Italy commits to foster host communities’ self-reliance and resilience, as part of a comprehensive and integrated approach.*”

The use of cash for work for achieving resilience and self-reliance is clearly and strongly justified by the commitments taken by Italy in Istanbul in 2016. However, as described in the next section (5.1.2 Cash for Work and 5.1.4 Partnerships and implementation mechanisms), the CfW is a complex and controversial form of assistance that requires *specific* prerequisites and pre-conditions to achieve expected results.

b) National Framework

The regional Lebanese strategic and operational framework of the Programme under evaluation is provided, respectively, by the **LCRP** and **3RP**. The Initiatives (AID10248/1-2 and AID10671/1-2) are strongly anchored to the Strategic Outcome #1 and the specific Output #3 of the Livelihood sector, which states that “*La creazione di posti di lavoro è favorita in aree vulnerabili mediante investimenti a forte intensità di manodopera per la realizzazione di infrastrutture pubbliche e interventi per la tutela ambientale*” (*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.

The **Livelihood sector in the LCRP 2015-2016** provides clear guidance on how to design a Livelihood project/programme within the LCRP. For instance, it highlights the need to link up livelihood and food security projects for close coordination with the Protection Sector and specifically with the Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) task force to properly address the needs of women at risk. Overall, a livelihood project for refugees in a protracted displacement crisis, especially one that is designed around the mode of cash for work, requires strong *coordination, linkages and synergies with long-term livelihood initiatives* (vocational training, private sector, etc.) and a *solid protection mainstreaming*. These elements are somehow absent from the design of the initiatives and the specific projects implemented by the different NGOs. It should be noted that only two partner NGOs appear to be active partners of the Livelihood Sector at central level and until 2017 they appear to be mostly the only ones attending the sector meetings at central level.¹⁰

The **LCRP 2015 and the Social Stability Sector** provide strategic and operational guidance for social stability initiatives aimed at enhancing social cohesion. The Social Stability Sector guidelines underline the importance to mainstream a) protection, b) livelihood, c) cross-sector working, d) conflict analysis, gender and age in all social stability projects. The Evaluation Team did not find evidence that these requirements were consistently factored in the evaluated projects. It should be noted that only two of all the NGOs implementing the Programme are listed as ‘partners’ under the social stability sector and participated (not consistently over the time)¹¹ to the Social Stability Working Group meetings at central level

¹⁰ It should be noted that some partners report their commitment at regional rather than central level; while the ET was able to verify the active participation of partners at the central level thanks to documents made available online, the same verification exercise was not possible at the local level.

¹¹ Minutes of the Social Stability Working Group meetings are available online:

https://data2.unhcr.org/en/search?type=%5B0%5D=document&working_group=25§or_json=%7B%220%22:%20%220%22%7D§or=0&page=49

(from 2014 to 2018)¹². While AICS and some of its partners guaranteed participation to the Livelihood Sector Working Group (starting from 2017), the link to the Social Stability Sector has not been consistently established, resulting in a weaker alignment to the strategic guidance provided by the LCRP social stability sector (and a de-facto isolation from the other existent social stabilities initiatives).

The project of the **AID10466 initiative** (Education) seems to be very consistent with the global international response, as it is fully aligned with the RACE strategy, in coordination with other stakeholders. However, at the operational level, the Evaluation Team did not find evidence of solid and systematic coordination efforts between partners. In Lebanon, Education is a complex and multidimensional issue that requires integrated, multisectoral and multi-partners approaches. While stakeholder coordination is assured at the central coordination level in Beirut (MEHE, UNICEF and RACE), there is little evidence of genuine coordination efforts at the operational level (in the implementation locations). The projects implemented under this initiative appear to be designed in a vertical and stand-alone approach. For instance, the list of schools and locations is already provided by MEHE and the set of activities was defined in advance by AICS, leaving little space to the NGOs partner to adopt an inclusive and participative needs-based approach. There is little evidence of effective synergies with other programmes, projects or activities implemented in the locations of implementation of the initiative visited. Most of the refurbished schools that were visited by the Evaluation Team, were not known to the partner NGO before the refurbishment work (the partner NGOs did not previously work in the same place). 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.

c) AICS Lebanon Calls

AICS does not have a Country Strategy Document for Lebanon and the link between the international and national normative framework and the implemented Programme is assured by the AICS Calls for Proposals. In the previous paragraphs the report has identified a series of inconsistencies between on one side the foreseen policy framework and the implemented projects on the other side. The paragraphs below provide an overview of the key requirements and guidance provided by AICS in its Calls and try to assess the adequacy and relevance of their design.

- *Gender, child protection, disabilities, climate change* mainstreaming is expressly requested in all 6 Initiatives;
- *Coordination and synergies* requirements are uneven between 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 Initiatives indicate that UTL/AICS Beirut is responsible for the *coordination* of the Programme.
- *M&E*: AICS calls do not explicitly indicate specific MEAL requirements. The exception is the AID10248/1-2 Call¹³, which expressively requests a results-oriented approach with

¹² It should be noted that some partners report their engagement at regional level rather than at the central one; while the EV could verify partners active participation at central level thanks to documents made available online, the same verification exercise could not be conducted at local level.

¹³ Call AID10248, page 19

indicators able to measure the impact of the projects. While the NGO partners appear to have a ‘supervision’ responsibility, UTL/AICS Beirut is formally in charge of the monitoring activities.

- *Inclusiveness, Participation and Accountability to the Affected Population (AAP)*: Calls request the direct participation and inclusiveness of the beneficiaries, with different degrees. For instance, AID10466 explicitly requests the direct involvement of school authorities, while AID10671/1-2 foresees the active participation and constant feedback of the beneficiaries. However, there is no evidence in the Programme documents of a consistent approach by partners on this matter. With a few exceptions, partners did not have accountability frameworks in place, with evident difficulties expressed by some of the interviewed beneficiaries to access information or a complaint mechanism. The AID10248/1-2 specifically recommends that Lebanese citizens (and not Syrians) are selected for the position of team leader of the cash for work team.¹⁴ At the same time INTERSOS’s final report (for the project forming part of the same Initiative) states that while Municipalities and Lebanese beneficiaries insisted on having Lebanese Team Leaders, the partner succeeded to sensitise and convince all stakeholders that Syrian refugees could indeed also hold the position of Team leaders, despite their initial resistance.¹⁵ This example highlights the need for solid, contextualised and consolidated risk analysis when implementing social stability initiatives.

EQ 2. Has the Cash Assistance/Cash for Work tool been adapted to strengthen the income capacities of Syrian refugees and host communities?

5.1.2 Cash for work and strategy coherence

Cash for work (CfW) is a mode of the broader category of Cash Based Transfers (CBT), which includes vouchers, unconditional cash assistance, *multipurpose cash assistance* (MPCA), etc. Hence, CfW should be considered as a tool rather than a strategic approach that de facto enhances the resilience and the self-reliance of the beneficiaries. CfW has the potential to (contribute to) deliver such results but is not always the most appropriate way to achieve different strategic objectives. In fact, CfW approaches can be highly controversial. One criticism is that they cannot help to relieve precarious situations in a lasting way and may even contribute to maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, if CfW measures are not planned thoroughly enough, there is a *risk of fomenting new conflicts* (for instance, between refugees and the local population). In addition, they could give rise to new dependencies between the population and donors, and the public infrastructure that was constructed may subsequently prove to be neither particularly sustainable nor cost effective. In conclusion, when they are designed “correctly,” CfW programmes can be usefully deployed in many fragile contexts for stabilisation purposes. *The design of the action is fundamental to the achievement of the selected objectives.*¹⁶

The choice of the CBT mode is extremely context-sensitive and each of the different CBT modes can effectively protect the beneficiaries’ dignity and improve their resilience, but they

¹⁴ AID10248, page 10: “there will also be a specialised leader for each group of workers, who will have to ensure the management of his/her team and the correct supervision of the work, in addition to playing a role of facilitator and mediator with the Lebanese community and authorities. For this type of assignment, the recruitment of Lebanese personnel is recommended.”

¹⁵ ES/10248/A010

¹⁶ *Pros and cons of Cash-for-Work measures in crises and forced displacement contexts*, KFW 2021 https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/PDF/Download-Center/PDF-Dokumente-Development-Research/2021_02_19_EK_Cash-for-Work_EN.pdf

may also ‘do harm’¹⁷ if the initiatives are not properly designed and contextualised. CBT projects require a thorough analysis of the benefits and risks associated with each mode within a clear and solid strategic framework that clarifies objectives, expected results and guarantees a proper monitoring, learning and accountability framework.

The different Programme initiatives under exam that make use of the CfW tool have comparable but not *equal* general and specific objectives (SOs), see Table 2. The first CfW initiative (10248/01) SO expressly and clearly aims at reinforcing the Syrian refugees and Lebanese hosting communities’ resilience. The second (10248/02) SO targets the ‘living conditions’ as considered as socio-economic vulnerabilities, but expressly adds that this objective will be achieved through income support activities, better access to services and *through support to local authorities*. This second initiative narrows the operational space of the design, by excluding modes that could potentially be more appropriate for the achievement of the objective itself. The third CfW initiative (10671/01) SO significantly changes the main target of the initiatives, shifting it from the vulnerabilities and wellbeing of the beneficiaries to the capacities of the concerned Municipalities. The fourth initiative (10671/02) SO maintains the focus on the Municipalities, and it further reinforces it by adding that the main expected results of these investments on the municipalities *is to enhance the municipalities’ capacities to mitigate and prevent social tensions between refugees and hosting communities*.

The Programme’ SOs present a strategic shift from the beneficiaries’ socio-economic wellbeing and living conditions to local authorities’ capacities to mitigate and prevent social conflicts and hence guarantee social cohesion. The same strategic shift can be observed in the GOs, with an initial focus on the beneficiaries’ socio-economic vulnerability (resilience) that moves on the capacities of municipalities in terms of stability and social cohesion. The LCRP provides enough operational flexibility to justify all the specific objectives listed in the 4 mentioned CfW initiatives. 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.

Projects and programmes that aim at different SOs (vulnerabilities of beneficiaries vs. capacities of the municipalities to address social stability) should have different approaches and use different timeframes, partners, modes and tools. For instance, the EU in Lebanon (DG ECHO) addresses the basic needs of the refugees through unconditional multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA). At the same time, and with other funding streams (EUTF Madad), the EU addresses the issue of national and local capacities through a combination of institutional and non-institutional partners and approaches, and it doesn’t enlarge its target population to the hosting Lebanese communities. The EU also makes use of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)¹⁸ specifically designed for stabilisation. These instruments make use of different approaches, fund streams, timeframes, modes and tools, which are contextualised and designed along the EU policy and strategic objectives. Humanitarian and stabilisation projects require different kinds of partners, capacities, timeframes, approaches, design and funding streams.

¹⁷ *Employment Intensive Programmes in Lebanon – Guidelines*, OIL, MOSA, MOL, October 2020, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_757447.pdf

¹⁸https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/about_the_european_commission/eu_budget/db_2021_programme_statement_instrument_contributing_to_stability_and_peace.pdf

The use of cash for work and a largely unchanged approach and design in the different 4 initiatives do not seem to fully consider the very different operational requirements that each of the different SOs demands. For instance, social cohesion and stabilisation projects require a solid risk analysis before, during and after the initiative to identify threats and risks that may result in negative outcomes and harm to the beneficiaries. The Programme has limited evidence of this analysis and there is little evidence of a robust and harmonised monitoring and reporting system required by this type of initiative. In addition, humanitarian assistance requires impartiality and centrality of needs, refusing to select beneficiaries based on status or citizenship. There is no obvious (humanitarian) justification for the different shares required by AICS (the share of Lebanese beneficiaries has reached 50% of the total beneficiaries over the years), which seem to be based on political or social stability considerations. Status/citizenship quotas remain legitimate and justified under a stabilisation approach and they are in line with the LCRP Social Stability Sector's guidelines. Nevertheless they are questionable under a humanitarian approach and somehow not fully coherent with the commitments taken by Italy at international level (principle of Impartiality).

CfW and the inclusion of Lebanese beneficiaries have positively improved the **operations** of the partner NGOs. NGOs were able to exploit the activities foreseen by the project to sensitise Municipalities that were initially hostile towards NGOs projects targeting Syrian refugees. CfW activities created a productive communication channel between some municipalities and NGOs aiding Syrian communities. There are, however, also risks associated with such approaches, including the risk for partners of creating expectations and pre-conditions in future initiatives. There is no evidence of post-mortem analysis or evaluation on the positive and negative long-term impact of such an approach.

As seen, the 4 different cash for work initiatives are not consistent in terms of SOs, while the strategic and operational approach remained mostly unchanged over time. However, even within the same initiative, *and under the same SO, there are different results that may challenge the intervention logic of the actions*. For instance, supporting the municipalities in rehabilitating infrastructures may absorb a considerable amount of the budget, which is deducted by the budget dedicated to providing cash injections to the beneficiaries. Given the relatively limited amount of funds available for each project, there was a constant tension in the allocation exercise, with AICS on one side indicating a minimum of 40% of the funds to be dedicated to cash payments, while on the other NGOs partners were often left to manage disappointed municipalities who were expecting a more considerable investment in terms of material and equipment.

5.1.3 Adequacy of CfW to strengthen Syrian refugees and host communities' income capacities

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 (short-term, isolated), the lack of income opportunities and long-term livelihood programmes, we can assume that the affected population's income capacities were not significantly influenced by the CfW provided by the Programme under evaluation. As said, the Programme does not provide harmonised baselines and it does not require ex-post assessments and surveys from partners to systematically measure the impact of the action. One of the exceptions is the (partial) impact study conducted by INTERSOS in the frame of the AID10671 Initiative. The study was based on a questionnaire for CfW beneficiaries aimed at assessing both the beneficiaries' level of satisfaction and how the planned project implementation methods could impact the beneficiaries' needs. The

survey demonstrated that most of the respondents had a rather negative or average opinion about the project's impact on their basic needs. The CfW method and the Programme design are not considered to be adequate to strengthen the income capacities of the Syrian refugees and host communities.

EQ 3. Have chosen implementation mechanisms (implementation and governance methods, choice of implementing entities) and the capacities (and their reinforcement) of the main stakeholders (human, financial) proven adequate to achieve the expected results?

5.1.4 *Partnerships and implementation mechanisms*

AICS's key partners in operationalising the programme are the NGOs, the Municipalities, MOSA and MEHE.

The 11 NGOs that implemented the Programme have extremely different profiles, capacities, resources and expertise. Some of the partners have excellent skills and ability to approach local communities to implement humanitarian protection projects. Others appear to have excellent know-how in local governance, livelihood and conflict management expertise. However, all of them implemented virtually similar projects designed along the guidelines provided by the AICS Calls. This appears to have resulted in the levelling of project quality, with the minimum requirements required by the Calls to be fulfilled by all but with extremely limited incentives to enhance the design of the projects with internal available expertise and know-how. Without significant incentives and guidance from AICS, NGOs did not invest in enhancing the projects' design, such as building an internal and external referral system, guaranteeing protection, gender and disabilities mainstreaming or developing M&E systems.

Municipalities are also key partners in the Programme and direct beneficiaries in some Initiatives. Their direct involvement is considered to be extremely positive since it enhanced the level of ownership and participation of this key stakeholder. AICS funded projects under evaluation were piloting this approach in Lebanon and it has resulted in improved relevancy of the actions. However, the modes for developing such approaches do not appear to be similar for all partners, with different degrees of success. For instance, partner NGOs have often spent time and resources addressing expectations and demands of municipality officials, who identified the municipality as the primary beneficiary (rather than Lebanese or Syrian communities) and hence claiming a bigger share of the resources available in the projects. The collected evidence also highlights a concern about *sustainability*, given that many projects did not have follow up activities from the same partner, nor were linked to other longer term initiatives (often resulting in the partner NGO leaving the area and ceasing the collaboration with the concerned municipality once the project reached its end).

The support provided by the Programme to the Municipalities, while always extremely appreciated by the concerned interviewed stakeholders, appears to be output-oriented (how many kilometres of road clean, etc.) rather than focusing on the capacity building and systems strengthening at municipal level. In fact, it is extremely difficult to achieve that kind of expected change and results without an integrated, long term approach involving many partners. AICS supported parallel long-term initiatives (UNDP, ILO, etc.); however, at the operational level, the Evaluation Team did not find evidence of links and synergies built around these different projects.

The MOSA is responsible for and leads the response to the Syrian crisis (in coordination with UNHCR and UNDP). It is one of the key stakeholders in all CfW initiatives and has over

time become one of the main partners of Italian Cooperation in Lebanon. MOSA and AICS enjoy excellent relationships and a rich set of cooperation agreements. MOSA's role is central in guaranteeing some sort of transparency and accountability in key sensitive tasks such as the targeting of the (Lebanese) beneficiaries. However, this role is strongly undermined by lack of internal resources and by the fragmentation of the Lebanese public administration. The relatively recent involvement of MOSA in assessing the vulnerability of the Lebanese beneficiaries resulted in important delays in the implementation of the projects and contributed to increased level of tension at field level in the implementation location of the ongoing projects.

The MEHE is the main stakeholder and leader in the response to the Syrian crisis in the education sector, in coordination with UNICEF, and appears to be a key partner for AICS. In the evaluated programme, all selected schools prioritised to be rehabilitated were pre-selected by MEHE. There is no information in the Calls and in the Programme documents regarding the criteria for prioritising the selected schools instead of others. AICS support and adherence to MEHE decisions are in line with the AICS objective of strengthening the national authorities' capacities and the sustainability of activities. However, it is also important to consider that MEHE is often perceived by NGOs and some donors as a stakeholder who has played an important role in defining the (reduced) operational scope of NGOs (for example in the field of non-formal education - NFE).

Generally speaking, there is little evidence of genuine coordination among partners, resulting in lack of cross-fertilisation and positive synergies within the Programme. Some of the partner NGOs have excellent capacities and know-how in specific sectors (Protection, CfW, Gender, WASH, etc.) that appear, however, to have contributed only minimally to the projects' overall quality.

5.2 Coherence

EQ 4. To what extent are the methods of implementation of the initiatives (NGO/direct implementation, etc.) consistent with the international strategy and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and with the commitments made by Italy at the World Humanitarian Summit (Istanbul 2016) on Lebanon and the Syrian crisis (Round table no. 3 "Leave no one behind")?

The methods of implementation of the initiatives (NGOs/direct implementation) appear to be consistent with the international and national policy and strategic framework to which Italy adheres. There is full alignment of the Italian Cooperation in Lebanon to all adopted strategic frameworks, including the LCRP that remains the main domestic framework. The Programme has made extensive and growing use of Cash for Work, in line with the provisions of Round Table No. 3 "Leave no one behind" and with the *Grand Bargain*.

EQ 5. Is the proposed intervention strategy coherent, adequate and valid to achieve the SOs and the overall objective (impact)?

The Programme includes different intervention strategies (CfW to beneficiaries vs. capacity building of local authorities in addressing social cohesion issues). The Programme is based on the GOs and SOs of the 6 initiatives. The documents made available and the data collected in the field mission do not allow a solid measurement of achievement of the GOs and SOs. However, based on the information collected, the triangulation of data and the in-depth analysis conducted, we note that the intervention strategy was only partially coherent, adequate and valid to achieve the GOs and SOs of the 6 Initiatives. As mentioned earlier,

the intervention strategy is very fragmented and hasn't seemingly fostered a homogeneous approach to the problem to address, that is a response to the Syrian crisis.

EQ 6. In the perspective of the link between humanitarian aid and development (Humanitarian Development Nexus – HDN), is the intervention of Italian cooperation adequate to respond to needs?

The intervention logic and approaches of the Italian Cooperation in Lebanon has evolved over time, reflecting the changing external elements and key indicators of the Syrian crisis. Following the emergency-mode humanitarian response of the first years, already in 2015, the humanitarian community engaged in the response to the Syrian crisis acknowledged the need for different approaches that would better respond to the complex, multifaceted, protracted displacement crisis that developed in Lebanon. The Italian Cooperation evolved and adapted significantly over the 5 years covered by the Programme. The increased use of CfW rather than in-kind assistance is one of the main positive changes identified during the evaluation. The Italian Cooperation also succeeded in moving away from a short-term humanitarian response approach and increasingly developed a strategy focusing also on the capacities of local and national authorities rather than just providing direct assistance. However, HDP Nexus initiatives require a set of approaches (multi-sectoral, integrated, long term), capacities (joint efforts of UN agencies, INGOs, CSOs, national and local authorities, etc.) and resources (considerable level of multi-year funding) that do not appear to be made available to and by the Programme.

5.3 Efficiency

EQ 7. To what extent has the Programme achieved the desired results and/or effects through rational and efficient planning and use of the resources provided and a timely response?

The Programme under evaluation allocated a total of euro 8,520,000 in the period 2013-2018, through the publication of 4 calls for proposals divided into 6 initiatives: AID 10030-1, 10248-1, 10248-2, 10466, 10671-1 and 10671-2¹⁹.

The initiatives were implemented through 25 projects entrusted by Call to 11 Italian CSOs (ARCS, AVSI, CESVI, CTM, COOPI, GVC, ICU, Intersos, OXFAM Italia, TDH Italia) and 5 directly managed initiatives.

The analysis regarding **the adequacy and availability of resources** in relation to the needs of the Programme highlights the following.

In all the Calls, the number of projects submitted exceeded the appropriations, which led to the need to choose only some of them, in order of score obtained.

On average, each project (including those directly managed) received an amount of euro 283,150 with a minimum of euro 111,082 and a maximum of euro 350,000 (see Tab. 3).

This led to a certain level of fragmentation of the initiatives, which were implemented by many implementing actors (11 NGOs, plus direct management by AICS Beirut/UTL), distributed in more than 26 different locations. This allowed Italian Cooperation to be present in all the Governorates of Lebanon, in some cases reaching places not covered by other

¹⁹ The AID 10030/2 initiative was not included in the scope of the evaluation, as indicated in the ToR.

donors. It nevertheless led to a low amount available for each project, affecting the capacity for incidence and, above all, the sustainability of the initiatives in the short-medium term.

As shown in Table 3, the appropriations covered approximately 29% of the management costs (including general costs) and the rest of the activities directed at the beneficiaries (purchase of food/non-food kits, cash for work, purchases of goods for the construction of infrastructures, transport costs). The total amount managed by NGOs, net of all management costs, is about 66% of the total allocated, although in some initiatives this percentage changes significantly: in AID 10030 it is 47% in AID 10671/2 is 78%, because in this initiative the general management costs have an irrelevant impact.

Regarding the Cash for Work initiatives (AID 10248/1 and 2 and AID 10671/1 and 2), with the total amount managed by NGOs in the entire period of implementation of the Programme, approximately 2,656 direct beneficiaries were reached (see Table 4)²⁰, with a ratio between input (total amount allocated) and output per direct beneficiary of approximately euro 2,197. This figure is not to be understood as the amount received by the individual beneficiary, but as the amount of resources (input) per capita that was necessary, on average for each beneficiary, to implement the initiatives (output). This figure becomes more significant when compared to the amount of CfW actually received by the beneficiaries.

Regarding the AID 10466 initiative, according to the final report, 6,251 beneficiaries were reached (understood as the number of students having access to rehabilitated and/or equipped school facilities) against a total appropriation of euro 1,000,000, with an input/output ratio per beneficiary equal to euro 159.

This ratio demonstrates a greater degree of efficiency in the input/output ratio compared to that of cash for work initiatives, although the activities are not entirely comparable given their different nature.

Finally, as regards the AID 10030 initiative, according to the data of the final report, 2,627 beneficiaries were reached against a total appropriation of euro 1,500,000. The ratio between input/output is equal to euro 570, demonstrating a level of efficiency in the relationship between input and output that is much higher than the other initiatives.

As regards the **quality of the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system**, the *Logical Frameworks* (LF) of the implementation projects include indicators referring exclusively to the expected outputs. The calls do not provide for the introduction of a M&E system capable of reporting on the impact/effects on beneficiaries.

The monitoring envisaged essentially concerns the results of the projects in terms of output and results (activities carried out) in line with the provisions of the LF. These data helped to draw up, for each initiative, quarterly monitoring reports and a final report, which give an account of the activities carried out with respect to what was initially planned, the obstacles encountered during implementation, the reasons for changing the number/type of beneficiaries. From the reports, however, it is not possible to obtain information on the effects of the initiative (and its impacts with respect to the GOs and SOs) during its implementation or in the period immediately following its conclusion.

A peer-to-peer evaluation was carried out by AVSI, Cesvi and Oxfam on the respective Cash for Work initiatives. However, it refers to an initiative that is not the subject of this evaluation. An independent evaluation was commissioned by AICS Lebanon to an external company to provide evidence and recommendations on the programme "Resilience and social stability:

²⁰ Data source: General Operational Plans of the initiatives.

creation of temporary employment opportunities to support municipalities to manage the economic and social consequences of the Syrian crisis.” The scope of the evaluation is not the same as the initiatives covered by this evaluation.

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. For example, it is possible to make a comparison between the target and actual values of the PGO indicators referring to the results, but it is not clear how these values were achieved, since the data for each individual project are reported in terms of different activities and units of measurement.

In general, the MEAL requirements are not consistently required by the different Calls and the ET has not been able to find evidence either in the Programme documents or in the field mission of considerable financial or operational investments in MEAL activities. The few identified exceptions are the result of partner NGOs’ own capacities and willingness to employ minimum M&E standards rather than a harmonised approach led and verified by AICS. A further exception is the report commissioned by AICS to Cesvi on the effects of Cash for Work initiatives on social cohesion²¹.

²¹ CESVI-AICS, Cash for Work, Work for Cohesion: temporary work and social cohesion for the most vulnerable groups of the Syrian refugee population and the Lebanese host population in Chouf, Mount Lebanon- ES/10248/A004, 2016.

Table 3 - Summary of amounts allocated (source: Final reports of the initiatives)

Initiative	Total amount allocated	management and monitoring costs (inclusive)	Direct management	NGO Management	NGO management costs (does not include visibility and	impact of operating costs on allocations	Amount of NGOs net of management costs and direct	Amount of NGOs net of management costs and direct
AID 10030	€ 1.500.000	€ 150.000	€ 425.939	€ 924.061	€ 220.670	25%	€ 703.391	47%
AID 10248/1	€ 2.000.000	€ 200.000	€ 100.000	€ 1.700.000	€ 408.254	30%	€ 1.391.746	70%
AID 10248/2	€ 1.320.000	€ 74.553		€ 1.245.447	€ 299.785	28%	€ 945.662	72%
AID 104666	€ 1.000.000	€ 100.000		€ 900.000	€ 224.707	32%	€ 675.293	68%
AID 10671/1	€ 2.000.000	€ 200.000	€ 57.964	€ 1.742.036	€ 424.198	31%	€ 1.375.802	69%
AID 10671/2	€ 700.000	€ 203		€ 699.797	€ 154.624	22%	€ 545.173	78%
TOTAL AMOUNT:	€ 8.520.000	€ 724.756	€ 583.903	€ 7.211.341	€ 1.732.237	29%	€ 5.637.068	66%

Table 4 - Beneficiaries of Cash for Work initiatives (NGO implementation)

	TOTAL AMOUNTS			AID 10248/1			AID 10248/2			AID 10671/1			AID 10671/2		
	EXPECTED	ACTUAL	Delta %	EXPECTED	ACTUAL	Delta %	EXPECTED	ACTUAL	Delta %	EXPECTED	ACTUAL	Delta %	EXPECTED	ACTUAL	Delta %
CFW Direct Beneficiaries	2.360	2.656	11%	1.440	1.532	6,0%	345	490	29,6%	315	364	13,5%	260	270	3,7%
of which:															
Syrians	1260	1756	39%	720	974	26,1%	252	445	77%	158	178	11,7%	130	159	18,2%
<i>Syrians % of total</i>	53%	66%		50%	64%		73%	91%		50%	49%		50%	59%	
Lebanese	1101	900	-18%	720	558	-29,0%	93	45	-52%	158	186	15,2%	130	111	-17,1%
<i>Lebanese % of total</i>	47%	34%		50%	36%		27%	9%		50%	51%		50%	41%	
women	N/A	457	N/A	144	206	30,1%	N/A	114	N/A	56	55	-1,8%	82	82	0,0%
<i>women % of total</i>	N/A	17%		10%	13%		N/A	23%		18%	15%		32%	30%	
No. of paid	49.474	123.343	60%	25.000	34.983	29%	10.000	10.478	5%	7.020	70.138	90%	7.454	7.744	4%

Compared to the administrative reporting mechanism, all the implementing entities, during the interviews, stated that the workload that such reporting requires could be reduced by making it less burdensome and simple (e.g., reducing the number of forms and documents to be submitted), also to the benefit of a possible reduction in administrative costs.

DURATION (data in months)				
	<i>expected</i>	<i>effective</i>	<i>deviation</i>	<i>months of delay on</i>
AID 10030				
OXFAM Italia	6	6	0	1,8
GVC	5	5	0	2,8
AVSI	6	8	2	3,3
CISP	5	8	3	2,9
INTERSOS	8	8	0	3,0
Direct management	6	7	1	4,3
Direct management	8	13	5	3,0
Direct management	8	12	4	6,8
AID 10248/1				
OXFAM Italia	10	10	0	4,7
AVSI	10	10	0	2,2
CESVI	10	11	1	5,1
COOPI	6	6	0	2,4
CTM	8	8	0	5,6
Direct management	8	23	15	0,5
AID 10248/2				
ICU	10	10	0	1,4
ARCS	10	11	1	2
GVC	9	9	0	1
INTERSOS	6	7	1	1
AID 10466/1				
COOPI	4	7	3	3,4
TDH Italia	6	7	1	2,8
ICU	10	10	0	3,5
INTERSOS	6	7,5	1,5	2,8
OXFAM Italia	6	6	0	2,8
AID 10671/1				
GVC	9	11	2	1
OXFAM Italia	9	9	0	1,0
COOPI	8	8	0	1,0
INTERSOS	6	6	0	1,5
TDH Italia	8	9	1	1
AID 10671/2				
CTM	7	9	2	0,5
AVSI	9	8	-1	0
TOTAL AVERAGE DURATION (months)			9,0	
AVERAGE DURATION OF NGO PROJECTS (months)			8,3	
AVERAGE DELAY ON EXPECTED START (months)			3	
AVERAGE VARIANCE ON PLANNED START/END (months) NGO			0,7	
AVERAGE VARIANCE ON EXPECTED START/END (months) DIR- MGMT			6,3	

In addition, having to submit project documentation (including periodic monitoring reports) in Italian was an obstacle and a limitation in terms of efficiency, given that local NGO staff are rarely familiar with this language.

Regarding the **timeliness** of implementation, almost all initiatives required non-obligatory variations, to extend the execution period and to redistribute, within the overall project budget, reduced amounts, generally small residuals that were re-invested in directly managed activities consistent with the initiative.

These being emergency initiatives, the timeliness of response is an important element in terms of efficiency.

The start-up period is on average 3 months behind what is expected, often for reasons related to the improvement of administrative aspects.

The average deviation between the expected and actual implementation times does not exceed on average one month, to which, however, must be added an average, 3-month delay for the start of the actual activities.

These timescales for the new initiatives in place are being further lengthened especially in the identification phase of the beneficiaries.

This figure increases to 6.3 months of deviation from the expected end date for direct management activities.

EQ 8. To what extent have the initiatives provided for in the Programme been carried out in coordination with other initiatives in the sector within the same country and in accordance with the principle of complementarity?

Regarding the level of coordination with other initiatives in the field (principle of complementarity), most of the projects were carried out in areas reached by initiatives of other types. There are also projects where there were no initiatives from other donors. Moreover, the documentary analysis shows, as already highlighted in the chapter on Relevance and Design, the Programme considered in its formulation the international and national planning framework, even with the limits and considerations already commented on previously.

5.4 Effectiveness

EQ 9. To what extent has the Programme contributed to the improvement of the governance capacities of the Municipalities and local authorities in the management of the Syrian crisis?

The Programme and pertinent Initiatives and Projects do not allow a comprehensive and consolidated quantitative analysis and measurement of the identified objectives. The logical frameworks of the different initiatives are designed with an output-oriented approach and generally lack baselines and SMART indicators that would allow such measurements and analysis. The evidence collected during the 3-week field mission highlights a general positive appreciation of the individual projects from the local authorities. The support provided in delivering services and the CfW distribution to vulnerable Syrians refugees and Lebanese citizens is considered to be a very valuable support to the Municipalities. There are reasons to believe that the Programme may have contributed to enhancing local authority capacities; however, this improvement is limited and not sustainable and, as seen, in any case not measurable (it has not been measured consistently by partners nor the initiatives and data do not allow such post-mortem analysis).

EQ 10. To what extent has the support to services managed by the Municipality provided by the Programme (waste, sanitation, basic medical care, sewerage, etc.) been functional and effective in improving the living conditions of Syrian refugees and host communities?

The evidence gathered during the field visit shows that the support provided generally contributed positively to the improvement of Municipalities' service provision in a context of sudden increase of needs (in terms of waste management for instance) and extremely limited resources. Notably, the services (such as irrigation channels, waste management, public garden) have indeed improved. However, it is fair to assume that an improvement in service quality also resulted in an improvement in the beneficiaries' living conditions as a proxy indicator.

EQ 11. Have the expected results indicated in the logical frameworks of the projects in which the Programme was articulated been achieved?

As already mentioned in other points of the report, the M&E system is essentially based on the indicators of the Logical Framework of the six Initiatives, in turn articulated in the projects' individual logical frameworks (one for each project managed by NGOs).

Although the LFs at the initiative level identify some impact indicators referring to the SOs of the LCRP 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 above being said, the analysis of the LF indicators shows that **all the expected results (expressed in terms of activity/output) were achieved and in some cases exceeded**. Exceptions in which the expected targets were not reached are very rare, not so much in the total amount, which has always been reached, but with respect to specific targets (e.g.: fewer women than planned, fewer Lebanese than planned, or one less toilet refurbished and replaced by other work.)

In very few cases, there was a remodulation of the activities/output compared to what was expected and these remodulations were consolidated for the non-costly variants.

However, even if all the planned activities were carried out, with the rare exceptions mentioned, and the results (in terms of output/activities) achieved, the data collected do not allow expressing a true evaluation of the initiatives' effects on the beneficiaries in terms of strengthening their resilience or, in the case of the Municipalities, their capacities. For example, the analysis of the LF OVIs, as reported in the initiative reporting documents, does not allow answering the question whether AID 100248/1 and 2 were actually able to *"improve the living conditions of the Syrian refugee populations and the Lebanese host communities through initiatives aimed at increasing income, access to basic services and support to local authorities"* (SO), but only to the fact that all the planned activities were actually implemented or not.

Therefore, it is possible to obtain some evidence on the level of achievement of SOs in terms of real effects on beneficiaries only by examining the qualitative data collected in the field through interviews and FDG and with some proxy indicators, as commented in the previous point. By proxy indicators we mean indirect indicators based on the assumption that intervening on a certain factor produces an effect on another (for example: it is assumed that if the initiative actually improved the quality of a public infrastructure, channel, public garden or, sports field, consequently having improved the living conditions of the reference community).

EQ 12. Has the strengthening of Lebanese municipalities been adequate to meet the basic needs of refugees and host communities?

The evidence gathered in the field visit shows that the support provided by the Programme allowed the Municipalities to increase the quantity and enhance the quality of the services they provide. However, the cash injections provided at best the minimum amount for addressing the basic needs of a household for a month only. The other services (waste, sanitation, etc.) positively addressed some important needs of the communities, mostly lasting for the project duration. However, it is fair to assume that the Programme only partially contributed to the fulfilment of the basic needs of the beneficiaries.

EQ 13. Have education and awareness-raising activities improved the use of available resources (e.g., water, energy, etc.)?

The Programme documents do not provide enough data and information for conducting a quantity measurement and analysis on whether the education and awareness-raising activities improved the use of available resources. The Evaluation Team did not find consistent evidence demonstrating that these awareness activities improved the resources management capacities of the beneficiaries (individuals or local authorities). However, such

capacity building processes would require an increased level of structural investments both in terms of funds and time (long term initiatives).

EQ 14. Have the criteria and methods for selecting direct beneficiaries made it possible to reach the expected beneficiaries?

The Cash for Work Initiatives and Projects are fully aligned to the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the Livelihood and Social Stability Sector, guaranteeing a minimum level of transparency and harmonisation between the different projects implemented by the NGO partners. However, each NGO adopted a contextualised approach to the selection process of (Lebanese beneficiaries), considering the requests and pre-conditions established by the various Municipalities. This contextualised approach undermined the harmonisation efforts of the process itself and raises questions about transparency and accountability. The targeting procedure of Syrian beneficiaries is more solid and technically advanced compared to the procedure used for Lebanese citizens. Syrian refugees' socio-economic vulnerability is systematically assessed by UNHCR, which owns systems and databases for the necessary checks and verifications exercises put in place by the partner NGOs. The selection of Lebanese citizens is far more complicated, given the absence of a solid and consistent national vulnerability analysis system. The Lebanese National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP) has a list of vulnerable Lebanese citizens, but it is widely considered not to be sufficiently solid and reliable. Partner NGOs were obliged to triangulate data and information between the Municipalities and the MOSA and to consolidate different priorities and demands in the absence of a robust and impartial evaluation system. The evidence gathered during the field visit suggests that the selected Lebanese beneficiaries were not the most vulnerable in their community and that they were definitely less vulnerable than the selected Syrian peers.

EQ 15. Were aid initiatives timely in responding to needs?

The nature of the needs identified for the Cash for Work projects of this Programme did not require timely intervention, being of a chronic-structural type. The nature of the projects' activities (cash injections, infrastructure rehabilitation, services, capacity building of local authorities) although all necessary, responded to needs that were present before the project implementation and remained as such after completion of the Initiative (considering the limited impact on socio-economic needs.) The Education Initiative was fully coordinated at the central level (MEHE, UNICEF, RACE) with other education workstreams, so it is fair to assume that the initiative was launched in a timely manner. However, the implementation of the projects suffered many serious delays (with MEHE responsible for causing many of such delays), which sometimes made the activities not very timely (i.e., education support provided late in the year, or rehabilitation works done in winter during school time). Regarding the timelines of the initiatives, also see what previously noted in section Efficiency.

EQ 16. Have the projects implemented by the Programme produced positive or negative synergies? Are there any additional effects created by their joint work?

The projects implemented appear designed with a vertical and isolated approach with limited interaction and coordination among them. The extremely large number of partners and projects (with a relatively reduced amount of funds), and the dense and complex operational

environment of Lebanon, resulted in an extremely fragmented programme and made it objectively difficult to establish genuine coordination and synergies. The ET failed to identify evidence of synergistic effects or other additional effects as a result of the planned joint work of implementing bodies. There are exceptions arising from the initiative of some partners, such as the *peer review* launched on own initiative by some partner NGOs²².

5.5 Sustainability

EQ 17. To what extent will the Municipalities ensure that the results of the Programme will continue after the completion of the action?

The Cash for Work Initiatives supporting documents clarify that the principal objective of the CfW is to provide punctual and immediate assistance rather than creating long term income opportunities. Hence, without the funds made available from AICS, Cash for Work activities could not be sustained by the Municipalities after Programme completion. Some of the services provided during the Programme, such as waste collection and sanitation rehabilitation work mostly terminated in parallel to the projects, with Municipalities mostly facing the same situation as before the implementation of the programme. Municipalities faced a crisis created by the (pre-existing) lack of capacities to deliver services (even to the Lebanese citizens) and a sudden increase of beneficiaries to be taken care of (Syrian refugee influx). As seen above, the Programme provided valuable and important support to the Municipalities during its implementation. However, most of the activities proved unsustainable for most of them, once the external support for the projects ended. Some specific activities such as waste recycling could have been supported in part over time, but in the implementation locations visited, they were mostly suspended for structural reasons linked to the Lebanese context.

EQ 18. To what extent has the Programme succeeded in consolidating the presence of Italian cooperation in existing intervention synergies (international agencies/NGOs), so as to strengthen the level of coordination of future initiatives, in line with the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan?

Italian Cooperation's presence and position at the central level appeared to be well established around the concerned sectors of intervention (Livelihood and Education). The Programme 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 address problems and issues faced by its partners. Partner NGOs testify to the responsive and supportive role played by AICS and the Embassy throughout the Programme. AICS is the only international cooperation agency that provides direct funding to MOSA²³ (other cooperation agencies provide their support through a third organisation, usually a UN agency). MOSA highly values this kind of support and the capital and leverage created could be further utilised in enhancing the coordination and quality of the response. However, there is little evidence of how this strong positioning was functional to policy change or improvements in the coordination of the Syria crisis response. The capital built

²² AVSI – CESVI – OXFAM, Peer To Peer Evaluation-AID 11253, 2019.

²³ Feedback from MOSA DG

by Italian Cooperation during the past years can definitely be maximised to further enhance the overall quality of the coordination within the framework provided by the LCRP.

5.6 Impact

EQ 19. To what extent has the capacity of local authorities to mitigate tensions and foster social cohesion between Syrian refugees and host communities improved?

The Programme documents (i.e., PGO AID10671) state that ‘thanks to the support provided to the Municipalities and the high number of cash for work beneficiaries, the Initiative contributes to social cohesion between Lebanese citizens and Syrian Refugees’. This assumption may be true although it cannot however be verified. There is little evidence validating such an assumption, as social cohesion levels were not measured in a consistent way. Generally speaking, the different projects do not provide the baselines nor the indicators for measuring social cohesion and stability. As seen in the Relevance chapter, the design of the Programme and implementing projects is not suitable to achieve such outcomes, which require long-term integrated structural programmes. In any case, the different projects injected assets and resources into the Municipalities’ structures, so it can be assumed that the Municipalities’ capacities have increased, at least for the Programme duration. It cannot be stated, however, that such eventual capacities were sufficient nor that they were used for the purpose of mitigating social tension.

EQ 20. To what extent has the earning capacity of Syrian refugees and host communities in the cash for work-cash for assistance areas increased?

The 2014 Lebanon Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) was 435 USD, while in 2016, it rose to 550 USD/household/month (please note that this figure represents the amount of money necessary for an average Syrian household to *survive*). The Minimum Expenditure Basket (which instead covers all basic needs) amounted to 571 USD in 2014 and 836 USD in 2016.²⁴ Each cash for work beneficiary in the Programme received an amount largely in line with the SMEB, hence receiving income support that matches the household’s survival needs for a month. The Programme did not provide for ex-post evaluation reports to measure the impact of the cash injection on the beneficiaries’ income capacities.

However, the component of cash injection (the one that is foreseen to address the economic vulnerability of the beneficiaries) appears to have had an extremely limited impact on vulnerability levels. The amount distributed is too limited to have a considerable impact, which in any case would remain of a short-term nature. 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. However, even in the absence of ex-post analysis or monitoring at the end of cash for work activities, it can be assumed that the expected impact responds to the survival needs of the beneficiaries for a period of one month.

EQ 21. What effects can be expected to be observed on the social, economic and environmental context as well as on other development indicators, which can be related to the initiatives implemented by the programme?

²⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/76229.pdf>

The Programme design did not facilitate strong synergies and links with other existing programmes, actually limiting its impact to its direct targeted population (beneficiaries). It is important to underline that the level of funds made available for the Programme and its 30 projects amounts to less than EUR 9 million, with an average budget of EUR 292.907 per project. The international response to the Syrian Crisis in Lebanon absorbed more than EUR 1 billion per year during the implementation period of the Programme. Hence, it is fair to assume that the Programme under evaluation had extremely low effects on the socio-economic and environmental indicators at country level.

EQ 22. What unintended effects can be observed on the social, economic and environmental context as well as on other development indicators, which can be related to the initiatives implemented by the Programme?

With regard to unforeseen effects, without prejudice to the analysis just noted and given the Programme's nature, the ET did not find any evidence of unforeseen effects on the social, economic and environmental context.

EQ 23. How have external factors such as the political context, economic and financial conditions positively or negatively affected the impact of the Programme?

The Lebanese context is extremely complex, and the impact of the Syria crisis created a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional crisis. It is exceptionally difficult for NGOs (and other stakeholders alike) to implement short term humanitarian projects in what progressively become a protracted and complex displacement crisis with a limited and challenging operational space. Programmes such as the one under evaluation are constantly influenced by the evolving context and operational space in Lebanon, both at central and at decentralised levels. For instance, elections in certain Municipalities resulted in delays and in change of commitments from new elected administrations. The economic crisis affecting Lebanon in the past years also resulted in very limited new livelihood and income generating opportunities being created, reducing the impact of the external investments in such sectors. Certain Municipalities may maintain a 'hostile' approach to the presence of Syrian refugees in their territory, even if taking part in the Programme. MEHE was often perceived as a non-sympathetic stakeholder towards NGOs and their projects in favour of Syrian refugees, often limiting the operational space of partners. MEHE decision making on the selection of schools, such as the inclusion of certain schools in specific areas even with limited presence of Syrian refugee children, can also be considered as political factors (negatively) influencing the Programme. All these elements need to be factored in at the design phase of the programme/project and require capacities from partners and flexibility and resources from the donor agencies to be successfully addressed during the implementation phase. An in-depth and contextualised needs assessment, with a risk analysis based on the Do Not Harm principle, would be functional to mitigate the negative effects of these external factors.

EQ 24. the extent to which the action of Italian Cooperation has influenced national policies, strategies and programmes, contributing to the achievement of MDGs/SDGs?

The Programme certainly contributed to the results of the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainability Development Goals (MDGs/SDGs), in particular as regards Goal 1 "End poverty." However, as we have seen before, it is impossible to measure this contribution; it can, however, be assumed that, given the nature of the Programme and the relatively low volume of funds invested, this contribution may be rather limited, also with respect to MDG

2 “Making primary education universal” and SDG 4 “Providing quality, equitable and inclusive education and learning opportunities for all.”

5.7 Cross-Cutting Aspects

EQ 25. To what extent are the results achieved consistent with the commitments made in the context of the Call to Actions on sexual violence in emergency contexts and in the Charter on the inclusion of people with disabilities in humanitarian aid?

Italian cooperation, specifically AICS Lebanon, is one of the 96 partners of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies²⁵ that was launched globally by a set of international donors and CSOs.

The design of the Programme under evaluation does not explicitly include a commitment to this Call to Action, since the latter was launched in September 2020, therefore well beyond the conclusion of the Programme’s initiatives.

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 an evaluation to be expressed on the effects of initiatives on the inclusion of people with disabilities, since there is no specific data on this aspect.

In any case, interviews with local stakeholders (mayors and school principals) showed that some people with disabilities were included in some initiatives, both as direct beneficiaries of cash for work and as indirect beneficiaries thanks to improved access to public infrastructure.

EQ 26. Have the Programme’s initiatives changed the context in a direction of greater equity and social justice and influenced cross-cutting issues (including human rights, gender equality, environment and disability)?

The Guidelines for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (2010) provide all necessary guidance and requirements in terms of gender and women’s empowerment. Although most of the Initiatives provide for full alignment with these requirements and all the AICS Calls evaluated make specific reference to them, the Projects selected and funded do not seem to consistently meet the requirements in terms of gender mainstreaming. In any case, the initiatives subject to evaluation included a gender perspective, although basic, which in some cases contributed to the empowerment of the direct beneficiaries of Cash for Work.

Overall, in the Cash for Work initiatives related to AID 10248/1 and 2 and AID 10671/1 and 2, 17% of the direct beneficiaries were women. In addition, in interviews with beneficiaries and FGDs, the women involved in the activities of CfW testified that these activities 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 improving the living conditions of their village or municipality. Some of them continued to offer their contribution on a voluntary basis to the community of reference even after the end of the period of the Cash for Work project.

However, there is no clear evidence that the Programme initiatives had a significant impact on these cross-cutting aspects (gender and disability). In this regard, however, it should be

²⁵ <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/what-we-do>

remembered that the Programme was mainly aimed at emergency activities, although it also attempted to include social cohesion objectives (greater equity and social justice).

There is also little evidence that disability, gender and protection issues were adequately integrated into the dialogue with Municipalities. In fact, most of the officials of the Municipalities reported that their main priority of the CfW activities was the rehabilitation or construction of infrastructure, so the priority was focused on qualified and “healthy” workers.

Finally, with regard to environmental issues, some cash for work activities were aimed at improving the separate waste collection service, also through the distribution of special bins and awareness-raising activities. Monitoring report data and interviews/FGDs with the direct beneficiaries show that the activities were carried out, but only in one case the separate collection continued after the end of the initiative. In a second case, the activities contributed to improving waste collection activities in a landfill, which remains an open-air collection point.

Generally speaking, activities were designed with a short-term approach, also those that would have required a more comprehensive and holistic approach. For instance, waste collection was drastically improved during the implementation of the projects thanks to: i) the distribution of waste containers, and ii) cash for work cleaning activities; however, Municipalities soon faced the structural problem of managing the increased amount of waste, given the limited capacities / space of the existing waste facilities (which forced some of them to stop collecting waste altogether).

6 Conclusions

Concerning **Relevance-Design**, the Programme is consistent with all concerned national and international policy and strategic frameworks. However, the overall Programme as expressed by the AICS Calls and AID documents do not appear to successfully and consistently reflect full adherence to the guidelines and requirements of such frameworks. The 30 projects do not consistently factor in the recalled requirements and maintain a rather emergency approach, resulting to be rather top-down than exclusively needs-based, with an inconsistent level of genuine mainstreaming of gender, protection, disability and environmental considerations.

The Programme includes multiple GOs and SOs (at AIDs level) and it employs different approaches to reach its objectives. Eleven NGOs implemented 25 projects and another 5 projects were implemented directly by AICS/UTL, through 6 initiatives. The Programme appears to be fragmented in a multitude of relatively small initiatives not sufficiently coordinated between themselves. The 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 led to uneven and inconsistent performance levels among partners and among the different projects implemented by the same partner.

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 (short-term, isolated), 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.

The design of the initiatives allowed a strong inclusiveness and ownership of local authorities such as the Municipalities and the creation of precious operational space for NGOs by

including 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 capacities of Local Authorities to manage social cohesion and stability between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugee communities.

The Programme, however, largely achieved the expected results as expressed in the outputs listed in the different projects. At the same time, it is virtually impossible to measure the outcomes of the Programme given the lack of baselines, Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs) and consolidated data, but it is fair to assume that they were only marginally impacted by it.

Regarding **Coherence**, the Programme includes different intervention strategies (cash injections to beneficiaries and capacity building of local authorities in addressing social cohesion issues). The Programme is based on the GOs and SOs of the 6 initiatives. The documents made available and the data collected in the field mission do not allow a solid measurement of achievement of the GOs and SOs. However, based on the information collected, the triangulation of data and the in-depth analysis conducted, it is fair to assume that the intervention logic was only partially coherent, adequate and valid to achieve the GOs and SOs of the different 6 Initiatives.

The Cash for Work and Education Initiatives appear to be fully aligned to the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the Livelihood and Social Stability and Education Sectors, guaranteeing a sufficient level of transparency and harmonisation among the different projects implemented by the 11 partner NGOs. The initiative referred to in the first edition is successfully coordinated at the central level (MEHE, UNICEF, RACE) and considers other lines of intervention in the educational field, so it is fair to assume that the initiative was launched in a timely manner.

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 intervention logic and approaches of Italian Cooperation in Lebanon evolved over time, reflecting the changing external elements and the evolving humanitarian context. The increased use of CfW rather than *in-kind* assistance is one of the main positive changes identified during the evaluation. Italian Cooperation also succeeded in moving away from a purely short term humanitarian response approach and increasingly developed a strategy focusing on the capacities of local and national authorities rather than just providing direct assistance to beneficiaries. However, HDP Nexus frameworks require a set of approaches (multi-sectoral, integrated, long term), capacities (joint efforts of UN agencies, international development organisations, Civil Society Organisations, national and local authorities, etc.) and resources (considerable level of multi-year funding) that do not appear to be made available to and by the Programme.

The analysis of the **Efficiency** criterion shows that the adequacy and availability of resources regarding the needs suffered from the fragmentation in which the Programme was articulated: an amount of just over 8 million distributed over 6 initiatives, with 11 NGOs involved, in more than 26 initiative locations.

On average, each project (including those directly managed) received an amount of approximately euro 293,000 with a minimum of euro 111,082 and a maximum of euro 350,000. This is a low amount, considering the ambitious GOs and SOs of each initiative. The management costs, although overall contained within 29% of the amount allocated, nevertheless influenced the availability of resources directly available to the beneficiaries.

With regard to timeliness, both the documentary analysis and the interviews with NGO representatives confirmed a certain delay (on average 3 months) on the effective start of activities compared to the scheduled date, almost always due to administrative delays, also in the provision of the budget.

The M&E systems include indicators (OVIs) that are almost exclusively related to the planned outputs/activities and that, consequently, do not allow to measure the effects and impacts of the initiatives on the beneficiaries. This aspect, in view of future initiatives, should certainly be improved.

The forms of administrative reporting, which proved to be very burdensome for the implementing entities, could also be reviewed with a view to simplifying and optimising resources.

Regarding **Efficacy**, the Programme documents do not allow a quantitative analysis and measurement of the beneficiaries' improved resilience nor a comprehensive quantitative analysis and measurement of the GOs and SOs.

The logical frameworks of the different initiatives are designed with an output-oriented approach and generally lack baselines and OVIs that would allow measurements and analysis. The evidence collected during the 3-week field mission highlights a general positive appreciation of the individual projects from the local authorities and beneficiaries alike. The support provided in delivering services and CfW to vulnerable Syrians refugees and Lebanese citizens is considered to be a very valuable support to the Municipalities.

The evidence gathered during the field visits shows that the support provided 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.

The Programme also contributed to strengthening local authorities' capacities, although the ET did not collect evidence to prove that awareness-raising and capacity building activities improved the resource management capacities of beneficiaries (individuals or local authorities). Moreover, such *capacity building* processes would require an increase in structural investments both in terms of funds and time, where the design of the projects evaluated (approach, duration, partnership, available funds, synergies, etc.) does not seem to have allowed the Municipalities to significantly improve their governance capacities in facing the structural and systemic challenges of a prolonged and complex crisis.

The ET could not identify sufficient evidence of positive synergies generated by the various projects. Projects appear designed in a top-down approach and implemented in a vertical way with limited interaction and coordination among them. The extremely large number of partners and projects, and the complex context in Lebanon, made it extremely fragmented and objectively difficult to establish genuine coordination and synergies.

Regarding **Sustainability**, the Cash for Work Initiatives' supporting documents clarify that this instrument's principal objective is to provide timely and immediate assistance rather than creating long term income opportunities. Given the projects' emergency nature and the lack of synergies with income opportunities, training or long-term programmes, it can be assumed that the income capacities of the assisted population were not significantly impacted by the CfW provided. The Programme does not provide harmonised reference baselines and it did not require ex-post assessments and surveys from partners to systematically measure the impact of the action.

The Programme provided valuable and important support to the Municipalities during its implementation; however, most activities returned to be unsustainable for most Municipalities once the projects' external support terminated. Generally speaking, activities were designed with a short-term approach, also those that would have required a more comprehensive and holistic approach.

With regard to the initiative targeting Education, Lebanon is a very complex and multidimensional area, requiring integrated, multisectoral and multilateral approaches. While stakeholder coordination was assured at the central coordination level in Beirut by AICS and its partners, there is little evidence of genuine coordination efforts at operational level. The projects implemented under this initiative appear to be designed in a vertical approach and there is little evidence of genuine synergies built with other programmes, projects or even activities implemented in the visited project areas.

Italian Cooperation's presence and position at the central level appeared to be well established around the concerned sectors of intervention (Livelihood and Education). The Programme 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 address problems and complications faced by its partners. The capital built by Italian Cooperation during the past years can definitely be maximised to further enhance the overall quality of the coordination within the framework provided by the LCRP.

With regard to **impact**, the Lebanese context is extremely complex, and the impact of the Syrian crisis created a very multifaceted and protracted crisis. It is exceptionally difficult for NGOs (and other stakeholders alike) to implement humanitarian short term projects in what progressively become a protracted and complex displacement crisis with a limited and challenging operational space. Programmes such as the one under evaluation are constantly influenced by the evolving context and operational space, both at central and at decentralised levels. Solid and comprehensive risk and do not harm analysis would be functional in mitigating the negative effects of such external factors. However, there is no solid evidence that such analysis was carried out in a consistent way by AICS and its partners.

The design of initiatives does not appear to be fully consistent with achieving a lasting impact in a crisis such as the Syrian one. Nevertheless, the different projects injected assets and resources into local authorities' systems, so it can be assumed that the capacities of the Municipalities increased, at least for the duration of the Programme. It cannot be stated, however, that such capacities were sufficient nor that they were used for the purpose of mitigating social tension.

The emergency short term nature of the projects, the projects' relatively low budgets (compared to the total amount of funds being injected by the International Community into the crisis), the absence of solid links and synergies with long term livelihood and development programmes considerably impacted the sustainability levels of the initiatives. It is fair to assume that the Programme only marginally impacted key social and development indicators at national or at local level.

With regard to the **Transversal Aspects**, the design of the Programme under evaluation does not explicitly include a commitment to this Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, since the latter was launched in September 2020, therefore well beyond the conclusion of the Programme's initiatives.

The initiatives under evaluation, however, include a gender perspective, although basic (inclusion of women in cash for work activities), which in some cases contributed to the empowerment of direct beneficiaries.

With regard to the issue of disability inclusion, the data of the final reports do not allow an evaluation to be expressed on the effects of initiatives on the inclusion of people with disabilities, since there is no specific data on this aspect. In any case, interviews with local stakeholders (mayors and school principals) showed that some people with disabilities were included in some initiatives, both as direct beneficiaries of Cash for Work and as indirect beneficiaries thanks to improved access to public infrastructure.

However, there is no clear evidence that the Programme initiatives had a significant impact on these cross-cutting aspects (gender and disability). In this regard, however, the Programme was mainly aimed at emergency activities, although it also attempted to include social cohesion objectives (greater equity and social justice). There is also little evidence that disability, gender and protection issues were adequately integrated into the dialogue with Municipalities. In fact, most of the officials of the Municipalities reported that their main priority of the CfW activities was the rehabilitation or construction of infrastructure, so the priority was focused on qualified and “healthy” workers.

7 Recommendations

The following recommendations consider the evidence collected during the evaluation exercise, deriving both from documentary analysis and from field work (interviews/FGD) carried out in Lebanon.

We decided to represent the overall framework of the recommendations in Table 5 below to make it easier and more immediate to read. The evidence and related recommendations are grouped in order of criteria. All the evidence included in the table are summaries of those already commented on in the chapter “Presentation of the results,” to which reference is made for further details.

Table 5 - Recommendations

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>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</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>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>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).</p> <p>F14 Each NGO adopted a contextualised approach to the targeting process (of Lebanese beneficiaries),</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>

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 strengthening capacities and systems at the municipal level.

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.

F21 There is little evidence of genuine coordination between partners resulting in lack of cross-fertilisation and positive synergies within the Programme.

CROSS-CUTTING ASPECTS	
<p>F22 The projects selected partially meet the requirements in terms of gender mainstreaming, although a very basic gender approach is present.</p> <p>F23 There is no clear evidence that the Programme initiatives had a significant impact on the cross-cutting aspects (gender, disability, environment).</p> <p>F24 In the design of the initiatives, there is no explicit provision for the inclusion of people with disabilities and the data of the final reports do not allow an evaluation to be expressed on the effects of the initiatives on the inclusion of people with disabilities.</p>	<p>R10 Select and finance projects that meet the requirements in terms of gender mainstreaming and that consider the commitments made by Italian cooperation with respect to the Call to Actions on sexual violence in emergency contexts and the provisions of the Charter on the inclusion of people with disabilities in Humanitarian Aid.</p>

8 Lessons learned

Without prejudice to the recommendations expressed in the previous paragraph, some of which are suggestions aimed at improving the overall approach adopted by the Programme under evaluation, this paragraph will highlight the following specific aspects that can further improve the design and implementation of future initiatives, if considered in conjunction with the mentioned recommendations.

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

As highlighted both in the presentation of the results and in the recommendations, some aspects that need to be refined, with consequent positive repercussions also on the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the various initiatives, concern the design of the initiatives (see the evidence in Table 5 – Recommendations).

The lesson learned from the analysis of this Programme is that it is important to support the processes that encourage the consolidation of the lessons learned, the capitalisation of *best practices* and the sharing processes to improve the design phase of future initiatives.

An example of such an exercise is the one carried out by AICS in 2017 (on 2016 data) in cooperation with ILO²⁶, with the aim of drawing up a guide for the design of innovative programmes for public employment considering the Lebanese background and the experiences developed in this context. The guide provides practitioners in Lebanon with the tools to better assess and understand the nature and complexity of the working-age population, unemployment and underemployment in Lebanon based on the responses under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016, as well as the inter-agency Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Cash for Work (CfW) programmes. The guide shows the options and possibilities for implementing employment and public infrastructure programmes in Lebanon.

Other examples in this direction are the Peer To Peer Evaluation carried out by Avsi – Cesvi – Oxfam on their respective Cash For Work initiatives, funded under the Programme

²⁶ Towards the right to work: A guidebook for innovative designing. Public Employment Programmes. Background & Experiences from the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon

“Resilience and Social Stability: Temporary Employment Opportunities to Support Municipalities in Managing the Economic and Social Consequences of the Syrian Crisis” (AID 11253).

A further example is the impact study conducted by INTERSOS under the AID10671 initiative.

This type of exercises can offer valuable help in the design phase of the initiatives, to better put 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) Request 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 approach needs to be addressed in a more timely 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 requested 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 system, in anticipation of future initiatives, should be improved both in the context of individual implementation projects and at the initiative level, to allow the drafting of an evaluation aimed at measuring not only the activities carried out (output), but also the effects on the beneficiaries (outcome, impact).

One of the lessons learned during this exercise is that the evaluation of a Programme of emergency initiatives should be carried out either during the execution of the initiatives, to introduce any corrections during their execution, or no later than one year after their completion.

This is for two reasons:

1. from a methodological point of view, “an impact” cannot be measured in the strict sense of the term (i.e., the effects on beneficiaries 4-5 years after the end of the initiative) for initiatives that by their nature have the objective of supporting the target beneficiaries in the immediate or very short term;
2. from the point of view of opportunity/feasibility: the beneficiaries of emergency initiatives are people who move, who rapidly change the nature of their needs, who receive almost more and more aid at the same time, so that many years after obtaining the benefit they may no longer have a clear and distinct memory of what they have received and by whom. In addition, the project managers of the implementing bodies are characterised by high turn-over, so, once again, many years later, it is difficult to be able to contact them and, in any case, to ensure that they are able to provide specific details of a project that was completed for several years.

For future initiatives, therefore, the lesson learned suggests that the evaluation exercises of Emergency Programmes are carried out during implementation (*on-going*) or at the immediate closure of the initiatives (*ex-post*).