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## **RAPID PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

### **LIVELIHOODS IN FORESTRY (LIF)**

LEBANON REFORESTATION INITIATIVE NGO

### **FINAL REPORT**

NOVEMBER 2022

This report was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by EnCompass LLC for the Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon (MEPL) under Contract No. 7200AA20D0001 I, Task Order 72026821F00005.

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COVER PHOTO: Micro-garden set up through LiF's support on the Fouad Boutros bridge in Ashrafieh (All photos by MEPL unless otherwise indicated).

## **ABSTRACT**

The Livelihoods in Forestry (LiF) Activity implemented by the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) NGO has come to a close after completing four years of project work at a cost level of \$6.1 million and with a main goal of improving livelihoods in rural areas through forestry-related activities. LiF had four sub-purposes: three initial and a fourth that was added during a one-year extension period through 30 September 2022.

USAID/Lebanon tasked the Monitoring and Evaluation for Program (MEPL) with evaluating the relevance and effectiveness of LiF's urban-forestry component, the sustainability of the LiF-supported Anjar Eco-Park (AEP), and LiF's progress in adopting the recommendations of its 2021 mid-term evaluation during the extension period. This rapid performance evaluation provides recommendations for USAID and its future implementing partners to follow in subsequent similar projects. MEPL's evaluation team used a mixed-methods approach to answer a set of agreed evaluation questions.

The findings show that urban forestry as a sub-component of forestry activities is relevant to LiF's general objective. Different reasons were behind the strategic decision to refocus forestry activities on cities, most important of which was providing economic support to communities in need through cash for work activities. In terms of effectiveness, LiF modified all its initial workplans to align them with municipalities' priorities and the feasibility, timelines, and budgets of activities. Beirut, Saida, and Tripoli all completed the works as planned, with a minor deviation. Byblos did not. Tripoli could have absorbed more workers and allocated more worker days given its bigger size. The main finding regarding the AEP is that, to date, the sustainability of the park is questionable despite the fact that the park possesses the needed tools and infrastructure to be sustainable. LRI's team made an effort to follow all the applicable recommendations of the mid-term performance evaluation throughout LiF's life of project and adopted some of them in other projects. The team tried to follow these recommendations to the extent possible under LiF's urban-forestry component.

The evaluation's main recommendations for future USAID forestry-related livelihoods projects in Lebanon include ten recommendations tackling urban forestry and AEP.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The evaluation team consisted of Dr. Sandra Fahd as team leader and received support from the following MEPL staff: Stephanie Bassil, MEPL Research and Evaluation Specialist; Nour El Zaouk, Data Analyst; and Jim Fremming, Chief of Party, in addition to Ted Rizzo, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Specialist at EnCompass home office.

The evaluation team would like to thank LiF's staff for their cooperation, organization of site visits, and the valuable information they have provided, which helped us reach key findings and draw conclusions.

The team would also like to thank the staff of LiF's municipal partners and NGO and private-sector partners and the staff of Anjar Eco Park who took the time to participate in the interviews.

The team also thanks LiF's cash-for-work beneficiaries who took the time and travelled the distance to meet with us and share their experiences.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>FIGURES &amp; TABLES</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>IV</b>
<b>EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>I</b>
EVALUATION PURPOSE.....	I
EVALUATION QUESTIONS .....	I
<b>LIF BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>2</b>
CONTEXT .....	2
<b>EVALUATION METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>EVALUATION FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
RELEVANCE .....	4
EFFECTIVENESS.....	5
SUSTAINABILITY OF ANJAR ECO-PARK.....	10
ADOPTION OF MID-TERM EVALUATION’S RECOMMENDATIONS.....	13
<b>EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>ANNEXES</b> .....	<b>23</b>
ANNEX 1: SCOPE OF WORK.....	24
ANNEX 2: EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS .....	25
ANNEX 3: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX.....	31
ANNEX 4: DATA-COLLECTION TOOLS .....	33
ANNEX 5: CONSENT FORMS.....	38
ANNEX 6: DOCUMENT SOURCES.....	45
ANNEX 7: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST .....	47
ANNEX 8: EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS.....	48
ANNEX 9: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS .....	49
ANNEX 10: MID-TERM EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS .....	51
ANNEX 11: LIF LOG-FRAME .....	54

## FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1: Number of working days by city (target vs. actual) .....	7
Figure 2: Urban forest stakeholders and actors. (FAO 2016) .....	20
Figure 3: Raised vegetation beds in a Berlin schoolyard. ....	20
Figure 4: Wooden bird nests hand-painted by kids placed in a common outdoor area in a Berlin school. ....	21
Figure 5: Three-centimeter bed of soil laid over water tanks and planted with mesembryanthemum. (Berlin).....	21
Figure 6: Raised bed planted with medicinal and ornamental plants on a Berlin rooftop.....	22
Table 1: Sustainability of AEP’s activities based on KII responses .....	122

## ACRONYMS

AEP	Anjar Eco-Park
CA	Cooperative Agreement
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibilities
DAIS	Data Analysis and Interpretation Session
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
HMTN	Homenetmen Sports Association Lebanon
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
IR	Indicator
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KII	Key Informant Interview
LiF	Livelihood in Forestry
LRI	Lebanon Reforestation Initiative
MEPL	Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
PSD	Private Sector Development
SV	Site Visit
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFS	United States Forest Service
USG	United States Government

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EVALUATION PURPOSE

This rapid performance evaluation of the Livelihoods in Forestry (LiF) Activity was conducted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon (MEPL). It examines the relevance of LiF's urban-forestry component to the Activity's overall objectives, and the sustainability of the LiF-supported Anjar Eco-Park (AEP). The evaluation team also checked the completion of LiF-funded urban-forestry projects in four cities: Saida, Byblos, Tripoli, and Beirut and examined the extent to which LiF had followed the recommendations of its 2021 mid-term performance evaluation. The evaluation offers recommendations for future USAID programming in urban and rural forestry, including guidance on site-selection criteria for urban-forestry activities.

### EVALUATION QUESTIONS

#### Relevance

1. To what extent is the urban forestry component relevant to LiF's overall objective?

#### Effectiveness

2. Were the works in the four sites completed as per the initial plan? If not, what were the main reasons for that?

#### Sustainability

3. How sustainable is the Anjar Eco-Park as a stand-alone project?

#### Adoption of Mid-Term Evaluation Recommendations

4. To what extent and in what ways were the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation acted upon during the one-year cost extension?

### BACKGROUND

USAID launched the LiF Activity in September 2018 as a three-year, \$5-million program to be implemented by the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) NGO through a Cooperative Agreement. In October 2021, LiF received a one-year, \$1.1-million cost extension designed to ensure the sustainability of the initial Activity's interventions, which were implemented amidst the economic and the Covid crises, and to extend the work to major cities through urban forestry. This raised LiF's total budget to \$6.1 million and extended its duration till the end of September 2022. LiF later received an additional two-month cost extension.

The LiF Activity is based on the theory that rural communities that sustain their forest resources will be able to improve their livelihoods thanks to the economic benefits of seasonal job creation and to increase their income from forestry, if they are supported to 1) Have good governance over their shared resources; 2) Participate in forest-conservation activities; 3) Improve their skills in forest management and 4) Establish forest-related economic activities. LiF's one-year extension is built around one goal: "to improve rural livelihoods in targeted areas through forestry-related activities," one purpose: "Improved sustainable forestry in the targeted areas," and four sub-purposes:

*Sub-purpose 1. Social and Environmental Corridors conserved and expanded*

*Sub-purpose 2. Rural tourism and economic development enhanced through improved natural resources management in Anjar*

*Sub-purpose 3. Enhanced sustainable land management and conservation through agroforestry*

*Sub-purpose 4. Urban vulnerable population supported through labor-intensive urban forestry work in Beirut and major cities.*

## EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS, AND LIMITATIONS

This evaluation utilized a mixed-methods approach (Annex 2) to reach evidence-based findings and draw relevant conclusions. It compiles primary and secondary data from various sources. For primary data, the team conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with 16 stakeholders, focus group discussions (FGDs) with 23 cash-for-work beneficiaries, and site visits (SVs) to the four cities and the AEP. KII and FGD respondents included USAID and LiF staff, municipality staff, sub-awardees, and beneficiaries. The evaluation team gathered secondary data from various LiF Activity documents, including its quarterly progress reports, initial workplans, internal reports for each city (Beirut Greenery Assessment report, Planting plans for Byblos, Saida and Tripoli), and interventions maps (a list of source documents is available in Annex 6). The team analyzed the data through a structured summary approach to extract empirically verified conclusions and make corresponding recommendations.

The evaluation team was aware of potential response bias from the key informants and beneficiaries, as these may be motivated to provide responses that would be considered socially desirable or influential in obtaining additional support. To mitigate such bias, the team clarified at the start of every interview that the responses would not influence the possibility of obtaining future assistance while emphasizing the confidential nature of the interview.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

### RELEVANCE

#### Urban Forestry Relevance to Overall LiF Objective

USAID and LiF's decision to refocus forestry activities on cities, especially after the Beirut port blast and as recommended in the mid-term evaluation conducted in 2021, resulted in the creation of short-term cash-for-work activities in urban forestry in four cities. The findings from this evaluation revealed that the newly-introduced activities were relevant to LiF's general objective of improving livelihoods through forestry-related activities.

There is a shared perception among USAID and LRI staff that LiF's urban-forestry extension contributes to both economic and socio-environmental aspects of the project's objective, with the balance tipping in favor of economic support, especially after the Beirut port explosion.

### EFFECTIVENESS

#### Completion of Work as per Initial Plan

LiF modified all its initial workplans to align them with the four cities' municipalities' priorities and the feasibility, timelines, and budgets of activities. All activities were completed according to the modified workplans, except for the ones in Byblos. The green wall and green bridge in Byblos were not completed due to:

- The municipality's incomplete compliance with the requirements for worker selection and monitoring.
- Diverging priorities and lack of agreement on the design concepts between the municipality and LRI.
- Once the design was approved, the municipality realized that it was unable to stick to it.

In conclusion, Beirut, Saida, and Tripoli completed the works as planned, with minor deviation. Tripoli could have absorbed more workers and allocated more worker days given its bigger size. Byblos municipality's high expectations and standards in relation to the city's public image as an

acclaimed international tourist destination<sup>1</sup> were not in line with the works' budget, and feasible maintenance.

### Key Achievements

Respondents identified several key achievements of LiF's urban-forestry component, including: income provided to workers, green spaces maintained and improved, positive civic reactions to green spaces generated, positive worker psycho-social outcomes achieved, and worker hard and soft skills improved.

Beneficiaries and sub-awardees identified several factors that facilitated LiF's successes, including:

- LRI's team was pleasant to work with.
- Coordination between LRI, municipalities, and the engaged partners was effective.
- The engaged partners all had relevant backgrounds.
- The sense of camaraderie that developed between workers.

LRI's experience, effective definition of roles, and creation of a positive work environment that motivated workers were identified as factors that drove LiF's achievements. As a result of meeting targets, citizens around the sites had access to improved green spaces, and the workers benefited from increased incomes, improved skills, and positive social interactions.

### Challenges Encountered during Implementation

Challenges reported by LRI staff were mostly related to factors specific to big cities, such as clientelism, complicated bureaucracy, lack of clear roles and responsibilities in government institutions, lack of skilled labor (in comparison to rural areas), lack of water and shade, and concerns about worker safety and insurance. They also cited context-related challenges, such as money transfer issues related to banks, which delayed payments.

When there was deviation from the initial workplans, it was largely related to the need to adapt to working in urban environments, such as responding to municipal priorities and dealing with time constraints due to the added complexity of the city environment, which included bureaucratic, administrative complications and the greater overall number of stakeholders that need to be involved in cities.

### Learning Regarding Site-Selection Criteria

LRI staff were happy with the cities selected but said a smaller number would have been more manageable for a pilot project. They listed a number of criteria to take into consideration when selecting sites: Land tenure access and rights, Availability of areas, Conducting a technical assessment, Worker safety, Cultural and ethnic diversity, Maintenance costs and feasibility, Stakeholders to be involved in decision making, and Insurance for workers.

## **SUSTAINABILITY OF AEP**

### Main elements defining AEP's sustainability

AEP's sustainability is conditional on ensuring income-generating activities and a positive working relation among stakeholders that will maintain the existing assets: infrastructure, human resources, natural assets, and equipment.

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<sup>1</sup> Byblos was named Best Arab Tourist City in 2013 by The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Arabic Capital of Tourism of 2016 by the Arab Tourism Organization.

### Factors affecting sustainability of AEP

Stakeholders noted that AEP had the tools needed to achieve sustainability, including the good structure of the management committee and staff members possessing the required skills and resources to run the park. However, they said these tools were negatively affected by external and internal factors, such as the loss of staff due to the financial crisis and the management committee facing internal conflicts.

### Most sustainable activities in AEP

Interviewed key informants rated hiking and events as the most sustainable activities in AEP followed by planting. They rated cycling as moderately sustainable. All activities not directly managed by the park, such as museum visits and selling mouneh (homemade pantry foods), were rated as sustainable. Meals at the guesthouse and selling coffee and refreshments were seen as slightly sustainable. Strawberry picking and outdoor meals came last on the list of sustainable activities. Birdwatching was deemed unsustainable to slightly sustainable.

Respondents determined whether specific activities were sustainable or not based on an activity's ability to generate income for the park, seasonality, degree of demand by visitors, and required maintenance.

The AEP as implemented by LRI has all the elements needed to be sustainable. This is, however, highly dependent on a positive and constructive collaboration between the stakeholders and on working in line with the signed agreement.

## **ADOPTION OF MID-TERM EVALUATION'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

The LRI team made an effort to follow all the applicable recommendations of LiF's mid-term performance evaluation throughout the Activity's extension and adopted some of them in other projects as well.

The main factors that prevented LRI from fully adopting the mid-term evaluation's recommendations were i) the tight timeframe, ii) the limited budget, iii) the seasonality of some interventions, and iv) the fact that some recommendations were beyond LiF's scope. The economic situation was the main factor that pushed LRI to redirect LiF's focus to cash-for-work activities and encouraged local communities to protect their natural resources/forests after they became more aware of their economic benefits (through beekeeping, collection of medicinal plants, ecotourism, etc.).

There was a window of opportunity for innovation, especially in urban forestry, when applicable. However, LRI's team felt differently, for example, regarding the adoption of the Miyawaki method in urban forestry<sup>2</sup>.

## **EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **URBAN FORESTRY**

Recommendation 1: USAID should consider implementing similar cash-for-work and livelihood activities, especially in light of the ongoing economic crisis, with a main focus on the maintenance and expansion of urban green areas. Future projects can capitalize on the work done by LiF on the

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<sup>2</sup> The Miyawaki method is a unique technique to grow forests. Through this approach, dozens of native species are planted in the same area, close to each other, which ensures that the plants receive sunlight only from the top, and grow upwards rather than sideways. In the Miyawaki method, trees grow about 10 times faster. Once stabilized, the forest is left to flourish, forevermore, on its own without further interference. More information here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/pgofw7noxmpfwxg/Miyawaki%20Methodology%20Explained.pdf?dl=0>

Fouad Boutros Bridge and duplicate it in other areas, such as schoolyards, cemeteries, public parks, pocket gardens, etc.

Should USAID choose to implement similar forestry interventions either as a stand-alone Activity or a component of an Activity in the future, the evaluation team recommends the following:

Recommendation 2: The intervention should assess marginal lands and build on existing studies on abandoned lands and non-constructible areas in cities prior to initiating urban forestry projects. For example, there exists a study suggesting there are more than 1,000 plots of land in Beirut with a surface area exceeding 100 sqm that can be transformed into urban micro forests or gardens, hosting trees, shrubs, and cover plants.

Recommendation 3: The intervention should raise awareness of the importance of green public spaces and appoint local committees or hire a private firm to handle the maintenance of the implemented plots, gardens, micro-forests, etc.

Recommendation 4: The intervention should allocate more time to plan and coordinate its work with the different stakeholders in each city, as it is important to have the buy-in of a broad range of parties. The partner should also endeavor to involve the local community in urban-forestry projects as much as possible.

Recommendation 5: The intervention should include waste-management considerations (for collection and disposal) in the early stages of activity design, with a special attention to cost savings.

Recommendation 6: The intervention should put in place measures and equipment to ensure the safety of all workers, including insurance. This should be planned in the early stages of activity design.

Recommendation 7: USAID should consider including transportation fees and refreshments for workers in the initial budget.

### **ANJAR ECO-PARK**

Recommendation 8: USAID should do follow-up for three months after LiF's closeout to check on the level of engagement of the stakeholders in the park's management and activities as detailed in the agreement.

Recommendation 9: In case the AEP committee did not improve its internal work relations, and the sustainability of the park continued to be at risk as a result of disagreements between the committee's members, Anjar Municipality should look for a different entity to manage the park.

Recommendation 10: AEP's current committee should fill the vacant positions as soon as possible to ensure the proper operation of the park. The committee should also strengthen its marketing strategy to attract more visitors.

## EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

### EVALUATION PURPOSE

This Rapid Performance Evaluation of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Livelihoods in Forestry (LiF) Activity was conducted by the Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon (MEPL), implemented by EnCompass LLC. The evaluation examined the relevance of LiF's urban-forestry component to its overall objectives, the sustainability of the LiF-funded Anjar Eco-Park (AEP), and the completion of LiF's urban-forestry work in four sites: Saida, Byblos, Tripoli, and Beirut. It also checked LiF's progress in implementing the recommendations provided in the Mid-Term Performance Evaluation conducted in May 2021. The evaluation provides new recommendations for future USAID programming in urban and rural forestry, including guidance on the criteria to be used for the selection of urban-forestry sites.

### EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This evaluation aimed at assessing the relevance and effectiveness of LiF's urban forestry component, the sustainability of the AEP, and the extent to which LiF had adopted the recommendations of its mid-term performance evaluation. The evaluation team based their work on the following questions provided in the evaluation's Scope of Work (Annex 1):

#### Relevance

1. To what extent is the urban forestry component relevant to LiF's overall objective?
  - 1.1 To what extent is the urban forestry component aligned with LiF's objective?
  - 1.2 How do the USAID and LiF staff perceive the extension activities' relevance to LiF's objective?

#### Effectiveness

2. Were the works in the four sites completed as per the initial plan? If not, what were the main reasons for that?
  - 2.1 To what extent did LRI conduct activities in line with their approved work plans for the four sites?
  - 2.2 What were the key achievements during implementation?
  - 2.3 What were the main challenges encountered during implementation?
  - 2.4 What was the learning regarding the site selection criteria?

#### Sustainability

3. How sustainable is the Anjar Eco-Park as a stand-alone project?
  - 3.1 What are the main elements that define the sustainability of AEP? And to what extent?
  - 3.2 What factors have affected positively or negatively the sustainability of AEP? How?
  - 3.3 Which aspects of AEP's activities are likely to be the most sustainable? And which are the least?

#### Adoption of Mid-Term Evaluation Recommendations

4. To what extent and in what ways were the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation acted upon during the one-year cost extension?
  - 4.1 To what extent and in what ways were the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation acted upon during the one-year cost extension?

4.2 What are the main factors that negatively or positively influenced LRI's ability to adopt the recommendations and follow through on them? And how?

## LIF BACKGROUND

USAID launched the LiF Activity in September 2018 as a three-year, \$5 million program to be implemented by the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) NGO through a Cooperative Agreement. In October 2021, LiF received a one-year, \$1.1-million cost extension designed to ensure the sustainability of the initial Activity's interventions, which were implemented amidst the economic and the Covid crises, and to extend the work to major cities through urban forestry. This raised LiF's total budget to \$6.1 million and extended its duration till the end of September 2022. LiF later received an additional two-month cost extension.

The LiF Activity is based on the theory that rural communities that sustain their forest resources will be able to improve their livelihoods thanks to the economic benefits of seasonal job creation and to increase their income from forestry, if they are supported to 1) Have good governance over their shared resources; 2) Participate in forest-conservation activities; 3) Improve their skills in forest management and 4) Establish forest-related economic activities.

LiF's one-year extension is built around one goal: "to improve rural livelihoods in targeted areas through forestry-related activities," one purpose: "Improved sustainable forestry in the targeted areas," and four sub-purposes:

*Sub-purpose 1. Social and Environmental Corridors conserved and expanded*

*Sub-purpose 2. Rural tourism and economic development enhanced through improved natural resources management in Anjar*

*Sub-purpose 3. Enhanced sustainable land management and conservation through agroforestry*

*Sub-purpose 4. Urban vulnerable population supported through labor-intensive urban forestry work in Beirut and major cities.*

The logical framework (or logframe) of LiF's extension Activity is available in Annex 11.

Sub-purpose 2 aims at enhancing rural tourism and economic development through improved natural resources management in Anjar. LiF's main activity consists of establishing the first national park in Anjar, showcasing sustainable eco-friendly job creation opportunities that can ensure rural development and natural-resource conservation, jointly.

The LiF extension added the theory that vulnerable Lebanese residents in urban settings will have improved livelihoods if they are supported through short-term employment in urban-forestry (sub-purpose 4), labor-intensive activities, allowing them to earn their living and improve food security for their families amidst increasing environmental and economic threats.

In line with that, LiF's urban forestry component addresses livelihoods in urban areas within four major coastal cities: Beirut, Tripoli, Saida, and Byblos. It supports the short-term employment of the most vulnerable Lebanese living in urban areas through labor-intensive activities in urban forestry, "allowing them to earn their living and improve food security for their families" while creating beneficial services for the entire urban community.

## CONTEXT

Urban green areas, including parks, community gardens, schoolyards, etc. enhance the quality of the population's life. There is no doubt that the most livable cities in the world are those that provide extensive green space for their inhabitants. Urban vegetation, particularly trees, provides numerous

benefits that can improve environmental quality and human health in and around urban areas<sup>3</sup>. Mini urban forests can play a major role in absorbing carbon dioxide. Cities around the world share almost the same physical characteristics of grey infrastructure, and Beirut is not an exception to that. Due to a high urbanization rate and increased densification of Lebanon's coastal cities, urban forestry has become vital and essential to improve the quality of life. The existence of green areas offers various benefits in terms of social, environment, economic, and aesthetic aspects of urban living and surroundings and ensure that each citizen has access to the use of urban green space<sup>4</sup> and to fulfil their social needs particularly in a high-density urban area, such as recreational areas, provision of shade and cool areas and to some extent reduction of air and noise pollution. Besides the financial and economic crisis, Lebanon has scored poorly on indices of quality of life, especially regarding the pollution status of the country. Recently, Beirut was ranked as the third worst city in the world, in terms of air pollution<sup>5</sup>. In 2017<sup>6</sup>, Farah and al, has measured a particulate matter PM 2.5 (also referred as particle pollution) concentration levels exceeding the WHO limits by 150 %, which is a major concern for people's health when levels in air are high. Urban gardens and green areas are usually managed by local municipalities. However, in some areas, municipalities rely on the private sector to expand their green areas by allocating space for urban gardens (e.g., Jounieh and Byblos). A few pilot urban forestry projects (also funded by the private sector) were implemented in Beirut (Beirut RiverLess I, II, and III and three schools' playgrounds) and in Zouk using the Miyawaki method<sup>7</sup> of afforestation which allows for the rapid creation of urban pockets of forest, reclaiming public space and restoring biodiversity in cities.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation team adopted a mixed-methods approach to answer the evaluation questions. Because the programmatic scope is limited, and USAID/Lebanon is in need of timely recommendations based on the evaluation questions, MEPL and USAID determined that this evaluation should be a rapid one, utilizing a relatively small evaluation team and a short calendar timeline. The team collected qualitative data through 16 key informant interviews (KIIs) and four focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 39 individuals and five site visits and supplemented the process with the review of various LiF documents. The sample included five LiF staff, one USAID staff, six municipality staff, two staff from NGO partners, one staff from a private sector partner, one staff from AEP, and 20 beneficiaries of cash-for-work activities. The interviews took place between 16 and 28 September 2022. The team selected the FGD participants based on convenience in terms of distance and transportation and mitigated response biases by clearly explaining to participants that the anonymity of the data collected would be ensured. The team did not identify any recall bias, as

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<sup>3</sup> Novak et al, 2008. A Ground-Based Method of Assessing Urban Forest Structure and Ecosystem Services *Arboriculture & Urban Forestry* 2008. 34(6):347–358

<sup>4</sup> Maryanti et al, 2016 The urban green space provision using the standards approach: issues and challenges of its implementation in Malaysia. *WIT Transactions on Ecology and The Environment*, Vol 210, © 2016 WIT Press

<sup>5</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-by-density> 2018.

<sup>6</sup> W. Farah, M. M. Nakhlé, M. Abboud, N. Ziade, I. Annesi-Maesano, R. Zaarour, N. Saliba, G. Germanos, N. A. Saliba, A. L. Shihadeh, et al., Analysis of the continuous measurements of pm 10 and pm 2.5 concentrations in beirut, lebanon., *Environmental Engineering & Management - Journal (EEMJ)* 17 (7)

<sup>7</sup> The Miyawaki method is a unique technique to grow forests. Under this approach, dozens of native species are planted in the same area, close to each other, which ensures that the plants receive sunlight only from the top and grow upwards rather than sideways. In the Miyawaki method, trees grow about 10 times faster. Once stabilized, the forest is left to flourish, forevermore, on its own without further interference. More information here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/pgofw7noxmpfwxg/Miyawaki%20Methodology%20Explained.pdf?dl=0>

none of the participants had issues remembering details about the projects. The team transcribed and summarized all interviews, then held three data-analysis and -interpretation sessions (DAIS) to share emerging themes and patterns and develop findings and conclusions. Further information on the methodology is available in Annex 2.

The evaluation questions are mapped against sub-questions, data sources, data collection methods, and the sample in the evaluation matrix in Annex 3.

The evaluation team was composed of a team leader supported by three MEPL team members throughout the evaluation (Annex 8).

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

### RELEVANCE

#### **Q 1: To what extent is the urban forestry component relevant to LiF's overall objective?**

##### *Q 1.1: To what extent is the urban forestry component aligned with the LiF objective?*

*Finding 1.1: Short-term cash-for-work activities in urban forestry are contributing to LiF's objective by supporting forestry-related livelihood activities.*

According to LRI staff, shifting LiF's focus from rural to urban areas was a natural transition, and a need even, especially after the Beirut port explosion. They said the urban-forestry component had been missing from LiF's activities that tackled livelihoods through forestry (LiF's main objective). After the 2021 mid-term performance evaluation recommended adding an urban-forestry component, and after a number of LRI and USAID/Lebanon staff did an internship with United States Forest Service (USFS), the need to align urban forestry within LiF's objective became obvious. While designing the extension project, LRI and USAID decided to select urban forestry because of the need to speed up LiF's implementation and the availability of public spaces and data on green areas in cities. As explained by USAID staff, the decision to target four cities was LRI's decision, with Beirut being the main focus, especially after the port explosion.

According to LRI and USAID staff, urban forestry is aligned with LiF's economic-support objective through cash for work, supporting livelihoods through activities related to forestry. Additionally, urban forestry has a more evident social-cohesion aspect in cities. Per LRI staff, city dwellers are not used to working together, but if they are engaged in forestry activities, they will bond and socialize. In addition to maintaining a greener area, LiF's urban-forestry activities improved people's social and economic situation.

##### *Q 1.2: How do the USAID and LiF staff perceive the extension activities' relevance to LiF's objective?*

*Finding 1.2: There is a shared perception among stakeholders that LiF's urban-forestry extension contributes to both the economic and the socio-environmental aspects of the project's objective, with the balance tipping in favor of economic support, especially after the Beirut port explosion.*

When asked which aspect of LiF's objective the extension was contributing more to, the economic one or the socio-environmental one, LRI staff said that while it contributed to both, it leaned more towards economic growth, especially after the Beirut port explosion.

LiF added a sub-activity to the urban-forestry component that consisted of planting community gardens on the Fouad Boutros bridge in Ashrafieh and on another bridge in Byblos. The urban-forestry component was comprised of two phases, and the environmental aspect emerged during the second phase while conducting planting activities in new areas, e.g., Saida garden and Fouad Boutros bridge, but the majority of work done was under economic growth.

According to USAID staff, seasonal jobs were created, such as to clean and maintain green areas, and although they were short-term, they contributed to supporting households during the economic crisis and especially after the Beirut port explosion. The main focus was on responding to the livelihood needs of the community rather than on addressing municipalities' priorities, like purchasing new trees, repairing potholes in roads, etc.

## **EFFECTIVENESS**

### **Q 2: Were the works in the four sites completed as per the initial plan? If not, what were the main reasons for that?**

#### **Q 2.1: To what extent did LRI conduct activities in line with their approved work plans for the four sites?**

*Finding 2.1: LiF modified all its initial workplans to align them with municipalities' priorities and the feasibility, timelines, and budgets of activities. All activities were completed according to the workplans, except for the ones in Byblos.*

LRI selected four cities for LiF's urban forestry component: Beirut, Tripoli, Saida, and Byblos. The evaluation team gathered information on each project's implementation through site observations, KIs, and a desk review.

#### **Beirut**

As stated in the workplan, Beirut city had a list of activities to implement, including maintaining its existing gardens, identifying one or two roundabouts and planting them, and planting the rooftop of the Assabil public library in Bashoura. The last two were not implemented. According to three LRI staff members, the Assabil library rooftop project was not executed due to safety and security measures related to construction.

The Beirut municipality said that almost all plans related to maintaining existing gardens had been executed, with some delays caused by external factors (weather and long winter periods), although it would have liked to see more planting done. The municipality does not have the resources to sustain the planting projects, so it is always seeking external funding. For example, the evaluation team noticed a small piece of land, adjacent to the Fouad Boutros bridge, that was planted and maintained by a private organization. This is true in other places as well, where the Beirut municipality handed over the maintenance of small gardens or plots to private companies, associations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

During visits to various LiF activity sites in Beirut, the evaluation team noted that the work done there consisted mainly of maintaining and cleaning various road mid-sections; green areas along the Ain el Mrysseh Corniche; and several public gardens, such as Jesuites, Sanayeh, and Karantina. The team also visited the Sagesse site previously comprised of an empty bridge and a parking lot next to it. The former was turned into an urban micro-garden, the latter remained unchanged.

#### **Tripoli**

According to LiF staff and beneficiaries, the original work plan for Tripoli was modified after consultation with the municipality's focal point. The original work plan stated that interventions would be limited to the maintenance and pruning of existing green areas. However, the coverage was later expanded to include a larger area. Specifically, the plan to plant the Bohsas roundabout was replaced with another aimed at pruning and partially planting a garden suggested by the Union of Arab Women. This is a small part in a long-term project that includes underground parking lots and a garden, both of which will be accessible to people with disabilities. LiF already installed fences and an irrigation system there.

LRI staff said this modification of the work plan had been driven by a number of external factors, such as i) the Bohsas roundabout being prone to vandalism, ii) the municipality not wanting to modify the work done there by residents in memory of the victims of a recent migrant boat incident, and iii) the municipality's lack of power and authority. There were also internal factors involved, mainly LRI being short on time for implementation.

According to the municipality, the work plan was modified because the initial budget for the roundabout was insufficient. They also said they did not have the funds needed to maintain the roundabout in the future, due to the financial crisis. Municipality staff also said that LRI did not have the needed urban-landscaping skills. The municipality's main priority was pruning the bitter-orange trees that the city is famous for.

As per the work plan, Tripoli had the smallest number of workers to be hired (total of 90) compared to Beirut, Saida, and Byblos (respectively 400, 150, and 100). However, during the site visit, the evaluation team noted that the area covered by LiF in Tripoli was very large compared to the other three cities. For example, LiF did maintenance work in roundabouts, mid-sections along the road leading to Mejdlaya, pathways in Azme and el Miten streets, cemeteries, in addition to three existing gardens (El Biia, el Fayhaa, and King Fahd Garden). Given the small number of workers engaged, the work executed in these locations is impressive.

### **Saida**

Based on the desk review, the original plan for Saida was to plant trees and maintain green spaces in the coastal area between the city's entrance and the landfill. The plan to plant mid-sections along the Hariri Street boulevard was changed to target a different location. According to LRI staff, the reason for that was the municipality's inability to maintain the area and irrigate the newly-planted trees. On the other hand, the beneficiary said the plan had changed because the new location had less trees in it and better access to water. However, the evaluation team found the newly planted area was barely noticeable; a sign was even placed there to point to the garden. In fact, the site consists of dispersed patches of vegetation and looks incomplete, despite the level of effort and investment made to implement it. It is still an open area through which motorcycles can drive and damage the trees planted there.

### **Byblos**

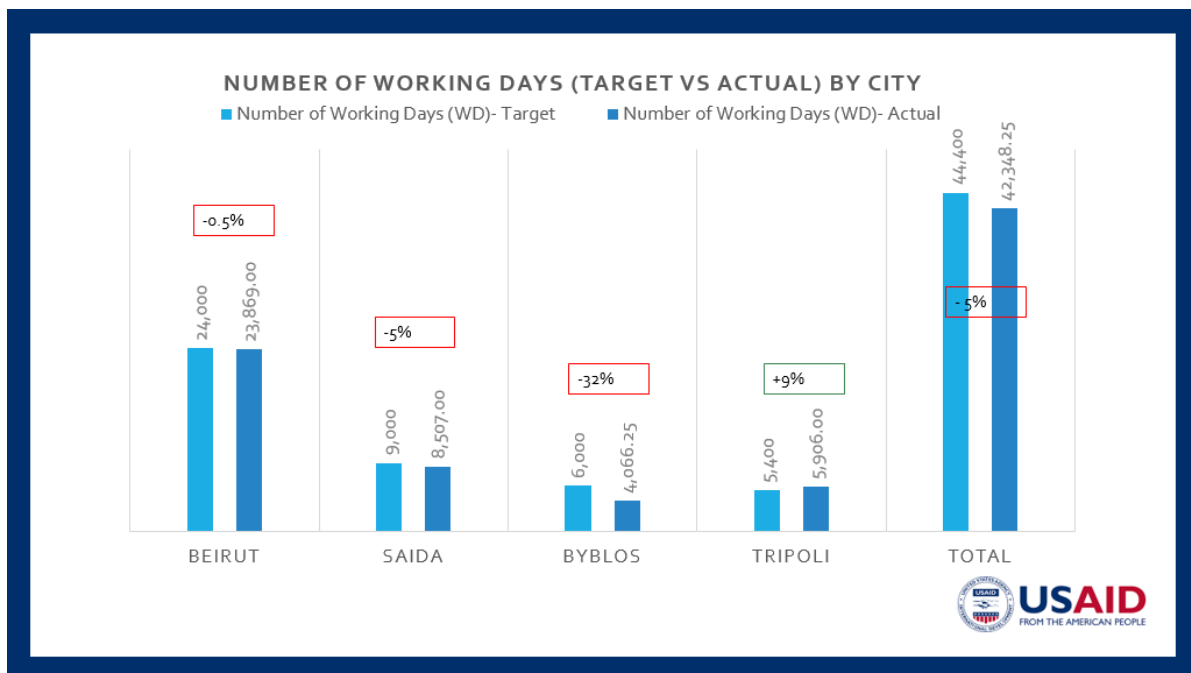
LiF's project in Byblos was not completed as per the initial plan, and the planned green wall and bridge were not implemented. Delays occurred in the first phase, and LRI decided to put the work there on hold due to the municipality's lack of compliance with the worker-selection criteria and its misuse of power. It turned out the municipality had been reporting on ghost workers. LRI later resumed the work there after getting a guarantee from the municipality that it would not interfere with the selection and payment of workers.

According to LRI staff, the green bridge and wall project was not implemented because of the municipality's inability to commit to the work needed and maintain the bridge afterwards. However, the beneficiary said the project had not been implemented because the design was neither appropriate nor convenient for the city. According to a key informant, Byblos has its own specific status and standards, as it was named Best Arab Tourist City in 2013 by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Arabic Capital of Tourism of 2016 by the Arab Tourism Organization. As such, the design proposed by LRI did not fit this prestigious image of Byblos. Although the municipality had said, after agreeing on the design, that it would be able to cover the project's maintenance costs and ensure its sustainability, it later decided to use the budget to clean and prune other areas of the city, such as the Hboub highway (main road leading to Saint Maron Monastery, one of the most visited sites in Lebanon).

USAID staff reported that the wall had not been built due to technical issues related to the municipality, which wanted another design format.

- The green wall and green bridge in Byblos were not completed due to:**
- 1. The municipality's incomplete compliance with the set criteria for worker selection.**
  - 2. Diverging priorities and lack of agreement on the design concepts between the municipality and LRI.**
  - 3. Once the design was approved, the municipality realized that it was unable to stick to it.**

In Figure 1, the obstacles faced in Byblos are evident in the effective number of working days, leading to a deviation of 32% from the original target. In general, the total number of working days and the total number of workers hired were in accordance with the work plan (deviation of 5% only).



**Figure 1: Number of working days by city (target vs. actual)**

**Q 2.2: What were the key achievements during implementation?**

*Finding 2.2: Respondents identified several key achievements of LiF’s urban-forestry component, including: income provided to workers, green spaces maintained and improved, positive civic reactions to green spaces generated, positive worker psycho-social outcomes achieved, and worker hard and soft skills improved.*

According to respondents from all interviewed groups, citizens appreciated the work they did, in terms of expanding green spaces in their cities and cleaning up all the waste discarded there. Cash-for-work beneficiaries frequently said they were proud of the work they had done and shared stories of other people thanking them for this work. Two cash-for-work beneficiaries even noted that walking through the green spaces improved their mental health and relieved their stress.

LRI staff noted that LiF’s assistance in maintaining these green spaces had temporarily taken some pressure off municipal budgets. Two LRI staff members and one sub-grantee said the results had increased interest in continuing the work of expanding and maintaining green spaces. One LRI staffer and one municipality said that this interest was mostly expressed by citizens and that they hoped it would push municipalities to act as well in the future. Some of the projects that were cited as successful by the respondents were the Fouad Boutros Bridge, the small gardens in Beirut and Tripoli (particularly the garden behind El Salem Hospital), the Saida entryway, and the seaside cleaning in Byblos.

LRI staff, cash-for-work beneficiaries, and representatives of municipalities and one implementing organization all noted that LiF had provided important seasonal employment for workers, with one LRI staffer saying they had exceeded their targets for worker participation in Beirut. Respondents noted that, in addition to providing income, LiF's interventions also helped these workers gain skills in the forestry sector. Indeed, several workers confirmed they had gained a lot of experience and skills from the work they did. However, some respondents noted that it would be hard in the future to offer the same compensation rate provided by LiF, which would limit municipalities' ability to hire workers to maintain the implemented projects.

Respondents described several factors that they felt had made LiF's interventions effective. Municipal and organizational partners said the LRI staff were easy to work with, while cash-for-work beneficiaries particularly noted positive relationships with them. One municipal respondent stated that LRI had played an active supervisory role, while others noted that coordination between the different partners had been effective. LiF's partners had relevant backgrounds in forestry and the private sector. Cash-for-work beneficiaries who were involved in individual projects said strong bonds had formed between members of the same team. They knew they could rely on one another to pull their weight and contribute to their overall work.

During the site visits, the evaluation team noted that people were enjoying the green areas implemented by LiF. There were children playing in playgrounds, elderly people relaxing on benches or doing handicrafts, etc. The team also witnessed an art exhibition held at the Sanayeh Garden and believes this would not have been possible without the maintenance work done by LiF there.

***“Once the project ended, the municipality saw the success, and residents endorsed it (...) hopefully this will create a ripple effect for the bigger project.”***

***-Key Informant***

***“I had worked with other NGOs before, but this one was (...) better. (...) I was happy working with them. We saw results. The city looked better.”***

***- FGD Participant***

***Beneficiaries and sub-awardees identified several factors that facilitated LiF's successes, including:***

- LRI's team was pleasant to work with.***
- Coordination between LRI, municipalities, and implementing partners was effective.***
- The implementing partners all had relevant backgrounds.***
- The sense of camaraderie that developed between workers.***

### Q 2.3: What were the main challenges encountered during implementation?

*Finding 2.3: Challenges reported by LRI staff were mostly related to factors specific to big cities, such as clientelism, complicated bureaucracy, lack of clear roles and responsibilities in government institutions, lack of skilled labor (in comparison to rural areas), lack of water and shade, and concerns about worker safety. They also cited context-related challenges, such as money transfer issues related to banks, which delayed payments.*

LRI staff explained that it had taken their team a while to adjust to the highly bureaucratic and political public administrations in Beirut and Tripoli. Getting approvals for LiF's interventions was a lengthy process, which caused delays in implementation. They had not faced this challenge while dealing with municipalities in rural areas in the past.

LRI staff expressed their concern regarding the sustainability of the work done on the Fouad Boutros bridge in Beirut due to the lack of clarity in the division of roles and responsibilities

between the Beirut municipality and the Beirut governorate directorate, which are supposed to set up a committee soon to oversee the maintenance of the bridge by the local community.

One LRI staff spoke about the Byblos municipality reporting on ghost beneficiaries and how LRI spotted the issue and stopped the project until the municipality assigned a more compliant municipal staff member.

Another LRI staff recommended allocating more time for the preparation phase of projects implemented in cities in order to have the full engagement of different stakeholders and adapt to the lack of local urban plans and the dispersed locations of interventions within the same city.

Most LRI staff said they preferred to work in fewer sites, as it was challenging to work with four new municipalities in a short period of time.

LRI staff explained that due to the fluctuating currency exchange rate and the increasing prices, workers' wages were no longer sufficient. All sites faced delays, and workers were unable to receive their payments due to bank closures (due to covid or security reasons) and lack of liquidity. One municipality staff stated that these delays in payment caused the workers to lose their trust in LRI and the municipality, despite all the efforts made by the former to explain the situation.

LiF was able to overcome the increasing transportation costs by assigning workers to locations close to their area of residence. Some workers also resorted to carpooling or just walked to work.

During the implementation phase, huge amounts of vegetation waste were generated on a daily basis. Since LRI had not included an item on waste management and disposal in LiF's initial work plan, they had to rent dump trucks to collect the waste. Only Tripoli's municipality handled waste collection itself. LRI had to dispose of the vegetation waste in landfills or transport it to treatment facilities. In Byblos, the waste was transported to Bentaal Nature Reserve's premises, and in Tripoli to Nemreen to be broken down by a shredder provided by a USAID-funded project (Tamkin program) to the municipality.

In Beirut, LRI first tried to access a shredder owned by the municipality, but after purchasing the needed safety gear (work gloves, eye protection goggles, etc.), it turned out the machine was no longer available for use. The municipality then decided to manage the waste itself through the city's main contractor for waste management.

USAID staff were understanding of the budget constraints that municipalities were facing and their inability to hire workers to do the works to which they had committed. According to LRI staff, since workers in the cities were not skilled in agriculture-related work, they had to offer them training and follow up more with them afterwards, which is something they did not need to do so extensively when they worked in rural areas in the past. Similarly, one Byblos municipality staff reported that the socio-economic background of residents there had made it more difficult to find workers willing to do the work. A staffer from another municipality also said that getting pruning experts on board would have been better and more efficient for the work.

Beneficiaries who took part in the Saida FGD said they had not faced any issues and that the equipment had been sufficient. Tripoli FGD participants expressed the same thing and added that LRI staff were very organized. The same positive feedback was given by Beirut FGD participants who also emphasized the importance of clearly dividing the labor among worker groups and said they would gladly do this kind of work again. In Byblos, the interviewed workers said the equipment was made of brittle steel and would sometimes break. However, they said they had enjoyed working with LiF. On their part, LRI staff said that some tools had not been properly maintained, and that was why some of them had broken. They admitted, however, that these tools (mostly for pruning) were not of the best quality and had gotten quickly worn out due to excessive use.

FGD participants reported facing some resistance from residents at first but said these had later changed their minds after seeing the results.

#### Q 2.4: What was the learning regarding the site selection criteria?

*Finding 2.4: LRI staff were happy with the cities selected but said a smaller number would have been more manageable for a pilot project. They listed a number of criteria to take into consideration when selecting sites: Land tenure access and rights, Availability of areas, Conducting a technical assessment, Worker safety, Cultural and ethnic diversity, Maintenance costs and feasibility, Stakeholders to be involved in decision making, and Insurance for workers (this applies to both rural and urban settings).*

LRI staff said they had not followed any criteria for site selection, as their priority had been to find locations quickly and begin work there as soon as possible. Although, they had access to a study made available by LiveLoveLebanon about the availability of green spaces in Beirut, this study however did not specify land ownership, which is a key criterion to be considered.

Safety is a major concern while working near roads and highways, hence the importance of providing workers with medical insurance. LRI staff selected areas to do maintenance work where risks for workers are minimal and the working conditions are safer; for example, sites located near inner roads with low traffic rather than highway medians and heavy-traffic roads.

LRI staff explained that they had selected the sites based on the different cultural and religious affiliations of residents.

One staff member clarified how several stakeholders, including residents, other NGOs, and private firms were either already completing work in certain sites or wanted to be involved as consultants on projects. LRI needed to consult with them, which prolonged the duration of implementation. Another important element to take into consideration was the maintenance costs and feasibility for the municipality or another entity to maintain the site.

One LRI staff explained that they had selected locations in different parts of the city in a way as to equally benefit as many residents as possible and that they had taken into account site maintenance, the level of work needed, and the safety of workers. In general, all LRI staff thought that the locations selected were good.

### **SUSTAINABILITY OF ANJAR ECO-PARK**

#### **Q 3: How sustainable do you foresee the Anjar Eco-Park as a stand-alone project?**

##### Q 3.1: What are the main elements that define the sustainability of AEP? And to what extent?

*Finding 3.1: AEP's sustainability is conditional on ensuring income-generating activities and a positive working relation among stakeholders that will maintain the existing assets: infrastructure, human resources, natural assets, and equipment.*

Both LRI and USAID staff said that AEP's sustainability was still debatable at the moment. One interviewee mentioned a learning process and that the park indeed had all the elements and components to be sustainable. The evaluation team believes that AEP has all the needed assets to be sustainable, such as built capacities, human resources, natural assets (e.g., forest and wetland), and infrastructure. What remains to be seen is who will manage the park and how; for example, what role each stakeholder, the municipality, and the Homenetmen Sports Association Lebanon (HMTM) will play in the management, operation, and oversight of AEP and how the profits will be split between the stakeholders. LRI and USAID stated that a clear set of agreements would need to be reached and respected to ensure the park would subsist and continue to function. They said all the necessary tools were already available and that the committee would only have to run it properly.

LiF developed a good marketing plan for AEP, in terms of promotion, visibility, and branding, and contacted tour operators and social media influencers. All key informants interviewed said the number of visitors was acceptable, especially that this was a newly established park. AEP initiated partnerships with tour operators and a local restaurant to increase the park's visibility.

AEP staff and LRI confirmed that the AEP had been self-sufficient since February 2022 in terms of operational expenses. Based on visitor demand, some improvements were made during the past

year, such as introducing rental bikes for toddlers and creating camping areas, which will attract a diverse clientele.

**“AEP will be sustainable if the team there are able to continue managing the park and generate a good income to sustain themselves.”**

**-LRI Key Informant**

### Q 3.2: What factors have positively or negatively affected the sustainability of AEP? How?

*Finding 3.2: Stakeholders noted that AEP had the tools needed to achieve sustainability, including the good structure of the management committee and staff members possessing the required skills and resources to manage the park. However, they said these tools were negatively affected by external and internal factors, such as the loss of staff due to the financial crisis and the management committee facing internal conflicts.*

#### **Positive Factors**

Tools, assets, and skilled staff: During the past three years, LiF and USAID invested a lot in AEP in terms of building the staff's capacity, designing and planning the park in a smart and effective way, installing various infrastructure, building new trails, acquiring various equipment, developing a marketing plan, and putting in place a set of procedures to manage and oversee the park's operations.

Committee of diverse stakeholders: LiF established a committee comprised of people from different stakeholders to monitor and manage the park and follow up on all its activities centrally without having to inform each stakeholder separately. This committee comprises diverse expertise in accounting, eco-tourism, and management, which will help the park to generate income.

Sustainable and instrumental youth and volunteer program: As one LRI staffer explained, AEP did not rely on volunteers in the beginning. However, after seeing the activities being implemented there, locals expressed their interest in being involved in the park's work on a volunteer basis. Another interviewee went as far as saying that the park would not even exist without the volunteers and that the community was relying on these people to get the work done there.

Affordable activities: According to KII respondents, visitors consider the activities offered at AEP affordable compared to other eco-tourism facilities in the area and in Lebanon in general.

#### **Negative Factors**

Miscommunication between stakeholders: Good communication between the different stakeholders is key for the proper management of AEP, however, sometimes these stakeholders do not see eye to eye, and challenges may arise, although this is not often a deal breaker, as one LRI staffer said. One interviewee explained that the lack of responsibility on HMTN's part led to internal conflicts. When asked about communication among stakeholders, another interviewee preferred not to answer and stated that an agreement between the municipality, LRI, and HMTN was going to be signed in the coming week to clarify roles and responsibilities. However, other interviewed stakeholders said the agreement had already been signed.

Stakeholders' lack of engagement: AEP staff regularly inform the municipality of all the events held in the park. However, they said they did not feel that the stakeholders were sufficiently involved and engaged. On their part, stakeholders seemed critical of the quality of AEP's management and marketing plan. One KII respondent said this plan was unsatisfactory and could be improved, especially with regard to the social media outreach work and the cooperation with the local restaurant.

Conflicting agendas/priorities: Some members of the AEP committee are affiliated with political parties, which might affect the sustainability of the park, as explained by two LRI staffers. Only one KII respondent (of the three directly involved in AEP's management) had a clear idea of the roles and responsibilities of each member of the committee. Another key informant said the municipality did not have a direct role in the management of the park and recommended that HMTN invest more in

the park and make some improvements, such as installing mobile latrines, maintaining the equipment, etc.

**Fuel crisis:** The fuel shortage had a negative effect on AEP’s business and operations, with many people not making reservations or canceling their existing ones due to the distance.

**Expensive food:** According to one LRI staffer, while most visitors said the park’s activities were inexpensive, many said the food there was overpriced compared to local restaurants in the area. To justify the higher prices, the interviewee said the food was more expensive because it was prepared by local women using quality ingredients.

**Economic crisis:** The economic crisis and the ensuing devaluation of the local currency have affected the salaries of AEP’s staff. The park initially started with seven full-time employees and currently has only one left. After LiF stopped paying salaries in February 2022, all AEP staff members quit their jobs except one, which undermines all the efforts that were made before to maintain the park’s human resources and is expected to affect the park’s sustainability negatively. Those employees were well trained by LiF and had been working there since the park’s early beginnings. On another note, the lack of funds caused by the economic crises can hinder AEP’s ability to reach more people and widen its circle of marketing and communication.

**“Staff are not motivated to work. Their salaries are in Lebanese lira and are thus insignificant. The [AEP] committee did not raise their salaries. It wasn’t LiF’s decision. We have been trying and pressuring them, but they haven’t taken the decision [to raise the salaries] yet.”**  
**-LRI Key Informant**

**Q 3.3: Which aspects of AEP’s activities are likely to be the most sustainable? And which are the least?**

**Finding 3.3:** According to key informants familiar with AEP’s activities, two of those are highly sustainable: Hiking & Events and Educational activities (training, planting, seed center, etc.). Three activities were described as moderately sustainable: Cycling, Art Gallery & Souvenirs and Mouneh Shop, and Food & Beverage. Less sustainable activities include Strawberry Picking and Birdwatching.

The evaluation team asked six key informants about the activities offered by AEP and how they would rate each in terms of sustainability. Five of them demonstrated good knowledge of these activities while the sixth did not seem very familiar with them. The results are presented in the table below.

**Table 1: Sustainability of AEP’s activities based on KII responses**

Activity	Finding(s)	Conclusion
Hiking & Events	Highly sustainable	All key informants agreed that these two activities were the most sustainable in terms of income generation, visitor demand, and low maintenance.
Educational activities, e.g., training, planting, seed center, etc.	Highly sustainable, especially the planting activities. Many schools are interested in such activities.	There is a huge potential for this type of activity if a larger number of schools is engaged.
Cycling	Moderately sustainable	Maintenance is required for bikes. This is a family-friendly activity, but not all customers know the park

Activity	Finding(s)	Conclusion
		offers it. Demand varies according to the season.
Art Gallery and Museum Visits & Souvenirs and Mouneh Shop	Moderately sustainable activities. There is no direct cost for AEP to include such components in its list of activities.	These activities are linked to the AEP but are not directly managed by it.
Meals at the guesthouse & Coffee and refreshments	Moderately sustainable (according to some key informants).	These are occasional activities linked to other (outdoor) activities. They depend on the type of visitors (individuals or families) and their age range.
Strawberry picking & Outdoor kitchen activity	From slightly sustainable to moderately sustainable.  The person in charge left the park and could not be replaced, for financial reasons.  Lack of interest from the customers even after all the efforts made to promote these activities.	These two activities were not implemented.  Maintenance is needed to renew the strawberries plants.
Birdwatching activity	From unsustainable to moderately sustainable.  Interviewees expressed varied and sometimes conflicting views about this activity and its sustainability.	This activity was never implemented, but some stakeholders believe it could be boosted by getting ornithology experts on board.

## ADOPTION OF MID-TERM EVALUATION'S RECOMMENDATIONS

**Q 4: To what extent and in what ways were the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation acted upon during the one-year cost extension?**

*Q 4.1: To what extent and in what ways were the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation acted upon during the one-year cost extension?*

*Finding 4.1: The LRI team made an effort to follow all the applicable recommendations of LiF's mid-term performance evaluation throughout the extension's lifetime and adopted some of them in other projects as well. With few exceptions, the team tried to apply these recommendations as much as possible under the urban forestry component.*

The evaluation team collected information from several LRI staff about the extent to which LiF had adopted the recommendations presented in its mid-term performance evaluation conducted in May 2021 (Annex 10). The team also did a desk review of the evaluation's recommendations' tracker. The findings are presented below.

### Land Restoration

**-Boost the natural regeneration and the integration of key species:** LRI's planting team took this recommendation into account and applied it under the urban-forestry component. However, they

did not apply it in rural areas, because there were only a few sites remaining when the extension took effect. LiF added more diverse species in the newly-reforested areas and tried to establish a balance between what the municipalities wanted and what the different sites needed in terms of diversity of species. Under the urban-forestry component, LiF realized that the main focus in cities was on aesthetics rather than on environmental regeneration and biodiversity. One LRI interviewee said, “In Beirut, since the municipality did not ask about the details of the work, we could do what we wanted and pushed the natural regeneration approach forward.”

-Adopt the Miyawaki method: The LRI team expressed conflicting opinions regarding this method. Some of them said they were not so sure about this method from a technical point of view, while others said the limited time had prevented them from adopting it in some sites. This method could not be applied in urban-forestry interventions for one main technical reason: the planting must be done in pots and not in the soil. The LiF team are keeping an eye on the Sin el Fil pocket forest, implemented by the OtherDada [tOD] Integrated Consultancy & Architecture (known as Sugi project), using the Miyawaki method.

-Promote the use of fast-growing species: LiF adopted this recommendation in rural areas only, as fast-growing species are highly dependent on climate suitability, soil type, and water availability.

### **Nurseries**

-Change nurseries’ business engagement in the project and consider payment associated with deliverables: LRI was not able to fully adopt this recommendation and is still facing some problems with the nurseries regarding invoices, delays in delivery, and quality differences. The team said they were constantly following up with these nurseries. Furthermore, without sufficient time allocated and large quantities ordered, nurseries cannot be expected to provide a more diversified portfolio, as it would not be profitable to them.

### **Private Sector**

-Encourage companies and the diaspora to direct their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) efforts towards livelihood assistance besides restoration activities: LRI tried to change the approach by including international companies in many of LiF’s activities. The study on ecosystem services that LiF conducted in 2019 was done in a very different context than now and was intended to increase awareness and create a new approach for CSR schemes. Today, however, businesses are operating in survival mode, and their level of engagement is different.

Of relevance here is the partnership formed between AEP and a local restaurant to promote the park’s activities on the restaurant’s website and offer special tourist packages (e.g., AEP visit plus lunch and/or breakfast at the restaurant). But in this case, there is no direct funding from the private sector.

Under the urban-forestry component, the private sector (kept anonymous) contributed a water tank to the Fouad Boutros Bridge project. According to a LRI staffer, some items, such as streetlights with built-in solar panels, could have been funded by the private sector, but nobody at LRI did the necessary follow-up to make that happen.

### **Agroforestry**

-Apply the dense seeding techniques: According to LiF staff, this recommendation was taken into consideration at an LRI project funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Such work needed a bigger budget and could not be undertaken in other LiF sites, as they had already been established.

-Avoid investing in auxiliary equipment and infrastructure: LiF continued investing in auxiliary equipment, as it was part of their value-chain approach. They wanted to support the farmers based on farm-to-fork approach, and this was upon the farmers and landowners’ request.

-Incorporate agro-forestry system approaches within already existing orchards: Within LiF's extension, LRI had a few adopters of the agro-forestry approach. This model was also adopted under similar projects funded by UNDP and implemented by LRI.

-Promote agroforestry within USAID's agriculture activities and projects: LiF staff said they had reached out to the USAID-funded Agriculture and Rural Empowerment (ARE) project, but the proposal did not make it past the submission phase.

### **Fire Prevention**

-Mobilize budget and resources to prioritize the completion of the remaining Fireshed sites: Within the LiF extension, the LRI team worked to complete work at the pending sites (Hasbaya, Rachaya, and North). They explained that the fire-prevention component needed constant input in terms of maintenance and cleaning and that whenever they had the funds, they tried to clean as many areas as possible in towns with a high fire risk. Unfortunately, due to the financial crisis, the municipalities that benefited from previous projects can no longer afford to maintain the sites.

For AEP, LiF offered stakeholders training in fire prevention, including how to map water sources and identify areas that present a high risk of fires.

### **Forest Management**

-Encourage municipalities' engagement in forest management (increasing awareness, using native trees, etc.): LRI staff said they were expanding and scaling up their work. They developed forest-management plans for four different areas: Kfarmershki, Khenchara, Meziara, and Kherbet Rouha, after holding round tables with stakeholders there to collect their input. They validated each plan with the respective municipality then ran it by the Ministry of Environment for approval before proceeding with dissemination and implementation. Furthermore, LiF developed a forest-management plan for Deir el Ahmar that covers all the Baalbek-Hermel governorate and not only the village. As for cities, there is a lack of knowledge within municipalities there about native species and their selection, which can hinder the execution of forest-management plans, as explained by one key informant.

-Promote balance between community development and forest preservation: According to LRI, a lot was done in this regard. Their team delivered a series of training to local communities on non-forest products and their potential use and on the importance of sustainable forest management in the four sites covered by LiF (Kfarmershki, Khenchara, Meziara, and Kherbet Rouha).

Under the urban-forestry component, LiF tried to apply this recommendation in Beirut. They made intense efforts to inform the community (people living in the vicinity of the Fouad Boutros bridge) about the project, briefing them about the garden plan and inviting them to participate. They also offered them training about native trees and explained the importance of establishing a committee for the garden. LRI also tried to apply this recommendation in Saida where they saw potential, but they were unable to achieve sufficient community engagement.

-Develop financing schemes for municipalities: LiF developed different financial models, such as using part of the entrance fees to natural reserves to finance restoration and conservation efforts there. On recognizing the economic value of nature, one LRI staffer said that Lebanon was trailing far behind other countries. Moreover, the study on the payment schemes of ecosystem services that LRI had commissioned was put on hold due to other priorities. LRI requested the USFS's assistance in order to resume it.

-Strengthen the relationship between people's livelihoods and the various ecosystem services: LRI staff acknowledge that local communities are more aware now of the importance of ecosystem services and the income-generating activities they provide, such as beekeeping and collecting medicinal plants. But guiding communities on how to use their forests without causing a long-term impact on their conservation is a lengthy process.

-Encourage small landowners to use native species in their landscaping: LRI has been encouraging the use of native species as part of the training, awareness activities, and events they deliver to communities. For instance, LiF offered training on planting native species on balconies to a number of households in Beirut.

### **Local Governance**

-Promote more collaboration between key stakeholders to avoid the duplication of efforts and activities: LRI staff said this recommendation had more to do with municipalities. One staffer added that before starting an intervention in a given location, LiF would see if there were activities already taking place there in order to avoid any overlapping of efforts.

Under the urban-forestry component, especially in Beirut following the port explosion, LiF took into account the multitude of NGOs working there. The team made sure to coordinate closely with these organizations to avoid duplication of efforts. They also reached out to LiveLoveLebanon, which developed an urban-trail concept for Beirut, the Cedars of Lebanon, and Operation Big Blue, among others, to seek collaboration and combine efforts.

-Advocate for integrating forestry into policies and laws as a major contributor to the economy: An LRI staff member noted that while LiF had advocated with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment for forest protection, reforestation, and the sustainable management of forest resources, getting these activities to contribute to Lebanon's economy was still unattainable due to the current context. Another interviewee explained that the existing laws were not being enforced due to the current situation in the country.

-Organize rural tourism activities and mitigate this sector's adverse effect on reforested areas: According to LRI staff, there is no large-scale rural tourism in the areas where LiF conducted interventions. The project created hiking trails in different towns, in coordination with the municipalities, to keep people from wandering off into the reforested areas and damaging the vegetation there. They also conducted awareness campaigns to inform the public about the importance of sticking to the trails and not disturbing the surrounding areas. Furthermore, LiF provided municipalities with guidance on how to avoid crowdedness and manage large amounts of visitors. The project is doing this type of work gradually based on resource availability.

### **Economic Growth**

-Support municipalities or local cooperatives to process agricultural residues: LiF tried to optimize and limit the amount of vegetation waste generated across all its interventions by recycling as much material as possible, including vegetation waste, paper, and plastic. In Anjar, it was not possible for LiF to use the generated vegetation waste for composting, and all residues were handed to the municipality for shredding instead. In Deir el Ahmar, on the other hand, LRI established composting zones and charcoal kilns. In Nemreen, they collaborated with the municipality to send the residues for shredding. Outside the LiF project, LRI has several interventions underway, including setting up an industrial charcoal facility. In West Bekaa, LRI is coordinating with USAID's Diverting Waste by Encouraging Reuse and Recycling (DAWERR) project to manage pruning residues and optimize their use as to contribute to the circular economy.

-Implement cash-for-work activities in sustainable forest management: In certain areas, LiF offered cash-for-work activities related to the maintenance of hiking trails, fire prevention, and urban landscaping.

-Conduct a value chain assessment to cover all services provided by forest ecosystems: LRI did not follow this recommendation. They said a value chain assessment was not a priority in the current context.

## Visibility

LiF put up visibility signs in its intervention areas (mostly in planting sites), as per the mid-term evaluation's recommendation. In AEP, however, the signs blend so well with the surrounding environment that people are often unable to notice them. Moreover, LRI preferred not to install signs in locations where maintenance activities took place, saying it was no use since they would soon be covered with garbage and overgrown vegetation.

### Q 4.2: What are the main factors that negatively and positively influenced LRI's ability to adopt the recommendations and follow through on them? And how?

*Finding 4.2: The main factors that prevented LRI from fully adopting the mid-term evaluation's recommendations were i) the tight timeframe, ii) the limited budget, iii) the seasonality of some interventions, and iv) the fact that some recommendations were beyond LiF's scope. The economic situation was the main factor that pushed LRI to redirect LiF's focus to cash-for-work activities and encouraged local communities to protect their natural resources/forests after they became more aware of their economic benefits.*

One of the main obstacles that kept LiF from adopting some of the mid-term performance evaluation's recommendations was the timing of this evaluation, as the project already had plans in place that could not be easily modified, as explained by one LRI staffer. LiF tried, to the extent possible, to implement proposed modifications that were not major, did not necessitate substantial changes to the project's existing plans, and did not require a lot of time or a big budget. The scope of LiF's extension was more a response to an emergency situation and an urgent need for cash-for-work activities. As such, some of the recommendations were neither relevant nor feasible.

Regarding the recommended use of the Miyawaki method, one LRI staffer said they had debated the idea internally and might consider adopting the method in their future work.

Another recommendation that LRI did not adopt was the one related to planting native species in private gardens. This was not possible because LRI's mandate as an NGO is limited, and their main focus is on forests, not to mention the time and budget constraints.

In general, the recommendations related to economic growth were easier to apply, as the local communities are becoming more aware of the value of their ecosystems. People are now protecting their forests more because they understand that they can be a source of income for them.

## EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS

### Relevance of Urban Forestry

*Conclusion 1.1:* Urban forestry is a sub-component of forestry activities that is relevant to LiF's general objective of improving livelihoods through forestry-related activities.

*Conclusion 1.2:* It was a common and strategic decision of both USAID and LiF to refocus forestry activities on cities, especially after the Beirut port blast and as recommended in the mid-term evaluation conducted in 2021.

### Effectiveness of Urban Forestry

*Conclusion 2.1.1:* Beirut, Saida, and Tripoli completed the works as planned, with minor deviation. Tripoli could have absorbed more workers and allocated more worker days given its bigger size and potentials.

*Conclusion 2.1.2:* Byblos municipality's high expectations and standards in relation to the city's image as an acclaimed international tourist destination were not in line with the works' budget, and feasible maintenance.

*Conclusion 2.2:* LiF was able to achieve its targets in most of the cities, although there were some changes to the initial plans to respond to municipalities' priorities. LRI's experience, effective definition of roles, and creation of a positive work environment that motivated workers, drove these

achievements. As a result of meeting these targets, citizens around the sites had access to improved green spaces, and the workers benefited from an increased income, improved skills, and positive social interactions.

*Conclusion 2.3:* When there was deviation from the initial workplans, it was largely related to the need to adapt to working in urban environments, such as responding to municipalities' priorities and facing time constraints due to the added complexity of this environment, which included bureaucratic, administrative complications and the greater overall number of stakeholders in cities that needed to be involved.

### **Sustainability of AEP**

The AEP as implemented by LRI has some elements to be sustainable; however, challenging factors remain. AEP is equipped with the tools and the resources needed to manage the park and secure its sustainability. All respondents stated that the park “must” be functional despite some challenges. However, there was always a “but” stated after that.

Based on the KIs, it can be concluded that AEP possesses the needed tools and skilled staff in addition to a committee comprised of representatives of different stakeholders and a volunteering program, all of which can contribute to the sustainability of the park. However, the financial crisis that affected the staff's salaries, the lack of engagement of some of the stakeholders, and the miscommunication among the involved parties are all factors jeopardizing the park's sustainability. Furthermore, stakeholders not being all on the same wavelength and sometimes taking the park and the staff's efforts for granted are factors led to an unstable environment for collaboration.

In conclusion, AEP's sustainability depends highly on a positive and constructive collaboration between the stakeholders and on working in line with the signed agreement.

## **EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

This rapid evaluation presents the following recommendations for future USAID programming in Lebanon:

### **Urban Forestry**

*Recommendation 1:* USAID should consider implementing similar cash-for-work and livelihood activities, especially in light of the ongoing economic crisis, with a main focus on the maintenance and expansion of urban green areas. Future projects can capitalize on the work done by LiF on the Fouad Boutros Bridge and duplicate it in other areas, such as schoolyards, cemeteries (on Damascus Street or in Achrafieh), public parks, pocket gardens, etc.

Should USAID choose to implement similar forestry interventions either as a stand-alone Activity or a component of an Activity in the future, the evaluation team recommends the following:

*Recommendation 2:* the intervention should reassess abandoned lands and non-constructible areas in the targeted city. The implementer should also assess existing land and build on existing studies (for example those from 2012<sup>8</sup> and 2013<sup>9</sup>) that suggest that there are more than 1,000 plots of land in Beirut with a surface area exceeding 100 sqm that can be transformed into urban micro forests or gardens, hosting trees, shrubs, and cover plants.

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<sup>8</sup> Les espaces publics à Beyrouth, Université Saint-Joseph, Habib Debs Architectes - Urbanistes (URBI) - 2012

<sup>9</sup> Reconquerir les espaces publics de Beyrouth, Municipalite de Beyrouth en collaboration avec Bureau de la Région Île-de-France au Liban, December 2013

Recommendation 3: The intervention should raise the public’s awareness of the importance of public spaces in cities. Increased knowledge is critical for advocacy with policy and decision-makers and can help improve the planning, design, and management of urban forests. Urban systems are complex and aim to achieve not only environmental functionality but also social equity and economic viability (BES Lter, 2018<sup>10</sup>).

Recommendation 4: The intervention should allocate more time to plan and coordinate its work with the different stakeholders and endeavor to involve them in both the implementation phase and the operation and maintenance of the sites after the Activity ends. It is important to have the buy-in of a broad range of parties. (Figure 2) <sup>11</sup>

Future planning should involve the local community in urban-forestry projects and appoint local committees to maintain or pilot gardening projects on city rooftops or lands owned by multiple shareholders, including marginal lands owned by the private sector. This committee will be involved in designing and maintaining the garden and informing the community about it. These gardens aim at creating a feeling of conviviality between city dwellers in addition to raising their awareness of the importance of sharing public spaces and providing them with a natural setting to relieve their stress and improve their wellbeing.

Urban gardens are a great way to introduce green spaces into households and schools. This can be done through raised beds in backyards (Figure 3) or common outdoor areas with chairs, tables, bird nests, etc. (Figure 4)<sup>12</sup>. Urban gardens can be easily created on rooftops as well, with a variety of options and designs, and don’t require large amounts of soil, water, or supplies (Figures 5 and 6).

In previous years, the Beirut municipality used to engage the private sector, mainly banks, to improve the living environment in micro-spaces and abandoned plots left behind by construction work (for roads, buildings, etc.) in exchange for free advertising space. Future USAID projects can build on this model to ensure the continuous maintenance of funded interventions (plots, gardens, micro-forests, etc.) by the private sector after the implementing partner’s contract ends.

Recommendation 5: The intervention should have a plan in place for the proper management of materials resulting from maintenance work in intervention areas, in terms of collection, disposal, and pre-treatment if possible (e.g., shredding large tree branches), specifying the budget and the parties involved in each step.

Recommendation 6: The intervention should put in place measures and equipment to ensure the safety of all workers, including insurance. Road safety measures should be compliant with the national road safety rules (Refer to Law # 243/ 22.10.2012) and guidelines for all work done along and within (mid-sections) roads and highways.

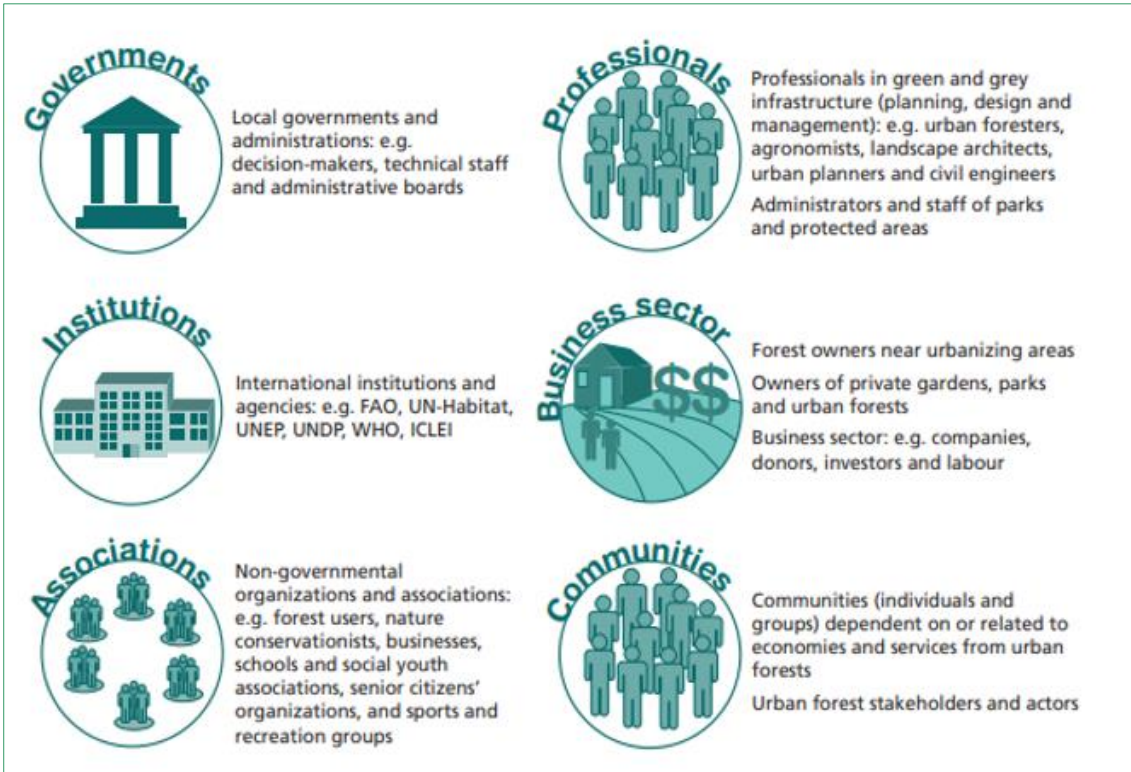
Recommendation 7: USAID should consider setting aside a budget for transportation fees and refreshments for workers, especially for work taking place in spring and summer.

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<sup>10</sup> Baltimore Ecosystem Study, Long term Ecological research (BES Lter 2018).

<sup>11</sup> FAO. 2016. Guidelines on urban and peri-urban forestry, by F. Salbitano, S. Borelli, M. Conigliaro and Y. Chen. FAO Forestry Paper No. 178. Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

<sup>12</sup> [www.grundschuleambuschgraben.de](http://www.grundschuleambuschgraben.de) (Fig. 3 and 4)



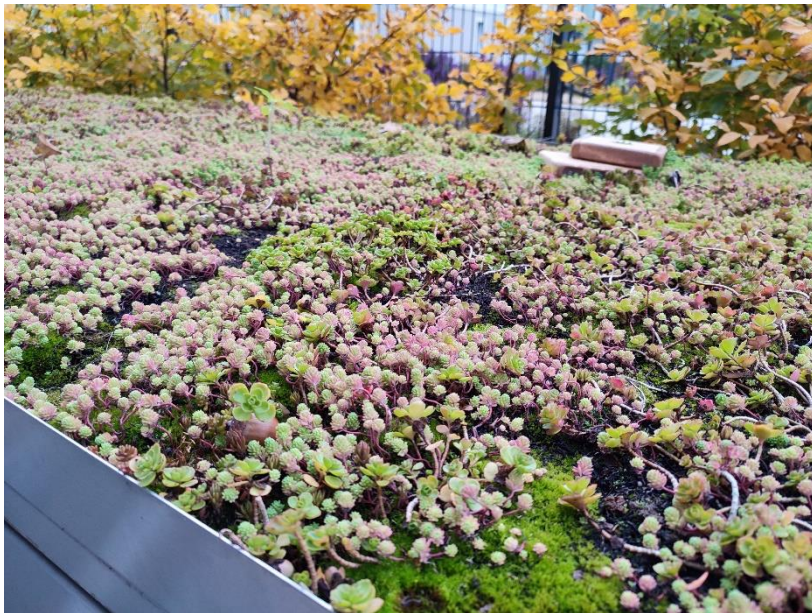
**Figure 2: Urban forest stakeholders and actors. (FAO 2016)**



**Figure 3: Raised vegetation beds in a Berlin schoolyard.**



**Figure 4: Wooden bird nests hand-painted by kids placed in a common outdoor area in a Berlin school.**



**Figure 5: Three-centimeter bed of soil laid over water tanks and planted with mesembryanthemum. (Berlin)**



**Figure 6: Raised bed planted with medicinal and ornamental plants on a Berlin rooftop.**

### **Anjar Eco-Park**

**Recommendation 8:** USAID should do follow-up for three months after LiF's closeout to check on the level of engagement of the stakeholders in the park's management and activities as detailed in the agreement.

**Recommendation 9:** In case the AEP committee did not improve its internal work relations, and the sustainability of the park continued to be at risk as a result of disagreements between the committee's members, the Anjar Municipality should look for a different entity to manage the park.

**Recommendation 10:** AEP's current committee should fill the vacant positions as soon as possible to ensure the proper operation of the park. The committee should also strengthen its marketing strategy to attract more visitors.

## **ANNEXES**

Annex 1: Scope of Work

Annex 2: Evaluation Methods and Limitations

Annex 3: Evaluation Design Matrix

Annex 4: Data-Collection Tools

Annex 5: Consent Forms

Annex 6: Document Sources

Annex 7: Disclosure of Any Conflicts of Interest

Annex 8: Evaluation Team Members

Annex 9: Recruitment Materials

Annex 10: Mid-Term Evaluation Recommendations

Annex 11: LiF Log-frame

## ANNEX I: SCOPE OF WORK



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## **ANNEX 2: EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS**

### **EVALUATION METHODS**

The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach to answer the evaluation questions. Because its programmatic scope is quite limited, and USAID is in need of timely recommendations based on the evaluation questions, MEPL has determined that this will be a rapid evaluation, utilizing a relatively small evaluation team and short calendar timeline. Qualitative data was collected from interviews with 39 individuals, five site visits and supplemented with the review of LiF documents. The sample included USAID and LiF staff, municipality staff, sub-awardees, and beneficiaries 23 beneficiaries of cash for work activities. The interviews took place between 16-28 September. The evaluation questions were mapped against sub-questions, data sources, data collection methods, and sample in the Evaluation Matrix in Annex 3

Data collection methods for this evaluation are further detailed below:

- **Document Review**

Document review included at least 40 documents primarily focused on the Activity implementation post the 2021 evaluation. The review allowed the evaluation team to build a comprehensive understanding of the design and implementation of LiF, to identify the learning captured so far, and to cross-check findings from primary data collection against existing data and information. The documents included quarterly progress reports, modifications, the 2021 evaluation, among others. The evaluation team continued to review project documents iteratively throughout the evaluation process, as needed. Primary data collection yielded access to additional documents relevant to the evaluation, which were incorporated into the iterative document review. Some documents were provided by LiF during the evaluation design phase; additional documents were requested in the first week of September. All referenced and analyzed documents are listed in the evaluation report's bibliographical annex 4.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

The team conducted semi-structured KIIs with the USAID AOR and five LiF staff. The evaluation team were in direct contact with the USAID AOR and requested the interview by email. The five staff from LiF were selected by the evaluation team, and the interviews logistically organized by the LiF CoP. The interviews were held in person at the LiF office. The evaluation team selected respondents purposively in consultation with the program team and included staff members who have been involved in program strategy, design, and/or implementation. These individuals included the LiF COP, DCOP, project coordinator, M&E manager, and AEP's coordinator. The rationale behind the KIIs was to conduct in-depth interviews with key actors at LiF who were responsible for the management and implementation of the activity. These KIIs were essential for the evaluation team to gain multiple perspectives on the relevance and effectiveness of project management and implementation.

The team conducted three KIIs with NGO and private sector company partners of LiF and with six municipality staff. LiF provided the contact information of these individuals by email, and evaluation team stored them in the SharePoint group of the evaluation documents. The partners had a specific role to play in some interventions and were expected to contribute to the learning around the effectiveness of the implementation and what could be done differently. The interviewees were purposively selected by LiF staff and were expected to be senior staff.

### **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

The evaluation team conducted one FGD in each of the four sites with beneficiaries that participated in cash for work activities. The evaluation team randomly selected up to 6 workers per site from

lists that were shared by LiF. The FGDs were held in mixed sex spaces. The evaluation team double checked with LiF that it was fine to have mixed sex FGDs in each location based on the staff's understanding of contextual/cultural realities in the area. The facilitator clarified to FGD participants that the input of every person is valuable for the evaluation and that participants were expected to respect each other's opinions and experiences; this reflects the text in the participant consent form.

The LiF team contacted the beneficiaries and followed the recruitment materials (annex 9) shared by evaluation team to invite the participants to the FGDs.

For in person interviews (KII and FGD), social distancing was ensured between participants, notetaker and facilitator. Participants were requested as per the recruitment materials to withdraw their participation if they have symptoms or were in contact with someone that tested positive. Interviews were conducted in a private room at the municipality or the offices of the NGO or company or outdoors in a garden. The main purpose of conducting FGDs was to examine the extent to which the project had clear guidance and expectations for cash for work and other activities involving beneficiaries in the four sites, hence assessing the effectiveness. FGDs informed the evaluation team about the shared experience, and diversity of experience, of beneficiaries. These discussions helped learning challenges and recommendations for similar projects in the future.

The evaluation team was not able to pilot the tools given the tight timeline of the evaluation.

- **Site Visits (SVs)**

The evaluation team visited the five sites selected by USAID AOR for visual observation of the completion of works in four of the sites and sustainability of the eco-park. The rationale behind the SVs was primarily to observe and inspect the completion of the works, and the maintenance of the sites. The operating focal point guided us and explained as we talked how the works were completed. The evaluation team took pictures to document the visit and did not include individuals in them. A form for the SV protocol is included in Annex 4.

## **Data Analysis**

The analysis was based on assessing the effectiveness of completing the work in the four sites and the sustainability of the eco-park. Reports and interviews were key to providing evidence of successful performance and were compared with findings from site visits. Ultimately, this combined analysis elicited a triangulated perspective to inform USAID about lessons learned and programmatic ways forward.

The evaluation team took detailed notes during interviews and focus group discussions and completed site visit forms for each of the five sites. The data were cleaned and summarized to facilitate the extraction of key themes on relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability. After the evaluation team completed preliminary analysis for these evaluation questions, they came together for three internal data analysis and interpretation sessions (DAIS) to share emerging themes and patterns, and developed concise narratives related to the evaluation questions. These narratives provided information for the preliminary findings sessions that the team conducted with USAID and other stakeholders, as appropriate. Through this participatory process, the evaluation team validated findings and discussed dissemination plans with stakeholders.

## **DATA QUALITY CONTROL AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data collection team uploaded the collected data to MEPL's password-secure SharePoint site on a daily basis.

Data collection and management adhered to the protection and confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) as follows:

- The team administered informed consent forms prior to conducting recorded interviews, ensuring respondents are aware of the purpose of the study and their participation options

(see below discussion and Annexes 4 and 5). An Arabic version of the consent forms was shared with the interviewees by email ahead of the interviews or in printed copies right at the end of the interviews. The facilitator briefly explained the consent form at the start of the interview if the interviewee has read it already, if not then the facilitator went over it in detail using the language that the interviewee is most comfortable with either English or Arabic. Once informed consent was given and approval to be recorded, the facilitator audio recorded the verbal consent.

- All interview recordings and notes were electronically stored in a password-protected and encrypted shared folder.
- PII were collected from all respondents in the interview notes so the evaluation team would follow up with any questions for clarification, given that all respondents were intimately involved or benefiting of the program. Respondents were assigned a unique identification number in the interview tracker that was stored in the evaluation team SharePoint folders. There was a single file in which the personal identifying information can be linked to this unique identification number.
- The dataset and shared folder were stored in EnCompass's SharePoint account, which is highly secured and protected by U.S. standards. The team members had access to the project password-protected folder.
- Team members immediately shared any documents containing PII. There was no information or documents stored on personal computers.
- The anonymity of informants was ensured by referring to them as per their respondent group in the report (ex: LiF staff, municipality staff, etc.), to avoid any PII from being utilized.
- Team members were instructed not to use emails with PII contents unless encrypted.
- The PII data remained stored in the encrypted SharePoint file and no such data was shared outside the evaluation team. Data shared with USAID did not include PII, and the report included results in aggregated form identifying only stakeholder groups.
- Finally, all PII will be deleted once the final report is approved by USAID and the project is certified as complete.

They were held with appropriate protocols to protect the confidentiality of responses and abide by COVID-19 health regulations in the case of in-person interviews. In addition to requesting participants to abide by the covid-19 guidance provided in the recruitment materials, the evaluation team ensured safe physical distancing between participants, proper ventilation in the venue, and hand sanitizer was available.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **INFORMED CONSENT**

At the start of each interview, data collectors read a standard informed consent and confidentiality statement explaining:

- The purpose of the evaluation and why the respondent(s) was(were) selected.
- The length of the interview (generally one hour), and if recorded, that the recording will be used only by the data collectors to fill any gaps in their notes and that all notes and recordings will be stored in a secure location and destroyed when the evaluation has concluded.
- That participation in the interview was completely voluntary and the respondent may decline to answer any question and also end the interview at any time.

- Benefits and risks stemming from participation, and that incentives or compensation are not provided.
- Right and extent of confidentiality.

Respondents received a copy of the Study Information Sheet and Informed Consent Statement, either as a soft copy through e-mail before the virtual interview or as a hard copy at the beginning of an in-person interview (Annex 5). Respondents were asked for oral consent to participate, and permission to audio-record the conversations. If consent was granted, data collectors were beginning recording and audio record the consent.

No financial incentives or compensation was provided to the respondents, and data collection occurred during work hours or at a time convenient for the respondents.

## **DATA MANAGEMENT**

After data collection, data collectors uploaded all raw data, including recordings, interview notes, and KII sheets onto EnCompass' secure server where they will be stored for a period of three years, at which point they will be destroyed. Data collectors will permanently remove data from their personal computers, tablets, cloud-based servers, and external hard drives.

Personal identifying information (PII) were collected from all respondents so the evaluation team can follow up with any questions for clarification, given that all respondents were intimately involved or benefiting of the program. Respondents were assigned a unique identification number. There is a single file in which the personal identifying information were linked to this unique identification number.

Only applications that require password-protected accounts to access were used so that the evaluation team can control project file sharing and grants access only to those working on the evaluation.

## **RISK MITIGATION**

The evaluation team conducted interviews in locations that assure privacy or, if not fully private, are comfortable for the respondents. Data collectors reiterated that conversations remained confidential and reminded participants to be respectful and maintained privacy. Data collectors refrained from discussing interview content amongst themselves except when they are in private settings.

## **ADVERSE EVENTS**

There are two categories of adverse events, defined as:

### Category A: Any Serious Adverse Event that Occurs within 48 Hours of Participation in the Research/ Evaluation

Serious adverse events are those resulting in death, a life-threatening experience, hospitalization or prolongation of existing hospitalization, a persistent or significant disability or capacity, or a congenital anomaly or birth defect. Every serious adverse event must be reported on a form provided by EnCompass's Institutional Review Board (IRB), even if the event does not appear to be associated with the research protocol. In addition, the IRB (at [irb@encompassworld.com](mailto:irb@encompassworld.com)) should be notified within 24 hours of discovery of any serious adverse event.

### Category B: Any Event for which All Three of the Following are True:

- *Subject or Risks to Subject or Others Adversely Affected:* An event or outcome has occurred that has resulted in harm to the subject, has affected the subject detrimentally, has worsened as a result of their participation, or that has resulted in increased risk to the subject or to others, whether or not the risk has actually resulted in harm (for example, misplacing a subject's research records would constitute an increased risk event that should be reported).

- *Unexpected Event*: The event or outcome was not described as a risk of participation in the research, or, though described as a risk, the event or outcome has occurred with unexpected severity or frequency.
- *Possibly, Probably, or Definitely Related Event*: The event or outcome was definitely related to participation in the research or it is reasonable to conclude that the event or outcome was related to participation or it is possible the event or outcome was related but not enough information is available at this time to assess the likelihood of this possibility.

If an evaluation team member or data collector becomes aware of an adverse event, they could immediately report it to team leader Sandra Fahd, PhD on +961-76706744 or [sfahd@encompassworld.com](mailto:sfahd@encompassworld.com) referring to the Adverse Event Report provided by the IRB.

## **INCIDENTS**

EnCompass took personal and organizational security seriously. Physical, personal, and cyber-security measures are employed to avoid, mitigate, and respond to threats as a matter of policy. Understanding that no security measures are invulnerable, EnCompass required all employees, independent contractors, and beneficiaries to document any incident that represented a threat to the organization, its employees, contractors, and beneficiaries. Where more than one employee, independent contractor, or beneficiary has first-hand knowledge of an incident, team leader, Sandra Fahd was obligated to take responsibility for assembling a full description of the incident, documenting the context, correspondence, and other information. When a member of the assessment or data collection team became aware of an incident, they completed an incident report, provided by the IRB, and submitted it to Sandra Fahd, who reviewed and transmitted it to the appropriate vetted personnel based on a need-to-know basis to address the incident as needed.

## **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)**

Data collection instruments and protocols were submitted for approval by the EnCompass IRB. Data collection didn't begin until IRB approval was granted.

## **EVALUATION REPORT, VALIDATION, AND DISSEMINATION**

### **VALIDATION SESSION(S)**

The evaluation team held a preliminary findings validation session with USAID staff. Following that, a similar session was held with LiF staff. The sessions were used to validate findings and conclusions through a participatory and collaborative process and to discuss initial recommendations. The outcomes of the validation sessions were used to finalize the report.

### **DISSEMINATION**

After USAID/Lebanon approves the evaluation report, the evaluation team will redact it and make it 508-compliant before uploading it on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) repository for wider dissemination and use by the development community. MEPL will hold a debrief with USAID/Lebanon to discuss the implications of the evaluation's findings for the Mission and obtain its feedback about the evaluation process. Additional dissemination materials will be developed including a 3–5-page executive summary document for easy sharing with all evaluation participants and other interested stakeholders.

## **ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES/LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

Recall bias was expected, especially with beneficiaries and municipalities who received the services and support more than a year ago. The evaluation team found however that respondents were able to remember well the services they received or activities they participated in without any challenge. Additional probing for specific example was rarely needed because they were already sharing about their day to day experience easily.

The evaluation team was aware of potential response bias from the key informants and beneficiaries, as these may be motivated to provide responses that would be considered socially desirable or influential in obtaining additional support. To mitigate such bias, the evaluation team clarified at the start of every interview that the responses were not influenced the possibility of obtaining future assistance while emphasizing the confidential nature of the interview.

The evaluation team was working with a tight timeline for the evaluation and was heavily reliant on the availability of site focal points, staff of municipalities and beneficiaries to complete the data collection in time. To mitigate any possible delays, the evaluation team started coordination with LiF staff two weeks before the scheduled start of the site visits.

### ANNEX 3: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

Evaluation Questions	Sub-questions	Data sources	Data collection methods
1. To what extent is the urban forestry component relevant to the overall LiF objective?	1.1 To what extent is the urban forestry component aligned with the LIF objective? 1.2 How do the USAID and LiF staff perceive relevance of the extension activities to LiF objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LRI Staff</li> <li>• USAID staff</li> <li>• Activity Documents and M&amp;E Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Informant Interviews</li> <li>• Desk review</li> </ul>
2. Were the works in the four sites completed as per the initial plan? And if not, what were the main reasons for that?	2.1 To what extent did LRI conduct activities in line with their approved work plans for the four sites? 2.2 What were the key achievements during implementation? 2.3 What were the main challenges encountered during implementation? 2.4 What was the learning regarding the selection criteria?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LRI Staff</li> <li>• USAID staff</li> <li>• Activity Documents and M&amp;E Plan and Maps</li> <li>• Beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Key Informant Interviews</li> <li>• Desk review</li> </ul>
3. How sustainable do you foresee the Anjar Eco-Park as a stand-alone project?	3.1 What are the main elements that define the sustainability of AEP? And to what extent? 3.2 What factors have affected positively or negatively the sustainability of AEP? How? 3.3 Which aspects of AEP 's activities are likely to be the most sustainable? And which are the least?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LRI staff</li> <li>• Anjar Manager</li> <li>• Sub awardees</li> <li>• Activity documents</li> <li>• MEL documents and Maps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Key Informant Interviews</li> <li>• Desk review</li> </ul>
4. To what extent and in what	4.1 To what extent and in what ways were the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LRI staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Informant Interviews</li> <li>• Desk review</li> </ul>

<p>ways were the recommendations from the mid-term evaluation acted upon during the one-year cost extension?</p>	<p>recommendations from the mid-term evaluation acted upon during the one-year cost extension?</p> <p>4.2 What are the main factors that negatively and positively influenced LRI's ability to adopt the recommendations and follow through on them? And how?</p>		
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## ANNEX 4: DATA-COLLECTION TOOLS

### KII tool with LRI staff<sup>13</sup>

- 1.1.1 How was the decision to work on urban forestry reached?
- 1.1.2 How well do you think is LiF's extension aligned with the overall objective to improve livelihoods through forestry related activities?
- 1.2 Which of these two is more relevant to the LiF extension work: the economic growth aspect or its social and environmental characteristics? Why?
- 2.1.1 To what extent were the works completed as per the workplans in the four sites?  
If not, can you elaborate on the specific activities that were not completed?
- 2.1.2 Why weren't they completed? Probe for: external factors, internal factors at project or site level.
- 2.2.1 What were the main challenges faced during the implementation phase? Can you give us some examples? *Probing: Were they related to coordination among focal points or stakeholders? site specific? Lack of funds and/or time? Lack of workforce?*
- 2.3.2 How was the outreach of workers conducted? Who was responsible for the outreach? Did you have a selection criterion?
- 2.3.5 What motivated the workers to join this project? *Probe for interest in cash only.*
- 3.1.1 How would you define sustainability in the case of AEP? What aspects of AEP will define its sustainability? And to what extent?  
*probing: Multiple stakeholders? clear set of objectives and agenda? Diversified clientele? Good Business plan?*
- 3.2.1 To what extent has communication among stakeholders contributed to the sustainability of the AEP? how?
- 3.2.1 To what extent have the financial crisis and COVID- 19 affected the sustainability of AEP? how?
- 3.2.3 To what extent does the involvement and enrollment of youth/ volunteers add value or is an asset to the project? Does it affect its sustainability? How?
- 3.3. Which aspects of AEP 's activities are likely to be the most sustainable? And which are the least? Can you rate from 1 to 5 (5 highly sustainable) the listed activities? And why?

Activity	Rating	Why
Hiking		
Cycling		
Strawberry picking activity		
Outdoor kitchen activity		

<sup>13</sup> Questions were selected from this full list based on the role of each interviewee.

Birdwatching activity		
Art Gallery and Museum Visits		
Educational activities e.g training, seed center, etc..		
Souvenir and Mouneh Selling		
Meals at guesthouse		
Coffee and refreshments at the park house		

### 3.3.1 How can sustainability be improved?

#### 4.1.1 How did LiF approach the land restoration sector recommendation?

- a. boosting natural regeneration and integration of key species
- b. Adapting the Miyawaki method
- c. promoting the use of fast-growing species

#### 4.1.2 How did LiF approach the recommendations related to the nurseries?

#### 4.1.3 How did LiF approach the private sector's recommendations?

#### 4.1.4 How did LiF approach the agroforestry's recommendations?

- a. planting more dense seeding techniques
- b. avoiding investing in auxiliary equipment and infrastructure
- c. incorporating agroforestry system within already existing orchards
- d. promoting of agroforestry within agriculture USAID' s projects.

#### 4.1.5 How did LiF approach the fire prevention's recommendation?

#### 4.1.6 How did LiF approach the forest management's recommendations?

- a. Encouraging municipalities' engagement in forest management (increasing awareness, using native trees, etc)
- b. Promoting the balance between community development and forest preservation
- c. developing financing schemes for municipalities
- d. strengthening the relationship between people's livelihoods and the various ecosystem services
- e. encouraging small landowners to use native species in their landscaping

#### 4.1.7 How did LiF approach the local development and governance's recommendations?

- a. promoting more collaboration between key stakeholders to avoid the duplication of efforts and activities
- b. advocating for integrating forestry into policies and laws as a major contributor to the economy
- c. organizing rural tourism activities and mitigating this sector's adverse effect on reforested areas.

#### 4.1.8 How did Lif approach the recommendations related to economic growth?

- a. supporting municipalities or local cooperatives to process agricultural residues
- b. cash for work in forestry sector
- c. conducting a value chain assessment to cover all services provided by forest ecosystems

4.1.9 How did LiF approach the recommendations related to visibility?

4.2.1 What are the main factors that negatively influenced LRI's ability to adopt the recommendations?

4.2.2 What are the main factors that positively influenced LRI's ability to adopt the recommendations?

Lessons Learned and recommendations

5.1 From your perspective, what are LiF's main lessons learned that can be adopted by other ongoing or future USAID interventions?

5.2 What do you recommend for similar programming in the future? Any specific on-site selection criteria that should be revised?

5.3 Do you have additional comments or feedback

KII tool with USAID staff

1.1.1 How was the decision to work on urban forestry reached?

1.1.2 How well do you think LiF's extension is aligned with the overall objective to improve livelihoods through forestry related activities?

1.2.1 To what extent were the activities implemented relevant to the needs of the selected four municipalities and communities in the post-2020 economic crisis?

1.2.2 Which of these two is more relevant: the economic growth aspect or its social and environmental characteristics? Why?

2.1.1 To what extent were the works completed as per the workplans in the four sites?

2.1.2 Why weren't they completed? *Probe about quality of planning and implementation*

2.2.1 What were the main challenges faced during the implementation phase? Can you give us some examples? *Probing: Were they related to coordination among focal points or stakeholders? site specific? Lack of funds and/or time? Lack of workforce?*

2.3.2 How was the outreach of workers conducted? Who was responsible for the outreach? Did you have a selection criterion?

2.3.5 Were the workers interested only in cash-for-work?

3.1.1 How would you define sustainability in the case of AEP? What aspects of AEP will define its sustainability? And to what extent?

Lessons Learned and recommendations

5. What do you recommend for similar programming in the future?

## KII Tool for AEP

3.1.1 How was the Eco-park managed in the past year?

3.1.2 Which of the activities on site were operational? How many visitors/users approximately came through in the past year?

3.2.1 How have you overcome challenges related to operation and maintenance?

3.2.2 To what extent have the financial crisis and COVID- 19 affected the sustainability of AEP? how?

3.2.3 How were the costs covered? How do you foresee to cover them in the next one to two years?

3.2.4 To what extent has communication among stakeholders contributed to the sustainability of the AEP? how?

3.2.5 Do you think the involvement and enrollment of youth/ volunteers is an asset to the project? Does it affect its sustainability? how?

3.3. Which aspects of AEP ‘s activities are likely to be the most sustainable? And which are the least? Can you rate from 1 to 5 (5 the most sustainable) the listed activities? And why?

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Why</b>
<b>Hiking</b>		
<b>Cycling</b>		
<b>Strawberry picking activity</b>		
<b>Outdoor kitchen activity</b>		
<b>Birdwatching activity</b>		
<b>Art Gallery and Museum Visits</b>		
<b>Educational activities e.g., training, seed center, etc.</b>		
<b>Souvenir and Mouneh Selling</b>		
<b>Meals at guesthouse</b>		
<b>Coffee and refreshments at the park house</b>		

3.3.1 How can sustainability be improved?

#### **KII tool for urban forestry**

I. How did you learn about the project?

Could you describe your role in the project?

1.1 What things worked especially well in your experience with this project?

2.1.1 Has LRI completed all the work to be done as per workplan in the four sites?

If not, can you elaborate on the specific activities that were not completed?

2.1.2 Why weren't they completed?

2.2.1 What were the main challenges faced during the implementation phase? Can you give us some examples? Probing: Were they related to coordination among focal points or stakeholders? site specific? Lack of funds and/or time? Lack of workforce?

2.3.1 To what extent did the implementation address worker needs and expectations?

2.3.2 How was the outreach of workers conducted? Who was responsible for the outreach? Did you have a selection criterion?

2.3.5 Were the workers interested only in cash-for-work? Probe for interest in cash only.

5 What do you recommend for similar programming in the future?

**FGD with beneficiaries of cash for work**

2 How did you learn about this project? And how were you selected to participate?

2.1 What activities were you involved in?

2.2 Why did you choose to participate in this project?

2.3 What things worked especially well in your experience with this project?

2.5 Has your involvement been effective in enhancing urban forestry in your city?

2.6 Were there any difficulties encountered during the implementation? How were these solved?

3. Are there any areas of the project that you feel could have been done in a better way?

**Site visit form**

**Section 1: General information**

**IP Site Visit Information**

Location		Type of project	
Date of visit		Name of site supervisor	

**Section 2: Observations**

Area	Sub-activity completion and maintenance status				USAID branded (Y/N)	Notes (if partial completion or non completion, explanation should be noted)
	Maintenance	Replacement of trees	Planting roundabouts	Other		

### **Section 3: Pictures**

Pictures will be taken to document works completed, site and equipment condition as relevant. The photographs will be stored in MEPL SharePoint in a folder specific to the site .

### **ANNEX 5: CONSENT FORMS**

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR VIRTUAL OR IN PERSON KII

**Principal Investigator: Sandra Fahd**

**Organization:** EnCompass LLC

**Sponsor:** United States Agency for International Development

This informed consent has two parts: (1) information sheet and (2) provision of oral consent.

#### **PART I: INFORMATION**

The United States Agency for International Development has recently commissioned an independent Endline Evaluation of their LiF Activity in Lebanon. Our objective is to collect the knowledge and experiences you feel comfortable sharing about your communities. The overall goal of the evaluation is to derive evidence to inform strategy and future programming.

Before you decide to participate, you can talk with or ask questions of anyone you feel comfortable with. If you have any questions regarding this content, please let me know. If you have questions later or in the future, you can contact any member of the evaluation team. Information about how you can reach the evaluation team is included in this information sheet.

#### **METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

For this study, we are collecting information by conducting interviews with LiF staff, USAID staff, local government officials, civil society organizations and community members. This interview will last approximately one hour.

Data will be collected in September 2022.

#### **RESPONDENT SELECTION**

You have been chosen for a key respondent interview because you either have knowledge of and/or experience with the LiF activity or within the communities that LiF has worked.

#### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW**

Your participation in this evaluation is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, we will remove the contact information we have for you from our data set. If you decide to participate, you may change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time, and we will remove your contact details and any other information you have provided up to that time. Choosing not to participate in this study will not affect your relationship with United States Agency for International Development or EnCompass LLC.

If you decide to participate, you may ask to skip any question or stop the interview at any time. You do not have to share anything you are not comfortable sharing. After the interview, if you decide you do not want your remarks/answers to be used, you may let us know and we will immediately destroy all information and it will not be used.

#### **PERMISSION TO RECORD**

We would like to take notes and record this discussion via the online platform used to conduct the virtual interview (e.g., Teams, Zoom, Jitsi, Signal). We would encourage keeping the video turned on to facilitate a more interactive and energetic conversation. This would result in recording video as well. Let us know if this is not preferred and we would not record or keep the video off. For the in-

person interviews we will use a recorder. This is so that we can develop an accurate transcript of what you say that will help us in analyzing the data. The recording will be kept on EnCompass's secure password-protected web-based platform specific to this evaluation, which is only accessible to the EnCompass team conducting this evaluation. You will not be identified by name in the recording file name, and any identifying information will be removed during transcription. Once the transcription is complete, the recording will be deleted and any written notes will be destroyed, and only the transcript will be kept. In the meantime, no one outside of the EnCompass assessment team will have access to the recordings or notes.

## **RISKS**

The study team will keep all of your answers and personal information in a secure location and will not share this information with anyone not involved in the study. Your responses will not be shared with colleagues or your supervisor or anyone else.

Your personal information, including your name, will not be included in the final report or any presentation of findings. Any risk of breaching your privacy or confidentiality has been significantly reduced by the strict rules and ethical principles all our team members have agreed to observe.

In terms of risks:

1. Some questions may cause discomfort or distress. If that is the case, we will give you a list of people you can call or meet for assistance. You can ask us at any time for this information—now, during, or after we finish the interview. You can also leave the interview for a while or leave and not come back.
2. There is a chance that the conversation could be intercepted online from the platform we are using to conduct the virtual interview (e.g., Zoom, Jitsi, Signal). We are taking many steps to prevent this from happening, such as using password-protected meeting links and choosing encrypted platforms when possible. However, it is still possible that the discussion could be intercepted through a security breach in the online platform.
3. There is a chance that the information you share will not stay private due to a data leak. We are doing many things with the data we collect to prevent the leak from happening, but it could happen.
4. You may be worried someone will learn what you said and not like that you joined the meeting. You may not feel safe. Again, we will do everything we can to keep your answers safe and private. If someone does find out, somehow, you may not feel safe. You can contact people listed on this consent form. We will give you a copy of this form, if participating in this study affects your safety. There are actions we can take to keep your answers safe.

For in-person interview only:

Given the COVID-19 pandemic there are several reasons you may choose not to participate in an in-person interview for the evaluation. If you or someone in your household or workplace has been feeling sick including having a cough or high temperature in the past two weeks, we ask you to inform us so that we hold a virtual interview instead. Should an in-person interview be feasible, we plan to use safety protocols when we talk such as sitting far apart and wearing masks. If these measures are not possible or not enough protection, you may not want to participate in-person, and the evaluation team will hold a virtual interview instead.

## **BENEFITS**

You may receive no direct benefits from participating in this study, but your participation is likely to help inform USAID's programming.

## **REIMBURSEMENTS**

No compensation is provided for this interview.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information you share will be kept confidential. We will not share the information you provide to us with anyone who is not part of the evaluation team. We will store information, such as recordings, transcripts, and notes, electronically in password-protected and secure web-based data storage and analysis platforms specific to this evaluation. The interview transcripts, notes, and recordings will be de-identified, with each participant assigned a number ID. The ID linked to each participant will only be available in a participant tracker, which is saved separately on the password-protected platform specific to this evaluation that is only accessible to the EnCompass assessment team. Information analyzed will be anonymous. We will destroy all the information you provide three years after the publication of the final report.

## **SHARING SUMMARY RESULTS**

The evaluation team will combine the information you provide with that from other interview respondents, focus group participants, reviewed documents; and/or survey respondents as needed, and we will present it in a final report that we will share with the USAID and other stakeholders. An external version summary will also be produced and we can send it to you. This report will also be available to other data collection participants and members of the public.

## **WHOM TO CONTACT**

This study has been reviewed and approved by the EnCompass LLC Review Board, whose members are tasked with making sure participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find out more about the ethics review, contact IRB at [irb@encompassworld.com](mailto:irb@encompassworld.com).

If you have any questions about this research study in the future, please contact me using the following information:

Name and phone # of interviewer:

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have complaints about our team or the study, please contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

Team Lead, LiF Evaluation

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## **PART II: PROVISION OF ORAL CONSENT, CONSENT TO AUDIO RECORD AND CONSENT TO BE CONTACTED TO RECEIVE EXTERNAL SUMMARY. CONSENT FOR VIDEO RECORDING IN CASE OF VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS.**

**Say to the respondent:** I want to confirm that you have read the consent form or I have read it to you. Do you have any additional questions?

**After answering respondent's questions:** Do you voluntarily consent to participate in this study?

Following verbal consent, note the response of the respondent with your initials:

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Interviewer's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

### **If the respondent answers no:**

Thank them for their time and end the interview.

### **If the respondent answers yes:**

Ask them for their verbal consent to audio and video record the conversation using the virtual platform: I/We would like to both take notes and audio and video record our conversation. This is so we can develop an accurate transcription of what you say. The recording can be stopped at any time, if you choose to do so. We will delete the recording and destroy written notes immediately after creating a transcription of the conversation. The transcription will be deleted three years after

the publication of the final report. In the meantime, no one outside of the study team will have access to this information.

Do you give me/us permission to record the audio and video of this virtual interview, using the record feature of this platform?

Following verbal consent to audio and video-record, note the response of the respondent with your initials:

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Interviewer's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**If the respondent answers yes:** Continue with the interview and record the consent. **If the respondent answers no:** I understand your decision not to have our conversation recorded. Would you be comfortable proceeding with this interview if I take written notes only and do not use the record feature on this platform?

If the respondent agrees to hand-written notes, proceed with the interview.

Would you like us to send the report using the same contact information that we used to contact you?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Interviewer's initials: \_\_\_\_\_

If the respondent does not consent to hand-written notes, end the interview.

**Signature of the interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## FGD - INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

**Principal Investigators:** Sandra Fahd

**Organization:** EnCompass, LLC

**Sponsor:** USAID

This Informed Consent Form has two parts: (1) information sheet and (2) giving spoken consent. Each of you will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form.

### Part I: Information Sheet

#### Why we are doing this evaluation and why you are being invited to participate

Thank you for meeting here today. My name is [name of data collector]. We work for a company called EnCompass LLC which has been recently commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development to conduct an independent Endline Evaluation to conduct an evaluation of the LiF Activity in Lebanon, also referred to as the Livelihoods in Forestry Activity. The goal for the evaluation is to derive evidence to inform strategy and future programming particularly looking at relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. We want to learn from you and others about your experiences participating in this project and how the work could be done better. Is there anything you want to ask regarding why we are here? *(Answer questions, if any, then continue.)*

Okay, now we want to be sure you want to be part of this evaluation. We want to do this before we ask you anything for the evaluation. We want to confirm that there will be no consequences with LiF and local municipalities if you choose not to participate.

You can ask your own questions any time. Feel free to stop us anytime.

### First, I will let you know that we have permission to do this evaluation

LiF have allowed us to talk to you. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that gave us money to do this work, also allowed us to talk to you. We are not part of LiF. We are not part of the USAID. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) hired us to collect this data. We are our own company – separate from the USAID, the government of Lebanon, and the project.

### This is how we are collecting information for this evaluation, and why we are asking to include you in the evaluation.

We are talking to a lot of people like you. We are talking to some people alone and some people in a group. This helps us learn different things. We are meeting with people like [project managers] who are running projects; and we are meeting with people like you who joined in activities for these projects. We are meeting with people who live here, in other parts of [Lebanon]. This is because we want to learn from a lot of different people. All of this information will help us better understand what work has taken place so far. We are collecting information in September of this year.

If you decide to join this evaluation, we will ask about what you have done while you were in the project. We will ask for your thoughts on what has worked well and how activities could be done better. We will listen to you and write down your answers. This will be our meeting. This will take approximately one hour.

### Now I will describe for each of you, your rights.

You do not have to be part of this evaluation. You can say “No” and can walk away and we will not bother you again. There is no problem for you from EnCompass or our funder, the USAID just because you did not want to be in the evaluation. It is all up to you.

If you decide you want to answer questions for this evaluation, you can change your mind and stop at any time. You can leave the group, if you wish. There is no problem for you from EnCompass or our funder, USAID, if you decide to stop. That is your right. That is your freedom. You have the freedom to choose.

You can also choose to skip any question that you do not want to answer. That is also your right. You can let us know if you want us to keep your answers or not. If you do not want us to keep your answers, we will get rid of them. We will destroy them before they are included in the evaluation. It is up to you.

Your participation in the interview is not conditional on accepting to be recorded. Data collection is possible without recording.

### Now I will describe risks and benefits.

You may want to know if you can gain anything if you join this meeting. There will be no direct financial incentives nor compensation for your participation in this FGD. Your participation will however support in improving similar programming to people like you in the future.

We have rules for this group. We expect everyone in this group to keep anything they hear during this discussion private. We do not want anyone in this group to share people’s answers with anyone else after leaving the group. This is an important rule. If you do not want to agree to this rule, please leave the group now, so that others will know that what they share here will not be shared. We also wish for you to honor your and others’ privacy by not sharing that you joined this meeting with other beneficiaries unless the whole group agrees that this is something they want to do.

In terms of risks:

- There is a chance that the information you share will not stay private due to a data leak. We are doing as much as we can with the data we collect to keep it safe this from happening but it could happen.
- You may be worried someone will learn what you said and not like that you joined the meeting. You may not feel safe. Again, we will do everything we can to keep your answers safe and private. If someone does find out, somehow, you may not feel safe. You can contact people listed on this consent form, and we will give you a copy of this form, if participating in this evaluation affects your safety. We are following a rigorous protocol for ensuring the data collected during this evaluation is safe, private and not accessible outside of the evaluation team.. We will not share your answers with others in a way that we think could be traced back to you. We will not share your private information, like your name, with people who are not on our research team. We will join your answers with answers from a lot of other people and will share data that way – as a whole. Only this joint information will be shared in the report. We will store information using passwords to protect your data from being seen by other people. We will take out information that could trace your answers back to you. We will do this before we report on what we learned. We keep information safely stored for three years. We destroy all of your answers 3 years after we finish the report. In terms of gains, there is not a direct gain for you by joining this meeting.

**For in-person interview only:**

Given the COVID-19 pandemic there are several reasons you may choose not to participate in an in-person interview for the evaluation. If you or someone in your household or workplace has been feeling sick including having a cough or high temperature in the past two weeks, we ask you to inform us so that we cancel your participation in the FGD. If you have not been exposed or feel sick yourself, please join us for the discussion. We will be using safety protocols when we talk such as sitting far apart and wearing masks. If these measures are not possible or not enough protection, you may not want to participate in-person and we understand and respect your choice.

Do you have any questions for us now? (Answer questions, if any.)

Do you have any questions for us now? (Answer questions, if any.)

**Part II: Oral Informed Consent**

Now we want to ask your permission to be part of the evaluation.

Do you choose to join this meeting? If you say “Yes,” it means you want to be part of this meeting. If you say “No,”, then you can leave without any problem.

*DATA COLLECTORS:* if they say “No”, the participant may leave. If they say “Yes” mark “Yes” at the bottom of the consent form and only the interviewer should sign that consent was obtained.

Thank you.

We would also like to record this meeting. The reason we want to record the meeting is because we want to be sure we don’t make mistakes writing what you say to us. If we can listen to the recording, this could help. Even if you are okay with us recording the meeting now, you can ask us to stop the recording any time and we will stop. Even if one person here does not want to be recorded at any time, we will stop the recording for the whole group and continue with written answers only. Is it okay with you if we record this interview?

Following verbal consent, note the response of the respondents with your initials:

PID \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Interviewer’s initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of the interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

OR like this:

PID	YES	NO	Interviewer initials

Signature of the interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any other questions or comments? (Answer these, if any.) If you have questions after this interview, we have people you can contact on this form. Would you like a copy? (Share if they would like a copy.) Now we are ready to begin.

*Note that, based on answers, only ONE option should be checked and initialed for each person (to be filled out by enumerator). Do you have any other questions or comments? (Answer these, if any.)*

If you have questions after this observation, we have people you can contact on this form. Would you like a copy? (Share if they would like a copy.) Now we are ready to begin.

#### Additional Information

This evaluation has been reviewed and approved by the EnCompass LLC Institutional Review Board EC-022-2022. That makes sure you and others who choose to join the evaluation are protected from harm. To learn more, contact the IRB email: [irb@encompassworld.com](mailto:irb@encompassworld.com).

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact me using the following contact information:

Name and Phone # of Data Collector:

If you have complaints about our team or the evaluation, please contact: Diana Shannan, USAID Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon (MEPL) Email: [dshannan@encompassworld.com](mailto:dshannan@encompassworld.com)

## **ANNEX 6: DOCUMENT SOURCES**

### **I. USAID/LEBANON DOCUMENTS**

#### **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS , COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT AND MODIFICATIONS**

1. Cooperative Agreement CA No.72026818CA00003 - May 2018,
2. Contract modifications: no.P001- December 2019; no.P003-July 2020; no.P004 - August 2021.

#### **EVALUATION**

3. LiF mid-term evaluation report, May 2021

### **II. LRI DOCUMENTS**

#### **PROPOSAL**

4. 72026818CA00003 LRI
5. LRI Mod 3

#### **EVALUATION TRACKER**

6. Tracker of progress against mid-term evaluation recommendations.

#### **INTERNAL STUDIES**

7. Beirut Greenery Assessment Report
8. Kfarmechki forest management plan
9. Fire risk assessment at the fireshed level – phase 2
10. Fire risk assessment for 8 villages
11. Gender mainstreaming strategy EN AR 290721 v2
12. Khenshara forest management plan\_Final
13. KHIRBevaluation team ROUHA FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN
14. Planting plans- Byblos urban forestry component
15. Planting plans- sidon urban forestry component
16. Mapping and valuing forest ecosystem services in Lebanon
17. Miziara forest management plan
18. Scoping and options paper
19. LiF - urban forestry Tripoli- Intervention plans\_updatedv2\_CLEAN
20. Interventions map LiF\_UL
21. LRI Project Report PHASE I

#### **QUARTERLY AND ANNUAL REPORT**

22. Final\_LiF Annual Report to USAID -FY21\_Clean
23. FINAL\_LiF Quarterly Report to USAID -FY21Q1 (002)
24. FINAL\_LiF Quarterly Report to USAID -FY22Q1-cleared
25. FINAL\_LiF Quarterly Report to USAID -FY22Q2- CLEAN

26. FINAL\_LiF Quarterly Report to USAID -FY22Q3\_08302022-Clean
27. LiF Annual Report to USAID -FY20\_Final Clean (002
28. LiF Quarterly Report to USAID -Apr-Jun 2020\_Final
29. LiF Quarterly Report to USAID -FY21Q2\_Final clean
30. LiF Quarterly Report to USAID -FY21Q3\_Final\_Clean
31. LiF Quarterly Report to USAID -Jan-Mar2020

#### **M&E**

32. FINAL\_LiF MEL PLAN\_20190627
33. LiF Extension MEL PLAN\_20220104

#### **WORKPLANS**

34. Copy of LRI-LIF WP Tracking sheet-Year 2\_MN
35. FINA\_LiF Workplan Tracking Sheet FY21Q4\_Extension
36. FINAL\_LiF WP FY22- with Demob Plan\_clean
37. LiF WP FY20-MN
38. LiF WP FY21\_EH cmnts of summary Demobilization Plan

#### **OTHER REPORTS**

39. Report from workshop on management planning for Anjar Eco park
40. MOU between LRI and Homentmen Association
41. Presentation done by Dr Josephine Zgheib
42. Marketing Plan\_Anjar Eco Park.v2.Aug.2022\_Clean
43. Report 2 [Saida map]

## ANNEX 7: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Team member	Conflict of interest form
<b>James Fremming, Chief of Party - Lebanon (EnCompass)</b>	[redacted]
<b>Nour El Zaouk, Data Analyst (EnCompass)</b>	[redacted]
<b>Dr. Sandra Fahd, Team Lead (Independent Consultant)</b>	[redacted]
<b>Stephanie Bassil, Research and Evaluation Specialist (Management Systems International)</b>	[redacted]
<b>Ted Rizzo, (EnCompass)</b>	[redacted]

## ANNEX 8: EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

Team member	Qualifications	Responsibility for this task
James Fremming, Chief of Party - Lebanon (EnCompass)	Chief of Party for USAID's Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon (MEPL), implemented by EnCompass LLC	Will maintain primary contact with USAID Lebanon country mission and insure the final delivery of evaluation.
Nour El Zaouk, Data Analyst (EnCompass)	Public health practitioner, specialized in health promotion and community health.	Will participate in designing, implementing, and analyzing the evaluation plan. Will support the team in planning the methodology for data collection, management, and analysis. Will conduct quality assurance reviews of presented tools, data and reports; coordinate ethics review; and facilitate the data analysis integration and synthesis workshop with the team.
Sandra Fahd (Team leader)	Extensive experience in project management and evaluation in the fields of rural and agricultural development, environmental and resources management.	Will be responsible for coordinating and directing the overall evaluation, including preparation and submission of the draft and rapid evaluation report.
Stephanie Bassil, Research and Evaluation Specialist (EnCompass)	Managed several evaluations while working with the Norwegian Refugee Council	Will contribute to all phases of the evaluation in collaboration with the team leader and the rest of the team, under the supervision of the Senior MEL Specialist at MEPL.
Ted Rizzo, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Specialist II (EnCompass)	Evaluation specialist with extensive experience in managing rapid data analysis processes	Will support team in adapting EnCompass analysis procedures for implementation during the rapid assessment.

## ANNEX 9: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

### Key informants

#### Sub-awardees and beneficiaries:

Please note that the LiF chief of party will inform the selected sub-awardees and beneficiaries that an evaluation is taking place. The evaluation team requested from IP to contact the interview participants as per below guidance. If the IP will not be able to do so, the evaluation team will recruit the participants.

#### **Email invitation sent to sub-awardee or beneficiary focal point if evaluation team will contact the sub-awardees:**

Dear [insert name of Key informant],

I hope this email finds you well.

My name is [Insert Name of Organizer], I am a member of the evaluation team working on an endline evaluation of LiF Lebanon. The evaluation is commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Our objective is to collect the knowledge and experiences you and other stakeholders feel comfortable sharing about your participation in the Activity.

I am emailing to invite you to participate in a one-hour key informant interview on [Insert date and time] with the evaluation team leader [Insert name of team leader].

The interview will be conducted in person during the site visit. The evaluation team is interested in visiting the site of the project to observe the operation of the project and reflect from the field on prospects and challenges for future programming. We would appreciate being guided by the project focal point responsible for the operation and maintenance of the site.

Kindly find attached a consent form for your review ahead of the interview. Your participation is voluntary, and you should not feel any pressure or obligation to join the discussion.

Please let us know whether the time suits you and if you have any questions.  
Thank you and have a good weekend.

Best regards,

#### **Email invitation sent to sub-awardee focal point if IP staff will contact the sub-awardees (with evaluation team in Cc):**

Dear [insert name of Key informant],

I hope this email finds you well.

I am a staff member at LiF contacting you to invite you for an interview organized for the external evaluation of the Activity. The evaluation is commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). A team of external consultants in copy has been hired to complete the evaluation. Their objective is to collect the knowledge and experiences you and other stakeholders feel comfortable sharing about your participation in the Activity.

The interview is expected to take one hour on [Insert date and time] and will be with the evaluation team leader [Insert name of team leader] and a notetaker. The interview will be conducted [virtually or in person] [on Microsoft teams] or [at the site]. The evaluation team is interested in visiting the site of the project to observe the operation of the project and reflect from the field on prospects and challenges for future programming. We would appreciate if a guide could be provided to show them the works completed.

Kindly find attached a consent form for your review ahead of the call. Your participation is voluntary, and you should not feel any pressure or obligation to join the discussion.

Please let us know whether the time suits you and if you have any questions.

Thank you and have a good weekend.

Best regards,

The evaluation team expects that some key informants like the heads of municipalities will be reached by phone first, in such cases the text above will be slightly modified to a phone invitation. Following the call, the IP staff or evaluation team will send an email confirming the interview date and time, with consent form attached.

## Focus Group discussions

The MEPL evaluation team will randomly select FGD participants from the list of beneficiaries benefiting directly from the project.

The sub-awardees will contact their beneficiaries by phone and invite them to participate in the FGDs. MEPL evaluation team will share the below script with the sub-awardees to use when they contact their beneficiaries, and will go over the script with sub-awardee ahead of the calls:

Script shared with sub-awardee:

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in a focus group discussion facilitated by MEPL Evaluation team on [Date and Time]. They work for a company called EnCompass LLC which has been recently commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development to conduct an independent Endline Evaluation of the LiF Activity in Lebanon. They want to learn from you and others about your experiences participating in the [title of activity] project and how the work could be done better. You are being invited to attend the FGD with 5-6 other [men/women/youth] who participated in the same [title of activity]. The discussion will be confidential, in a private space, you are not obliged to answer all questions and you will be free to leave the room anytime you want. There will be no financial or in-kind compensation/reward for your participation. And none of the staff of our municipality will be attending the FGD. Your participation is voluntary, and you should not feel any pressure or obligation to join the discussion.

The discussion will be one to one hour long.

Are you interested and able to participate in the FGD? Yes/No.

If yes, please make sure that in the 24 hours before the FGD that neither you or anyone in your household HAS had any of the following symptoms:

- fever of greater than 100 degrees C
- unexplained sore throat
- fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- new loss of taste or smell
- chills
- cough, not due to other known cause
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms unexplained body aches

Also that neither you or someone from your household is awaiting results from a COVID test, and that in the 14 days prior to the FGD, you had no close contact with a person known to be infected with COVID-19.

## **ANNEX 10: MID-TERM EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Land Restoration (LiF)**

Should reforestation activities continue during an extended implementation period, LiF should increase biodiversity and boost natural regeneration further by planting nursing species or companion crops. The reintroduction of key species is fundamental to increase biodiversity and enhance the natural vegetation under environmental constraints (climate, soil, etc.) without further human intervention.

The adapted Miyawaki tool could provide a fast and new innovative method for the forestry sector in Lebanon to restore degraded lands in urban and rural areas and recreate an entire ecosystem, from shrubs to canopy trees. LiF should also encourage small landowners, municipalities, and agriculture players to plant trees native to their regions.

In addition, LiF should promote the use of fast-growing species with high economic value for the benefit of the local communities in agroforestry and reforestation, i.e., the Charcoal method.

### **Nurseries (LiF and USAID)**

Within the project's remaining timeframe and should outplanting activities continue, LiF should change nurseries' business engagement in the project and consider payment associated with deliverables. The deliverables can be set by the implementing partner according to technical specifications, such as the purchase of seeds, the preparation of soil and planters, and the delivery of seedlings. Such arrangement would secure a much-needed financing to the seedlings' production. In future activities, USAID should consider assisting nurseries by developing a new marketing strategy for native species.

### **Private Sector (LiF and USAID)**

LiF and USAID should encourage companies/diaspora to direct their CSR efforts towards livelihood assistance besides restoration activities. In other terms, they should encourage the private sector/diaspora to adapt their CSR approach to respond to emerging priorities, such as food security, fire prevention, and/or agroforestry instead of focusing on reforestation and planting activities only.

### **Agroforestry (LiF and USAID)**

LiF should consider adopting the dense seeding technique in new agroforestry sites using native species and fast-growing plants. This should be included in the design and implementation phases.

Furthermore, LiF should avoid investing in auxiliary equipment and infrastructure such as installing kiosks and providing dairy machinery at late stage of implementation, as their impact and generated income won't be captured within the project's timeframe.

For future agroforestry activities USAID should also encourage implementing agroforestry practices in lands and orchards that have already been planted as opposed to unplanted lands. This would help capture the real impact of the agroforestry component faster and implement it at a lower cost.

Additionally, USAID should consider promoting agroforestry within its agriculture activities and projects.

### **Fire Prevention (LiF and USAID)**

If the implementation period is prolonged (at least till January 2022), LiF should mobilize budget and resources to prioritize the completion of the remaining Fireshed sites. LiF should expand the Firewise tasks to also provide tools, devices, and small equipment to municipalities to ensure the sustainability of fire prevention and management if there is enough budget to be reallocated.

### **Forest Management (USAID)**

USAID should continue its support for a better sustainable management of forests and raising public awareness of regulations and good practices, including making sure that people understand that

forests are a shared resource and should not be overexploited. USAID should also encourage engaging municipalities and agriculture players in promoting the use of native trees and raising public awareness of their importance on many levels (economic, forest management, etc.).

In addition, USAID should promote balance between community development and forest preservation. USAID should also support forest management activities in a way that ensures the sustainability of forest resources and their sound management by local communities to prevent the latter from overexploiting or depleting them due to poverty.

Furthermore, USAID, through its Local Development portfolio, might consider implementing a financing scheme for municipalities to support local ecosystems and the communities that protect forests. For instance, there's a USAID-funded project that supports local NGOs to maintain (prune, clean, etc.) forests. Another way could be by supporting municipalities to partner with a private company specialized in maintaining forests and ecosystems. A public-private partnership (PPP) could be developed and supported by a USAID-funded activity. For instance, every year, the municipality of Bkessin invites companies to bid and exploit its pine forest. Such model could be replicated in other municipalities with different purposes, such as pruning and using the resulting wood to make charcoal.

LiF is currently conducting an Ecosystem Valuation study that assesses all the ecosystem services from which a community can benefit and has identified these as potential income generating activities from forests. USAID should strengthen the relationship between people's livelihoods and the various ecosystem services (provisioning, regulating, supporting, and cultural services) in the short and long term. Rural communities that rely on non-wood forest products such as honey, pine nuts, and wild zaatar picking to improve their livelihood by providing food, additional income, and employment opportunities could benefit from additional USAID support in these areas. Climate change should also be taken into consideration in all practices and planning and production phases, for example in terms of species diversification, species selection, afforestation method, etc.

USAID and other sector stakeholders should encourage small landowners to use native trees in their landscaping. They should also conduct and disseminate studies on urban forestry, such as biodiversity studies on ecosystems, habitat regeneration, etc. The urban forestry sector should be considered beyond rural reforestation and corridor rehabilitation.

### **Local Development and Governance (USAID)**

Sector stakeholders, including USAID, should promote more collaboration between key stakeholders to avoid the duplication of efforts and activities and help these stakeholders to build on previous projects using the developed tools and studies to achieve a holistic approach in environmental conservation and land restoration. They should also coordinate and collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture's regional offices to reach out to actors in remote areas and monitor forest lands and restored lands.

Additionally, key stakeholders should advocate for integrating forestry into policies and laws as a major contributor to the economy and expand the list of species to be protected and conserved.

Furthermore, USAID should help organize rural tourism activities and mitigate this sector's adverse effect on reforested areas.

### **Economic Growth (USAID)**

USAID should consider supporting municipalities or local cooperatives to process agricultural residues (such as residues and by-products of the olive-oil production chain) and wood resulting from tree pruning to generate secondary products that can be used by the community, such as wood logs for heating purposes. This type of assistance would be very useful in light of the recurrent fuel crises (availability and/or price hikes) and could prevent illegal logging.

USAID should consider implementing similar cash for work and livelihood activities during the current economic crisis, these should be focused on maintenance and sustainable forest management.

USAID should consider conducting a value chain assessment to cover all services provided by forest ecosystems (provisioning, regulating, supporting, and cultural services) and integrate its recommendations in USAID’s Economic Growth and Local Development Offices’ portfolios.

**Visibility (LiF)**

LiF should prioritize the dissemination and release of the studies it conducts and should carefully schedule these studies to serve their objective within the project’s life. LiF should also enhance the visibility of USAID branding and signage during implementation in all activity sites, such as agroforestry sites, fire prevention sites, and reforestation site.

## ANNEX I I: LIF LOG-FRAME

*Project Goal:* To improve livelihoods in targeted areas through forestry-related activities

Indicators (IR)

IR1: PSD a: Proportion of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources

IR2: PSD c: Value of new private sector investment leveraged by USG assistance

IR3: PSD d: Number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs created as a result of USG assistance

IR4: PSD IR 2.3.b: Number of people with improved economic benefit derived from sustainable natural resource management and conservation as a result of USG assistance

IR5: Youth-3Percentage of participants who are youth (15-29) in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources

*Purpose:* Improved sustainable forestry in the targeted areas

PSD IR 2.2a: PSD IR 2.2.a Number of firms, farmers or other organizations who have applied improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance

PSD IR 2.3.a Number of hectares under improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance

*Sub-purpose 1:* Social and Environmental Corridors Conserved and expanded

IR: Average percent survival of planted seedlings

*Sub-purpose 2:* Rural tourism and economic development enhanced through improved natural resources management in Anjar

IR: Value of revenues earned from the established National Forestry Park in Anjar

IR: Percent increase in number of visits to the established National Forestry Park in Anjar

*Sub-purpose 3:* Enhanced sustainable land management and conservation through agroforestry

EG.3.2-7: Number of technologies, practices, and approaches under various phases of research, development, and uptake as a result of USG assistance

*Sub-purpose 4:* Urban vulnerable population supported through labor-intensive urban forestry work in Beirut and major cities.

--END--