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ENDLINE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

BUILDING ALLIANCE FOR LOCAL ADVANCEMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND INVESTMENT (BALADI)

RENÉ MOAWAD FOUNDATION (RMF)

FINAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2022

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COVER PHOTO: Solar panels installed by BALADI-RMF in the village of Kfaryashit. (Photo by MEPL)

Abstract

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Building Alliance for Local Advancement, Development, and Investment (BALADI) Activity, implemented by the René Moawad Foundation (RMF), has come to a close after ten years of implementation.

BALADI-RMF's work under the Request for Municipal Assistance (RFMA) and Supplemental Program Description (SPD) modalities consisted of 80 interventions valued at $12,124,262.06 and was implemented in all Lebanese Governorates with the exception of Beirut.

This Endline Performance Evaluation of BALADI-RMF builds on an Interim Performance Evaluation conducted in July 2020. It examines the relevance, effectiveness, and adaptability of BALADI-RMF's work in order to draw conclusions and make recommendations for future programming.

The findings of this evaluation highlight important contributions made by BALADI-RMF between July 2020 and September 2022 to respond to the urgent needs of local communities. The evaluation concludes that BALADI-RMF has continued to gain relevance in meeting its intended outcomes. More so, its relevance has expanded to include building municipal capacities, supporting decentralized governance, and formulating the needed administrative practices to sustain projects in response to emerging community needs amid declining sate services. Moreover, BALADI-RMF has demonstrated effective implementation and management practices manifested in the satisfactory delivery of intended projects outputs. BALADI-RMF has also shown an unequivocal ability to adapt to difficult environments, as it was capable of navigating projects despite Lebanon's unprecedented and uncertain economic and political circumstances.

BALADI-RMF's experiences and practices can certainly be considered a reference point for recommendations targeting future USAID programming in Lebanon; however, certain adjustments are necessary. Most notably, it is recommended that efforts aimed at supporting the capacities, decentralization, and management of municipalities to improve service delivery (i) be expanded to target clusters or unions of municipalities and (ii) be expanded to include multiple specialized implementing partners at once. The evaluation also recommends that such expansion be more inclusive of women and contribute to the localization of labor and resources. Furthermore, a rapid and flexible tendering and approval procedure should be utilized by RMF, as well as follow-up activities that scale up good practices, expand partnerships, maintain local engagement, and mainstream lessons learned in development and recovery activities.

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The team would also like to thank the staff of BALADI-RMF's municipal partners who took the time to participate in the interviews and were patient when virtual calls were interrupted due to connectivity issues.

The team also acknowledges the efforts of USAID/Lebanon's staff, who reviewed the inception report, took part in the interviews, provided valuable feedback, and validated the evaluation's preliminary findings. Their contribution has guided much of the analysis and recommendations made in this report.

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Acronyms

A&E	Architecture and Engineering
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
BALADI	Building Alliance for Local Advancement, Development, and Investment
BALADI CAP	BALADI Capacity Development Program
CA	Cooperative Agreement
CDCS	Country Development Cooperative Strategy
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CPC	Community Project Committee
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAIS	Data Analysis and Interpretation Session
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
DO	Development Objective
DUNS	Data Universal Numbering System
ERAC	Environmental Review and Assessment Checklist
ET	Evaluation Team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IMF	Independent Municipal Fund
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Intermediate Result
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCS	Lebanon Council for the South
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MEPL	Monitoring Evaluation Program for Lebanon
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RFMA	Request for Municipal Assistance
RMF	René Moawad Foundation
SI	Social Impact
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SOW	Scope of Work
SPD	Supplemental Program Description
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WSC	Water Sanitation and Conservation

Executive Summary

Evaluation Purpose

This Endline Performance Evaluation of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Building Alliance for Local Advancement, Development, and Investment (BALADI) Activity, implemented by René Moawad Foundation (RMF), builds on an Interim Performance Evaluation conducted in July 2020 to assess the work performed by BALADI-RMF between 2012 and 2020.[1] The Endline Performance Evaluation, which was conducted by USAID's Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon (MEPL), aims at assessing whether or not BALAD-RMF's activities continued to maintain relevance and effectiveness while adapting to Lebanon's multiple economic and political crises since 2020. The evaluation draws conclusions, articulates lessons learned, and provides a set of recommendations to help inform future USAID programming in Lebanon.

BALADI-RMF Background

The BALADI-RMF Activity (2012-2022) has come to a close after ten years of project work worth $28,978,088.[2] It was implemented within a turbulent social, political, and economic environment fraught with challenges. Throughout its lifetime, BALADI-RMF went through 16 different contract modifications that amended/expanded its scope of work and extended its end date to September 2022. The Activity, which is one of USAID's longest-running projects in the country (lasting ten years), was able to adapt to and address current challenges thanks to several factors, particularly the large in-kind contributions it received from local governments.

BALADI-RMF's Request for Municipal Application (RFMA) work modality underwent a major transformation in 2018 after the introduction of the Supplemental Program Description (SPD) modality. Combined, the RFMA and the SPD modalities supported the implementation of 80 interventions across 116 municipalities throughout Lebanon (except Beirut) with an estimated municipal Activities budget of $12,124,262.06 and a target of 348,962 beneficiaries.[3]

It is worth noting that BALADI-RMF's activities have continued to respond and adapt to a development-humanitarian nexus amidst an unprecedented economic crisis in the country. They also involved a wide array of development and crisis responses, including construction, renovation, equipment installation, and service provision (to help provide access to basic services, such as electricity and water). The SPD modality was introduced to expand BALADI-RMF's coverage by targeting municipalities in critical situations and assisting them in building their public service delivery and enhancing their capacities, all while responding to urgent community needs.

Evaluation Questions, Design, Methods, and Limitations

The questions selected for this Endline Performance Evaluation examine the extent to which BALADI-RMF's activities responded to urgent community needs, in line with the Activity's objectives. They look at how BALADI-RMF continued to remain relevant to the needs of communities and true to its original aim and intermediate results. The evaluation questions also assess the extent of effective implementation and explore the means utilized by RMF and its partners to achieve BALADI's intended objectives. They include questions related to factors that have contributed to or hindered the achievement of outcomes. The evaluation also asks whether BALADI-RMF was capable of adapting its activities to deal with the multiple challenges caused by Lebanon's economic and political crises, since 2020 up to its close-out in September 2022.

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[1] BALADI-RFM Interim Performance Evaluation, 2020. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X974.pdf
[2] AID-268-A-12-00004 Modification No. 15.
[3] BALADI-RMF's Fiscal Year 10 - Quarter 3, Progress Report, April 1st, 2022 – June 30th , 2022. P. 3.

This evaluation utilizes a multi-method approach to reach evidence-based findings, draw conclusions, and identify lessons learned (Annex 2) based on primary and secondary data collected from various sources. The evaluation team collected primary qualitative data over a period of 15 days through 30 key informant interviews (KIIs), five focus group discussions (FGDs) (37 men, 16 women), and 10 site visits. A list of the sampled municipalities and their location is available in Annex 6 KII and FGD respondents included USAID/Lebanon and RMF staff and BALADI awardees and beneficiaries. The sampling approach adopted by the evaluation team ensures a representative selection of projects.

The evaluation team also analyzed secondary data collected from various BALADI-RMF documents, including memoranda of understanding (MOUs), quarterly progress reports, the Interim Performance Evaluation conducted in 2020, and various project performance documents (Annex 13).

The evaluation's main limitation was the fact that many of BALADI-RMF's projects were still under construction or awaiting licensing and not yet operational, which constrained some of the findings and made others contextual or anticipatory.

Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

Relevance

Municipalities' capacities to deliver public services were built: BALADI-RMF provided municipalities with vital equipment and facilities, allowing them to deliver services to their communities, which in turn facilitated the preservation of local livelihoods. The timing of BALADI-RMF's projects was decisive, as they provided municipalities the needed resources to substitute for failing government utility services, such as electricity and water. BALADI also helped build municipalities' capacity to manage, operate, and sustain these projects to ensure the reliability and continuity of service delivery. The involvement of municipalities in project implementation gave them valuable experience in project development, especially when working in difficult environments.

A participatory decentralized governance model was introduced and enhanced: BALADI-RMF's SPD modality introduced a decentralized decision-making process at the municipal level and strengthened communities' participation in determining local priorities. BALADI-RMF's participatory orientation activities served marginalized communities and reduced their reliance on the central state in favor of greater decentralization of service provision. Projects are now owned, supported, and maintained by local communities.

Innovative public administration practices were adopted, and local development was sustained: BALADI-RMF supported private, civil society, and local community groups and empowered them to engage in partnerships for the administrative development, management, and sustainability of the projects. These innovative public administration practices were found to play a pivotal role in establishing a complementary partnership that expanded service provision beyond municipalities' capacities and limited human resources.

Participation by women, youth, and vulnerable groups was ensured, but traditional perceptions of gender roles prevailed: BALADI-RMF designed projects that accommodate persons with disabilities and established project-management committees that are inclusive of women and youths. In various municipalities where BALADI-RMF invested resources, the presence of women remained marginal, and traditional community leaders' perceptions of gender roles prevailed. Due to the constant need to respond to emergency situations, RMF did not invest enough effort in this area. They also did not act on previous evaluation recommendations that suggested recruiting a specialist dedicated to developing gender-analysis plans for all projects.

Some community members said the localization of resources by contractors was insufficient. Although BALADI RMF procured Lebanese contracting companies, in line with the cooperative agreement's procedures, these contractors did not hire local community members, as they already had their own workforce. As such, the localization of labor was limited in the geographic area of the intervention.

EFFECTIVENESS

Communities' most urgent needs were met, and municipalities' capacities were built: Despite the multiple crises, BALADI-RMF continued to implement public-service projects by focusing on communities' most urgent needs. Lebanon's difficult situation did not affect the Activity's purposes, intermediate results (IRs), or major performance indicators. Different factors enabled BALADI-RMF to remain aligned with its initial purposes and adapt its response to contextual changes and emerging needs, thus achieving its desired results and outcomes. These factors include BALADI-RMF's design approach, which contributed to making the desired change at the municipal level, and its constant and close coordination with USAID.

An on-the-job training approach, rather than a curriculum-based approach, was used to build the capacities of municipal officials: Instead of using a systematic approach based on standardized training modules to further build the capacity of municipal staff—through other USAID Activities specialized in capacity building, such as BALADI Capacity Building Program (CAP)—BALADI-RMF relied on on-the-job short term technical assistance. As a result, these staff only acquired knowledge relevant to the construction, management, and operation of their respective projects. Their skills would have been more comprehensively built had RMF linked more municipalities to BALADI CAP.

Citizens' trust in municipalities grew: Citizens experienced the positive results of BALADI-RMF's projects (such as the decrease in their energy bills) and saw that their municipalities were fulfilling their promises of providing them with basic services in times of crisis, which made them trust them more. Increase in trust as part of building the social capital was more evident under this evaluation than in the previous one.

Positive factors minimized the impact of negative ones: Facilitative factors outweighed the inhibiting factors linked to Lebanon's crises, which led to a successful implementation, adaptation, and closure of BALADI-RMF projects. Positive factors like the continuous presence and follow-up of the RMF team with municipalities and the proactive guidance they received from USAID contributed to the achievement of goals. But while negative factors related to the crises did not inhibit project implementation, they did delay it in many instances and made cost-sharing more difficult after 2021.

Municipalities' awareness of the importance of public partnerships with local partners in community projects was raised: BALADI-RMF collaborated with civil-society organizations (CSOs) and private-sector companies, especially in projects not related to public service delivery, and encouraged municipalities to seek support from the community when developing project proposals. Engaging the private sector proved to be effective and efficient, as it provided a longer sustainability for the projects. Private companies were also a good alternative to municipalities when it came to managing and operating the projects.

ADAPTABILITY

Remote work and on-site work facilitations helped overcome transportation difficulties and COVID lockdowns: Following the lockdowns in March 2020, BALADI-RMF's management team resorted to remote work using online communication platforms, which allowed them to maintain links with contractors, municipalities, and field officers. Special arrangements were made to fuel essential car-pooled transportation, and contractors were instructed to establish on-site construction facilities to avoid transportation interruptions.

Flexible budget revisions and the use of different billing rates helped respond to fluctuating exchange rates: BALADI-RMF's budgeting included a "cushion fund" line-item to cover unanticipated costs. It was possible to reallocate this fund, as the municipal cost-share was no longer available. To keep pace with the fast-changing exchange rate and increasing banking constraints, BALADI-RMF dispatched cash flow while adopting multiple billing approaches, such as cash order and invoicing using different currency values to the dollar. These multiple approaches to funding, alongside maintaining accurate book-keeping, were instrumental to completing the work despite the raging crisis.

Project designs were adjusted when priorities changed: The BALADI-RMF team was able to accommodate awardee requests for contractual changes in light of shifting priorities, for example, to reallocate funds between projects and revise deliverables whenever required.

Evaluation Recommendations

Expand Municipal Capacities to Substitute for Failing State Services

Recommendation 1.1: RMF is encouraged to do partnerships with clusters of municipalities instead of individual municipalities, as clustering can help build the capacities of less-capable municipalities. In addition, working with clusters of municipalities helps mitigate the risk of municipal dissolution and counters the bias of excluding less-capable applicants.

USAID/Lebanon can build on BALADI-RMF's experience to strengthen the development and emergency nexus in response to growing instability and declining state services. Considering the rising needs of communities in various areas of service provision, an effective and efficient implementation will require expanding the Activity scope to engage multiple sector-specialized implementing partners (IPs).

Recommendation 1.2: RMF should build on its reputation of neutrality and the credibility it has at the local level to enlarge partnerships and attract support for follow-up and project-development activities, particularly in the South and the Bekaa. Mainstreaming BALADI-RMF's participatory decision-making approach to other award-selection procedures can further enhance public support in the prioritization of local agendas.

USAID/Lebanon is encouraged to explore a variety of partnership modalities that can strengthen private-sector and local-ownership roles in municipal administration. This is particularly needed since most municipalities lack the resources and the know-how to deliver services that are no longer provided by state institutions or the private sector. New partnership modalities, like the ones adopted by BALADI-RMF, can optimize municipal in-kind resources and help to deliver urgent services to local communities. BALDI-RMF's SPD-Arsal, for instance, demonstrates an important modality in public-private partnership (PPP), where the municipality provides property and facilities while USAID funds equipment and private-sector processes and markets local agricultural products. Neither partner would have been able to achieve such a local-development initiative on their own.

Ensure Participation of Women and Youth

Recommendation 1.3: RMF should place more focus on gender and youth inclusion in all phases of project implementation, across all sectors, and explore ways to avoid submitting to traditional gender-biased justifications when responding to crisis situations. For that purpose, it is proposed that RMF, as previously recommended by the 2020 interim evaluation, include a gender specialist to develop a gender-analysis plan that spans the whole project life-cycle, including in crisis contexts.

Localize Workforce and Resources

Recommendation 1.4: RMF future competitive procurement procedures may want to take into consideration contractual preferences for the localization of project resources whenever possible, including those pertaining to supplies and equipment, while considering the employment of members of targeted communities. Such efforts will ensure that awards are locally consumed, to the extent possible, and that contractors consider procuring local resources and hiring local community members when implementing projects. Giving priority to selecting local contractors may also contribute to localization. Such localization can distribute award benefits in a way that supports the local market and youth employment, and skill-building.

Systemize Project Management and Procurement

Recommendation 2.1: To build the capacity of municipal staff engaged in proposed projects, USAID is encouraged to offer systematic training in subjects like project design, procurement,

management, and implementation, rather than relying on the implementing partner to provide on-the-job training only. This can be achieved by linking more municipalities to USAID activities specialized in capacity building, such as BALADI CAP. On a related note, RMF should ensure and verify that operation and maintenance manuals are distributed to all beneficiaries, and that they are accessible and provide sufficient guidance for all audiences.

USAID/Lebanon should integrate a capacity-building component and an infrastructure component in Activity design to ensure a systematic approach of knowledge transfer and to guarantee the viability of the Activity beyond its life cycle.

IMPROVE RAPID RESPONSE IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Recommendation 3.1: RMF is advised to maintain existing practices that lead to effective and responsive project execution and to mainstream the lessons learned in crisis management across all its future work. USAID can foster and strengthen prospective partnerships and provide guidance on the best practices in crisis management and local service provision. It would be very helpful for USAID to facilitate learning events or provide learning materials to disseminate these best practices. The learning generated can then be used in training and orientation workshops that target implementers working in turbulent regions.

It is also suggested that USAID/Lebanon utilize the lessons learned and the best practices in crisis mitigation attained through BALADI-RMF to orient other IPs. Special emphasis can be given to insights gained from the experiences of forging multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve sustainability in project operation. The latter practice has demonstrated efficiency and effectiveness in the mobilization of resources as well as in providing the community with essential services that are no longer offered by state institutions or the private sector.

Recommendation 3.2: RMF should consider worst-case scenarios in its contingency planning, including the potential complete paralysis of public institutions. They should take possible challenges into account, including the increasing difficulty to obtain permits and approvals for projects. Additional digitalization of the internal approval procedure and ensuring fast response to architecture and engineering (A&E) review and requests would help in that area.

SUSTAIN PARTNERSHIPS

Recommendation 3.3: RMF should capitalize on its local presence and national network and maintain communications with municipalities, informing them about different funding opportunities and potential collaborations. RMF may consider the establishment of a hub (called "Hub for Municipal Development" for example) where news and opportunities are exchanged, and occasional meetings are held to share views and make proposals regarding supporting local development.

USAID/Lebanon can complement such an initiative by occasionally participating with RMF in mini-conferences that address municipal development in times of emergency and respond to suggestions and local views. This can help build on BALADI-RMF's experiences and transmittable effects.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

EVALUATION PURPOSE

This Endline Performance Evaluation of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Building Alliance for Local Advancement, Development, and Investment (BALADI) Activity, implemented by René Moawad Foundation (RMF), was conducted by the Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon (MEPL).

It builds on BALADI RMF's Interim Performance Evaluation conducted in July 2020 and aims to inform the Mission about BALADI-RMF's performance and achievements since that time, its ability to adapt to Lebanon's changing context, its relevance, and the lessons learned it generated to be used for future programming.

The evaluation looks at the extent to which the BALADI RMF Activity achieved its stated outputs, outcomes, and objectives. For example, it discusses BALADI RMF's role in improving local governance (of municipalities) and public-service delivery and establishing sustainable local social capital despite the several contextual factors that might have affected its implementation and adaptability negatively, especially the economic and political crises and the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Endline Performance Evaluation pays special attention to how BALADI-RMF adapted to changing circumstances and accomplished the objectives of its Request for Municipal Assistance (RFMA) and Supplemental Program Description (SPD) work as of 2020.[4] By documenting BALADI-RMF's continuous relevance, implementation successes and challenges, and lessons learned over the past two years, the evaluation informs future programming for both USAID/Lebanon and RMF. In addition, it is intended to contribute to the Mission's commitment to continuously adapting and learning under challenging circumstances. This evaluation also addresses the inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups as crosscutting elements in BALADI-RMF activities.

EVALUATION APPROACH

MEPL's evaluation team (ET) developed the evaluation approach through consultation with USAID/Lebanon, which culminated in the design described in this report. During the opening coordination meeting, stakeholders provided feedback on the scope and questions of interest and discussed with the ET qualitative and quantitative data collection. Following this meeting, the ET developed the evaluation' scope of work (SOW) in collaboration with USAID/Lebanon (Annex 1).

MEPL first produced an Inception Report after reviewing a set of documents relevant to the BALADI RMF Activity, including its 2020 Interim Performance Evaluation, quarterly progress reports, cooperative agreement (CA) modifications, and other relevant documents. The ET slightly modified the main evaluation questions and proposed sub-questions to further guide data collection, analysis, and reporting. USAID/Lebanon reviewed and approved the evaluation design before the ET commenced actual fieldwork.

The team piloted all data-collection tools prior to actual data collection. They used a multi-method approach to data collection based on key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and site observation visits to a number of stakeholders and beneficiaries. After completing data collection, the ET coded and analyzed the data before extracting a set of main findings that they then verified through workshops with USAID/Lebanon and RMF stakeholders. The team later articulated a set of conclusions and lessons learned.

[4] More information on SPD is found in the Background section

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This Endline Performance Evaluation has two overarching objectives aimed at assessing the relevance and effectiveness of the BALADI RMF Activity. To attain these objectives, the ET committed to answering the main questions and sub-questions presented below.

Relevance

1. **Main question:** To what extent has BALADI RMF continued to be relevant to community needs post-July 2020?

   Sub-questions:

   1.1. To what extent were the awarded municipal projects capable of answering and/or addressing the relevant needs of the supported communities?

   1.2. Did women, youth, and vulnerable groups actively participate in the identification, design, and implementation of local development activities?

Effectiveness

2. **Main question:** To what extent has BALADI RMF continued to achieve its activity goal and objectives, and what factors have contributed to or hindered the achievement of these objectives?

   Sub-questions:

   2.1. What are BALADI RMF's major outcomes and achievements post-July 2020, and to what extent were these outcomes aligned with the stated activity purposes?

   2.2. What are the main factors that influenced positively or negatively BALADI RMF's ability to achieve these purposes, and to what extent did they impact achievements?

   2.3. To what extent was BALADI RMF capable of increasing collaboration between sub-national public entities, CSOs, and the private sector to implement the awarded projects and deliver services?

   2.4. How successful was BALADI RMF in ensuring gender mainstreaming across its interventions?

   2.5. Which BALADI RMF activities remain operational beyond the life of the activity?[5]

Adaptability

3. **Main question:** To what extent and how well has BALADI RMF adapted in response to evolving circumstances?

   Sub questions:

   3.1. How has BALADI RMF adapted to the changing context as of July 2020?

   3.2. What are the main factors that influenced positively or negatively BALADI RMF's ability to adapt?

[5] During data collection, the majority of the projects implemented after July 2020 were either not completed yet or completed just 2-3 months earlier. As a result, the ET decided to skip this question since we could not determine which projects would remain sustainable and operational beyond the life of BALADI-RMF.

Successes and Lessons Learned

4. **Main question:** What are BALADI RMF's main successes and lessons learned that can be transmitted to other ongoing or future USAID/Lebanon interventions?

   Sub-questions:

   4.1. What were some of the major successes of BALADI RMF?

   4.2. What were the lessons learned from BALADI RMF's experience?

BALADI-RMF BACKGROUND

BALADI-RMF is a USAID Activity with a goal to provide support so that "Targeted local government entities are more responsive to community needs and concerns." BALADI-RMF aims to reach this goal through three intermediate results (IRs). IR1 aims to ensure that the "capacities of local government entities in public services provision are enhanced." Similarly, IR2 attempts to reach a stage where "participatory decentralized governance model is enhanced." Finally, IR3 seeks to have "innovative public administration practices adopted for sustained local development." Throughout its lifetime, BALADI-RMF "sought to address cross-cutting themes as well, including: gender and women empowerment, youth employment and skills building, and environmental protection and eco-tourism prioritized by communities."[6]

BALADI-RMF PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND APPROACH

Originally, USAID awarded the René Moawad Foundation two CAs to implement the BALADI Activity.[7] The BALADI CA had an aggregate value of $27 million over a period of five years; from September 30, 2012 to September 29, 2017. However, BALADI-RMF was later extended until September 2022.

Three initial rounds under the RFMA modality (R1, R2, R3) supported approximately 60 projects worth $7,900,000 and covered a variety of municipal sectors.[8]

Following the violent clashes in Arsal in 2017, where the Lebanese army fought off the Al-Qaeda-affiliated extremist group Jabhat Al-Nusra, USAID decided to extend its support to the Arsal Municipality through new interventions worth around $1,200,000. Labeled SPD-Arsal, these interventions complemented previous USAID-funded projects in the area implemented through BALADI-RMF's RMFA R2. This brought the number of interventions in Arsal to 5.

Furthermore, after the challenging political environment in the South prevented BALADI-RMF from establishing coverage through the RFMA modality, SPD-South was established to support a number of municipalities in responding to community needs. SPD-South implemented 13 interventions and follow up activities for projects under implementation worth some $3,000,000.[9]

THE LEBANESE CONTEXT POST-OCTOBER 2019

POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL TURBULENCES

Since the launch of the BALADI Program in 2012, Lebanon has experienced a turbulent political and economic environment. Starting in 2013, political disputes prevented the election of a president, and

[6] BALADI-RMF's Fiscal Year 10 - Quarter 3, Progress Report, April 1st, 2022 – June 30th , 2022. P. 3.
[7] CA No. AID-268-A-12-00004 and CL—CA No. AID-268-A-12-00005
[8] BALADI-RMF's Fiscal Year 10 - Quarter 3, Progress Report, April 1st, 2022 – June 30th , 2022. Tables 2-6.
[9] BALADI-RMF's Fiscal Year 10 - Quarter 3, Progress Report, April 1st, 2022 – June 30th , 2022. Pp. 6-7.

the office was left vacant for more than two years. There were also recurring cabinet resignations, political paralyses, and deadlocks. Between 2013 and 2021, five different cabinets were formed with periodical transitional vacuums under caretaker governments lasting 36 months in total.[10]

The conflict in Syria, which started in 2011, forced more than 1.5 million Syrians to seek refuge in Lebanon. A protracted situation of displacement exerted immense pressures on local resources, shifting local priorities from development towards relief. In 2019, the economic situation in the country went down a rapid deterioration path. The gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by about 25% in 2020 and fell another 10-15% in 2021. Lebanon defaulted on its sovereign debt in March 2020, and between 2019 and 2021 its currency lost almost 90% of its value. Efforts by the government to reduce public debt by printing currency led to hyperinflation, which cost most of the Lebanese their bank savings and reduced their salaries and pensions to around 10% of their 2019 value. Human suffering became widespread in the country, as unemployment rose to 40%. More than half of the population now lives below the poverty line, and malnutrition is spreading, especially among children and refugees.[11]

The economic crisis that stormed Lebanon is not just severe but virtually uniquely so in several regards. Lebanon imports some 80% of its basic goods, including foodstuffs, but it no longer has sufficient hard currency to pay for them. The country's high dependence on imports is largely a result of the Lebanese version of the "Dutch Disease:" Over a period of almost two decades, an over-valued currency undermined most productive sectors in favor of a dependent, rentier economy reliant upon constant infusions of foreign capital. However, from 2011 onward, even this rentier economy stagnated. The Lebanese are left with little to rely on by way of domestic economic foundations and have few export opportunities to exploit.

All this happened and continues to happen in a context where gender inequalities are pre-dominant and pre-existent. According to the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap report published in 2022, Lebanon has one of the highest overall gender gaps in the world, ranking 119 out of 146 countries.[12] Speaking of economy and livelihood, the ratio of employed to unemployed is only one in four in women, compared to three in four in men. Within the refugee community in Lebanon, women are the most food-insecure, and many experience increased vulnerability as the heads of households. Despite making progress in reducing gender gaps over the past two years, in appointing several women ministers in cabinet and increasing female education enrollments, widening economic and political gaps continue.[13] At the municipal level, only 663 women were elected out of 12,139 councilmembers.[14] Only 10 (or 1%) of the 1,029 municipalities were headed by women.[15]

Lebanon confirmed its first COVID-19 case on February 21, 2020. The emergency measures adopted shortly thereafter exacerbated the preexisting economic catastrophe. The lockdown imposed in March 2020 brought economic activity to a near-complete halt, with further job suspension job and income losses. More businesses failed, and poverty spread, fueled by rising unemployment, lower real wages, and the loss of savings due to the collapse of the local currency. Bread, medicine, and meat were all in short supply. Moreover, the government was no longer able

[10] Salamey, I. 2021. The Government and Politics of Lebanon. New York: Peter Lang.
[11] Lebanon Political Economy Assessment 2021. USAID.
[12] Global Gender Gap Report 2022 | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)
[13] ibid.
[14] Women in Municipal Elections 2016 - Key Results.pdf (aceproject.org)
[15] لماذا رئيس وليس رئيسة بلدية ؟ - أحوال ميديا (ahwal.media) and Lebanese municipalities according to their municipal councils size (may 2016) | Drupal (libandata.org)

to finance its own electric company thus plunging the country in prolonged blackouts. The emigration of skilled youth also accelerated at an unprecedented rate.[16]

Local Development, the Private Sector, and CSOs

The economic crisis had a direct toll on the private sector as well. The collapse of the banking and credit system put many private companies and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) out of business, leading to unemployment in excess of 40% (2020). For SMEs, which represent 90% of businesses and employ 50% of the country's labor force, the economic meltdown resulted in inventory losses and diminished personal equity by more than 80%.[17]

Civil society organizations (CSOs), on the other hand, have attempted to adapt to the new circumstances in various ways. Some increased their readiness and capacities to respond to emergencies, thus providing critical assistance and support to the victims of the Beirut port explosion, while others turned to support the immediate needs of the increasing number of citizens thrown into poverty.

As a consequence of the crises and the events described above, local development in Lebanon was affected at various levels, most critically with regards to failing anticipations for greater administrative decentralization. Political reforms were curtailed by the recurring economic crises and political deadlocks. Currency devaluations and fuel and power shortages devastated municipalities and interrupted their development priorities.

Municipal priorities shifted away from supporting local development, including strengthening local economic prosperities through ecotourism and recreational activities, towards responding to urgent community needs and providing medicines and urgent health equipment during the covid pandemic and economic crisis. The collapse of state services, such as electricity, water, and wastewater treatment, threatened the livelihood of local communities. In parallel, economic devaluations rendered municipal incomes negligible. As a result, the state-run Independent Municipal Fund (IMF)'s annual financial allocations to municipalities were substantially reduced in value. This affected the delivery of basic municipal services, such as garbage collection, and threatened municipalities with dissolution.

Uncertainty has continued to overwhelm municipalities with social, political, and economic burdens, the latest of which was the postponement of the 2022 municipal elections for a year. It remains unclear whether the government will be able to fund and monitor these elections.

Prior Evaluation of BALADI-RMF

The 2020 Interim Performance Evaluation of BALADI-RMF reached some important conclusions; first, that BALADI-RMF had achieved important results that had contributed to meeting its objective to support the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), and second, that BALADI-RMF's interventions had mostly focused on the relevant needs of supported communities. "This was manifested in the support extended to municipalities to help them provide basic electricity, water, education, and health services to residents and ensure an enabling environment for economic activity," the report says.[18] Nevertheless, the report pointed to mixed outcomes in BALADI-RMF's intentions to promote improvement in livelihoods and said that women's involvement in the interventions had been limited.

[16] Lebanon Political Economy Assessment 2021. USAID.
[17] Ibid.
[18] BALADI-RFM Interim Performance Evaluation, 2020. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00X974.pdf

The interim evaluation also found little evidence of new partnerships established between municipalities, the private sector, and CSOs through BALADI-RMF sponsorship. Several recommendations were raised to USAID proposing (i) the development and implementation of a long-term local economic development plan as part of municipal capacity-building efforts, (ii) the coordination of the implementation of municipal infrastructure and capacity-building activities, (ii) the need to focus on renewable electricity in cooperation with RMF, (iv) an increased collaboration between municipalities and civil society, and (v) raising the awareness of municipalities regarding public-private partnerships (PPPs).

The evaluation also recommended that RMF develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for Community Project Committees (CPCs) to encourage women's roles, identifying local entities as implementing partners, and include a gender specialist to develop a gender-analysis plan for the whole life of the project.[19]

Now that the BALADI-RMF is coming to a close, it is important to consider questions about (i) the extent to which it continued to be relevant to its original objectives despite emerging economic and political challenges, (ii) whether it remained effective in executing its activities, and (iii) whether it managed to adapt to difficult environments while maintaining gender and youth inclusion and observing environment and quality assurance regulations.

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation utilizes a multi-method approach. The evaluation team conducted document reviews and collected data from semi-structured KIIs, FGDs, and site visits in order to compile and analyze information and reach relevant findings. The tools utilized are included in Annex 8-12.

The team collected primary qualitative data over 15 days by conducting 30 KIIs, five FGDs (with 36 men and 22 women), and ten site visits. A list of the sampled organizations and municipalities along with their locations is included in Annex 6. Secondary-data review mostly focused on BALADI-RMF's quarterly progress reports, memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and related modifications, and the 2020 interim evaluation, in addition to an analysis of the lists of beneficiaries and other documents (Annex 13).

The evaluation team applied purposive sampling to select 18 projects based on findings from BALADI-RMF's progress reports, with the objective of covering all sectors in various locations. For the KIIs, the team interviewed USAID staff, RMF staff, heads or members of municipalities, and project/site managers, either online or in-person. The team also conducted FGDs with community members to learn about their experiences and satisfaction with the services provided by BALADI-RMF. In addition, the team visited ten BALADI-RMF project sites in nine municipalities.

The team selected FGD participants based on convenience (in terms of distance and transportation) and mitigated response biases by clearly explaining to the participants that the data collected will remain confidential. The team did not identify any recall bias, as none of the participants had issues remembering details about the projects or the services provided. Response bias was mitigated during interviews through probing questions to confirm the information shared and by cross-checking the data with success and challenges sections in the progress reports. The team transcribed, coded, and summarized all interviews then held two Data Analysis, Integration, and Synthesis (DAIS) sessions to identify emerging themes and patterns and develop finding statements.

[19] Ibid, pp. vi-vii.

The evaluation team was composed of two local consultants (a team leader and a team member) and received support in data collection and analysis from MEPL's Beirut team and a Data Analysis Specialist from EnCompass Home Office.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

This Endline Performance Evaluation aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and adaptation of the BALADI-RMF Activity since July 2020. To achieve this objective, the ET used a set of evaluation questions derived from the Inception Report to generate findings and recommendations.

RELEVANCE

Q1 - TO WHAT EXTENT HAS BALADI-RMF CONTINUED TO BE RELEVANT TO COMMUNITY NEEDS POST JULY 2020?

Finding 1.1: BALADI-RMF substantially increased its contribution to IR.1 (Capacity of municipalities in public service provision is being enhanced) and became even more relevant to this IR amid declining government utility services, particularly after July 2020.

BALADI-RMF's projects demonstrated ability to remain relevant to the fast-changing local community needs amid turbulent political and economic conditions. By providing municipalities with vital equipment and facilities, BALADI-RMF helped them to continue to provide services to their residents and preserve their livelihoods. BALADI-RMF has, thus, stayed relevant to its strategic objective of ensuring that "targeted local government entities are more responsive to community needs and concerns."[20]

Post-2020, BALADI-RMF's project outputs contributed to IR.1 where the "capacities of local government entities in public services provision are enhanced."[21] This was clearly evident in the role assumed by municipalities as providers to substitute for the collapsing central government utility services, such as electricity and water. Installing solar power equipment, for example, helped municipalities provide local communities with electricity at a lower cost while keeping water pumps operational. Such newly introduced power infrastructure enhanced local governments' ability to respond to emerging community needs and sustain livelihoods.

Finding 1.2: BALADI-RMF advanced its contribution to IR.2 (Participatory decentralized governance model is enhanced) by empowering municipalities through participatory decision-making processes and enhanced decentralized service provision.

Capacity building further paved the way for greater self-reliance and built momentum for increased decentralization of service provision. BALADI-RMF discussed its SPD modality, which relied on conducting a participatory needs assessment to determine local priorities, with local leaders and stakeholders through a consultative process prior to decision-making. According to interviews with municipalities, the interests of the different gender, religious, and socio-economic groups were incorporated in the final deliberation. Hence, BALADI-RMF demonstrated direct contribution to IR.2, "participatory decentralized governance model is enhanced."[22] Prior modalities (RMFA R1, R2,

[20] BALADI-RMF Fiscal Year 10 - Quarter 3, Progress Report, April 1st, 2022 – June 30th, 2022, p. 3.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

R3) had also institutionalized CPCs as a means to strengthen the participatory decision-making process.

The needs assessments, as utilized by SPDs, helped municipalities determine urgent priorities, especially given that the localities confronted failing central-state institutions and reduced funds, even those of the (IMF) and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR). The bottom-up and participatory approach helped determine communities' critical needs and priorities, such as solar power for lighting, heating, and water pumping (Annex7). Agri-food and agri-business were among other priorities identified as critical to support rural communities during the crisis.

Many BALADI-RMF projects implemented prior to the SPD work proved relevant and capable of meeting urgent local demands, such as initiatives related to health facilities run by local organizations (in Alley and Akkar) and supported by the Lebanese diaspora abroad. Overall, these participatory projects serving marginalized communities reduced the latter's reliance on the central state in favor of greater decentralization of service provision.

Finding 1.3: BALADI-RMF improved its contribution to IR.3 (Innovative public administration practices adopted for sustained local development) through reliance on the private sector and CSOs for the administration of newly established projects serving local communities.

In SPD-Arsal, municipal collaboration with the private sector (a firm called Najjar) was crucial for sustaining the activity of the agri-food facility. Sustainability of the project was primarily driven by the ability of the private sector to explore market opportunities beyond the local space and to manage the collection and processing of fruits while procuring the supply from local farmers.

In SPD-South, Tibnin's agricultural cooperative was involved in operating and utilizing the BALADI-installed olive-mill facility and built strong partnerships with municipalities in this regard. Enthusiasm was driven by the benefits the project brings forth, namely producing quality olive oil ready for commercial sale on a wide national and international scale. The cooperative also benefited from the by-products of this process, such as the bio-fertilizing liquid and the olive press cake used for heating. In Machha, under RFMA R2, municipal collaboration with a local CSO, led to the establishment of a management structure to operate a local bakery, thus achieving the mutual interests of both the municipality and the CSO. The former made use of the CSO's expertise to develop a proposal and an operation plan, while the latter made use of the land provided by the municipality. While the partnership intends to generate revenue for both entities by simultaneously supporting local communities in Tibnin and Akkar, the Mechha project remains obstructed because it does not have the government's approval to operate. In all these projects, there is a potential to create local jobs, enhance local capacities, and form innovative PPPs and public-civil society partnerships in administrative practices. As such, these projects are contributing to IR.3 by supporting "innovative public administration practices adopted for sustained local development."[23]

These innovative public administration practices were found to play a pivotal role in establishing a complementary partnership that allowed the private sector, cooperatives, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to become equal stakeholders in the management and sustainability of the projects. Local municipal leaders considered the administrative role as a means to expand services beyond the capacities and administrative resources of their municipalities. These approaches became of critical relevance post-2020, as they mobilized management resources to run complex operations, such as food-drying and processing facilities, bakeries, and olive mills, hence advancing rural development, expanding services, and increasing public trust in local governments.

[23] Ibid.

Finding 1.4: BALADI-RMF made efforts to include women, youth, and vulnerable groups in both the needs assessment and the implementation of projects. However, traditional gender roles prevailed.

It can be noted that BALADI-RMF helped change perceptions around gender and contributed to rethinking gender roles and promoting the inclusion of marginalized groups, as most of its projects' requirements emphasized participation and accessibility. For instance, all assisted projects required facilities to provide access to persons with disabilities. The ET was able to verify this requirement in all the facilities it visited.

However, the participation of women, youth, and vulnerable groups in the identification, design, and implementation of projects varied from one municipality to another. Generally speaking, and despite efforts by RMF to have a participatory and inclusive process in CPCs, most municipalities continued to hold conservative perceptions of gender roles. For instance, when asked about the role of women in project design, the majority of municipal leaders typically responded by suggesting that solar, water-pumping, and infrastructure construction projects were of no interest to women, whom they described as more suited for such jobs as Agri-food drying and processing. This was the case in the vast majority of projects visited by the ET, where municipality members were mostly older males. These perceptions were more moderate in municipalities that had both male and female members and/or were led by younger people, as is the case in Kfaryashit for example. it should be noted that none of the municipalities that this evaluation covered had a woman president, and no prominent councilwoman participated in the interviews.

Deeply rooted traditional views of gender roles in local development and the absence of women and youth in most municipal councils may have influenced overall anticipations. For instance, interviews with BALADI-RMF staff suggested that the emergency context was partly responsible for the reduced interest in gender inclusion, in addition to the fact that projects were already non-gender focused. These factors, coupled with a strained budget, may have contributed to RMF not acting on the 2020 interim evaluation's recommendation that they "include a gender specialist to develop a gender-analysis plan for the whole life of the project."[24]

Considerations for gender inclusion were further weakened by the switch from the RMFA modality to the SPD one, where CPCs were dropped altogether from the new project-design requirements along with the condition that women and youth participate in project management. This made irrelevant the 2020 interim evaluation's recommendation that RMF "develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for CPCs to encourage women's roles."[25] These factors and assumptions undermined the project's gender inclusivity.

> ***"The activity brings together Muslim and Christian communities in our town and makes them as one. It adds to their common interests and serves their harmony as we make a model of religious coexistence. This community center will be mostly run by women and serve many women-organized activities. It will provide youth with the opportunity to get together and celebrate joyful events."***
>
> ***— Head of a Municipal Council***

[24] BALADI-RMF Interim Performance Evaluation Report, July-October 2020, p. vii.
[25] Ibid.

> ***"We only had men on the municipality's board, and we discussed the needs. The role of women is a bit weak in our village. The population is mixed; some like to participate, while others don't."***
>
> ***— Head of a Municipal Council***

> ***"No, we did not get a gender specialist on board because we didn't have a budget, plus BALADI wasn't a gender-oriented project."***
>
> ***— RMF Staff***

Finding 1.5: There was no evident leveraging of local resources and community labor by BALADI-RMF's sub-contractors.

According to interviewed municipality heads, BALADI-RMF's contractors used their own specialized and trained staff for the installation of equipment and the construction of facilities and relied on their existing resources and suppliers to source materials. They did not employ locals or make use of local resources. From observation visits most equipment were foreign made. This has somewhat become a typical practice by specialized companies, which abide by liability and specialization requirements and are concerned about the efficient implementation of projects to meet deadlines and remain competitive as required by the bidding process.

EFFECTIVENESS

Q2 - TO WHAT EXTENT HAS BALADI RMF CONTINUED TO ACHIEVE ITS ACTIVITY GOAL AND OBJECTIVES, AND WHAT FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO OR HINDERED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THESE OBJECTIVES?

SUB Q 2.1 - WHAT ARE BALADI RMF'S MAJOR OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS POST JULY 2020, AND TO WHAT EXTENT WERE THESE OUTCOMES ALIGNED WITH THE STATED ACTIVITY PURPOSES?

Finding 2.1.1: BALADI-RMF succeeded in responding to communities' urgent basic needs and was able to moderately build the capacities of municipalities in project design and implementation.

MEL Data

The analysis of BALADI-RMF's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan and other related Activity documents revealed a storyline characterized by expanding the program's reach to cover new geographical areas not served previously. At the onset of the project in Q1 FY2012, the MEL Plan included 21 indicators (12 output and nine outcome) that worked towards achieving the Activity's strategic objective, purposes, and sub-purposes. However, due to the need to adapt to the crisis situation in Lebanon post 2019, and with the launch of SPD-South, two outcome and one output indicators (2.2 and 4.2) were dropped since the design of the SPD did not have CPCs.

In terms of target achievement, this evaluation covers the period post July 2020, i.e., the Arsal and South SPDs.

The ET can confirm that all cumulative indicator targets pertaining to BALADI-RMF's IRs were achieved. It is worth noting, however, the team cannot say yet whether the targets for each round were achieved or not, as 13 projects are yet to be completed (one project under RFMA R2, under SPD-Arsal, and ten under SPD-South) and their results have not been reported towards BALADI-RMF's indicators yet.

Responding to Urgent Needs through Public Service Delivery

During the crisis, BALADI-RMF continued to respond to municipalities' urgent needs to provide basic services to residents, as revealed by the KIIs. The desk review showed that of the 30 activities implemented since July 2020, 21 provided public services (Solar Power (12), Energy Efficiency (5), Public Education and Community Facility (2), Water Channel (1), and Back-up Generator (1)). Three of these projects were under SPD-South, three under SPD-Arsal, 13 under RFMA R3, and two under RFMA R2.

Solar-power and energy-efficiency projects had an instant impact on the communities where they were implemented. One municipality head, whose town benefitted from a hybrid solar-power project, said, "We were able to cut the electricity bill of the community generator by 20%." A beneficiary who received solar heaters revealed, "Through the solar heaters, I was able to cut my electricity bill by 80%, and now I always have hot water for my family." Other types of projects addressed basic safety issues. The mayor of a village where water channels were constructed said, "The main success was reducing road accidents caused by watery roads. Also, water also is no longer flooding stores, people's homes, and nearby agricultural land."

In addition to basic service delivery, BALADI-RMF's projects in the agro-processing sector led to job creation and income generation. For example, a village under SPD-South got a modern olive press and a facility for briquetting olive residue, which created two full-time and four part-time jobs and improved productivity, thus generating further income. During an FGD, a beneficiary said, "With this new olive press, I now get 20% more oil for the same quantity of olives that I used to process."

Three solar water pumping projects in (Senay, Zefta, and Kharayeb) under SPD-South will be picked up and implemented by USAID/Lebanon's Water Sanitation and Conservation (WSC) Project. RMF has completed the design phase and tendering phases for these three projects, but due to time constraints and delays related to the proposed subcontractors obtaining Unique Entity Identifier numbers and undergoing vetting, the needed procurement will not be possible to complete before BALADI concludes at the end of September 2022. So, it was decided, in coordination with USAID, to transfer these three projects to WSC for implementation. In parallel, RMF is looking into providing agricultural equipment to other municipalities based on the assessment of their needs.

> ***"Municipalities were overwhelmed, and many could not cope with the emerging needs. The project came at the right time."***
>
> ***— RMF Staff***

Building the Capacities of Municipalities

The 2020 Interim Performance Evaluation pointed out that BALADI-RMF's main contribution to developing municipal capacities had been "the support in the bidding and project implementation phases," as stated by RMF and USAID/Lebanon officials.

This was further confirmed by the findings of the present evaluation, with KII respondents from municipalities where the RFMA modality was applied confirming that throughout the program, they had learned how to submit proposals and applications and how to apply appropriate procedures in project design and implementation. Of course, the level of learning differed from one municipality to another based on the existing know-how skills of the municipal officials.

A municipality president said, "We improved our vision as a rural municipality to have new projects for the village and were not only concerned with building a new wall." An RMF staff member was clearer in explaining his experience with municipalities, saying that municipalities "had this stereotype of working on fixing roads and walls. This was the culture of municipalities. But when we introduced them to community engagement and townhall meetings, they changed and learned how to prepare for projects, due diligence, and creating activities."

When asked to explain how BALADI had built the capacities of municipality members, this RMF staffer said the latter had been engaged in on-the-job training through the different phases of project

implementation. Municipal staff, on the other hand, had different opinions regarding this approach: while some appreciated it, others were more reluctant to it and said they needed more information and training, as there were different levels of education, experience, and assimilation to help understand project design and implementation. One municipality staff member said, "We [municipalities] looked for people with a background in economics or social science to help us develop the proposal." Another one pointed out that municipal members with previous relevant experience or who had a college degree were more likely to be selected as focal points for projects.

Building Trust

Participants in eight of the 17 KIIs conducted with municipal officials confirmed that citizens' trust in their municipalities had increased. This is a notable improvement compared to the findings of the 2020 evaluation where only one out of the 16 municipal officials interviewed mentioned an increase in citizens' trust.

When asked about the reason behind this increase in trust, the majority of respondents said it was because citizens had witnessed first-hand the concrete results of the implemented projects, such as the decrease in electricity bills, the increase in production, the improvement of health services, etc. They saw that their municipalities had fulfilled their promises. Moreover, according to several municipal officials, having the trust of citizens helps municipalities improve their public image and attract more projects and funding from donors and the Lebanese diaspora abroad.

One municipality head whose municipality created a recreational hall for public gatherings said that "both Muslim and Christian communities in our village trust the municipality more in its objective to provide services for everyone."

SUB Q 2.2 - WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY BALADI RMF'S ABILITY TO ACHIEVE THESE PURPOSES, AND WHAT WAS THE EXTENT OF THEIR IMPACT ON ACHIEVEMENTS?

Positive Factors

Finding 2.2.1: The main factors that contributed to BALADI-RMF's achievements were the RMF team's close follow-up with partners on the ground and USAID/Lebanon's flexibility and support in responding to the Activity's needs.

Twelve out of 17 municipal officials interviewed (71%) pointed to the professionalism, dedication, and availability of the RMF staff, whom they considered as key factors that had enabled the successful implementation of BALADI-RMF's projects. These officials, many of whom had worked with the RMF staff in the past, noted that since its establishment in 1991, RMF had built credibility within the Lebanese community. They said they highly appreciated the weekly, in-person follow-up of RMF's staff on the projects being implemented, from start to finish. One said, "RMF were very precise and detailed. They followed up on the maintenance that the municipality was supposed to do and checked if there were issues. I really liked working with them and would like to do that again."

USAID/Lebanon's staff shared the same appreciation for RMF's staff and praised them for their ability to adapt BALADI's activities and operations to meet the emerging needs resulting from the crisis.

The RMF staff noted that BALADI's participatory approach when responding to municipalities' needs had been a decisive factor. "Many municipal members were surprised when we asked them 'What kind of support do you really need?' No one had ever asked them such a question before," one RMF staffer said. Additionally, BALADI-RMF's field staff were all residents of the targeted communities and were thus well aware of their communities' context and enabling environment; a key factor that enabled BALADI-RMF's successful achievement of its objectives. "Our field coordinators are from the area. They guide and support us in the collection of information and follow up closely on implementation," an RMF staff member said.

All of the BALADI-RMF staff interviewed expressed their appreciation of the flexibility and support of USAID/Lebanon's staff in responding to their needs, especially during a time of crisis, and said

these factors were key for achieving the program's objectives. An RMF staff member said, "USAID's involvement has been at the core. They are flexible and supportive, and their role was very important in setting direction of the BALADI program to address the needs of the community." Another one highlighted her appreciation for BALADI's Agreement Officer Representatives (AORs): "Both of them, the previous and the current one, followed up very closely on the program. We have weekly meetings, where we flag urgent matters and discuss priorities. This helps us stay in line with USAID Mission's strategy."

Another RMF staff appreciated the overall relation with USAID and its impact on the RMF team as a whole: "We [RMF] learned a lot and thanks to USAID. We improved support/auditing/compliance, and thanks to this, we secured more grants. We now know how to work in a consortium. BALADI built the capacity of our teams."

Negative Factors

Finding 2.2.2: Negative factors predominantly related to Lebanon's multidimensional crisis hindered BALADI-RMF's implementation.

Municipal KII respondents cited a number of negative factors that delayed project implementation and obstructed cost-sharing post 2020. These included the COVID-19 lockdowns, the banking crisis, the currency devaluation, the price fluctuation, the hyperinflation, the spike in fuel prices, and the lack of fuel. "The whole period of lockdowns negatively affected implementation," said one municipal official. Another one explained they had had to pause project implementation due to "the high increase in fuel prices."

Municipal officials who were involved in solar-power projects that used a hybrid system with a community generator said "the high prices of diesel oil required increasing the generator's bill. As such, beneficiaries had to decrease energy spending, which led us to minimize the use of the generator, and we could no longer use the system as a hybrid. We had not predicted at the beginning that fuel prices would increase."

Moreover, lack of cost-sharing by municipalities post 2020 delayed project implementation because the municipalities' budget is in Lebanese lira and lost more than 95% of its value. One municipal official said, "We have almost zero budget to initiate projects. Our money is still blocked at the Independent Municipal Fund, and we barely are able to pay salaries. Luckily, the diaspora is supporting us."

RMF and USAID/Lebanon staff indicated that the requirements for obtaining the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) as of April 2022 had been one of the major factors delaying implementation. One USAID staff member said, "Our office has been very active in trying to resolve this matter, and it was resolved in June 2022. We were advocating to find a solution."

Another factor that delayed implementation was USAID's appointment of a new company (CDM-Smith) to monitor the architecture and engineering (A&E) work. There was a learning curve for both organizations, and improvements were made over time as each side became more familiar with the other's requirements.

To further investigate the delays in project implementation, the ET looked the original duration indicated at the onset of the projects (in the data provided by RMF) and compared it to the actual status of the projects in August 2022. The team found that 21 out of 29 projects (62%) had witnessed delays. The least delayed project took 214 days to be completed, while the most delayed one took 1,746 days. The chart below summarizes the number of projects that faced delays:

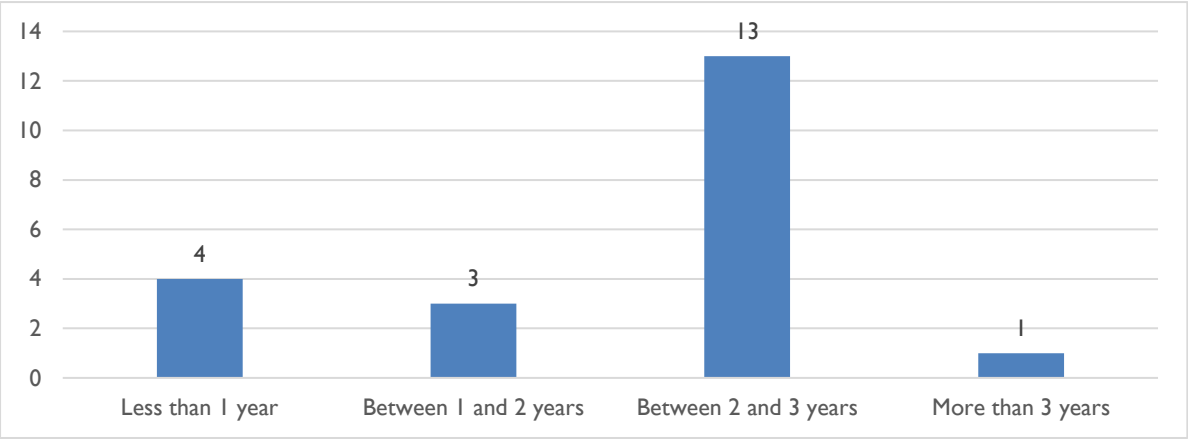

Figure 1: Number of BALADI-RMF projects that faced delays.

SUB Q 2.3. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS BALADI RMF BEEN ABLE TO INCREASE COLLABORATION BETWEEN SUB-NATIONAL PUBLIC ENTITIES, CSOS, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO IMPLEMENT THE AWARDED PROJECTS AND DELIVER SERVICES?

Finding 2.3.1: BALADI-RMF increased municipalities' awareness of the importance of cooperating with local partners to operate the implemented projects.

Civil Society Organizations

The evaluation found six long-term collaborations between BALADI-RMF-supported municipalities and CSOs, in four of the 17 municipalities sampled:

- In Bchatfine, the municipality partnered with the Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI) organization to operate an eco-tourism area. The municipality also partnered with the local scouts to monitor the games and recreational activities, and with the Women's Union to provide catering services through women microentrepreneurs.
- In Aley, the municipality partnered with Al Iman Hospital to manage new medical equipment provided to the existing Emergency Room Unit.
- In Mashha, the municipality partnered with a local CSO to manage the community bakery (operation, hygiene, staff training, drivers, maintenance, accounting, etc.)
- In Aintourin, the municipality agreed with a local church's committee to make the church's reception hall available to host BALADI-related events (meetings, conferences, training).

Public-Private Partnerships

While creating partnerships between municipalities and the private sector is an important component of BALADI's Goal, the ET found that the focus in later interventions had shifted to the delivery of essential public services without needing to engage private firms. In SPD-South for instance, six out of the 15 projects there were based on collaboration with the private sector. These were projects related to rural tourism and agri-business. The rest were basic-service delivery projects. "Solar heaters and panels do not need a company to operate them," as one municipal official pointed out. Furthermore, the scope of SPD-South did not include CPCs, which are the primary vehicle to promote the inclusion of citizens in both the interventions and the partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

The KIIs showed that the municipalities were aware of the importance of having partners in projects that they cannot operate on their own. One municipal official said, "We need others to operate implemented projects and generate income from them." Another municipal official insisted on the importance of having partners for sustainability purposes: "Municipalities cannot lead without a

partner and cannot sustain the project without an operator. We see project sustainability through these partnerships."

In sum, the ET did not find any notable increase in collaboration between sub-national public entities (municipalities), CSOs, and the private sector to implement the awarded BALADI-RMF projects and deliver services, as the design of these projects did not allow such collaboration.

ADAPTABILITY

Q3 - TO WHAT EXTENT AND HOW WELL HAS BALADI-RMF ADAPTED IN RESPONSE TO EVOLVING CIRCUMSTANCES?

SUB Q 3.1 - HOW HAS BALADI-RMF ADAPTED TO THE CHANGING CONTEXT AS OF JULY 2020?

BALADI-RMF utilized three major adaptation strategies to navigate Lebanon's difficult and rapidly-changing environment:

Finding 3.1.1: BALADI-RMF resorted to remote work and made on-site working facilitations to overcome challenges related to transportation and the COVID lockdowns.

To follow-up on implementation and coordinate with contractors, RMF's management team resorted to a remote-work modality using online communications software, including establishing a coordination group on WhatsApp. RMF also appointed a gas station as a supplier for its staff to refuel their cars when they needed to go on essential trips. For their part, contractors made efficient arrangements for their teams, such as setting up on-site working camps to reduce transportation costs.

> ***"In order to manage these challenges, we worked remotely on [Microsoft] Teams when it was feasible and did carpooling as much as we could. The contractors even rented some houses for their teams in the area."***
>
> ***— RMF Staff***

Finding 3.1.2: BALADI-RMF adopted a flexible budget revision and used different billing rates in response to the fluctuating currency exchange rates.

BALADI-RMF allocated a "cushion fund" within the municipal activities budget line-item to make up for the shortage in municipal cost-share. Following the 2020 crisis, municipal funds, including those of the IMF, were substantially reduced due to the currency depreciation and shrinking revenues. Municipalities were no longer able to maintain their initial cost-share commitments. BALADI-RMF's "cushion fund," which is typically used in construction components of the supported interventions in anticipation of emerging challenges, proved critical for financial adaptation and the reallocation of budget items in response to Lebanon's economic crisis. With USAID/Lebanon's approval, RMF used the available intervention funds under the award to cover municipalities' reduced cost-share amounts.

At the same time, BALADI-RMF's ability to financially dispatch cash while using multiple billing approaches, such as cash order and invoicing at different currency values to the dollar, helped the Activity keep pace with the multiple official exchange rates (official rate and SAYRAFA rate). These multiple approaches to funding, alongside maintaining accurate book-keeping, were instrumental for BALADI-RMF to adapt to the post-2020 crisis context.

"There is a buffer factored into the BALADI funds for municipal interventions, and RMF requested to tap into it. That was really intelligent from RMF (…), like for example if they planned an intervention of $50,000, they would have $10,000 set aside for unexpected situations (…). If they did not need to use it in two years, they could use it to fund something else. This allowed them to adapt to the problems. It is a common practice when you have construction projects."

— USAID/Lebanon Staff

Finding 3.1.3: BALADI-RMF adjusted projects' designs in response to emerging priorities.

Changing project designs was among BALADI-RMF's strategies to cope with and adapt to emerging needs and challenges. At different sites, BALADI-RMF accommodated Municipal requests to change the design of the projects being implemented due to emerging circumstances jeopardizing their sustainability. For instance, in Safad Al Batekh (SPD-South), the original plan was to construct a public garden to be used for tourism and recreational activities. However, due to the economic crisis, the project was transformed into a community center used to host social and recreational activities while generating revenues to cover its operational costs. In SPD-Arsal, a detailed cost assessment showed that the planned construction of an additional classroom annex in the vocational school exceeded the anticipated cost. As such, BALADI-RMF worked with the municipality and the school to amend the scope of the intervention and responded to other, less costly needs, such as furnishing the school with equipment essential for administrative and laboratory operations.

"The project was initially granted to develop a restaurant, but we later decided to change it, as we saw that most restaurants in the area were closing due to economic hardship."

— Head of Municipal Council

SUB Q 3.2 - WHAT ARE THE MAIN FACTORS THAT INFLUENCED POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY BALADI-RMF'S ADAPTATION?

Positive Factors

Finding 3.2.1: Urgent community needs emerged that required municipal interventions to substitute for failing state service provision.

Various post-July 2020 factors enhanced BALADI-RMF's ability to adapt to difficult contexts. Prime among them were the growing local stakes in the successful and rapid completion of projects. The fact that these projects were inspired by local needs and demands prior to and after the 2020 economic crisis strengthened municipalities' interest in completing facility construction and equipment installation. Empowering municipalities through solar energy systems for water heating, home electricity, street lighting, or water pumping gained urgency following the 2020 crisis. Similarly, agriculture and agri-business activities grew in relevance, as local farmers began to search for efficient local means to market their produce. As centralized state services declined, reliance on local alternatives increased, which was a driver for BALADI to provide more support to municipalities to act as a substitute for the state in matters related to service delivery.

Finding 3.2.2: BALADI-RMF retained key management staff in key leadership positions and preserved acquired knowledge and experience while relying on a technical expert consultant to ensure that appropriate acquisitions and adjustments were made.

BALADI-RMF's adaptation at the managerial level was remarkable, with most changes in team leadership involving rotation in key posts rather than initiating new recruitment. For instance, when the BALADI Program Director or other key managers were re-allocated to other projects, their replacements were selected from BALADI-RMF's administration staff. This prevented interruptions in implementation by eliminating the need for lengthy recruitment and orientation processes. Noteworthy is the case of the BALADI Program Director, who was reassigned to manage the USAID-funded Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods (PSL) project implemented in partnership with RMF. Therefore, background knowledge and management experience in BALADI-RMF appears to have been preserved among close teammates. In the KIIs, BALADI-RMF's current and previous staff kept referring to the work carried out by their teammates or predecessors in project implementation. The evaluation team observed significant synergy in staff responses across different portfolios in terms of identifying project management progress and challenges.

BALADI-RMF's effective management team contributed further to adaptation by hiring technical experts to review project financial and technical feasibilities and specifications, plan equipment installations, and make necessary design adjustments whenever needed. This was among the critical aspects that supported the successful procurement and implementation processes, while accommodating adaptation whenever changes were required.

Finding 3.2.3: BALADI-RMF's credibility and impartiality in local affairs and positive experiences, particularly in SPD-South, facilitated adaptation and work in new locations.

The SPD modality gave BALADI-RMF the ability to adapt to Lebanon's challenging political environment and extend its geographical coverage, namely into Arsal and the South, to provide urgent support to the local communities there. BALADI-RMF was able to establish partnerships with municipalities. As a result, BALADI projects were well received by local municipalities and even influenced neighboring ones, which showed interest in benefiting from USAID-sponsored programs as well. Several municipal leaders informed the evaluation team that several neighboring municipalities had contacted them to inquire on how to partner with BALADI-RMF and how to receive USAID funding.

BALADI-RMF's ability to successfully adapt implementation and coverage is largely due to communities' trust in RMF's impartiality in local affairs, as well as in its recognition of the various cultural and social sensitivities in its areas of operation. Interviewed beneficiaries repeatedly expressed their trust in RMF and their enthusiasm about their partnership with the organization. The same applies to contractors, many of whom worked with RMF in the past, before BALADI. They expressed their trust in RMF's integrity and appreciation of its flexibility in extending contract durations and commitment to making payments on time.

USAID/Lebanon's trust in RMF was reflected in the AO and AOR's flexibility in extending deadlines when projects faced delays or required consultations or special approvals.

> ***"In the closing event, there were people from Koura, Arsal, Baalbeck, and Aley next to me, and it was nice to see that RMF was working for all of Lebanon. RMF does not discriminate against or differentiate between villages and municipalities. (…) I liked working with them."***
>
> ***— Head of Municipal Council***

Finding 3.2.4: The SPD modality adopted participatory and ground-truthing approaches to determine or reassess changing local priorities.

The shift from the RFMA modality to the SPD modality in municipal project selection proved timely in terms of enhancing BALADI-RMF's adaptability to crisis conditions. Communities' participation in the needs assessment and ground-truthing to determine priorities for SPDs was instrumental in

establishing collective interests, thus building the needed momentum to support projects and overcome local challenges as they emerged (Annex 7). RMF was able to reassess projects and decide on new priorities through close consultation with local stakeholders.

Finding 3.2.5: Municipal in-kind contributions substituted for the declined ability to cost-share funds.

As a result of the participation of multiple stakeholders in decision-making and in providing support to BALAD-RMF's projects, it was possible for municipalities to mobilize local in-kind resources whenever financial cost-sharing fell short of covering the required expenses. As such, in-kind contributions, like local labor, land, and machinery, allowed project implementation to continue despite cash shortage. This type of support was provided by almost all municipalities whose projects were impacted by the economic crisis and declining revenues.

Finding 3.2.6: Partnerships with cooperatives, the private sector, and CSOs compensated for the lack of municipal capacities in service delivery.

BALADI-RMF's ability to make the best of a crisis situation is evident in the different partnerships it made in order to assist projects when municipalities lacked the resources required to operate or sustain the facilities. This can be observed in SPD-Arsal where Najjar, a private firm, was called in to manage and operate food-drying facilities. Similarly, in the town of Tibnin under SPD-South, a municipal partnership with a local agricultural cooperative proved essential for the management of the commissioned facilities. In Machha, a local CSO assumed the role of managing and operating BALADI's local bakery project and serving the local population, as the municipality there lacked the capacity and the know-how to provide essential bread production and distribution services. In Bchetfine, the municipalities teamed up with local women to provide different services to the recreational and tourism facility implemented by RMF. In addition, the municipality partnered with the Lebanese Reforestation Initiative (LRI) NGO as well as with the local scouts in order to manage activities around these facilities. Hence, in these projects, municipalities were able to fill their own capacity gaps and, at the same time, sustain the projects despite economic difficulties.

Finding 3.2.7: Unified municipal councils provided the required support for project adjustments.

Members and leaders of municipal councils stressed the importance of adopting a unified stand that seeks to maintaining support to BALADI-RMF throughout implementation. This became even more critical as municipalities faced economic hardships, and internal village politics jeopardized consensus and support to projects. This particularly applied to SPD-South, where sensitivities associated with U.S.-funded programs required municipal consensus. Thus, unified positions provided the flexibility needed for adaptation, such as in deciding in-kind contributions and project revisions, which was not influenced by divisions or splits among municipal leaders. Various KIIs attested to the fact that the unity of municipal councils was among key aspects of projects successful implementation and adaptation to changing circumstances.

Negative Factors

Factors undermining BALADI-RMF's ability to adapt were mainly the time-consuming procedural processes that often kept the team from responding to requests quickly or to make quick adjustments, which often resulted in the extension of project implementation periods. Longer implementation periods meant the projects were at more risk of being affected by the fast-changing prices, currency devaluations, and dwindling inventory. In short, given the fact the BALADI-RMF was designed as a development rather than a humanitarian or stabilization project, it was sometimes unable to ensure a rapid response, which is a critical component to avoid price fluctuation, ensure available material, and comply with contracts and bidding agreements.

The evaluation identified at least six interrelated adaptation challenges:

Finding 3.2.8: Extended time periods to complete procedures mainly associated with vetting, procurement, and meeting construction quality-assurance requirements.

When asked about factors that negatively affected adaptation, RMF's team mentioned the lengthy vetting procedure and the long time needed to issue an authentication to contractors. They said the time to complete these procedures had changed from only a couple of days through the previous Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) to more than **three** months through the current UEI[26] system. This long waiting period was a result of the new UEI numbering system that was being rolled out worldwide, the large number of applications that had to be processed, in addition to the unfamiliarity of local contractors with the new system and procedures.

Furthermore, the process of procurement involved a multi-step procedure that at best required three months to complete, and sometimes double that time, the RMF team said. This included, for example, open tender, ensuring bill of quantities (BoQ), compiling and screening technical and financial applications, establishing a Single Procurement Document, short-listing applicants, conducting expert reviews, establishing a Vender Comparison Matrix, vetting short-listed applicants through DUNS/UEI, obtaining USAID eligibility notice, and issuing contracts.

Meeting engineering and construction quality-assurance requirements also required a lot of time. For example, the lengthy back-and-forth communication between RMF and USAID's new A&E contractor (CDM-Smith) delayed the completion of construction design packages by RMF. Both parties kept a close eye on these challenges and addressed them when major delays were observed. RMF relied on individual engineering consultants during project design and implementation monitoring; thus, correspondence involved multiple lines of communications with CDM-Smith.

Finding 3.2.9: Lack of pre-approved contractor list and tender qualifications.

Procurement was one of the main components of BALADI-RMF. After all, BALADI-RMF is centered around facility construction and equipment installation, which makes contracting qualified sub-contractors a key determinant of implementation success. Furthermore, an effective procurement procedure became more crucial during the crisis, as the speed of contracting became a crucial element for project efficiency and the ability to acquire the needed equipment.

However, the evaluation found that BALADI-RMF's procurement procedure was lengthy and added to the long approval process. For example, the utilization of open tenders instead of issuing requests for offers was among the main factors that prolonged the process. Moreover, the lack of a pre-approved contractor list complicated the procedure more since there needed to be a screening process every time a new bidding process began. Requests for multiple quotations and multiple approvals for purchases below $1,000 was also a time-consuming procedure.

Finding 3.2.10: Use of paperwork and lack of an expedited, digitalized approval procedure.

Another factor that prolonged the approval process even more was RMF's reliance on hardcopies, such as using hand-written signatures and various types of paperwork. Physical requirements to move paperwork across RMF offices, municipalities, government offices, and contractors for reviews, signatures, and stamps was time-consuming, especially as the country faced multiple phases of road

[26] SAM.gov | Duns - Sam UEI

blocking, the COVID lockdowns, and a fuel crisis. As such, the lack of digitalization especially at the level of municipalities and related government directorates extended the approval process and delayed the implementation overall.

Finding 3.2.11: State institutions' unresponsiveness and slowness in issuing any required licensing for municipalities (e.g., construction, land use, etc.) for some of the BALADI-supported income-generation interventions.

Projects that required municipalities to obtain certifications for doing construction work or signing a PPP posed particular adaptation challenges to BALADI-RMF. The constant lockdowns, interruptions, and government resignations prolonged these processes for municipalities and made it difficult for them and their private-sector partners to start operating certain income-generation projects. This was the case of the Mechha Bakery, for example, which was unable to start operations in the absence of a certificate for the local NGO to obtain subsidized flour from the central government and supply it to bakeries. The bakery tried to pilot an operation using unsubsidized flour to produce a variety of baked goods and breads that it thought could be competitive on their own, but the project was not lucrative and was discontinued. The bakery has put its operations on hold until the NGO obtains the certificate for subsidized flour.

Hence, delays in obtaining government-issued certificates by local operators and municipalities as a result of the country's context added another layer of administrative complications and resulted in time extensions that hindered project implementation and challenged BALADI-RMF's ability to adapt.

Finding 3.2.12: Declining municipal funds and growing concerns over changes in community priorities and the dissolution of some municipalities.

With the worsening economic collapse in the country, mounting stress on municipal resources and fast-evolving community priorities were among the main challenges that threatened the ability of municipalities to adopt BALADI-RMF's projects amid a growing state of emergency. Municipal members reported that declining funds had been barely sufficient to support communities' urgent priorities, such as garbage collection. Neither the IMF's contributions nor the municipalities' revenues (from permit fees for example) were adjusted to the dollarized market rate. Other government-supported services provided by entities such as the Lebanon Council for the South (LCS) and the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) were also no longer available either due to budget constraints. The result was a dramatic decline in the amount and value of municipal funds and support, which made municipalities incapable of resuming basic service delivery.

Municipalities also became increasingly concerned about their ability to prioritize their constituents' basic and most urgent livelihood needs, such as solid waste management, wastewater treatment, and basic utilities. In various regions, municipalities were no longer functional, and internal disputes forced several of them to dissolve themselves. Though BALADI-RMF did not witness many such severe cases, particularly thanks to the SPD modality which conducts comprehensive pre-qualification assessments, the ability of municipalities to adapt to the economic crisis remained threatened by a growing trend of collapses.

Only one BALADI-RMF partner municipality (Toula, under RFMA R2) was dissolved, and this was due to a local political dispute that prevented holding elections.[27] Management of the partnership

[27] إرجاء الانتخابات البلدية والاختيارية في تولا- زغرتا |النهار (annahar.com)

was then transferred to the Qaemmaqam (County Executive) who is appointed directly by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities. The various Qaemmaqams in the country appear to have taken over a growing number of municipalities that declared bankruptcy due to lack of funds or were dissolved as a result of internal disputes.

> ***"The project started in 2018, before the start of the financial crisis, but today we have some restrictions and challenges because our money is still blocked by the Ministry [of Interior and Municipalities], as the Independent Municipal Fund is no longer sufficient to cover municipal services, particularly garbage collection."***
>
> ***— Head of Municipal Council***

LESSONS LEARNED

Q4. WHAT ARE BALADI RMF'S MAIN SUCCESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED THAT CAN BE TRANSMITTED TO OTHER ONGOING OR FUTURE USAID/LEBANON INTERVENTIONS?

Finding 4.1: Municipal leaders learned that partnership with local implementing partners, such as RMF, was central for project success and that USAID sponsorship and support could be well received by localities with large American-Lebanese diaspora.

Responses to this question varied according to the respondents' roles. Municipal leaders said RMF's professionalism and responsiveness were critical factors for the successful implementation of projects. They highly valued RMF's local knowledge and considered it as an asset in trust-building that other or future projects should rely on. In SPD projects, local leaders found it particularly useful to conduct a needs assessment in a participatory way to build local communities' consensus around projects. Some recommended that this participatory approach be replicated as a practice in future projects. Others found important lessons attained from the process of project development where quality assurances and regulations requirements in A&E informed municipal practice.

Additional suggestions highlighted the importance of assembling municipal leaders from various regions and different backgrounds for training and sharing knowledge and experience. In SPD South, some leaders stressed the importance of the role that USAID-supported projects played in reversing local communities' political misconceptions about the United States. In towns with large Lebanese-American diaspora communities, leaders suggested consolidating local partnerships with the US rather than with any other country.

> ***"[RMF] brought in the consultant and helped him with the project's design. I was genuinely happy with the team, and I've never witnessed such ethical and professional work. They cared about all the details in the project. For example, they wanted to know where the waste material would be placed and if that would affect the environment. There were also strict rules to abide by, such as wearing protective helmets on construction sites."***
>
> ***— Municipality Leader***

Finding 4.2: BALADI-RMF staff highlighted the importance of prioritizing local livelihood projects that are not at risk of extended delays in obtaining government certification and have sufficient time to get their outcomes documented. The staff also learned that developing a feasibility plan ahead of launching tenders was a major factor in determining implementation success.

Consensus exists amongst RMF and USAID staff that projects that do not necessitate procedural or certification approvals from the central government have better prospects for effective implementation.

RFM staff stressed the importance of long-term projects, such as BALADI, allowing sufficient time to observe changes, measure outcomes, as well as help stabilize human resources. Given the deterioration of state services, projects that focus on the urgent provision of livelihood support and critical services, such as solar energy and health, are more suitable for municipal partnerships, while other development projects, such as tourism, are more prone to volatile country factors, such as security and lockdowns. Employing a technical expert to conduct a project feasibility study prior to launching tenders and a periodic revalidation of the feasibility and the theory of change amid a changing country context is among the recommended best practices to be utilized in future projects.

> ***"Municipalities have proven that despite of everything they can continue to provide services, at least basic services, and be there for their communities when other centralized government bodies are not there at all."***
>
> ***— USAID Staff***

Evaluation Conclusions

Relevance

Conclusion 1.1: BALADI-RMF demonstrated ability to build the service-delivery capacities of municipalities and to strengthen the administrative decentralized response to urgent community needs, using an innovative and multi-stakeholder partnership approach to project management.

This evaluation found that BALADI-RMF remained highly relevant to its objective of responding to community needs by building the capacity of municipalities and contributing to establishing a participatory and decentralized decision-making process. This was most evident in its partner municipalities acquiring extensive knowledge in many aspects of project implementation, including safety, health, quality assurance, and environmental compliance. Municipalities also learned how to effectively communicate and collaborate with contractors, field officers, and operation partners. They are now capable of conducting a needs assessment survey, accommodating local priorities, and mobilizing public support in decision-making. This helped strengthen public trust in local and decentralized governance.

Moreover, BALADI-RMF introduced innovative administrative partnership practices through its collaboration with civil-society and private-sector actors to complement the work of municipalities or to compensate for some municipalities' inability to operate projects that provide services to the community. In this sense, municipalities ventured into new service provisions that were identified as local community priorities. This partnership increased the relevance of municipalities in providing services and running complex operations, such as an olive oil mill, food drying factories, and rural tourism venues.

> ***"Personally, I learned a lot about how to implement similar projects in the future. Our municipality is now more aware of different standards that projects must comply with, such as environment, health, and quality (water, food, materials)."***
>
> ***— Head of Municipal Council***

Conclusion 1.2: BALADI-RMF contributed to putting a participatory and inclusive municipal decision-making process in place. However, most projects remained subject to traditional gender perceptions and were unable to deconstruct prevailing attitudes during project implementation.

CPCs and participatory ground-truthing were among the inclusive approaches adopted by BALADI-RMF to ensure a gender-inclusive decision-making process in all phases of project design and implementation. Commissioned facilities were also required to be accessible to persons with disabilities. However, despite sincere efforts by BALADI-RMF's management, traditional gender roles prevailed in different aspects of project implementation. Misconceptions were evident, such as the belief that women's participation is not a priority in non-gender-oriented projects, that emergency situations makes the participation of women less of a priority, and that construction projects are not as accommodating to women as other more softcore projects like food drying or nursing. These opinions were more salient in male-dominated municipalities, which constituted the vast majority of BALADI-RMF's partnerships.

EFFECTIVENESS

Conclusion 2.1: The crisis did not result in the modification of or deviation from the initially-set outcomes. BALADI-RMF's initial design contributed to systems and municipal-level change rather than to outcomes at the community/resident level. This made it easier to adapt activities to fit under the same outcomes.

The multidimensional crisis did not result in any deviation from BALADI-RMF's initial purposes and IRs and did not lead to major changes in its indicators. BALADI-RMF's activities fall under one strategic objective that contributes to systems and municipal-level change rather than to outcomes observed at the community level. This made it easier for RMF and USAID/Lebanon to adapt BALADI's activities to the changing context and emerging needs, which led to the achievement of the desired results and outcomes. This approach also helped BALADI-RMF to focus more on field work implementation and spend less resources (human and financial) and time to work on a new M&E strategy.

While BALADI-RMF was able to build the capacity of municipalities, it did not do so using a systematic, academic approach but through simple on-the-job interactions. No proper coaching modules were developed for this purpose.

Conclusion 2.2: Adaptive management was a key factor in both USAID/Lebanon's and RMF's response to the crisis.

The adaptive management approach used by BALADI-RMF under the guidance of USAID was a key factor in the way RMF responded to the crisis, which affected the two of main pillars of project management—budget and time. Without the quick adaptation, close communication, and daily follow-up done by RMF and USAID, these two pillars would have affected the third one—scope—which would have led to project problems that would have been costly to overcome. More precisely, budget constraints due to the devaluation of the Lebanese lira rendered municipalities unable to provide on-time cost-sharing. Furthermore, the lockdowns, social unrest, and fuel scarcity delayed implementation. BALADI-RMF's ability to adapt its activities quickly and without changing its initial scope kept everything going in the right direction.

Conclusion 2.3: As priorities shifted due to the crisis, citizens highly appreciated the support they received from their municipalities in terms of access to urgent basic services. Their trust in their municipalities also grew as a result.

Increasing citizens' trust in their local governments as part of building the social capital was more relevant under this evaluation than it was in the previous one. This is because basic service delivery was not a high priority for communities at the time (the focus was more on economic activities), but after the onset of the crisis in 2019-2020, people appreciated the fact that their municipalities (through BALADI-RMF support) were responding to their urgent basic needs, which in turn increased their trust in these institutions.

Conclusion 2.4: Facilitative factors outweighed inhibiting factors, which led to a successful implementation, adaptation, and closure of BALADI-RMF.

RMF's team acquired a solid experience since the start of BALADI-RMF in 2012. Additionally, the proactive role of BALADI's AOR at the Mission was very helpful, especially in terms of constantly following up on the implemented projects and also in terms of expediting entity vetting and resolving UEI number complexities, both of which were beyond RMF's control.

Conclusion 2.5: Engaging the private sector proved effective and efficient, as it helped municipalities better manage and operate the implemented projects and ensure their sustainability.

The evaluation team did not notice any increase in collaboration between municipalities and the private sector to implement the awarded projects during the evaluation period; only a few partnerships were envisaged due to the type of the projects or the South SPD's design. Municipalities are more aware of the importance of cooperating with civil society and the private sector and understand the concept of outsourcing better.

ADAPTABILITY

Conclusion 3.1: RMF's effective management response and emergency planning during the crises ensured BALADI's adaptability. BALADI-RMF was able to adapt its operations and project design to overcome external stressors, such as the economic crisis and the COVID lockdowns.

BALADI-RMF was able to make the necessary adjustments to its work to navigate the challenging environment and continue the construction of facilities and the delivery and installation of equipment. These adjustments included working remotely using online communications software, setting up on-site camps, procuring an emergency gas station to refuel staff vehicles, and encouraging car-pooling. In most cases, BALADI-RMF was able to retain contractors despite delays in processing payments, as it has an established credibility and a good reputation in the market.

BALADI-RMF was capable of adjusting to the reduced municipal cost-share by modifying budget line-items, substituting cushion-funds, and increasing non-cash, in-kind municipal contributions. RMF also adopted multiple billing rates in procurement to keep pace with multiple official exchange rates. Important as well was the practice of retaining and rotating staff in key leadership positions and avoiding hiring new people, a process that requires a lot of time (for selecting the right people and providing them with the necessary guidance), which would have risked interrupting key activities.

Conclusion 3.2: Failing state institutions elevated the role and importance of municipal services provided through BALADI-RMF support. RMF also gained legitimacy thanks to its community-supported agenda and impartial partnerships.

In addition to BALADI-RMF's effective management response to the crises, the heightened relevancy of municipal services in terms of responding to community needs amid failing state institutions consolidated local support for project implementation. This was evident in municipalities' increased

in-kind contributions and rapid response to required adjustments. Municipal support was encouraged by locally-identified priorities under the SPDs and by the councils' unified stands regarding project implementation. RMF's disassociation from local politics in the different SPDs and its experience and knowledge in local development emphasized its neutrality and objectivity and boosted its credibility. The outcome was a spreading interest in municipal partnerships with USAID-funded initiatives.

Conclusion 3.3: Rigid and time-consuming procedures affected BALADI-RMF's ability to adapt smoothly in emergency situations. Exogenous challenges are related to the dwindling municipal funds and the fast-changing priorities.

BALADI-RMF faced immense challenges since July 2020. While it was able to overcome most difficulties, some prevailed and curtailed its quick adaptation. Prime among these challenges was the lengthiness of approval processes, which made implementation less flexible and put project costs and inventories at risk. Delays happened in almost all implemented projects. Causes strictly related to BALADI-RMF include the complicated and lengthy processes it uses during vetting, procurement, and administrative paperwork. External factors that hindered adaptation included municipalities' declining funds and revenues and the difficulty they faced in obtaining government-issued certificates for certain interventions, mainly livelihood ones. The latter factor strained municipal resources and put some municipalities at risk of getting completely dissolved as local priorities changed, and responses proved inadequate.

Evaluation Recommendations

Following the onset of the economic crisis in late 2019, Lebanon witnessed dramatic economic and political collapses that undermined the ability of the central state to continue to deliver basic services to the population. The repercussions of this deepening crisis were manifested in massive power shortages, as the government was no longer able to purchase fuel to operate its power plants. Additional effects were evident at the local level after the dramatic devaluation of the Lebanese lira rendered negligible the financial revenues generated by municipalities from local services or from the Independent municipal funds, especially when compared to the cost of services provided.

Although BALADI-RMF operated under difficult circumstances, including the COVID-19 lockdowns, its role only increased in relevancy to local communities. BALADI-RMF was originally designed to support local development and decentralization. In the past two years, however, its new SPD modality revolved around responding to communities' urgent needs by helping municipalities substitute for the state in delivering basic services, such as electricity.

BALADI was designed to serve community needs through partnerships with municipalities, and it has demonstrated substantial ability to adapt to emerging challenges, hence yielding many lessons learned. Based on that, the ET suggests that similar USAID/Lebanon programming in the future be built on the wide experience acquired through the implementation of BALADI projects in an emergency situation.

This Endline Performance Evaluation has the following recommendations to make that would benefit future USAID programing in Lebanon:

Expand Municipal Capacities to Substitute for Failing State Services

Recommendation 1.1:

- *RMF: Partner with clusters of municipalities instead of individual ones to allow for building the capacities of less-capable municipalities as well.*

- *USAID: Build municipal capacities and improve public service delivery by working with various specialized implementing partners.*

Mainstreaming gained experiences and scaling up projects are recommended practices for future programming. While there are various advantages to partnering with a single municipality, particularly the ability to execute projects while dealing with a limited number of decision-makers, this practice may limit the number of beneficiaries compared to the size of investment and efforts made. There are also risks associated with the single municipality RFMA approach, especially since it places a significant amount of investment in one municipality, and this municipality could face economic hardships in the future that could lead to its dissolution. Furthermore, this approach may favor strong municipalities and ignore less-capable ones during the selection process, which ultimately affects the coverage of interventions.

While the SPD approach mitigated some of these risks by doing targeted selections, municipalities that were capable of committing to cost-sharing, in-kind contributions, and the implementation of complex projects were the ones that were awarded the grants.

Therefore, in future work, RMF is encouraged to partner with clusters of municipalities that combine municipalities with varying capacities. This would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and distribute the benefits evenly among several municipalities or unions of municipalities. Partnering with clusters of municipalities also helps avoid the risks associated with the dissolution of a partner municipality and ensure the inclusion of localities that need significant support. While there are much more complexities associated with working with cluster of municipalities in an emergency situation, the benefits of doing so are manifold.

As state services collapse, USAID/Lebanon programs face the challenge of being able to address urgent community needs while retaining and developing the existing human capital and infrastructure. Establishing such a nexus in future projects, while building on existing partnerships, is strategic. Applying this to the local municipal context is expected to increase in relevance in the next five years. USAID has already gained significant experience and learned valuable lessons related to effective local interventions. Scaling up BALADI-RMF approach and methodology in any upcoming future programs and working with various IPs specialized in essential service delivery (solid waste management, wastewater treatment, household water, solar energy, health, agribusiness, infrastructure, etc.) can improve the effectiveness of project implementation.

Recommendation 1.2:

- *RMF: Mainstream the SPD participatory needs-assessment approach and merge it with the RFMA modality whenever required. Strengthen outreach and be as impartial as possible in the selection process.*
- *USAID: Explore various partnership modalities that would strengthen private-sector and local ownership roles in municipal administration.*

Among BALADI-RMF's strengths was the utilization of the local needs assessment which adopted a participatory approach to determining urgent community needs. This type of rapid surveys, along with local participatory decision-making processes, need to be emphasized and mainstreamed in other award-selection procedures, including RFMAs. The advantages are many, but most importantly, such an approach rallies local support and trust in local government decision-making, which helps contribute to strengthening decentralization (IR2). RMF's work in the South and Arsal is a case in point. For these reasons, RMF is encouraged to adopt such an approach to maintain and build on its existing targeted-selection, local-participation, and ground-truthing practices.

USAID/Lebanon should enhance the practice of involving an impartial organization like RMF in the selection of awards in order to ensure local trust and eliminate political interferences in projects. At the same time, due to the expanding emergency needs of the different communities in Lebanon in

different sectors, it is best to build specialized partnerships as to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation. It is recommended that USAID/Lebanon continue selecting impartial IPs for its programs, and at the same time, diversify partnerships along specific sectors (solar, water, solid waste management, wastewater treatment, agri-food, health, etc.).

Ensure Participation of Women and Youth

Recommendation 1.3:

- *RMF: Ensure gender and youth inclusion in all project phases, across sectors and avoid submitting to traditional gender-biased justifications in crisis situations.*

The ET reiterates the recommendation made in the 2020 interim evaluation that RMF "include a gender specialist to develop a gender-analysis plan for the whole life of the project." This crucial measure will enable the Activity to emphasize the centrality of women's role in all different types of projects, in every field of specialization, and under all circumstances, including in emergency situations. There is no reasonable excuse that explains gender exclusion, especially given the fact that Lebanese women are competent and now present in all fields of specialization, including A&E. For instance, there is a growing number of women seeking engineering careers in Lebanon where nearly half of all college students enrolled in Renewables/energy efficiency programs are women.[28]

Localize Workforce and Resources

Recommendation 1.4:

- *RMF: Request that contractors prioritize local employment and resources, whenever possible.*

As the bulk of awards is given to the contractors that implement the projects, it is important that these funds benefit the local community as well, i.e., where the project is being implemented. As such, contracts should include clauses requiring the contractors to hire a certain number of locals (youth) and utilize a certain amount of local resources. These numbers can be determined after consultation with the targeted municipalities. Selecting local sub-contractors can further contribute to localization. This localization creates local jobs and benefits local suppliers. Local or national manufacturers may also contribute to localization.[29]

Systemize Project Management and Procurement

Recommendation 2.1:

- *RMF: Design and conduct capacity building based on a systematic approach in project design, procurement, management, and implementation for municipal members engaged in the proposed projects. Produce written guidelines on the operation and maintenance of the installed equipment.*
- *USAID: Include a capacity-building component in the design of all Activities aimed at responding to community needs.*

[28] Shedding light on female talent in Lebanon's energy sector, World Bank, April 2019.
[29] USAID/Lebanon has been moving in such a direction through its collaborations with local universities. See for instance USAID cooperation with Lebanese American University to support local development in solar energy: Harnessing Solar Energy in Lebanon with the Support of USAID | LAU News.

BALADI-RMF's focus was to implement the award and provide capacity building to municipalities in the bidding and project-implementation phases. However, in reality, BALADI-RMF focused more on the design and implementation of the awards, especially in SPD-South, and less on systemizing the capacity building of municipalities using an integrated approach. As such, they relied on on-the-job training to build the capacity of municipality staff rather than offering them academic training. The on-the-job approach can indeed be helpful if the municipal officials in question have previous experience in project design and implementation, however, this was often not the case.

Adopting a more holistic and systematic approach in building the capacities of municipality staff would ensure a better transfer of knowledge and enable municipalities to design and develop projects for their communities on their own in the future. A holistic and systematic capacity-building approach does not mean delivering classroom-like training but rather using simple coaching techniques where attendees receive key learning concepts, templates, and tools to be used for preparing proposals. This approach generates best practices in promoting sustainable solutions for community development and ensures the transfer of knowledge within the municipality.

Additionally, the implementing partner should provide detailed and clear operation and maintenance (O&M) manuals to all beneficiaries to ensure that the installed equipment is properly used and maintained and eliminate the need for a third-party operator after the contract expires. This is particularly important when providing equipment for household use. Getting beneficiaries' feedback on the content of these manuals is also important to ensure this literature is updated as to provide more useful information and guidance in the future.

USAID/Lebanon is advised to include a capacity-building component in any Activity focusing on enhancing community services and assets. This would enable the IP to steer its activities in two separate directions: implementing the award and building capacities, rather than mixing both and prioritizing one over the other due to context changes. In addition, such approach ensures the viability of the project and the supported entity beyond the Activity's life and enables partner municipalities to apply for future funding and develop better community projects.

IMPROVE RAPID RESPONSE IN PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Recommendation 3.1: *Mainstream participatory partnership in crisis-response practices.*

- *RMF: Maintain existing management practices in the effective and responsive execution of projects and mainstream lessons learned while responding to crisis situations.*
- *USAID: Require IPs to adapt emergency response practices during planning and enlarge partnerships with relevant stakeholders.*

Now that BALADI-RMF has come to a close, it is recommended that the lessons learned be documented by USAID to help maintain and mainstream the good practices acquired in crisis response and management. Such documentation can highlight (i) the practices used during the COVID-19 lockdowns in terms of remote management and communication, (ii) the measures adopted to overcome fuel shortages and blocked roads, (iii) the budgeting practices implemented to deal with exchange rate fluctuations and liquidity shortages, (iv) the approaches followed to maintain credibility while working with partners and contractors experiencing delays and shortages of supplies, (v) the strategies devised to substitute for shrinking budgets, (vi) the staff rotations made to retain key management and field officers, (vii) the approaches used to reassess and respond to fast-changing local priorities, and (viii) and the revisions made to accommodate new project designs. Holding a learning event or producing learning materials to disseminate these best practices could be very helpful.

It is recommended that USAID/Lebanon make use of BALADI-RMF's good practices and lessons learned while forging new partnerships. USAID may also want to recommend that IPs take into consideration some of the practices BALADI-RMF used to anticipate further deterioration of state

institutions and financial collapses, including the massive devaluation of the Lebanese lira and municipal partners' inability to make substantial contributions.

Additionally, USAID may need to explore emerging community needs as state institutions continue to fail, and recovery does not appear to be attainable any time soon. Therefore, some of the partnership strategies followed by BALADI-RMF should be further explored and enhanced, including partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and the Lebanese diaspora, in order to complement and/or operate the essential services which local governments lack the capacity or know-how to run.

Recommendation 3.2: *Expedite the approval process and expand project stakeholders.*

- *RMF: Pre-plan in anticipation of any interruptions of state services and complicated state licensing and approval processes. Explore ways to expedite approvals based on digitalization, a pre-approved contractor list, fast-vetting/procurement procedures, and more responsive quality assurance verification.*
- *USAID: Attempt, to the extent possible, to avoid procedural changes during project implementation in emergency situations.*

Project implementation may face many risks in the future, prime among them are Lebanon's continuous political stalemate and the paralyzed public sector, which is experiencing frequent interruptions and shutdowns and might be face total bankruptcy and collapse. Despite prior promises of decentralization, public administration has remained fundamentally centralized. Efforts to strengthen local governments to deliver services have remained sporadic rather than comprehensive and institutional. Local-development projects continue to require central state approvals.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that project planning by RMF take into consideration all the current and potential risks, including the difficulty of obtaining approvals and permits from the central government, before and during implementation. It is also important to consider some contingency plans where government approvals may be significantly delayed or not obtainable at all. As part of the mitigation strategies against potential worsening situations, it is also suggested that RMF work with a cluster of local governments, as already mentioned, thus avoiding investments in a single entity that risks dissolution or abandoning the project due to changing priorities.

Since project effectiveness in emergency is time-sensitive, and rapid response determines the ability to efficiently deliver intended outcomes, expediting the approval process became a major determinant of BALADI-RMF's success. In anticipation of increasing requests for projects responding to emergency, it is highly recommended that RMF revisit its approval procedures and explore ways to efficiently manage the process. The ET recommends, as a first step, that RMF digitalize approvals. It is also recommended that RMF accommodate faster and flexible procurement procedures, such as facilitating a pre-approved list of qualified contractors, considering issuing requests for offers instead of open tenders, and establishing flexible quotation procedures for purchases below $1,000. During the design phase of engineering and construction projects, it is recommended that RMF consult with a pre-qualified firm, instead of relying on individual consultants. At the same time, they should have staff dedicated to the monitoring of engineering and construction sites. This can help expedite the quality assurance approval process in a comprehensive approach and maintain close follow-up on quality and environmental compliances during implementation.

USAID/Lebanon is advised to avoid, to the extent possible, changing the A&E monitoring contractor midway through an Activity's lifetime, as implementing partners need time to become accustomed to new standards and approval requirements, which might cause interruptions and delays. In case this was a necessity, then USAID should support and streamline the new contractor's working relation with the implementing partner to ensure a more efficient and productive process. The evaluation team, however, understands that some of these procedures may not be decided by the Mission in Lebanon, such as switching from DUNS to UEI and vetting.

SUSTAIN PARTNERSHIPS

Recommendation 3.3: *Build on existing achievements and establish an open communication channel with local governments.*

- *RMF: Maintain follow-up and post-project assistance and scale up activities, including an online open communication platform with municipalities to receive ongoing feedback about emerging local challenges and needs.*
- *USAID: Encourage and participate in meetings and conferences with IPs to engage with municipalities to address their challenges and develop a local agenda for development and recovery.*

BALADI-RMF followed up on previously- implemented project rounds and reported on their operation status on a quarterly basis. Such follow-up practices are recommended to be sustained by RMF in its projects. RMF's local presence and national networks allowed their team to maintain constant communication with municipalities and inform them about different funding opportunities. As such, projects and interests were sustained.

It is highly recommended that RMF maintain and develop a follow-up program and produce a monthly online report featuring stories of municipal and project activities. RMF is also advised to establish a forum (called 'Forum for Municipal Development' for example) where news and opportunities are exchanged, and occasional meetings are held to share views and make proposals regarding support for local development. RMF, or other IPs working with municipalities, may need to utilize or raise own fund for this purpose.

USAID/Lebanon, on the other hand, can encourage IPs to adopt follow-up practices. It can also occasionally participate in municipality-sponsored meetings and mini-conferences that address development challenges in emergency and respond to local suggestions and recommendations. This can help maintain the enthusiasm and the contagious effects of BALADI-RMF and develop a participatory local agenda for recovery and development.

ANNEXES

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ANNEX 1: SCOPE OF WORK

Baladi RMF Endline Evaluation_SOW_FIN

ANNEX 2: EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach to answer the evaluation questions. Qualitative data was collected from interviews with 59 individuals (22 women, 37 men) and supplemented with the review of BALADI RMF documents including M&E data. The sample included BALADI RMF staff, USAID staff and community members who participated in RFMA 2, 3 and Arsal and South SPDs. The interviews The evaluation questions were mapped against sub-questions, data sources, data collection methods, and sample in Annex 3.

Data collection methods for this evaluation are further detailed below:

- **Document Review**: more than 20 documents.

Document review included at least 20 documents primarily focused on the BALADI-RMF implementation post the 2020 evaluation. The review allowed the ET to build a comprehensive understanding of the design and implementation of BALADI RMF, 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 2020 evaluation, among others. The ET continued to review project documents iteratively throughout the evaluation process, as needed. All referenced and analyzed documents will be listed in the evaluation report's bibliographical annex.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**
    - The team conducted semi-structured KIIs with USAID staff and ten BALADI RMF staff. These interviews were mostly carried out virtually to minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19 for the ET team and interviewees given that other data collection was planned to be conducted in person. The ET selected respondents purposively in consultation with the program team and included staff members who were involved in program strategy, design, and/or implementation. The rationale behind the KIIs was to conduct in-depth interviews with key actors at BALADI-RMF who were responsible for the management and implementation of the activity. These KIIs were essential for the ET to gain multiple perspectives on the effectiveness of project management and implementation.

    - The team also conducted KIIs with 18 staff of RFMA sub-awardees and 10 relevant community stakeholders who have participated in CPC. The staff were either heads of municipalities or municipality members who were leading on the implementation of the project. The community stakeholders were selected by the ET and RMF team contacted them to coordinate on interview times. . The team evaluated 18 projects of sub-awardees. Their selection ensured representation from different RFMA phases with a primary focus on South SPD and a secondary focus on projects completed in RFMAs 2, and 3 and the Arsal SPD after the interim evaluation (July 2020). The rational for the prioritization is two folds. First, the projects from South SPD were not included in the 2020 evaluation, unlike the projects of the previous rounds which were eligible for examination. And South SPD did not include CPCs, same as Arsal SPD, nor did it include municipal applications which might have yielded different results for the BALADI-RMF. The ET took into account the different districts targeted across the country, the PPPs achieved, the STTA provided, the participation of local NGOs, and the sectors of intervention (Energy, water, eco-tourism, etc.). The rationale behind carrying out KIIs with individuals responsible for the implementation of sub-awarded projects was to determine the relevance of the sub-awards to the overall project. In addition, these KIIs aimed to understand the effectiveness of the sub-awarded project.

Furthermore, KIIs with sub-awardees aim to identify successes and lessons learned that can inform future programming.

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**
  - The ET conducted three FGDs with BALADI RMF beneficiaries selected purposively from three projects: Jezzine and Zgharta solar water heaters and Nabatieh agri-business facility. These projects were selected because community members have direct access to the equipment or facility and could provide the ET team with feedback on the needs assessment and implementation phases of each project. Up to 6 participants were selected at random in each location from beneficiary lists provided by the municipality, and participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups were ensured.[30] This included selecting beneficiaries from diverse backgrounds and disaggregating FGD participants by sex (when possible). The FGDs will be held in single or sex-disaggregated spaces, while making sure the facilitator is the same sex as the participants. The main purpose of conducting FGDs was to examine the extent to which the project has reached the appropriate target groups, was inclusive and consultative, and has positively affected these people's lives as originally intended in the project design; hence assessing the relevance of BALADI RMF regarding community needs. FGDs can inform the ET about the shared experience, and diversity of experience, of beneficiaries. These discussions can further help learning challenges and recommendations for the project moving forward.

- **Observation Visits (OVs) to RFMA sub-awardees.**
  - The ET visited the selected projects for visual observation of the operational status of the project. Observation visits were planned for projects that provide long-term services to the community and include the installation of equipment and infrastructure. The observation were completed following the KII with the municipality member and were guided by that individual. The selection of these OVs was based on the findings of the 2020 evaluation, geographic distribution, the type of projects implemented, and the specificities of target groups. The rationale behind the OVs is primarily to observe and inspect the operation and maintenance of projects that were completed in 2020 or 2021.

[30] Marginalized groups are those who are subjugated a process, and a condition, that prevents them from full participation in social, economic and political life (Defining-marginalised.pdf (ukaiddirect.org)).

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES.

	KII	FGD	Observation visit
IP	10 *(5 women; 5 men)*	0	0
USAID	2 *(1 woman, 1 man)*	0	0
Municipal officials	18 *(men)*	0	14
Community stakeholders	10 *(7 women, 3 men)*	3 *(9 women, 9 men)*	N/A
Total	41 KIIs *(13 women, 27 men)*	3 *(9 women, 9 men)*	14

BALADI RMF List of KIIs

Role
Program directors, previous and current
Operations manager (3)
M&E manager
Field coordinators (3)
Senior Procurement Officer

The data analysis was guided by the evaluation questions. The ET followed a rigorous procedure for data cleaning, coding, inter-coder reliability checks, and quality assurance. With a "start list" of codes based on the literature review, the team expanded, revised, and adjusted this list as data are collected and analyzed.

The ET disaggregated data across key variables, such as respondent category, location and gender.

After the ET 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, Conclusions, and Recommendations Workshop that the team conducted with USAID and RMF staff. Through this participatory process, the ET validated findings and conclusions, received feedback on initial recommendations, and discussed dissemination plans. Following the DAIS and workshops, the team prepared the draft evaluation report.

GENDER ANALYSIS PLAN

This evaluation addressed the gender aspect as a crosscutting element in all activities, showing to what extent BALADI-RMF has adhered to USAID's gender integration requirements. A key component of the ET's analysis was its capture of gender-based findings and conclusions with a focus on the extent to which RMF interventions specifically benefit (or do not benefit) women or men. The KIIs and FGDs included questions to assess the extent to which gender has been integrated into BALADI RMF approaches and applied with community-level partners.

Participant-level data was disaggregated by sex, when feasible. The ET analyzed how gender issues have been addressed both in the initial design of the activity and in implementation. More specifically, the ET assessed:

- How women were involved in the supported communities.
- The extent to which women actively participated in the identification and the implementation of the grant-funded community projects.
- Whether and how successfully women were encouraged to take on leadership roles in the projects.

DATA QUALITY CONTROL AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The data collection teams 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 informant 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 Annex 5: Informed Consent Form).
- All interview recordings and notes were electronically stored in a password-protected and encrypted shared folder.
- PII was collected from all respondents so the ET can follow up with any questions for clarification, given that all respondents are intimately involved or benefiting of the program. Respondents were assigned a unique identification number. There was a single file in which the personal identifying information will 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 shredded any documents containing PII. There was no information or documents stored on personal computers.
- The anonymity of informants was ensured by assigning a number to each respondent when referring to her/him in the report (ex: respondent 1, respondent 2, 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 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 will also be held with appropriate protocols to protect the confidentiality of responses and abide by COVID-19 health regulations in the case of in-person interviews.

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 is completely voluntary and the respondent may decline to answer any question and also end the interview at any time.

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 began recording.

The same applies to FGDs, except for three points. The discussion was expected to take longer, up to one hour and a half. Participants may decide to withdraw from the FGD and leave the venue but cannot request to end the discussion. And the consent form was shared in hard copy with the participants at the end. No financial incentives or compensation were provided to the respondents, and data collection occurred during work hours or at a time convenient for the respondents.

RISK MITIGATION

The ET conducted interviews in locations that assure privacy or, if not fully private, are comfortable for the respondents. Data collectors reiterated that conversations would remain confidential and remind participants to be respectful and maintain 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, or a persistent or significant disability or incapacity. Every serious adverse event must be reported on a form provided by EnCompass' 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) 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 must immediately report it to team leader _____ or _____ referring to the Adverse Event Report provided by the IRB.

INCIDENTS

EnCompass takes 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 requires all employees, independent contractors, and beneficiaries to document any incident that represents 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, _____, is 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 becomes aware of an incident, they must complete an incident report, provided by the IRB, and submit it to _____ who will review and transmit 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 have been submitted for approval by the EnCompass IRB. Data collection will not begin until IRB approval has been granted. The ET will inform USAID if there is any unexpected delay in the timeframe for IRB approval.

EVALUATION REPORT, VALIDATION, AND DISSEMINATION

VALIDATION SESSION(S)

The ET will share preliminary findings and conclusions through two virtual validation sessions with select participants from BALADI-RMF and key stakeholders from USAID/Lebanon who participated in the inception meeting. The ET and USAID will identify participants in this session during evaluation implementation and discuss combining into one session if of interest. This session will be used to validate findings and conclusions and to co-create and refine recommendations through a participatory and collaborative process. The outcomes of the validation session will be used to finalize the report.

DISSEMINATION

After USAID/Lebanon approves of the evaluation report, the ET will redact it and make it ADS 508-compliant before uploading it on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) repository for wider dissemination and use by the development community. MEPL plans to solicit USAID/Lebanon's feedback on the implications of the evaluation's findings, conclusions and recommendations for the Mission and to obtain its feedback about the evaluation process. Additional dissemination materials will be developed including a 2-3 page Executive Summary document in both English and Arabic for easy sharing with all evaluation participants and other interested stakeholders. Other dissemination modes may be discussed with USAID/Lebanon.

LIMITATION AND BIASES

The ET is aware that certain biases and limitations might affect negatively the evidence generated by the evaluation:

Recall bias is expected, especially with beneficiaries and sub-awardees who received the services and support more than a year ago or very recently. They may also respond with answers that blend

their experiences into a composite memory, and those who participated previously in similar activities may not separately distinguish their BALADI RMF experience. The ET will use in interviews references to related project or historical events to assist in accurate recall and mitigate this bias

The ET is 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 ET will clarify at the start of every interview that the responses will not influence the possibility of obtaining future assistance while emphasizing the confidential nature of the interview and the importance of collecting factual information.

ANNEX 3: CONSENT FORMS FOR KIIS AND FGDS

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR KIIs

Principal Investigator: _____

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 BALADI-RMF Activity in Lebanon, also referred to as the Building Alliance for Local Advancement, Development, and Investment – René Moawad Foundation (BALADI-RMF) Activity. 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 virtual interviews, focus group discussions with BALADI-RMF staff, partner organization staff, local government officials, civil society organizations, community leaders, and community members, as well as an online survey as needed. This interview will last approximately one hour.

Data will be collected between June-July 2022.

RESPONDENT SELECTION

You have been chosen for a key respondent interview because you either have knowledge of and/or experience with the BALADI-RMF activity or within the communities that BALADI-RMF 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). 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.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.

2. 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, private and protected from data leak . 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.

The following text is for consent forms for pilot interviews:
The pilot interview will help the evaluation team identify any possible weaknesses in the questionnaire so that the team can amend them accordingly. The pilot interviews in which you are contributing will be included in the final sample and the data from this interview will be used to highlight expected refusal rates as well as respondents' reactions to any specific questions or issues; the data from this interview will not be included in the final analysis. The results will be only used by the evaluation team and will inform any needed modifications to the interview guides.

WHOM TO CONTACT

This study has been reviewed and approved by the EnCompass LLC Review Board EC-015-2022, 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.

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, BALADI-RMF Program Evaluation

Email: _____

PART II: PROVISION OF ORAL CONSENT, CONSENT TO RECORD AND CONSENT TO BE CONTACTED TO RECEIVE EXTERNAL SUMMARY

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. **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: _____

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR FGDs

Principal Investigators: _____

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 BALADI-RMF Activity in Lebanon, also referred to as the Building Alliance for Local Advancement, Development, and Investment – René Moawad Foundation (BALADI-RMF) 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. 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

RMF 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 RMF. 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 between March and April 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 and a half to two hours.

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.

Now I will describe risks and benefits.

You may want to know if you can gain anything if you join this meeting. 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:

• Some questions may not feel good to answer. If you feel things you don't like, 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, or during or after we finish the group interview. You can also leave the group for a while or leave and not come back.

• 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. 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," check the #1 option by their respondent # on the form below and initial. Stop asking questions, thank them, give them a copy of the consent form if they ask for it. If they say "Yes," go on with the text, below:

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?

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-008-2022. 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.

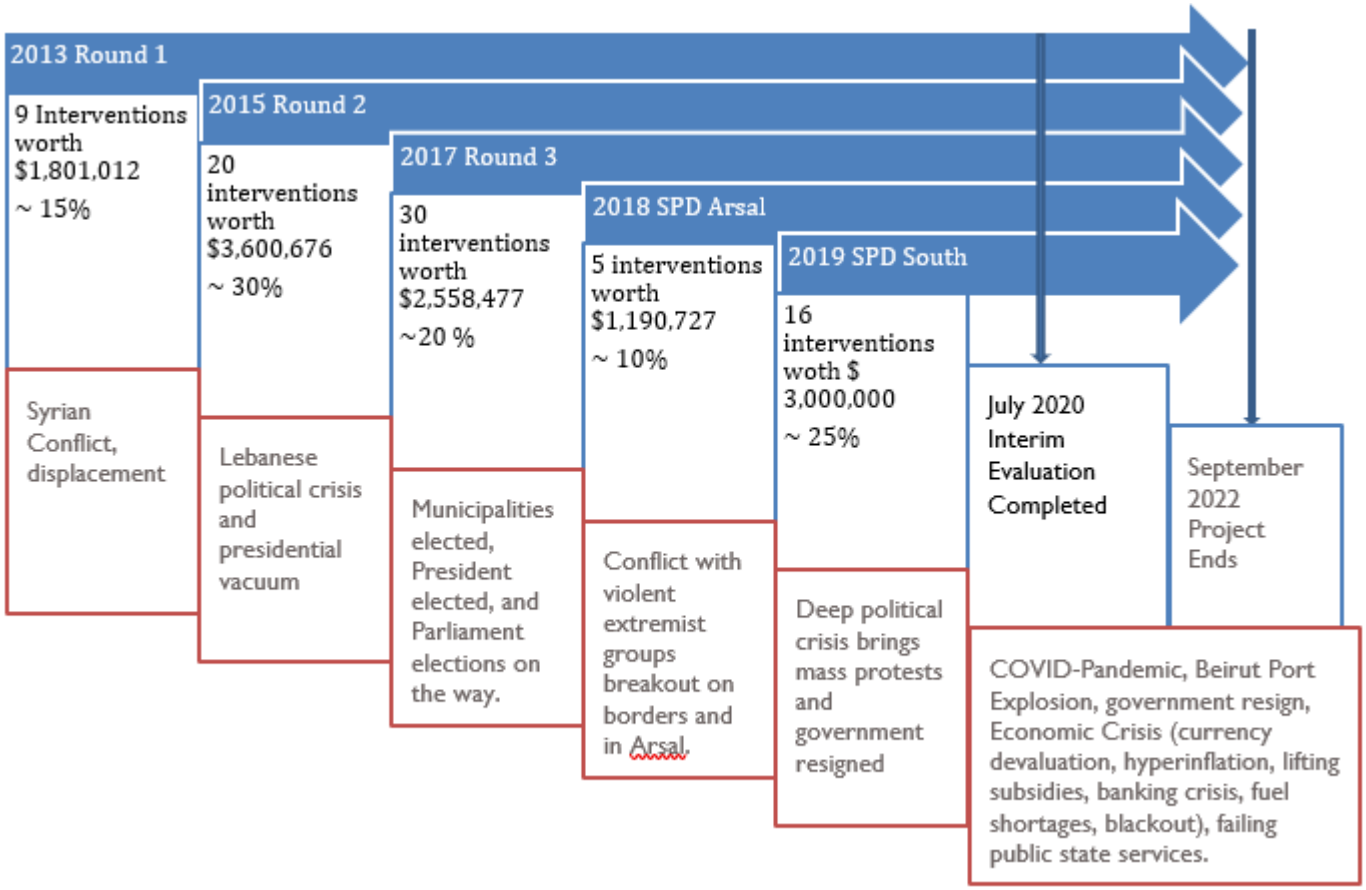
If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact me using the following contact information:

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

ANNEX 4: TIMELINE OF RMF IMPLEMENTATION IN LIGHT OF CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

(out of $12,123,262.06 allocated to 80 interventions)



ANNEX 5: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

Area of Evaluation	Main Question[31]	Sub-Questions	Data sources	Data collection methods
Relevance	To what extent has BALADI-RMF continued to be relevant to community needs post July 2020?	• To what extent did the awarded municipal projects answer and/or address the relevant needs of the supported communities? • Did women, youth and vulnerable groups actively participate in the identification, design and implementation of local development activities?	• Rapid Needs Assessment • Community members • Municipality staff	• Desk Review of Documents • Focus Group Discussions • Key Informant Interviews

[31] The ET suggests removing the question about relevance to the CDCS, given that:
- The CDCS in question is for the period 2014-2019.
- The BALADI RMF Activity design and approach remain mostly unchanged.
- The 2020 interim evaluation has already provided a good analysis of the alignment with the CDCS.

The ET elected to remove the question from the SoW about effectively addressing community needs because it is addressed in questions 2.1. and 2.2.

Area of Evaluation	Main Question[31]	Sub-Questions	Data sources	Data collection methods
Effectiveness	To what extent has BALADI/RMF continued to achieve the activity's goal and objectives, and what factors have contributed or hindered the achievement (or non-achievement) of the activity's objectives?	• What are BALADI/RMF's headline outcomes and achievements post July 2020, and to what extent were these outcomes in-line with the stated purposes? • Does the provision of essential services to communities remain the most effective intervention under BALADI/RMF? • What are the main factors that influenced positively or negatively BALADI/RMF's ability to achieve these purposes? • Has BALADI/RMF been able to create new long-term collaboration between sub-national public entities, CSOs, and private sector to implement the awarded projects and deliver services? • How successful was BALADI/RMF in ensuring gender mainstreaming? • What aspects of the activity demonstrate potential for sustainability beyond the life of the activity?	• USAID staff • BALADI RMF staff • Municipality staff • Community members	• Desk Review of Documents • Focus Group Discussions • Key Informant Interviews • Observation visits

Area of Evaluation	Main Question[31]	Sub-Questions	Data sources	Data collection methods
Adaptability	To what extent and how well did BALADI-RMF adapt in response to evolving circumstances?	• How has BALADI RMF adapted to the changing context as of July 2020? • What are the main factors that influenced positively or negatively BALADI/RMF's adaptation?	• USAID staff • BALADI RMF staff • Municipality staff • Community members	• Desk Review of Documents • Focus Group Discussions • Key Informant Interviews • Observation visits

ANNEX 6: SAMPLING

#	Project	Municipality	District	Governorate	Sector	Rationale for selection
1	**RFMA2**	Tekrite	Akkar	North Lebanon	Energy Efficiency: LED street lighting	- not included in previous evaluation - reported high reach of beneficiaries (including women and Youth) -change of scope in 2019
2	**RFMA2**	Bcheftine	Shouf		Rural Toursim: Eco-tourism area	- not included in previous evaluation - operator will be operating the center
3	**RFMA2**	Kfaryashit	Zgharta	North Lebanon	Solar Power: Generation of electricity for the village through renewable energy	- not included in previous evaluation - STTA provided
4	**RFMA3**	Mazreat El Shouf	Shouf	Mount Lebanon	Public Education and community facility: Equip a multipurpose room in the village's public school;	- not included in previous evaluation
5	**RFMA3**	Massha	Akkar	North Lebanon	Agri-business: equip a community bakery	- not included in previous evaluation -NGO operating the facility
6	**RFMA3**	Lebaa	Jezzine	South Lebanon	Solar Power: Install 80 solar water heaters in the village	- not included in previous evaluation

#	Project	Municipality	District	Governorate	Sector	Rationale for selection
7	**RFMA3**	Aintourine	Zgharta	North Lebanon	Solar Energy: Install 80 solar water heaters and a 250 KVA generator	- not included in previous evaluation - high reach of beneficiaries
8 and 9	**Arsal SPD**	Arsal	Baalbek	Baalbek-Hermel	Agri-business: Rehabilitate/Equip a fruit cooling/drying/processing/packaging facility	- Operator to run the facility - community users eligible for FGD
8 and 9	**Arsal SPD**	Arsal	Baalbek	Baalbek-Hermel	Technical School: Provide equipment to Arsal Technical Institute	- Scope of intervention was modified in 2021
10	**South**	Arzoun	Sour	South Lebanon	Energy Efficiency: Equip an estimated 44kWp photovoltaic system and upgrade the village's back-up electricity distribution network	- not included in previous evaluation
11	**South**	Tibnine	Bint Jbeil	Nabatiyeh	Agri-business: Equip an Olive Press and Olive Residues Briquetting Facility	- not included in previous evaluation -job creation -STTA

#	Project	Municipality	District	Governorate	Sector	Rationale for selection
12	**South**	Kaakaaiyet Al Sounawbar	Saida	South Lebanon	Water project: Building a storm water channel of an approximate length of 700 meters	- not included in previous evaluation - STTA
13	**South**	Safad Al Battikh	Nabatieh	Nabatiyeh	Rural Tourism: Establish a Tourism Park/Garden	- not included in previous evaluation - STTA
14	**South**	Ansar	Nabatieh	Nabatiyeh	Solar Power: Equip an estimated 129kWp solar pumping system to operate the village water well	- not included in previous evaluation
15	**South**	Baysariyeh	Saida	South Lebanon	Supporting the Community by Providing Pruning, Harvesting and Shredding tools	- not included in previous evaluation
16	**South**	Mlikh	Jezzine	South Lebanon	Energy Efficiency: Install a back-up electricity distribution network for the village residents	- not included in previous evaluation
17	**South**	Yanouh	Sour	South Lebanon	Back-up Generator: Install a back-up generator and upgrade part of the back-up electricity distribution network	- not included in previous evaluation - Adjustment to needs with budget increase
18	**South**	Qsaybeh	Nabatieh	Nabatiyeh	Solar Power: Equip an estimated 120kWp solar pumping system to operate the village water well	- not included in previous evaluation

ANNEX 7: ADAPTATION TO CHANGING PRIORITIES IN SOUTH SPD

Municipality Name	Project	Project	Project
	Identified priorities as per the needs assessment	Identified priorities as per the Ground Truthing conducted	Selected and Executed project
Ansar	PV Solar Pumping	PV Solar Pumping	PV Solar Pumping
Qaaqaayet el Sanawbar	Building a Dispensary Stadium with Cafeteria Construction of a municipal building Provision of tractor for the waste transportation	Building a storm Water Channel	Building a storm Water Channel
Qseiby	PV Solar Pumping	PV Solar Pumping	PV Solar Pumping
Safad el Battikh	Establishing a tourism Park & Public Garden Milk Factory	Establishing a tourism Park & Public Garden	Establishing a tourism Park & Public Garden
Tebnine	Building a Public Hospital Install a Generator Public area for Seniors	Olive press + briquetting	Olive press + briquetting
Yanouh	Rehabilitation of the town spring Food Processing	Solar energy to generate electricity	Generator & Cabling
Arzoun	Dispensary building Stadium with Cafeteria	Equipping the town of Arzoun with an electric generator and a Solar farm	Equip an estimated 44kWp photovoltaic system and upgrade the village's back-up electricity distribution network.
Mlikh	Building a livestock area Solar Water Heater for houses	Install a back-up electricity distribution network	Install a back-up electricity distribution network

ANNEX 8: KII TOOLS FOR BALADI-RMF STAFF

Evaluation Question 1

1. [EQ1] What is your understanding of the community support approach of the RMF Baladi project? To what extant is this approach relevant to the 2020-2022 landscape of Lebanon?
2. [EQ2] Overall, how satisfied have you been with RMF Baladi Project? Why?
3. [EQ1] Are you aware of other municipal community support projects implemented in Lebanon in the last years? If yes, were they relevant for BALADI RMF to partner with? How?
4. [EQ1] To what extent are you satisfied by your ability/knowledge to define and respond to community needs identified by the municipalities?
5. [EQ1] What do you think about the outreach plans? Do you think that they can be enhanced in the future? Please specify how.
6. [EQ1] How do you describe the approach adopted in shifting from call of applications for municipal interventions to identified interventions by municipalities (prior 2018, in Arsal and South)?
7. [EQ1] Which approach do you think worked better in answering the needs of the local community?
    - [EQ1] To what extent were the municipalities able to identify the interventions on their own?
    - To what extent was RMF Baladi team taking part in supporting the municipalities in their assessment?
8. [EQ1] To what extent did beneficiaries participate in the project cycle: identification, design, and implementation of local development activities? [Probe on women, youth, and other vulnerable groups]
9. [EQ1] What are the techniques or measures that you put in place to ensure that the quality of the assistance was consistent with the needs of the beneficiaries?
10. [EQ1] How Was the follow-up provided by RMF Baladi team suited to the needs of the beneficiaries? How did you maintain a consistent follow-up process with the municipalities and other stakeholders involved?

Evaluation Question 2

11. [EQ2] In what ways has Baladi RMF Project been able to help meet the community needs over the last two years?
12. [EQ2] In what ways has Baladi RMF Project been unable to help the municipalities and communities (or hasn't been able to help enough)?
13. [EQ2] Were the project's overall and specific objectives clearly defined? Did these objectives change throughout the course of the project lifetime? How so?
14. [EQ2] What has the Baladi RMF Project enabled your organization to do that it wouldn't have been able to do otherwise?
15. [EQ2] Aside from the multiple crises, what were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of reaching the objectives and intended results? Did these factors fall under your control or outside?
16. [EQ2] To what extent has the program been successful in meeting its objectives for:
    Improving the governance of municipalities and improving public service delivery.
    [Probes: biggest successes, biggest challenges, progress on targets]
    Establishing sustainable local social capital
    [Probes: biggest successes, biggest challenges, progress on targets]

17. [EQ2] What were the steps that you took to overcome the non-achievement of these results?
18. [EQ2] In the current context, what, if anything, could be done to help improve women, youth, and other vulnerable inclusion in future USAID programs?

Evaluation Question 3

The Baladi RMF Project went through several different changes in focus in response to recent crises.

19. [EQ3] To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Baladi RMF Project implementation? Which activities were affected? What were the alternatives that you adopted to maintain the project activities in response to the pandemic?
20. [EQ3] From your perspective, how successful has the project been in being able to help meet the needs of municipalities and communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
21. [EQ3] To what extent has the Economic/Financial Crisis impacted Baladi RMF Project implementation? Which activities were affected? What were the alternatives that you adopted to maintain the project activities in response to the pandemic?
22. [EQ3] From your perspective, how successful has the project been in being able to help meet the needs of municipalities and communities in response to Economic/Financial Crisis?
23. [EQ3] To what extent has the Beirut Blast impacted Baladi RMF Project implementation? Which activities were affected? What were the alternatives that you adopted to maintain the project activities in response to the pandemic?
24. [EQ3] From your perspective, how successful has the project been in being able to help meet the needs of municipalities and communities in response to the Beirut Blast?

Evaluation Question 4

25. [EQ4] What lessons have you learned from the way in which the project unfolded?
26. [EQ4] What outcomes should be considered if an organization wants to repeat this or conduct a similar project?
27. [EQ4] What could have been done differently to complete the project more effectively?
28. [EQ4] What key changes should be made to the project to enhance achievement of objectives?
29. [EQ3] Which crisis was the most impactful on the Baladi RMF Project specially in its implementation and results? Reword

ANNEX 9: KII TOOLS FOR RFMA SUB-AWARDEES

Questions for municipalities

Evaluation Question 1

1. [EQ1] How did you learn about BALADI/RMF?
2. [EQ1] How has BALADI/RMF helped you to work with citizens to achieve local development objective?
3. [EQ1] How has BALADI/RMF helped to build trust between municipal officials and citizens?
4. [EQ2] How has BALADI/RMF enhanced economic growth in your municipality, and how do you measure that?
5. [EQ1] Does the activity address the real needs of your municipality?
6. [EQ1] To what extent was the development of community activities challenging?
7. [EQ1] To what extent were you able to identify the interventions on your own? How did the Baladi/RMF team assist you in this task?
8. [EQ1] To what extent did beneficiaries participate in the project cycle: identification, design, and implementation of local development activities?
9. [EQ1] Was the follow-up provided by RMF Baladi team suited to the needs of community and municipality?

Evaluation Question 2

10. [EQ2] What type of assistance has your organization received through the F2F Program?
11. [EQ2] How has BALADI/RMF contributed to improving capabilities of your municipality, including your local economic development plan?
12. [EQ2] How satisfied have you been with your involvement in the F2F Program overall? Why?
13. [EQ2] What do you think have been the biggest successes resulting from the support you received from F2F Program? What have the challenges been?
14. [EQ2] To what extent was the implementation of the assessments for identifying community needs challenging?
15. [EQ2] Would you participate again in a similar project? What would you recommend for the future work?
16. [EQ2] How involved were women and youth in activity implementation, and is their participation sustainable?
17. [EQ2] Did women and youth actively participate in identifying and implementing activities?
18. The Baladi RMF Project went through several different changes in focus in response to recent crises.

Evaluation Question 3

19. [EQ3] Which crisis had the most impact on the Baladi RMF Project? What were the challenges related to this crisis (possibility of talking on more than one crisis)? How were you able to solve and what were the Baladi RMF team interventions in helping you alleviating these challenges?
20. [EQ3] Were the alternatives for training and assistance adopted by the Baladi RMF team able to maintain the project activities during the pandemic?
21. [EQ3] To what extent did the COVID-19 global pandemic impact the activities? Which activities were affected?

22. [EQ3] To what extent did the Economic/Financial Crisis impact the activities? Which activities were affected?
23. [EQ3] To what extent did the Beirut Blast pandemic impact the activities? Which activities were affected?

Evaluation Question 4

24. [EQ4] What lessons can you learn from the way in which the project unfolded?
25. [EQ4] What outcomes should be considered if an organization wants to repeat this project or conduct a similar project?
26. [EQ4] What could have been done differently to complete the project more effectively?
27. [EQ4] What key changes should be made to the project to enhance achievement of objectives?

ANNEX 10: KII QUESTIONS FOR USAID/LEBANON STAFF

Evaluation Question 1

1. [EQ1] What is your understanding of the community support approach of the RMF Baladi project? How relevant is this approach to the current landscape of Lebanon?
2. [EQ1] What has been your overall experience with BALADI/RMF?
3. [EQ1] How has BALADI/RMF contributed to improving municipal capabilities?
4. [EQ1] What is your understanding of the community support approach of the RMF Baladi project? How relevant is this approach to the current landscape of Lebanon?
5. [EQ1] How has BALADI/RMF helped municipalities to work inclusively with citizens to achieve local development objectives?
6. [EQ1] Do the activities address the real needs of the supported municipalities?
7. [EQ1] To what extent are you satisfied by Baladi RMF ability/knowledge to define and respond to community needs identified by the municipalities?
8. [EQ1] How do you describe the approach adopted in shifting from call of applications for municipal interventions to identified interventions by municipalities (prior 2018, in Arsal and South)?
9. [EQ1] How do you describe the approach adopted in shifting from call of applications for municipal interventions to identified interventions by municipalities (prior 2018, in Arsal and South)?
10. [EQ1] Which approach do you think worked better in answering the needs of the local community?

Evaluation Question 2

11. [EQ2] Overall, how satisfied have you been with RMF Baladi Project? Why?
12. [EQ2] What are the most significant outcomes and achievements of BALADI/RMF, and were
13. they in line with the BALADI/RMF's objectives?
14. [EQ2] To what extent has the program been successful in meeting its objectives for:
    Improving the governance of municipalities and improving public service delivery.
    [Probes: biggest successes, biggest challenges, progress on targets]
    Establishing sustainable local social capital
    [Probes: biggest successes, biggest challenges, progress on targets]
15. [EQ2] Which activity or component stands out for you as particularly successful? How so? Why do you think this was the case?
16. [EQ2] How successful was BALADI/RMF in creating and sustaining collaboration between municipalities, civil society and the private sector?
17. [EQ2] How involved were women in BALADI/RMF implementation, and is their participation sustainable?
18. [EQ2] Did women actively participate in identifying and implementing activities?

Evaluation Question 3

The Baladi RMF Project went through several different changes in focus in response to recent crises.

19. [EQ3] Which crisis had the most impact on the Baladi RMF Project?
20. [EQ3] To what extent were the Baladi/RMF team able to respond and adapt the activities in response to the multiple crises? What were the challenges that they faced? And to what extent were the alternatives that you adopted to maintain the project activities in response to the crises?

Evaluation Question 4

21. [EQ4] What lessons can you learn from the way in which the project unfolded?
22. [EQ4] What outcomes should be considered if an organization wants to repeat this or conduct a similar project?
23. [EQ4] What could have been done differently to complete the project more effectively?
24. [EQ4] What key changes should be made to the project to enhance achievement of objectives?
25. [EQ4] In the current context, what, if anything, could be done by international organizations like USAID to help improve social inclusion in supporting communal projects led by municipalities (probes on women, youth and other vulnerable groups)?
26. [EQ4] What are the main lessons learned from BALADI/RMF for the design and implementation of similar projects in the future?
27. [EQ4] Are the lessons learned and/or innovations introduced by Baladi/RMF integrated into other USAID Mission projects?

ANNEX 11: FGD TOOLS

FGD Solar Water Heaters (heads of households)

1. [EQ1] How would you describe your experience in the activity as a whole?
2. [EQ1] How were you selected as a beneficiary for this project?
3. [EQ1] Can you each tell us how long you have been using the solar water heaters? How do you use them (what function it fills for you)?
4. [EQ1] To what extent was the process of installing solar water heaters clear to you from the beginning?
5. [EQ1] Who was responsible for establishing the solar water heaters? Do you know who was behind the initiative? Who paid for it? Who was involved in setting it up? Were there any women involved?
6. [EQ1] Were the water heaters provided to you for free, or you had to contribute in any form to covering the costs?
7. [EQ1] How well do the solar water heaters meet your needs? Do they function well?
8. [EQ1 and 3] Please tell us on how you benefited from the solar water heaters specially within the current crises (Probes: free energy, reduced cost in energy bills, efficiency in terms of heating during winters)
9. [EQ2] What features of the solar water heaters would you say are most useful or valuable to you? What features are missing?
10. [EQ2] Do you or any member of your family have challenges using the solar water heaters? Are they accessible enough for women and people with disabilities?
11. [EQ2] How would you describe your overall experience with the project staff?
12. [EQ2] What kind of technical support did the project provide to support you in maintaining the solar water heaters? Did they provide any on-site training and provide you with guidance manuals?

FGD Agricultural Facility (farmers, SME staff)

13. [EQ1] How would you describe your experience in the activity as a whole?
14. [EQ1] How were you selected to take part of this activity and to benefit from the facility?
15. [EQ1] Can you each tell us how long you have been using the facility? How do you use it (what function it fills for you)?
16. [EQ1] To what extent was the process of equipping the facility and its operations clear to you from the beginning?
17. [EQ1] Who was responsible for establishing the facility? Do you know who was behind the initiative? Who paid for it? Who was involved in setting it up? Were there any women involved?
18. [EQ1] How well does the facility meet your needs? Does it function well?
19. [EQ1 and 3] Please tell us how you benefited from the facility specially within the current crises (Probes: better product presentation and packaging, reduced post-harvest costs, increased in selling price, more marketing opportunities)
20. [EQ2] What features of the facility would you say are most useful or valuable to you? What features are missing?
21. [EQ2] Do you have challenges using the facility?
22. [EQ2] Are community members involved in operating or managing the facility including women and people with disabilities?
23. [EQ2] How would you describe your overall experience with the staff managing the facility?
24. [EQ2] Were you provided with any technical support to help you in your farming operations and to complement with the operations of the facility?
25. [EQ2] How would you assess the follow-up that the project provided you?

ANNEX 12: OBSERVATION VISIT FORM

Date of site visit

Section 1: General information

IP Site Visit Information

Location		**Name of focal point**	
Role		**Contact information**	

Evaluation team members information

Name		**Telephone Number**	

Section 2: Observations

Description of project equipment/facility being observed	USAID Branded if applicable (Y/N)	Is the equipment/facility operational? (Y/N or N/A)	Notes (especially if any significant deficiencies in operation are observed)

Section 3: Pictures

Item No.	Picture / Geo Location Stamp (GIS Data)

ANNEX 13: DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

I. USAID/LEBANON DOCUMENTS

RFA, Cooperative Agreement and Modifications

1. Cooperative Agreement CA No.AID-268-A-12-00004 - Final September 2012.
2. Contract Modifications: Mod 10 – August 2018; Mod 11- September 2018; Mod 12 – September 2018; Mod 13-December 2019; Mod14 – April2020; Mod 15 – March 2022; and Mod 16 – May 2022.

Evaluations

3. BALADI RMF Interim Performance Evaluation – October 2020

II. BALADI DOCUMENTS

RFMA: all grant documents per awardee sampled for data collection
SPD: all grant documents per awardee of Arsal and South SPDs sampled for data collection

M&E

4. Approved M&E Plan
5. Performance monitoring plans from FY10Q1, Q2 and Q3.

Progress Reports: FY8Q2, Q3 and Q4; FY9 Q1, Q2, A3 and A4; FY10 Q1, Q2 and Q3.

ANNEX 14: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Team member	Conflict of interest form
James Fremming, Chief of Party - Lebanon (EnCompass)	[redacted]
Nour El Zaouk, Data Analyst (EnCompass)	[redacted]
Dr. Imad Salamey, Team Lead (Independent Consultant)	[redacted]
Ziad Atonious, Team Member (Independent Counsultant)	[redacted]
Stephanie Bassil, Research and Evaluation Specialist (Management Systems International)	[redacted]
Dr. Pragati Godbole, (EnCompass)	[redacted]
Amanda Stek, Facilitator and MEPL Senior MEL Specialist (EnCompass)	[redacted]
Julio Gerges, Third Party Monitoring Analyst (Management Systems International)	[redacted]
Hussein Zehri, Monitoring Specialist (Management Systems International)	[redacted]
Diana Shannan , Deputy Chief of Party – Lebanon (Encompass)	[redacted]

ANNEX 15: EVALUATION TEAM

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 and ensure final delivery of the evaluation.
Diana Shannan , Deputy Chief of Party – Lebanon (Encompass)	Deputy Chief of Party for USAID's Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Lebanon (MEPL), implemented by EnCompass LLC	Will oversee the implementation of the evaluation and contribute to all phases of the evaluation.
Ziad Antonios (Team member)	Evaluation experience of USAID Activities	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 Research and Evaluation Specialist
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.
Dr. Imad Salamey, Team Lead (Independent Consultant)	Associate Professor of Political Science. Senior MEL consultant. Delivered and led several evaluation teams for USAID.	Will work under the direct supervision of the Research and Evaluation Specialist and in close collaboration with the MEPL team to coordinate and implement all evaluation activities.
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 M&E Specialist.

Team member	Qualifications	Responsibility for this task
Dr. Pragati Godbole, (EnCompass)	Project Management, Research & Assessment, Quantitative and Qualitative data collection and analysis, Facilitation, Staff Training and Delivery, Grant Writing, Experience with Stata, SPSS, HLM, In-depth familiarity with developing contexts and Issues on Girls' Education in international contexts.	Will provide learning, recommendations, review, help with analysis, and ongoing feedback to the team.
Amanda Stek, Facilitator and MEPL Senior MEL Specialist (EnCompass)	MEL Associate Director	Will facilitate the various tasks among the team members and ensure along the team leader the timely completion of the assigned tasks. Will provide quality assurance to deliverables.
Julio Gerges, Third Party Monitoring Analyst (Management Systems International)	Good experience in data collection and analysis	Supported in interviews, site observation and transcriptions
Hussein Zehri, Monitoring Specialist (Management Systems International)	Good experience in data collection and analysis	Supported in interviews, site observation and transcriptions

ANNEX 16: CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATION BY SECTOR

Rural Tourism (2 projects)

Challenges to Implementation	Adaptation
- declining revenues and IMF/LCS/CDR contributions. - changing priorities. - fuel cost. - delays in implementation and incomplete project. - Locals are not accustomed to scrutinized BALADI-RMF's compliance requirements	- In-kind contribution substituted for cost-share. - municipal council remained unified behind project. - modified projects to accommodate new priorities. - NGOs to take on increasing role in managing facilities. - maintained public support due to prospects in youth and women employment.

Solar and Energy Efficiency (10 projects)

Challenges to Implementation	Adaptation
- Declining revenues and support from IIMF/LCS/CDR contributions. - fuel cost. - power generator not running at full capacity, undermining revenues.. - power generator not compliant with ERAC. - government licensing complications. - delays in implementation (2 years instead of 6 months) and changes of contractors. - available space for solar palates. - Theft	- in-kind contribution substituted for cost-share. - municipal council unified behind project. - youth volunteerism contributed to local ownership. - selection of beneficiaries based on Ministry of Social Affairs (Poverty Elevation Program). - RMF proved impartiality and professionalism.

Agribusiness (3 projects)

Challenges to Implementation	Adaptation
- declining revenues and IMF/LCS/CDR contributions. - government licensing complications. - Ukraine war and rising cost of flour and cooking oil. - fuel cost. - delays in implementation due to quality assurances. - prevailing public misconceptions about municipal work. - lack of public media awareness campaigns. - limited capacities of facility to absorb Agri production.	- in-kind contribution substituted for cost-share (mostly by partners). - partners) operating the facility. - maintained public support due to prospects of youth and women employment and needs. - the productive and sustainable nature of project help maintain supporting momentum. - received training to comply with food safety regulations. - PPP is fully utilized through long term partnership. - maintained cooperatives support due to prospects of benefits and marketing. - remove development from politics. -municipal leadership. -effective partnership between municipality-cooperative-contractor-RMF.

Recreational Centers (1 project)

Challenges to Implementation	Adaptation
-political disputes over municipal elections. municipality terminated and project moved to Qaemmaqam. - implementation delayed due to COVID and government permits requirements. - incomplete projects	- Qaemmaqam role as impartial. - Benefits and partnership in project helped navigate challenges.

Vocational Education (1 project)

Challenges to Implementation	Adaptation
- Pessimism over resuming classes in 2022-23 due to fuel and salary costs. - discovered required renovation cost beyond initially anticipated. - disagreement between school and municipal administrations over project orientation and allocated funds. - Fuel cost	- modified intervention from renovation to equipment along the installation of power generator.

-END-

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