



## Final Evaluation Report for the Programme:

“Sustainable and equitable rural development in the West Bank, including putting into use and responsible management of land and water resources for small and medium-sized farmers”

Fundación Promoción Social (FPS)

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**Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD)**

Al-Masayef, Kamal Nasser St., Building # 43. P.O. Box: 2238, Ramallah – Palestine

Al Mena, Ghazi Shawa Building, Second Floor, Gaza City – Palestine

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## Acronyms

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| AECID: | Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation |
| AWRAD: | Arab World for Research and Development                  |
| FGDs:  | Focus Group Discussions                                  |
| FPS:   | Fundación Promoción Social                               |
| LCs:   | Local Committees   |
| M&E:   | Monitoring and Evaluation                                |
| MOA:   | Ministry of Agriculture                                  |
| OECD:  | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development   |
| PARC:  | Palestinian Agricultural Development Association         |
| SC:    | Steering Committee                                       |
| SEC:   | Small Enterprise Centre                                  |
| SO:    | Specific Objective                                       |
| TOC:   | Theory of Change   |
| TOR:   | Terms of Reference                                       |

# Executive Summary

## Background and Overview

The programme “*Sustainable and equitable rural development in the West Bank, including putting into use and responsible management of land and water resources for small and medium-sized farmers*” is a four-year initiative, designed and implemented by Fundación Promoción Social (FPS), in close partnership with the Palestinian Agricultural Development Association (PARC), with funding from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The programme was implemented between (December 2014 and April 2019) with a total grant of 2.5 million Euros.

The purpose of the programme was the promotion of inclusive and sustainable agricultural initiatives that reduce the vulnerability of rural families in the northwest zone of the West Bank, adjacent to the Green Line. The programme was further intended to promote sustainable and equitable rural development in the West Bank through a holistic approach, including the putting into use - and responsible management - of land and water resources with the active participation of all relevant actors in the agricultural sector. Additional programme outcomes included increased agricultural productivity in the Qalqilya and Tulkarem Governorates, encouragement of good environmental practices, enhancement of the capacities of farmers and women producers and promotion of women’s empowerment.

Programme beneficiaries were located in two clusters of 19 villages in rural areas that are seriously affected by the route of the Israeli Separation Wall. These communities were selected through a needs assessment *cum* baseline evaluation that accorded the highest weight to unemployment rates, environmental issues and access to agricultural land. The target beneficiaries of the programme were farmers (1,553), rural families (1,969) rural women (91 young entrepreneurs, 6,891 women), unemployed workers from rural areas (804), local PARC staff and Local Committees (LCs) (represented by local municipal councils, pioneer farmers, and other key local actors).

Programme activities included land rehabilitation, irrigation system improvement and expansion, road construction, establishment of waste water treatment plants for agricultural use, establishment of an organic composting factory, establishment and capacitation of women’s food producing cooperatives, establishment of home gardens, provision of the technical training for farmers, women producers, and agronomists from implementing partner staff, establishment of income generating projects for women, and establishment of water management committees in the targeted areas. Programme activities commenced in December 2014 and were completed in April 2019.

## Purpose of the Evaluation

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to assess the design and management of the intervention, and the achievement of results, according to the OECD criteria of relevance, efficiency, sustainability and impact. The research assesses, in particular, the relevance of the intervention to its context, the linkage between activities and results, the planning and organizational framework and process of the intervention, and the impact of the intervention on the promotion of gender equality and environmental sustainability.

## Methodology

The evaluation used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods including desk review, 12 semi structure interviews with programme stakeholders, and six focus group discussions (FGDs) with all categories of beneficiaries. The evaluation field work was carried out between June 17, 2019 and July 6, 2019. The evaluation examined the achievement of the results developed by the programme through the differences in outputs and outcomes between baseline figures and the latest monitoring reports.

## Evaluation Analysis

The analysis was presented in three sections: a process analysis which assesses the design of the intervention focusing on the planning and organization framework and the execution of the intervention including the financial mechanisms used for programme management; a contextual analysis which assesses how relevant the intervention is to the political, social and economic environment of the West Bank in particular; and the achievement of project objectives which assesses the extent of the achievement of the results and objectives, the quality of indicators and reporting, forecasting impacts and emerging impacts in terms of their sustainability.

## Evaluation Findings

### *Process:*

The programme adopted a hybrid design and approach, combining elements of a market development approach (e.g., establishing competitive producer cooperatives, small scale businesses, supporting development of input enterprises, diversifying agricultural production) and elements of agricultural rehabilitation (bringing more land and water into productive use). In a highly complex operating environment, the design was, overall, an appropriate response to some of the key constraints faced by farmers and food producers, chiefly high production costs and low market returns. Production constraints were addressed but market constraints less so. FPS and PARC could consider the use of the concept of resilience in the process of formulating and operationalizing goals and results to enable the addressing of the overarching constraints of beneficiary and market vulnerabilities.

The programme design process was inclusive and interactive. However, the use of the log frame approach, in the absence of a well-developed Theory of Change (TOC) with assumptions, presented significant challenges to creating an overall vision of change for the programme. This inhibited the programme's ability to effectively link results expected (outcomes) in a causal chain, and to develop more appropriate results and indicators for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting purposes. The baseline study, while producing useful contextual information, did not provide any initial benchmarks against which to measure progress towards achieving outputs and results expected, compromising effective M&E strategy and programme performance reporting. In the absence of timely M&E performance data, there was a distinct feeling that the role of the Steering Committee (SC) was reduced to approving work already done, rather than providing useful guidance and input to overall programme performance. In contrast, the excellent monitoring reports from the Small Enterprise Centre (SEC) contain a wealth of analysis on results and impact and could be summarised for the benefit of the SC.

Programme strategies and activity design were based on PARC's long experience of working in agricultural development and were able to effectively address some of the key underlying constraints to profitable and sustainable agriculture. Activities were based on a comprehensive and participatory needs assessment. There was a delay in start-up of the women's

empowerment activities, which has meant that some of the results expected have not materialised and been validated within the programme implementation horizon. The programme's gender strategy focuses on women's only activities, which did produce some remarkable impact in terms of women's empowerment. The leveraging of funds from beneficiaries and other stakeholder proved a very effective mechanism and strategy for promoting ownership and sustainability of programme results. The promotion of good environmental practices through an awareness campaign was conducted in 2017.

Target group and partner selection was appropriate for the achievement of program goals, and the beneficiary selection process and criteria developed proved acceptable to the target groups, including beneficiaries, who were involved in the setting the selection criteria during the needs assessment workshops carried out before the start of implementation. The selection of PARC as implementing partner was a key element in successful implementation. All stakeholders commended their experience, practical skills and ways of working in the field.

The programme management structure and implementation process were very appropriate for the complexity of the programme, which had many moving parts. The structure and process reflected a high degree of decentralisation of roles, responsibilities and some authorities. The work of the LCs was particularly useful in proving a link between PARC and the direct beneficiaries. The LCs provided additional implementation monitoring and problem-solving functions, although in some areas they tended to work only with male household heads rather than with female-headed ones. Implementation was generally very smooth partly because of the high levels of beneficiary and other stakeholder investments in the interventions.

*Context:*

The programme was aligned with the national agricultural, gender, and Area C strategies as well as AECID's agricultural strategy in Palestine. It contributes to two of the key areas for FPS – water resource management and agricultural production- and was fully aligned with the PARC's agricultural sector strategies. The relevance of the objectives of the programme in addressing national and beneficiary priorities has not changed since the beginning of the Programme. However, although the most recent Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture Strategy (2017 -2022) reiterates the same strategic objectives as the previous strategy (2013-2016), an additional priority was added, concerned with the need for female and male farmers and entrepreneurs to have better access to quality agricultural services needed for increasing value along agricultural value chains.

*Achievement of Results and Objectives:*

All activity output targets have been achieved or exceeded. The achievement of the results and emerging impact were assessed against the monitoring and evaluation framework and M&E reports, together with stakeholder testimonies. This approach showed that programme outputs were well achieved and likely to be fully achieved by programme end. It is not clear to what extent the results were actually achieved on the ground as there no end line survey was administered and it was difficult to reflect the results in the reporting.

Evidence of impact at the level of women's empowerment was particularly impressive, considering the limited gender mainstreaming attempted. Impacts on environmental attitudes and understanding were observed and included the farmer's new capacities to rationalize the use of water and expand the green areas in their localities. The sensitization and capacity

building undertaken by the programme around environmental issues contributed to the achievement of longer-term goals in this area to encourage good environmental practices.

Evidence of improved agricultural and food processing productivity was largely anecdotal, but it is clear that production increases have occurred and can be expected to bear fruit in the future. There is much anecdotal evidence of increases in income, particularly among women. The impact of the increased access to land and water has already shifted cropping patterns towards cash crops. Local and regional networks are being built which is setting the foundations for future market links.

The sustainability of results for the individual farmer has great promise, if the strong sense of beneficiary ownership created is supported by the additional promotion of the benefits of new inputs and technology, the continued availability of extension services and the sustaining of learning networks among farmers through extension visits. The sustainability of the longer-term results expected (increases in productivity and sustainable levels of income) will require further support in terms of marketing linkages, the provision of high-quality services, including quality assurance of agricultural products, and innovative, commercially viable and environmentally friendly inputs.

### **Recommendations**

*Process* recommendations include the need to revisit the overall design process and consider the use of a TOC. The evaluation team sees this as a proactive and joint responsibility of key stakeholders. There may also be a need to consider the use of the concept of resilience in the process of formulating and operationalizing goals and results to enable the addressing of the overarching constraints of beneficiary and market vulnerabilities. Further, mainstreaming of gender into the design of future activities should be strongly considered and facilitated by gender audits within FPS and the local team of PARC. A more rigorous market development approach should be attempted for future programmes, and additional quality control of key documents, produced for establishment of baseline data, is required. PARC should debrief the LCs who is closely involved in implementation on the current strengths and weaknesses of their role and responsibilities, including gender issues so that this key implementation mechanism is strengthened. PARC and FPS should review the recommendations highlighted by beneficiaries for potential incorporation into future project design processes. Sustainability

*Context* recommendations include the need to align future programmes with the new strategic objective presented in the most recent Palestinian National Agricultural Sector Strategy. This would involve adopting a more market development approach by identifying agricultural value chains which have a potential for the production of higher value crops for the internal and export market. Programmes should also devote focus to incentivised private sector investment, further capacitation of producer's cooperatives, and establishment or capacitation of agricultural processing enterprises. Additional concepts of resilience could be considered in formulating and operationalising programme goals and results to address the overarching constraint of beneficiary and market vulnerabilities. These could include indicators of income and food expenditure, access to basic services (schools, hospitals, electricity etc.), agricultural assets, agricultural practices and levels of technology in use, availability of safety nets (agricultural insurance, other donor assistance), enabling institutional environment (rules and regulations), support services, sensitivity to shocks and adaptive capacity.



*Achievement of objectives and results* are focused on how to improve the M&E framework and improve reporting on programme results. Additional work is needed on the conceptualizing and development of an adequate M&E framework, system and process for the complexity of the intervention. The M&E framework developed illustrates the disadvantages of using a log frame approach for complex programmes without the initial step of developing a TOC. Indicators are too activity-focused, like milestones and completion, rather than indicators of intermediate precursors or precursor results that come from individual tasks or steps in the activities. Recommendations are focused on how to improve reporting on programme results in terms of content and timeliness so that SC meetings can provide more forward-looking guidance to implementation. The Spanish Cooperation could consider providing resources needed for this by hiring backstopping services through a longitudinal evaluator. The evaluator would help provide continuous in-house support at the start of the design process and throughout implementation to ensure that the intervention is evaluable. The evaluator should also support project monitoring, facilitating periodic evaluative reviews for strategic learning. Support could be continued while all partner efforts to develop their M&E systems and process continue.

## Section 1: Introduction (Context, Purpose and Methodology)

### Programme Context

Palestinians in the West Bank are acutely exposed to external shocks concurrent with ongoing stressors. The situation in Palestine remains in a protracted crisis due to the belligerent Israel occupation. Movement restrictions imposed by Israel since the early 1990's and intensified in June 2007, contravene international humanitarian law (IHL) as they target and impose hardship on the civilian population, effectively penalizing them for acts they have not committed.

On the ground, the continuous construction of settlements, driven by ideological mobilization and economic incentives to attract settlers (pull strategy), is supported by a push strategy that limits physical and social space for Palestinians. The coercive environment, which facilitates forcible transfer, manifests itself through a discriminatory permit regime for construction, lack of access to basic services, forced evictions and planned relocations, confiscation and destruction of civilian property, obstruction of humanitarian assistance, land expropriation, settlement expansion, construction of the Wall, movement and access restrictions, declarations of live fire zones and closed areas, settler violence and military operations.

These policies and practices obstruct the development and maintenance of physical structures, community life and livelihoods, increasing the vulnerability of Palestinian communities, reduce their resilience, render them dependent on humanitarian aid and, ultimately, make them uninhabitable.

The agricultural environment in Palestine is becoming increasingly vulnerable. Climate change, political instability and conflict, poor environmental practices, natural resources depletion, as well as market inefficiency are drivers of what is termed chronic vulnerability. These result from a mix of factors such as insufficient incentives for the wider implementation of sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices, land confiscation, lack of financial resources to bring unused land into cultivation, lack of water, and political uncertainty, as well as the myriad of restrictions imposed on the Palestinian economy by Israel occupation.

These burdens distort the functioning of agricultural markets and erode the profitability of Palestinian producers. They have adversely affected distribution to internal and external markets, hindering the competitiveness of Palestinian producers and leaving the domestic agricultural production in a disadvantageous situation. This has resulted in an increase the actual and perceived risk of investment in Area C, hampering badly needed investment in the agricultural sector.

Vulnerabilities are not evenly distributed throughout districts, communities, households, or agricultural enterprises. Rather, vulnerabilities depend to a large extent on socioeconomic status and exposure to shocks and stressors. Improving resilience<sup>1</sup> results in a reduction in

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<sup>1</sup> Resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb shocks, adapt and bounce back. The level of the resilience of an individual is linked to, for example, their educational level, income, their psycho-social

vulnerability. With high reliance of Palestinians on subsistence farming to survive, access to additional land and water, better agricultural infrastructure, skills, knowledge and quality inputs are essential in order to improve productivity and develop more effective linkages to markets in the long run. Market systems are key to the resilience of small-scale producers by increasing returns and reducing risks. However, the benefits to small scale producers from market system engagement, however, will not be sustainable unless the market system itself is also resilient to shocks and stresses<sup>2</sup>.

## Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

As stipulated in the Terms of Reference (TOR), the overall purpose of this final evaluation is to assess the design and management of the intervention, and the achievement of results.

The programme under review adopted a hybrid design and approach, combining elements of a market development approach (e.g. establishing competitive producer cooperatives, small scale businesses, diversifying agricultural production) and elements of agricultural rehabilitation (bringing more land and water into productive use). It seeks to contribute to small-scale and sustainable changes that create sustainable and profitable impacts for small scale producers. The purpose of this evaluation is to examine the impact and effectiveness of this hybrid approach taken by the programme. The scope of the evaluation is to determine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of this programme according to the criteria stipulated in the TOR, analysing the process of design, the implementation and management of the implementation process, the context, and the evaluation of the results and objectives achieved.

This programme undertook multiple interventions at different stages across a variety of development areas/themes. Integrating these different intervention strategies effectively into one programme design contributing to one overarching goal is a significant challenge. It is essential to understand how, why and at what point all the different interventions contribute to the changes expected. For example, improving agricultural production does not depend only on reclaiming, irrigating and planting the additional land. Other factors, such as improved agricultural practices, access to and utilization of improved inputs (organic fertiliser), and linkages to secure markets that reduce the risks to the investments made by small-scale producers are also required.

This evaluation is intended to fulfil the following objectives as per the TOR:

- Evaluate, after the elapsed execution period, the relevance of the intervention and its objectives in relation to the problems and vulnerabilities identified in the "Programme", within the framework of the sectoral strategy on Rural Development of Spanish Cooperation

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status, their sense of belonging, sensitivity to shocks, and adaptive capacity. At the household level for example, resilience is linked to food security, access to basic services, agricultural assets, access to social safety nets, the enabling environment. At the community level for example, resilience is linked to the state of agricultural infrastructure, land management, water resource management, linkages to regional and national planning initiatives.

<sup>2</sup> For more on this issue, please refer to UNCTAD, The Besieged Palestinian Agricultural Sector, 2016.

[https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/gdsapp2015d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/gdsapp2015d1_en.pdf)

- Value the design and execution of the intervention. The coherence between the expected results and the achievement of the objectives, as well as their scope in the evaluated period, reorienting them if necessary.
- Value the activities carried out, their contribution to the achievement of the results and the optimization of the resources used to carry them out.
- Analyse at this moment the foreseeable impact of the intervention.
- Establish a qualitative and quantitative measurement of the indicators with respect to the different baseline studies conducted and the indicators constructed in the agreement's planning matrix.

The analysis will provide answers to all the evaluation questions above.

## Programme Background and Overview

In this programme “Sustainable and equitable rural development in the West Bank, including putting into use and responsible management of land and water resources for small and medium-sized farmers”, FPS aims to capitalize on its past experience of designing and implementing water resource management and agricultural development projects in Palestine. It is also capitalizing on one of the more recent funding instruments of AECID, the “Programme”, which provides longer term funding, allowing for a focusing of the programme in a relatively small area to maximise impact and sustainability during implementation. The Programme was implemented by FPS in close partnership with PARC -with whom they have 10-year working experience-, with funding from AECID.

The programme took place in the rural areas of the Qalqilya and Tulkarem Governorates (West Bank). It aimed to promote inclusive and sustainable agricultural initiatives that reduce the vulnerability of rural families in the northwest zone of the West Bank, adjacent to the Green Line. The programme intended to promote sustainable and equitable rural development in the West Bank through a holistic approach including the putting into use - and responsible management - of land and water resources with the active participation of all relevant actors in the agricultural sector (farmers, cooperatives, municipalities, local governments, ministries, companies, etc.). Rights holders are located in two clusters of 19 villages in the rural areas of Qalqilya and Tulkarem seriously affected by the route of the Separation Wall, which has deprived them of their principal source of income, linked to agriculture, and has resulted in the loss of much of their fertile land and water resources (more than 33 water wells are now behind the Separation Wall).

The programme was implemented between (December 2014 and April 2019) at a total cost of 2.5 million Euros. PARC was responsible for the direct implementation of all activities on the ground with support from the LCs and district level Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) staff. All other elements of the programme, including quality control through review of documents and reports, review of programme progress and the visibility of the intervention were done in partnership with PARC and to some extent with AECID (review and input to programme design, review of programme progress). The programme was co-financed by AECID with financial contributions from FPS, provision of materials from PARC, labour contribution from the targeted communities, and the provision of space for workshops by the local councils.

The needs and priorities of the 25 agricultural communities were identified by the needs assessment, conducted as part of the baseline study in February 2015, just before the start-up

of the programme, intended to map the intervention areas and determine the status of the main programme indicators in the logical framework (log frame) to be used as benchmarks for monitoring the achievement of outputs and outcomes. From this assessment, 19 villages were finally selected to participate in the programme, based on criteria that gave the highest weightings to unemployment rates, environmental issues and access to agricultural land.

The goal of the programme was to promote profitable and sustainable rural development. The specific objectives (Outcomes) were:

- SO1: Increase agricultural productivity in Qalqilya and Tulkarem governorates
- SO2: Encourage good environmental practices
- SO3: Enhance the capacities of farmers and women producers
- SO4: Promote the empowerment of women

Nine (9) results (outputs) linked to the Outcomes above-mentioned were planned as follows:

- 1.1 Access to agricultural land and its productivity is improved
- 1.2 Stony unused land is reclaimed for agricultural use and exploited
- 1.3 Dry land has been converted into irrigated plots
- 2.1 Wastewater is treated and reused for agricultural use in the community
- 2.2 The fertility of the land is improved with the use of agricultural waste compost
- 2.3 Four pilot wells are built using photovoltaic energy
- 3.1 Active social agents: agronomists, farmers (men and women), agronomists and women's organizations have improved their technical level.
- 3.2 The influence and access to the exchange networks of rural communities has been improved
- 4.1 Women increase their capacity to manage and decide on food production in family production units.

The target beneficiaries of the programme are: Farmers (1,553), rural families (1,969), rural women (91 young entrepreneurs, 6,891 women), unemployed workers from rural areas (804), local PARC staff and LCs (represented by local municipal councils, pioneer farmers, and other key local actors).

## Methodology

The evaluation applies a mixture of qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods including desk review, semi structured interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). The evaluation field work was carried out between June 17, 2019 and July 6, 2019. . The evaluation team relied on the indicators in the M&E strategy document to assess the extent results developed by the Programme were achieved. The sufficiency and appropriateness of these indicators are themselves assessed based on the evaluation of the appropriateness of the programme design, in line with the evaluation TOR. The team assesses the usefulness of log frame approach in design programmes of this complexity, where complex interactions exist within the results chains of the interventions.

The evaluation team reviewed the relevance of the intervention to its context, the linkage between activities and results, and the planning and organizational framework and process of the intervention, including the beneficiary selection process. The team further assessed the impact of the intervention on the promotion of gender equality and environmental sustainability. A quantitative measure of the achievements was made using the baseline study as a starting point. Lessons learnt are drawn and recommendations are made regarding key elements of the intervention for Fundación Promoción Social (FPS) and the Palestinian Agricultural Committees (PARC) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) - referring both to the strategic design, planning and management of the intervention, and the measurement of programme performance.

The evaluation team applied the criteria of the OECD - relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact, and feasibility of the intervention - to structure the report. Recommendations were developed regarding key elements of the interventions for FPS and PARC - referring both to the design, planning and management of the intervention -.

### Desk Review

During the inception meeting, the evaluation team and FPS identified the essential documentation required to provide an overview of the programme, as well as necessary documentation relating to the context of national, regional and local actors.

The inception stage relied on review of secondary sources such as existing programme documents, publications, and partners' reports to establish the scope of its work, and develop a methodology for the full review process.

The evaluation team conducted a thorough review of all relevant documents to enable the design of the evaluation tools (i.e., FGDs and interview guidelines) effectively and with relevance to the programme's objectives.

### Evaluation Tools (FGDs and Semi-Structured Interviews)

The evaluation team used a combination of qualitative and quantitative tools for the evaluation consisting of in-depth semi structured interviews, FGDs, and desk review of documents. The evaluation collected information around five key evaluation criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Feasibility, and Impact.

Semi-structured interviews and FGDs were both utilized to collect qualitative data that provided in-depth qualitative insights from different categories of beneficiaries and stakeholders into programme relevance and effectiveness over a range of the Programme's interventions. Participants in both interviews and FGDs were carefully targeted to ensure that a representative sample of beneficiary and interventions types were selected using a screener of demographic, geographical and intervention criteria. The interview participants were selected together with FPS to ensure that the most relevant and useful information available on the Programme's design, management and implementation could be gathered. Data gathered from these three sources were compared and contrasted (triangulated) to identify some of the trends, and to enable evidence-based evaluative judgements to be made against the evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and viability) used.

| Stakeholder | Informants | Title |
|-------------|------------|-------|
|-------------|------------|-------|

|  |                        |   |
|--|------------------------|---|
| PARC local staff   | Mr. Mahmoud Abu Hamdan | PARC Project Local Coordinator  |
| FPS HQ representative  | Ms. Gema Talavan       | Departamento de Proyectos   |
| FPS representative   | Ms. Mayte Illan        | Head of Mission   |
|  | Ms. Naiara Imedio      | Project Manager   |
| PARC representative  | Ms. Basema Shuquir     | PARC Project Manager  |
| PARC representative  | Mr. Izzat Zeidan       | PARC Programs Manager   |
| Representative of MOA  | Mr. Emad Khliif        | Director of Marginal Water Use  |
| Representative of MOA – Qalqilya                             | Mr. Thafer Sahlab      | Services Department Head in Qalqilya Governorate Directorate                    |
| Representative of MOA – Tulkarem                             | Mr. Baha' Khadr        | Agricultural Water Section Head in Tulkarem Governorate Directorate             |
| Representatives of local grassroots organisations – Qalqilya | Ms. Fakhriyya Sawan    | President of Amateen Cooperative for Food Production and Local Committee member |
| Representatives of local grassroots organisations – Tulkarem | Mr. Fawzat Drubi       | President of Shufa Village Local Council & Head of the Agriculture Society      |
| Representative of Spanish Cooperation                        | Mr. Jesus Tome         | Senior Programme Manager at AECID   |

Moreover, the team conducted (6) FGDs with beneficiary groups as illustrated in the following table:

| FGDs                           | Date  | # of participants |           |           |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|
|                                |       | Total             | Men       | Women     |
| Men beneficiaries – Qalqilya   | 2-Jul | 9                 | 9         |           |
| Local committees – Qalqilya    | 2-Jul | 9                 | 9*        |           |
| Women beneficiaries – Qalqilya | 3-Jul | 11                |           | 11        |
| Men beneficiaries – Tulkarem   | 4-Jul | 14                | 14*       |           |
| Local committees – Tulkarem    | 4-Jul | 8                 | 8         |           |
| Women beneficiaries – Tulkarem | 6-Jul | 10                |           | 10        |
|                                |       | <b>61</b>         | <b>40</b> | <b>21</b> |

\* Local committees (LCs) consist of both men and women according to the lists received from PARC. However, only men attended the FGDs with LCs.

The evaluation team coordinated with PARC's local coordinator in Tulkarem and Qalqilya to obtain lists of beneficiaries and recruit participants for the FGDs based on the following criteria to ensure perspectives were included that represented both genders, all geographical areas targeted, and all interventions implemented.

- Geographic representation: The evaluation team organized a FGD with each stakeholder category in each location (i.e., Tulkarem and Qalqilya). Moreover, the team recruited

participants accounting for geographic diversity (i.e., having participants from different villages and areas within Tulkarem and Qalqilya).

- Gender balance: The team organized separate FGDs for men and women beneficiaries, while inviting both men and women to the LCs' FGDs.
- Representation of the Programme's key activities/ components: The team recruited participants reflecting the need to have perspectives from beneficiaries who benefitted from rehabilitation, agricultural roads, home gardens and all other key activities of the Programme.

Annex A includes the evaluation matrix, which provides the evaluation questions, sample indicators, proposed verification methods and sources of verification for each of the five evaluation criteria. Annex B provides the proposed TOC, Annex C provides the TOR and Annex D the evaluation tools.

## Limitations of the Evaluation

The evaluation methodology used a mixed-methods approach. The use of such an approach mitigates limitations of subjectivity that could arise in case of using one of the tools in isolation. Evidence is gathered against the evaluation criteria from a variety of sources and is then compared and contrasted as part of the analytical process. Some limitations and considerations should be kept in mind, however, in reading this report:

1. The quality of the programme's baseline report posed a challenge to the evaluation. No benchmarks were set against which the programme could assess progress towards results. These could have included the production rates of land already under cultivation, the baseline status of knowledge and skills among the targeted farmers and women, and the initial level of usage of organic fertiliser. As a consequence, programme results were not monitored over time and there is only hearsay evidence and some success stories which reveal some evidence of results achieved.
2. Some of the key documents made available were in Spanish<sup>3</sup>. In particular some time had to be invested in translation of key sections of these documents, which limited further the time resources at hand.

## Evaluation Criteria and Themes

The evaluation questions in the TOR were presented against the standard criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Viability and Impact.

| Evaluation Criteria | Evaluation Themes   |
|---------------------|---|
| Relevance           | Adaptation of the intervention to the context, the problems detected and priorities established by the beneficiaries, public administrations and the donor community. In the analysis the alignment criteria will be taken into account in relation to the public policies developed in the country and the harmonization with other donors and NGOs that are operating in the area |
| Effectiveness       | The degree of compliance with the objectives set by the NGO, at a   |

<sup>3</sup> These include the Documento de Formulación de Convenios de Cooperación al Desarrollo.



|            |   |
|------------|---|
|            | strategic and operational level. The coverage of the Programme in relation to the target group will be specifically assessed. The costs of the intervention will be weighted  |
| Efficiency | Measurement of the scope, and results in relation to resources (financial, material and human) and the time spent by the intervention. It is about showing how the available resources are transformed into results   |
| Viability  | The probability of continuity of development processes beyond the time of action of the non-governmental organization (NGO), with the maintenance and management of the results obtained and even with the implementation of new complementary actions                        |
| Impact     | The impact is understood as the visualization of the positive and negative global effects caused by the intervention. The elements of the planning matrix understudy for this criterion will be the specific objective and the general objective and its causal relationships |

The evaluation themes detailed under each of these criteria were developed into an evaluation matrix which defined the evidence needed to assess the intervention against these specific criteria, the methods and means of verification of the evidence and the source of the verification.

## Section 2: Analysis of Findings

The following section provides an analysis of the evaluation findings which are classified into three main sections: Process analysis, context perspective and achievements of programme objectives.

### Process Analysis

This section of the report assesses the design of the programme focusing on the planning and organization framework and the execution, including the financial mechanisms used for programme management. The report also assesses the process of implementation of the intervention including the process of pre-selection and final selection of beneficiaries taking into account the vulnerability criteria used; the task accountability framework and how it functioned in the field; how beneficiaries themselves experienced the implementation process in the field; and the role of community contributions.

#### Planning Framework

The planning framework was holistic, integrated and risk sensitive. The goals and objectives are clearly articulated and the scope well defined. The strategies proposed address some of the key constraints to sustainable agricultural production through a series of carefully linked activities. However, the phasing of the activities across the four years was uneven. The implementation of the women's empowerment activities did not start until the second quarter of 2016. This timing has meant that there are as yet no results to report on, for example, of the 16 income generating activities, the last 10 of which did not start implementation until the last half of 2018.

The partners involved in the design and management of the intervention - FPS, PARC, UN Women, Rural Women's Development Society, Al Reef Finance<sup>4</sup>- and other stakeholders (Palestinian Water Authority, MOA, and AECID) exemplify a pool of highly qualified technical resources with long experience in their respective areas of gender, agricultural development and investment and environmental expertise. PARC are the most well established Palestinian NGO specialising in the development of the agricultural sector. PARC have profound experience in project and programme implementation in the agricultural sector and have local knowledge, networks, connections, expertise and resources. Their ability to productively liaise with all the key actors in the sector, and their ways of working in the field - particularly their ability to find solutions to implementation problems - were highly and positively commended by all stakeholders.

FPS has a strong track record of managing multiple and high value programmes in water resource management and agricultural development in the region in general, and Palestine in particular. Since 1992, when they established their presence in the Middle East, they have implemented 116 separate interventions for a total value of €79.5 million. In Palestine, they have managed four co-financed interventions in agricultural development and environment for €1.5 million, and a joint programme for development of water resources in Palestine and Jordan for €13 million.<sup>5</sup>

PARC was particularly satisfied with allocation of a percentage of the programme budget for FPS to undertake advocacy work in Spain. Programme partners felt this had great value added for two reasons. Firstly, it allows Spanish tax payers to understand for what purpose their money is spent. Secondly, it enables more strategic outcomes for the agricultural sector in Palestine as it enables the articulation and presentation to the Spanish public and government of the most critical constraints to Palestinian development in general. As PARC noted, meeting the needs of small producers is an endless process in the current political context. It is the political context which has to change in order to provide a long term and sustainable solution to the problems of the agricultural sector.

Interviews show that FPS and PARC jointly designed the Programme at all stages of its formulation.<sup>6</sup> FPS also noted that they tried to mainstream gender and environment from the start of implementation. The design process itself was inclusive in the sense that all major stakeholders had a role, either in initial design, peer review and/or finalization. AECID reported a 'very active' role in defining the programme priorities, scope and goals, including the need to reduce the fragmentation of effort and concentrate the intervention in a more tightly focused geographical area, and to integrate several complementary components. According to a key informant, the Programme's mechanism enabled design discussions to take place within a longer-term planning approach, a more flexible and efficient fund management strategy and the inclusion of an element of capacity building for both FPS and PARC. As a matter of procedure,

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<sup>4</sup> Al Reef Company is owned by (PARC) and is the marketing arm that provides post-harvest services (processing, production, marketing and export) of Palestinian agricultural products while (PARC) provides preharvest support in terms of consultancy, training on analysis of skill gap, distributing seedlings, equipment and agricultural infrastructure development. Integrated and complementary work is achieved through close cooperation between Al Reef Fair Trade and PARC.

<sup>5</sup> Documento de Formulación de Convenios de Cooperación al Desarrollo.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with FPS.

the Spanish Cooperation shares all programmes submitted for funding with the MOA, meaning all stakeholders were engaged to a greater or lesser extent in the design process.

### Organizational Framework

Sustainable change encompasses not only who the programme partners with, but how. The organizational framework described in the programme document is a much-decentralised model (From the Programme Steering Committee, to FPS, to PARC, to the LCs established to help monitor the implementation, to the final direct beneficiaries themselves).

The decentralization of functions and responsibilities as shown in the table below is essential for a complex programme of this nature with many moving parts to enable the implementation to run smoothly in all its target areas. The table below shows the broad functions of the entities involved in the management of implementation.

**Table 1: Implementation Process Functions**

| Entity                             | Function   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Programme Steering Committee       | Review programme progress towards targets and results<br>Provide advice and strategic guidance on key issues arising   |
| Spanish Cooperation                | Programme design<br>Participation in Steering Committee<br>Monitoring field visits   |
| FPS                                | Programme design<br>Participation in Steering Committee<br>Provide quality control of programme products<br>Monitoring field visits  |
| PARC                               | Programme Design<br>Participation in Steering Committee<br>Overall management of Implementation including monitoring and evaluation (M&E)<br>Reporting on project progress, outputs and outcomes<br>Setting criteria for beneficiaries and inputs required<br>Leveraging funds as needed               |
| MOA National level                 | Approval of programme design<br>Participation in the Steering Committee  |
| MOA District Level                 | Beneficiary and site selection<br>Provide advice and guidance during implementation  |
| LCs (19, with between 5-6 members) | Participation in site and beneficiary selection<br>Coordination and supervision of implementation outputs and timelines<br>Coordination of site visits<br>Preparation of workshops<br>Setting specifications for compost factory<br>Solving local conflicts with farmers<br>Leveraging funds as needed |
| Farmers                            | Supervision of workers on land reclamation activities  |

## Management and Implementation Process

Despite the multiple levels of coordination that this management and implementation structure requires - by itself, the number of LCs is high (one for each of the 19 villages) spread over a large geographical area require significant time and effort to coordinate and support - implementation was overall very smooth. The major factors in the success of the process was a clear delineation of tasks for all the entities involved combined with strong decentralization of responsibilities and some authorities, and a strong commitment to the outputs because of stakeholder investments in the interventions. The process worked particularly well at the local level, where the LC became an effective link between the farmers and PARC.<sup>7</sup> Activities were implemented on time, and in a timely manner (women noted that training times were suitable). Field work was delayed only by external factors (weather and Israeli activities) and then only for short durations. Payments were made on time based on delivery (output based).

### Role of the LCs

The framework of LCs in the organizational framework is clear, including the requirement to have 50 percent female representation. When PARC approach any community, they ask all grassroots organizations and groups to nominate someone to participate in the programme in the LCs. Some conservative communities would not nominate any women making the target of equal gender representation difficult to meet. In addition, the traditional gender roles in rural communities meant that in some the LCs did not engage with women. For example, some of the women in the Tulkarem FGD asserted that the LC members followed up with the husbands, even though LC representatives in these areas stated there was female representation on the LCs. PARC acknowledged the problem as a social norm which needs more time change.

As a result, the anticipated role of the LCs was uneven in gender terms. In some areas the women had limited communication with the LCs and had very little knowledge of their work or purpose. As a consequence, in Tulkarem in particular, they received little support from this body and reverted by default to PARC for their ongoing needs and requirements. In Qalqilya however, women in the FGD reported a very productive relationship with the LCs.

#### Testimonials

This mechanism (leveraging funds through mandatory contributions) is very appropriate, it increases the financial value of the programme and thus we benefit more, it also ensures the commitment of beneficiaries to work till the end.

PARC Coordinator

#### Testimonials

We didn't know that there were committees. The municipality held this first meeting and we didn't communicate after that. There was no relationship. We asked them once for a course and they didn't come (Women, Bal'a in Tulkarem)

Our relationship with the LCs is great. They visited the sites, represent us and request the things that we needed (Woman, FGD in Qalqilya)

There was no need for the committee; the follow up was mostly with PARC (Woman, Anabta)

<sup>7</sup> PARC is planning to establish complaints boxes in the communities where they work so people can register their issues using boxes in the villages. PARC will use these boxes as an additional tool for learning and accountability purposes. The complaints are directed to PARC management and not to the programme department.

Farmers (males) however, said that the relationship with the LCs was good and supportive, and was useful in leveraging local funds, and facilitating their needs. They felt that the LCs did not have a big role at their level because implementation was smooth. The MOA at the local level provided ongoing technical counselling to beneficiaries and played a major role in identifying programme sites, helping to select beneficiaries based on evidence gained from field visits with PARC. The LCs are an important implementation partner for PARC on the one hand and beneficiaries on the other as they supervise the activities closely and continuously at the local level, and can also use their agency to expand the network of local support to the programme from other local organizations. A more equitable gender approach would help to contribute to the objective of women's empowerment by better supporting women's initiatives, but also by exposing men in the LCs directly to the women's capacities and contribution in the agricultural sector.

LCs felt that their mandate could be expanded in some areas including helping to set the beneficiary criteria and, more importantly, helping to set specifications for the Bills of Quantities for the tenders based on their knowledge of their communities and their experience of engineering works in their communities. They felt this would lead to better planning at the local level. Members of the LCs were generally drawn from the educated professional and business class in the community with practical knowledge of a range of development sectors. Some LC members were nominated by the Local Councils, and some of them were Council members themselves, which ensured a good working link with the local authorities.

Some of the LC FGD participants in Qalqilya had experience in similar programme settings. When they were asked how their experience in this programme compared to their experience in similar programmes, 50 per cent of the participants said it was better and 50 per cent said it was the same.

### **The Role of the Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee (SC) included the donor, implementing partners, and other key stakeholders. The role of the SC was felt by the MOA, AECID and FPS to be more operational than strategic. These stakeholders believed this to be the result of lack of available performance data, which would enable more responsive guidance and oversight at the SC level. The lack of M&E data at the SC meetings resulted in discussion which focused on progress (what has already been done), with no review of experience and lessons learned from implementation strategies for future implementation.

At higher levels of the implementation structure, some issues were noted. The MOA at national level for example felt that PARC needed to improve its coordination with the Ministry at local levels. Spanish Cooperation, FPS and the MOA all felt that M&E and reporting needed to be significantly improved in order to provide more responsive guidance and oversight at the Steering Committee level.

### **Financial Management**

Both PARC and AECID highly commended the flexibility of the financial mechanism, which provided on-time payments to contractors, workers and materials suppliers. As fund allocations could be moved from one year to the next, this enabled payments to be made for actual work done rather than work planned (payment for results). Funds were always transferred on time on the basis of timely financial reports. PARC noted that timely payments to contractors and other

service providers are essential to their reputation as a trusted partner and client in the agricultural sector.

### Strategies and Activities

The strategies and activities were based on PARCs' successful agricultural sector strategies and activities. The strategies and activities adopted clearly addressed some underlying constraints to profitable and sustainable agriculture through targeted training, better access to land, water and eco-friendly inputs, diversifying production, building productive capacities, and improving access to financial resources. All categories of beneficiaries reported that the interventions provided solutions to some of their most pressing problems. The strategies were well linked to the outputs expected, but perhaps more importantly, supported significant outcomes and impact as documented in beneficiary testimonies. These will be explained and detailed in the effectiveness and impact sections.

FPS noted during interviews that while environmental good practices were one of the key strategies in the intervention, gender was less so, despite one of the four specific objectives being focused on women's empowerment. The gender strategy of the programme focused on undertaking particular activities for women including support to women's cooperatives, building skills in income generating activities, and promoting an active role for women as decision-makers. This strategy proved to be very effective in several key areas of women's empowerment including increasing mobility and self-worth and changes in power dynamics and roles in the household and community (See sections on Achievement of Objectives for fuller explication). The programme may have missed opportunities for mainstreaming gender more fully into the activities and laying the groundwork to promote additional positive changes in the situation of rural women. The MOA (national level) representative noted that from his point of view, the activities were nothing out of the ordinary. They have already been tested and are known to lead to positive results and outcome.

The actual prioritization of activities to be undertaken was based on a comprehensive need assessment conducted over a period of 6 months (June – November 2014). The needs assessment was conducted in 25 villages in Qalqilyia and Tulkarem. The villages included in the survey were determined using 6 criteria including, level of poverty and vulnerability, level of impact of Israeli policies on livelihoods (land confiscation, wall construction and check points), previous experience of working with PARC, level of similar activities carried out recently in the communities, communities that are already participating in other assessments, the ease of clustering of communities to make implementation efficient, effective and to increase overall impact, and willingness of the community to provide their own contributions to costs throughout the implementation process.

The assessment provided an overall picture (profile) of the targeted villages, mapped the current situation, and identified the needs of the villages at the level of the existing cooperatives in the village and at the community level. Data was gathered through individual questionnaires and a meeting in each community to assess the needs of farmers in a collective setting using a participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) approach. Data was gathered on the economic situation in general, current irrigation techniques, surface area of existing greenhouses, existing agricultural water infrastructures and their status, water resources available, impact of Israeli policies on agricultural livelihoods, women's role in agriculture, land tenure systems and cropping patterns, and the general livelihood situation. Data was also gathered on existing and previous projects

by different agencies concerning land use, and water management and previous similar projects in the last 5 years. The data was analysed against a set of criteria in order to rank all the villages surveyed in terms of need. This prioritization was done through applying a high, medium and low scoring system across a series of weighted criteria. The most heavily weighted criteria included unemployment rates, environmental issues, access to agricultural land, and challenges faced. Medium weighted criteria included women involvement in agricultural processing, the availability of relevant development plans, land confiscation and wall construction. The lowest weighted criteria included the economic situation, readiness to contribute to the activities and the communities' history with other NGOs. As a result of the needs assessment process, a total of 19 communities were selected to participate in the projects activities.

Monitoring of project progress and achievements was based on reporting on the outputs which were expected to be achieved as a result of the activities and detailed in the programmes planning documents. The needs assessment was undertaken as part of a baseline assessment. FPS said in an interview that the study was very useful as it synthesized a lot of information on the context and prioritized the needs of the communities as they saw them. However they noted that although the baseline report was useful for PARC's internal purposes, it was difficult to identify information related to the initial status of the indicators on the Logframe, which made measuring future changes challenging. FPS re-iterated to PARC the need for results to be measured and FPS feel there has been some improvement in this area. PARC provided them with output data on activities completed, which FPS then entered on a rolling basis into the M&E plan included in the yearly programme planning documents. The needs of the target groups in relation to the activities undertaken were generally assessed through a participatory process. For example, women producers in cooperatives were asked to identify and justify their precise needs and priorities to which the programme was very responsive.

### **Target Groups and Selection Criteria**

Programmes which have a market-based element usually benefit those operating in the market most. They do not normally target the extreme poor because the poorest are in general risk-adverse as result of their high vulnerability and lack of basic means, assets, skills and power to be active in the market<sup>8</sup>. However, market-based interventions still have a critical role in poverty reduction for their advantages. By enhancing the ways that the poor interact with markets, the poorest might indirectly benefit, particularly through increased opportunities, services provision and better regulation. The reviewed programme documents do not claim to target the poor. Poverty reduction and poverty levels are not specified as key objectives or criteria for beneficiary selection in the programme document. For example, the criteria for village selection included only one reference to unemployment levels, and predominantly focused on issues of land and water access. The programme targets small-scale producers, both men and women who have agricultural assets and some measure of agency. According to beneficiary, MOA and PARC testimonies, criteria for beneficiary selection were designed by PARC in consultation with the beneficiaries during the meetings held for the needs assessment and then agreed with MOA. The beneficiary criteria were well known to both the LCs and the beneficiaries themselves.

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Blaser 2014; Can the "Making Markets Work for the Poor" NADEL MAS – Cycle 2012 – 2014

The process for criteria development for the specific volumes and types of inputs was set by the programme budget and number of activities envisaged, rather than by iterative consultations with the beneficiaries, which, as described in one FGD, resulted in occasional issues of quality and sustainability of outputs. A representative of the LC in Qalqilya explained that budgets for the agricultural roads could not accommodate all the required elements of what they considered a quality road. The bidding process had revealed that the amounts required exceeded the available budget as the initial appraisal of the actual route had not taken into account the quantities of large rocks in need of removal. In this particular case, PARC said that the original length specified in the budget was done with the understanding that if there were budget savings in later years, the retaining walls would be completed. PARC acknowledges that there is always a trade-off between quality and sustainability when carrying out agricultural infrastructure projects. In this particular case, PARC allocated part of the savings realised in other communities to complete the construction of the retaining walls in the last year of the programme. In other separate cases of budget shortfall, other solutions were explored, such as leveraging additional funds or voluntary work from the community or the Local Council which was evidenced in testimonies of the LCs by PARC itself providing additional materials, and the Local Council providing the rental costs, and the LC members paying for the electricity connections for the compost factory.

### Implementation Reporting

While a log frame was developed for programme approval, the M&E system and process itself was not dealt with up front as an issue integral to programme design and implementation. The baseline surveys did not provide any baseline information on the results indicators in the log frame, for example, the initial level of clearing and transportation costs and initial levels of household agricultural production. PARC provided updated figures on activity outputs periodically against the log frame. The sole narrative monitoring reports available are those from the Small Enterprise Center (SEC), which focus mainly on progress against outputs. While this is needed for effective programme management, it does not help in assessing the changes in programme performance over time and answering questions, including: Are we achieving our objectives? What are our indicators telling us? Where are the issues? What do we need to do to solve them?

Quality control by FPS and other stakeholders of M&E products including the baseline survey was weak. This was acknowledged during the interview with FPS where they noted that the baseline for the programme was not up to standard and did not provide the needed information. The baseline surveys gathered substantial and detailed data on the constraints faced by the communities in their attempts to develop profitable and sustainable agriculture. The studies also identified and prioritized the main needs of the communities. However, the survey did not ask specific questions linked to the results indicators in the log frame which could provide a benchmark (initial status) of the indicators against which to measure the progress towards achieving the programme results. For example, one of the results indicators in the log frame is that *'Agricultural production in the intervention area increases by 20% at the end of the period of implementation.'* The baseline survey did not identify what the current level of agricultural production was at the start of the intervention, making progress in this area difficult to determine. It is true that many programmes do not have baseline data and during the end line survey, it is possible to ask farmers to recall their level of agricultural production before the programme and compare this to the end line status. However, an end line survey was not



carried out, so data on the changes were not generated. That said, there are some case studies carried out by PARC and the SEC<sup>9</sup> that provide evidence of significant improvements for individual farmers. For example, in Ezbit Salman and Ezbit Almiduar, reduction in water losses because of the rehabilitation of the water networks was reported at 40 per cent, the cost of water decreased from two-and-a-half Shekels to one Shekel for one cubic meter and water is available 24 hours a day.<sup>10</sup>

### **Sufficiency and Timeliness**

The programme experienced no major issues related to the timely delivery of activities and outputs. Resources were available and time plans were followed. Beneficiary testimonies attest to this. The chronograms incorporated in the Annual Planning documents show that all proposed activities on the Programme were complete within the programme period. PARC did request a cost extension for the programme in October 2018, which was intended to maximize the impact of the work with women's cooperatives. The need for this extension is linked to the later start-up of the women's empowerment component noted above. Significant delays in registration for some of the cooperatives had resulted due to the unexpectedly lengthy bureaucratic procedures of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The three-month extension enable PARC to complete the work with these cooperatives focused on marketing studies, product and brand development, and marketing linkages through product exhibitions.

Applications for assistance from individual beneficiaries far outweighed the capacity of the programme to respond, both in terms of funds and time. FGD testimonies also revealed the seemingly bottomless pool of needs for improved agricultural infrastructure and increased access to water, markets, technical knowledge and jobs. The programme had built in expected beneficiary contributions as part of the initial budget, but additional contributions were leveraged as implementation progressed. As noted above, the scale of contributions was sufficient to guarantee full participation by the beneficiaries and their communities to the end of implementation and was also able to solve some unexpected financial costs, for example the electricity connection costs of the compost factory, which was covered by local contributions.

## **Context Perspective**

This section will assess how relevant the programme is to the political, social and economic environment of the West Bank in particular. From this perspective, the report will assess the value and logic of the Programme, its alignment to the development priorities of Palestine and Spanish Cooperation, and its internal harmonization with other NGO projects in the sector and in the areas targeted. It will also assess the soundness of programme strategies used during implementation in the targeted areas.

### **Relevance of Programme to the Political and Economic Context**

In Palestine, agriculture is not only a vital sector for food security and eradication of poverty but also for protecting land from confiscation. Around 12 per cent of the Palestinian labour force is employed in agriculture and one fifth of Palestinians are relying on subsistence farming to

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<sup>9</sup> SEC were contracted to do one of the baseline studies. The other baseline study was part of the needs assessment TOR which was conducted by Spring Centre for Development Company in 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Final Report, Small Enterprises Center, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018

survive. The most vulnerable Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip and Area C of the West Bank. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) 20 per cent of West Bank non-refugee communities are food insecure.<sup>11</sup>

The areas targeted by the programme were adjacent to the Green Line. The fertile land and water resources (particularly wells) of these communities in these areas have been subject to a series of forced confiscations as part of Israeli planning policies to enable the construction of the Separation Wall and settlements. Improving community access to control and management of expanded and sustainable water resources and bringing currently unused land into production using environmentally appropriate techniques are proper strategies in the targeted areas, particularly when addressing the sector's general low productivity. In addition to this goal, the programme also sought to further integrate rural women into the agricultural production process by improving their entrepreneurial and institutional capacities.

### **Alignment of Programme with Country Sector Strategies**

The National Agricultural Sector Strategy (2014-2016) set five strategic objectives to achieve its vision. The programme is in strategic alignment with three of the four strategic objectives, namely:

1. Second strategic objective: Efficient and sustainable management of natural resources. (Programme Outcome: Encourage good environmental practices in the target communities).
2. Third strategic objective: Enhanced agricultural production, productivity and competitiveness, as well as enhanced contribution of agriculture to food security. (Programme outcome 1: Increase Agricultural Production).
3. Fourth strategic objective: The agriculture sector has effective and efficient capacities, institutional frameworks, legal environment, infrastructure and agricultural services. (Programme outcome 3: Improve the institutional capacities of farmers and cooperatives in the target communities).

The programme is also fully in line with the National Strategic Framework for Development Policies and Interventions in Area C (2014 – 2016) supporting many of the identified priorities in the short and medium terms. Through the promotion of women-led agricultural enterprises, capacity development, and cooperative development, the programme is further contributing in increasing women's economic and decision-making participation, aligned with two of the four priorities identified in the 2014-2016 Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, namely:

1. Increase the participation of women in the labour market
2. Reduce all forms of violence against Palestinian women
3. Increase the participation of women in the decision-making areas of institutions
4. Palestinian women have access to all basic services without discrimination

The programme is aligned with two of the three strategic guidelines of the Spanish Cooperation Partnership Framework, namely:

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<sup>11</sup> Food security in Palestine remains high, Joint press release by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP), 2014.

1. Promoting economic opportunities for the poorest
2. Promoting women's rights and gender equality

During an interview with Spanish Cooperation, representatives confirmed that the Programme is also aligned with their own strategy for the agricultural sector and the overarching guiding strategy detailed in the Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2013-2016.<sup>12</sup> The programme also responds to the new funding modality available, which provides support to longer term programmes rather than projects, with the flexibility built in by taking stock every year on progress, with an integrated (multi sector) approach, market oriented and gender sensitive orientation. For the Spanish Cooperation, the Programme also represents a very important rationalization of the way PARC does land reclamation. The programme targets and integrates different and larger financial resources and a clearly defined geographical area, which allows a deeper dive into the issues of longer-term sustainability associated with land reclamation (for example, forward and backward market linkages, diversification of crops). While environmental objectives of the Programme do not form part of AECID's strategies in the agricultural sector, they are aware of the importance of paying attention to environmental consequences on interventions.

The programme also helps to contribute to the realization of many of PARC's goals in the agricultural sector of reducing food insecurity, expanding the decision-making capabilities of rural communities, increasing the contribution of the agricultural sector to national income, strengthening the agricultural sector profitability and its competitiveness, enhancing the role of agricultural cooperatives and grassroots institutions working in agricultural and rural development, and enhancing PARC's efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and accountability.

The relevance of the Programme's objectives in meeting national and beneficiary priorities has not changed since the beginning of the Programme. Indeed, the title of the most recent Palestinian National Sector Strategy document 2017-2022 is the same: Resilience and Development. Land rehabilitation, better management of land, water and environmental resources, ensuring resilience and attachment of farmers to their land are still three of the five priorities. However, although the sector strategy reiterates the same strategic objectives as the previous strategy (2013-2016), an additional priority is added, namely, the Fourth Strategic Objective: female and male farmers and entrepreneurs access to quality agricultural services needed for increasing value along agricultural value chains is improved.

This suggests clearly that future agricultural interventions should adopt an approach oriented to market development and identifying the specific agricultural value chains (olives, vegetables, fruits etc.) to be improved. This should be followed by identification of the geographical focus, based on where the value chains are active and have the potential for improvement and can lead to the production of higher value crops for the internal and export markets. Interventions should be structured around this element, which can still, of course, include land rehabilitation, better management of land, water and environmental resources as in the Programme, but

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<sup>12</sup> The Master Plan details the strategic approaches (linking relief to development, increasing the participation of women in development, prioritizing interventions based on vulnerability,) the goals of development investments (reduce vulnerability, improve food security, diversify livelihoods, foster small-scale production, linking private sector to agricultural development, mainstreaming the environment in interventions and promoting networks for self-governance among actors). The Convenio is aligned in its design with all these elements of the Master Plan.

interventions must also include the introduction of 'quality agricultural services' based on incentivised private sector investment, further capacitation of producers cooperatives, and establishment or capacitation of agricultural processing enterprises who can buy from producers and sell to the market. This new Strategic Objective may go some way to explain the comment of the MOA official in Ramallah for more 'creative' ways of designing interventions.

## Achievement of Programme Objectives

This section addresses achievement of the results and objectives, the quality of indicators and reporting, forecasting impacts and emerging impacts in terms of their sustainability.

### Achievement of Results

All activity output targets have been achieved or exceeded. The achievements of results linked to these outputs are more difficult to assess as the baseline has not provided any benchmarks against which to assess progress. However, beneficiary testimonies and the qualitative reporting included in the reports submitted by SEC to PARC in February 2018, testify to the wide range of impacts achieved as a result of programme implementation. The results/impacts are often remarkable and include very significant and unexpected results, in the sense that they were not included in the intended results articulated in the Programme's log frame. It is clear that the results achieved are a big success story, even though they are not properly reflected in the reporting. The major problem, as identified above, is that the baseline did not establish the current status of the indicators and no end line survey was undertaken.

The evaluation team presents the achievement of the results of the programme below based on a review of PARC's monitoring data against the relevant log frame indicators.

**Table 2: Achievement of Results Expected**

| Result                                      | Indicator  | Achieved   | Comments  |
|---|--|--|---|
| 1.1 Access to agricultural land improved,   | (1) 1800 dunums will benefit from improved access as a result of opening of (10) km of agricultural roads, representing an increase of 10 per cent<br>(2) 90 per cent of farmers users of new agricultural roads have reduced the current cost of ploughing land, clearing and transportation are reduced by 50 per cent at the end of the agreement | (1) 3,895 dunums benefitted from improved access<br><br>(2) No information available | Target very significantly exceeded<br><br>No baseline for the indicator (2) although monitoring reports <sup>13</sup> note a reduction in distance and time in transport of the agricultural produce especially in perishable crops like vegetables |
| 1.2. Unused rocky terrain are recovered and | (1) 500dunums of land reclaimed/rehabilitated at the end of the agreement which represents an increase of 1.36 per cent  | (1) 500 dunums of land reclaimed   | (1) Target achieved   |

<sup>13</sup> SEC report,

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| exploited for agricultural use,   | (2) The surface of green areas is increased in targeted communities by 10 per cent at the end of the four year agreement   | (2) No information available  | No baseline for indicator (2)   |
| 1.3. Rain fed land has been converted to irrigated plots,                     | (1) 1,250 dunums went from rain-fed to irrigated land in four years.<br><br>(2) The volume of water loss in the pipes for agricultural use has been reduced by 30 per cent in four years in targeted locations<br><br>(3) The total irrigated area increased by 5 per cent in target locations in four years | (1) 3,076 went from rain-fed to irrigated land<br><br>(2) No data available<br><br>(3) No data available  | (1) Target well exceeded<br><br>No baseline for indicator (2) or (3) Monitoring report <sup>14</sup> notes in one area Ezbit Salaman – Ezbit Almiduar reported reduction in water losses of 40 per cent |
| 2.1. Wastewater is treated and reused at community level                      | (1) At least 40,000 cubic meter of wastewater treated and reused annually for agricultural use in 150 dunums of land from the rehabilitation of three Collective WWTP<br>(2) Supplemental irrigation increased by 50 per cent in target locations at the end of the four years of the agreement              | (1) 40,100 cc of waste water used in 300 dunums of land from two WWTP<br><br>(2) No data available  | (1) Target exceeded<br><br>(2) No baseline for indicator  |
| 2.2 The soil fertility is improved with the use of agricultural waste compost | (1) 1,000 dunums of land are supplied with compost each year from the new factory<br><br>(2) Four permanent jobs are created in composting plant<br><br>(3) Fertilizers used for agriculture are reduced by 50 per cent at the end of the four year agreement in target locations                            | (1) 1,000 dunums of land are supplied by compost each year from the new factory<br><br>(2) Four jobs created<br><br>(3) Fertilizer use reduced by 50 per cent | (1) Target achieved<br><br>(2) Target achieved<br><br>(3) No baseline data for indicator  |
| 2.3   | Energy expenditure in four pilot wells were reduced 50 per cent on completion of the four years agreement compared to wells activated by engines operated in the local electricity network   | No data available   | No baseline data on indicator   |
| 3.1 Active social agents – agronomists, farmers and                           | (1) 225 farmers trained in the field of sustainable water management at the end of the four year agreement<br><br>(2) 85 per cent of trained farmers   | (1) 240 farmers trained   | (1) Target exceeded<br><br>(2) Target achieved  |

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<sup>14</sup> SEC reports

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>women's organizations have improved their technical level</p>                                  | <p>considered the training beneficial and applicable to the their production model</p> <p>(3) 45 farmers are organized into three associations of farmers at the end of the four year agreement</p> <p>(4)12 members of PARC benefit from visits to Spain for training in various technical aspects</p> <p>(5) Number of cooperative members (at least four of them women) increase by 50 per cent</p> <p>(6)Income of cooperative members increased by 25 per cent</p> <p>(7)use of chemicals is reduced by 50 per cent</p> | <p>(2) 85 per cent of trained farmers consider their training beneficial and appropriate</p> <p>(3) 45 farmers are organized into three water associations</p> <p>(4) 12 PARC members were trained</p> <p>(5) Number of members increase by 50 per cent</p> <p>(6) Income of cooperative members increased by 25 per cent</p> <p>(7) Use of chemicals reduced by 50 per cent</p> | <p>(3) Target achieved</p> <p>(4) Target achieved</p> <p>(5) No baseline data on this as all cooperatives were newly established</p> <p>(6) No baseline data on income of cooperative members</p> <p>(7) No baseline data for this indicator</p> |
| <p>3.2 Improve the influence and the access to the exchange networks of the rural communities</p> | <p>(1) Three seminars are held annually, two devoted to specific themes of empowerment of women's' cooperatives</p> <p>(2) Three campaigns are conducted annually</p> <p>(3) They participate in three fair trade markets nationwide with products produced by the four cooperatives, at least three of them women(sic)</p>  | <p>(1) Three seminars conducted on treatment and re-use of wastewater, Palestinian stone industries, alternative energy use in agriculture in Palestine</p> <p>(2) Three campaigns conducted</p> <p>(3) Three trade exhibitions held</p>   | <p>(1) Target partially achieved. No seminar on the empowerment of women's cooperatives</p> <p>(2) Target achieved</p> <p>(3) Target achieved</p>  |
| <p>4.1 Women increase their management</p>  | <p>(1) Increase of 25 per cent of the income of women beneficiaries</p> <p>(2) Food production in 150</p>  | <p>(1) Increase in 25 per cent in the income of female beneficiaries</p>   | <p>(1) Target achieved. No baseline data for Indicator</p>   |

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| capacity and decision (making) on food production in family production units | households has increased by 15 per cent<br><br>(3) The income of the four women's cooperatives record a balance between expenditure and revenue and start making money | (2) Food production increased by 15 per cent in 150 households due to home gardens<br><br>(3) Income of the four women's cooperative record a balance between expenditure and revenue | (2) Target achieved. No baseline data for Indicator<br><br>(3) Target partially achieved No data which shows that cooperatives are now making a profit. No baseline data for Indicator |
|--|--|---|--|

In Table 3, provided below, the evaluation team analyses the data against the number of results and the number of indicators to give an idea of what extent have the results been achieved at the overall level. Nearly **70 per cent** of indicator targets have been exceeded or met. For 23 per cent of indicators, no data has been reported.

**Table 3: Overview of Achievement of Results**

| Number of Results | Number of Indicators | Targets Exceeded | Targets Met | Targets Partially Met | No Data Reported |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 9                 | 26                   | 4                | 14          | 2                     | 6                |
|                   |                      | 15.3%            | 53.8%       | 7.6%                  | 23%              |

Looking at the log frame for the Programme, the baseline studies and monitoring reports, several issues can be noted, which point to some lack of clarity on the purpose and responsibilities for M&E within and across the program.

### Indicators

The indicators in the log frame are mixed between activity results and outcome results, for example, for the SO1 – increase agricultural production – the results are framed as “Access to land and its productivity improved (outcome),” “Unused land is reclaimed (output) and Exploited (more of an outcome),” and “Dry land has been converted into irrigated plots (output).”

This is only a problem inasmuch as it is not clear what the implementing partner is reporting against: is it the outputs of activities? Or is it the outcomes of activities? In terms of activity outputs, PARC has been able to meet – and indeed exceed -all its obligations in this area. The analysis shows that the activities and strategies were sufficient to achieve the outputs expected. If PARC is responsible for determining the outcomes of the activities, then it has fallen a little short.

As noted above, the baseline studies did not provide an understanding of the status of the proposed outcome indicators at baseline<sup>15</sup>, important to measure progress towards the

<sup>15</sup> For activity monitoring the baseline is always zero.

outcomes over time, to assess if the activity strategies are working or not, and adjust implementation over time. By mixing activity and outcome results in the log frame, programme performance (are we achieving our objectives?) is confused with programme progress (are we achieving our milestones?) and responsibilities for both become blurred.

Indicators are not always linked to the result they are intended to measure. For example, Result 4.1 is articulated as “Women increase their management capacity and decision on food production in family production units”. The indicators do not provide direct evidence of increased management capacity or of decision (making) in family-based units which could be, for example, women take responsibility for the crops that are planted in the home gardens, or women are able to develop a business plan for the cooperative. Instead the indicator misses this essential change step and looks at evidence which may be generated much further along the causal pathway.

Indicators are not always well defined and, as a result are open to different interpretations. Take, for example, “the number of cooperative members (at least 4 of them women) increased by 50 per cent at the end of four years of the agreement”. This might mean any of the following:

- The number of cooperative members in all cooperatives in the targeted communities?
- The number of cooperative members in the newly established cooperatives?
- The number of cooperative members in at least four women’s cooperatives?

Although the indicators are not well defined, it must be emphasized that the activities and strategies have been successfully designed and implemented within a holistic and integrated approach. The issue is that the current design of the M&E framework does not easily allow a periodic testing of the programme strategies employed (e.g. raising awareness on re-use of waste water) so that an indication of how and why this increase happened is obtained. For example, has the level of acceptance of farmers on waste water re-used increased as a direct result of the campaign among youth?

## Log Frames and the Theory of Change

The development and use of log frames for the design of programmes of this degree of complexity, without an accompanying TOC, has several risks attached. The log frame does not work well for designing programme strategy as it is designed to be more linear in relation to one specific outcome, rather than a collection of outcomes that programme strategy typically is. As a result, the linkages between the outcomes and their synergies are difficult to see, the distinction between immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes is often lost, and indicators tend to be more activity-focused than outcome-focused. A TOC enables one to look at a strategy on one page with all the linkages and causal pathways clear.

A TOC is constructed by defining long-term goals then mapping backward to identify necessary preconditions. A TOC explains the process of change by outlining causal linkages in an initiative, i.e. its shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term outcomes. It helps to examine ideas or assumptions of how change is expected to happen. The TOC structures the goals and objectives into a hierarchy of change, with logical assumptions at every level of change (if this happens...then this will result). The assumptions are the programme strategies, which need to be tested through the development of appropriate indicators. It also provides on one page all the activities and outcomes envisaged in the programme log frame, and it allows sight of where



in the process the different interventions happen, and helps to see what results are important to measure. All achievements at the output and outcome levels are phrased as results, rather than actions, as they are sometimes articulated in the log frame developed for programme monitoring, but they are grouped into more manageable categories.

The drawbacks of using a log frame approach for programme design without the initial step of developing a TOC, is evidenced in the Programme log frame where indicators are developed that are too activity-focused, like milestones and completion, rather than indicators of intermediate or precursor results that come from individual tasks or steps in the activities.

Although commendable efforts were made to undertake regular M&E activities aligned with the M&E planning matrix by both FPS and PARC, the absence of experienced resources in the overall design of performance measurement systems meant that the actual results achieved on the ground were not properly reflected in the reporting and lessons learned from monitoring efforts were not integrated into the project cycle over time. Consequently, the SC was disabled in performing its function of review and guidance.

### Evidence of Emerging Impacts

The report has grouped the evidence of emerging impacts into the broad areas of programme objectives, providing some idea on the efficacy of the employed strategies. The report underpins its summaries with quotes from beneficiaries and other stakeholders, sections of monitoring reports as evidence of the changes occurring and the possible constraints to impact. Overall, because the project focused on the production of public, rather than private goods (roads, water nets, water reservoirs, compost factory), all beneficiaries felt they had benefitted from an intervention, even if they were not direct beneficiaries. The project also motivated other farmers to start working on their land.

#### *Impact of Programme Activities on Agricultural Production*

In all FGDs, farmers reported a significant increase in the price of their land and a rise in their incomes. The access roads enable the farmers to increase their level of effort in agricultural work. The example of the programme also encouraged other farmers in the areas who were not direct beneficiaries of the activities to do their own land rehabilitation.<sup>16</sup>

#### Testimonials

The programme affected us financially. In less than a year, I will get 30,000 shekels from my 153 olive trees - Farmer, Tulkarem.

I bought my land for 1,000 dinar and now it's worth 15,000 dinar – Farmer, Qalqiliya

My land has roads now and I go there every day – Farmer, Tulkarem

My income has risen by 30 per cent. The programme motivated other farmers to do land restoration and protect the land from settlers – Farmer, Qalqiliya

<sup>16</sup> The SEC monitoring provides some useful insights to what helps to drive increases in productivity, stating: "An improved road infrastructure leads to changes in cropping pattern towards cash crops as there is a significant improvement in ease of transportation (the cash crops were considered as those crops which are mainly produced for sale in an area for the sugarcane and vegetables.) The ease of transporting and selling milk also expanded the acreage under fodder crops. The road also increases the gross cropped area due to availability of tractors in the village and even from outside. This has increased

### *Impact of Programme Activities on Women's Empowerment*

This was very impressive for the women who were beneficiaries of productive activities which enabled them to generate their own income, and increase the productivity of their cooperatives to be able to provide other women with jobs and income. Almost all impacts related to generating income are positive. The only negative impact reported by one woman, was that women stopped seeing their relatives and friends, which is one of the traditional roles that women play in the villages. But other women said that they had started to invest their time in 'better things'.

It is evident that through exchange visits and product exhibitions, women are beginning to build their networks which are an essential foundation in the marketing process. There is copious evidence from women's FGDs of increases in income from food production, both from home gardens and collective food production. The significance of these increases is apparent in the changes of dynamics and power relations within the household, where women are now more independent and empowered actors, sometimes taking control of household budgets and being able to provide better for their children. In this context, FPS felt that working with women in activities where they are comfortable (e.g., home gardens and cooperatives) contributed to their self-esteem and strengthened their position in decision-making situations. This was confirmed by the women themselves during FGDs.

Evidence from FGDs showed that women had experienced changes at the personal level including.

- an increasing sense of their self-worth in doing productive work
- an improved psychological status<sup>17</sup>

At the household level, women reported changes in household dynamics as a result of their economic activities and having their own income, as well as a subtle shift in power relations within the household including:

- a change in household dynamics as children would now go to them rather than their father for money
- an increase in their mobility as a result of their husbands recognizing the contribution they were making to household income and removing their

#### **Testimonials**

The programme did change our lives. Now we like to leave the house to go to the association, it really became a big part of the society, also we feel like we are actually doing something...There were initially negative sides from our participation because our husbands wouldn't want us to go, they want us to stay at home, but after we needed a new income for the family, they stopped opposing and we started to leave the house in confidence.  
Women - Qalqilya and Tulkarem

the use of fertilizers and seeds, resulting in mild increase in yield because of road infrastructure and it will increase in yield for food and vegetable crops." SEC Monitoring reports.

<sup>17</sup> Women in FGDs referred to the "positive mental effects" of going out to work. In previous AWRAD studies, women have also noted the liberating effect of leaving their individual and private existence in the house and being among other women in a work setting. In this setting, they share their problems. There is a natural process of collective problem sharing and solving around common domestic issues, including family pressures and influence, dysfunctional relationships within the household, and problems with their children. This process has a strong therapeutic effect on women who begin to experience a more collective existence outside of their families.

objection to them leaving the house

Finally, at the community level, women reported a greater sense of belonging to - and being respected by - the community. Women reported the following developments:

- an increased sense of connection to their wider community
- increased social relations with women outside their families
- a change in community dynamics as with their own income they were able to assist other women in need and to create additional jobs for women
- an improvement in their social position in their villages reflected in being invited to activities and workshops organized by the local council.

These impacts have resulted in other associated changes in women's attitudes and behaviours within the household setting. One woman from Tulkarem reported that "before the programme I never went to the store to buy something, now I do, I buy things for my house, also now I am the one who works out the household budget." As a result of this greater sense of empowerment, the behaviours of their children have shifted, with one woman reporting that her children now come to her and not their fathers, when they need money.

The evaluation was not able to gather any significant evidence of positive gendered impact on female farmers, male farmers or male members of the LCs. In contrast, in FGDs, LC members and farmers were quite clear that they felt that most of the programme activities require "masculine" work and that women are "not used to going up into the mountains." Despite the fact the Palestinian rural women's contribution to agricultural activities has always been significant<sup>18</sup>, some felt that women's role was realistically confined to "follow up." When the researchers re-phrased the question as "what might some of the advantages be in having women more involved in programme implementation?" Some of younger LC members admitted that it was beneficial to have women in meetings, 'because no-one knows their problems better than them'<sup>19</sup>.

### *Impact on Environmental Practices within the Communities*

Based on the FGDs, there was no direct evidence of changes or improvements in the farmers' attitudes or behaviours towards environmental practices. In interviews with other stakeholders, the evaluation detected some evidence of understanding the environmental results of the project. For example, the fact that the project supported the environment by rationalizing the use of water and expanding the green area of the community was noted<sup>20</sup>, the increase in water availability leading to good quality of crops without the use of pesticides, and the fact that irrigating the land is good for the environment generally. The awareness campaign for youth on good environmental practices was undertaken in late 2017, which may have been a little late in the implementation period to impact environmental attitudes and practices. FPS observed that changing practices and procedures is a long road, but sensitization and capacity building are important blocks to achieve the long term goals.<sup>21</sup> The monitoring reports of SEC provided some

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<sup>18</sup> Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, Enhancing the role of women in agricultural sector, 2016. <https://www.mas.ps/files/server/20161310121344-1.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> FGD, Local Committees, Qalqilya

<sup>20</sup> Amateen Organization, Tulkarem governorate.

<sup>21</sup> FPS Interview

insights into<sup>22</sup> possible constraints to the impact of this element. The factors identified were the need for more regular and periodic awareness activities for farmers on the benefits of using compost including its actual usage in the field through visits to demonstration plots, or farmers that have successfully implemented the practice with good results. In terms of future strategies, capacity development for potential private sector suppliers on sustainable innovative technologies of composting could be done to increase the availability of compost, with a facilitated and strengthened link-up at the farmers' end.

### *Impact of Capacity Building and Utilization of New Skills*

Evidence from FGDs showed that the interventions contributed to the development of new knowledge and skills across all categories of beneficiaries, who considered them useful and important. Beneficiaries appreciated the training they received, and provided examples of the new knowledge and skills, such as planting olive trees, practicing more efficient watering cycles for their crops, and developing business plans. Women in particular were very enthusiastic about the training as it was directly related to the skills they needed to be productive and start generating income. The transformation of new skills and knowledge into improved production practices will be a continuing process. Beneficiaries also reported that exchange visit had been important for the women cooperative members to learn from existing successes.

Quality assurance skills and knowledge were mentioned in relation to food production, but – as FPS reflected that behavioural change occurs gradually – AECID felt that the quality of products had not reached their expectations and that products could only meet the quality demands of the local market. Already, however, female producers are diversifying their production activities based on the training, moving to honey, and other niche markets products. The example of the staff of Kufr Thulth bakery, who were able to assert their prices in the local market based on the quality of their production, demonstrates that women-run cooperatives have been enabled through developing business capacity to expand their production and become competitive in the context of the growing needs of its local market.

The SEC monitoring (2018) final report notes that most farmers will need additional training, opportunities and incentives to put skills into practice before they fully adopt good practices, including post-harvest handling and storage. An additional constraint to the adoption of better farming practices is farmer's "limited access to capital and credit may limit their ability to invest in technologies they have been exposed to and practices (e.g., agricultural chemicals, storage facilities, fertilizers) and therefore limit programme's impact in this area."

### *Sustainability of Programme Results and Impacts*

There are several factors that have the capacity to influence the programmes sustainability. These can be summarized by the continued flow of economic returns for cooperatives and farmers, constant diffusion of knowledge and skills to the farmers through continual access to extension services and learning networks through exchange visits, the utilization of the new skills and technology in farming practices, the continued commercial viability of the inputs created by the programme, the continued practice of crop diversification of higher value crops, and the strong sense of ownership by beneficiaries, institutional and political stability. In FGDs and interviews, there were mixed opinions on who should take the responsibility for sustaining

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<sup>22</sup> MoA Representative, Qalqilya

the results of the programme. Some members of LCs felt that the LC should be responsible, but others said that they do not have the required resources like the MOA in general and PARC in particular. PARC feels that the beneficiaries themselves will sustain the activities as they have already invested a lot in the process. The following captures the expected sustainability of main results and activities:

**Increased production:** If knowledge is diffused, the sustainability of increased productivity should continue at the beneficiaries (individual level), and possibly be extended to others. The sustainability at macro level is linked to epidemic and disease management and water accessibility. The sustainability indicators at individual level are farmers' satisfaction with results and expansion of the planted areas.

**New knowledge:** Utilization of new knowledge, inputs and technology will be sustained at the individual level if additional promotion of the benefits of the new inputs is continued. Increased utilization of new knowledge, inputs and technology and the resulting satisfaction of trainees would be strong early signs of sustainability. Farmers practicing peer-to-peer knowledge sharing especially with interested farmers is a further sustainability indicator. The MOA needs to be involved in some way to adopt dissemination plan to promote sustainability.

**Improved access to extension services:** These can be expected to be sustained but are likely to remain limited to the available capacities of both PARC and the MOA. Without continuous education, the access will be limited to the available knowledge. Without increasing numbers of MOA extension agents, the access will also remain limited.

**Increased income:** Income is determined by the quantity of goods sold and market price. If the supply of any produce does not exceed the market demand, the income will be encouraging. The planting of different varieties of crops and the targeting of different market channels including the local market and the export market. are all essential. Traders and processors showing satisfaction with quality as well as wanting to expand the order are all indicators of sustainability.

**Learning networks:** As long as common interests are preserved, communication channels are open, and information is shared, these networks will grow. Early signs of sustainability are there, including participant satisfaction and their intent to develop the needed capabilities and resources.

**Commercial viability of new inputs:** Participation of commercially-motivated actors (compost factory) is evidence of the commercial viability of new inputs. The compost factory management reports that the price of fertilizer is lower, and they have enough production to satisfy the governorate and beyond.

## Section 3: Conclusions and Recommendations

This section provides the most salient conclusions of the evaluation, the recommendations and lessons learnt.

### Conclusions

The programme is aligned with the national agricultural, gender, and Area C strategies as well as AECID Agricultural Strategy in Palestine. It contributes to two of the key areas for FPS – water resource management and agricultural production- and it is fully aligned with the agricultural sector strategies of PARC.

The programme adopted a hybrid design and approach, combining elements of a market development approach (e.g., establishing competitive producer cooperatives, small scale businesses, supporting development of input enterprises, diversifying agricultural production) and elements of agricultural rehabilitation (bringing more land and water into productive use). In a highly complex operating environment, its design reflects and builds on PARC and FPS's rich and accumulated experience in agricultural programming in the country and is an overall appropriate response to some of the key constraints of high production costs and low market returns faced by farmers and food producers. Production constraints were well-addressed but market constraints less so.

The programme design process was inclusive and interactive but the use of the log frame approach, in the absence of a well-developed TOC with assumptions, presented significant challenges to creating an overall vision of change for the programme which could more effectively link results expected (outcomes) in a causal chain, to develop more appropriate results and indicators for M&E and reporting purposes. The baseline study, while producing useful contextual information, did not provide any initial benchmarks against which to measure progress towards achieving outputs and results expected. This inhibited the development of a more effective M&E strategy and programme performance reporting. The excellent monitoring report reviewed from SEC contains a wealth of analysis on results and impact and could be summarised for SC consumption.

Programme strategies and activity design were based on PARC's long experience of working in agricultural development and were able to effectively address some of the key underlying constraints to profitable and sustainable agriculture. Activities were based on an especially comprehensive and participatory needs assessment. There was a delay in start-up of the women's' empowerment activities, meaning some of the results expected have not materialised and been validated within the programme implementation horizon. The programme's gender strategy focuses on women's-only activities, which did produce some significant impact in terms of women's empowerment. The leveraging of funds from beneficiaries and other stakeholder proved an effective mechanism and strategy for promoting ownership and sustainability of programme results.

Target group and partner selection was appropriate for the achievement of programme goals, and the beneficiary selection process and criteria developed proved acceptable to the target groups, including beneficiaries. The selection of PARC as implementing partner was a key

element in successful implementation. All stakeholders commended their experience, practical skills and ways of working in the field.

The programme management structure and implementation process were particularly appropriate for the complexity of the programme, which had many moving parts. The structure and process reflected a high degree of decentralisation of roles, responsibilities and some authorities. The work of the LCs was particularly useful in proving a link between PARC and the direct beneficiaries. The LCs provided additional implementation monitoring and problem-solving functions, although in some areas they tended to work only with male-headed households rather than with female-headed ones. Implementation was generally very smooth partly because of the high levels of beneficiary and other stakeholder investments in the programme.

In the absence of timely M&E performance data, there was a distinct feeling that the role of the SC was reduced to approving work already done, rather than providing useful guidance and input to overall programme performance. The M&E strategy was compromised at the outset by the absence of initial benchmarks.

Outputs were well achieved. The achievement of the results and emerging impact presented in the log frame were assessed against the M&E plan together with stakeholder testimonies. This approach showed that programme outputs had been well achieved and were likely to be fully achieved by programme end. It is not clear to what extent the results were actually achieved on the ground as no end line survey was administered and it was difficult to reflect the results in the reporting. Impacts at the level of women's empowerment were particularly impressive, considering the limited gender mainstreaming attempted. Capacities and capabilities have been built; new skills and knowledge imparted, and attitudes and behaviours have shifted. Evidence of improved agricultural and food processing productivity was largely anecdotal, but it is clear that production increases have occurred and will bear fruit in the future. There is much anecdotal evidence of increases in income, particularly among women. The impact of the increased access to land and water has already shifted cropping patterns towards cash crops. Local and regional networks are being built which is setting the foundations for future market links.

The sustainability of results in terms of individual farmers has great promise if the strong sense of beneficiary ownership is supported by the additional promotion of the benefits of new inputs and technology and the continued availability of extension services. The sustainability of the longer-term results expected (increases in productivity and sustainable levels of income) will require further support in terms of marketing approach.

## Recommendations and lessons Learnt

The evaluation recommendations are grouped by the three categories of analysis: process, context and objectives.

### Process

- FPS, PARC and AECID are advised to revisit the overall design process and consider the usefulness of the TOC approach to facilitate the improvement of a more effective M&E system and reporting process. This is seen by the evaluation team as a joint

responsibility of FPS, PARC and AECID, who are fully committed to a results-based management approach. The responsibilities for M&E within the Programme should be shared and integrated. At the programme design stage, the responsibility for designing the M&E framework must be a collective one between programme management and donors. It should follow the same route of comment and approval as all other components of the programme document.

- Mainstreaming gender further into the design of future programme activities should be strongly considered by PARC, FPS and AECID. The women's empowerment component was a successful approach but more impact on gender relations in the communities would help sustain the gains that women have made. Consideration should be given to how to make activities more gender-sensitive, particularly in the agricultural development and capacity development component. For example, a workshop on masculinities could have been attempted and more attention could have been paid to gender-sensitive agricultural infrastructure and gender-equitable access to land. Improving access to agricultural land consisted of building agricultural roads but did not consider the specific needs of women in this process. Women farmers need appropriate sanitary facilities (compost toilets, for example) to be able to stay on the land and work instead of using their productive time to return home and come back to the land again, which can be a considerable distance. The building of compost toilets along the length of the new agricultural roads will significantly address this issue.
- Involving women in agricultural trainings as they undertake most of the associated work, awareness workshops on masculinities for the male farmers. This may also involve the conducting of a gender audit with FPS local team and PARC to help support further gender mainstreaming in the next iteration of the programme.
- Consideration should be given to the further diffusion of the knowledge imparted to the farmers so that the sustainability of increased productivity namely can continue at the beneficiaries (individual level), and possibility extended to others
- More consideration should be given to the sequencing of programme activities to ensure that outcomes can be monitored within the implementation period. Women's empowerment and environmental promotion activities should commence at the beginning of the interventions so that farmers can be immediately exposed to the importance of good environmental practices. In the same way, the income generating projects for individual women should be moved forward in the implementation cycle so that results of these interventions can be better monitored and evaluated.
- FPS, PARC and AECID should consider a more rigorous market development approach to future interventions. PARC could use its experience in market development approaches to facilitate this process. This approach would imply including other market actors (private/public sector providers of services) in the programme design, continuing to provide cost share incentives to social enterprises that can develop quality inputs (composting factory), but also to provide farmers with economic incentives to use the inputs and technology. These incentives could be phased out over time as the farmers adapt to the new ways of working and recognise the benefits it brings in terms of higher production and thus more income.
- Some improvement is needed in the area of quality control of M&E products including baseline surveys and the development of indicators which are fully aligned with the results expected. FPS and AECID have an important role in this aspect of programme



management and supervision. Due diligence is a very positive force in ensuring overall sustainable success and ability to provide evidence of change and impact.

- PARC should debrief the LCs on how they perceive their strengths and weaknesses of their current roles and authorities. This would include their input into the beneficiary criteria, availability of contingency funds in the budget for unforeseen expenditures, greater flexibility for adapting the scope of activities and how to make their work with beneficiaries more inclusive of female beneficiaries.
- PARC and FPS should review the recommendations highlighted by beneficiaries for the future design of programme activities. These recommendations include the need for specific training for women producers in digital marketing. Training should be practical and hands-on, increase the number of exchange visits and continue to include model cooperatives in these so that women can see practically how the application of their new skills can improve productivity, increasing the visibility of women's product through more food exhibitions.
- Consult with designated beneficiaries on the costs of land clearing to better fine tune implementation budgets. These individuals have an in-depth knowledge of the issues.
- Strengthening market access and quality is key, especially for women with individual income generating-projects, who only have access to the overcrowded local market. The issue of marketing of agricultural products should be addressed from the beginning of the intervention.

### Context

- Additional concepts of resilience could be considered in formulating and operationalising programme goals and results to address the overarching constraint of beneficiary and market vulnerabilities. These could include indicators of income and food expenditure, access to basic services (schools, hospitals, electricity etc.), agricultural assets, agricultural practices and levels of technology in use, availability of safety nets (agricultural insurance, other donor assistance), enabling institutional environment (rules and regulations), support services, sensitivity to shocks and adaptive capacity.
- In line with the most recent Palestinian National Agricultural Sector Strategy, consider the use of a market development strategy for future programmes of this type to address some of the vulnerability issues associated with markets and lack of beneficiary access to high quality technical training and inputs.

### Programme Objectives and Results

- PARC and FPS are recommended to explore how improvements can be made in reporting on programme results. This would include improving upward reporting by PARC to FPS and AECID and the MOA to ensure that there is timely performance data for review at the SC. The continued reports of SEC could be summarised, for example, to show how the programme implementation is supporting the achievement of its objectives.
- This recommendation is linked to the need to improve the M&E framework for the programme as part of the programme design process. Improving the area of programme performance reporting will enable the SC to fulfil its function of review and guidance more effectively as the evolving lessons learned from the monitoring of outcomes and outputs will form part of the reporting process. Designing an appropriate and results-

driven M&E framework requires a significant investment of resources and capacity development. AECID could consider hiring backstopping services and a longitudinal evaluator<sup>23</sup> to improve this, while PARC's own efforts to develop a better M&E system and process continue.

- Additional work is needed on the conceptualizing and development of an adequate M&E framework, system and process for the complexity of the intervention. The M&E framework developed illustrates the disadvantages of using a log frame approach for complex programmes without the initial step of developing a TOC. Indicators are too activity-focused, like milestones and completion, rather than indicators of intermediate precursors or precursor results that come from individual tasks or steps in the activities.

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<sup>23</sup> **Longitudinal evaluations** are a more collaborative model where evaluators work with project implementers from the outset, ensuring that projects are evaluable and then supporting and complementing project monitoring as well as facilitating periodic evaluative reviews, and sometimes also ex post impact evaluation for strategic learning. over the lifespan of the project. It is often observational in nature or randomized experiments with/out performing cross-section (comparative) at intervals through time. This has been found to be a particularly appropriate model for interventions which include market elements because it helps in monitoring changes in attitudes and behaviours among targeted and non-targeted actors; developmental trends and market dynamics.

## **Annexes**

- Annex A      Evaluation matrix
- Annex B      Possible Theory of Change
- Annex C      Terms of Reference
- Annex D      Data Gathering Tools

## Annex A Evaluation Matrix

| Evaluation area/ criteria | Evaluation question/ issue   | Sample indicators  | Methods/ means of verification | Source of verification  |
|---------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Relevance</b>          | Does the intervention fit the needs and priorities of the beneficiary population?  | Evidence of the Programme's relevance to people's needs and priorities in targeted communities   | Semi-structured interviews     | Representatives of local grassroots organizations and coalitions (e.g., women or farmers groups)  |
|                           | How does the target group prioritize its needs? Is there a correspondence of the priorities established by it with the objectives of the Programme?                            |  | FGD                            | Farmers<br>Rural families<br>Rural women<br>Unemployed workers<br>Local committees  |
|                           | Have your priorities changed since the beginning of the Programme?   |  | Desk review                    | Reports on Qalqilya and Tulkarem areas specific development and humanitarian needs, if available  |
|                           | Are the Programme lines consistent with the guidelines established in the sectoral strategy documents that concern them and with the corresponding country strategy documents? | Evidence of the relevance of the Programme's objectives and goals to PA development priorities and strategies in the agricultural sector including environmental requirements and practices for organic farming. | Desk review                    | Sectoral Strategy for Agricultural Development<br>2017-2022 State of Palestine National Policy Agenda<br>Social Development Sector Strategy (2017-2022) and other sector strategies |
|                           | Are the principles of action of the NGO consistent with the public policies that affect the country?   |  | Semi-structured interviews     | Representative of Ministry of Agriculture in the local communities  |
|                           | Has there been consultation and  |  |                                |   |

| Evaluation area/ criteria | Evaluation question/ issue   | Sample indicators   | Methods/ means of verification | Source of verification  |
|---------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|---|
|                           | agreement with the competent public authorities as holders of obligations throughout the identification, formulation, and execution of the Programme?  | Evidence of the Programme's programme delivery strategies being authentically participatory and inclusive of key local actors and stakeholders.   | FGD                            | Local committees<br>Farmers<br>Rural families<br>Rural women<br>Unemployed workers  |
|                           |  |   | Semi-structured interviews     | FPS representative of the Programme<br>PARC representative of the Programme   |
|                           | Do the objectives of the strategy of this intervention promote synergies with other policies and programs in execution?<br><br>Are they compatible with the objectives and results of the intervention evaluated in the context in which they are carried out? | Evidence of the Programme's programme delivery strategies being in line with other major programs in the agricultural sector in the targeted areas (e.g., the intervention provides solutions to problems/ issues not being tackled by other programs (responding to gaps), the intervention coordinated with other key implementing actors in the targeted areas during planning and implementation, etc.) | Desk review                    | Review of key programs and projects in the agricultural sector and other relevant sectors in the targeted areas<br><br>Review of the Programme key documents and plans              |
|                           |  |   | Semi-structured interviews     | FPS representative of the Programme<br>PARC representative of the Programme<br><br>Representatives of local grassroots organizations and coalitions (e.g., women or farmers groups) |

| Evaluation area/ criteria | Evaluation question/ issue   | Sample indicators  | Methods/ means of verification | Source of verification  |
|---------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|---|
|                           |  | Evidence of the Programme's programme delivery strategies being compatible with the context of the targeted areas (e.g., FPS conducted a baseline survey that identified contextual factors and criteria that needed specific response such as gender relations, environmental practices, Israeli occupation constraints, etc., the intervention set achievable results and outcomes given the restrictions faced in the targeted areas) |                                | Representative of Ministry of Agriculture in the local communities          |
| <b>Effectiveness</b>      | Have the planned activities been carried out and have they been sufficient and necessary for the achievement of the results? | Comparison of actual outputs against planned outputs<br>Ability of outputs to generate the results expected.   | Desk review                    | Key documents of the Programme (e.g., progress reports, M&E reports, etc.)  |
|                           | Have the expected results been achieved? What factors-internal or external-have influenced the scope of results?             | To what extent have the planned objectives and results been achieved   | Semi-structured interviews     | FPS representative of the Programme<br>PARC representative of the Programme |

| Evaluation area/ criteria | Evaluation question/ issue  | Sample indicators  | Methods/ means of verification | Source of verification  |
|---------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|---|
|                           | <p>Have the specific objectives been met?</p> <p>How many are and how have you selected the people who have participated in the proceedings of the Programme?</p> <p>What has been your participation in the implementation of the Programme?</p> <p>Are there groups of people harmed by the Programme? Has anything been done to minimize the negative effects?</p> <p>What gender impact has the Programme had? Have there been specific activities geared towards the promotion of gender equality?</p> | <p>Evidence of changes in the lives of beneficiaries (increase in income, increased access to land and resources, improved capacities, effects of good environmental practices, etc.)</p> <p>Communities' perception towards these changes (how they are valued, what negative effects were experienced, etc.)</p> <p>Evidence of any backlash experienced by beneficiaries and how it was managed</p> <p>Evidence of changes in the lives of rural women beneficiaries (increased integration in the production process, increase in control of income, increased role in decision making within the household and community, increased freedom of movement, etc.)</p> <p>Evidence of women's enhanced capacities in communication, decision making, business</p> | FGD                            | <p>Farmers</p> <p>Rural families</p> <p>Rural women</p> <p>Unemployed workers</p> <p>Local committees</p> |

| Evaluation area/ criteria | Evaluation question/ issue | Sample indicators  | Methods/ means of verification | Source of verification |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------------|
|                           |                            | <p>development and other skills.</p> <p>Evidence of women’s increased agency and improvement in gender equality in relation to the achievement of human rights of women as per local laws and international covenants.</p> |                                |                        |

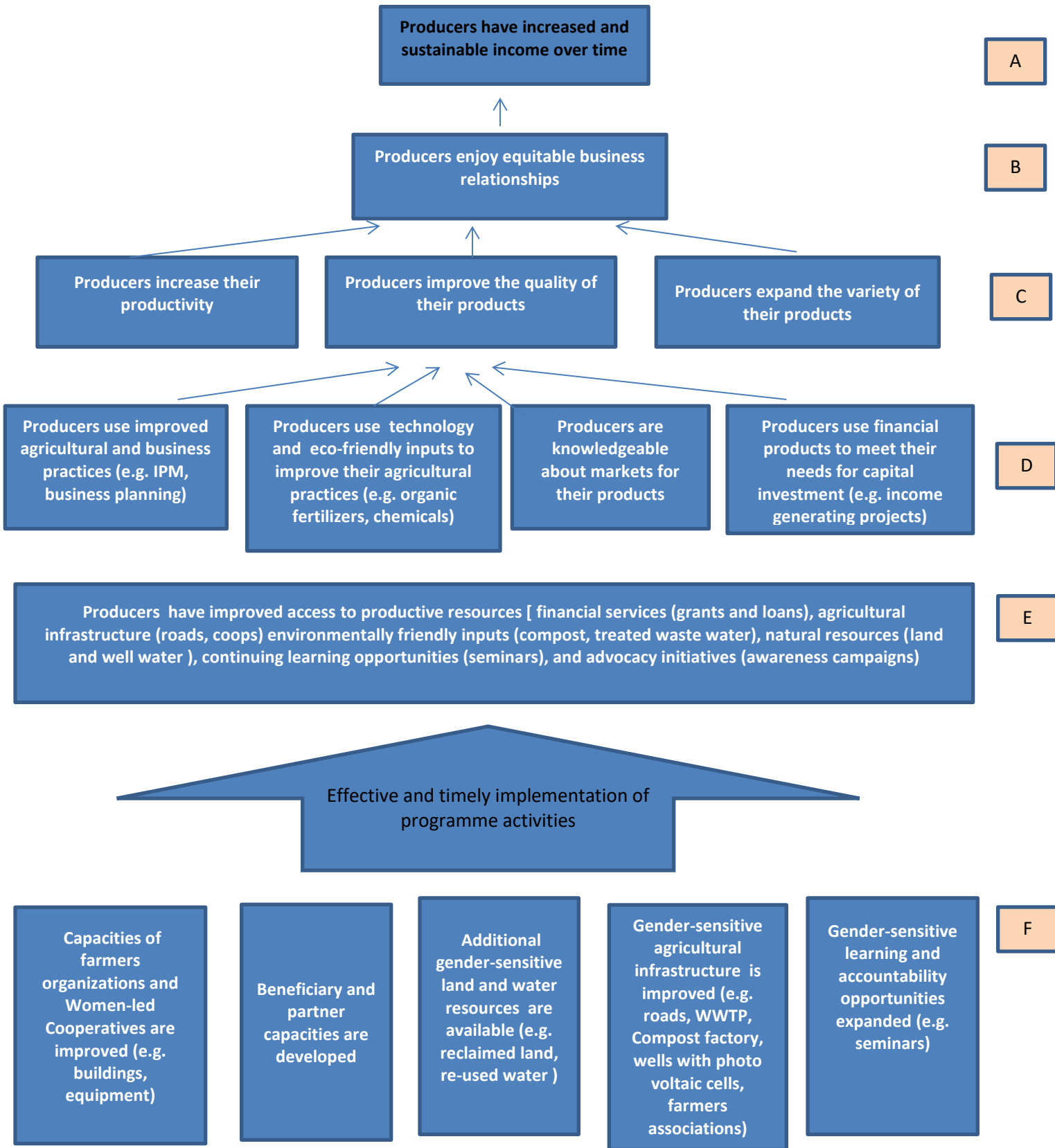


| Evaluation area/ criteria | Evaluation question/ issue   | Sample indicators  | Methods/ means of verification   | Source of verification  |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Efficiency</b>         | Have the funds been available in the foreseen times? Have there been variations regarding the formulation?                                   | Quality of management systems and process for timely delivery of programme activities and outputs          | Semi-structured interviews   | FPS representative of the Programme<br>PARC representative of the Programme |
|                           | Was the profile of the managers adequate to the intervention and its objectives? What monitoring mechanisms of the Programme have been used? |  | Desk review  | Key documents of the Programme (e.g., M&E framework, M&E reports, etc.)     |
|                           | Are the material resources directly related to the achievement of results?   | In-kind or monetary donations provided by the community, the MOA or others to support the intervention     | Desk review  | Key documents of the Programme (e.g., M&E framework, M&E reports, etc.)     |
|                           | What are the indirect investments for these achievements?  | Actual time of completion of activities against planned time line  | Semi-structured interviews   | FPS representative of the Programme<br>PARC representative of the Programme |
|                           | Have the times foreseen in the formulation been fulfilled? What external and/or internal factors have influenced the eventual delays?        | What factors have influenced the timely completion of programme activities                                 |  |   |
|                           | <b>Feasibility</b>   | If the right holders are the key actor in economic solvency, have they participated by contributing funds? | In-kind or monetary donations provided by the community, the MOA or others to support the intervention | FGD   |

| Evaluation area/ criteria | Evaluation question/ issue  | Sample indicators  | Methods/ means of verification    | Source of verification   |
|---------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|
|                           | <p>If part of the cost of the results had to be covered institutionally at the end of the Programme, have the public institutions expressed their commitment to assume them? Do they have the economic and financial capacity to do so?</p> <p>Have people and institutions been aware of their responsibilities? Have they developed or possess the necessary capabilities to ensure the flow of benefits?</p> | <p>Evidence of the Programme empowering beneficiaries to overcome social, economic and political barriers to enable continued participation in programme activities.</p> <p>Extent to which public institutions (Min of Ag, local councils, NGOs) have committed to continued funding of activities.</p> <p>Evidence of beneficiaries' and institutions' awareness of roles, and responsibilities and possession of capacities to sustain long terms benefits.</p> | <p>Semi-structured interviews</p> | <p>Local committees</p> <p>FPS representative of the Programme</p> <p>PARC representative of the Programme</p> |
| <b>Impact</b>             | <p>What expected long-term effects of the Programme have been achieved or is it likely to be achieved?</p> <p>How has the local counterpart strengthened and is expected to be strengthened in the long term?</p> <p>Has any change of attitude in the</p>  | <p>Evidence of long-term impacts on the lives of beneficiaries (more sustainable income, improved access to land and resources, etc.)</p> <p>Beneficiaries' perceptions towards these impacts (how they are valued and perceived)</p>  | <p>FGD</p>                        | <p>Farmers</p> <p>Rural families</p> <p>Rural women</p> <p>Unemployed workers</p> <p>Local committees</p>      |

| Evaluation area/ criteria | Evaluation question/ issue   | Sample indicators  | Methods/ means of verification | Source of verification |
|---------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|------------------------|
|                           | <p>beneficiary population been achieved during the evaluated execution period?</p> <p>Is the target group aware of the effects achieved or potentially achievable?</p> | <p>Beneficiaries' awareness of all impacts achieved by the Programme or where planned to be achieved</p> <p>To what extent do beneficiaries feel that they have more influence in determining fairer prices for water, agricultural inputs, and product prices through advocacy?</p> |                                |                        |

## Annex B Possible Theory of Change



Assumptions in the boxes are explained below:

A

If increases in farmers and producers' agricultural productivity are sustainable over time, **income of farmers will improve**

B

If producers have the knowledge and skills to optimize their productivity and respond to the needs of the market, they will be more resilient to shocks and stresses and be able to **create equitable business relationship**

C

If producers **use productive resources** (extension services, inputs, technologies, financial products, assets) and **get efficient access to market information** to identify the most appropriate markets for their products (collection hubs, dairy production/breeding/feeding enterprises and/or cooperatives, local consumers) then they will be able to **market their products more successfully**.

D

If training programmes are effective in generating knowledge and skills uptake, producers will be able to **utilize the new knowledge and skills in their production activities**

E

If activities are implemented, producers **will be able to get expanded access to productive resources**

F

If capacities of cooperatives and farmers associations are improved, they can make better use of available training resources

If local businessmen are properly incentivized, they will perform well and provide quality inputs

If unused land is reclaimed, more land will be available for agricultural production

If use of waste water is acceptable to producers, more water will be available for irrigation

If producers and other key stakeholders address issues emerging resulting from programme strategies, then producers are in a better position to advocate for their interests with influential actors.

## **Annex C Terms of Reference**

## Annex D Data Gathering Tools

### FGD guidelines

#### Introduction

The convention "Sustainable and equitable rural development in the West Bank, including the putting into use and responsible management of land and water resources for small and medium farmers" was implemented by Fundación Promoción Social (FPS) and the Palestinian Agricultural Development Association (PARC), with funding from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID).

The intervention contemplated in this "Programme" took place in the rural areas of the Qalqilya and Tulkarem Governorates (West Bank). It aimed to promote inclusive and sustainable agricultural initiatives that reduce the vulnerability of rural families in the northwest zone of the West Bank, adjacent to the Green Line.

Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) was contracted by FPS to implement a final evaluation of the convention. As part of this evaluation, we are conducting focus groups with beneficiaries of the convention in Tulkarem and Qalquilia. Your participation will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of the convention in terms of its relevance, design and implementation processes and mechanisms, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Your objective and honest answers will provide a vital insight that will assist FPS as well as other similar organizations to improve their programming and interventions in the future.

**Duration:** Two Hours

#### Overall introduction and management of the FGD (10 minutes)

- Welcoming participants and introducing the team (moderator, transcriber)
- Explaining the method of selecting participants
- Discussing the process of the FGD
- Outlining general ground rules and discussion guidelines, including the importance of everyone contributing, only one participant speaking at a time, being prepared for the moderator to interrupt and facilitate discussion to insure that all topics are covered.
- Addressing and ensuring confidentiality and getting consent about audiotaping the discussion
- Informing the group that information and opinions discussed will be analyzed anonymously and at the general level, and when using citations from their words, they will be presented in an anonymous manner.
- Informing the group that information and data results of the FGDs will be kept in a safe place and will not be shared with anyone outside the project's team.

#### Relevance

- How would you describe the objectives of the project?
- How relevant was the project to your needs and priorities?

- How were you consulted on your needs and priorities? Did you help set the criteria for beneficiary selection?
- How satisfied were you with the beneficiary selection process overall in terms of meeting the selection criteria?

### **Design and Implementation**

- How were you involved in the design of the project and its activities?
- How satisfied were you with your level of involvement in this?
- How were you involved in the implementation of the project activities?
- How satisfied were you with your level of involvement in this?
- How would you describe your relationships with PARC field staff? The local committee? The Ministry of agriculture?
- Were there any specific project activities which addressed women's rights? Gender equality issues? How would you assess their value?

### **Effectiveness**

- How do you assess the value of the capacity building activities? How were you involved in the identification of training topics? Were training times convenient for you? Do you think men and women benefitted equally from the trainings provided?
- To what extent did the training activities provide you with new knowledge? New skills?  
Examples
- How do you assess your own level of participation during implementation?
- How do you assess the effectiveness of the local committee established? How clear was their role? How transparent and participatory was the selection process of committee members?
- To what extent were the project objectives achieved?

### **Impact**

- In what ways did the project intervention change your lives? [Probe: increases in income, access to land and water, increased gender equality in community, in the household, increased freedom of movement for women, increased role in decision making for women in community, and household, increased agency, increased self-confidence]
- Was there any backlash created by these changes? How was it dealt with in the community? In the household?

### **Sustainability**

- Who do you think should be responsible for sustaining the project activities in the longer term? To what extent do you think they have the commitment and the financial resources to do this?

### **Lessons learned and recommendations for improvements in project activities**



- What are the most important achievements of the project? What are the challenges and opportunities to sustaining these achievements in the longer term?
- What are the most important things you have learnt from the project in terms of activity design, coordination and implementation?
- What are your overall suggestions for improving the timing and/or the scope of the project activities that could increase the positive impact of the project?

**Interview guidelines (Representative of Spanish Cooperation)**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Interviewee Name      |  |
| Interviewee Position  |  |
| Date of interview     |  |
| Duration of interview |  |
| Place of interview    |  |
| Interviewer name      |  |

- To what extent was the project in line with the priorities of Spanish Cooperation at the time of its design?
- How involved have you been in the planning and implementation of this project?
- What do you think the most important achievements of the project are?
- How important do you think is the achievement of gender equality and good environmental practices to achieving the objectives of the agricultural sector in Palestine?
- What is your assessment of the level of participation and coordination of the Min of Ag during project design and implementation?
- What do you think is the best approach to sustaining the project activities in the longer term?
- What insights and lessons learned have you gained from your involvement in the project that are useful for your own programming?
- What recommendations would you have in terms of strategies and activities to increase the impact of future projects of this type?

**Interview guidelines (representatives of PARC and FPS)**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Interviewee Name      |  |
| Interviewee Position  |  |
| Date of interview     |  |
| Duration of interview |  |
| Place of interview    |  |
| Interviewer name      |  |

**Relevance**

- What problems were you trying to address through the project?
- Did these problems match with beneficiary priorities in terms of need?

- To what extent did the project strategies fill a gap in providing solutions to the problems the beneficiaries are facing?
- What was your role in project design?
- How did you consult with the Min of Ag on the design of the project?
- How well do the project objectives align with the PA sector plan?

### **Project design, activities and strategies**

- How did the programming integrate gender equality and good environmental practices?
- Describe the process for designing the project, developing implementation approaches and the monitoring of progress.
- 
- How much time do you spend on M&E? How were you involved in developing project indicators? How did you monitor progress towards the project objectives?
- How often did the project team meet to assess on- going performance of the project? Who was involved?
- How did you get beneficiary feedback on the activities?
- How did you use the findings of the baseline study?

### **Effectiveness**

- How do you assess the value of the project activities and strategies in:
  - ✓ Successfully addressing the gaps in knowledge and practical skills of beneficiaries and local partner related to land management, marketing and entrepreneurial practices?
  - ✓ Improving the institutional capacities of farmers and cooperatives?
  - ✓ Improving fair and equitable process in the value chain of agricultural products? Provide examples
  - ✓ Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment
  - ✓ Promoting good environmental practices?
  - ✓ Meeting project objectives and results? Have expected results been achieved?
- How useful do you find monitoring reports in understanding what progress is being made against the project indicators? In helping you understand what is happening, why and what needs to happen next?
- How useful are the indicators in the log frame/collective M&E plan in terms of your monitoring of project performance and progress you are making towards your objectives?
- How has the project improved your own capacities and practices?
- What are the major factors that have influenced the achievement of the expected results?
- What do you think are the major strengths and weaknesses of the project in terms of implementing approaches? Generating useful feedback to inform project management decision-making? In meeting its objectives?

### **Efficiency**

- What factors influenced the timely implementation of project activities?
- Assess the levels of participation and coordination between partners in the planning and management of the intervention.
- To what extent were financial resources available in a timely way?
- To what extent were project resources used to directly achieve project results? What kind of in-kind support (financial, material, time) did the project receive? (from the community, the local council, the Min of Ag, others)

### **Impact and Sustainability**

- To what extent do beneficiaries feel that they have more influence in determining fairer prices for water, agricultural inputs, and product prices through their present and future advocacy efforts?
- How has the project created the basis for a stronger beneficiary voice to advocate for needs and priorities? Gender equality in the agricultural sector? Good environmental practices in the agricultural sector? sustainable improvements in livelihoods and income?
- What evidence is there that the project promoted gender equality at the level of the community? Household? Individuals?
- How has the project encouraged beneficiaries to adopt more collective ways of working to reduce their production and marketing costs?
- To what extent will the project be sustained and meet its longer term objectives? Are you committing funds to the continuation of project activities?

### **Lessons learned and recommendations for improvements in project activities**

- What are the most important achievements of the project? What are the challenges and opportunities to sustaining these achievements in the longer term?
- What are the most important things you have learnt from the project in terms of activity design, coordination and implementation, monitoring and evaluation?
- What are your overall suggestions for improving the timing and/or the scope of the project activities and strategies that could increase the positive impact of the project?
- What lessons have you learnt from the project that could inform future gender equality and good environmental practices related programming as well as integrating gender needs and concerns in other interventions?

### **Interview guidelines (Representatives of the MoA)**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Interviewee Name      |  |
| Interviewee Position  |  |
| Date of interview     |  |
| Duration of interview |  |
| Place of interview    |  |
| Interviewer name      |  |

- How were you involved in the design and implementation of the project?
- To what extent was the project in line with national priorities at the time of its design?
- How was coordination with other agricultural actors done to promote synergies in programming?
- To what extent does this project fill a gap in finding solutions to the problems farmers and rural households face?
- What are the most significant achievements of the project?
- How important is the achievement of gender equality to achieving the objectives of the agricultural sector? At the community level? At the household level?
- How important is the promotion of good environmental practices to achieving the objectives of the agricultural sector?
- What is your assessment of the value of the capacity building activities provided?
- What is your assessment of the level of participation and coordination of the Min of Ag during project design and implementation?
- Who do you think should be responsible for sustaining the project activities in the longer term? To what extent do you think they have the commitment and the financial resources to do this?
- What insights and lessons learned have you gained from your involvement in the project that are useful for your own programming?
- What recommendations would you have in terms of strategies and activities to increase the impact of future projects of this type?

**Interview guidelines (PARC field coordinators)**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Interviewee Name      |  |
| Interviewee Position  |  |
| Date of interview     |  |
| Duration of interview |  |
| Place of interview    |  |
| Interviewer name      |  |

**Relevance**

- How relevant was the project design for the situation the beneficiaries found themselves in? to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries targeted?
- To what extent did the project strategies fill a gap in providing solutions to the problems the beneficiaries are facing?

**Project design, activities and strategies**

- How were beneficiaries selected?
- How were the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries assessed?

- How satisfied were you with the selection process overall in terms of meeting the selection criteria?
- How inclusive was the selection process of women?
- How was gender equality considered when implementing project activities?
- How were good environmental practices considered during the implementation of project activities?
- Who was involved in capacity building activities?
- How much time do you spend on M&E? How were you involved in developing project indicators? How did you monitor progress towards the project objectives?
- How often did the project team meet to assess on-going performance of the project? Who was involved?
- How did you get beneficiary feedback on the activities?
- How did you use the findings of the baseline study?

### **Effectiveness**

- How do you assess the value of the project activities and strategies in:
  - ✓ Successfully addressing the gaps in knowledge and practical skills of beneficiaries and local partner related to land management, marketing and entrepreneurial practices?
  - ✓ Improving the institutional capacities of farmers and cooperatives? Provide examples
  - ✓ Improving fair and equitable process in the value chain of agricultural products? Provide examples
  - ✓ Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in terms of:
    - ✓ Improved socio-economic status
    - ✓ Strengthening women's social and economic networks
    - ✓ Improving the support of men and boys in recognizing and supporting the importance of women's economic activities and women's participation in the public life of their communities
    - ✓ Improving understandings of both men and women of the implications of current gender roles in the household and the need for change;
    - ✓ Increasing women and female youth agency (improved self-esteem and aspirations, awareness of rights, business and leadership skills);
    - ✓ Improving women's institutional capacity
    - ✓ Integrating women into the production process? Give examples
  - ✓ Promoting good environmental practices? Give examples?
  - ✓ Meeting project objectives and results? Have expected results been achieved?
- How useful do you find project monitoring in understanding what is happening, why, and what needs to happen next? To what extent do you use the project indicators to assess progress?
- How could the capacities developed of beneficiaries and yourselves be best sustained?
- How has the project improved your own capacities and practices?

- What are the major factors that have influenced the achievement of project activities?
- What do you think are the major strengths and weaknesses of the project in terms of implementing approaches?

### **Efficiency**

- Have activities been implemented according to the work plan and on time? What factors influenced this?
- Assess the levels of participation and coordination of partners (beneficiaries, local committees, ministry of agriculture) in the planning and management of the intervention.
- To what extent were financial resources available in a timely way?
- What kind of in-kind support (financial, material, time) did the project receive? (from the community, the local council, the Min of Ag)

### **Impact and Sustainability**

- To what extent are beneficiaries aware of the results/achievements of the project?
- To what extent do beneficiaries feel that they have more influence in determining fairer prices for water, agricultural inputs, and product prices as a result of their current and future advocacy efforts?
- How has the project created the basis for a stronger beneficiary voice to advocate for needs and priorities? Gender equality in the agricultural sector? sustainable improvements in livelihoods and income?
- What evidence is there that the project promoted gender equality at the level of the community? Household? Individuals?
- How has the project encouraged beneficiaries to adopt more collective ways of working to reduce their production and marketing costs?
- To what extent do the beneficiaries, local committees and Ministry of Agriculture have the capacities, resources and commitment to sustain the project and enable it to meet its longer term objectives?

### **Lessons learned and recommendations for improvements in project activities**

- What are the most important achievements of the project? What are the challenges and opportunities to sustaining these achievements in the longer term?
- What are the most important things you have learnt from the project in terms of activity design, coordination and implementation, monitoring and evaluation?
- What are your overall suggestions for improving the timing and/or the scope of the project activities and strategies that could increase the positive impact of the project?
- What lessons have you learnt from the project that could inform future gender equality and environmental sustainability related programming as well as integrating gender needs and concerns in other interventions?