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Promotion of Sustainable Enterprises for Women and Youth in the Agricultural Sector Project – Internal Final Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)

Evaluation date: 17 July 2024

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: RO- Arab States

Technical Office: DWT- Beirut

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DC Symbol: PSE/22/03/JPN

Donor(s) & budget: Government of Japan, USD 740,740

Key Words: Inclusive Market Systems, Capacity Building, Gender Equality, Sustainable Agriculture, Value Chain Development

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

<p>Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure</p>	<p>The project titled “Promotion of Sustainable Enterprises for Women and Youth in the Agricultural Sector” aimed to address systemic market failures in the OPT by enhancing the capacities of marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, through the ILO’s Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS). The project focused on the dairy and honey value chains, targeting eight cooperatives in the Jordan Valley and Jericho with a membership of 269 farmers. The interventions were executed by five Palestinian NGOs (LRC, UAWC, PFU, PARC, and ACAD), leveraging their expertise in agriculture and rural development. The project had two primary outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusive value-chain analysis and development. 2. Business linkages and partnerships to enhance market access and sustainability.
<p>Present situation of the project</p>	<p>The project was implemented within a short timeframe of 18 months and concluded in June 2024. Despite achieving several immediate benefits and outputs, broader market impacts and systemic changes were limited due to the short duration, fragmented interventions, and challenging operating environment. The project effectively included marginalized groups, enhanced productivity, and supported the formation of new cooperatives, but it struggled to achieve long-term systemic changes.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>The evaluation aimed to assess the project’s performance based on OECD criteria, including relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. It covered the entire project duration and targeted the Jordan Valley and Jericho, with primary beneficiaries being small-scale farmers, women, and youth. Key stakeholders included the ILO, Government of Japan, local NGOs, and cooperative members.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>The evaluation utilized a mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative data collection. Methods included documentation review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and field visits. Data triangulation ensured the credibility and validity of the findings, while a detailed evaluation matrix guided the systematic assessment of the project’s performance.</p>

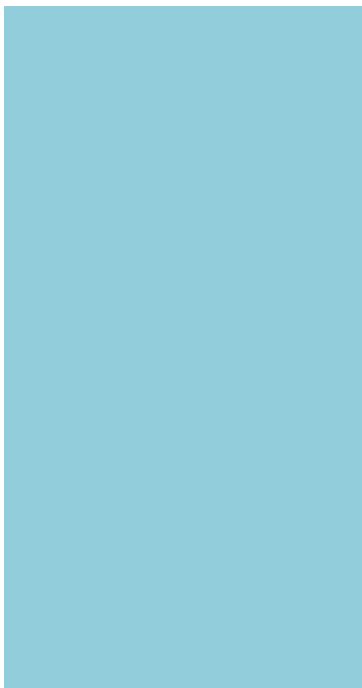
MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The project was highly relevant to the socio-economic context of the OPT, addressing critical market system barriers and building local capacities through the AIMS approach. It effectively included marginalized groups like women and youth, focusing on equitable market access. However, the project's short duration and other factors limited its ability to fully address the needs of these groups and the capacities of their cooperatives.

The project aligned well with national and international development strategies, including the National Agriculture Sector Strategy and the SDGs. It adhered to International Labour Standards and continued the certification process for SYB, GYB, and IYB trainers. However, practical limitations in cooperative capacity building affected overall coherence.

The project's effectiveness was mixed. It successfully improved skills and productivity through direct input delivery and targeted training, but skewed more towards immediate needs rather than balancing short-term relief with long-term development as per the AIMS approach. The absence of specific outcome indicators and ambiguous output indicators made it difficult to fully measure progress. Despite this, significant outputs were achieved, including cooperative and enterprise development, productivity enhancement, and new cooperative formation. Key achievements were:

- Cooperative and enterprise development through wide-ranging training and advocacy.
- Formation of two new cooperatives in the honey and dairy subsectors.
- Localization and cascading of the SIYB toolkit to 108 women and men.
- Addressing challenges in the honey value chain with high-quality queen bee production and advanced insulated hives.
- Enhancing dairy production efficiency with alternative fodder production and community-based para-vet models.
- Conducting a study on women's livelihoods and promoting gender-sensitive interventions.



Resource utilization was generally efficient, with funds appropriately allocated to key activities. However, ambitious timelines, external constraints, and pre-defined support targets impacted overall efficiency, limiting flexibility in exploring alternative intervention designs.

Impact: The project improved productivity and market access for small-scale farmers, particularly women, through sustainable practices and cooperative management enhancement. While there were positive socio-economic impacts, broader market system changes were limited, and some interventions required more time to demonstrate effectiveness and scalability.

The project laid a foundation for sustainability through capacity building and local NGO engagement. However, continued support and comprehensive performance metrics are crucial to ensure lasting impacts. The reliance on local NGOs and capacity building were positive steps, but the lack of comprehensive performance metrics and the need for a longer-term commitment pose risks to achieving lasting impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

Recommendations for Immediate Action

1. **Follow-Up and Strengthen Facilities Established by the Project to Bolster their Sustainability:** Engage with the targeted cooperatives to finalize agreements on the utilization and sustainability of project-established facilities and tools. Provide mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance to ensure these facilities operate on a commercially viable basis.
2. **Support GYB and SIYB Trainees in Accessing Finance:** Ensure GYB and SIYB trainees are ready to seek financing for their business ideas and development needs, facilitating their access to financial resources.

Recommendations for Follow-Up and Similar Future Projects:

1. **Enhance Private Sector Engagement:** Increase collaboration with private sector actors to drive broader market changes



	<p>and ensure scalability. This engagement is crucial for creating sustainable market linkages and driving innovation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Give a more balanced focus on Demand-Side Interventions: Balance supply-side initiatives with demand-side strategies, including market linkages and policy advocacy, to enhance market access and develop more comprehensive value chains. 3. Foster Synergies with Existing Projects: Building on already good practices, leverage synergies with ongoing and future projects to maximize resource utilization and impact. Coordination with other ILO and external projects can create complementary actions and enhance overall outcomes. 4. Promote Inclusive Practices: Continue emphasizing gender equality, disability inclusion, and environmental sustainability in all project activities. Ensuring inclusivity will maximize benefits for marginalized groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities. 5. Address Policy and Regulatory Barriers: Advocate for policy and regulatory changes to facilitate market access and improve the operating environment for cooperatives and SMEs. Addressing systemic barriers is essential for creating an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises. 6. Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: Develop robust M&E frameworks with clear and measurable indicators at all project result levels. Future programs should focus on systemic changes, guided by best practices, and include detailed plans to track progress, demonstrate impact, and facilitate data-driven decision-making.
<p>Main lessons learned and good practices</p>	<p>Comprehensive capacity building must be integrated with financial support mechanisms.</p> <p>Longer project durations are necessary to achieve systemic and sustainable impacts.</p> <p>A balanced approach including both supply-side and demand-side interventions is crucial for comprehensive market system changes.</p>



Flexibility and adaptability in project implementation enhance responsiveness to changing contexts.

A holistic approach to gender and inclusivity ensures interventions effectively address the needs of all marginalized groups.