

## FINAL INTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Project Title	<i>“Specialised comprehensive protection response for vulnerable individuals in Beirut Mount Lebanon, Nabatieh and South Governorates”</i>
Award No.	<b>ECHO/SYR/BUD/2022/91020</b>
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## **ABSTRACT**

The Evaluation exercise concerned the project entitled “*Specialised comprehensive protection response for vulnerable individuals in Beirut Mount Lebanon, Nabatieh and South Governorates*”, funded by the DG ECHO. The goal of the project was to enhance Protection prevention and response mechanisms for the most vulnerable women, girls, men and boys amongst the host and refugee communities.

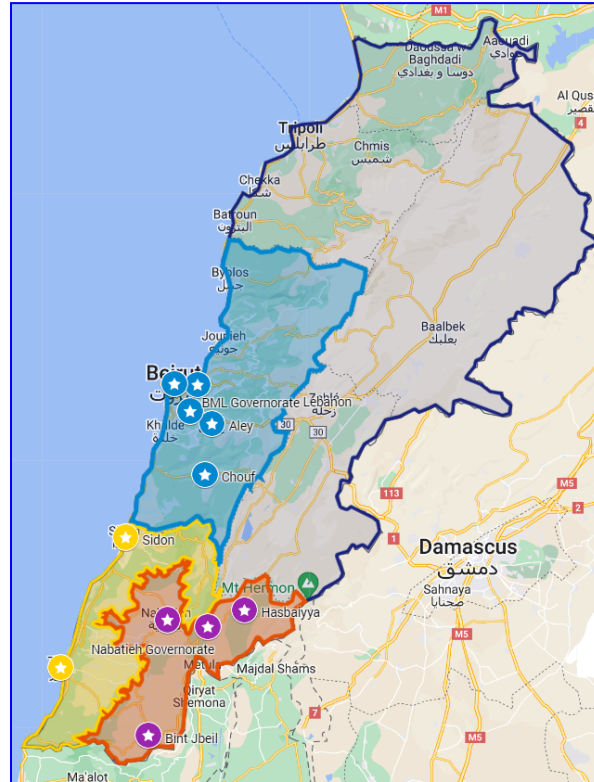
The Evaluation exercise covered all Governorates where the intervention took place. It aimed at providing a qualitative analysis on the project, looking at its design, implementation and impact on the affected population through the achievement of set objectives. To this end, the following OECD-DAC evaluation criteria were used: Relevance and Appropriateness; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact. The Evaluation design focused on primary qualitative data collection, through interviews with key stakeholders and project staff, as well as focus group discussions with project beneficiaries. A desk review was also conducted to triangulate data with the project’s monitoring documents, so as to support the Evaluation’s findings.

Based on the study carried out, INTERSOS’ activities were found to be relevant and appropriate to the local needs, considering the specificities of the context and targeting both Lebanese and Syrian communities. The intervention achieved or overachieved most of the established targets, meeting expectations of those receiving the services. Throughout the Evaluation exercise, it emerged how the presence of both preventive and response activities was crucial to reach out to the most vulnerable ones. While from the targeted population there was an overall appreciation of the services received, INTERSOS staff identified areas for improvement in the ways of working, such as information sharing, collaboration among the different units - based on a better clarity of roles and responsibilities, and capacity to analyse the data and information collected. It is worth emphasising that many among the key informants praised the progress being made following up on the lessons learned, best practices and recommendations that had emerged from the previous intervention funded by the DG ECHO last year.

## Acronyms

BML	Beirut Mount Lebanon
CBG	Community-Based Group
CBI	Community-Based Initiative
CfP	Cash for Protection
CfR	Cash for Rent
CFRM	Complaint and Feedback Response Mechanism
CM	Case Management
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DG ECHO	Directorate General – European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ECA	Emergency Cash Assistance
ESG	Emotional Support Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HQ	Head Quarters
HR	Human Resources
IEC	Information, Education and Community
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning
MSNA	Multi Sectoral Needs Assessment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OV	Outreach Volunteer
PSS	Psychosocial Support
PwSN	Persons with Specific Needs
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION



*Map of the project's locations*

Now entering its twelfth year, Lebanon remains at the forefront of one of the worst humanitarian crises as it continues to host the highest number of displaced per capita and per square kilometre in the world, while further facing the devastating impact of the economic, financial, social and health crises of the last two years.

Indeed, against a backdrop of weakened governance and political paralysis, Lebanon is facing an unprecedented economic and financial crisis, affecting all residents and population groups. In this context, the situation of ordinary people in Lebanon is worsening day by day. Consequently, poverty rates among the host and the refugee communities have risen dramatically, and the overall protection environment has further deteriorated, increasing the vulnerabilities of the population.

The project evaluated in this exercise, funded by DG ECHO, aimed at reducing and mitigating the protection risks faced by the most vulnerable persons from refugee and host communities, including stateless individuals, in Beirut Mount Lebanon (BML) and Southern Lebanon (Nabatieh and South), by enhancing prevention and response mechanisms. Specifically, the Action aimed at improving the access to quality and dignified protection services for persons at risk and survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and persons with specific needs (PWSN).

The intervention started in July 2022 and lasted until June 2023.

## **EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS**

### **Evaluation Design**

The Evaluation exercise was organised around three main phases:

1. The inception phase, consisting in preliminary work based on a desk review of the project's main documents, as well as of the most relevant reports produced by other agencies on the humanitarian situation in Lebanon. The outcome of this phase was the Evaluation Matrix with all the questions to be asked during the primary data collection phase.
2. The fact-finding phase, consisting in the direct collection and analysis of data.
3. The completion phase, consisting in the drafting and sharing of the Evaluation Final Report, completed with findings and recommendations.

While the fact-finding phase was conducted in Lebanon, and specifically in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Nabatieh and South Governorates, both inception and completion phases were conducted out of the Country.

The following Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria were used to evaluate the project: Relevance and Appropriateness; Effectiveness, Efficiency; and Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact.

### **Data collection methods**

The Evaluation was primarily qualitative in nature, consisting of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). In order to guarantee completeness of data, a mixed methodological approach was used: quantitative data from the project's monitoring documents were also analysed to triangulate and complement information deriving from the identified stakeholders.

- **KIIs**

All KIIs were conducted in English by the Evaluator. The KIIs' schedule entailed semi-structured interviews developed around the Evaluation questions. A sample of 15 key informants was interviewed: they included numerous INTERSOS staff (both programmes and technical staff, at project and mission level) and one representative of SIREN, the partner organisations tasked with the study on Statelessness. Interviews took place between June 5th and June 15th, 2023, in different locations, specifically Beirut and Tyre. Some were in person, others took place online.

The list of key informants interviewed during the fact-finding phase is attached to this report for reference, as well as the related list of questions.

- **FGDs**

In total, 5 FGDs were facilitated in Beirut Mount Lebanon, Nabatieh and South Governorates, along the month of June, 2023. All FGDs involved beneficiaries from the ECHO-funded intervention, coming from the targeted Governorates, and randomly selected by the MEAL Unit.

The composition of each FGD varied, ranging from 5 to 10 participants, and resulted in the involvement of 43 beneficiaries selected on a random basis by the MEAL Unit that supported the Evaluation exercise, which ensured that all status were represented.

At the beginning of each FGD, verbal consent was asked to beneficiaries so as to use the information collected for the Evaluation purposes, and to have a recorder to register the discussions and help the note-taker collect all relevant information. Lastly, but most importantly, beneficiaries were guaranteed the confidentiality of the information collected during each FGD.

Due to language constraints, all FGDs were conducted by INTERSOS national staff, in Arabic. The composition of the selected team supporting the Evaluator considered both roles and gender, so as to ensure competences and appropriateness for the implementation of the FGDs. Specifically, the selected team consisted of:

- The MEAL Unit, composed by one MEAL Manager (female) and two MEAL Officer (one female in the BML, one male in the South);
- One Information Management Support (male, in BML) and two Field Support Officers (one male and one female, in Nabatieh and South Governorates).

This team was led by the MEAL Manager, after an in-country briefing with the Evaluator before the beginning of the Evaluation exercise, during which all questions prepared were analysed and rephrased, when needed, to guarantee the highest possible level of understanding by the affected population. The team was then given one guide to help them throughout the data collection phase, attached to the report for reference.

As FGDs were conducted in Arabic, the team collected the responses through hard or soft copies. All data was then digitised and translated into English, then sent to the Evaluator for analysis.

## **Data processing**

The data collected was analysed and the draft of the Evaluation Final Report was shared for review with INTERSOS Regional Direction. All information and data collected during the fact-finding phase have been treated as confidential and used solely for the Evaluation scope. Comments received from INTERSOS management staff have been integrated into the Evaluation Final Report.

## Limitations

The Evaluation was conducted within the context of the following limitations:

- The Evaluation was mainly qualitative in nature. No primary quantitative data was collected, thus the triangulation had to be done with reference to the project's monitoring documents.
- As the Evaluator has no specific technical expertise in the sector of intervention of the project, all questions remained at a general level. Indeed, the focus was more on understanding what worked and what did not work, from the perspectives of both staff and people who received the services, rather than on assessing the technicalities of each activity. Specifically, attention was given to understanding improvements made in relation to the previous Action carried out last year, at the end of which an Evaluation exercise was also conducted.
- The total number of FGDs (5) was limited, primarily because of some time and logistics constraints. While it was possible to gather representatives of both the Lebanese and the Syrian communities, both female and male of different age groups, the limited number of voices cannot be considered representative of the entire target population - though it did provide useful information and interesting perspectives on those receiving the services.
- Language constraints prevented the Evaluator from conducting the FGDs. Therefore, all FGDs were done by the team that supported the Evaluator, after having received a dedicated briefing. Though the persons of this team were mainly external to the ECHO-funded project, they were still staff from INTERSOS Lebanon Mission, thus some bias might have occurred and should be taken into account. To minimise translation bias, questions were analysed in depth by the Evaluator and the team before starting the FGDs, so as to make sure the meaning was clear to everyone, and that the language used was appropriate for the audience. This mitigation measure left anyhow freedom of translation to the team, once they had all responses in Arabic and had to translate them in English, in order to submit them to the Evaluator.

## FINDINGS

### RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS

#### 1. To what extent do the objectives of the intervention respond to the local needs?

As reported extensively in the major analyses conducted by the humanitarian community, in the last twelve months the situation in Lebanon has not shown any significant sign of improvement when looking at the living conditions of its populations. Not only does the crisis in Syria continue impacting the country with severe consequences on its economy, institutions and people: since 2019, Lebanon has been facing an increasingly serious multifaceted economic, financial, and social crisis. This has severely affected the vulnerable communities, with poverty levels rising dramatically among all groups - displaced Syrian and Lebanese households alike. To address such gaps and respond to the main needs of the population, the humanitarian community has defined a holistic, comprehensive and integrated approach that looks at both short and medium term objectives, starting with the protection and the immediate assistance to vulnerable populations, and including the reinforcement of the service provision as well as the economic, social and environmental stability (**LCRP 2022-2023**).

More specifically, and according to the findings that emerged from the yearly conducted **VASyR (2022)**, the continuous deterioration in the living situation of Syrians in Lebanon sees major gaps in protection and child protection, food security and livelihoods, with the result that the overwhelming majority resorts to often inappropriate coping mechanisms.

To shed further light on the severity of humanitarian needs of vulnerable Lebanese, Syrians, migrants and marginalised communities, in early 2022 INTERSOS commissioned a Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (**INTER SOS MSNA 2022**), which eventually confirmed the above mentioned trends. The analysis highlighted the general challenge in securing the most basic needs, with 98% of interviewed individuals reporting at least one harmful coping mechanism as mitigation measure. Furthermore, the study emphasised the prevalence of protection concerns (more among women and girls), with many at risk of or already affected by mental health issues.

Lastly, and in line with the broader humanitarian analysis, **INTER SOS Country Strategy** for 2022 and 2023 puts the focus on a two-pronged approach: ensuring continued provision of a comprehensive and integrated package of specialised protection services; and enhancing access to critical needs, by mitigating the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions in Lebanon and addressing the immediate needs of both refugees and host communities, through early recovery mechanisms and social cohesion activities.

In this scenario, the current Evaluation exercise assessed that the intervention implemented by INTERSOS from July 2022 to June 2023 was relevant and in line with the needs of the population, by being addressed to both Syrian and Lebanese communities. The Action was also consistent with the strategy of INTERSOS Lebanon, as well as with the main findings reported at the international humanitarian level.

It is worth recalling that from June 2021 to June 2022, INTERSOS had carried out a first intervention funded by the DG ECHO, which had also been assessed by an internal evaluation in its final stage: both the implementation of the activities and the internal exercise did provide confirmation on the



necessity of addressing protection needs, working with and supporting both Syrians and Lebanese communities so as to have a real needs-based response, while decreasing social tensions and improving cohesion. One of the findings of the first evaluation highlighted the necessity to guarantee continuity of protection services already initiated, to build trust, gain acceptance and provide effective assistance to the population. Furthermore, the evaluation had highlighted some elements that were still missing from the services provided - starting with the vocational training, a full protection package, and the focus on persons with specific needs (PwSN). The fact that the present intervention did include these aspects, while continuing those that had been successful, is an additional factor contributing to the relevance of the activities vis à vis the local needs.

Indeed, the Proposal submitted in June 2022 underlined the focus on both prevention and response activities, to reduce and mitigate the protection risks faced by the most vulnerable persons from refugee and host communities, including stateless individuals, in Beirut Mount Lebanon, Nabatieh and South Governorates. Specifically, the Proposal emphasised the objective to improve the access to quality and dignified protection services for persons at risk and survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and PwSN, through a community-based approach, so as to enhance community mobilisation and a stronger involvement of the population, while reaching out to the most marginalised communities across all social groups.

The relevance and appropriateness of the intervention, as analysed through the above desk review, was confirmed by both interviews with key informants (KIs) and discussions with the affected communities.

All KIs appreciated the rationale behind the Action, which was widely seen as a continuation of the previous one<sup>1</sup>. As one senior staff reported: *“We are targeting the needs as they were analysed through the MSNA, and even looking at the gaps in the external documents”*.

The new components that were added to the project were also widely appreciated and their relevance emphasised: namely, the focus on PwSN and stateless community; and the Crisis Modifier.

Particularly relevant, according to all those interviewed, was the **research** commissioned to further understand the issue around the stateless community, which was conducted externally, by SIREN Association. When speaking about the research, a key informant reported how the team *“spotted the right needs: people were screaming their hearts out when they were talking. It was the best of best practices, it sheds light to the relevance of our project.”* Or, in the words of another team member: *“Stateless are at the end of the pyramid, and they are the most vulnerable.”* While everyone shared a common understanding of the significance of researching and gaining a deeper insight into the needs and the challenges faced by this group, some informants stated that it is equally important to ensure that INTERSOS is able to effectively leverage these findings for advocacy purposes, starting at the national level and extending to institutions and sectors.

On the other hand, the **Crisis Modifier** was also praised as a new tool to enable immediate response to emergencies - which, in the case of the present action, was a mass eviction in the village of

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<sup>1</sup> This even if there were some major differences between the two Actions, in terms of geographical coverage (North and South in year 1; BML and South in year 2) and targeted groups (LGBTQI+ community in year 1; stateless and PwSN in year 2).

Aqtanite, in the South Governorate. One technical staff clearly explained the reasons behind the relevance of this component, in line with what reported by other colleagues: *“It is super important: during emergencies, you don’t have the luxury of time to revise your project; (...) with the Crisis Modifier, you skip all the bureaucratic steps and you can intervene right away”*.

The information collected by the **community members** who took part in the activities and received INTERSOS services confirmed both the relevance and the appropriateness of the action: *“All provided services were appreciated and beneficial (...) as they improved either our mental or our economic situation”*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the use of safe spaces as primary location for both individual and collective activities was appreciated, as they provide the users with the opportunity to freely discuss around many topics, some of which considered sensitive by the respective communities: *“We were in need of a place to speak our minds freely”*<sup>3</sup>.

Representatives of the stateless community reported that the project responded to needs they were otherwise unable to meet, as they were marginalised and unaware of their entitlements and how to access key services. They finally felt listened to and “seen”: *“Before the team came in, we were neglected; we had no one to turn to or to listen to our issues and concerns”*; *“Prior to INTERSOS, nobody inquired about our situation or extended any assistance or services, not even in hospitals, due to our stateless status.”*<sup>4</sup>

The full package of **psychological services** provided by INTERSOS teams proved once again to be relevant for a population struggling with meeting their basic needs. On the other hand, interesting feedback came out from the members of the communities when asked about additional services they would have needed. Some voiced their priority to receive financial support: *“The vocational training needs to improve to help us financially, by increasing the period of the training and equipping us with skills that directly translate to employment opportunities and economic empowerment”*<sup>5</sup>. Others spoke about access to healthcare: one stateless woman summarised the feedback of her community by reporting that, for them, *“Medical services are highly needed; my 3-year old son needs an operation and I couldn’t get him into the hospital because I am stateless and unemployed”*.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, the Outreach Volunteers (OVs), while confirming the relevance of the activities implemented by INTERSOS teams, observed and reported the need of parenting skills, something that, according to them, should be enhanced and addressed in the awareness and training sessions to further support families in their interactions with children during such a fragile situation: *“We should also focus on parenting, to reduce tensions. When a woman attends a session, the husband fears we provide information to her that is bad for him. Focusing on Parenting skills would make it visible that our aim is not to destroy families, but to improve their well-being and make them feel more comfortable.”*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> FGD with Community Structure, South Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>3</sup> FGD with Community Members, South Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>4</sup> FGD with Stateless Community, BML Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>5</sup> FGD with Community Members, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>6</sup> FGD with Stateless Community, BML Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>7</sup> FGD with Outreach Volunteers, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

## 2. Are the activities consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?

As stated in the project proposal, the intervention aimed at addressing the most urgent needs and improving access to quality and comprehensive protection services for the most marginalised communities in Beirut Mount Lebanon, Nabatieh and South Governorates, by enhancing prevention and response mechanisms. More precisely, the overall goal was to improve the access to quality and comprehensive protection for persons with specific needs, survivors and at risk of GBV through a community-based approach.

To reach this objective, and in line with INTERSOS way of intervention as implemented not only in the previous Action but more broadly at country level, the response strategy foresaw a **combined approach** of (i) a static service delivery, through already established safe spaces; and (ii) outreach activities designed and implemented to identify PwSN, stateless, persons at risk and survivors of GBV, and ensure their referral to appropriate service providers.

The Evaluation exercise, through an analysis based on the desk review as well as on the qualitative information collected during KIIs and FGDs, established that overall, the activities were consistent with the primary goal of the intervention.

To begin with, **awareness raising sessions** have been assessed as beneficial from a dual perspective: the first, and more obvious one, to spread messages related to Protection and gender issues, often disregarded and/or deemed sensitive subjects. These sessions targeted women and girls, men and boys alike, with tailored approaches and dedicated curricula. Secondly, these sessions contributed to creating a trusted environment and building relationships between the Organisation and the community. This, in turn, allowed INTERSOS Outreach Volunteers (OVs) to spot persons at risk and refer them, either internally or externally.

In line with the previous Action and considering the sensitive topics treated throughout the intervention, it was extremely important to involve the community from the very beginning. The project did include a very strong component of **community involvement**, key to starting the conversation and ensuring the appropriate acceptance by the different targeted groups. Specifically, the project foresaw the setup and continuation of Community-Based Groups (CBGs) and the running of Community-Based Initiatives (CBIs), as well as the identification of OVs.

Indeed, the role of the **OVs**, which was considered crucial at the end of the previous Action, has been reaffirmed as an essential component of the intervention to enable the achievement of its stated objectives. According to the feedback of a KI who works directly with the OVs, the selection process for these individuals placed stronger emphasis on experience and higher level of expertise compared to the previous Action and based on its lessons. This allowed them to *“provide us with useful information. They are aware of the context, the needs of all groups. They are more able to articulate these needs and to be the bridge between INTERSOS and the community.”* Furthermore, the OVs have proven highly effective in detecting vulnerable cases, underscoring once again how prevention activities like an awareness session play a pivotal role in preparing the ground for response activities, where needed - like the provision of psychosocial support (PSS) or individual counselling, or else. As will emerge under the Evaluation question n.4, the percentage of those referred internally from the outreach activities, thanks to the effort of the OVs, was definitely substantial. Specifically, OVs identified 72% of the total cases referred internally, which corresponds to 64% of the total number of

cases referred. This highlights the significant impact of outreach activities in preventing and responding to protection issues.

The OVs, together with INTERSOS Social Workers, were also responsible for mobilising beneficiaries and inviting them to form or join existing **CBGs**, which in turn were tasked with supporting the organisation of **CBIs**. This was another key activity aiming at not only addressing GBV and other sensitive topics at community level, but also at breaching barriers and making people feel at ease to discuss their own situations. One Social Worker reported that *“We know people are facing a mental health issue, but for them this [coming to the CBGs] does not improve their well-being. They look more for financial assistance (...) So we worked on CBIs to let them see that it is not just about information sharing, but also activities to make them more comfortable in their relationship with INTERSOS”*.

Following up on one the most frequent requests collected during last year’s intervention, **vocational training** was introduced as part of the prevention activities. This choice was based on identification of needs from the communities, in terms of types of sessions, so that beneficiaries would have acquired useful skills to access small scale markets. While this remains crucial to provide people with opportunities, some feedback received highlighted the necessity to improve the selection of activities, better linked to employment opportunities. That said, the primary purpose of the vocational training activities was not to promote employment, but to create opportunities for socialising in a productive way, and to improve participants’ psychosocial wellbeing. Should employment creation and income generation become the primary objective of vocational training, a KI recommended to pursue that by forging synergies with other NGOs and key actors in the context, to facilitate participants’ insertion in the job market.

Concerning the **response component**, the provision of the full package of **protection assistance**, both individual and for groups, was considered by most key informants as a best practice of this type of intervention: *“We are doing the holistic approach, providing all sorts of protection services on different topics, to try to target all issues. This is a good aspect.”*

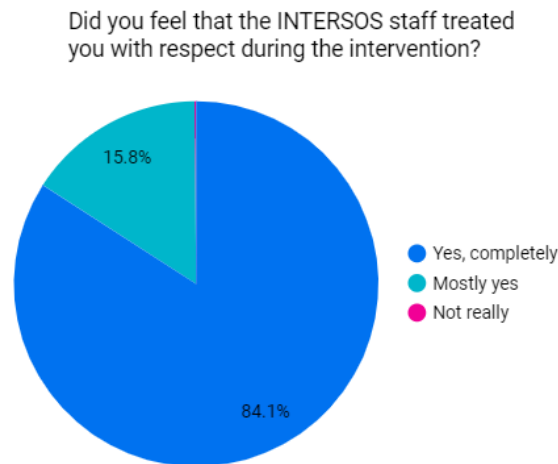
**Cash assistance** was another important piece of the protection response support, in its three typologies: Cash for Transportation (CfT), which had been repeatedly requested during the previous Action due to the rise in transportation costs in the areas of intervention; Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA) to prevent, mitigate or reduce the impact or high risk of immediate harm due to emergency shock or protection threat, and as a bridge to the Cash for Protection (CfP), for longer-term support. On one side, cash assistance is deemed essential, considering the dramatic economic situation many people are facing in Lebanon; on the other side, it is likely to always be considered insufficient, as emerged from various accountability exercises conducted throughout the project implementation. Yet, views differed: as one senior management staff commented: *“If you can pay one more month of rent, you have not solved your problem but still, you have an additional month to try and do it.”*

As already presented, the **focus on the stateless community** was a new component of the project, to reach out and provide support to these individuals often left out of the assistance. For this, the intervention envisaged a research study, to be conducted externally, and legal services, to be provided by INTERSOS legal team. All KIs considered the research instrumental to the final goal of

the Action, as it enabled INTERSOS to gain deeper insights on statelessness in Lebanon, and refine the Action accordingly. Management staff interviewed confirmed that the preliminary findings of the research helped adapt the outreach strategy, and indeed more statelessness hotspots were detected because of this study. The direct provision of legal assistance was also recognised as being relevant and undeniably in line with the needs of a population that cannot benefit from basic services because of lack of official documentation. Yet, due to its dependency on external factors, like the court strikes or adverse governmental policies, it was equally considered as a major challenge. Feedback from some representatives of the stateless community reflected this mixed feeling: while they really appreciated having an Organisation helping with acquiring their papers *“that will facilitate our lives and ensure access to our basic rights, the legal assistance was not of big aid as it was made clear after the counselling that our cases cannot be resolved due to governmental policies”*.

As for the **Crisis Modifier**, it allowed the team to respond to emergencies within 72h, with cash and in-kind assistance through prepositioning of Non-Food Items (NFIs). As one senior management staff put it, it proved to be *“crucial to have a timely response”*. INTERSOS responded to only one crisis, but the presence of the Crisis Modifier was anyway appreciated by all considering the current tensions (actual or potential) in different areas of Lebanon.

As it came out during an **accountability exercise** carried out as part of the project monitoring plan<sup>8</sup>, the majority (99.9%) of those benefiting from the services felt treated with respect by INTERSOS staff:



This finding was confirmed throughout all FGDs, where beneficiaries recognised the efforts made by INTERSOS in respecting social norms: *“All the services provided were appropriate and convenient to the social, cultural, and religious norms of the community”*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> All the pie charts represented in the Report have been done by the Evaluator using the raw data collected at interim and final stage by the MEAL team of INTERSOS Lebanon Mission, as part of the ECHO Key Objective Indicator 1.

<sup>9</sup> FGD with Community Members, South Governorate, June 2023.



As for the activities, what was provided by INTERSOS teams encountered the approval of those who received it, whether it was under the preventive or response umbrella - as one man summarised it, *“All provided services improved either our mental or our economic situation”*<sup>10</sup>.

### **3. Was the design of the intervention the most appropriate to achieve the set goals and objectives?**

As just analysed, the project design had a strong component of **community involvement**, and foresaw different ways of beneficiaries’ participation throughout the implementation of the activities. Specifically, the community-based approach had as main objective the establishment of the CBGs and the organisation of CBIs, while the activities of information sharing and feedback collection and response was supposed to be continuous and regular.

The **accountability system** already developed during the previous intervention was regularly applied, and included three main channels, as specified in the dedicated policy on INTERSOS commitment to AAP: the feedback and complaint hotline, the feedback and complaint boxes, and the feedback and complaint email address. To these, online forms shared on social media were then added, and there was the more direct face to face to INTERSOS staff members.

It is worth considering these two aspects separately, to properly address them while looking for both improvements made from the previous Action, as well as any gaps perceived by those directly involved.

#### **1. Community-based approach**

The proposed intervention aimed at empowering **agents of change** within the targeted communities, to enhance a protective environment for women, men, boys and girls alike.

As also assessed at the end of the previous Action during the evaluation exercise, the use of **CBGs** was considered crucial by all key informants, and was actually regarded as one of the successful pieces of the present intervention, as well as one of its most significant added values. As eight out of the ten CBGs were already in place, and generally speaking the practice of community engagement had already been presented and explained to communities, this year the groups were found to be more active: according to INTERSOS staff involved in their monitoring and support, not only did their members successfully organise some **CBIs**, but they also delivered awareness raising sessions and were more present in the communities. Some technical staff highlighted how INTERSOS could increase the number of the initiatives being conducted, with more efforts to make possible that the topics of each initiative be selected more and more by the community. Indeed, such an increase of the CBIs was eventually possible in the last months of the project’s implementation, following the reallocation of money originally budgeted for the Crisis Modifier component (see below).

Beyond the CBGs, the capacity of INTERSOS to establish good relationships with the targeted populations, as well as the trust placed on the organisation by the communities supported through the intervention, was widely acknowledged during all interviews and during the FGDs too. Beneficiaries confirmed that this **positive environment** led to increased communication between them and INTERSOS teams: *“We always felt comfortable to reach out to INTERSOS, as the staff was*

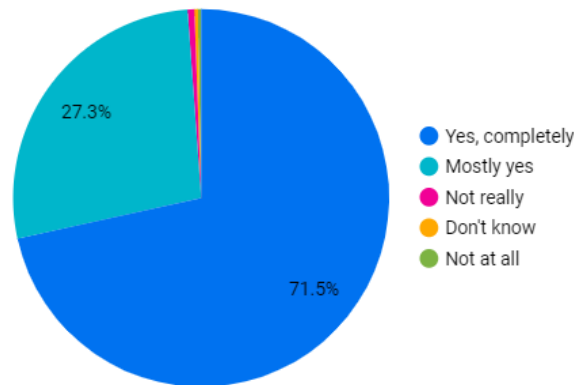
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<sup>10</sup> FGD with Community Structure, South Governorate, June 2023.

very friendly and respectful. We were able to share our point of view by communicating with INTERSOS staff, who were listening to our problems and needs”<sup>11</sup>.

This **involvement of the community** was confirmed in the accountability exercise conducted at both interim and final stages of the project, where nearly all beneficiaries surveyed confirmed the fact that INTERSOS managed to consider their opinions:

Were your views taken into account by the Organisation about the assistance you received?



This view related to an approach rooted in the participation of the community was endorsed by the **OVs**, who emphasised how their being the link between the Organisation and the population brought various benefits, for all parts involved: *“Our role contributed in raising awareness about human rights and mental health, and it enhanced the friendly relations between the Lebanese and Syrian refugees. Additionally, our volunteering encouraged others to be interested in volunteering”*<sup>12</sup>.

## 2. Accountability system

When asked about the accountability system, the KIs expressed appreciation over the continuous progress INTERSOS is making in this important domain. Some specifically recognised the improvements made, for example, thanks to the development of Information, Education and Community (IEC) materials. The standardisation and harmonisation of the contents and messages ensures coherence and proper visibility of the mechanisms in place for the community.

In both project locations, a general **feeling of trust** was created and this resulted in having beneficiaries at ease if and when they were willing to speak to the staff, to report complaints or require assistance, as reported by one community member: *“We felt confident and at ease in approaching INTERSOS, in seeking assistance or engaging with the Organisation”*<sup>13</sup>.

Yet, it is worth considering the results coming from the accountability exercise conducted under the Action. Although a large majority (around 80%) felt comfortable in reaching out to INTERSOS for complaints or feedback, an important 16.1% did not answer positively (left-side chart below).

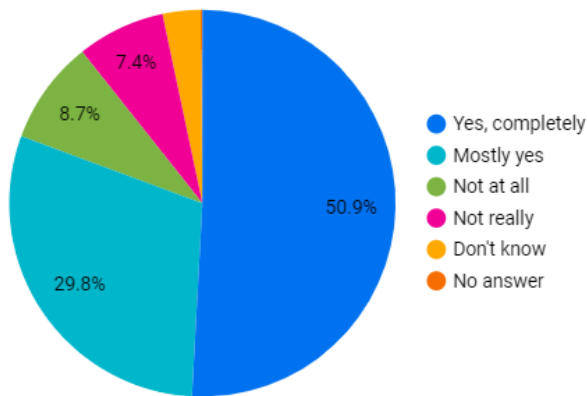
<sup>11</sup> FGD with Community Structure, South Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>12</sup> FGD with OVs, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

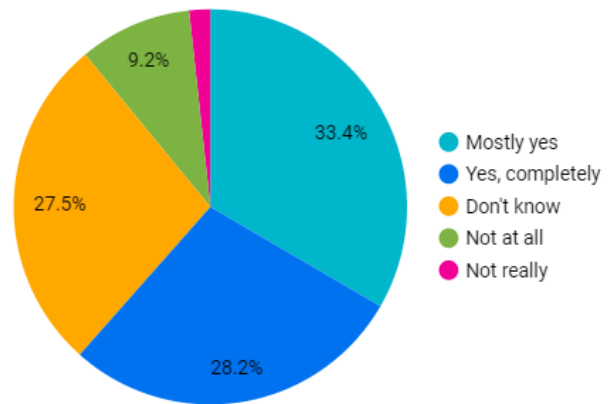
<sup>13</sup> FGD with Community Members, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

Furthermore, when asked about their perception of whether their **feedback and complaints** were responded to or followed up by INTERSOS, a considerable 38.4% of the respondents were either unable to provide an answer (27.5%), or did not believe feedback were addressed or followed up (10.9%). This surely represents one area for further analysis and action, considering how perceptions might be different and how challenging this topic can be, especially when operating in conservative communities. The two pie charts below represent these findings:

If you had a suggestion for, or a problem with the assistance/service, do you think you could channel the suggestion or lodge a complaint?



To your knowledge, have suggestions or complaints raised been responded to or followed up?



Lastly, many KIs highlighted the need to further strengthen the **information sharing and analysis components** of the accountability mechanism. By looking at the internal complaint system set up in all bases, it was reported that although working well, the flow of information should be strengthened to make it more efficient. The interviews conducted during the evaluation exercise accentuated how, while feedback was received and managed at field level, the sharing of the main outcomes did not occur as smoothly as it should have. When asked about the possible reasons behind this area for improvement, some linked it to a **resource gap**: by not having a dedicated accountability person, MEAL and technical staff had to add this on top of their tasks. This impacted mostly the hotline channel, with the result that sometimes beneficiaries lamented lack of feedback: *“INTER SOS staff met with us, they asked for our needs and considered the points we mentioned. However, we were trying to reach the hotline but we were not getting any response”*.<sup>14</sup> While the hotline service was operational during working hours, thus any call received outside this timeframe was not answered by default, the staff in charge could not always call back because of excessive workloads.

<sup>14</sup> FGD with Community Members, South Governorate, June 2023.



## EFFECTIVENESS

### 4. To what extent were the objectives achieved?

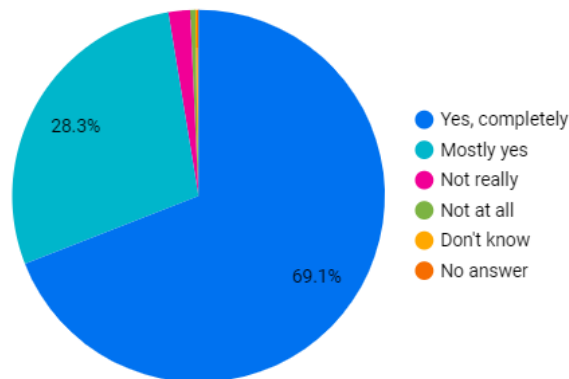
By triangulating the final data calculated in the project monitoring documents with what key informants and beneficiaries reported, the Evaluation exercise confirmed that the intervention achieved most of its objectives. The Action managed to support 12,270 vulnerable people against the 10,068 that were originally planned in the project proposal, thus exceeding the target by nearly 22%.

Overall, all KIs defined the project as successful, reporting a positive feeling about its implementation in a more consistent manner than last year - when differences across the two bases had resulted in different levels of appreciation of the activities by the two teams. Indeed, those who were there during both implementation periods, underlined how lessons learned from the previous intervention had made this project “easier” from a management and implementation point of view.

When looking at the achievement levels as reported at the end of the implementation, only one indicator stands out for a significant underachievement, but its justification was discussed with the Donor throughout the action, and decisions were taken on which measures to put in place. It refers to the **Crisis Modifier** component, which eventually supported 286 persons, out of a total 3000 set initially as target. On this discrepancy, KIs unanimously said that it was the first time this element was included, that “*there was a learning process also involving the other partners [NCR and IRC] as well as the Donor*”, and that it did depend on external circumstances that would trigger the crisis modifier. What was clear to everyone though, was that the mechanism allowed an immediate response once the trigger was activated for the mass eviction of Aqtanite, as reported in the related analysis. The preposition proved essential to enable the response, through the provision of kits and cash by a pool of resources mobilised for this in a timely manner. It has to be noted that the context in which this response occurred was particularly sensitive, considering people were evicted after a homicide, and that social tensions were also to be carefully evaluated and addressed - once again, according to the stakeholders interviewed, the team managed to successfully do this, without any negative consequence. Some recommendations were made, which pointed out that a higher level of collaboration would be necessary among the organisations benefiting from this Crisis Modifier tool, to exchange information and approaches and further develop the learning. Furthermore, a better follow up after the related report was published, on how to translate this for advocacy purposes was also mentioned.

Concerning the point of view of beneficiaries as collected during the routine accountability exercise, 97.4% expressed their satisfaction with the services provided, with only 2.3% manifesting their discontent (mostly linked to a demand for financial assistance, or, for the stateless community, to the fact that the process to get their legal documentation had not yet been finalised):

Are you satisfied with the assistance/service provided?



This general **appreciation** with the services provided by INTERSOS was confirmed during all FGDs conducted for this Evaluation exercise with the project’s beneficiaries, as reported by the following quotes coming from the three governorates where activities took places:

- *“The services we engaged in not only fulfilled our requirements, but exceeded our expectations in terms of outcomes and benefits.”<sup>15</sup>*
- *“The outcome was in line with our expectations; the services were very beneficial to the beneficiaries and we sensed these improvements through them.”<sup>16</sup>*
- *“Although not all the cases were eligible to be legally resolved, we perceived the legal assistance as a crucial part of this project.”<sup>17</sup>*

Thus, the external success of the project was broadly underscored. Looking internally, it is worth analysing **monitoring processes**, which are key to effectively run the project and therefore an important piece contributing to the overall success.

To start with, and considering the previous Action, all KIs, both technical and non, highlighted the continuous efforts towards the centralisation of the **data management** process. Indeed, the national data management platform was introduced in both bases, to enable a higher level of data control and quality - even if this change encountered different levels of appreciation by the staff directly involved. Furthermore, those who had been in INTERSOS Lebanon since before this project, confirmed the progress deriving from a combined effort towards the harmonisation of tools, carried out by MEAL and technical teams and facilitated by more frequent communication and mutual involvement throughout the different phases of the project life cycle.

Yet, some areas for improvement clearly emerged, which still represent obstacles in facilitating a smoother team work, more timely reporting, and most importantly, the **capacity to analyse** and reflect on the data collected to draw conclusions and feed into corrective measures. Among the elements that were identified by the KIs: the necessity to ensure there is common understanding of

<sup>15</sup> FGD with Community Members, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>16</sup> FGD with Community Structure, South Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>17</sup> FGD with Stateless Community, BML Governorate, 2023.

each indicator, how to calculate them and using which tool; the acknowledgment that both MEAL and technical staff have to work together to produce such tools and to elaborate the analyses, as both technical skill sets are needed; lastly, more clarity on roles and responsibilities in the different phases, from form creation to data collection and reporting. Almost all KIs pointed to the importance of adjusting the ways of working among MEAL, project team, and technical experts to allocate more time and resources for data analysis and interpretation. As effectively summarised by one technical staff: *“The problem is understanding and analysing the data we collect. We do pre- and post- tests, and MEAL colleagues provide charts. But we need analysis: what does this mean? Our job is to understand what the implication is for the activities. The problem is having the time to go deeper in this information, shared by MEAL, to analyse implications and results in terms of quality implementation”*.

## **5. What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives of the intervention?**

The Evaluation exercise identified several factors that influenced the implementation of the project activities and thus the achievement of their objectives. Some of them will be presented as enabling factors, having facilitated INTERSOS teams in carrying out a smoother implementation. Others will be analysed as challenges, either internal or external, together with any related mitigation measures put in place by INTERSOS staff to confront them. At the end, the overall perceptions reported by beneficiaries participating to the FGDs will also be presented.

### **Enabling factors.**

As mentioned in the project proposal and later confirmed during the implementation period, the **long standing presence** of INTERSOS in Lebanon had a clear impact on the capacity of the Organisation to successfully complete the activities. Having started working in Lebanon in 2006, with a focus on Protection interventions since the very beginning, INTERSOS’ experience and expertise in the Protection sector played a crucial role in supporting the achievement of the project objectives, in all the components. Furthermore, the widespread presence of INTERSOS throughout the Country was also important, allowing for easier internal referrals to trusted protection teams, ready to take care of the most sensitive cases. This value added was reported by all KIs.

Furthermore, **lessons learned** from the previous Actions were considered and some critical aspects were improved, starting with an enhanced collaboration between the two bases (BML and South). More joint meetings were organised to facilitate interaction across BML and South teams and the sharing of approaches, challenges and mitigation measures, as well as to promote harmonisation and standardisation of SOPs, guidelines and tools.

Lastly, INTERSOS’ **capacity to adapt** to an evolving context and react to the challenges by adjusting its activities definitely represented another enabling factor. The main example, recognised by the whole management team, was the ability to take advantage of the savings accumulated from the Crisis Modifier and the fluctuations, to increase the CBIs - once it was more than clear that they were being highly appreciated by the community.

### **Internal challenges.**

While indeed some adjustments were made based on the feedback and the lessons learned coming from the previous action, some internal challenges remained, which had already been highlighted during the first evaluation exercise conducted in 2022.

Mainly, what emerged revolved around the **data management** domain, directly linked to the way indicators were defined, calculated, reported. Sometimes this turned out to be quite challenging, as there was some confusion among the different teams on what actual meaning a certain indicator had, the rationale behind the tool that was meant to calculate it, as well as its effectiveness in really measuring what the indicator referred to. Furthermore, while the transition to the internal data management platform was something asked for and appreciated, it did prove challenging, as recalled by one staff member: *“Change also brings frustration. Not everyone is tech savvy, which brings more work in data validation and quality.”*

Another difficulty, specifically at the reporting stage, was some **lack of clarity** in relation to roles and responsibilities, with particular emphasis on the tasks of technical roles.

Lastly, and as already mentioned, the need to improve **capacity to further analyse** came out, to be able to translate the data into valuable information, useful to duly adapt the intervention, and possibly bring the results and the findings also to other humanitarian and institutional platforms.

### **External challenges.**

It is fair to report that KIs did not accentuate any specific challenge coming from the external context. While this does not mean that there were none, it reflects the right approach of the INTERSOS teams in dealing with the few obstacles they faced while carrying out this Action.

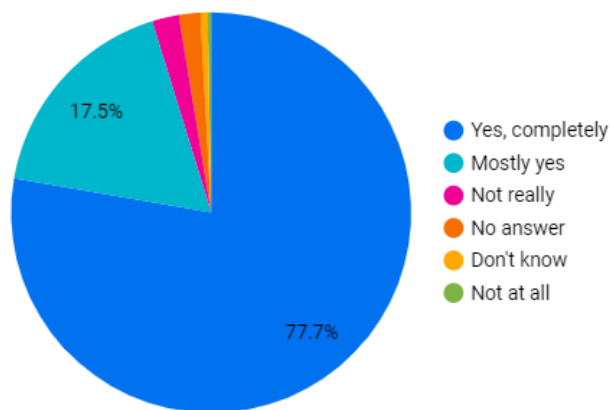
Among the challenges mentioned during the interviews, the frequent **legal court strikes** were definitely one. This slowed down the legal assistance component of the project, as it prevented the finalisation of the process.

Another challenge happened in the framework of the research study conducted by SIREN Associates, and was related to getting **access** to the Southern area of Beirut - which was not granted. Therefore, information about that area was obtained through KIs (and not the initially planned door-to-door approach). While this confirmed the capacity of the team to adapt the methodology, the information that was collected was based on the individuals' willingness to participate in the research, as well as on their personal knowledge and network..

### **FGDs**

Through the accountability exercise conducted internally, the overwhelming majority of beneficiaries expressed their feeling of safety while receiving the assistance provided by INTERSOS:

Did you feel safe at all times travelling to receive the assistance/service, while receiving the assistance/service, and upon return to your place?



Indeed, this was confirmed through the FGDs conducted as part of the evaluation exercise, like in the answer provided below: *“The sites were easily accessible, we faced no difficulties in reaching them. We felt secure and experienced no concerns about our personal safety when coming to the safe space.”*<sup>18</sup>

Some participants reported experiencing a certain degree of difficulty in attending the services due to **transportation costs**, something that was addressed by INTERSOS staff later on in the implementation period through the provision of dedicated buses.

During the discussions with the representatives of the OVs, two women pointed out that *“being alone prevented us from entering some unsafe areas like camps or any small alleys, if we were a team of two it would be safer to enter these areas”*<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> FGD with Stateless Community, BML Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>19</sup> FGD with OVs, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

## EFFICIENCY

### 6. Were activities cost-efficient?

For the purpose of this exercise, the evaluation of the efficiency focused on key informants' opinion about whether the money was spent in the best possible way, looking at both the activities implemented and the staffing structure in place. Compared to the previous project, this action was deemed to be more appropriately resourced staff-wise.

Generally speaking, consensus emerged on a **good budget allocation** for the activities. Furthermore, all key informants recognised the flexibility of the donor, as well as the internal capacity of adapting and responding to the accumulated savings. Indeed, the money saved because of the fluctuation of the exchange rate as well as the considerable unspent from the Crisis Modifier component could be reallocated to increase the number of CBIs, activities that have proved to be highly appreciated by the communities. The result was that the theatre plays were replicated and organised also in the BML Governorate, becoming a *“Best recommended practice”* by the Sector. When asked about the original budget set for the Crisis Modifier, all KIs acknowledged the need and the importance to have discussions between INTERSOS and the donor at regular intervals of the project implementation period, so as to facilitate adaptation based on real scenarios.

Some highlighted some elements that made the project cost-efficient, such as the safe space in BML which was shared with another NGO, the optimisation in the use of vehicles, an efficient procurement, including several timely framework agreements with the top qualifiers that speeded up the process when needed.

A few **recommendations** were received around the necessity to produce better planning, in terms of both budget forecast and procurement plan; something that had already improved since the previous Action, but on which the team should further work, according to the direct stakeholders.

As for the human resources (HR) foreseen to manage and implement the project, the teams were more satisfied than at the end of the previous Action. Indeed, the **HR structure** was broadly considered sufficient, with the exception of the absence of a dedicated person for the helpline/hotline. In the words of one KI, who represented many other voices: *“We need one additional resource to answer the phone. Some beneficiaries said they called but were never called back. It's highly time consuming, it's a job in itself and it requires a dedicated staff.”*

### 7. Were objectives achieved on time?

From the information collected during both interviews with KIs and discussions with focus groups, no major delay was encountered in the delivery of the project activities, except for legal assistance (see below).

Compared to last year, the **startup phase** was judged as significantly smoother by those among the project and Mission staff who were present during both interventions. While some delays did still occur in the recruitment of quality staff, in terms of tools, curricula and Standard Operating

Procedures (SOPs) were already in place, as they had been developed during the previous Action. Looking at staff retention, the most frequent comment was made in relation to the role of the psychologist, whose high turnover rate caused some challenges in BML.

As mentioned elsewhere in the report, the project experienced a major delay in the provision of **legal assistance**, primarily due to external causes, such as the frequent court strikes. Also, the **statelessness research** presented some delays: initially, because of the need to further review the scope of the study, then because of access constraints in Southern Beirut. As explained by one senior staff, *“In Lebanon there are areas that present relevant security constraints, with consequences on access. We wanted to do research on a sensitive topic, we wanted to conduct complex questionnaires to be able to go deep in the subject and resistance can be expected. This plays an important role in delays”*. Moreover, the methodology of the study had to be refined, as the first sampling method was not appropriate for an urban settlement and had to be adjusted.

From the beneficiaries’ perspective, their feedback was positive. Based on the outcomes of the FGDs, an overall satisfaction on the **timing of the assistance** was reported:

- *“INTER SOS was very committed to providing services in a timely manner”*.<sup>20</sup>
- *“The training schedule and timing were perfect. All involved parties arrived on time and everything was very organised.”*<sup>21</sup>

The cash assistance also arrived at a crucial moment, providing timely support that significantly eased their economic situation. *“My husband had been unemployed for the past 6 months, and the assistance arrived just in time.”*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> FGD with Community Members, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>21</sup> FGD with Community Members, South Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>22</sup> FGD with Stateless Community, BML Governorate, June 2023.



## SUSTAINABILITY AND LIKELIHOOD OF IMPACT

### 8. To what extent has the intervention supported and developed local capacities, both at authorities and community level?

The way the project was designed implied a significant component of **community engagement** and active participation of the targeted populations, with the objective of providing them with capacity building so as to boost their understanding of both their rights and the existing services they could refer to for support. Through the CBGs and the organisation of CBIs, the project aimed at focusing on building local capacities, considering also it addressed sensitive topics in conservative communities. Another important element foreseen in the project design was the training of the OVs, who were supposed to be the link between the Organisation and the Lebanese and Syrian communities.

By looking at the monitoring documents and triangulating the information with the KIIs and the FGDs, the Evaluation found that the intervention managed to involve participants and promote their active role, by reaching out to also to those vulnerable individuals for which the previous Action had highlighted the necessity to better approach - like PwSN and the stateless community, but also men and boys. While the continuation of CBGs in the South made it easier to work on developing local capacities, the intervention still requires further time to be able to focus on the sustainability aspect.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, KIIs reported how **CBGs** were more active than before: considering 80% of them were already in place when this intervention started, they could focus on their initiatives right away. Many success stories were reported showing that not only CBIs had been successfully carried out, but also that some of them will continue autonomously. Examples include the setup of a sports club for people with disabilities in Saida (South Governorate), and a centre for elderly women in Hasbaya (Nabatieh Governorate) - both considered as best practice to further replicate. *“It was really a great success for our team. The population requested it to continue regardless of the presence of INTERSOS. It’s really emotional: we can see how people are engaged, how their lives are changing.”*

The **development of local capacities** happened also at individual level, by strengthening the importance of understanding rights and opportunities, as recounted by one member of the stateless community: *“Now I know my rights as a stateless, and I know what should be done”*.<sup>24</sup> These sessions were appreciated by participants, to the extent that they counted on them: a social worker reported that *“Whenever we were changing schedules or could not conduct a session, the community was upset, they were looking forward to it.”* Indeed, awareness sessions had positive repercussions on improving both family and community environments, as presented by examples coming different groups:

- *“We have improved our knowledge and awareness about women’s rights which also resulted in a better relationship with our families and children”*<sup>25</sup>;
- *“Those who received awareness sessions spread the knowledge to their families and friends”, “encouraging others in the community to volunteer in such projects and organisations”*,<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> This aspect is further elaborated under Evaluation question n.10.

<sup>24</sup> FGD with Stateless Community, BML Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>25</sup> FGD with Community Structures, South Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>26</sup> FGD with OVs, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.



- *“We experienced a boost in our self-confidence, now we have a more proactive approach in making personal decisions. Our social connections within the community have expanded and we were able to forge new friendships and relationships.”<sup>27</sup>*

Indeed, awareness sessions and vocational training courses, which lasted between one month and one month and a half, played a significant role in the path towards enhancing sustainability. Requests to have longer sessions were voiced by many among the beneficiaries: community members suggested to increase the frequency and the duration of the courses provided, so as to further develop *“pathways to providing us with livelihood opportunities and a means for us to attain financial independence.”<sup>28</sup>*

It is worth highlighting that one of beneficial aspects of the Action, is that it targets both Lebanese and Syrian individuals, thus contributing to reducing tensions and building bridges between different groups: this was reported by both KIs and beneficiaries, who noted that *“Tension between the Lebanese and Syrian communities were lessen as a result of participating together in the activities provided by INTERSOS. After all, we are all in need”<sup>29</sup>*.

## 9. What has happened as a result of the intervention (intended or unintended)?

As analysed throughout the Evaluation exercise, the project approach to provide preventive as well as response measures brought about real change in the targeted communities. The evidence of this is not just merely in the achievement levels; it came out during the whole process of qualitative data collection, where the general consensus on positive results was expressed by both INTERSOS teams and the persons benefiting from the services provided.

Beyond the impact that awareness sessions and vocational training had on the development of local capacities, at both individual and group level (as described under the previous Evaluation question), what was repeatedly underlined by KIs was the success in changing the way communities now appreciate and utilise protection services. As explained by one technical staff member, *“Every day we have new referrals. There is a high demand now: before, people would ask for money only, now they better understand what PSS means, and they demand it.”* This was confirmed by another field staff: *“Before, the idea was that a person had to be crazy to ask for such service. But we manage to **change the approach**, focusing on the community’s sense of well being, safety and security”*.

When reflecting about the **legal assistance** that was provided notwithstanding the external challenges encountered, the KIs agreed that, while the target itself was relatively low if compared to the other activities, its impact was significant. This support managed to radically change the life opportunities of those whose access to basic services was prevented by not having an ID. This was the case of a child, who benefited from the legal services offered by the INTERSOS team and was then able to go school. In the words of his mother; *“My kid did not have hopes, you changed his life”<sup>30</sup>*. Such a reaction had an impact also on the staff themselves, translating into further motivation

<sup>27</sup> FGD with Community Members, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>28</sup> FGD with Community Members, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>29</sup> FGD with Community Members, South Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>30</sup> FGD with Stateless Community, BML Governorate, June 2023.

when having to face external obstacles: as a KI that has been working in the sector for many years reported, *“Just one paper can change the world for you. It is the first time I have received such feedback from beneficiaries”*.

Particularly praised as a result of the Action was the impact that Emotional Support Group (ESG) had on their participants. In the words of one KI, *“ESG is the success of all successes. It is both prevention and response, people react to both. Now they are finding out that others have similar problems, not only of financial nature (they speak only about this outside) but also inside their family. To know that somebody is on your side has an **impact**. You can get support, you can move on. You are not hopeless, you have options.”*

Many **success stories** were collected throughout the project implementation period, which provide further insight into what the services provided by INTERSOS meant for individual empowerment. One of these gives a sense of the change brought about, and was recalled by a protection staff:

*“I had three, four very long calls with this woman, she had depression with suicidal ideation. She has kids, her husband doesn't work. They sleep on the floor, they have no cups to drink. What's worse, her husband's relatives want to take the daughter for early marriage with another member of the family. So we talk, we analyse her feelings and possible solutions. She doesn't have money, how can she get them? I tell her that women can work. She was not considering this, she was saying: “I will never find a job, no one would ever take me”. Then she tried and she found one. There was a need in her area that was in line with her skills, but she had never asked around. It's amazing how some thoughts can change someone's life.”*

One negative (though not really unusual) consequence was reported by some stakeholders, who mentioned some unfortunate episodes deriving from the cash assistance. *“Recipients of cash assistance talk to each other, if someone gets more money there is room for complaint and dissatisfaction.”* Recommendation here pointed to the need to guarantee higher levels of confidentiality, on one side, but also to continue the efforts towards providing clearer explanations, to avoid people thinking they are getting less money than they deserved - considering however that, while a standard amount is foreseen in line with the CM SOPs, it does differ based on the severity of each case, as well as on the assessment conducted by the case worker, and also the fluctuation of the exchange rate. All factors that can lead to complaints if one person compares the amount received with that of another.

## **10. To what extent are the benefits of the intervention likely to continue?**

As stated in the project proposal, among the aims of the intervention there was the investment on building the **resilience** of the community contributing to create a safer environment and long-lasting strategies and pathways, by working on developing community structures' potential, as well as enhancing individual capacity to respond to external negative factors, and maintaining a personal well-being through the whole protection package.

The Evaluation exercise, through the triangulation of the information collected by those involved, recognised that the investment on both response and prevention activities, together with the strong

community-based approach and capacity building components, did put the basis for some lasting impact. However, the presence of INTERSOS is still required to continue this process and embed its core messages in the communities, until the recipients of these activities will manifest a more solid sense of confidence in the skills and knowledge acquired, in an environment where awareness is well rooted in the society - or at least in some of its segments. Indeed, the continuation of the intervention under a new ECHO-funded grant goes in the direction of laying the groundwork for sustainability, by reinforcing the messages and working on community empowerment.

In those locations where INTERSOS was already a well known Protection actor, the team did not have to spend too much time on creating a trusting environment and could focus from the get-go on establishing roots and developing local capacities. Of course, in case of new areas or new target groups, such as the stateless community, more time had to be allocated to build a sufficient level of trust and awareness.

Some of the KIs interviewed were able to report visible **improvements in the interactions** between communities. Both Lebanese and Syrian beneficiaries agreed on this result, emphasising the lessening of the tensions as a consequence of participating together in the same activities.

Impact can be seen also in terms of having **acquired confidence and knowledge**:

- *“The sessions offered by INTERSOS changed our living behaviour for the better. These sessions educate the community: we now know the rights of women and men. This can break barriers between different groups.”*<sup>31</sup>
- *Volunteering was a great opportunity to improve our skills and experience. We as OVs gained confidence to interact with people in the community.”*<sup>32</sup>

On the other side, comments were made on the need to further **strengthen the sustainability component** of the implementation, specifically by working on how to empower the community to be able to stand alone without humanitarian support, to access the services for the different groups, to be more independent after having become more knowledgeable about their rights and possible solutions. Some KIs explicitly pointed out that the attention should go beyond the provision of services, *“to understand how to handover this type of acquired knowledge to the community itself, to be able to benefit from it independently”*. From the community perspective, some concerns were raised in relation to the actual capacity of continuing the work started with INTERSOS, without INTERSOS. As described by individuals directly involved as OVs or members of the CBGs: while *“We as Ovs gained confidence to interact with people in the community (...) without the support of INTERSOS we cannot continue and reach a lot of beneficiaries. Using INTERSOS’ name makes communication and access to sites and areas much easier.”*<sup>33</sup> Indeed, among the suggestions provided by the KIs, there was the need to include both OVs and community groups in more training sessions, so as to have more individuals supporting community-based initiatives in their areas, speaking directly with their communities and bringing forward the messages received as part of INTERSOS intervention.

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<sup>31</sup> FGD with Community Structure, South Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>32</sup> FGD with OVs, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

<sup>33</sup> FGD with OVs, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2023.

## CONCLUSIONS

As detailed in each section pertaining to the criteria examined earlier, **the project under evaluation was successful** in addressing the needs of the targeted populations. It is worth noting that the project extended its reach to encompass not only the Syrian but also the Lebanese community, with a particular focus on assisting the most vulnerable within these groups.

Overall, the intervention achieved its main objectives and managed to bring about positive changes in the lives of the individuals who benefitted from the services provided. The addition of two new components to the project, namely the Statelessness research and the Crisis Modifier, constituted a challenging double innovation that the team successfully managed.

It is worth recalling how the previous Action made it possible to immediately implement **lessons learned and best practices**. This resulted in a smoother start up phase, availability of SOPs and curricula at the beginning of the activities, and an increased collaboration both among teams and among bases. For the rest, INTERSOS experience and expertise in the Protection sector, its long standing presence in the areas of implementation, as well as its capacity to easily adapt to changes and delays, contributed to what was defined by the majority of those interviewed as a successful project, one for which all the internal stakeholders interviewed for this exercise were happy about.

With an upcoming new intervention funded by ECHO, which will continue some of the project aspects here evaluated, it is important to focus the attention on the areas where improvement is still necessary: making the **coordination and communication** more regular, across bases but also at country level among programmes and technical staff (both Protection and MEAL), throughout the project life cycle and not at reporting phases only; clarifying roles and responsibilities; building on the achievements in data centralisation to develop meaningful analyses; enhance the **accountability system**, allocating dedicated resource(s), to make sure feedback and complaints not only are addressed and followed up at the individual level, but also are documented and used as part of a broader organisational learning process.

### Relevance and Appropriateness

The Evaluation exercise established that the project was both relevant and appropriate, considering the needs of the targeted populations. The response that was provided, combining preventive and response activities, took into consideration the specificities of the context and was designed to address both Syrian and Lebanese vulnerable individuals. The community-based approach was key and foresaw the identification and training of OVs, as well as the setup of CBGs and the organisation of CBIs to further involve the community. While good relationships were established and a general trusting environment was created, some improvements are still needed to enhance accountability in terms of regular communication and information, as well as a more continuous learning process based on the feedback received from the community. From the beneficiaries' perspective, no

significant gap was identified in what was provided. Their main comments revolved around the inclusion of other services, mostly related to financial empowerment, through not only direct cash assistance but also longer and better tailored vocational training sessions.

### **Effectiveness**

The project achieved most of its targets, with only one indicator (the one related to the Crisis Modifier targeted beneficiaries) reporting a substantial underachievement - something that was addressed throughout the project implementation period and duly justified and discussed with the donor. Confirming what had emerged in the previous Action, INTERSOS' experience and expertise proved crucial in implementing activities and engaging communities on sensitive topics. While the perception that the project was effective is widespread among stakeholders, some recommendations emerged to further improve internal communication and collaboration among programmes, technical (protection) and MEAL staff, with specific regard to having more appropriate and clear measurement tools and being able to analyse the findings so as to improve the activities.

### **Efficiency**

No major delay was experienced throughout the implementation period, except for the strikes that impacted the legal services, without any severe implication on the final results and achievements. The allocation of the budget was considered to be fair and appropriate: the savings accumulated from the unspent budget allocated to the Crisis Modifier component were successfully transferred to other activities, primarily the CBIs, which had already received appreciation and were thus increased.

### **Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact**

The intervention brought about positive change in the communities, by enhancing GBV prevention and response mechanisms for both survivors and individuals at risk, and by contributing to enhancing a positive environment between host and refugee communities. The focus on the stateless population, though linked to a relatively small target, was widely praised. By being able to build on the previous intervention, community empowerment was more significant, with the result that some of the initiatives are now running independently. As for any Protection project targeting sensitive topics in conservative communities, a medium-long term timeframe is required to have a long lasting impact. The presence of awareness sessions remains crucial, as a means to detect vulnerabilities and promptly refer them either internally or externally.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Project Implementation and Project Management

- Enhance coordination among Programmes, MEAL and technical teams to ensure there is collective identification, measurement and interpretation of indicators. Regularly check on tools development and their effectiveness in providing a measurement as accurate as possible: piloting each tool during the implementation period should allow sufficient time to address potential challenges;
- Continue improving regular exchanges, with attention to both numbers and quality of the activities, to avoid possible discrepancies at reporting stage;
- It is recommended to prioritise the organisation of dedicated meetings for presenting programmatic dashboards and analyses, rather than sharing them via email. Hosting such meetings allows for the allocation of time to facilitate discussions and engage all those involved in a more interactive manner.

### Mission Management

- Accountability mechanism:
  - Improve information sharing within and across bases, foster centralisation of the complaints and feedback management and ensure all types of complaints and feedback are duly archived;
  - Budget for at least one dedicated person (Accountability Officer at Country level, or Accountability Assistants at base level) who can support the MEAL staff in collecting, registering and responding to feedback and complaints, and who can guarantee regular checks on the use of the CFRM channels, so as to suggest improvements if needed. While clearly hotlines are among the most used channel, decisions could be made about the real effectiveness of complaint boxes;
- Information Management:
  - Continue the efforts towards data centralisation, supporting staff in an efficient use of the data management Platform;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities at all stages of the project life cycle, and especially with regard to MEAL, from the creation of data collection tools, to data collection, to data analysis and reporting. Highlight the complementarity of MEAL and technical roles when it comes to elaborate analyses starting from the data collected.