



Executive summary

**End-Term Review of the
Intervention: Schools
Construction, Restoration and
Equipment in the Palestinian
Territory – Phase IV**

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Palestine o.T.

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Date of Review Report: April 26th, 2022

1 Presentation of the evaluation

The School Phase IV Project builds on the results of the previous phases I, II and III; it explicitly cements three results (R1, R2, R3). The present End-term Review (ETR) aims to assess the state of implementation of the project and to propose recommendations for the remaining period. School IV project has been implemented by Enabel across both the West Bank (WB) and East Jerusalem (EJ).

The project directly aimed to benefit large school users (<7,360 students, headmasters, teachers) while the Palestinian community was identified as the indirect beneficiary. The main entities involved are Enabel (Palestine office and Brussels Headquarters) and the Jerusalem Directorate of Education (JDoE), up to its dismantling on 20/11/2019 by the Israeli authorities.

The School Project Phase IV had a final budget of 18.5M€ from the donor (the Belgian Development Agency, referred to later as 'Enabel'), and 2.5M€ 'in kind' from the partner Country. The Contract agreement lasted 120 months (including 36 additional months, as per Addenda #1, 2, 3 and 4), covering a ten years period (17/07/2013 - 06/07/2023). It is based on a combination of own management (EJ) – due to the lack of legal status of the Palestinian MoE in EJ – and co-management in the WB.

The ETR methodology relied on multiple sources of information, including a desk review, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and several physical and remote Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI) with key stakeholders. Beyond some useful documentation supplied by Enabel, the project team struggled to gather further reliable and evidence-based set of quantitative data. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Team Leader was impeded to travel to Palestine and the Local Evaluator, due to time constraints, travelled to selected sample of schools.

2 Results and conclusions

2.1 Performance criteria

Relevance

The project consistently responds to the targeted beneficiaries' needs and to national strategies and priorities, as its scope goes beyond a mere architectural and engineering design, and maturely considers a large soft component. The project helps to reduce the discrepancy between Palestinian and Israeli schools, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Efficiency

As a result of an articulated funding modifications, across the 10-year period of implementation (2013-2023), the project benefitted from a budget of 18.5M€. The expenditures up the last official data attained: 72% for R1 (hard-component), 52% for R2 and supposedly 100% for R3. Payments made to Contractors and suppliers in general were reported in a regular and acceptable timeline. The Review did not find trace of bribes.

Effectiveness

As enthusiastically recognised by the beneficiaries at all levels, construction or reconstruction of schools and kindergartens resulted in better and healthier educational environments for children. The technical quality of the interventions is generally positive. Support to disabled people and environmental concerns were duly and purposely considered and delivered.

The R3 component, through the installation of PV-systems, was correctly implemented. R2 (soft-component) lags behind schedule due to Covid-19 restrictions and may be completed during the remaining course of the project.

The untiring commitment of the Enabel staff as well as the strong and eager involvement of all its consultants and reference groups, helped in offsetting the pandemic consequences which affected any social dynamics, especially in the very sensitive location and cultural features of EJ. In general, Enabel's staff competence and involvement were widely applauded.

Impact

A direct impact of the project is seen in the improved indoor and outdoor comfort conditions of the rehabilitated schools and kindergartens (R1 hard-component). This also has practical and political impacts, as better comfort and quality attracts parents to subscribe at the Palestinian-run EJ schools, rather than at those under the Israeli administration.

Funds withdrawal due to school naming crisis, determined the non-implementation of Bakri pilot green-school (as well as another school and a kindergarten, along with a set of soft-activities and a study-tour abroad): this weakened the project's impact and its potential to link with the visionary Wadi Al-Mughair school (Phase III).

A lesser impact of the project is visible in R2 (soft-component, e.g. capacity building at MoE level, through a study-tour abroad, and better energy and environmental awareness).

R3 is also having a clear impact, because the installation of PV-systems results in significantly reduced demand for fossil energy from Israeli suppliers and thus reduces electricity bills in addition to the obvious environmental impact. Although a positive impact on attendance rates, compared to drop-out rates, was initially noted, the ongoing pandemic and the data loss due to JDoE dismantling (November 2019) have limited the availability and reliability of relevant statistics.

Sustainability

The investment displays a potential for high sustainability mostly due to Enabel's long-standing experience in WB and EJ in particular. The targeted school population were involved up to a notable degree and interested in increasing the quality of the school premises: this fostered a vivid sense of ownership which will in turn result in a stronger cultural and political resilience. Focusing on EJ, better schooling will lead to better performance by school children and, in the short- and medium-term vision, will encourage more children to enrol in the EJ-based schools.

The closing of JDoE and the lost opportunity to enhance the MoE officers' capacity building negatively affected the project sustainability.

Gender

In general, the project benefitted from an inclusive contribution irrespective of gender, which has positively impacted the high-quality design and implementation. Actually, a significant number of female consultants, public agents and officers at Enabel, national partners and consultants in general characterised the ongoing project at the administrative and technical levels.

Environment

The project in general and the schools' design in particular benefited from the Enabel staff's broad and specific experience in managing and addressing a variety of environmental issues: to this regard - by specifically focusing on the EJ hard-component - the project implementers

tried their best to minimise disturbances to the physical and social components. Also, the use of environmentally friendly building techniques and materials, was maximised. A targeted Handbook (designed to be scrupulously followed) was supplied to the works implemented

2.2 Specific questions

1. To what extent has the environmental theme been integrated in the scope of the project? Which lessons and recommendations are relevant for the preparation of the next cooperation project/programme?

A more green-oriented approach and a clear target to reduce the dependency on fossil fuels is constantly envisaged and generally recognised in Enabel-funded initiatives.

The School IV project raised awareness of environmental issues at different levels (e.g. use of natural or re-use of materials, natural cross-ventilation, reducing dependency on artificial lighting, promoting animation movies on six environmental topics, etc.), and installation of a number of PV-systems.

2. To what extent has the implementation of Schools IV and RiSE projects been managed with a project approach? To what extent and how has each intervention benefited from the implementation of the other?

Both School IV and the parallel RiSE projects are based on a mature and multi-year successful and innovative experience of schooling construction/reconstruction in West Bank and East Jerusalem. Typical EJ-schooling affecting issues (i.e.: comparison with the concurrent and resourceful Israeli-affiliated school premises) were / are being partly addressed via hard-component activities, but also by enriching the curricula with more attractive and up-to-date teaching and learning tools, such as STEAM and an overall inclusive schooling environment.

The complementarity of the two projects, as well as their mutual administrative and technical results, have been achieved. In addition, the management and technical support of both projects are provided by one team from Enabel, and they follow similar procedures and management approach (taking into consideration the unique specificities of East Jerusalem, compared to West Bank).

3. What impact has the COVID crisis had on the implementation and results of both interventions? Has the intervention team adapted its strategies? How successful were these adaptations?

In spite of a satisfactory management of especially R1 and R3 (hard-component), the pandemic severely impacted R2 (soft-component), hardly implemented or even cancelled. Large use of remotely implemented meetings and common sessions helped to ensure a relatively effective implementation of the project: managing the online payment-process and an overall improved computer literacy resulted in an upgrade of national partners' skills and their ability to continue with the ongoing activities.

Though no funds were specifically budgeted or allocated to relieve the impact of the Covid-19 crises - as the project (in its design phase) had not anticipated such a serious situation -, there is a direct positive impact of the project for the targeted communities: it is now possible to envisage post-pandemic schooling in the future.

4. How do the two implementation modalities (co-management and own management) of the project compare in terms of efficiency, sustainability, and innovation?

School IV is being implemented with a combination of modalities, determined by the changing political and administrative environment, the lack of legal status of the MoE in East Jerusalem and the sudden school naming crisis and its consequences: in the course of the project implementation, larger responsibilities were attributed to the national partners.

The own management led to overall good results, as Enabel managed procurement and expenditures is based on its own robust procedures (efficiency) and shows a larger range of independency in the design (innovation). Strong and transversal involvement of the national stakeholders (sustainability) was noted.

5. School IV: What was the impact of the decision to suspend the collaboration with MoE, all construction in the West Bank and all capacity building on the project?

The politically and administratively unsolved ‘school naming crisis’ suddenly occurred in Q3 2018, as a result of a clash between the line ministry and the Donor led to the dramatic withdrawal of the Belgian government from the JFA, which resulted in the reduction of funds allocated to the project.

This whole incident had a disruptive impact on implementing the School IV project, affecting both the hard- (R1) and soft-component (R2), though at the end the loss was to some extent limited due to the eagerness and commitment of both Donor’s and national actors. Moreover, there was a transfer of funds to the parallel RiSE project.

3 Recommendations

Recommendations	Target
<p>1: Considering the very good overall results achieved by the project’s hard-components and, to a lesser degree, its soft-components, a further injection of funds is recommended.</p> <p>2: The popular STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) approach and further visionary hard- (green building) and soft-design components should be included in the upcoming investment of funds from Enabel.</p> <p>3: Re-considering the long-awaited Bakri innovative school funding is recommended.</p> <p>4: Collaboration, participatory design and social mobilisation should be continuously emphasized and practised across the funded projects.</p> <p>5: Topics such as gender equity, environmental awareness and disability are intimately tied within any Enabel-funded initiative. This laudable approach should be strongly continued.</p>	<p>Enabel & the Steering Committee</p>

4 Lessons learned

1. All project implementers (Enabel, Consultants, and beneficiaries) are deeply rooted in the local environment and its intimate features: this allowed a fair and balanced assessment and identification of the most disadvantaged schools and kindergartens, aiming to address part of their technical and educational issues.
2. The sudden obstacles encountered by the project (e.g. school naming crisis, funds withdrawal, outbreak of the still ongoing Covid-19 pandemic) have severely impacted especially the soft-component R2, while these obstacles were satisfactorily managed and tackled for the R1 and R3, mainly thanks to the high commitment of Enabel HQ and the Jerusalem-based manager, and the concurrent contribution of all national parties.
3. Particularly in EJ, education suffers significantly due to the challenging competition from the Israeli education system: financially speaking, the EJ teachers’ salaries are outrageously low compared to their competitors. Moreover, Palestinian teachers’ skills are outdated.
4. Repairing/renovating the infrastructures is only one aspect of the main political and social issue. Another is to ‘attract’ the parents and to convince them to enrol in a Palestinian educational institution. This calls for improvements to the expected learning results, in terms of updated curricula, practical tools, teachers’ capacity building, IT hardware and software, etc.

5. From a broader perspective of school finance, the improved quality of schools – in both the soft- and hard-components – primarily ensures enrolments and the resulting fees-flow, attracts better teachers, defines a safer and more stimulating human environment (especially for girls' schools and Co. Ed. schools), and leads to greater physical and moral respect for the schools.
6. Funding PV-systems installation reduces schools' dependency on fossil-fuel energy sources supplied by Israeli companies. It also limits the schools' electricity bill, with immediate and positive impacts on the schools' technical upgrading and maintenance.