



Executive summary

Mid-term review of the Local Government Reform and Development Programme – Phase II (LGRDP-II)

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Palestinian Territories

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1 Presentation of the evaluation

The 2nd phase of the “Local Government Reform and Development Programme”, the LGRDP-II, was conceived and implemented within a context of extreme (social, economic, cultural and political) fragility and instability in Palestine and considering extraordinary challenges of territorial fragmentation in Palestine.

The programme comprises 5 complementary result areas, targeting respectively:

- ✓ policy and regulatory frameworks for local government collaboration, local economic development and territorial integration (R1);
- ✓ institutional capacities at national level to support, coach, supervise, and monitor collaboration of local government units or LGUs (R2);
- ✓ improved service delivery, local development and territorial integration through effective collaboration of LGUs (R3) and through LGU infrastructure (R4);
- ✓ community participation on issues and priorities of public interest (R5).

This mid-term review (with field work in Palestine and Jerusalem from 4th till 18th March 2019) intervened 45 months after the official start of the programme (June 2015) and it shall inform and provide recommendations and guidance for the last 15 months of programme implementation (April 2019 - June 2020).

The methodology used for this MTR combined: a preparatory and continued desk study, exploiting the programme’s planning, monitoring and evaluation system, interviews and focus group sessions with key stakeholders, field visits to 4 clusters and 2 interactive brainstorming sessions. An on-line survey was also conducted, but its responsive rate was too low to provide trustworthy information.

2 Results and conclusions

2.1 Performance criteria

Overall this MTR concludes that LGRDP-II performs well vis-à-vis the 5 DAC evaluation criteria. The following table visualises the assessed performance using the A-B-C-D scoring.

| Overall performance | A | B | C | D |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| <u>Relevance</u> | A | | | |
| <u>Efficiency</u> | | B+ | | |
| <u>Effectiveness</u> | Potential for score A | B+ | | |
| <u>Impact</u> | Potential for score A | B+ | | |
| <u>Sustainability</u> | Potential for score A | B+ | | |

- Relevance

Combining multiple aspects and sources of information and considering the challenging Palestinian context, the MTR-team concludes that all focus areas of LGRDP-II remain highly relevant. Moreover, the combined (achieved and/or still potential) synergies between these focus areas enhance the relevance of this programme.

- Efficiency

Overall stakeholders expressed their (strong) appreciation of the mutual and joint management; while the MTR-team observed adequate attention to economic usage of resources and funding. Some of the strengths found include: attention to the quality of services procured; the sharing of resources; the extensive mobilisation of Palestinian professionals; and sharing concepts and fostering synergies with other development partners.

Combining many sources of information, the MTR-team considers that the performance management of the LGRDP-II team and the monitoring and steering of the implementation of the work streams and result chains of LGRDP-II remained rather weak. The MTR also observed some limitations in collaboration and synergies (such as: within the LGRDP-II team itself, between the LGRDP-II team and other international development partners or between MoLG departments supported by LGRDP-II).

- Effectiveness

Overall, when enquiring about progress and success of the different result areas of LGRDP-II, the MTR team generally found satisfying answers with respect to outputs and (intermediate) outcomes. The mutual coherence of the multiple workstreams and initiatives of the LGRDP-II programme is good and contributes to the overall effectiveness.

The intervention strategy, the theory of change and the pathways of development of LGRDP-II often remain implicit and are insufficiently documented. Some of these key challenges to address are: the urgent need to fully focus now on completing the policies, regulatory frameworks and replicable models expected under R1; insufficient documentation of good practices in capacity building (R2); late progress in several work streams (R3); insufficient integration of infrastructure funding under R4 with ambitions and outcomes of other LGRDP-II components.

The “B+” score for effectiveness is mainly justified by the many valuable building blocks that have already been produced; thus, constituting a potential for strong effectiveness by the end of the programme. But at the same time, this MTR concludes that the LGRDP-II team should urgently get its act together and ensure that those building blocks are transformed into integrated and lasting results, as further detailed in this report.

- Impact

The mutually reinforcing (existing and expected) outcomes of the different result areas and intervention streams of LGRDP-II are significantly contributing to real potential for lasting impact of LGRDP-II. Such impact could be achieved by materialising the combined systemic transformation potential already brought together by LGRDP-II. The MTR-team also appreciates clear (already observable and potential) impacts of sustained and combined support (both infrastructures and enhanced capacities) in particular clusters. The ongoing inclusion (adoption) of lessons learned, good practices and models - generated with the support of LGRDP-II - into national systems and into multi-donor / other donor supported initiatives (LGSIP, ARD, AFD-funded programmes, etc.) contributes to the (potential) impact of the programme.

However, well-targeted further efforts are absolutely needed to enhance and consolidate such strengths. Several work streams of LGRDP-II are rather short in time for delivering the targeted outcomes and for generating sufficient potential and critical mass for lasting impact. The remaining time for programme implementation (up to June 2020) is short.

Intensive and well targeted efforts are required to realise LGRDP-II's potential by such closure time.

- Sustainability

Some of the observed key strengths are: high level of appropriation of enhanced capacities at MoLG and clear adoption by innovated practices for capacity building; and some clear successes in empowerment of (clusters of) LGUs and groups of stakeholders; many already generated building blocks providing good potentials for leaving a coherent and sustainable legacy (with respect to policies, frameworks, good practices, Palestinian expertise, ...); etc.

Some of the observed key strengths are: remaining key issues in MoLG's capacity building; the need to further promote and advance empowerment of both LGUs and of groups of stakeholders (women, youth, ...); the urgent need to fully focus now on effectively materialising LGRDP-II's potentials; etc.

2.2 Specific questions

The terms of reference for this MTR listed approximately 20 specific questions, grouped under the 5 DAC evaluation criteria provided above. Listing all these specific questions and summarising the corresponding responses would be in excess of the number of pages allotted to this summary. The detailed analysis and response per specific question is however provided in the full report, while the key elements to be mentioned in this summary are already listed above under the MTR's appreciation for the corresponding DAC evaluation criteria. The MTR's specific performance assessment for most of these specific questions varies between A- and B+.

Below the MTR's appreciations are also recapped for the transversal and horizontal themes.

- Gender: overall appreciation **B-** (potentially B+)

Some interesting gender related outcomes have been and/or are being achieved. Nonetheless, the MTR-team concludes that the gender perspective did only get a minor, but recently increasing, focus.

- Environment: overall appreciation **B-** (potentially B+)

Apart from the specific attention for environmental issues related to specific types of JSC, environmental issues only got a minor focus.

- Results-oriented steering: overall appreciation **B-** / **C+**

As explained in several parts of the MTR report, the results-oriented steering of LGRDP-II implementation was appreciated as "rather weak".

This MTR considers that such weakness in results-based management is one of the key reasons why the LGRDP-II programme has not (or not yet) reached its full potential in effectiveness. Urgent improvements are needed in this area for the LGRDP-II programme to effectively leave a legacy.

- Monitoring: overall appreciation **B-** / **C+**

Idem as above.

3 Recommendations

Recommendations for LGRDP-II

- The final 15 months of LGRDP-II's implementation phase (April 2019 – June 2020) should focus on leaving a coherent sustainable legacy; comprising: policies, frameworks, good practices, replication manuals, networks of Palestinian experts, etc. This includes providing comprehensive answers and solutions for lingering issues with respect to LGU collaboration (limitations of bylaw on JSC, Joint Municipality, ...) and integrating good practices and lessons learned on territorial integration, LED (Local Economic Development) and ARD (Area Resilience Development).
- Enhance LGRDP-II's performance management and results-based accountability
- Maintain the programme's full operational capacity and continue the full-fledged implementation of key initiatives (including ARD) till June 2020 (closure date).
- Improve the documentation and communication on LGRDP-II's intervention strategies, theories/pathways of change and results chains
- Invest in and further enhance synergy with other development partners.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG)

- In close collaboration with the LGRDP-II support team, focus on finalising the policy, regulatory and implementation support frameworks targeted under Result 1.
- Nurture full adoption of LGU-empowerment concepts and MoLG's supporting roles.
- Establish and capacitate a (virtual) 'cross-cutting' team in charge of policy design and strategic planning & control, involving the different departments of MoLG, as well as multi-disciplinary (cross-cutting) teams in support of effective LGU collaboration and territorial development.

Recommendations for Enabel and the Belgian development cooperation

- Actively support successful achievement of the challenging targets for the last 15 months of the execution phase of LGRDP-II (till end June 2020)
- Envisage future Belgian support (in cooperation with EU and other partners) for an intervention centred around "enabling area-based inclusive development and territorial integration"

4 Lessons learned

- Intervening in complex environments and supporting institutional and organisational capacity enhancement among all actors of a sector in a country (in this case the local governance sector in Palestine) requires time spans of at least 9 to 12 years.
- The available scope for flexibility in intervention strategies of programmes of the Belgian Development is a crucial success factor and allows adapting the programme to evolving contexts.
- In spite of consistent efforts under the 'More Results' label, the indicators used in the logical framework and/or in the annual results reporting of interventions of Enabel often do not yet provide a valuable representation of the progress achieved and/or of the intervention's performance.

- Improved public sector governance, enhanced government service delivery, appropriate territorial governance and enabling policy environments at local, inter-local / sub-regional, regional and/or national levels are (and remain) key for successful and sustainable socio-economic development. The corresponding 'conditions of success' should be part of the theories of change developed when designing new interventions targeting local economic development or private sector driven development.