



Executive summary

**Mid-term Review of “RiSE”
project – Resilience in Schools of
East Jerusalem**

PZA 17 0421T

Palestine o.T.

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1 Presentation of the evaluation

Launched in 2019 for an initial 3-year implementation period, **Resilience in Schools of East Jerusalem (RiSE)** aims to strengthen the resilience of the Palestinian community in East Jerusalem by improving access to education, school infrastructure and public spaces through the creation of a healthy, safe, child and environment friendly education atmosphere involving the end users and the educational communities. The present Mid-term Review (MTR) was commissioned to provide opportunity to assess progress to date, determine whether the project is on track to achieve its predicted outcome and propose any necessary changes of approach and/or direction to optimise the achievement of the outcome and the sustainability of the achievements.

The project directly aims to benefit large school populations (4,265 students, 352 teachers, targeted schools' population at large and Inhabitants of five neighbourhoods) while the Palestinian community could be identified as the indirect beneficiary. The project directly involves the following entities:

- Enabel: Palestine office and Brussels Head Quarter
- The European Union Representative (EUREP) in Jerusalem
- The Jerusalem Directorate of Education¹ (JDoE), up to 20/11/2019 (dismantling date by the Israeli forces).
- Numerous Consultants and national and international NGOs, such as: Bimkom, Al-Nayzak, Terre des Hommes – Italy.

The RiSE project has a budget of € 12,013,168 from the donor (the Belgian Development Agency, referred to later as 'Enabel'), following an amendment to the project signed in November 2021 (EU: additional budget €850,000, Belgium additional budget €4,500,000). The project duration - extended for further 14 months -, totals 50 months (expected end: 31/07/2023).

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 Palestine and the Local Senior Evaluator could not travel to all locations.

2 Results and conclusions

2.1 Performance criteria

Relevance

The project consistently responds to the targeted beneficiaries' needs and to national strategic orientation 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.

The support of EUREP and the collaboration with national and international NGOs and Consultants, gave the project a stronger push, aiming at a visionary inclusive education goal, fully in line with Enabel's schooling principles, and the priorities of the EUREP in Palestine.

Efficiency

¹ It is worth noting that the Palestinian Ministry of Education (MoE) has no-legal status in East Jerusalem

The programme is benefitting of a budget of €12M+, is based on own management mainly in compliance with the EU funding requirements². The expenditures up the last official data attained: 37% for R1 (hard-component), 0% for R2 and 60% for R3. The payment to Contractors and suppliers at large were reported regular and acceptably timely. Briberies of whatever form were not reported.

The EUREP promoted the inclusion of a new sports playground at the Collège des Frères (CdF - €400k) within the project frame, expected to be used by local sport and cultural clubs and community in the late hours.

Effectiveness

The programme effectiveness is satisfactory with regard to its R1: as enthusiastically recognised by the beneficiaries at all levels, schools and play-grounds reconstruction resulted in better and healthier educational environments for children. The technical quality of the interventions is actually largely positive. Support to disabled people and environmental concerns were duly and purposely delivered.

R2 and R3 components lack behind schedules due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic: nonetheless, implementing partners' (e.g.: Enabel, consultants, national and international NGOs, reference groups) are contributing to activities such as: video-production, environmental awareness mobilization, play-grounds refurbishment and others.

Enabel's staff competence and involvement is widely applauded.

Impact

A direct impact of the programme is seen in the improved indoor and outdoor comfort conditions of the rehabilitated schools and play-grounds (R1 hard-component): this also entails practical and political meanings, as attract parents to subscribe at the EJ schools, rather than at the Israeli's.

A lesser impact is visible with regard to R2 and R3 soft-components, due to the ongoing pandemic. Nonetheless, some early sign of impact was met via the new STEAM approach application and the redesign and equipment of CdF large playground, along with an increased tendency to a wider participatory design to enhance the project ownership at the school population's level and meet their requests.

Sustainability

A high sustainability to the investment is most likely assured by: 1) The targeted schools and kindergartens' population involvement, and 2) Enabel long-standing experience in EJ. Cultural and political resilience is surely strengthened through RiSE project. In the contrary, the closing of JDoE shadows the project sustainability to a degree: possibly a lack of maintenance plan and capacity on the newly rehabilitated schools and play-grounds is to be feared.

Both hard- and soft-components as designed and partially implemented so far, constitute a powerful source of interest to the wider Jerusalemite population. Therefore, better schooling will assure better performances: at short- and medium-term this will attract more subscription to the EJ-based schools.

Gender

² RiSE is funded by the EU, therefore according with Art. 9 of Enabel management contract for third-party funded projects, Enabel cannot undertake co-management. In fact, if the Enabel's partner would fail in implementing the project, or incur in limitations or defective results, Enabel would still be responsible to the EU.

In general, the project benefitted from an inclusive contribution irrespective of gender, and this 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: considering the over-sensitivity of working within the Old-city of Jerusalem and the typical nuisances provoked by any construction activity, 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 has 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 RiSE 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 R1 (hard-component), the pandemic severely impacted R2 and R3 (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?

RiSE is solely being implemented via an own management, due to the lack of legal status of the Palestinian MoE in EJ. This determines overall good results, as the implementing agency (Enabel) manages procurement and expenditures based on its own robust procedures (efficiency) and owns a larger range of independency in the design (innovation). Only and merely theoretically, a lesser degree of project ownership may be taken into account, punctually balanced by a strong and transversal involvement of the national stakeholders (sustainability) and the long-lasting presence of the Belgian cooperation in Palestine.

3 Recommendations

Recommendations	Responsible
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The programme visionary good design – for both hard and soft components – and its strong and continued steering and flexibility, adapting to a partially changing and unpredictable context (i.e.: Covid-19 outbreak; dismantling of JDoE), deserves a further injection of extra-budget and the consideration of a RiSE-2, to build on the good results achieved so far and those most likely to be achieved within its time frame. 2. Enabel and/or the Steering Committee should consider measures to ease JDoE’s regular resuming to work as well as the partial re-design of both the R2 and R3 fields of intervention, indicators and goals 3. The STEAM approach was found to be in high demand within the Palestinian educational architecture: the programme fully met such a demand and further efforts (design and funding) may be recommended in the near future. 	Enabel & the Steering Committee
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Further initiative, where different specific contributions are made in parallel, should be pursued and promoted to enhance the overall impact and strengthen political and substantive collaboration. 	EUREP
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Collaboration, participatory design and social mobilization should be continuously emphasized and practiced daily, aiming at community-based ownership and promoting the sustainability of any programme. Women’s role should remain fully focused. 6. Aspects such as disability, inclusion, environmental concerns are now being closely and maturely incorporated within Enabel’s promoted initiatives. Deviations or decelerations in this regard should be avoided. 	Enabel, partners & consultants

4 Lessons learned

1. EUREP laudably promoted to mingle two parallel streams (one more hard-component oriented: RiSE; the second mostly soft- and inclusivity-oriented: TDH-It): overall the resulting triangular programme’s architecture is successful.
2. All programme implementers (Enabel, national and international NGOs, Consultants, 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 kinder-gardens, aiming at addressing part of their technical and educational issues.

3. Collaboration with TDH-It, Bimkom, Al-Nayzak and other experienced entities (freelance Consultants, social-mobilisers, etc.) in the educational, environmental-awareness and social mobilisation sector paves the way for large programme success, as it aimed at a broader than usual educational and schooling approach.
4. The sudden outbreak of the still ongoing Covid-19 pandemic around the spring of 2020 has severely impacted the soft-components R2 and R3, while it was satisfactorily managed and tackled for the R1, mainly due to the high commitment of Enabel HQ and the Jerusalem-based responsible, and the concurrent contribution of all national parties.
5. Education in EJ pays a dramatic fine to the Israeli challenging competition: financially speaking, the teachers' salaries in EJ are outrageously low compared to their competitors. Also, the Palestinian teacher's skills are outdated.
6. Repairing/renovating the infrastructures is only an aspect of the main political and social issue: "seducing" the parents and convincing them to subscribe to a Palestinian educational institution goes through the expected learning results, in terms of updated curricula, practical tools, teachers' capacity building, IT hardware and software, etc.
7. The use of the CdF external facility in the after-school period is solely limited to local sport-clubs and cultural groups and not to individuals. The responsibility of such a membership mostly lies on the Principal's approval and it is based on objective and fair indicators.
8. From a broader perspective of the school market, the improved quality of schools – at both soft and hard components – primarily ensures subscriptions and consequent fees-flow, attracts better teachers, defines a safer and more stimulating human environment (especially for girls' and Co. Ed. schools), and provides enhanced physical and moral respect for the institution.