



FINAL INTERNAL EVALUATION

Award No. ECHO/SYR/BUD/2021/91008

***Community and specialised protection services for vulnerable host and refugee communities in Akkar and Nabatieh Governorates***

Project Implementation date: 1st June 2021 - 30th June 2022

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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## ABSTRACT

The Evaluation exercise concerned the project entitled “*Community and specialised protection services for vulnerable host and refugee communities in Akkar and Nabatieh Governorates*”, funded by DG ECHO and implemented in Northern Lebanon (Akkar Governorate) and Southern Lebanon (Nabatieh Governorate). The goal of the project was to reduce and mitigate the protection risks faced by the most vulnerable persons from both refugee and host communities.

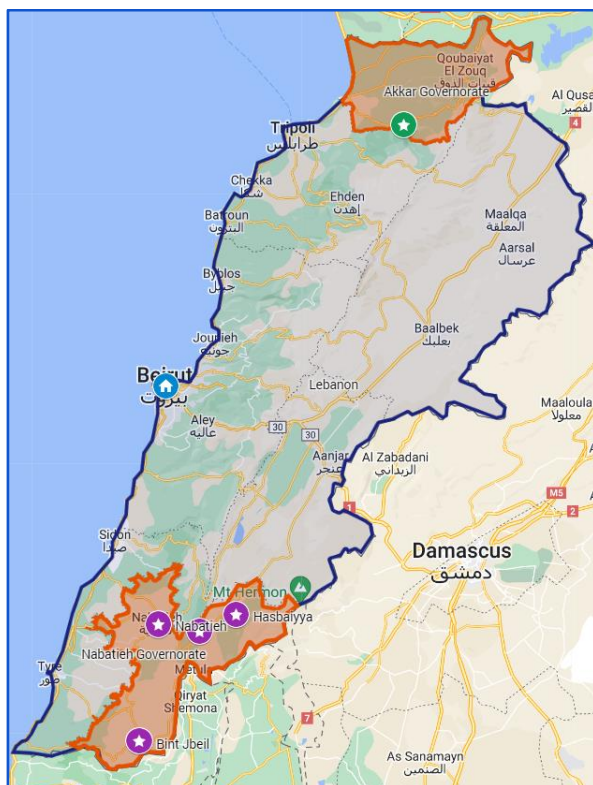
The Evaluation exercise covered all project locations. It aimed at analysing the impact of the intervention on the affected population through the achievement of set objectives. To this end, the following OECD-DAC evaluation criteria were used: Relevance and Appropriateness; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact. The Evaluation design focused largely 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 analysis carried out, INTERSES’ intervention was found to be relevant and appropriate to the local needs, and it achieved or overachieved most of the established targets. Throughout the Evaluation exercise, it clearly emerged how a one-year timeframe is not at all sufficient for such a Protection project to properly reach out to the most vulnerable and to leave a lasting impact in the communities. Yet, on INTERSES’ side some adjustments could have been applied nevertheless, especially in the North, to ensure a more timely and higher quality provision of services. While from the beneficiaries’ perspectives the activities and services were well received, a more continuous and closer monitoring, as well as technical tools in place since the very beginning, would have been beneficial in reducing the distance that eventually emerged between the implementation of the project activities in the two identified Governorates.

## ACRONYMS

CBG	Community-Based Group
CBI	Community-Based Initiative
CfR	Cash for Rent
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
GBVIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
HQ	Head Quarters
ICM	Individual Case Management
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and others
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning
MSNA	Multi Sectoral Needs Assessment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OV	Outreach Volunteer
PSS	Psychosocial Support
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Since the Syrian conflict started ten years ago, Lebanon has hosted the highest number of displaced people per capita in the world. While it has managed to provide a continuous response to both displaced Syrians and vulnerable populations within its borders, it has faced enormous difficulties especially in the last three years, with the economic and financial crisis severely hitting the country. The ongoing crisis is of a multifaceted nature, being marked by recession, economic decline, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Beirut Blast of 4 August 2020. 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 in Northern Lebanon (Akkar Governorate) and Southern Lebanon (Nabatieh Governorate), by enhancing prevention and response mechanisms in very vulnerable and rural areas. 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), including (and with a specific attention to) sexually diverse individuals.

The intervention started in June 2021 for an initial period of 12 months, and was then extended by one month, until its completion in June 2022.

## 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, Akkar and Nabatieh 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**

KIIs were conducted either in English or in Arabic. The KIIs' schedule entailed semi-structured interviews developed around the Evaluation questions. A sample of 19 key informants was interviewed: they included numerous INTERSON staff (both programmes and technical staff, at project and mission level) and representatives of two local partner organisations (HRAR and MOSAIC, while the key informant selected from AMEL did not manage to participate). Interviews took place between June 15th and June 23rd, 2022, in different locations, specifically: Beirut; Tripoli, Halba, Hrar; Tyre. While they were all conducted by the Evaluator, some were in person, others took place online. For the interviews conducted in Arabic, the Mission's Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Manager supported the translation.

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, 15 FGDs were facilitated in the two Governorates, along the month of June, 2022.

While 3 FGDs saw the participation of the project's Outreach Volunteers (OVs), the rest involved beneficiaries from the ECHO-funded intervention, coming from the two targeted Governorates: Akkar

in the North, and Nabatieh in the South. In each governorate, seven FGDs were organised and conducted separately for men and women, girls and boys.

The composition of each FGD varied, ranging from 4 to 9 participants, and resulted in the involvement of 89 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 North, one male in the South);
- One Information Management Officer (male, in the North) and one Field Support Officer (female, in the South).

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 and recordings. 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 INTERSON 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 INTERSON 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.
- Language and time constraints prevented the Evaluator from conducting and/or being present in 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 INTERSON 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. It should be noted that one question was not well understood. While this represents a lesson learned for future Evaluation exercises (to rephrase and/or adjust the wording), in this specific case it limited the triangulation of information<sup>1</sup>.
- In terms of key informants external to the INTERSON team, one local Organisation did not manage to participate in the process.
- Turnover of some coordination and management positions occurred between the planning and the implementation phases, thus it was not possible to capture their feedback and perspectives on the whole project implementation period. Specifically, 8 key INTERSON informants out of the 17 interviewed did not cover the whole implementation period.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to Ev. Question n.4, which will therefore mainly consider the information provided by the key informants.

## FINDINGS

### RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS

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

In the past few years, different reports and analyses have highlighted the aggravation in the living conditions for the majority of the populations living in Lebanon: not only is the Country hosting the highest number of displaced per capita in the world, with related challenges in the coexistence between Syrians and the host communities, but also a severe economic and financial crisis have brought about recession and economic decline. The Covid19 pandemic with its related restrictions, as well as the Beirut Blast of August 2020 have done nothing but make the access to basic needs and services even more difficult. In particular, what has been stressed in all Reports is the increase in poverty rates among both the host and the refugee communities, with the result that the Protection environment has further deteriorated (LCRP 2020). Specifically, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) issues are now common across the vulnerable population, while gaps in the service provision remain notable. According to the GBVIMS (2020) statistics, and to the findings of the VASyR (2020), the need to address such gaps is urgent, as is the necessity to provide alternative solutions to the current unstable situation, where domestic violence, child protection issues, and inappropriate coping mechanisms are commonplace.

To further shed light on the severity of such protection issues, in early 2021 INTERSOS carried out a Multi Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) in the North and South of Lebanon. The findings of this assessment confirmed the above-mentioned gaps and needs, and highlighted several concerning factors: the lack of awareness about health services, specifically Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services, practices and rights; lack of legal documentation, for Syrian refugees; lack of job opportunities; lack of safety; and overall the adoption of negative coping mechanisms to deal with an ever deteriorating economic situation. The assessment also concentrated on marginalised groups, such as the LGBTQI+ community, and what emerged is that difficulties for them are even worse, considering social stigma and a general climate of discrimination and persecution that have always represented a high risk for different forms of GBV issues.

This MSNA was part of and in line with the broader INTERSOS Country Strategy for 2021 and 2022, which put the focus on a two-pronged approach: continuing the 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 of both refugees and host communities through partnerships with national and international humanitarian and development actors.

In this scenario, the Evaluation exercise assessed that the Protection intervention implemented by INTERSOS from June 2021 to June 2022 was relevant and in line with the needs of the population, and particularly praised its 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.

The Proposal submitted in April 2021 underlined the focus on both prevention and response activities, to reduce and mitigate the protection risks faced by the most vulnerable persons in two Governorates, Akkar in the North and Nabatieh in the South - two very conservative areas. Specifically, the proposal emphasised that the intervention was to be implemented through a community-based approach, so as to enhance community mobilisation and a stronger involvement of the population.

The loss of value of the Lebanese pound that reached its peak in the summer of 2021 resulted in some savings for this project (while also causing some delays in the implementation of the activities, as will be analysed below). In light of this, INTERSOS was able to quickly adapt and reallocate the



money for the provision of other services, including cash assistance and additional kits to the beneficiaries (the latter really appreciated and became a pushing factor for higher level of participation to the various sessions organised).

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. Yet, some aspects of the project were assessed differently by the KIs, notably: the sectoral scope of the intervention, and the focus on the LGBTQI+ community.

On one side, the need to address Protection concerns, and specifically to focus on the prevention of and the response to GBV cases, was not disputed. All KIs confirmed that in both the North and the South, and even more in the remote areas selected for the project, GBV concerns are widespread. As reported by one INTERSOS staff, whose words are very much in line with the colleagues: *“the project was relevant, as GBV cases here are huge and very sensitive. Nobody really speaks about this topic, and survivors are usually not seen as victims.”*

Yet, for the intervention to increase its relevance it should have expanded its target focus on other vulnerable groups, including for example Persons with Specific Needs. What also emerged during the KIIs, as well as the FGDs, was the need to include vocational training, so as to empower the survivors but also to reduce some of the assumed root causes of domestic violence. Yet, because of the specificity of the project, this would have gone beyond its design.

Concerning the focus on the LGBTQI+ community, what came under discussion during the interviews was not its relevance *per se*, but more the ambitious outreach target in the given project timeframe and in the specific context of implementation (i.e., North). Some concluded that in order to succeed in this objective, the whole project should have been dedicated to reaching out to these groups; others expressed their concern as in such remote areas, and particularly in the North, this focus was very ambitious: as one senior staff put it, it was *“too advanced, especially in terms of the target for Case Management. GBV is already difficult, especially when you are new in a very conservative area. This takes years, it requires a lot of trust in the community”*.

On this discussion, however, it is worth reporting the perception given by one local organisation with which INTERSOS collaborated precisely to address this focus, which pointed at a very clear and straightforward consideration: for them, the project was *“very needed. These two [Governorates] are among the poorest areas of Lebanon. With such a project you are able to reach out to people that would not be able to come to Beirut to receive services - we look at marginalised communities, in marginalised areas. We had challenges in finding funds, so having you was very important.”*

Concerning the point of view of beneficiaries, all those that participated in the FGDs organised in the project locations confirmed that the activities implemented by INTERSOS responded to their needs and expressed satisfaction in relation to the assistance received, as it addressed real problems that were since then considered a taboo:

*“There's nothing we don't appreciate (...) the services provided by INTERSOS covered our main needs”<sup>2</sup>.*

*“We needed this on a personal level (...) Much information was given to us to help us in the future. Our psychological health was zero, but after the sessions our self confidence was increasing, we learned how to help our children.”<sup>3</sup>*

The Outreach Volunteers, key roles of the project for building the relationship with the communities and creating a trusting environment, confirmed these answers, speaking for themselves but also looking at the reactions they saw reflected in those benefiting from the services:

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<sup>2</sup> FGD with a group of men in Marjayoun, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>3</sup> FGD with a group of women, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

*“The provided services were appreciated (...) and suitable to the beneficiaries needs, who noticed a big change in their mental health”.*<sup>4</sup>

As it happened with the KIs, also many among those who took part in the FGDs highlighted the necessity to expand the activities, including mainly vocational training and literacy programmes:

*“The area needs vocational training and specifically for women, in order to help them in the financial situation.”*<sup>5</sup>

*“There’s nothing we don’t appreciate, though INTERSOS can improve (...) by conducting vocational training and skills related activities for men and boys and literacy programmes.”*<sup>6</sup>

## **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 reducing and mitigating the protection risks faced by the most vulnerable persons from refugee and host communities in underserved and rural areas of two Governorates, Akkar in the North and Nabatieh in the South, by enhancing prevention and response mechanisms. More precisely, the overall goal was to improve the access to quality and dignified protection services for persons at risk and GBV survivors, with a specific attention to sexually diverse individuals.

To reach this objective, the response strategy foresaw a combined approach of (i) a static service delivery, through already established and newly identified safe spaces; and (ii) a community-based action focused on prevention, through mobile outreach and community mobilisation. The Evaluation exercise, through an analysis based on the desk review as well as on the qualitative information collected during KIs and FGDs, established that overall, the activities were consistent with the primary goal of the intervention.

Indeed, to reduce and mitigate the protection risks, the services offered by INTERSOS provided both preventive measures and an immediate response to the most vulnerable groups. Firstly, awareness sessions were found to be appropriate considering the necessity to spread information on something regarded as a taboo. Though both stakeholders and beneficiaries highlighted the necessity for longer sessions, what was put in place was already sufficient to bring about some change in the way people see GBV-related topics.

Because it was often not possible to address directly the real subject of the session, INTERSOS team adopted an ad hoc approach, which ended up being successful: as recalled by one staff, *“We didn’t start directly with GBV: we started with rights, mental being, well being...down to the GBV.”* Gender was also taken into account, whenever possible, so as to put people at ease and be respectful. This was the perception on the side of those who participated in the FGDs:

*“The team was very respectful to all cultural and traditional norms of our community, taking into consideration all ages and genders”.*<sup>7</sup>

The activities foresaw a very strong outreach component: this started later than expected, and could not always count on staff appropriately trained, but at the same time it gave the everyone the opportunities to get to know those they were meant to reach: in the words of a case worker, *“We got*

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<sup>4</sup> FGD with a group of OVs, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>5</sup> FGD with a group of women, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>6</sup> FGD with a group of men in Bint Jbeil, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>7</sup> FGD with a group of girls, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

*to see the context in front of us, we got to understand the different contexts and mentalities in the various villages. The project was culturally sensitive.”* In this, the support of outreach volunteers was crucial - as was in general the community based approach that was implemented.

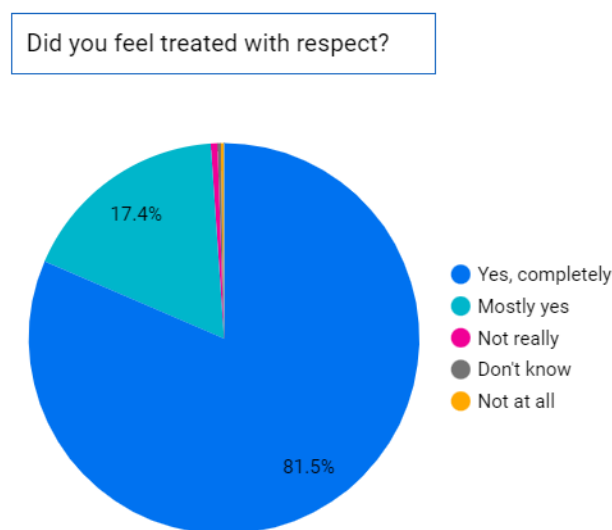
Then, concerning the response component, the services provided were unanimously considered as in line with the overall goal of supporting GBV survivors: KIs and beneficiaries were all satisfied about the case management, but also the PSS and the ESGs.

Because of the sensitivity of the issue and the general social and cultural norms, it was very important to involve the community from the very beginning. The project included a very strong component of community involvement, key to starting the conversation and ensuring the appropriate acceptance by the population. Specifically, the project foresaw the setup of CBGs and the running of CBIs as well as the identification of groups of OVs. Their knowledge of the social, cultural and religious norms of the communities turned out to be key to gain acceptance and be able to conduct awareness sessions.

What was found to be challenging has been particularly the start up phase of the intervention in Akkar, where INTERSOS was a new GBV actor. The new intervention site required team efforts in terms of building the trust with the targeted communities and contextualising and/ or tailoring critical SOPs. While in the South, INTERSOS has been a well-recognised Protection actor for more than a decade and can count on a solid technical team, in the North the Organisation was relatively new as GBV actor and the communities there are even more conservative than in other regions of the Country. Thus a longer inception period was necessary to correctly put in place the response.

Yet, it is commonly agreed that INTERSOS staff was very sensitive in approaching key messages, and strived significantly to build first a trusted and solid relationship with the community. In this, the support of the OVs proved essential, as a link between the Organisation and the beneficiaries. As one INTERSOS staff recalled, *“when we started they thought we came to split women from men. For this, the community level, the volunteers, was important, we could rely on them to spread key messages”*.

As came out during an accountability exercise carried out as part of the project monitoring plan, the majority (98.9%) 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:

*“INTERSOS respected our traditions and norms and the sessions were very appropriate to the context where we live”.*<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, the capacity of INTERSOS to adapt to the evolving circumstances was emphasised during the qualitative data collection and emerged as one of the most significant strengths of the project. Due to the volatile security situation, the economic crisis, the Covid-19 related restrictions, different working modalities were applied, usually in the direction of remote management, which the staff adopted properly led by the coordination team. The donor’s flexibility was also mentioned as one enabling factor that supported the implementation of the activities, even if through remote/alternative modalities: *“we always had the ability to adapt, to adjust, to have room for flexibility to come up with ideas and implement them. This happened also thanks to ECHO flexibility.”*

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

As already mentioned, the project design had a strong component of community involvement, and foresaw different ways of beneficiaries’ participation throughout the implementation of the activities. Specifically, their involvement was meant to start from the very initial stages of the intervention, as part of the community-based approach that had as main objective the establishment of the CBGs and the organisation of CBIs, to then continue with regular information sharing and the possibility to provide feedback. To ensure the active involvement of communities the accountability system was set up through three main channels, as specified in the dedicated policy on INTERSOS commitment to AAP: the complaint hotlines, the complaint boxes, and the complaint emails.

It is worth dividing these two aspects to properly address the community-based approach, first, and then the accountability system that was put in place.

#### 1. Community-based approach

The proposed action aimed at strengthening the role of the communities in addressing GBV stigma locally. All key informants recognised that the set up of the CBGs was key: *“it was a great way to establish a relationship with the community. Once we did that, a lot of people decided to go to PSS”*. Yet, while these groups worked well in the South, thanks also to a variety of initiatives that it was possible to launch, their setup faced more challenges in the North, where a delay in recruitment and in the formation of the groups reduced their potential impact. As summarised by one technical staff, this happened because *“There is no culture in Lebanon of community engagement, especially in rural areas, it requires a lot of capacity building with communities. The selection needs to be emphasised because then the community groups determine the rest of the activities.”*

Beyond the CBGs, the capacity of INTERSOS to establish a good relationship, and a feeling of trust, in the communities touched by the intervention was recognised during all interviews: particularly important was the fact that the project addressed both Syrian and Lebanese communities, which helped in those areas not particularly fond of NGOs - seen as supporting the refugees only. The result of this was that at the end, *“people trusted not the single person, but INTERSOS”*.

Beneficiaries confirmed their involvement throughout the project life cycle. The OVs also reported this, appreciating also the responsibility they were given by the Organisation towards their community, so as to increase the people’s knowledge and awareness.

#### 2. Accountability system

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<sup>8</sup> FGD with a group of boys, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

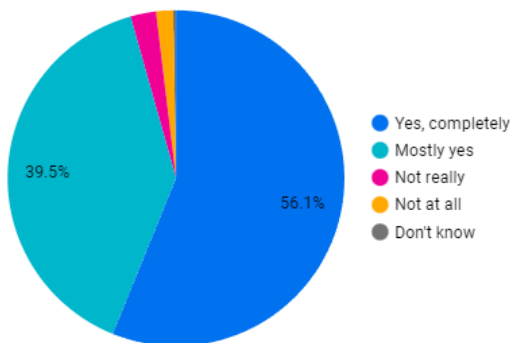
When asked about the accountability system, the KIs expressed an overall appreciation, underlying the significant progress made in this important domain. At the same time, many recognised the need to further strengthen timely responses to the feedback and complaints received from beneficiaries. Looking at the internal complaint system in place it has been reported that although working well, the flow of information should have been strengthened to make it more efficient.

In both project locations, a general feeling of trust was created and this resulted in successfully making beneficiaries at ease if and when they were willing to speak to the staff, to report complaints or to require assistance. In some locations complaint boxes were not used due to the illiteracy rate among beneficiaries; to mitigate this, INTERSOS designed flyers with pictures indicating how to issue a complaint and ensured a regular presence in the field to support such requests.

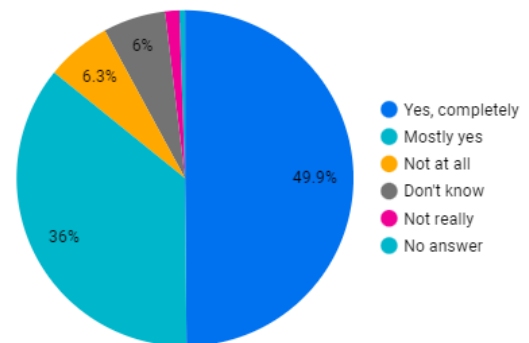
When asked about their knowledge of the accountability system, beneficiaries, mainly in the North, reported that they were aware of complaint mechanisms although they did not know all the channels in place, yet they also confirmed that they could easily reach out directly to INTERSOS staff if necessary.

However, the above views are confirmed by the accountability exercise implemented under the Action to evaluate the Protection mainstreaming. The pies below show how people felt comfortable in reaching out to INTERSOS for complaints or feedbacks although the exercise did not probe their knowledge of the mechanisms in place:

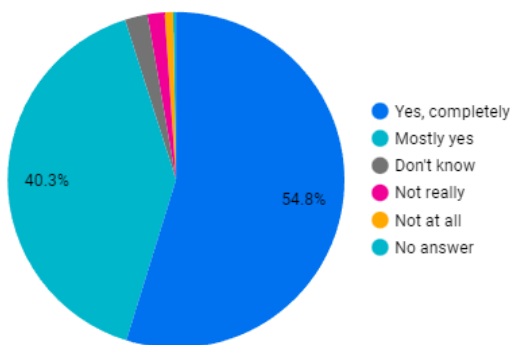
If you had a suggestion for, or a problem with the assistance received, do you think you could channel the suggestion or lodge a complaint?



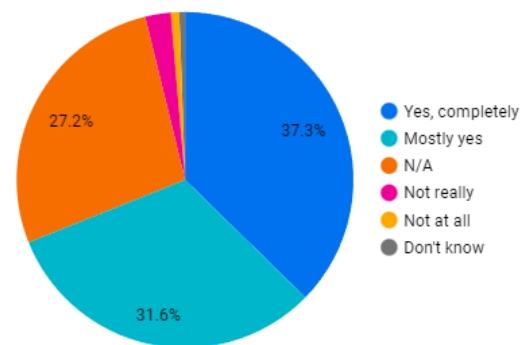
To your knowledge, have suggestions or complaints raised been responded to or followed up?



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



Did you feel well informed about the assistance/service available?





In this regard, it is worth highlighting that the OVs were not aware of all the complaint mechanisms available - they knew some of them, but being the OVs the primary link between the Organisation and the communities, more efforts should be put in ensuring their full understanding so that they can pass the information over to the beneficiaries.

The perception from the community on the answers received by INTERSOS on their feedback was overall positive: according to the majority, their feedback was considered and properly addressed.

Lastly, the learning phase, as well as a regular analysis of the feedback and complaints received, was not structured enough. Some members of the coordination reported that analysis was not shared consistently and this happened partly because of the acknowledged need to improve internal efforts dedicated to this, partly because of the high workload on the MEAL department, especially vis à vis other most urgent deadlines that often took the attention of the staff. In the words of one technical staff member, *"We should emphasise the importance of accountability at both community and mission level. People are overwhelmed and often don't give priority to it."*

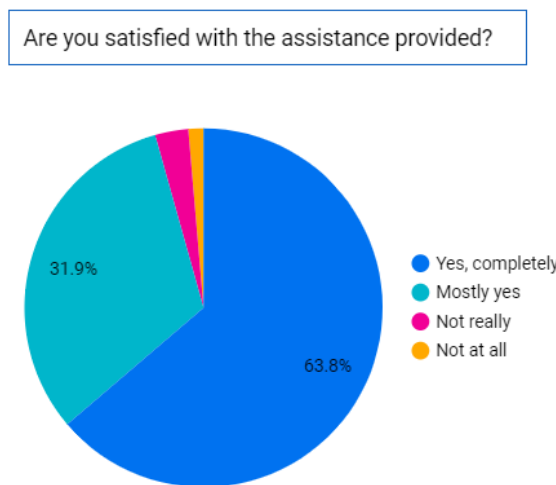
## EFFECTIVENESS

### 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 intervention has surpassed the target set with the project proposal by 60%, managing to support 9,987 vulnerable people out of the 6,227 initially foreseen.

Yet, throughout the analysis, it emerged how the project underwent two different paths during its life cycle in the North and in the South. Despite the same grounding structure of the intervention, of the objectives, assumptions and activities foreseen, the peculiarity of the context in the North along with the sensitivity of the proposed action, preventing and responding to GBV, played a role in the different pace followed by the teams. This proves on the one hand the well rooted acceptance gained by INTERSON in the South as the need to strengthen the positioning for INTERSON as a GBV actor in the North.

Overall, beneficiaries (95,7%) expressed their satisfaction with the services provided, though it is worth mentioning the relatively small, but reported, percentage of those that manifested their discontent when asked about their satisfaction during the internal accountability exercise (a total of 4.4% among those who replied “Not really” and those who said “Not at all”):



At the same time, the trust built with the beneficiaries and the community-based approach that the Organisation managed to set up paid off in setting the right bases: *“We achieved something: we were able to talk about GBV, to spread information about this, to discuss about this and related subjects. GBV is very sensitive, the approach was not as direct as it could be in another context.”* The effectiveness of the PSS sessions was widely recognised, and frequently opposed to the less effectiveness of the awareness sessions. Many interviewees said that, while after the first ones *“we received a lot of positive feedback from the beneficiaries and their neighbours and friends asking for psychological counselling”*, the second were perceived as too short to create a lasting impact. *“It’s one session, it can’t be very interactive, can’t create a lot of impact but at the end it is meant to be about spreading information, not changing lives.”*

Another success, not necessarily captured by the numbers, was the fact that the project activities managed to reach out to both Lebanese and Syrian communities. Cash assistance to both groups

helped them understand that NGOs do not support refugees only, thus increasing the reputation of the Organisation.

In this context, the monitoring of the project played an important role, especially considering the distance between the two locations and the different challenges faced by the two teams. When asked about the effectiveness of the monitoring system, the KIs reported that some mechanisms could be improved in terms of M&E tools, internal communication flows, structured analysis and data management approaches. Although at project level data was analysed, harmonisation and standardisation could be enhanced to “*get a snapshot of the situation at any given time.*” In the words of a senior staff member, “*data collection is one thing, but to be able to read and analyse such data is another thing. We have built the first part, now we have to focus on the second*”. It is worth mentioning that these reflections have triggered harmonisation and standardisation efforts at mission level through a specific MEAL strategy plan for 2023.

## **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 the INTERSOS team in a smoother running of the activities. Others will be analysed as challenges, either internal or external, together with any 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 put in place activities that were tackling very sensitive topics. 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 (from GBV to CM, PSS, etc). 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 more relevant for the South, where INTERSOS started its activities, whereas it was less felt in the North - where it settled in 2017<sup>9</sup>.

Furthermore, INTERSOS’ capacity to adapt to the evolving context and react to the challenges by adjusting its activities definitely represented another enabling factor. In the thirteen months of the project implementation, Lebanon and its population underwent a complex and multifaceted crisis - which could have hampered significantly the achievement levels. Instead, the teams were able to adjust their working modalities, to take advantage of the savings and increase both activities and human resources, to listen to the feedback received from the communities and introduce new services.

Lastly, even if it started as a challenge, the capacity of the team working in the North to deliver in a shorter period of time must be emphasised and listed in this group. If it is true that activities in the North had to face important delays (as it will be detailed below), and therefore started later than in the South, it is equally true that at the end most objectives were achieved. And it is reasonable to

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<sup>9</sup> This in fact will be listed among the challenges, as it took more time and resources for the team in the North to introduce the project and get going with the activities.



affirm that, had the project been given the possibility to continue, the path would have been definitely smoother.

## INTERNAL CHALLENGES

The internal challenges were not perceived in the same way by the project staff in the North and the one in the South, even if some of them had the same origin.

In the North, one challenge was repeatedly highlighted: the fact that the Organisation was a new GBV actor in the area and had to invest more time making itself known and building trust with the community, not particularly familiar in (nor supportive of) working with international NGOs. This, and the other challenges, caused frustration in the staff, some sense of discontent, and a high turnover rate. The difficult working conditions were also a factor; in fact, beside security related challenges, social tensions and the difficult economic situation, the Harar safe space was not easily reachable from Halba (to support on this cash for transportation was provided to vulnerable beneficiaries) and it used to get particularly cold during winter months. Things improved in the second half of the implementation period, with a reinforced team in place that could ensure better quality management - but still they had to rush and meet the set deadlines, to make up for the accumulated delays.

If the broader picture is considered, and looking at the project as a whole, other challenges emerged - which impacted differently the implementation. On the one hand, the fact that some SOPs, such as the one for cash assistance, had to be adapted and revised, entailed a comprehensive exercise that took a considerable amount of time. On the other hand a curriculum for men and boys engagement was created in order to overcome arising challenges in engaging them, which as well absorb some time for the development. Again, activities in the South were less impacted because of the stronger structure, whilst in the North this was a clear limitation in the first months. The turnover of the PM throughout the project timeframe impacted the implementation even though interim and ad hoc solutions were adopted during the recruitment process.

Lastly, while the MEAL system that was set in place was surely in line with project and donor requirements, it still had some areas in need of improvement, where quarterly discussions and lessons learned analysis could be done at coordination and project level. At the beginning of the project, the data system process was again rolled out and coaching on data entry for project staff was conducted. At the same time, it has been reported that coordination between Programmes and MEAL teams could be improved in terms of harmonisation and centralization.

## EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

Some external challenges characterised the entire life cycle of the project, though usually effective mitigation measures were put in place.

In the North, the volatile security situation as well as severe weather conditions caused delays and made it more difficult to access the sites. The safe space of Harar had to close for a couple of weeks because of the snow, which also testifies the difficult access to that location. The fuel crisis during its peak period from July to September, was another important challenge that affected both Governorates (as the whole Country), hindering the staff from moving around the project locations. This, together with the restrictions that had to be adopted to reduce the spread of Covid-19 during the first months of the Action, forced the adoption of remote working modalities for some time - with a resulting impact on the capacity to supervise both locations. Furthermore, it was difficult to recruit technically qualified staff in the North, causing delays in the overall recruitment process and consequently it represented an additional challenge against a timely start of the activities.

The collaboration with the local organisations selected to partner with INTERSOS for this project turned out to be less effective than it was expected, with some consequences in terms of referrals and a general support in entering new areas and reaching out to the identified marginalised groups.

Lastly, it is worth reaffirming the challenges related to the context, specifically in reaching out to very conservative communities to discuss about, and respond to, sensitive issues and to willing to reach out to sexually diverse individuals.

## FGDs

Coming to the perceptions of those receiving the services, the most recurrent comment coming out from the FGDs was about the transportation: while the safe spaces were easy to find and access, because of the economic situation, many found difficulties in reaching them, and recommended some additional support is provided - such as cost covering, or bus/taxi organised:

*“If there was a bus, it would be easy for us to go from our home to the safe space.”<sup>10</sup>*

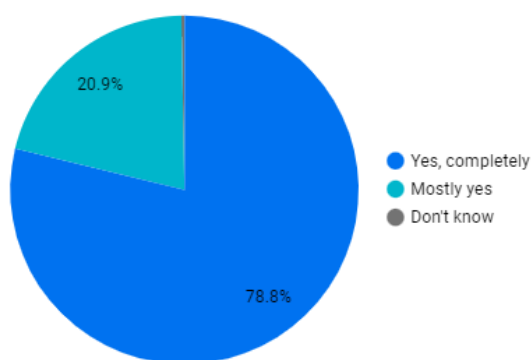
The OVs also reaffirmed this feedback:

*“The site was easy to access, but the main constraint was the financial and the economic situation, where the transportation is very high and the allowance people receive could not help. The recommendation for the future is for the allowance to be compatible taking into consideration the financial and the economic situation.”<sup>11</sup>*

Yet, it should be noted that cash for transportation was indeed provided, to support individuals in coming to the identified facilities as INTERSOS came to realise that this was a barrier.

Through the accountability exercise conducted internally, all 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 (to/from your place), while receiving the assistance/service, and upon return to your place?



## EFFICIENCY

### 6. Were activities cost-efficient?

<sup>10</sup> FGD with a group of girls, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>11</sup> FGD with a group of OVs, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

For the purpose of this exercise, the evaluation of the efficiency focused on what the key informants reported when asked about whether the money was spent in the best possible way, looking at both the activities implemented and the structure in place: different opinions came out driven by the different set up of the project in the North and in the South.

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 capacity of adapting and responding to the accumulated savings. Indeed, as the exchange rate fluctuated substantially, the money saved could be reallocated to increase human resources for boosting activities (for example, in the South more Social Workers were recruited) and the CBIs organised by the CBGs.

Concerning the distribution of dignity kits, some comments were made in relation to the need to include them since the very beginning of the project. A similar feedback was provided for the cash for transportation - as also recommended by the beneficiaries themselves, given that getting to the project spaces had become particularly expensive.

The cash assistance component encountered some diverging opinions, with some KIs reporting that it was still appropriate and a concrete support to the most vulnerable, and others reporting that in such critical circumstances the methodologies chosen (ECA and CfR) were probably not the most appropriate ones, considering a lot of people had increasing challenges in making ends meet. Considering the evolved circumstances, recurrent cash for protection coupled with ECA it is considered to be more appropriate and this was taken into consideration during the design of the new proposals. One senior staff was particularly critical about this: *“ECA would have been more relevant before the economic crisis, after that people weren’t able to address not even their basic needs. Criteria are fair but in light of the current circumstances, it was less an emergency shock than a recurrent assistance. If providing that assistance doesn’t mitigate the need, then one should stop providing it.”*

## 7. Were objectives achieved on time?

The beneficiaries’ feedback were positive and based on the outcomes of the FGDs an overall satisfaction on the timing of the assistance has been reported:

*“100% reported that the services were provided in a timely manner.”<sup>12</sup>*

*“INTERSOS is very committed and services were provided in a timely manner.”<sup>13</sup>*

However, one comment was often added, and pointed at the untimely sharing of information:

*“We knew about the service too late, this prevented us from attending all the PSS sessions.”<sup>14</sup>*

A No Cost Extension (NCE) was requested and approved by the donor in order to extend the project timeframe by one month, also in light of the savings accumulated due to the developments in the context. However, some delays occurred during the implementation of the project and linked to multiple factors

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<sup>12</sup> FGD with a group of women, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>13</sup> FGD with a group of men from Marjayoun, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>14</sup> FGD with a group of girls, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

The main reasons are to be found both in the above-mentioned external challenges (mainly the fuel crisis, the pandemic, the volatile security situation and the adverse weather) and in the setup phase, which turned out to be challenging especially in the North, where INTERSON was a new GBV actor.

Indeed, the initial months proved to be rather demanding, not only in terms of recruitment of quality staff (specifically in the North) but also because of the need for SOPs revision, for example the one of cash, and for the development of internal curricula for boys and men activities. Additionally, in the North the start up phase required a solid technical presence, and considering the specific context and challenges in the identification of qualified staff, activities in the North were the most exposed to what a senior staff called the “*vicious cycle: if one part was late, then the other ones were too.*” In other words, the lengthy recruitment negatively affected the timeliness of service delivery. Finally, staff retention was further hindered by the non-renewal of the project, therefore causing people to resign before the end of the project.

In the South, the reported challenges were mainly related to external factors which hampered the procurement process (i.e., PSS materials) and the staff movements. In fact, because of the partial lockdown imposed by the pandemic during the first months of the project, and the fuel crisis, “*a lot of activities were delayed when they could not be replaced (like the PSS), we had a lot of postponement and we ended up running late.*”

## **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 collaboration with local organisations, with the primary objective of providing them with capacity building so as to boost their understanding of both the rights of individuals at risk of GBV, and existing services they could refer to for support. Furthermore, through the set up of the CBGs, the project aimed at focusing on building local capacities, considering also it addressed sensitive topics in very conservative communities. Lastly, another important element foreseen by the project design was the training of the OVs, who were supposed to be the link between the Organisation and the local populations - both Lebanese and Syrian communities.

The Evaluation exercise, by looking at the monitoring documents and triangulating the information with the KIIs and the FGDs, established that the intervention managed to initiate some collaboration with local organisations, to develop local capacities and to increase people’s knowledge and awareness, though more could have been done in terms of fully exploiting the synergies created. This, of course, keeping into account the short life span of the project.

While unfortunately it was not possible to involve members of AMEL Association in the present analysis, what emerged in the discussions with MOSAIC and Hrar organisations highlighted the value this collaboration had for the two local NGOs, for which INTERSON was perceived almost as “*an ally*”. Yet, both recognised that the interaction could have been higher:

*“On some levels, the partnership was very successful. But we have some limitations (...) The training comes both ways, the needs come both ways - not just in terms of money, but we also need some training (management, proposal writing, capacity building...)”*

At the same time, INTERSOS defined its localization strategy which will be guiding the next steps in terms of local partnerships in the country including structured pathways of capacity strengthening for the targeted stakeholders

The key informants that were interviewed expressed some concerns over the short time they were given to collaborate with the local NGOs, especially considering that if the awareness sessions were indeed good and useful, one is not enough and refresh sessions are needed especially at group level. One staff summarised what others too reported: *“The community needs to have refresher sessions, one year is too little time - they have had this mentality for ages.”*

At the same time, and accepting the limitation of the short implementation period, many voiced how the intervention managed to leave something in the community, as reported by one project staff: *“The members learned something, we were able to tackle this mentality and to change the idea that GBV is not a taboo, is something that you can discuss without judgement. Now they are able to discuss this matter, they say the word, they speak about the violence - before this was not possible, it just didn’t happen.”*

Indeed, the development of local capacities happened also at individual level, by strengthening the importance of reflect, share and act, as recounted by one case worker: *“I had a survivor at the beginning of the project. He has called me recently, he wanted to refer the case of his aunt getting a divorce because she was being abused. So what we did left a mark.”*

According to other KIs, the success in promoting community engagement was clearly visible by the willingness to participate in the initiatives that were put in place: *“Are they more knowledgeable about our service? Yes, they are. About their rights? Yes. Do they see a change? Yes, they see when someone crosses the line of their rights. Do they know where to go for support? Yes. That is reflected not necessarily in the numbers, but in the fact that they look forward to our activities.”*

Yet, if the intervention was reportedly successful in its awareness raising and in fostering knowledge change, it all came at the end of the project, and this raised concerns across the staff: *“People will not forget. People needed it, they were satisfied and loved being with us. Now they have an overall view about GBV, they have the right to say, they know where to go. They are not happy that we are leaving.”* This early leaving worried others in the Organisation, from the coordination level as well: *“This type of intervention should be longer, especially considering you don’t really implement for 13 months. You need time to build trust and confidence. We leave when people start understanding us.”*

When asked whether the awareness sessions and the services received supported and strengthened their community, beneficiaries unanimously gave positive feedback. Some of them are reported below, which are in line with the rest of information collected:

*“INTERSOS services, training and awareness sessions have supported and strengthened the community. We are better in self-confidence, how to deal with others, how to avoid going to wrong places, and how to deal with our parents.”<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>15</sup> FGD with a group of girls, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

*“The bond between us and our community is strengthened because now we are able to chat and talk about our problems.”<sup>16</sup>*

Particularly interesting is the experience shared by the OVs:

*“Training and capacity building helped us a lot in gaining experience and information regarding GBV services. We were able to exchange this information with the community while conducting the awareness sessions; the exchange of information helped the community a lot in increasing their knowledge of GBV. Women became more aware in case they had issues related to GBV, to report them. The awareness session really increased self confidence, for women or mens.”<sup>17</sup>*

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

As already analysed throughout the Evaluation exercise, the project’s two main approaches, to provide response as well as preventive measures, brought about real change in the communities they targeted. The evidence of this is not just in the achievement levels, but came out during the whole process of qualitative data collection. What is even more significant, is that this general consensus on positive results was expressed from both teams (North and South).

For example, one answer that was provided by staff in the North and in the South was about the positive effect that particularly the CBGs and the CBIs had on reducing the tensions and increasing the integration between Syrian and Lebanese communities, something that found confirmation in the voices of beneficiaries:

*“The bond between us and our community is strengthened, whether we are Lebanese or Syrians.”<sup>18</sup>*

Moreover, staff at coordination level underlined how, regardless of the various challenges encountered, it is now possible to see some difference: not only in people’s understanding of Protection and GBV, but also in *“practising positive coping mechanisms, and knowing that sharing thoughts can enhance your wellbeing.”*

Attendance at PSS and ESG sessions also brought about change, as one project staff reported: *“Before, women never went out, now the situation is different. You can see the change in the way people interact with each other.”*

When asked about whether the intervention had managed to make any difference, considering the challenges in reaching out to the marginalised groups initially identified as one of the focus of the activities, one representative from a partner Organisation expressed her thoughts with no hesitance:

*“Yes, of course! It is not only a drop of water you are giving to a desert, you are giving water to a plant. With any service you provide, people feel supported, they feel you are there. Even if you leave or stop implementing these services, people will know that someone came and supported them, and that you provided them with alternatives. And they know that there are NGOs working on this.”*

Indeed, this came out during one of the FGDs:

*“We felt that there was someone giving attention to our needs.”<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> FGD with a group of men from Marjayoun, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>17</sup> FGD with a group of OVs, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>18</sup> FGD with a group of men from Bint Jbeil, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>19</sup> FGD with a group of men, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

One negative (though not really unusual) consequence was reported by some stakeholders, who referred to some unfortunate episodes deriving from the cash assistance and its being for individuals falling within certain categories only. These misunderstandings were usually solved with more and clearer explanations: *“beneficiaries are jealous if they don’t benefit from the cash. So they call and call, asking for money and saying they get emotionally abused. It’s a double-edged sword. We explain the eligibility criteria, that we have high, medium, low cases and we need to deal with the first group first, and then they get it.”*

Generally speaking, all beneficiaries reported that change was there after INTERSOS services, as reported by some personal experiences:

*“I was thinking about suicide, due to the bad situation, but after INTERSOS sessions I felt much better.”<sup>20</sup>*

Among the changes cited more frequently, the increased self-confidence as well as improvements in social life and wellbeing emerged, and was repeatedly cited by the youngest participants as well:

*“There was a positive change after the services provided by INTERSOS. We felt that our mental health was better. The most important changes we witnessed were increased self-esteem, reduced exposure to bullying, and more control of anger (...) We got to know each other more after the services, and we learned how to deal with stress in our normal life.”<sup>21</sup>*

*“We did not want to come to attend the sessions because we felt that they would not change anything in our life, but the OV convinced us, and we started to attend the sessions. The result was unexpected, we loved it and came to attend other sessions. We benefited a lot, it affected our personalities, on all levels.”<sup>22</sup>*

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

The Evaluation exercise, through the triangulation of the information collected by those involved, established that one year is not enough to ensure any real degree of sustainability for a project so conceived. Yet, it should be recognised that the investment on both response and prevention activities, together with the strong community-based approach and capacity building component, put the basis for some lasting impact. Here, the different scenarios in which the project was implemented determined two degrees of sustainability: in the South, because INTERSOS was already a well known Organisation operating in the Protection sector, the team did not have to spend too much time on creating a trusting environment and could concentrate sooner on establishing roots. In the North, still a certain level of trust and awareness was brought about, but it took more time - and activities will stop exactly when the Organisation could have consolidated those efforts.

The idea as foreseen in the project proposal was to combine response and prevention activities to attend to the most urgent needs while reducing the risks for vulnerable individuals. The capacity building component, as well as the establishment of community committees, were both pointing at creating sustainability in the project activities: on one side, by enhancing the understanding of the rights for individuals’ victims/at risk of GBV; on the other side, by reinforcing community engagement on GBV related topics. This attention to building a close collaboration between service providers

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<sup>20</sup> FGD with a group of women, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>21</sup> FGD with a group of boys, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>22</sup> FGD with a group of girls, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

(governmental and local associations) was meant to increase the resilience of the whole community contributing to create a safer environment and long-lasting strategies and pathways.

Data triangulated with qualitative information confirmed the intention but also the big challenge of managing to make the project sustainable within such a short timeframe. One of the most frequent doubts expressed by the interviewees concerned the effectiveness of the OVs and their work even after the end of the project, as they were generally regarded as the sustainability element of the intervention, together with those taking part in the community committees: *“the OVs are very trained on GBV-related topics, they need to spread the message even if they will stop working with INTERSON. But I don’t know how committed they are...”*. On a positive note, some answers seemed to come by a group of OVs:

*“Through the training, the capacity building and the exchange of information we gained experience, self-confidence and we want to continue our “mission” in the community even without INTERSON.”<sup>23</sup>*

Even at coordination level, the shared feeling was that yes, some groups could continue meeting and organising activities, but a driving factor should be there to guide them - at least until it really becomes something well embedded in the society. What can last, though, is the knowledge acquired, which will most likely lead to change, as summarised by one technical staff: *“Most people now know how to look for services, where to look for them, when someone crosses the line. They can rely on each other as a community to make things better.”*

Beneficiaries provided positive answers when asked whether the intervention had led to an increase in their wellbeing, something that could outlive the presence of INTERSON:

*“Our wellbeing improved for sure after taking the training and the awareness sessions, and as a result we are more self-confident, have the ability of making the right decisions, and we can better control our anger.”<sup>24</sup>*

*“As the sessions proceeded, we gained more self-esteem, and we improved our relationships with the community members.”<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup> FGD with a group of OVs, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>24</sup> FGD with a group of girls, Akkar Governorate, June 2022.

<sup>25</sup> FGD with a group of boys, Nabatieh Governorate, June 2022.



## CONCLUSIONS

As thoroughly explained in each section related to the four criteria analysed above, the project here evaluated was successful in responding to the needs of the targeted populations, considering also that it reached out to both Syrian and Lebanese communities - which had a direct impact on the perception of the Lebanese population towards the role of NGOs in the Country.

Considering the sensitive topics addressed, the intervention achieved its main objectives and managed to bring about positive changes in the individuals who benefitted from the services provided.

However, from the evaluation exercise it emerges how the two locations followed different paces due to external and internal challenges (extensively explained above). By looking at the implementation paths, the achievement levels, and the challenges faced, it emerged that in the North a longer inception period would have been needed. Such difference between locations was perceived and reported by the staff only, whether at project or mission level; the beneficiaries all appreciated what was provided, they suggested including more components and prolonging the assistance, but what was done was reportedly respondent to their needs. For this the action *per se* is considered relevant and addressing real needs.

Indeed, as it was widely recognised, it was an ambitious project, but results came, and objectives were achieved. While there is awareness on the potential impact the intervention could have had, a mark was left and surely lessons learned could be easily applied for future intervention. The main weakness was in not providing the two bases with the same starting set: in the South, the INTERSOS machine was already working, a wrong or delayed recruitment could not really impact. The North was a new area of intervention in terms of GBV, equally challenging but with a weaker safety net to count on, thus delays occurred which can be prevented in the future through the setup of a stronger management and technical structure which could guarantee adequate conditions to face internal difficulties as much as external challenges.

### 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 that would have then organised CBIs to further involve the community. While good relationships were established and a general trusting environment was created, some improvements could be made in terms of reporting back to the communities on the actions taken based on their feedbacks regularly and strengthening tools and guidance at community level.

### Effectiveness

The project achieved or overachieved most of its targets, though there were differences between the two Governorates. If, on one side, INTERSOS' experience and expertise proved crucial in implementing activities concerning extremely sensitive topics, on the other side this was not always

sufficient above all in the North, to mitigate internal and external challenges faced throughout the project lifecycle. Yet, from the beneficiaries' perspective, no significant gap was identified in what was provided - the main comments revolving around timelier information sharing and the inclusion of other services, mostly related to financial empowerment.

## **Efficiency**

Because of both external constraints and internal weaknesses, the delivery of the services came with some delays, more in the North than in the South, which however did not impact the final results and achievements. The allocation of the budget was considered to be fair and appropriate, though some diverging opinions emerged in relation to the structure that was set up for the overall project management in the two Governorates, at times confusing.

## **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, considering also the very conservative communities that were targeted. Yet, for a Protection project and exactly because of its focus on such a sensitive topic, more time is needed to have a long-lasting impact. While awareness sessions and capacity building were effective in initiating some change in the approach to GBV, a more stable presence is necessary to make the CBGs continue, to reinforce the GBV core concepts, and in general to increase knowledge at community level.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Project Implementation and Project Management**

- Strengthen regular coordination meetings and exchange of best practices and challenges/ solutions across teams located in different areas.
- Reconsider the duration of the start-up phase based on the specific feedback received, ensuring that the time dedicated to the development of SOPs does not affect the implementation period.
- Strengthen the standard management structure, especially in new areas of intervention where it takes time and resources to build trust with the community.

### **Mission Management**

- Further strengthen the MEAL system focusing on the harmonisation of the approach and the tools in use, as well as on the centralisation of the data management to make sure data and information collected are easily and readily accessible by whoever needs it - for project / analysis purposes; also, plan for field visits by the MEAL staff, and strengthen coordination between MEAL and Programmes throughout the projects' lifecycle.
- While recognising the significant improvement reached in relation to the setup and the mise en place of the accountability system, stress the importance of regular accountability exercises to collect feedback and contributions from all stakeholders involved, and at the same time plan as well the feed-forward phase - so as to promote an effective two-way communication process.

