

Midterm Evaluation Report



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COHERENCE Program (2022–2026)

Submitted to: Caritas Jerusalem

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1.0 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definiton
LAGS	Location Action Groups
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
KII	Key Informant Interviews
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
CI.be	Caritas Belgium
CJ	Caritas Jerusalem
AAUP	Arab American University of Jenin
TOR	Terms of Reference

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mid-term evaluation of COHERENCE Program provides a comprehensive assessment of its efforts to foster inclusion, participation, and resilience among targeted communities in Jenin Governorate. Operating within a challenging and volatile socio-political and economic context, the program has made tangible progress in addressing vulnerabilities and strengthening the capacity of local actors to lead their own development initiatives. The program's grassroots-driven approach has been its most significant strength, ensuring that interventions are grounded in the needs and priorities of marginalized groups while also empowering them to take ownership of their communities' futures.

Through its engagement with Local Action Groups (LAGs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and cooperatives, the program has successfully mobilized women, youth, low-income families, and persons with disabilities. Leadership training, capacity-building workshops, and the provision of resources for small businesses have equipped these groups with the skills and tools necessary to identify challenges and implement locally driven solutions. These initiatives have not only provided immediate economic and social benefits but have also fostered a deeper sense of agency and community cohesion, particularly among those traditionally excluded from decision-making processes.

A core strength of the program lies in its ability to integrate a "triple nexus" approach that combines social cohesion, resilience to crises, and support for equitable economic development. By connecting these three dimensions, the program has been able to uplift communities holistically, addressing the root causes of vulnerability while building long-term resilience. For example, targeted support for women's cooperatives and youth-led initiatives has not only improved livelihoods but has also created inclusive spaces for dialogue and collective action. The program's emphasis on grassroots mobilization has strengthened the social fabric, enabling communities to work collaboratively to address challenges ranging from environmental risks to economic instability.

However, the evolving political and social landscape, particularly after the events of October 7, 2023, has introduced new complexities. The escalation of conflict in Jenin Governorate has led to widespread displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and heightened economic vulnerabilities, further exacerbating pre-existing challenges. Restrictions on movement, coupled with the rising demand for urgent humanitarian assistance, have disrupted program activities and placed additional strain on local communities. The renewed fragility in the region underscores the need for the program to adapt its strategies to remain effective in an increasingly unstable environment.

To navigate these challenges, the program must prioritize flexibility and responsiveness. Expanding outreach mechanisms, particularly to include those most affected by the recent escalation, will be critical. Additional resources are needed to support infrastructure rehabilitation, provide psychosocial support, and address the immediate needs of displaced populations. Strengthening coordination with humanitarian actors and local authorities will ensure that interventions align with relief efforts and long-term development.

Despite these challenges, the program's achievements in mobilizing grassroots efforts and fostering resilience provide a strong foundation for future action. By building on its successes and addressing the emerging needs of communities, the COHERENCE Program has the potential to serve as a model for inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable development in fragile contexts.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

The DGD-funded COHERENCE Program (2022–2026) aims to promote social cohesion and resilience among rural communities in the Jenin Governorate in Palestine. Implemented by Caritas Jerusalem in partnership with Caritas International Belgium (CI.be), the program adopts a "triple nexus" approach by integrating social cohesion, rural economic development, and disaster risk reduction (DRR). This strategy aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on poverty eradication, gender equality, climate resilience, and peaceful, inclusive communities. The program primarily targets vulnerable groups, including women, youth, small-scale farmers, and individuals with disabilities. It addresses entrenched socio-economic inequalities and systemic challenges like restricted movement, environmental degradation, and economic instability exacerbated by occupation policies in Area C in Jenin.

The program's rationale is rooted in fostering local ownership and strengthening the capacities of Local Action Groups (LAGs). These grassroots platforms drive inclusive decision-making and community-led development by promoting advocacy, resource mobilization, and technical capacity-building. By addressing the structural barriers that hinder equitable development, the COHERENCE Program seeks to empower marginalized groups to actively participate in shaping resilient and sustainable communities.

Political, Social, and Economic Context

Prior to October 7th, 2023, the Jenin Governorate was already facing a fragile and challenging socio-political and economic context. As one of the most affected areas in the northern West Bank, Jenin experienced frequent military incursions, restrictions on movement, and systemic challenges related to land confiscation, limited access to resources, and poor infrastructure. The local economy, heavily reliant on agriculture and small-scale trade, struggled with stagnant growth, rising unemployment, and inadequate market access. Socially, the population faced high levels of poverty and vulnerability, particularly among women, youth, and marginalized groups, while limited access to quality healthcare, education, and psychosocial support exacerbated community fragility. Despite these hardships, the COHERENCE Program began its implementation against this backdrop, focusing on enhancing social cohesion, economic resilience, and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Local Action Groups (LAGs), women's cooperatives, and youth initiatives played a vital role in advancing community-led development interventions, advocating for inclusive participation, and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.

However, the events of October 7th, 2023, triggered a dramatic escalation of conflict, leading to a sharp deterioration in the already fragile situation and posing severe challenges to the program's implementation and objectives. Since October 7, 2023, Jenin Governorate has experienced a significant escalation in military activities. Israeli military operations have intensified, particularly targeting the Jenin refugee camp. These incursions have led to substantial infrastructure damage, including the destruction of roads, water networks, and electricity supplies, thereby disrupting daily life and governance structures. The social fabric of Jenin has been severely strained due to these military actions. These operations have led to widespread displacement, with families forced to flee their homes, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. Access to essential services, including healthcare and education, has been severely restricted, with attacks on health facilities and schools further compounding the challenges faced by the local population.

Economically, the governorate has suffered considerable setbacks. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicates that poverty rates in the West Bank are projected to rise to 74.3% in 2024, affecting approximately

4.1 million people, including 2.61 million newly impoverished individuals.¹ In Jenin, the destruction of commercial establishments and restrictions on movement have crippled local businesses and agricultural activities, leading to increased unemployment and economic instability. The closure of roads and the imposition of curfews have further hindered economic recovery efforts, leaving many households without a stable source of income.

These dynamics have posed significant challenges to the implementation of the COHERENCE Program in Jenin. The destruction of infrastructure has impeded the delivery of services and the execution of planned activities. Movement restrictions and security concerns have limited the ability of program staff to engage with local communities effectively. Additionally, the economic downturn has affected the capacity of beneficiaries to participate in program initiatives, particularly those requiring financial contributions or investments.

To adapt to these challenges, the program has had to reassess its strategies, placing greater emphasis on immediate humanitarian assistance while striving to maintain progress toward long-term development goals. This includes coordinating with other humanitarian actors to address urgent needs, such as food security and shelter, and exploring alternative methods of engagement, such as remote communication tools, to continue supporting the resilience and well-being of the affected communities in Jenin.

This mid-term evaluation reflects on these dynamics to assess the program's responsiveness and adaptability. It aims to inform future interventions by addressing gaps and leveraging strengths to maximize the program's impact on the resilience and inclusivity of targeted rural communities.

Objectives of the Mid-Term Evaluation

The objectives of the mid-term evaluation reflect the program's context and approach, serving as an opportunity to strengthen inclusive and participatory practices and ensure accountability. The evaluation emphasizes horizontal learning and peer evaluation to inform both current and future programming. The objectives are as follows:

1. To use evaluation findings to adapt current implementation practices from a perspective of participation and inclusion, contributing more effectively to the program's objectives in each country and improving the design of inclusive and participatory interventions in future programming.
2. To ensure and enhance accountability to donors and external stakeholders by publicly communicating the mid-term evaluation findings.

This evaluation aims to build on existing approaches, embed learning, and foster programmatic adjustments to better meet the evolving needs of the targeted communities, particularly marginalized groups.

Methodology Overview

The methodology for this mid-term evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative tools to gather comprehensive data from diverse stakeholders and beneficiaries. The mid-term evaluation utilized a variety of tools to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the COHERENCE Program's performance, emphasizing inclusivity, participation, and accountability. Each tool was carefully designed to target specific stakeholder groups and capture relevant insights, disaggregated by age, gender, and role. Below is a detailed breakdown of the tools used:

1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were held to capture in-depth qualitative insights from stakeholders regarding their experiences, challenges, and perceptions of the program's effectiveness. A total of 19 interviews were conducted, according to the below table:

¹ [UNRWA Situation Report #145 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem | UNRWA](#)

the revised table with a new column at the beginning for numbering:

#	Date	Field Visit Purpose	Interviewee/s
1	2/12/2024	Interview with Jenin Vocational Training Center	Manager Eng. Sondos Abu Baker
2	2/12/2024	Interview with Birqin Charitable Women Center	Ms. Omailma Klouf
3	2/12/2024	Interview with Home Garden Beneficiary	Kufrqood Village / household
4	2/12/2024	Interview with Microbusiness in Al Hashmia Village	Sweets & Cake (youth Female) / household
5	2/12/2024	Interview with Microbusiness in Al Araqa Village	Traditional Arabic Sweet Production (Man) / household
6	3/12/2024	Interview with Masliah Agricultural Cooperative Association	Mr. Eyad Abo Alrob, President of the Association
7	3/12/2024	Ministry of Agriculture - South Jenin Agriculture Department	Eng. Lama Abu Baker, Director
8	3/12/2024	National Agricultural Research Center	Eng. Sameh
9	3/12/2024	Interview with Home Garden Beneficiary	Zababdeh Women / household
10	3/12/2024	Interview with Microbusiness in Seer	Grocery Development, Women / household
11	4/12/2024	Interview with Microbusiness in Sirees	Youth Male / household
12	4/12/2024	Cooperative Work Agency Interview	Director Ms. Ro'a Alfayed
13	4/12/2024	Environment Quality Authority	Director Ms. Lama Jarad
14	4/12/2024	Jaba' Women Charitable Association Interview	
15	4/12/2024	Home Garden in Jaba	Women / household
16	4/12/2024	Interview with Microbusiness in Alfandqomia	Men / household
17	4/12/2024	Interview with Microbusiness in Araba	Home Kitchen & Traditional Food
18	5/12/2024	Jenin Chamber of Commerce	Director Mr. Amar Abu Baker
19	5/12/2024	AAUP - Hassib Sabagh Center for IT	Director Dr. Mays Awad

2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held to facilitate group interactions and gather collective views on program implementation and impact, focusing on inclusivity and participation. A total of 4 FGDs were held:

No.	Date	Target Group	Composition
1.	2/12/2024	FDG with Trainees of Vocational Training	4 males, 2 females
2.	3/12/2024	FDG with Two LAG groups	3 male, 7 females

3.	4/12/2024	FDG with Two LAG groups	2 male, 6 females
4.	5/12/2024	FDG with Employability Skills Training Beneficiaries	4 male, 5 female

3. Observational Assessments

Visits were held to document real-time interactions, project sites, and community environments to validate data collected from interviews and FGDs. Visits were held to microbusinesses in rural areas, home garden initiatives, and observation of vocational training facilities.

4. Peer Review and Participatory Approach

Following the approach adopted by Caritas, Mr. Hogos Dorry's peer review participation was highly valuable in this midterm evaluation, ensuring a collaborative and iterative evaluation process. Mr. Dorry's engagement throughout the process included:

- **Kick-Off Meeting:** Outlined evaluation objectives and aligned expectations among the team.
- **Inception Meeting:** Reviewed evaluation design and data collection tools, ensuring alignment with program goals.
- **Feedback on Tools and Reports:** Peer reviewer provided detailed comments on the inception report, data collection tools, and draft findings.
- **Workshops:** Stakeholders participated in validation workshops to discuss preliminary findings and shape recommendations.

5. Desk Review

Purpose: A desk review was conducted to analyze program documents, including the proposal, theory of change, monitoring table, annual report 2023 and midterm report 2024, to provide a contextual understanding and validate field data. The desk review contextualized the program's contributions to broader development goals, particularly regarding disaster risk reduction, social cohesion, and rural economic resilience.

Limitations

- **Logistical Challenges:** The tight timeline limited prolonged engagement with stakeholders and follow-ups for clarification.
- **Security Challenges:** The security situation in Jenin affected holding certain FGDs, which were postponed and ultimately completed.
- **Balancing Perspectives:** Reconciling conflicting viewpoints from institutional stakeholders and beneficiaries required careful analysis.

The evaluation process incorporated key thematic areas such as capacity-building, inclusivity, resilience, and community ownership. Stakeholders, including government ministries, cooperative associations, and vocational training centers, provided insights into institutional-level challenges and successes. Beneficiary interviews and FGDs were strategically designed to capture grassroots-level perspectives, focusing on tangible outcomes such as improved livelihoods, skill development, and community participation. Sessions with youth and women highlighted specific contributions and challenges faced by marginalized groups in program adoption and implementation.

4.0 ANSWERS TO EVALUATION QUESTION 1

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent do target groups (persons, households, community organizations, change agents...) participating in the programme feel more involved and listened to when decisions are made about life in their community? Who feels more involved and listened to and why? Who less and why? Which vulnerable groups in the targeted communities were or felt left behind by the programme and to what extent? What (elements of) interventions and methodologies contributed positively to perceptions of inclusion and how? What (elements of) interventions contributed less and why?

The first evaluation question seeks to assess the degree of inclusion, participation, and representation of the target groups in the programme's decision-making processes and interventions. This analysis examines how effectively the programme has amplified the voices of women, youth, low-income families, and marginalized groups, ensuring they are actively involved in setting local priorities and contributing to sustainable development efforts. Furthermore, it aims to identify which interventions and methodologies have been most impactful in fostering inclusion and which groups may have been underserved or excluded due to structural, logistical, or social barriers.

The assessment draws on qualitative and quantitative data collected through key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), participatory workshops, and field visits, along with a review of programme documentation and monitoring data. By triangulating these sources, the evaluation seeks to highlight both the successes and persistent challenges in ensuring meaningful participation across diverse beneficiary groups.

Question 1: Main Findings

Q1 – Judgement Criterion 1: Relevant Inclusion

Meaningful participation and representation are cornerstones of inclusive development programming, reflecting the ability of target groups—particularly women, youth, and marginalized populations—to influence decisions that directly impact their lives. This criterion examines whether the programme created accessible platforms and mechanisms for participation, such as consultation meetings, community dialogue sessions, and participatory planning processes. It also evaluates whether these mechanisms enabled equitable representation of different social groups and whether decision-making processes were transparent and inclusive.

A key aspect of this analysis involves exploring the effectiveness of Local Action Groups (LAGs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and youth and women's cooperatives in facilitating active participation. Additionally, attention is given to identifying barriers to participation, including cultural norms, power dynamics, and logistical challenges that may have limited certain groups' engagement in decision-making forums.

The analysis will further assess how feedback mechanisms—such as follow-up meetings, feedback surveys, or grievance redress systems—were integrated into programme activities to ensure that participants' voices were not only heard but also acted upon. By examining these dimensions, the evaluation aims to provide insights into how well the programme fostered ownership, trust, and accountability among its target groups.

Sub-Question 1.1.1: Does the LAG's (Local Action Groups) consist of different categories from the community which form social cohesion, especially the most vulnerable groups such as youth and women?

The Local Action Groups (LAGs) have shown commendable efforts in fostering inclusion and social cohesion by integrating diverse community categories into their structures. Membership representation highlights strong participation from women and youth, with women making up approximately 57% of the LAG members, reflecting a notable achievement in challenging traditional gender norms in leadership spaces. Youth members contribute fresh perspectives and energy, with more than 70% youth actively participating in identifying and addressing community challenges. LAG members actively engage in addressing local challenges, promoting ownership, and fostering accountability through their participatory approach. Members also extend their

efforts beyond LAG roles by participating in volunteerism, advocacy, and other community development initiatives, which strengthen their understanding of vulnerable groups' needs and priorities.

Feedback from members indicates a sense of ownership and accountability, with many expressing satisfactions with the participatory approach and the space provided to voice community needs. Beyond their formal LAG roles, members often engage in broader community-focused activities, including volunteerism, advocacy, and capacity-building efforts, which further solidify their understanding of marginalized groups' challenges and priorities.

However, while representation of women and youth is significant, the engagement of extremely marginalized groups, such as economically disadvantaged households, remains a challenge. Cultural stigmas, societal barriers, and the immediate financial priorities of vulnerable families in remote and impoverished areas continue to pose challenges to deeper inclusion. In remote and impoverished areas, cultural stigmas, societal barriers, and economic priorities constrain participation. Families facing severe financial hardships often prioritize immediate income generation over community involvement, limiting their capacity to engage in LAG activities despite the program's strong outreach efforts.

Additionally, disparities in socio-economic conditions among different clusters influence the performance and agency of LAG members. For example, clusters with stronger socio-economic foundations, such as Marj Bin Amer, have more established Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and members with greater capacity and experience. In contrast, members in more economically disadvantaged areas face limitations in resources and support, affecting the consistency of contributions across clusters. Addressing these challenges will require tailored strategies to further expand inclusion and enhance the effectiveness of LAGs in marginalized communities.

"Despite efforts to reach all marginalized groups, economic hardships and lack of awareness about volunteerism remain significant challenges."
Members of LAGs – Arraba

Sub-Question 1.1.2: Are targeted groups playing their role as main actors of their own self-promotion within the framework of the LAGs and raising the vulnerable groups' (youth, women, disabilities, households with low income) voices?

The targeted groups, including youth, women, low-income households, and persons with disabilities, have actively participated in Local Action Group (LAG) activities, assuming central roles in identifying and addressing community priorities. Through their involvement in needs assessments, prioritization of interventions, and participation in project design, these groups have demonstrated a strong capacity to advocate for their interests and those of other marginalized members of their communities. Training in advocacy, life skills, and project planning has equipped participants with the necessary tools and confidence to articulate their needs and advocate for their interests. Women and youth, in particular, have demonstrated strong leadership and engagement, successfully influencing strategic planning processes and aligning common good projects with community priorities. Mechanisms such as outreach to women's associations, youth groups, and direct engagement with low-income families have amplified marginalized groups' inclusion in decision-making processes.

Despite these successes, the program's ability to fully address the needs of all vulnerable groups was constrained, particularly during the recent crisis in Jenin, which dramatically increased demand on limited resources. The allocated 60,000 NIS for common good projects often fell short in addressing resource-intensive interventions. Additionally, the reliance on merit-based resource distribution inadvertently excluded some vulnerable groups lacking the capacity or technical skills to develop strong proposals. Structural and systemic barriers further exacerbated these challenges, particularly in remote and impoverished areas where families prioritize immediate financial needs over community engagement.

Unequal socio-economic conditions across clusters also affected the consistency of engagement. Clusters with stronger pre-existing community structures and socio-economic foundations demonstrated better performance in aligning strategic priorities with community needs. However, more impoverished clusters struggled to leverage resources effectively. Addressing these disparities will require targeted measures, such as earmarking

resources, implementing quotas for marginalized groups, and conducting socio-economic analyses to tailor interventions to the specific needs and dynamics of each community.

Sub-Question 1.1.3: Are the targeted CBOs sufficiently diverse to interact with different community needs within the targeted areas (related to R2)?

The targeted Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) operating within the program have demonstrated significant diversity and sectoral coverage, addressing key areas such as agriculture, women's empowerment, youth development, and environmental sustainability. Women's cooperatives, for instance, have been particularly impactful in economic empowerment through initiatives like food processing, skill-building workshops, and income-generation projects. In parallel, youth-focused CBOs have delivered training programs aimed at enhancing employability and fostering civic engagement.

In the agricultural sector, CBOs have played a critical role in promoting sustainable practices, providing essential equipment, and implementing crisis resilience programs to address food security challenges. These interventions have directly aligned with the immediate economic needs of the targeted communities, especially those of low-income families in rural areas. Programs offering small business grants and training in off-farm income-generating activities have further bolstered the economic resilience of vulnerable households.

Despite these strengths, there are areas where CBOs can improve their ability to scale their impact or address advanced needs, such as managing agricultural infrastructure or implementing digital marketing strategies. While CBOs cannot meet all the diverse demands of the community, the evaluation demonstrates that the program's interventions have significantly enhanced their capabilities. Key improvements include increased agency of these CBOs, particularly cooperatives, in making meaningful contributions to their constituents and the broader community. These advancements enable CBOs to play a more impactful role in addressing priority community needs, even within their limited capacity. Moreover, logistical barriers and resource constraints create geographical imbalances, with remote and underserved areas often facing reduced access to CBO services. This gap limits the reach of CBO interventions, leaving critical needs in isolated areas unmet.

Financial limitations further compound these issues. For instance, the 8,000 NIS allocation for agricultural projects, while beneficial, has proven insufficient for infrastructure-intensive interventions, such as greenhouse construction or advanced irrigation systems. Such funding constraints restrict the transformative potential of CBO activities, particularly in high-impact areas like agriculture and environmental management. Addressing these gaps through increased technical support, enhanced geographic outreach, and improved resource allocation will be critical for the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of CBO efforts.

Sub-Question 1.1.4: Did the interventions include as much as possible of the marginalized and most vulnerable groups, and have any been left behind? If so, why?

The interventions implemented through Local Action Groups (LAGs) demonstrated significant efforts to include marginalized and vulnerable groups by employing a variety of outreach and engagement mechanisms. These included home visits, direct outreach through local councils, social media campaigns, peer-to-peer strategies, and partnerships with organizations focusing on women, youth, and persons with disabilities. These approaches proved effective in engaging key groups such as youth, women, low-income households, and persons with disabilities. Stakeholders and LAG members emphasized that the program's inclusive design allowed for the identification and involvement of vulnerable groups within the community, promoting broader representation in decision-making processes.

Their needs were integrated into local plans and coherence interventions, with tailored activities designed to address specific challenges. Targeted initiatives, such as small grants and training programs, enabled beneficiaries, including persons with disabilities, to participate in income-generating activities and community initiatives. LAG members also played an intermediary role, leveraging their grassroots connections to advocate for the inclusion of

"Caritas was able to reach marginalized areas and provide opportunities to those who cannot express their needs." Sundus Abu Bakr - Vocational Training

marginalized groups and ensure their voices were reflected in local development plans.

The program's emphasis on localized engagement allowed women and youth, in particular, to play active roles in both leadership and decision-making processes. These efforts created a strong foundation for inclusivity, with several success stories emerging from women-led businesses and youth-driven community initiatives. Moreover, LAGs served as intermediaries between vulnerable groups and decision-makers, helping to align community priorities with local development plans.

Despite these targeted efforts, the program still faced notable limitations in reaching the most marginalized groups, particularly in geographically isolated and economically distressed areas. The events post-October 7th escalated the vulnerabilities of impoverished and rural households, creating new barriers to participation. Financial limitations, such as insufficient funding for high-cost agricultural projects, and the reliance on digital communication channels hindered the program's ability to reach remote and disconnected communities effectively. Addressing these challenges in future interventions needs to consider the dramatically changed situation in Jenin and in Palestine, which will require reassessing geographic targeting based on the changed needs, expanding funding flexibility, and strengthening partnerships with organizations specializing in humanitarian assistance and poverty alleviation to ensure no vulnerable groups and communities are left behind.

"Expanding the project to include new marginalized communities and focusing on climate change adaptation are crucial for long-term sustainability." Lama Abu Bakr – Director of Agriculture in Qabatiya

Sub Question 1.1.5: What are the most elements (interventions, methodologies, factors) contributed positively to perception of inclusion for the targeted groups especially the most vulnerable groups? and which elements contributed less and why?

The interventions and methodologies implemented through Local Action Groups (LAGs) played a significant role in fostering inclusion and engagement among targeted groups, particularly women, youth, and low-income households. The program adopted a multi-faceted approach, prioritizing direct engagement, empowerment, and responsiveness to community needs. Field visits, home-based outreach, and face-to-face interactions were among the most effective methods for building trust and ensuring active participation. These personal engagement strategies addressed common barriers such as hesitation to participate, lack of awareness, and limited access to information. Collaborative decision-making platforms also provided vulnerable groups with opportunities to voice their needs, contribute to local plans, and actively participate in prioritizing community interventions.

Training and capacity-building initiatives were another critical factor contributing to positive perceptions of inclusion. Programs focused on life skills, advocacy, and technical training provided participants with practical tools to improve their livelihoods, assert their rights, and contribute meaningfully to ongoing projects. Women and youth-led initiatives, in particular, gained momentum due to tailored training sessions that responded to their economic and social needs. Employment training programs and small grant schemes empowered participants to launch small businesses and diversify their income streams. These initiatives led to measurable improvements in household economic resilience and strengthened social cohesion within the community.

"The training I received completely changed me. I used to dislike speaking in front of others, but now I am confident and can express myself comfortably." Fidaa - Vocational Training Participant, American University

Resource limitations and the high number of applicants (in certain areas exceeded 3,000) created pressure on Local Action Groups (LAGs), with some expressing frustration at their inability to respond to all requests. While resource constraints are an external factor, managing expectations through clearer communication of budget availability and the competitive nature of project selection could help better manage expectations. For instance, providing straightforward details about the number of projects that can be supported would enable applicants to make more informed decisions about their participation.

The program's reliance on communication strategies such as social media campaigns and council announcements, while effective in many cases, faced limitations in reaching remote and underserved areas. This highlighted the persistent digital divide and the lack of access to reliable communication infrastructure in these communities. Tailoring communication tools to better suit the realities of disconnected populations would enhance outreach and inclusion efforts.

Furthermore, systemic cultural barriers, such as resistance to volunteerism and the expectation of immediate financial returns driven by economic hardships, reduced engagement in certain communities. Addressing these barriers will require a combination of increased financial flexibility, refined outreach strategies, and culturally sensitive interventions that balance immediate economic needs with long-term developmental goals. Moving forward, the program should focus on diversifying communication methods, providing tailored training programs, and aligning resource allocation with the unique needs of marginalized and underserved communities.

Q1 – Judgement Criterion 2: Effective Participation

The second judgment criterion, Effective Participation, examines the extent to which the program enabled targeted groups, including women, youth, and low-income families, to actively participate in initiatives aimed at improving their economic resilience and social cohesion. Participation in agricultural and off-farm interventions, engagement with stakeholders, and the role of horizontal dialogue platforms are central elements evaluated under this criterion. Effective participation is critical to ensuring that program beneficiaries are not passive recipients but active contributors in decision-making processes, implementation, and long-term sustainability of interventions. Through training sessions, capacity-building initiatives, and collaborative evaluations, targeted groups gained essential skills and resources, which, in many cases, translated into tangible improvements in their livelihoods and community development.

The analysis also highlights the role of stakeholders, including local councils, municipalities, ministries, and community-based organizations (CBOs), in recognizing and addressing the needs of the targeted groups. Collaborative mechanisms, such as consultations, field visits, and strategic planning sessions, allowed stakeholders to align interventions with local priorities effectively. However, challenges such as limited access to advanced tools, resource constraints, and gaps in coordination among stakeholders persist. Furthermore, the extent of horizontal dialogue between targeted groups and stakeholders played a pivotal role in ensuring transparency, accountability, and the adoption of successful interventions across local communities. These interactions created spaces for real-time feedback and continuous improvements, although external challenges, including cultural dynamics and economic instability, occasionally hindered the full realization of these efforts.

Sub Question 1.2.1. Did the targeted groups, especially youth and women, low-income families, enable their skills and obtain resources to develop their economic situation by agricultural or off-farm interventions?

The targeted groups, particularly youth, women, and low-income families, successfully developed their skills and improved their economic situations through agricultural and off-farm interventions. Specialized training in areas such as sustainable agriculture, financial management, and marketing enabled beneficiaries to manage small-scale projects effectively, while grants provided access to essential resources like irrigation systems, ovens, and refrigerators, improving productivity and product quality. Women and youth-led initiatives showcased significant progress, leading to increased incomes, reduced financial stress, and stronger social ties within their communities. Participants who received training and tools demonstrated an ability to adopt sustainable practices, including advanced farming techniques and product diversification, which contributed to increased resilience against economic shocks.

“Caritas played a vital role in stabilizing my business by providing essential equipment. I now feel more integrated into the community and have a stable source of income.”
Imad Rashid Azzam – Al-Funduqomiyya (Restaurant Project)

While the initiatives brought measurable improvements to participants' economic situations, several challenges limited their full potential. Limited access to advanced agricultural tools, infrastructure, and marketing opportunities hindered the scalability of projects. External factors such as economic instability, rising costs of raw materials, and frequent power cuts added further pressure on beneficiaries, impacting the sustainability of their interventions. Additionally, gaps in infrastructure, particularly transportation and storage facilities, restricted access to larger markets, thereby reducing economic potential. Some beneficiaries expressed the need for continued technical and vocational training to complement grant support and improve their operational efficiency.

"The grant helped ease my workload and reduce financial burdens, allowing me to focus on expanding my business."

Sirine Nimer
Mohammad Arada –
Arraba (Food

Furthermore, many beneficiaries highlighted the importance of stronger networking and market linkages to enhance their marketing efforts and secure better returns on their investments. Many respondents showed strong satisfaction and pointed to the success of the marketing days, calling for more of such activities. Some productive projects, particularly those in their startup phase, required additional inputs and raw materials, such as sewing supplies or agricultural seeds, to ensure long-term sustainability. A more structured aggregation and collective input supply system could reduce costs and improve the efficiency of these initiatives. Addressing these structural and operational challenges remains essential for maximizing the long-term impact of agricultural and off-farm interventions on targeted groups' livelihoods.

Several beneficiaries expressed the need for additional technical and vocational training tailored to their specific project fields. This would complement grant support and help improve operational efficiency, particularly for startup initiatives. For example, sewing projects and agricultural ventures often required more inputs and raw materials, such as sewing supplies or agricultural seeds, to ensure their sustainability and growth. Furthermore, stronger networking and market linkages were highlighted as essential for enhancing marketing efforts and securing better returns on investments.

Sub Question 1.2.2. Does the included stakeholders recognize target groups' demands and address their needs in their current and future interventions?

Stakeholders, including municipalities, village councils, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and ministries, have actively engaged with target groups to recognize and address their needs through consultations, field visits, and strategic documents developed by Local Action Groups (LAGs). These engagements provided valuable insights into the immediate and long-term needs of marginalized groups, particularly women, youth, and low-income families. Stakeholders demonstrated responsiveness by addressing priorities such as access to agricultural tools, capacity-building programs, and financial support for productivity enhancement. Additionally, interventions promoting environmental sustainability, technical training, and market access aligned with community demands and enhanced economic resilience.

Strategic documents prepared in collaboration with LAGs were incorporated into Local Government Units' (LGUs) development plans, ensuring that community voices and priorities were reflected in formal decision-making processes. Programs addressing off-farm income opportunities, skill development, and entrepreneurship provided essential pathways for income generation and self-reliance. Stakeholders also facilitated training sessions and resource distribution, equipping targeted groups with the tools and knowledge needed to overcome economic and social barriers.

However, the recent economic instability, particularly following the recent crisis, significantly constrained stakeholders' ability to fully meet all demands, especially for marginalized groups in rural and underserved areas. Requests for larger grants, advanced tools, and infrastructure improvements often remained unmet due to funding shortages and competing priorities, leaving critical gaps in meeting the needs of these groups. The political instability and restrictions further exacerbated these challenges, with some locations experiencing severe impacts due to military incursions and heightened insecurity. These disruptions delayed interventions, hindered consistent follow-up, and reduced the overall scalability and long-term impact of initiatives.

Coordination gaps among local councils, ministries, and private sector actors further limited the potential for sustainable and equitable support across regions.

Moving forward, addressing these structural barriers will require more resilient measures that allows more effective coping of the deteriorating situation in Jenin. This may include a more coordinated approach that advocates for governmental sustained investment in infrastructure, mobilizing local resources, and stakeholder collaboration among international allies and donors. Strengthening the capacity and agency of clusters and LGUs, alongside targeted efforts to bridge resource disparities and enhance coordination, will be critical for overcoming these challenges and ensuring the program's long-term effectiveness and inclusivity.

Sub Question 1.2.3. To what extent did the horizontal dialogue between targeted groups, partners, and stakeholders contribute to the successful monitoring of the output and embed successful intervention adoption from the local community?

Horizontal dialogue between targeted groups, partners, and stakeholders played a significant role in monitoring outputs and embedding successful intervention adoption within local communities. Regular communication platforms, including meetings, field visits, and collaborative evaluations, allowed stakeholders such as Local Action Group (LAG) members, local councils, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and implementing partners to share information, address emerging challenges, and align interventions with community priorities. These platforms facilitated transparency, real-time feedback, and collaborative problem-solving, ensuring that interventions remained relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of target groups.

Women-led cooperatives and youth groups were notably active in these dialogue processes, contributing valuable perspectives on community priorities and intervention effectiveness. They were actively engaged in approving the selection criteria, selecting the beneficiaries, and providing follow up on the projects through the local councils. Their involvement in project monitoring and evaluation processes fostered a sense of ownership and accountability among beneficiaries. Transparent monitoring systems, including community feedback mechanisms and participatory evaluation workshops, provided opportunities for beneficiaries to articulate their concerns and propose solutions. This participatory approach not only strengthened trust between stakeholders and beneficiaries but also increased community buy-in and commitment to sustaining project outcomes.

The formation and composition of Local Action Groups (LAGs) were among the program's strongest assets, fostering strong community participation. However, managing group dynamics in dialogue sessions required careful attention, particularly in balancing the influence of prominent individuals. While this dynamic reflected the cultural context of the communities, it occasionally shaped discussions and decision-making processes in ways that required further efforts to ensure full representation of marginalized voices. For instance, the engagement of local councils in the LAGs is extremely important in catalysing local action, however their presence would affect the dynamic of participation. Such structural issues, while extremely difficult to manage, might benefit from particular skills and best practices from similar contexts.

Some variations in communication and engagement approaches across clusters also posed challenges in ensuring uniform adoption and monitoring of interventions. While many communities benefited from regular follow-up and structured reporting, others faced logistical and resource-related hurdles that affected engagement levels. Strengthening coordination mechanisms, enhancing follow-up efforts, and fostering inclusive frameworks will help address these challenges, ensuring that all communities are equally supported and empowered to sustain the program's impact.

Q1 – Judgement Criterion 3: Adaptability and Resilience

The adaptability and resilience of targeted groups have been central to the success of the program, particularly in mitigating crises and navigating rapidly changing socio-economic and environmental conditions. The program aimed to equip women, youth, low-income families, and agricultural stakeholders with the tools and knowledge needed to respond effectively to shocks and disruptions. Training initiatives focused on sustainable agriculture, crisis management, and psychosocial support were designed to strengthen the capacity of communities to endure and recover from adverse situations. Local Action Groups (LAGs), women's

cooperatives, and community-based organizations (CBOs) played instrumental roles in building community resilience by fostering collective action, promoting resource-sharing, and enhancing social cohesion.

Sub Question 1.3.1. How effectively did the targeted groups equip themselves to adapt and mitigate crises to enhance their resilience?

The targeted groups, including women, youth, low-income families, and agricultural stakeholders, successfully equipped themselves with essential skills and tools to navigate crises and enhance their resilience. Training programs in crisis management, sustainable agriculture, and life skills empowered participants to respond proactively to economic and environmental disruptions. Women's cooperatives and youth groups, in particular, demonstrated improved resource management, better production practices, and increased social cohesion during times of crisis. Practical interventions, such as the provision of irrigation systems, fertilizers, and alternative storage solutions, played a critical role in sustaining agricultural productivity and mitigating economic shocks. Additionally, collaborative platforms, including Local Action Groups (LAGs) and partnerships with local councils, served as support systems for sharing knowledge and pooling resources, fostering a collective approach to resilience.

One of the program's key strengths was its emphasis on capacity-building through targeted training sessions that combined theoretical knowledge with hands-on applications. Women and youth-led initiatives showcased measurable improvements in decision-making, resource allocation, and crisis response, particularly in agriculture and small business management. Psychosocial empowerment, especially among women participants, contributed to increased confidence and enhanced community engagement. Furthermore, community platforms facilitated the exchange of knowledge and the development of shared strategies for navigating challenges, creating a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among beneficiaries.

While these achievements are significant, the evolving context post-October 7th has presented challenges that underscore the need for adaptive strategies. Prolonged external factors, such as climate-related risks, resource scarcity, and economic instability, continue to strain the adaptive capacity of targeted groups. Stakeholders have highlighted the importance of integrating more holistic resilience measures that address not only economic vulnerabilities but also psychosocial and protection needs during crises. Strengthening local networks, reducing dependency on external markets, and fostering agile crisis management approaches will be critical for building more robust and sustainable resilience in the face of future challenges.

"The greenhouse project introduced innovative techniques that are cost-effective and sustainable, contributing to the local agricultural sector's growth."
Iyad Abu Rab –
Misilya Agricultural Cooperative

Conclusion: Overall Evaluation of Question 1

The evaluation demonstrates that the **COHERENCE Program** has effectively fostered a sense of involvement and inclusion among target groups in decision-making processes related to community development. Women, youth, low-income households, and community-based organizations (CBOs) expressed that their voices were not only heard but also actively incorporated into program interventions. Mechanisms such as Local Action Groups (LAGs), participatory workshops, and collaborative planning platforms provided opportunities for diverse groups to contribute to setting priorities, designing projects, and advocating for their needs. Many participants highlighted that their inclusion in these forums empowered them to feel valued and involved in shaping decisions that directly impact their lives and communities.

However, the dramatically changed situation in Jenin and Palestine in general has considerably affected the program's ability to ensure consistent levels of engagement and inclusion across all target groups. While women and youth, particularly those engaged in LAGs and cooperatives, reported higher levels of involvement due to tailored training programs and opportunities for leadership, other marginalized groups, such as segments that are most socio-economically disadvantaged in remote rural areas, felt less engaged. This disparity was exacerbated by the increased demand for support and the program's limited resources, which constrained its ability to meet the needs of all vulnerable groups. Moving forward, addressing these challenges through

context-sensitive outreach efforts, flexible resource allocation, and targeted interventions will be critical to ensuring that all target groups feel equally involved and listened to in decisions affecting their communities.

Recommendations under Evaluation Question 1

The following recommendations are proposed to enhance inclusion, representation, and effective participation within the COHERENCE program. These focus on addressing gaps in engagement, ensuring equitable representation of marginalized groups, and refining methodologies especially in light of the renewed fragility in Jenin to promote meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

1. **Enhance Outreach to Marginalized Groups:** Develop context-sensitive outreach strategies to engage hard-to-reach populations, including persons with disabilities and residents of remote rural areas. Incorporate diverse communication methods, such as home visits, localized workshops, and partnerships with grassroots organizations, to overcome barriers to participation.
2. **Expand Inclusive Decision-Making Mechanisms:** Strengthen participatory tools, such as Local Action Groups (LAGs) and community dialogue platforms, by ensuring equal representation of all social groups. Introduce measures to address power imbalances, such as trained facilitators, to ensure marginalized voices are heard during discussions and decision-making.
3. **Increase Resource Flexibility:** Allocate flexible funding to address the evolving needs of target groups, especially in response to crises like the situation in Jenin. Introduce contingency budgets to support vulnerable groups who may require additional resources to participate fully in community development initiatives.
4. **Improve Feedback and Follow-Up Mechanisms:** Establish robust feedback loops that incorporate regular follow-up meetings, grievance redress systems, and transparent reporting to ensure that community inputs are acknowledged and acted upon. Use these mechanisms to build trust and accountability between stakeholders and beneficiaries.
5. **Strengthen Leadership Opportunities for Vulnerable Groups:** Provide targeted leadership training and mentorship programs for women, youth, and other underrepresented groups. Empower them to take active roles in decision-making processes and community leadership positions to enhance their sense of ownership and involvement.
6. **Address Cultural and Structural Barriers:** Introduce culturally sensitive interventions to tackle systemic issues, such as resistance to volunteerism and gender norms that limit participation. Work with local leaders and influencers to promote the benefits of inclusion and collective decision-making.
7. **Refine Coordination Among Stakeholders:** Strengthen collaboration between CBOs, LAGs, and local councils by formalizing coordination frameworks. Use joint planning sessions, shared monitoring systems, and regular communication channels to align interventions and avoid duplication of efforts.
8. **Develop Tailored Training and Capacity-Building Programs:** Offer technical, advocacy, and project management training tailored to the unique needs of different target groups. Provide specialized sessions for groups with limited prior experience, ensuring that all participants have the tools to contribute effectively.
9. **Facilitate Equity in Resource Allocation:** Implement equitable resource distribution frameworks, such as quotas or earmarked funds for marginalized groups, to ensure their inclusion in program benefits. Use socio-economic assessments to guide resource allocation decisions.
10. **Promote Local Ownership and Sustainability:** Encourage local councils and CBOs to lead community development initiatives by providing them with technical support and financial resources. Foster a sense of ownership through co-design and co-implementation of interventions.
11. **Promote Knowledge Exchange and Best Practices:** Encourage community knowledge-sharing through forums, success-story showcases, and peer-to-peer learning sessions to replicate successful interventions across different regions.

- 12. Support Climate Resilience Initiatives:** Develop localized emergency plans and implement agroecology-focused programs to strengthen climate resilience among agricultural stakeholders, ensuring preparedness for future environmental challenges.

5.0 ANSWERS TO EVALUATION QUESTION 2

What makes Community-Based Organizations supported by the program (e.g. community committees and groups, economic groups and associations (e.g. saving and credit groups, cooperatives ...)) more autonomous and democratic?

The Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) supported by the program, including community committees, cooperatives, and savings and credit groups, have played a crucial role in fostering autonomy and democracy within local communities. These organizations have served as platforms for collective decision-making, social inclusion, and economic empowerment. Program interventions, such as capacity-building training, provision of essential tools, and access to funding opportunities, have significantly enhanced the operational capabilities of these groups. Members of CBOs, particularly women and youth, have been equipped with technical, leadership, and advocacy skills, enabling them to effectively manage resources, represent community needs, and implement initiatives aligned with local priorities. This participatory approach has fostered greater transparency, accountability, and ownership within CBOs, contributing to more inclusive and democratic practices.

Data collection for this evaluation incorporated diverse methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the participation and performance of CBOs. A total of six focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with beneficiaries, including youth trainees in vocational training programs, to capture their perspectives and feedback. Additionally, interviews were carried out with key stakeholders such as the manager of the Jenin Vocational Training Center, leaders of women's centers, microbusiness owners, and representatives from agricultural cooperatives. These qualitative insights provided a robust analysis of the program's impact on CBOs' operational capacity, inclusivity, and ability to promote community participation. Through these data collection tools, the evaluation captured both successes and challenges in advancing autonomy and democratic governance within CBOs.

Question 2: Main Findings

Q2 – Judgement Criterion 1: Capacities and Resources Development

The development of capacities and resources within Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) plays a fundamental role in ensuring their sustainability, effectiveness, and long-term contribution to community development. This criterion focuses on assessing whether the targeted CBOs have successfully identified their internal gaps, raised their technical capacities, and utilized their available resources effectively. The evaluation examines the extent to which capacity-building efforts, access to resources, and financial planning have enabled CBOs to meet community needs, improve productivity, and foster resilience in challenging contexts.

Through a combination of training programs, technical support, and access to grants, the program aimed to empower CBOs to address operational and structural challenges. The evaluation investigates whether these interventions have resulted in improved technical skills, better resource utilization, and enhanced financial sustainability. Furthermore, it explores the challenges CBOs continue to face, including gaps in technical training, financial constraints, and limited networking opportunities, which hinder their ability to scale operations and achieve long-term sustainability.

Sub Question 2.1.1 Did the targeted CBOs identify their gaps and take actions to fill these gaps?

The targeted CBOs demonstrated a clear understanding of their internal gaps and took meaningful steps to address them, focusing on capacity-building, resource utilization, and improved collaboration. Support from stakeholders, such as grants and technical training workshops, enabled CBOs to purchase essential equipment like refrigeration units, food processing tools, and packaging materials, enhancing production efficiency and output quality. Participation in workshops and training programs improved technical skills in marketing, leadership, and sustainable agricultural practices, helping CBOs adapt to challenges. Furthermore, by engaging with local councils, networks, and coalitions, CBOs expanded their visibility and aligned their interventions with community needs.

CBOs effectively utilized available resources and grants to address immediate capacity gaps, particularly in infrastructure and production. Workshops and training sessions with experts enabled skill-building and adoption of innovative solutions, such as open-air netting for cost-effective agriculture. Collaboration with other organizations facilitated knowledge exchange, product promotion, and the adoption of sustainable practices. CBOs demonstrated adaptability by aligning projects with community needs, showcasing progress in filling identified gaps.

However, structural and environmental barriers, such as crop diseases and delays in material delivery, remained unresolved due to insufficient technical and financial support. CBOs require ongoing assistance and improved resource mobilization to fully address their gaps. Although CBOs were able to identify their gaps, rigorous follow-up on these is required, and with limited human resources, this was not optimal. Limited access to formal marketing channels and digital platforms restricted customer base expansion and long-term sustainability, posing significant challenges to their overall effectiveness.

"The biggest challenges we faced were marketing and the community's lack of awareness about the association, which hinders expansion and growth."
Ms. Iqbal Salem - Jaba Women's Association

Sub Question 2.1.2: Did the targeted CBOs raise their capacities properly to develop the technical aspect?

The targeted Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have made notable progress in raising their technical capacities, primarily through the adoption of new equipment, participation in capacity-building programs, and the practical application of acquired knowledge. Training sessions on sustainable agriculture, food production, and packaging played a crucial role in enhancing productivity and addressing immediate technical challenges. Women's CBOs, for instance, improved food processing efficiency by integrating tools like dough mixers, refrigeration units, and food sealers, while agricultural cooperatives adopted cost-efficient farming techniques such as open-net farming and irrigation solutions. These advancements enabled CBOs to increase production quality, streamline operational workflows, and experiment with innovative approaches to resource management.

Modern tools and training programs significantly enhanced technical capacities, with women's cooperatives improving production efficiency and reducing manual labor using specialized equipment. Agricultural cooperatives adopted sustainable farming techniques, addressing productivity constraints while reducing environmental impacts. Additionally, capacity-building programs equipped members with essential skills in food preservation, sustainable agriculture, and marketing strategies, resulting in tangible improvements in product quality and increased market demand. CBOs demonstrated adaptability and commitment by applying newly acquired knowledge to enhance outcomes and align technical interventions with community priorities.

While cooperatives made notable progress in raising their technical capacities—such as adopting modern equipment, improving food processing and farming techniques, and participating in capacity-building programs—certain structural and external challenges persisted. Limited access to advanced training in areas like digital marketing, food preservation, and climate smart techniques hindered the full optimization of cooperative potential. Additionally, financial constraints and restricted access to formal marketing channels as a result of heightened security situation prevented the targeted groups from expanding their customer base and ensuring the long-term sustainability of their projects.

Some cooperative projects, particularly innovative or pilot ones, faced specific challenges tied to the nature of their initiatives. These included crop diseases, seasonal dependencies, climate-related risks, and delays in material delivery. While the program provided significant support in identifying gaps and addressing immediate technical needs, follow-up mechanisms and resource mobilization efforts were constrained by limited human resources and funding. To further enhance the impact and sustainability of these initiatives, ongoing technical assistance, improved resource mobilization strategies, and more robust follow-up mechanisms will be crucial, particularly in addressing the evolving socio-political challenges in Jenin and Palestine.

Sub Question 2.1.3: Does targeted CBOs use current resources effectively and have a plan to raise their financial resources towards implementing developmental community initiatives?

The targeted Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have demonstrated effective use of their current resources, particularly equipment and tools provided through grants, to enhance productivity and streamline their operations. Women’s cooperatives, for example, successfully utilized freezers, mixers, and packaging tools to improve efficiency in food production, reduce waste, and boost sales. Agricultural CBOs adopted cost-effective farming practices, such as open-net farming and sustainable irrigation techniques, which maximized the impact of limited resources. Human resources within the CBOs were also utilized effectively, with members contributing their skills, labor, and innovative ideas to support ongoing community initiatives. Additionally, some CBOs leveraged partnerships with local councils and external stakeholders to bridge resource gaps and mobilize additional support.

Efforts to achieve financial sustainability were also evident, as certain cooperatives explored strategies such as digital marketing platforms, participation in Coherence program trade fairs, and establishing partnerships with external organizations. These initiatives demonstrated a growing awareness of the importance of financial diversification to ensure long-term sustainability. Women and youth actively participated in resource management, demonstrating creativity and ownership in utilizing available tools and enhancing productivity. Collaboration with stakeholders and local councils further indicated potential avenues for resource mobilization and external support for future initiatives.

However, challenges persist in achieving financial sustainability and fully optimizing available resources. Many CBOs remain heavily reliant on external grants, with limited internal capacity for structured financial planning and long-term fundraising strategies. Technical gaps in resource maintenance and scaling production also hindered the ability to meet growing community demands. Furthermore, turnover among CBO participants disrupted continuity, while limited networking opportunities reduced the potential for resource-sharing and collaboration. Addressing these challenges will require targeted financial literacy training, mentorship in resource mobilization, and fostering stronger partnerships to build sustainable funding models for developmental community initiatives.

“School canteen production and sales increased by at least 200 shekels per canteen. The dough mixer played a significant role in relieving us from physical strain of kneading.”
Jaba Women’s Association

Q2 – Judgement Criterion 2: Community Ownership

Community ownership is a cornerstone for the success and sustainability of community-based programs. Within the framework of the program, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of collective responsibility, amplifying community voices, and ensuring meaningful participation, particularly for marginalized groups such as women and youth. By engaging local councils, ministries, and community stakeholders, CBOs have been instrumental in bridging the gap between grassroots needs and institutional decision-making processes. However, challenges such as limited leadership opportunities for women and youth, cultural stigmas, and structural barriers have constrained the full realization of community ownership.

The program interventions aimed to empower CBOs to adopt inclusive practices, integrate program benefits into their operations, and foster partnerships with local authorities to address community priorities effectively. While successes were noted in the adoption of tools, capacity-building initiatives, and innovative farming techniques, gaps remain in areas such as systematic mentorship, follow-up mechanisms, and alignment with national strategic plans. Strengthening these areas will be essential to further enhance community ownership and ensure that interventions are sustainable, equitable, and responsive to evolving community needs.

Sub Question 2.2.1: Do targeted CBOs enhance their community voices properly by involving youth and women members within their structure?

Targeted CBOs have made significant strides in including youth and women within their structures, particularly in operational and income-generating activities. Women’s involvement in food production cooperatives, such

as in Jabaa and Jalama Women's Associations, demonstrates their active contribution to identifying community needs, improving teamwork, and enhancing visibility through networking and outreach. Similarly, youth engagement has been observed in consultations, needs assessments, and outreach activities, particularly within Local Action Groups (LAGs), where they have successfully raised issues such as employment and infrastructure challenges. By acting as connectors between marginalized groups and stakeholders, CBOs have amplified community voices and strengthened advocacy for inclusive decision-making.

While women and youth have been actively engaged in activities and discussions, their representation in leadership and strategic decision-making roles remains limited. Societal and cultural barriers continue to pose significant challenges, often relegating women and youth to supportive rather than leadership roles. Additionally, limited access to leadership training and advocacy tools has further constrained their ability to take on more strategic responsibilities within CBO structures. Addressing these gaps requires targeted capacity-building initiatives focused on leadership, advocacy, and strategic planning to empower women and youth to contribute meaningfully at all levels of decision-making.

Sub Question 2.2.2: Do CBOs adopt the program intervention and encourage their local communities for such initiative adoption?

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have effectively integrated program interventions into their structures, demonstrating a proactive approach to adopting tools, practices, and capacity-building activities. Women's cooperatives, for example, have utilized food processing equipment and improved packaging methods to enhance production efficiency, while agricultural CBOs implemented innovative farming techniques, such as open-net farming, to reduce costs and increase productivity. These interventions have not only strengthened the operational capacity of CBOs but have also fostered a culture of knowledge-sharing and community-driven replication of successful practices. Through awareness campaigns, community meetings, and home visits, CBOs have actively encouraged local communities to embrace similar initiatives, with a particular focus on empowering women and youth. The adoption of these practices has also contributed to stronger social bonds, increased trust, and improved community resilience during periods of crisis.

The program's interventions were most effective in building trust and demonstrating tangible benefits to communities, which encouraged greater participation and interest, especially among women and youth. Awareness campaigns, community meetings, and knowledge-sharing activities created platforms for dialogue and engagement, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. CBOs also played a key role in highlighting success stories, which motivated community members to replicate income-generating activities and innovative farming practices. Advocacy and outreach efforts further amplified the visibility of the program's benefits, leading to improved confidence in the sustainability and relevance of interventions.

"The support we received was the launchpad for this association. It led to increased interest and applications, and the workers became more motivated to work as a team despite all the challenges."
Al-Jalama Women's Cooperative Association

However, several challenges hindered the sustained adoption and scaling of program interventions. Cultural skepticism and societal barriers in certain communities slowed the acceptance of new practices, particularly among older populations and conservative households. The absence of systematic mentorship and follow-up mechanisms limited the long-term impact and scalability of adopted practices. Additionally, resistance to change was observed in some areas, particularly during periods of economic or political instability, which heightened community hesitance to experiment with unfamiliar methodologies. Government stakeholders also demonstrated limited appetite for genuine partnerships with CBOs, resulting in fragmented coordination and reduced support for community-led initiatives. Addressing these challenges will require a more structured mentorship approach, continuous follow-up mechanisms, and enhanced collaboration with local and national authorities.

Sub Question 2.2.3: Is there a common parallel work plan among the different CBOs and between stakeholders such as ministries, municipal, and village councils to implement CBOs' programs effectively?

Coordination between Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and key stakeholders, including ministries, municipal councils, village councils, and chambers of commerce, shown notable improvements in fostering collaboration. Positive outcomes have been observed in areas such as technical support, resource mobilization, and logistical facilitation. Ministries have actively supported agricultural techniques, such as Net-House farming, and provided training programs to enhance productivity. Local councils have contributed by offering logistical support, facilitating access to land, and creating platforms for implementing community-led initiatives. Collaborative efforts, such as joint environmental campaigns, community bazaars, and local festivals, have not only enhanced the visibility of women-led and community-focused projects but also strengthened the trust and working relationships between CBOs and stakeholders. These initiatives have demonstrated that cooperation has evolved beyond project-based interactions to include shared goals for community development.

However, challenges remain. The absence of a unified strategic work plan among stakeholders has limited the scalability and sustainability of these efforts, occasionally resulting in fragmented initiatives. Moving forward, formalizing coordination mechanisms and aligning resources with strategic priorities will be critical to ensuring the long-term impact and sustainability of these collaborative efforts."

The strengths of existing partnerships are reflected in the technical and logistical support provided by municipalities, ministries, and local councils. These stakeholders played a significant role in enhancing the operational capacity of CBOs, especially in agriculture and food production. Collaborative platforms, such as Local Action Groups (LAGs), have served as intermediaries, effectively communicating community concerns to relevant authorities and fostering dialogue between stakeholders. Joint events and campaigns have demonstrated the effectiveness of cooperative efforts in raising community awareness, mobilizing resources, and strengthening trust between CBOs and external partners. These initiatives have not only amplified community voices but also showcased the potential for long-term collaboration when priorities are aligned.

Challenges remain in establishing a formalized, parallel work plan to streamline coordination among stakeholders and ensure consistency in interventions. Communication mechanisms are often inconsistent, with limited follow-up, fragmented reporting systems, and overlapping responsibilities, leading to occasional duplication of efforts. Partnerships lack the structural alignment needed to foster transparency and collective accountability, further constraining the scalability and sustainability of collaborative initiatives. While participatory decision-making tools are utilized for projects, prioritization of interventions does not always achieve consensus, limiting collective ownership and the full realization of the group's potential.

Additionally, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are frequently excluded from higher-level governmental policy discussions, restricting their ability to align interventions with national priorities and advocate effectively for local needs. The divide between national planning and local implementation remains stark, as strategic plans developed at the ministry level, such as the Ministry of Agriculture's national strategic plan, often lack accompanying operational procedures to facilitate effective execution at the community level. Addressing these gaps will require the establishment of a structured, parallel work plan that

"Caritas initiatives brought us closer to the local community, especially women, and encouraged the cultivation of medicinal plants in home gardens."
Palestinian National Agricultural Research Center

"The Chamber of Commerce provided valuable opportunities through its extensive network, helping us connect small and medium-sized enterprises and offer more opportunities for young people."
Mr. Amar Abu Baker - President of the Chamber of Commerce - Jenin

"Networking with other organizations through Caritas has expanded our outreach and provided new opportunities for community development."
LAGs Member – Marj Ibn Amer

"We have ongoing plans to support projects through training, guidance, and enhancing employment opportunities for youth through our partnerships with civil society organizations."
Mais Awad - Hasib Sabbagh Center

harmonizes stakeholder efforts, strengthens communication mechanisms, and ensures alignment between national strategies and local action, while fostering a culture of shared responsibility and consistent collaboration.

Conclusion: Overall Evaluation of Question 2

The program has made significant strides in enhancing the autonomy and democratic governance of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) through capacity-building initiatives, resource mobilization, and inclusive decision-making mechanisms. CBOs have successfully utilized tools, grants, and training programs to improve their operational capabilities, enabling them to better address community priorities. Women's cooperatives and youth-led initiatives, in particular, have demonstrated notable improvements in resource management, technical proficiency, and advocacy, contributing to greater representation of marginalized groups. Collaborative platforms, such as Local Action Groups (LAGs) and partnerships with local councils, have fostered transparency and collective accountability, creating an environment where community voices are amplified, and ownership of development initiatives is strengthened.

However, the program also faced challenges that hindered the full realization of its objectives. While CBOs made significant progress in raising technical capacities, limited access to advanced training, financial constraints, and restricted formal marketing channels posed barriers to scaling operations and sustaining long-term impacts. Furthermore, the absence of a formalized parallel work plan among stakeholders, coupled with inconsistent communication and fragmented coordination, restricted the effectiveness of collaborative efforts. These challenges were compounded by structural barriers, such as the exclusion of CBOs from higher-level policy discussions and the disconnect between national planning and local implementation, which limited the alignment of interventions with broader strategic goals.

Addressing these challenges will require a more structured approach to capacity development, improved coordination mechanisms, and greater inclusivity in decision-making processes. Establishing a unified work plan that aligns stakeholder efforts and strengthens communication channels is critical for fostering collective ownership and ensuring the sustainability of interventions. Additionally, targeted mentorship, advanced technical training, and increased financial resource mobilization will be essential to further enhance the autonomy and effectiveness of CBOs. By addressing these gaps, the program can build on its successes and create a more resilient and inclusive framework for community-driven development.

Recommendations under Evaluation Question Number 2

The following recommendations aim to strengthen the autonomy and democratic functioning of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) by addressing key challenges and enhancing their capacities. These recommendations emphasize inclusivity, leadership development, financial sustainability, and effective coordination among stakeholders, ensuring the long-term impact and sustainability of the program's interventions.

- 1. Enhance Leadership and Inclusivity:** Strengthen leadership opportunities for women and youth by providing targeted training in leadership, advocacy, and decision-making. Develop inclusive outreach strategies to engage marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and remote communities, ensuring broader representation in CBO operations.
- 2. Provide Advanced Capacity-Building Programs:** Offer capacity-building programs focused on technical skills for cooperatives, such as sustainable agriculture, digital marketing, and financial management, to improve productivity and operational efficiency.
- 3. Facilitate Access to Tools and Infrastructure:** Ensure cooperatives have access to specialized equipment, such as agricultural tools and digital platforms, and provide ongoing maintenance and technical support to optimize resource use.
- 4. Strengthen Financial Planning and Resource Mobilization:** Provide tailored financial training to improve fundraising, proposal writing, and donor engagement. Encourage CBOs to diversify income streams through membership fees, social enterprises, and partnerships with private sector actors.

5. **Promote Digital Literacy and Market Access:** Train CBOs (including cooperatives) members in digital literacy and e-commerce to expand market access and improve financial independence. Foster partnerships with online platforms for broader visibility and customer reach.
6. **Support Strategic and Unified Planning:** Formalize a unified strategic work plan among CBOs, ministries, municipal councils, and stakeholders to ensure alignment of resources, consistent collaboration, and avoidance of duplication.
7. **Enhance Community Awareness and Engagement:** Increase community awareness through home visits, workshops, and peer-to-peer learning sessions, creating opportunities for broader participation and ownership of initiatives.
8. **Establish Follow-Up Mechanisms:** Develop robust follow-up systems, including regular monitoring and feedback loops, to sustain the impact of interventions and support continuous improvement.
9. **Facilitate Financial Incentives for Vulnerable Groups:** Introduce micro-grants, revolving funds, and matching grants to encourage the adoption of initiatives by vulnerable and marginalized groups.
10. **Strengthen Coordination Frameworks:** Create joint steering committees and implement regular meetings and shared monitoring systems to enhance coordination among stakeholders and align interventions with community needs.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The COHERENCE program has demonstrated notable success in addressing the needs of beneficiaries and aligning its interventions with the program's ambitions of fostering inclusion, participation, and resilience within local communities. By creating platforms such as Local Action Groups (LAGs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), the program empowered women, youth, and marginalized groups to play active roles in decision-making and community development. Tailored training sessions, access to resources, and inclusive engagement strategies enhanced participants' capacity to advocate for their needs, implement sustainable initiatives, and strengthen social cohesion. These efforts reflect the program's commitment to ensuring that previously underrepresented groups gain agency in shaping their futures.

Despite these successes, the program faced significant challenges in fully realizing its ambitions, particularly in the context of the rapidly evolving socio-political landscape in Palestine and the heightened vulnerabilities following the recent crisis in Jenin. Resource constraints, coupled with the reliance on digital communication channels, limited the reach of interventions to geographically isolated and economically disadvantaged communities. While women and youth reported increased inclusion, the engagement of persons with disabilities and extremely impoverished households remained limited due to cultural stigmas, economic hardships, and systemic barriers. These challenges highlight the need for more targeted outreach and flexible resource allocation to bridge inclusion gaps.

Furthermore, the program's emphasis on building technical and operational capacities for CBOs has resulted in significant progress in improving productivity and fostering innovation. However, structural barriers, such as inadequate access to formal marketing channels, limited financial resources, and insufficient follow-up mechanisms, constrained the scalability and sustainability of these initiatives. The program's inability to address these systemic issues comprehensively underscores the importance of fostering stronger partnerships with local stakeholders, diversifying income streams, and aligning national strategies with localized implementation plans.

In conclusion, while the COHERENCE program has made commendable strides in fostering inclusion, resilience, and empowerment, its impact has been uneven across different target groups and geographic regions. Moving forward, addressing structural and cultural barriers, enhancing resource mobilization, and refining intervention strategies will be crucial for ensuring that the program achieves its full potential. Tailored, context-sensitive approaches that account for the needs of marginalized groups, combined with sustained investment in capacity-building and collaborative frameworks, are essential to building a more inclusive and resilient foundation for community development in Palestine.

Recommendations and Target Groups

The recommendations outlined below aim to enhance the COHERENCE program's impact by addressing inclusion, autonomy, and sustainability challenges identified in Evaluation Questions 1 and 2. Each recommendation is directed toward specific stakeholders—implementing teams, Caritas International - Belgium (CI.be) and CJ (Caritas Jerusalem), and external stakeholders—based on their roles and capacities to influence outcomes effectively.

Short Term Recommendations

- 1. Addressing Marketing Challenges for Beneficiaries:** Many project beneficiaries, particularly small business owners and entrepreneurs, face significant challenges in marketing their products and services. To overcome this, the project should focus on providing practical training in digital marketing, branding, and sales strategies. Additionally, facilitating connections with potential buyers through local fairs and exhibitions can help beneficiaries expand their market reach and improve their economic prospects.
- 2. Developing a Crisis Response and Risk Mitigation Plan:** Given the evolving context and the increasingly deteriorating situation in which the project operates, it would be beneficial to support LAGs

and the local councils to have a community crisis response plan. This should include risk assessments, contingency strategies, and clear protocols for adapting community activism in times of uncertainty.

3. **Rapid Response Action Teams for Crisis Management:** Form “Rapid Response Action Teams” composed of CBO representatives, local councils, and project staff to address emerging needs and crises swiftly. These teams can provide immediate support in areas such as food security, mental health, and infrastructure repair.
4. **Establish a Digital Engagement Platform for LAGs and CBOs:** To ensure continuous communication and engagement despite movement restrictions, develop an interactive digital platform tailored for Local Action Groups (LAGs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). The platform should facilitate real-time feedback, online capacity-building, knowledge sharing, and progress tracking. It will also serve as a hub for sharing best practices and addressing urgent challenges.
5. **Community-Driven Social Innovation Labs:** Launch “Community Innovation Labs” within the LAGs to co-design solutions addressing economic and social challenges faced by vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth. These labs should provide space for participatory discussions, prototyping of ideas, and engagement with stakeholders such as local councils and ministries.
6. **Circular Economy Interventions for Economic Resilience:** Introduce circular economy models that focus on resource efficiency and sustainable economic opportunities. Encourage beneficiaries to adopt waste reduction and recycling practices to create new income-generating opportunities.
7. **Storytelling for Impact and Awareness:** Leverage digital storytelling to showcase the impact of project interventions and inspire further engagement from community members and stakeholders. Highlight success stories of women, youth, and marginalized groups.
8. **Leveraging Influencers and Community Ambassadors:** Engage respected local leaders, influencers, and youth champions to advocate for project activities and encourage wider participation. These ambassadors can play a pivotal role in reaching remote and marginalized groups.
9. **Strengthening Private Sector Engagement for Sustainability:** Forge strategic partnerships with the private sector to enhance market access and employment opportunities for project beneficiaries. Collaborations should focus on value chain development and capacity-building.

Long-Term Recommendations

Recommendation	Target Group
Enhance Outreach to Marginalized Groups: Develop tailored outreach strategies, such as home visits and localized workshops, to engage underrepresented groups, including persons with disabilities and remote communities.	Implementing Team, CBOs, Local Councils
Expand Inclusive Decision-Making Mechanisms: Strengthen participatory tools like LAGs by ensuring equal representation and employing facilitators to address power imbalances and amplify marginalized voices.	Implementing Team, CI.be and CJ
Increase Resource Flexibility: Allocate contingency budgets to address crisis-related needs, ensuring vulnerable groups can fully participate in community development activities.	CI.be and CJ, Other Donors
Strengthen Leadership Opportunities for Vulnerable Groups: Provide targeted leadership training and mentorship for	Implementing Team, CI.be and CJ

women, youth, and other underrepresented groups to enhance their decision-making and community leadership roles.	
Address Cultural and Structural Barriers: Launch culturally sensitive initiatives to challenge systemic barriers, working with local leaders to promote inclusion and community ownership.	Implementing Team, Local Councils
Facilitate Access to Tools and Infrastructure: Ensure CBOs have access to specialized equipment and digital platforms, paired with technical support and maintenance services.	CI.be and CJ, Donors, Ministries
Promote Digital Literacy and Market Access: Train members in e-commerce and digital marketing, fostering partnerships with online platforms to expand visibility and customer reach.	Implementing Team, CBOs
Formalize Strategic and Unified Planning: Develop a unified strategic work plan with stakeholders to align resources, avoid duplication, and ensure collaborative implementation of interventions.	CI.be and CJ, Ministries, Local Councils
Strengthen Financial Planning and Resource Mobilization: Provide tailored financial training to diversify income streams and improve donor engagement.	CBOs, Implementing Team
Promote Local Ownership and Sustainability: Empower local councils and CBOs to lead initiatives by providing technical and financial support, fostering long-term engagement and ownership.	Implementing Team, Local Councils
Foster Collaboration and Coordination: Establish joint steering committees, shared monitoring systems, and regular communication to enhance coordination and resource alignment.	CI.be and CJ, Ministries, Donors
Support Climate Resilience Initiatives: Introduce agroecology programs and localized emergency plans to build resilience against climate risks and strengthen agricultural productivity.	Implementing Team, Ministries, Donors

7.0 ANNEXES

- TOR of the Mid-term evaluation
- Annex 6 :Evaluation Matrix
- List of persons and organisations met and interviewed