

Final Report for the External Evaluation of  
PHASE I SHABAKE –  
PROMOTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN BEIRUT AND MOUNT LEBANON

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# Executive Summary

## Background

This report presents a final evaluation of Basmeh & Zeitooneh's (B&Z's) "Promoting Socio-Economic Recovery in Beirut and Mount Lebanon" project (hereafter the Shabake project), which was funded by Expertise France (EF) within the framework of their Shabake Program. B&Z's Shabake project aimed to *"assist the vulnerable Lebanese population, including displaced and impoverished population, in reviving their livelihoods as well as to innovatively develop new, integrative and demand-based livelihoods"*. This two-component project targeted communities directly affected by the economic crisis and residing or operating in localities affected by the Beirut Port Blast. The overall objective of this project was to *"respond to the pressing needs of Lebanese and Syrian refugees residing in urban areas affected by the Beirut Port Blast and the economic crises, through supporting 40 Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) (45 per cent women-owned, 55 per cent men-owned) to recover and proceed with their businesses and through building the skills and capacities of 3 (10 women per group, 50 percent Lebanese, 50 per cent Syrian) women-led groups by starting their dairy product processing business to generate income."*

The final project evaluation was conducted between March 1, 2022, and May 24, 2022. The main evaluation objectives are to assess the overall quality of the project, its accomplishments and results, extract lessons learned and recommendations on the implementation aspect of the project, and to provide recommendations on future planning and design of this/similar projects. The former was achieved through a primarily qualitative methodology relying on the expertise and experience of key project stakeholders, including B&Z staff, external stakeholders who supported with outreach, and participants in the women producer groups (WPGs) and MSEs components of the project. Methods of data collection included key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

## Key findings and conclusions

**Relevance:** Though its scope is relatively small, the project is relevant in its alignment to national objectives regarding economic development and recovery given Lebanon's compounded crisis, and is also relevant in addressing participant needs. For the most part, participants met project selection criteria, although outreach mechanisms may be improved to ensure participation of vulnerable women.

**Effectiveness:** Despite significant (mainly contextual) challenges and delays faced during project implementation, project objectives have been mostly met. Three WPGs have been formed (two in Karantina and one in Bourj Hammoud) and are in the process of taking over the dairy production business. The businesses will be launched during a second phase of the project, which B&Z identified EF. As for the project's second component, 40 MSEs have received capacity building (either through training and/or one-on-one coaching sessions) and their in-kind items or equipment. Several activities and indicators had to be adapted or adjusted in light of Lebanon's ongoing compounded crisis.

**Efficiency:** Delays and other contextual challenges are expected in a situation like the one Lebanon is going through, but overall, B&Z's quick response and adaptability to challenges faced enabled, to the best extent possible, the efficient use of project resources. The bulk of the project budget went to operational costs in favor of project participants; with significant savings in the MSEs component going to purchase additional equipment needed for the WPGs component to compensate for the country's electricity/generator issue. Procurement processes hindered project efficiency to a certain extent. Though project staff were significantly overstretched, they managed to complete most project activities within the given timeframe, requiring only a one-month no-cost extension to disburse in-kind support to MSEs.

**Impact:** It is too early to ascertain the long-term impact of this project on participant livelihoods. Furthermore, the two interventions have not had an impact on participant income generation yet. Regarding the WPGs component, the businesses have not been launched, while for MSEs, they are faced with the country's ongoing economic crisis. In Bourj Hammoud, the WPG reported that the intervention seems to have contributed, to a certain extent, to improved relations among the Syrian and Lebanese women participants. For some MSEs, the support they received contributed to security and stabilization, while for others, it had a positive influence on their emotional well-being.

**Sustainability:** The current economic crisis remains a threat to the sustainability of both the WPGs and MSEs that were supported. For the former, this has been somehow addressed by a top-up and extension of the project (Phase II), though long-term sustainability of their businesses will likely depend on their ability to buy materials on their own once fully take on their businesses, and on their ability to cover maintenance and repair costs for equipment, while covering other overhead and operating expenses. For MSEs, longer-term sustainability will depend on their ability to replenish materials and maintain equipment, despite not having the capital to do this.

## Lessons learned and recommendations

Building on the evaluation's key findings and conclusions, the evaluation team provides an overview of the lessons learned, as well as several recommendations, which may be taken into consideration in future planning and/or in the design of future similar projects. These are related to planning and processes, trainings, gender sensitivity, psychosocial support and protection, feedback mechanisms and communication, and the importance of support to participants post-the end of the project.

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## List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

3RF	Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework
B&Z	Basmeh & Zeitooneh
BRP	Business Recovery Plan
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
EF	Expertise France
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSL	Food Security & Livelihoods
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSE	Micro- and Small-Enterprises
MSME	Micro-, Small-, and Medium-Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Criteria
RLO	Refugee-led Organization
TORs	Terms of Reference
WPG	Women Producer Group

# Introduction

## Context

Lebanon has witnessed a severe economic and financial crisis in recent years, with vulnerable populations most hard-hit by the crisis (World Bank, 2020a; World Bank, 2020b). Since 2019, the local currency has lost almost 90 per cent of its value and inflation has soared, significantly decreasing residents' purchasing power. Many Lebanese have lost their jobs and most are not able to cover their basic needs including food, health services and medications. The multidimensional poverty rate doubled from 42 per cent in 2019 to 82 per cent in 2021 (World Bank, 2022). In the summer of 2021, a severe electricity blackout affected both private and public sectors, and shortages in gasoline led to long queues and rising tensions among the Lebanese, while the medical sector suffered scarcity in essential medication and medical services (World Bank, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns added to the deteriorating economic situation, resulting in loss of jobs, shortened working hours, and worsening working conditions for both Lebanese and Syrian refugees (ILO, 2020).

Deteriorating conditions were magnified by a devastating explosion that took place on August 4, 2020, at the Port of Beirut, which left more than 200 people dead or missing, thousands injured, and damaged or completely destroyed the homes of around 300,000 residents (UNHCR, 2020). The World Bank estimated between US\$3.8 and US\$4.6 billion damage to physical stock and between US\$2.9 and US\$3.5 billion decline in the output of economic sectors (World Bank, 2020a; World Bank, 2020b). Furthermore, the explosion decreased food imports and worsened structural facilities, resulting in destroyed infrastructure, an energy crisis and water supply shortages, and weakened the healthcare system (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

### *Micro-, small-, and medium-enterprises (MSMEs)*

Lebanon is known to rely heavily on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that constitute 95 per cent of businesses in the country and account for 50 per cent of employability (Ministry of Economy & Trade, 2018). The economic and financial crisis has caused thousands of MSMEs to shut down and 23 per cent of employees were laid off (UNESCWA, 2021; UNICEF, 2021). A study conducted by the ILO found that by October 2020, at least half of the MSMEs included in the study had halted their operations during COVID-19 and ensuing lockdowns, due also in part to bank restrictions on foreign currency and cash withdrawals (ILO, 2020). The Beirut Port Blast was particularly destructive for MSMEs within a 5 km radius of the Port, whereby in a study conducted by the ILO, for which Basmeh and Zeitooneh (B&Z) conducted the fieldwork, it was found that 86 per cent of surveyed enterprises reported sustaining some degree of damage (Kebede, Stave, Tiltnes, & Kattaa, 2021).

### *Dairy sector*

Lebanon's dairy sector comprises one of the most essential industries in the country, and ranges from small family businesses to well-established firms, mainly in rural areas and the Bekaa. In 2016, the size of the dairy market in Lebanon was estimated to be \$200M, with a total

production of 62,000 metric tons per year (Saadeh, 2016), while almost 60 percent of Lebanese farmers depended on dairy production as their main source of income (FAO, 2016). Lebanese processors need around 450 tons of milk daily for the processing of dairy, where Lebanese milk producers supply only 30 per cent, and the rest is imported. As a result, the increased foreign exchange rate coupled with restrictive banking policies has caused major financial and production challenges within the sector (Rahal, 2020). In the past year, the price of milk has been dollarized to 0.7 dollars per kilogram of milk subjected to change every 15 days compared to it being 3,750 L.L. in April 2021; prior to the crisis the price of milk was 900 L.L. per kilogram (Ministry of Agriculture, 2022; NNA, 2021).

## Overview of the “Promoting Socio-Economic Recovery in Beirut and Mount Lebanon” project

It is within this context that B&Z proposed their “Promoting Socio-Economic Recovery in Beirut and Mount Lebanon” project (here onwards referred to as the Shabake project), which was funded by Expertise France (EF) within the framework of their Shabake Program, and which answers to Component 4 of EF’s program, namely, “Local NGO partners have designed and implemented innovative economic recovery and livelihood projects post the Beirut Port Explosions”. This two-component project was implemented between March 15, 2021, and January 14, 2022, and aimed to “*assist the vulnerable Lebanese population, including displaced and impoverished population, in reviving their livelihoods as well as to innovatively develop new, integrative and demand-based livelihoods*”. The first component of the project consisted of “the creation of women dairy producer groups off-farm (urban) small scale dairy procession”, and the second component consisted of “Supporting micro- and small-enterprises affected by the Beirut explosions and the economic situation”.

Nearing the mid-term of the project, and to ensure the sustainability of the WPGs, B&Z identified the need to extend this component of the project through a top-up and follow-up phase. This was proposed to the donor and was approved. Accordingly, B&Z received a grant from EF for Phase II of the project. The team identified the need for this follow-up phase in light of Lebanon’s ongoing economic crisis, and acknowledged that, due to the several delays faced during project implementation, it was important to continue to support the WPGs in establishing their businesses. The main aim of Phase II of the Shabake project is to “help WPGs sustain their businesses which are their source of income generation. In addition, it will create more employment opportunities for other women within the community.”

### *Goals and objectives of the project*

This project falls under B&Z’s FSL Program, and is aligned with two of the program’s main objectives, namely (1) stabilizing livelihoods, and (2) local economic recovery. The project is an inclusive development-aid project aiming to assist the vulnerable Lebanese population, including displaced and impoverished populations, by enabling existing components within the Lebanese economy to “sustain themselves and recover after the multiple crises they recently experienced”. The overall objective of this project was to “respond to the pressing needs of Lebanese and Syrian refugees residing in urban areas affected by the Beirut Port Blast and the economic crises through supporting 40 Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) (45 per cent women-owned, 55 per

cent men-owned) to recover and proceed with their businesses and through building the skills and capacities of 3 (10 women per group, 50 percent Lebanese, 50 per cent Syrian) women-led groups by starting their dairy product processing business to generate income.” The specific objectives of the project were:

- 1) **Component 1:** Women groups of Syrian refugees and host communities’ women residing in urban areas affected by the Beirut Port Blast are able to generate income.
- 2) **Component 2:** MSEs receive in-kind small grants to restore their productive assets, build their capacity, and fix the damages that occurred during the explosion and are able to resume operations successfully.

Expected results for Component 1 of the project were:

- 1) Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese women are equipped with marketable vocational skills.
- 2) Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese women have launched an income generating business.

Expected results for Component 2 of the project were:

- 1) 40 micro- and small-business owners (Lebanese women and men) provided with capacity building and supported in their business recovery planning.
- 2) 40 affected micro- and small-businesses owners (Lebanese women and men) receive in-kind small grants to replace their damaged productive assets, purchase raw material, to pay wages for their workers, and rehabilitate their shops and premises.

*Key target groups and indirect participants*

The project targeted communities directly affected by the economic crisis and residing or operating in localities affected by the Beirut Port Blast, including Bachoura, Moussaitbeh, Mazraa, Rmeil, Medawar, Achrafieh, and Karantina in Beirut; and Bourj Hammoud in Mount Lebanon. Specific selection criteria were put in place to identify potential direct participants for both components of the project.

	Direct participants	Indirect participants
Component 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 Syrian and Lebanese vulnerable women, who are among the vulnerable groups affected by the economic situation and the consequences of the Beirut Port Blast.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families of the 30 women.</li> <li>• 20 farmers, who will act as input suppliers, and their families.</li> <li>• 30 points of sale, who will sell the dairy products produced by the women, and their families.</li> <li>• Close community members, expected to benefit from reasonably priced dairy products.</li> </ul>
Component 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 Lebanese MSEs in the Beirut Port Blast affected areas, out of which the project will aim to reach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families of the MSEs owners.</li> <li>• MSE’s employees and their families.</li> <li>• Wider community, through reviving the economy.</li> </ul>

	45 per cent women-owned MSEs and 55 per cent men-owned MSEs.	
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## Objectives and scope of the evaluation

B&Z commissioned the external evaluation of the Shabake project with the aim to contribute to a larger baseline study of the current state of refugee-led programming globally. The evaluation is to be submitted under the umbrella of the Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative, which aims to place refugee-led organizations (RLOs) at the forefront of the discourse around refugee aid and aid localization. B&Z is one of six RLO coalition members working to unlock millions of dollars in funding for RLOs and aiming to strengthen the field of RLOs through an RLO-to-RLO fund.

The overall objectives of this evaluation, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (TOR), were to:

- Assess the overall quality of the project, its accomplishments and results.
- Extract lessons learned and recommendations on the implementation aspect.
- Provide recommendations on future planning and design of this/similar projects.

The evaluation covered all activities conducted to date under the two components of Phase I of the Shabake project, and was undertaken during the period from March 1, 2022, to May 24, 2022. The approach for this evaluation was guided by the TOR, and the evaluation matrix (see Annex 5), which served as the overarching analytic framework for the evaluation.

## Key evaluation questions

With reference to the project’s TOR, the final evaluation assessed the following OECD-DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. In order to fulfill the project objectives and assess the relevant criteria, this evaluation will, in general, seek to answer the following key questions:

Criteria	Description	Key questions
Relevance	An evaluation of the extent to which the project is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor and to what extent it responds to the needs of the local market.	<p>To what extent does the project respond to the needs and priorities of participants (including vulnerable Lebanese, including displaced and impoverished persons)?</p> <p><i>Sub-question: Did the project differentiate between the needs of women, men, vulnerable groups?</i></p> <p>Did the intervention address the short- and long-term needs and priorities of targeted participants?</p> <p>Were the project inputs and strategies realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve its planned objectives?</p> <p>To what extent were the main project activities and outputs consistent with the goals and objectives of the project?</p>
Effectiveness	A measure of the extent to which the project attains its objectives. This entails assessing to what extent the	Did the project adhere to its stated overall objectives, specific objectives, results and indicators?

	<p>expected results have been achieved, and if progress has been made towards the achievement of the project's specific objectives.</p>	<p>What and how much progress was made towards achieving the project's results?</p> <p>Did the project achieve its expected results and objectives as well as the overall intended impact (consider both short-term and longer-term impacts)?</p> <p>What were the factors that contributed to (or hindered) the achievement of the project's planned results?</p>
Efficiency	<p>A measure of the total outputs (both qualitative and quantitative) in relation to the inputs. This entails checking if the resource allocation was informed and timely, and related to project objectives as intended.</p>	<p>Were project resources allocated in the most efficient way possible (for example, time, financial and human resources)?</p> <p>Were the project activities cost-effective? (Based on a qualitative assessment)</p> <p>To what extent was the project conducted in the most efficient way as compared to other alternative ways of conducting the project?</p>
Impact	<p>An assessment of the positive and negative changes produced by the project, directly, or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social situation.</p>	<p>To what extent has the intervention had an impact on the lives of participants? What evidence is there for this?</p> <p>What have been the positive effects of this project on participants and the surrounding community?</p> <p>Have any unintended and/or negative effects resulted from the project (to participants, to the community, etc.)? If so, what are these effects and how could they have been mitigated and/or avoided?</p> <p>What lessons were learned that can inform B&amp;Z's future programming to achieve the intended outcomes for the targeted population?</p>
Sustainability	<p>An assessment to the extent of which the project activities continue after donor funding has ceased. This entails assessing to what extent the benefits of the project will continue after it has ended and determining what effects of the project will last after the end of the action (on the participants to the training, on the grants recipients, on the local community).</p>	<p>Did the project work towards achieving sustainability of its results and impact? Was there a plan for this?</p> <p>Were measures taken to ensure the continuity of the project's activities after funding ceased?</p> <p>What is the potential for replication of this project (consider human, organizational and financial factors)?</p>

In addition, the evaluation will address the following questions:

- To what extent did B&Z provide the necessary and relevant information (for example, about the organization, its principles, and the project itself) to participants and communities?
- In what ways, if any, did the project adapt to contextual factors and/or changes (such as Lebanon's ongoing compounded crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic)? To what extent were these effective and adequate?

# Methodology

## Overview

The evaluation used a primarily qualitative approach to respond to the key questions outlined above. Primary sources of information and data for this evaluation included project documentation, as well as key informants, including members of the B&Z team directly involved in project design and conceptualization and/or project implementation, direct project participants, and external stakeholders. All data resulting from the evaluation was triangulated to identify overarching themes and key insights from the project, and in response to the key questions. Qualitative data was analyzed using a thematic framework approach.

## Data collection tools and sampling

Data collection tools, including consent form scripts, and FGD and interview guides, are included in Annex 4. The FGD and interview guides consisted of open-ended questions, derived based on the evaluation objectives and key questions, and allowed flexibility of discussion. The guides served as overall guides, and the questions posed to different stakeholders were relevant to their role within the project.

Participants were targeted using a purposive sampling technique and non-random approach. To the extent possible, sampling of direct project participants reflected the project's selection criteria and composition of target groups. For Component 1, this was based mainly on nationality and location. For Component 2, participants were selected based on gender and location of their MSE, consistent with their ratio respective to the whole sample. External stakeholders were selected based on their roles within the project, and based on the recommendation of B&Z. An overview of the stakeholders who participated in this evaluation can be found in Annex 2. An overview of the demographic characteristics of the Shabake project participants who participated in this evaluation study can be found in Annex 3.

## Desk review

The team consulted relevant project documents, including the grant application form and related annexes, M&E related documents, donor reports, and financial statements. Documents reviewed are outlined in Annex 1. The team also conducted a review of relevant peer-reviewed and grey literature, including of other similar projects and evaluations conducted in Lebanon and other countries in the Global South. Data gathered from the project documentation served initially to answer the evaluation questions and to identify gaps in information, and were triangulated with data gathered through fieldwork.

## Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with B&Z team members directly involved in project conceptualization or implementation, the training consultants, a representative from the

donor agency, and stakeholders involved in outreach. These interviews were conducted via the Zoom application or over the telephone.

Interviews were also conducted with MSEs owners. A list of all 40 participants in Component 2 was provided by B&Z staff, and served as the sampling frame for participant selection. The Shabake project officer informed participants via WhatsApp that the evaluation team would be contacting them. In total, interviews were conducted with 20 MSEs owners located in Bourj Hammoud, Karantina, Medawar, Achrafieh, Gemmayzeh, and Moussaitbeh. Interviews were conducted in-person or over the telephone, based on the participants' preference and availability.

The team conducted two in-person focus group discussions (FGDs) with women participating in Component 1 of the project, the WPGs. One FGD was conducted at the B&Z Center in Bourj Hammoud, and a second FGD was conducted in Karantina, at the dairy production plant where the women underwent their practical training. These locations were selected to ensure that the women were in a location familiar to them and comfortable. Participants filled out a short demographic form prior to the FGD, which included questions based on the selection criteria for the WPG component of the project. The FGDs were scheduled through coordination with the Shabake Project Officer, who informed the women via respective WhatsApp groups about the FGD date, time, and location. The WhatsApp groups included participants of the Shabake project, as well as participants of a second identical project conducted under another grant<sup>1</sup>, and so women from both of these projects attended the FGDs. The evaluation team does not foresee that this resulted in any bias, as based on our discussions with the B&Z team, implementation of this intervention was the same for women under both grants, who also received trainings together. In total, 5 women attended the FGD in Bourj Hammoud, while 13 women attended the FGD in Karantina.

Due to the large number of dropouts from Component 1 of this project, telephone interviews were also conducted with these participants. In total, interviews were conducted with nine women who dropped out of the WPG component of the project. The majority of those interviewed were Lebanese, as Lebanese represented the largest group of dropouts from the project.

## Challenges and limitations of the evaluation study

### *Delay in the data collection period*

The team faced difficulties in contacting and scheduling interviews with the various project stakeholders, due to the Easter and Eid al Fitr holidays, which overlapped with the data collection period. This resulted in an extension of the data collection period beyond its planned duration, and delayed receipt of relevant project documents, as well as coordination and planning for the WPG FGDs. As a result, only one FGD was conducted in each of the project locations (Bourj Hammoud and Karantina), with Lebanese and Syrian women together. This did not cause

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<sup>1</sup> Like the EF project, this second project included a component aiming to create women dairy producer groups, off-farm (urban) small scale dairy processing, and targeting 30 women, 15 Syrian and 15 Lebanese, residing in the most underserved neighborhoods affected by the August 4 Beirut Port Blast.

any issues in Bourj Hammoud, where the group was relatively small, but in Karantina, the group was larger, and the majority of attendees were Syrian women, which may have affected the FGD dynamics. Despite this, the sample can be considered sufficiently illustrative.

### *Selection and recall biases*

*Selection bias:* Sampling was conducted using a purposive, non-random approach. Despite the team's efforts to ensure impartiality in the selection of participants, there remains a chance of a selection bias. This is a possibility among the WPGs who attended the FGDs specifically, as it is likely that those who chose to attend the FGDs are more enthusiastic about the project than their colleagues. Due to this, it is not possible to generalize the study's findings to the whole of WPGs participants or MSEs participants in this project.

*Recall bias:* Considering that some time had passed since the participants had received the training; there is a chance of recall bias. This was observed among a number of MSEs owners who we interviewed, as they could not recall the contents of the training program, nor having filled out a business recovery plan (BRP). In these cases, the evaluation team relied on probes and/or showed them a printout of the BRP template.

### *Project implementation related delays*

Although significant progress has been made towards achieving the Shabake project's goals and objectives, there were some delays in the implementation of certain project activities, such as in the handover of dairy production plants to WPGs and the establishment of the plants as businesses, which will be covered in a second phase for the project, and in the hand-over of in-kind support/equipment to MSEs. B&Z requested a 1-month no-cost extension, in order to continue hand-over to MSEs in February 2022. The delay was in large part due to factors related to the current context in Lebanon (such as inflation, devaluation of the local currency, fluctuating LBP/dollar rates, extensive power cuts, increasing oil and gas prices, prohibitive generator membership fees); although some delays were also caused by project related challenges (discussed in more detail in later sections). Due to these delays, the evaluation team was not able to capture the extent of the intervention's impact (short-term and long-term) on direct or indirect participants. Nevertheless, direct participants shared the perceived impact of participation in the project on their lives to date through the semi-structured interviews and FGDs conducted.

### *Data and information gaps*

Several targets were not met due to incomplete activities (to be finalized in a follow-up phase to Component 1 of the project, Phase II), or because the means of verification for them were not yet available. Examples include the handover of processing kits and dairy production businesses to the WPGs. Where documents or data were not available, information was sought through interviews with project stakeholders. The evaluation team also reviewed documentation available for Phase II of the project as a means of qualitatively assessing the sustainability of the action.

## Findings

### Outreach and selection

- To what extent did B&Z provide the necessary and relevant information (for example, about the organization, its principles, and the project itself) to participants and communities?

As an active member in various clusters, coalitions, and working groups, B&Z coordinated effectively with multiple stakeholders involved in the Beirut Port Blast response during the outreach and selection process to avoid duplication of work. Participants were identified from databases gathered through previous assessments conducted by the organization, through multiple field visits, as well as through coordination with local partners, municipalities, other local governance bodies (*makhateer*), local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the Beirut Forward Emergency Room (pertaining to the Lebanese Army). Selection of participants was based on robust and clear criteria, aiming to capture those participants most in need and vulnerable. Key informants involved in the outreach process also mentioned incorporating a verification step during the selection process to ensure that participants met the inclusion criteria for participation.

This worked well for MSEs, whereby, among those interviewed, the majority of businesses selected for support are significantly impacted by the economic crisis, and are still struggling to recover post-the Beirut Port Blast and the impact of COVID-19. In addition, amongst those interviewed, few had received aid for their MSEs from other organizations; with the majority having covered initial rehabilitation for their shops out of pocket or through loans. The team assessed 75 MSEs initially, of which 40 were selected to participate in the intervention. Based on a review of the pre-assessment survey findings, selected MSEs fit the selection criteria. Nevertheless, among interviewed MSEs, the majority were not sure about why they had been selected for participation in the project or to receive support, but did mention perceiving the selection process as having been fair.

Among women who attended the WPG-FGD, the majority were heads of their household, had a low-income, and did not currently receive support from any other organization. Regarding the WPGs, 97 women were initially interviewed during the assessment, although outreach and selection were an ongoing process throughout the project duration due to dropouts. As participants dropped out of the project, B&Z promptly adjusted both their outreach mechanisms and selection criteria to identify participants willing to commit to such a project, and in addition, added a criterion related to participant level of education. The latter was added as a criterion to ensure that each group among the WPGs would have members with the basic literacy and numeracy skills required to take on the business end of the enterprise (such as the accounting requirements).

One potential issue during outreach and selection that may have resulted in the exclusion of certain groups of women from the project is that both team members involved in recruitment were men. As a result of both team members being male, registration of women for participation

in the project had to be conducted in an open-space, particularly in the Karantina area. In Karantina specifically, outreach regarding the WPGs relied to a great extent on the recommendations of two key local contact persons, both previously *makhateer*, who provided the team with lists of names, and who invited women to register as well. When asked how they heard about the intervention, some of the female participants and dropouts mentioned hearing about the intervention from their family, friends or neighbors, or from having seen the project team registering participants in their neighborhood.

This issue was identified as a lesson learned by the B&Z team during their internal reflection exercise and was acknowledged by several key informants during the interviews for the evaluation. As a result, B&Z have introduced a new practice during project design, namely to conduct a protection risk analysis and consult with protection teams when designing any future project.

## Relevance

- To what extent does the project respond to the needs and priorities of participants (including vulnerable Lebanese, including displaced and impoverished persons)?  
*Sub-question: Did the project differentiate between the needs of women, men, other vulnerable groups?*
- Did the intervention address the short- and long-term needs and priorities of targeted participants?
- Were the project inputs and strategies realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve its planned objectives?
- To what extent were the main project activities and outputs consistent with the goals and objectives of the project?

B&Z has years of experience (2014 onwards) supporting livelihoods projects and MSMEs through their community centers by providing vocational and technical trainings, small grants, and other types of immediate assistance to Syrian refugees and other vulnerable communities. In response to the quickly deteriorating situation in Lebanon, the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns, and the Beirut Port Blast, and considering the impact of these compounded crises on vulnerable and marginalized communities, B&Z expedited its Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) Program, updating its work to respond to local communities' emerging needs. With regards to supporting MSMEs after the Beirut Port Blast, this was an experience they already had leading up to the Shabake project, through a grant they received to support SMEs, whereby they provided participants with both rehabilitation (in the form of reconstruction, as needed for the shop) and recovery (in the form of in-kind equipment) to support them in restoring their operations. Based on their experience with this project, they opted to focus on MSEs that were only partially open or fully open in Shabake, rather than on MSEs that were fully closed, as based on their previous experience, the potential to restore operational capacity for partially open or open MSEs was deemed more likely.

B&Z were among the first organizations on the ground post-the Beirut Port Blast, implementing rehabilitation projects, providing protection services, and relief such as food baskets, and small in-kind cash grants. By the end of August 2020, just weeks after the blast, B&Z had conducted a

rapid assessment<sup>2</sup> to measure the extent of damage incurred by MSMEs in the Beirut Port Blast area, and identify those most affected MSMEs, with a focus on MSMEs able to return to operational capacity if provided with assistance. The results of this assessment conducted by B&Z highlighted the impact of the blast on micro-enterprises in particular, as well as shed a light on the lack of women owned businesses. B&Z also conducted the data collection for a report looking at the impact of the Beirut Port Blast on over 1,600 enterprises located within a 5 km-radius of the blast site (Kebede et al., 2020). The assessment was conducted both on-site and over the phone, and provided B&Z with a strong understanding of the context and its impact on enterprises, whether due to the economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, or the Beirut Port Blast, and on their needs and priorities. As one key informant noted, “Based on a needs assessment [B&Z] tried to...prevent [MSEs] from losing their employees by providing business and vocational training and conducting business recovery plans. There was the idea of giving them in-kind [equipment] to stabilize them and provide them with some resilience.”

Indeed, a desk review of studies conducted post the Beirut Port Blast and in light of Lebanon’s economic crisis revealed that support to MSMEs was still needed post the blast, and that supporting MSMEs would contribute to reviving Lebanon’s economy (World Bank, EU, & UN, 2020; UNHCR, 2022; Kebede et al., 2020). In addition, an assessment by UN Women highlighted the impact of the blast on women-owned enterprises (UN Women, 2020). Beyond this, B&Z’s Shabake project is in line with national-level strategic objectives regarding economic development in Lebanon. In particular, it responds to the second strategic pillar (Restoring access to jobs and economic opportunities and reviving the local and national economy) of the 3RF (The Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework), and to the LCRP Livelihoods Outcome #1 Stimulate local economic development and market systems to create income generating opportunities and employment.

For this project in particular, detailed pre-assessments were conducted with each of the MSEs participants to identify their business needs and to ensure that these were being met. This evaluation study found that the intervention fulfilled the participants’ needs and priorities for their business. Several participants reported being eager to return to work after the blast, particularly to support their livelihoods and that of their families. Even a year after the blast, a few of the MSEs participants were still in need of equipment to restore their operations. As one participant mentioned, their priority after the blast was to “work again, I needed an income for my household. The dough machine is one of the priorities for the bakery, and also the fridge I use for drinks, because this also brings in an income”; both were items they had lost as a result of the blast. Another participant highlighted the importance of recovering their operations in order to ensure the livelihoods of their children. The majority of participants reported that the support they received was important for them to progress and continue in their work so they do not close their business. When asked if they would have preferred to receive the in-kind support in another form, the majority responded that even if they had received the support in cash form, it would not have made a difference, as they would have put the money back into their business to restore operations.

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<sup>2</sup> Basmeh & Zeitouneh’s Beirut MSMEs Damage Assessment after Port Explosion on August 4, 2020; dated August 30, 2020.

Regarding the WPGs, this is a pilot intervention, and the first of its kind for B&Z in the targeted areas; considered to be both "creative" and "innovative" in its design by key informants, and aiming to "empower women and stabilize and empower the economy in the area..." The team conducted a market assessment to ensure the need for dairy products, whereby they studied the consumption habits of dairy products in Lebanon and beyond. At the time when the project was launched (and prior to a number of unforeseeable context-related challenges that emerged during the project implementation phase), the market assessment found that dairy products have a high profit margin. The project was also found to be feasible.

Based on their extensive experience working with Syrian refugees and other vulnerable communities, the team considered dairy production as a culturally appropriate business for women that would also respond to the increasing food security issue among these communities. As one key informant shared, "We thought of a project that is culturally relatable to women where they can actually relate to this type of business and they can be interested in starting their own business. We were also monitoring the food security situation in the area that was worsening with time especially with the economic situation in Lebanon and decrease in purchasing power. We were thinking how can we contribute sustainably to the food production process." This was reiterated by the women who attended the FGDs, as they reported participating in the project because they were in financial need, to help their households, improve their livelihoods, increase their experience, work in a domain that they like, and implement the skills they have gained at home. Participants also mentioned the added value of being able to take cheeses and yogurts home for their families, which they currently could not afford.

Due to the delays in the implementation of certain project activities, it was not possible to ascertain whether the project responded to participants' long-term needs, such as an increased income or income-generation. This may, however, be assessed at a later stage, through field-visits conducted by B&Z.

### *Project inputs and strategies*

Given the short time available to prepare for and launch the project, B&Z relied on previous staff who had already been working on projects related to the organization's Beirut Port Blast response for this project. Although this facilitated launch of the project and organizational processes and procedures, the all-male team was not in line with mechanisms to ensure the participation of vulnerable women. One key informant noted that the time for recruitment was very challenging, in addition to challenges faced by local NGOs to recruit staff, as they cannot compete against international NGOs with regards to salaries. Project staff also acknowledged that the project was missing mechanisms to facilitate women's participation, such as daycare, social female workers, protection services, and transportation, but note that they were faced with both a fund and duration limitation.

Due to their previous work in response to the Beirut Port Blast, the team had also already established connections with key stakeholders within the community, and were also familiar with the areas around the blast, which facilitated outreach and selection. B&Z's strategy to coordinate with other key stakeholders within the affected areas was successful in ensuring that there was no duplication of support and services. Among those participants that we interviewed for both

components of the project, very few had received support or aid from other organizations. The selection criteria used were also appropriate for the selection of participants and to identify their needs and priorities.

The selection of trainers with relevant experience also proved adequate, especially the dairy production trainer, who had previously worked on another Shabake funded project. The WPG participants mentioned that they were satisfied with the both the dairy production and business trainers, noting that they were easy to communicate with, treated them well, had patience, and were able to respond to any questions they had. Among the MSEs, participants shared a similar experience regarding the business trainer. Nevertheless, some of the women participating in the WPGs-FGD noted that they would have benefited from additional practical training, while a few MSEs owners mentioned that the business training was not beneficial for them.

Among most of WPGs participants, an improvement was observed between the pre- and post-assessments for the dairy trainings, as noted by the training consultant, and reflected by participant scores. Regarding the business training, the business trainer also noted an improvement in knowledge among both WPGs and MSEs participants. For the WPGs, they conducted a group exercise, and for the MSEs, they were assessed via pre- and post-tests, and there were varying degrees of improvement among some participants, while the BRP was also considered part of their post-assessment.

Regarding the workplan and proposed strategy for procurement of items, whether for the WPGs or the MSEs, this could have been improved. Considering that both components of this project required the procurement of equipment and other items, including stock for MSEs, the hiring of a procurement officer, even if part-time, dedicated to this project would have been beneficial. The project would also have benefited from a longer timeline and better planning regarding procurement. The project workplan gives only two months between distribution of dairy equipment and in-kind support to participants. In addition, distribution of in-kind support to participants was scheduled to take place two months before the end of the project. Given B&Z's internal procurement procedures and additional donor requirements, as well as the small size of their procurement team, the workplan should have included a buffer for possible challenges and delays. Issues related to equipment for the dairy production businesses as well as the in-kind support provided to MSEs are discussed in more details in later sections. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in light of the context and resulting delays (discussed in more detail below), B&Z still managed to purchase the dairy production business (Component 1) and in-kind (Component 2) equipment in a timely manner, requiring only a 1-month no cost-extension for disbursement of in-kind equipment to MSEs.

## Effectiveness

- Did the project adhere to its stated overall objectives, specific objectives, results and indicators?
- What and how much progress was made towards achieving the project's results?
- Did the project achieve its expected results and objectives as well as the overall intended impact (consider both short-term and longer-term impacts)?

- What were the factors that contributed to (or hindered) the achievement of the project's planned results?

B&Z has made significant progress towards achieving the objectives for Component 1 of the project, despite facing significant challenges and not having handed over or launched the three dairy production businesses by the end of Phase I. Some changes to the project design were also made to the WPGs component of the project. As for Component 2, in spite of all the challenges faced during implementation, all activities were conducted, and all project outputs were achieved, although with some minor adjustments and with a 1-month no-cost extension. Overall, several key informants noted that the project was constrained, both in terms of its budget and timeline. For both components, it is too soon to ascertain whether the project achieved any impact, such as on participants' income, although perceived impact was discussed with participants. The latter is covered in more detail in the section on impact below.

Following is an overview of project objectives and activities and progress towards their achievement based on the findings of the desk review, preparatory meetings, and interviews conducted as part of this evaluation study.

#### *Component 1: WPGs*

Participants for the three WPGs have been identified, and the groups have been formed (two in Karantina area, and one in the Bourj Hammoud area). All 30 women completed their theoretical training, while only 19 of them completed the practical training, due to multiple dropouts throughout the project period. Dropouts (reasons for dropping out are discussed in the *Factors hindering or delaying project results* section below) resulted in a continuous outreach and selection process, with women still being recruited in December 2021. The trainings had to be repeated for new participants, and some did not manage to attend both the theoretical and practical dairy production trainings by the end of Phase I. Participants of the FGDs reported being satisfied with the training, and in particular, with the trainer's approach, although some did note feeling like the practical training could have been longer. Some mentioned how easy it was to communicate with the trainer and the B&Z project team if they had any questions for clarification or concerns.

The dairy processing kits and equipment have been bought, and have been distributed to the rented localities. The budget for equipment required for the dairy production plants increased significantly, from \$8,000 to around \$13,000 per business, and the donor was cooperative and understanding regarding this reallocation. In addition, the production localities have been rented and the dairy production businesses set-up. Additional funding was also reallocated to the WPGs component to cover construction costs for the rented localities to prepare them for use as dairy production businesses. Furthermore, the MoUs with the WPGs have not been signed yet; these will be signed in Phase II of the project with consultation from a legal consultant taking into consideration feedback from the WPGs participants. The latter has been delayed due to concerns with legal issues around co-ownership of the businesses and the rights of the groups' members in this regard, as raised to B&Z by the women themselves, as well as with licensing and other requirements to sell their product to the market. This delay is also due to factors related to the

current context in Lebanon, as well as challenges faced during implementation, discussed in more detail below.

As for production, a milk supplier has been identified in lieu of 20 local farmers, and a verbal agreement was made. Initially the project aimed to support 20 local farmers (as indirect participants of the project) who would act as input (milk) suppliers for the dairy production groups, however, upon launching the project, B&Z found that most local farmers in close vicinity to the intervention localities had closed down as a result of the economic crisis.

Furthermore, production trials have taken place, but the women have not started production yet, as they have not taken over the businesses. The women conducted a few production trials, and produced a good quality *laban*, *labneh*, halloumi, akkawi and double cream, which were sold internally and to close friends to encourage them. In addition, linkages with local shops have not been established yet, although informal discussions were held.

In response to the multiple challenges faced, and based on their internal monitoring and learning, B&Z proposed a top-up and extension of the project, Phase II, which has been funded by EF. This phase aims to help the WPGs to sustain their dairy production business, which will be their source of income generation, and entails providing them with capital (in the form of covering rent, generator fees, and raw materials, such as milk, for a period of six months), additional training and mentoring regarding dairy production to ensure a standard production, as well as business training to ensure they have the necessary skills to run a business, as well as to market their products.

### *Component 2: MSEs*

Implementation of Component 2 was more straightforward. The target number of 40 MSEs participants was met, including 45 per cent women-owned enterprises and 55 per cent men-owned enterprises. After outreach and selection based on the project's criteria and scoring, a detailed needs assessment for each enterprise was conducted, the training for MSEs was held, all MSEs developed a BRP, and all of them received their in-kind support.

Based on feedback from the business owners, who could not always leave their jobs to attend the trainings, B&Z minimized the number of required training sessions to six, down from the initially planned 12 sessions. Nevertheless, several participants could not attend the trainings due to working conflicts, while others believed the training would not be beneficial to them. To compensate for both the shortened training and for those who did not attend, trainings were supplemented by a one-on-one coaching meeting with each of the business owners at their shops. A few of the interviewed participants mentioned that the training covered skills they already had, or they mentioned that the content of the training was not suitable for their type of work. Others did benefit to a certain extent, mentioning that they had adopted some of the techniques they learned during the training, such as digital marketing, accounting, diversification of their products, adjusting their prices, or purchasing dollars to maintain their purchasing power.

As per the activity indicators, the project initially intended to support reconstruction for 20 MSEs, and to provide in-kind equipment to 20 MSEs, nevertheless, it was found that since

almost a year had passed since the blast, that the majority of potential participants had already finalized reconstruction. As such, the team opted to provide in-kind support, in the form of productive assets, to all of the participants. While the trainings were conducted from end of June to end of July 2021, most of the participants received their in-kind support in December 2021 or after. This delay was due to challenges faced during the procurement process, discussed below, and had little impact on most of the participants. Furthermore, while the majority of MSEs participants interviewed reported being satisfied with the in-kind support they received, a few were only somewhat satisfied, noting that they would not be able to use some of the items they received, in one case due to quality.

Micro-finance institutions were mapped, and a meeting with two micro-finance institutions was held, which only a few of the MSEs owners attended. When asked why they did not attend this meeting, the majority of MSEs owners interviewed stated that they were not in a place to take on any additional debt, and that they feared not being able to pay back the loan.

Despite the achievement of project outputs for Component 2, the majority of participants reported that they had not been able to improve their income, not as a result of the project, but due to the ongoing economic crisis, for example, as a result of minimal sales or the electricity/generator issue, as they could not afford generator fees. For those participants that received equipment or other productive assets, it is expected that the support will eventually allow them to restore operations or to increase their income. Regarding the items they received, participants mentioned that this helped them make a profit while the items lasted, as they did not need to purchase these themselves (for some, this would have meant taking on additional debts). Some also mentioned that it gave them a sense of security. As one participant shared, “I selected items which I knew would have a high turnover, such as toilet paper, Nescafe, etc. I received everything requested, and it gave the store a good push...[the in-kind items] allowed me to make some revenue to restock as needed...The products helped me increase my turnover and income.” To a certain extent, the in-kind support helped participants to stabilize their businesses in the face of Lebanon’s ongoing crisis.

### Good practices: Factors contributing to achieved project results

#### *Direct project staff’s commitment and flexibility*

Staff went above and beyond to ensure that the project’s objectives were achieved, working after hours to ensure that objectives were met (in particular regarding the MSEs component), as well as responding quickly to on-the-ground challenges as they emerged. Their commitment to the project was mentioned by both external stakeholders as well as the participants themselves. Where necessary, they relied on personal resources to facilitate project activities, for example, using their own cars to bring participants who could not afford transportation fees to the scheduled trainings. Where necessary, they also relied on personal connections to speed up processes, such as identifying localities for the dairy production businesses. Staff also showed flexibility regarding adjusted training times, which were held as early as 7:00 am or as late as 7:00 pm due to the generator schedule. Regarding the MSEs, they made sure to deliver in-kind equipment to some of the participants before their high-season for work started (December), during the holiday period.

### *Project monitoring mechanisms, learning and adaptability*

Described as resilient by one of the external key informants, B&Z was quick to respond to emerging challenges, particularly with regards to Component 1 of the project. Whether it was extending the period for outreach and adjusting selection criteria to ensure that they would identify women willing to commit to the project, identifying the localities for the WPGs, or purchasing equipment that could be used manually and that did not require electricity due to the electricity issue, B&Z managed to bring together a group of women who are highly enthusiastic about the dairy production businesses and the prospects of generating their own income. With regards to the MSEs, B&Z adjusted the number of training sessions, and introduced one-on-one coaching to make up for this change, aiming to ensure that participants would get the most of this capacity building exercise.

### *B&Z's experience working on livelihoods in an emergency context*

B&Z's resilience and adaptability can in large part be attributed to the years of experience they have in working on similar livelihoods projects, in addition to their emergency response to the Beirut Port Blast. On this point as well, relying on staff who were previously involved in B&Z's emergency response to the Beirut Port Blast was likely a factor contributing to the achieved results, particularly regarding Component 2. Staff were familiar with the localities affected by the blast, had already established connections within the community, and were also familiar with B&Z's internal policies and procedures. Similarly, the technical advisor for the project had experience working on similar interventions with various NGOs and in various contexts, which allowed them to adapt the WPGs component of the project, in response to Lebanon's deteriorating context (for example, regarding the purchase of manual equipment).

### *B&Z's credibility and their reputation within the community*

As a result of their response and work towards rehabilitation and recovery post the Beirut Port Blast, B&Z managed to establish strong connections within these communities. This helped in outreach as well as facilitated other aspects of the project. In addition, despite the many challenges faced, both WPGs and MSEs participants mentioned B&Z's credibility and honesty as major factors contributing to the project's success. Participants also mentioned the respect with which they were treated by direct project staff as a success factor.

### *Factors hindering or delaying achievement of project results*

A number of challenges were faced during implementation of the project's two components, which hindered or delayed achievement of the project's planned results. In both cases, these were mainly issues due to the current context in Lebanon, and beyond the control of B&Z, although some of the issues can be attributed to flaws in the project design.

### *Component 1: WPGs*

### *Context related*

- An increase in price of milk, the raw material required for the production of cheeses and yogurts, and its dollarization.
- Increasing prices of equipment required for the dairy production businesses, due to inflation and the fluctuating dollar rates. In addition, the team had to purchase additional equipment for the dairy production businesses in response to the electricity crisis, increasing fuel prices, and lack of fuel in the market, such as equipment that could be used manually, in lieu of equipment that would require electricity or a generator.
- The team were not able to find local farmers in close vicinity to the production sites, as they had shut down their operations due to the crisis. An informal deal was made with a larger milk supplier, who supplied pasteurized milk for the trainings.
- Identifying a location or space for the dairy production business/equipment was especially difficult (high prices, refusal to rent to an NGO, or to WPGs composed of refugees and Lebanese), as the localities had to be within budget, close to the women's homes, and suitable in size to accommodate the necessary equipment. This resulted in a gap of a few months between the initial theoretical trainings conducted, and the following practical trainings. This caused a loss of trust and hope in the project among some of the participants.
- Lebanon's electricity crisis and skyrocketing generator fees, which are often dollarized. In addition, generator providers are not willing to provide 24/7 electricity, although constant electricity is required to produce and store dairy products. As a result, additional equipment was purchased for the women that they would be able to use manually.
- The electricity crisis also affected training times. The team adapted quickly by adjusting training times according to the generator schedule, to ensure that the trainings were conducted as planned.
- Public employees and ministries were either closed, on strike or not going to work because of transportation issues, lack of electricity and other reasons, as a result, this caused a delay in initiating the health certification and licensing process required for the dairy production units.
- Delays in trainings due to COVID-19 and roadblocks.
- During the implementation period, the Ministry of Agriculture tightened up on the requirements for cheeses and yogurts production, for example, with regards to the proper packaging and labeling, including expiry date, in order to be sold on the market.
- There was a delay in the handover of the dairy equipment from the supplier.

### *Project (design) related*

- There was a delay in purchasing the necessary equipment needed for the dairy production businesses, and in turn, in setting up the businesses. This was due to differing opinions regarding the most suitable equipment for production, which resulted in two bidding rounds for the equipment. While the consultant recommended automated high production equipment that were not suitable given the available infrastructure and current crisis conditions, B&Z opted to go for the originally proposed production kit, with minor modifications in response to the deteriorating context.
- Localities rented included shops, houses, or apartments, which did not have the necessary water drainage system required for a dairy production business. Approval and a permit for construction and connection to the neighborhood drainage system was required from

the local municipality, and was delayed as at the time the municipality was only opening 2x per week due to COVID-19. In addition, some of the spaces rented required renovation and painting.

- o In addition, construction work that would allow the spaces rented to be adjusted into a premises fit for food production was not initially budget for.
- As was mentioned by some key informants and participants, three theoretical and three practical sessions are not likely enough to produce a standard, marketable product. Nevertheless, the women had a few successful production trials, showcasing the promising results that could be expected from the project.
- Women mentioned transportation and late working hours as challenges faced during participation in this component of the project.
  - o Transportation fees were mentioned as a reason for leaving the project by some of the dropouts we interviewed.

#### *Participant related*

- A number of participants dropped out from the WPGs. Based on the team's input as well as feedback from participants from the WPG-FGDs, these women dropped out due to a variety of reasons, including related to social norms (husband not letting them attend), emergency or health-related situations at home, having to care for their children, or having to move away from the area due to increasing rental prices. As per several key informants, it was especially difficult to identify Lebanese women willing to participate in the project, in some cases because they preferred a salary.
- Among the dropouts interviewed, several mentioned transportation fees and the delay/gap in time between the theoretical and practical trainings as a driver for leaving the project. Others mentioned having to go to a different area for the practical training (from Bourj Hammoud to Karantina), long training days (spent away from home and children, tiring), or that there was no incentive (and accordingly, that they preferred to give this time to their home and children). One mentioned being worried that the project would fail without a supervisor, as was having to go to a different neighborhood (from Bourj Hammoud to Karantina) to attend practical trainings. These issues highlight the lack of measures taken to ensure and facilitate participation of vulnerable populations and women in the project.
- Difficulty identifying Lebanese women willing to participate in the project. Internal and external key informants involved in outreach mentioned lack of interest and hesitancy among Lebanese women.
- Difficulties with identifying the required number of women (50 per cent Lebanese, and 50 per cent Syrian) for participation in Bashoura, Moussaitbeh, and Karm El Zeitoun, which resulted in setting up 2 businesses in Karantina and 1 in Bourj Hammoud.

#### Component 2: MSEs

##### *Context related*

- Difficulties in identifying suppliers who had the necessary legal documentation, a bank account, and also the items requested. Where bank accounts were not available, B&Z had to pay suppliers through Cash United. This challenge is also somewhat related to B&Zs internal procurement policies, as well as the donor's requirements (for example, the

donor required a receipt from the supplier as proof of purchase), which indirectly contributed to the delay in purchasing and distributing the in-kind support.

- Difficulties in finding the right number of suppliers required for a bid, especially as some items were rare to find.
- Suppliers requested that they receive their payments in fresh dollars prior to handing over equipment and items. In addition, bank charges, which had to be reimbursed, as well as other challenges related to banks, such as delays in transfers.
- Lebanon's electricity crisis affected training times. The team adapted quickly by adjusting training times according to the generator schedule, to ensure that the trainings were conducted as planned.

#### *Project (design) related*

- The procurement team was pressured with time, as most orders were placed in November and December 2021, close to the end of the project, and right before the holidays. As a result, the team had to put on hold work for all other projects.
- Besides this being the first time for B&Z to work with MSEs in these localities (and so not having a list of suppliers), there was also a large variety of MSEs requesting multiple different items, sometimes a list of over 100 items. In addition, the procurement team did not have experience or know-how regarding some of the items requested due to not having previously worked with some types of businesses (for example, leather workshops).
  - Some participants interviewed did not receive the items they requested, received items they would not be able to use, or received low quality items.
- Each request over \$500 requires the formation of a committee, which was time-consuming, as it required scheduling multiple meetings with multiple staff members.
- The training was too general (MSEs owners had varying years of experience, various sectors were represented, not all benefited).
- Some participants interviewed mentioned difficulties in attending the trainings, as these took place in July 2021, coinciding with a country-wide gasoline shortage. Some participants also faced transportation issues (such as due to fees) to and from the center. Among those we interviewed, a few of the participants did not attend the trainings, as they felt they would not be beneficial for them or their work; this was supplemented by one-on-one coaching.

#### Efficiency

- Were project resources allocated in the most efficient way possible (for example, time, financial and human resources)?
- To what extent was the project conducted in the most efficient way as compared to other alternative ways of conducting the project?
- Were the project activities cost-effective? (Based on a qualitative assessment)

Despite incurring fixed costs related to logistics (such as during outreach), staff, and the rental of the community center, the bulk of the project budget went to operational costs in favor of project participants, whether for trainings, in-kind equipment, or dairy production kits. Several key

informants mentioned that additional staff would have benefited the project, at least by alleviating the tight timeline and/or load on individual staff members. As one key informant mentioned, the inclusion of a part-time internal comptroller to deal with donor compliance requirements could have freed the project manager's time for other project tasks. Nevertheless, direct project staff (consisting of the project manager, project officer, and outreach officer) were fully dedicated to their roles, and went above and beyond to ensure that project activities were conducted as required and progress was made towards achieving the project's objectives. Where necessary, the project team took on multiple roles, such as the project officer also supporting during outreach. They also benefited from the support of the technical advisor, who was very involved in Component 1: WPGs of the project.

Several key informants shared that the project budget was limited to begin with. The budget was further stretched by the unforeseen challenges resulting from Lebanon's crisis, such as the electricity/generator issue. Indeed, it would have been difficult to meet some of the Component 1 objectives in Phase I of the project had it not been for the significant savings made in Component 2. In this regard, the donor was very flexible in terms of reallocation of funds. B&Z's internal monitoring and learning mechanisms allowed the team to recognize early on the need for a top-up and extension for Component 1 of the project, to ensure both the impact and sustainability of the WPGs. The donor was also understanding and saw the benefit of a Phase II of the project.

Delays and other contextual challenges are expected in a situation like the one Lebanon is going through, but overall, B&Z's quick response and adaptability in the face of challenges have enabled, to the best extent possible, the efficient use of project resources. For example, in response to the electricity/generator issue, the team opted to purchase manual dairy production equipment that would allow the WPGs to continue their operations in the long-term. Furthermore, training timings were adjusted according to generator schedules, and multiple training sessions were scheduled to accommodate newcomers and ensure that they would catch up to their peers, or they were scheduled based on participant availability to ensure the highest participation possible. Since B&Z made the purchases of in-kind equipment for the MSEs participants, they were able to get better deals when purchasing large quantities of similar items. As a result, significant savings were made in the purchase of in-kind equipment for MSEs, which were used towards the benefit of the WPGs component.

The process for identifying needed in-kind equipment by participants was conducted during or right after the training through the development of participants' BRPs, and as scheduled. For the most part, participants noted knowing what equipment they needed to improve their business due to their years of experience. Notably, some interviewed participants shared that they were asked to obtain offers for the in-kind equipment they needed that were not eventually used in some of the cases. The procurement process itself was inefficient and poorly planned, due to the various factors previously discussed, and caused delays in delivery of in-kind support to participants. Though procurement staff were also overstretched, they managed to purchase the equipment within the project timeline. A one-month no-cost extension was necessary to disburse the in-kind support to participants, with some participants receiving their in-kind equipment in February 2022.

Considering the tight timeline for the project, and the large-scale and range of equipment that needed to be purchased to fulfill the project's specific objectives (between dairy equipment and in-kind equipment for WPGs and MSEs respectively), perhaps providing MSEs with grants could have been a suitable alternative to B&Z purchasing and distributing the in-kind equipment themselves. MSEs owners could have purchased the equipment and items needed for their business, and then provided B&Z with proof of purchase in the form of receipts from suppliers. The latter was actually mentioned as a suitable alternative by some of the participants. One participant explained that they would have been able to obtain a better deal from the supplier had they made the purchase themselves. Others mentioned that they would have purchased a better quality of items. Another participant mentioned that they would have purchased multiple items in smaller quantities, instead of large quantities of only a few items, since they did not feel comfortable asking the B&Z team to do the former. Alternatively, and as suggested by one key informant, hiring a part-time procurement officer for this project may also have been a suitable alternative for this project; as the load placed on the B&Z procurement team to finalize all purchases for this project in a timely manner resulted in their having to put on hold all other purchases organization-wide.

Several challenges faced during project implementation may have influenced the project's cost-effectiveness, and should be taken into consideration in future planning efforts. These include:

- The extended outreach and selection for the project, which lasted almost throughout its entire timeline, requiring significant resources, particularly regarding staff time.
- Having to repeat trainings due to dropouts, as well as having to repeat there in Phase II, once the dairy production businesses are launched, since significant time will have passed from initial training.
- Down-time between initially preparing and renting localities, and handing them over to the WPGs (pending signing of MoUs/launching Phase II of the project), as rent is being paid despite no production.
- No cost-extensions (in this case of one-month only) may contribute to decreased cost-effectiveness of a project, because fixed costs still have to be covered (for example, staff time).

### Communication with participants

Initially, two orientation meetings were held for the WPGs to inform them about the project, one in May 2021, and a second in July 2021. Among the women who attended the WGP-FGDs, the women were aware that participation in this project entailed receiving training and capacity building in order to launch and run their own dairy production business; however, there was some confusion regarding the details, for example, how tasks would be delegated and profits distributed, and also some concern about taking over. There was also some confusion regarding the formation of groups, although some of the women mentioned that the business would be close to home. Some mentioned that they lost touch with B&Z staff for some time after receiving the training and that they had begun to lose hope that the businesses would be launched (corresponding to the time taken to identify localities for the dairy businesses).

Similarly, some MSEs reported losing touch with B&Z while waiting to receive their in-kind support. Furthermore, the majority of MSEs participants interviewed reported that it was requested of them to obtain offers for the items they needed, and that they were given an initial budget of \$2,000 for the items. A few mentioned paying transportation fees out of pocket to visit several suppliers to get the best offers, only to find that B&Z had purchased the items from a different supplier. In addition, almost half of the participants interviewed mentioned that they were asked to decrease the total for the items they had requested from \$2,000 to \$1,200-1,400. While this was seen by B&Z as savings made which could be used to supplement the missing budget for Component 1 of the project, some of the participants mentioned that they would have benefited more had they received all the equipment they initially requested. Nevertheless, they remained grateful for the support.

When asked whether they knew were they could make any complaints, the majority of MSEs owners who were interviewed replied that they do not recall being informed about this during the training sessions, or that this information was not shared with them. Notably, participants interviewed for both components of the project did not have a clear understanding of the complaint mechanisms in place at B&Z, and the majority believed that complaints had to be made to direct project staff. Among MSEs owners, some mentioned that they were in direct contact with the project officer, who they submitted some of their complaints to regarding the in-kind equipment they received. Some participants mentioned appreciating being able to reach out to the project officer if they had any questions.

## Impact

- To what extent has the intervention had an impact on the lives of participants? What evidence is there for this?
- What have been the positive effects of this project on participants and the surrounding community?
- Have any unintended and/or negative effects resulted from the project (to participants, to the community, etc.)? If so, what are these effects and how could they have been mitigated and/or avoided?

It is too early to assess the long-term impact of this project, as for Component 1, the project is still ongoing, and for Component 2, most participants received their in-kind support only 3-4 months ago and are still facing the country's compounded crisis. The perceived impact of participation in this project is discussed below. Through both components, B&Z injected financial resources into the economy by participating in and supporting the local market, although the direct impact of this cannot be ascertained.

### **Component 1: WPGs**

To date, component 1 of the project has not had a tangible impact on the women's income as the businesses have not been launched. Nevertheless, the women participating in the WPG-FGDs expressed their hopes and expectations that the project would have a positive impact on their household once they started working, participants shared that the project would "help them get back on their feet" and that it would help them support their families. Among the women who

attended the WPG-FGD, some shared that the trainings helped them gain new skills, particularly with regards to dairy production, which they are now also implementing at home. Some of these women also showed their commitment to the project and expressed how excited they were to take over and start working.

In Bourj Hammoud, the participants mentioned the good relations and cohesion amongst group members. As one explained, “When they told us there were Lebanese and Syrians, I started to think it is possible that there will be discrimination. But we were one, there was no discrimination. We were working with one heart. We used to help each other; I take on tasks from her.”

Despite their enthusiasm for the project and its potential, some participants mentioned losing hope due to the project delays, which could have been mitigated by better planning and design. The delay also resulted in their forgetting some of the skills and knowledge they had gained during the trainings. The women will be receiving ongoing training and mentorship in Phase II of the project. Also, in Bourj Hammoud, some of the participants mentioned that their neighbors and communities were not supportive, and this also caused them some distress when the project was delayed, as some people mocked them.

In both Karantina and Bourj Hammoud, the women are facing some distress and worry regarding having to eventually take on the businesses independently and the responsibility that this entails: “And for maintenance alone, we cannot do it, it will be difficult for us. We need the organization to stand by us. Although we took theoretical part but during the actual work, there will be a lot of things we don't know so we need them by our side. For example, the electricity is not good and sometimes the water stops, we wouldn't know what to do.” Another shared, “I know the ladies in this group are scared but they are not saying that. We are scared of what will happen later on.” The women were also concerned about team dynamics, delegation of tasks, and dropouts. Some of the women expressed concerns about the long working days they were expecting, and how this would affect their household responsibilities. B&Z's acknowledgement of these issues and concerns have been translated into actions to be taken in Phase II of the project; these actions include incorporating a social worker early on in the project as well as providing protection services to create a safe space for participants, covering transportation fees, providing daycare services to the women, and adopting flexible timings for the training sessions, as per the participants' preference and availability.

## **Component 2: MSEs**

In light of the economic crisis, it is difficult to gauge the impact of the in-kind support on MSE's income, with many of those we interviewed sharing that work was slow or had decreased significantly in recent months due to the compounded crisis. Indeed, few participants we interviewed mentioned an increased income or improved turnover after receiving the in-kind equipment or items. Nevertheless, the support was timely. Participants reported that B&Z purchased items they needed for their shop, which they would not have been able to purchase on their own, or that the items or equipment saved them from having to take on a loan to purchase the items themselves. A few of the participants mentioned that the in-kind support had given their business a “push” and that participation in the project had improved their emotional

well-being. As one participant shared, "...the psychological aspect is much more important than the financial aspect. ... They gave us a psychological push and a financial push." Another mentioned that the support received "removed 80% of the burden" on them. Although the majority of participants highlighted that B&Z was a trusted organization, and that they had followed through ("كانوا صادقين معنا"), one mentioned losing hope for some time when the items were delayed, while some were disappointed by the quality of the items received.

Regarding the training itself, some of the participants mentioned the variety of business types represented at these meetings, as well as the variety in business skills level among participants. For some, this was seen as a positive aspect of the trainings, as it allowed them to learn from each other's experiences. In addition, the training was seen as a networking opportunity, with some making it a point to benefit some of the MSEs owners in their group by conducting business with them. This was encouraged by the business training consultant who conducted some activities to encourage exchange between MSEs, provided an opportunity for networking, and created a space for them talk about their businesses. Participants also reported adopting some of the techniques they learned during the business training in their daily work. For example, some shared that they were using new accounting/record keeping techniques to help them keep track of their profit, or that they were purchasing dollars or had adjusted their prices in order to maintain their purchasing power. Some also incorporated digital marketing in their work. As one participant shared, "...work has slowly been improving, and this is because of B&Z, because I had a mobile, but I was not very smart with it, during the meetings they would say that social media truly affects our work, so because of the trainings, I started advertising, starting posting the things I was making, my work has improved." Others diversified their products to increase turnover. One participant made a smaller sized, lower priced *mankousheh*, which had become popular at their shop. As for the BRPs, the majority of those interviewed could not remember the process or pinpoint how this plan benefited their work.

## Sustainability

- Did the project work towards achieving sustainability of its results and impact? Was there a plan for this?
- Were measures taken to ensure the continuity of the project's activities after funding ceased?
- What is the potential for replication of this project (consider human, organizational and financial factors)?

The current economic crisis remains a threat to the sustainability of both the WPGs and MSEs that were supported, and is out of their control. For the former, this has been somehow addressed by a top-up and extension of the project in Phase II. For MSEs, longer-term sustainability will depend on their ability to replenish materials and maintain equipment, despite not having the capital to do this.

### Component 1: WPGs

It is expected that Phase II of the project will provide the women with all the capacities, skills and tools necessary to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the dairy production businesses,

contingent on Lebanon's economic crisis. As prices (for example, of raw material such as milk) continue to increase, this will undoubtedly affect their profit margins. All three WPGs will be provided with raw materials, rental fees, generator fees, and other necessary supplies for a period of 6 months, as well as with ongoing mentorship both from a dairy trainer and a business coach. During this phase, they will also be linked to the market, and supported in producing a high quality, marketable product. Phase II also includes direct support to the women, in the form of food baskets, hygiene kits, and transportation fees, to minimize the potential for dropouts. Marketing will also be a goal of this phase. The women themselves do have hope in their business' sustainability. One participant in the FGDs shared that "No matter the aid, it will end. This project is sustainable, it is going to stay." A number of key informants emphasized the potential for these income-generating enterprises to act as a potential source of "sustainable job opportunities" and income.

Indeed, the long-term sustainability of production businesses will depend on the WPGs' ability to buy materials on their own once their supplies run out, and on their ability to cover maintenance and repair costs for equipment, while covering other overhead and operating expenses, such as rent, water, electricity/generators (fuel), butane gas, daycare, transportation fees to deliver products, etc. Production costs will have to be maintained to a minimum to ensure a profit margin. Other issues which could influence sustainability are related to the legal aspect of the project and ownership. Group dynamics and teamwork will also play a role, as the WPGs have to plan well and delegate tasks in the most efficient way possible to ensure a streamlined and standard production. The latter, along with quality assurance, are important to ensure trust in the dairy products by markets and community members. Competitiveness of the dairy products is also key, as is proper marketing. In addition, considering that the businesses are in close vicinity to one another, their markets have to expand beyond their local communities. The majority of these factors are accounted for in Phase II of the project.

Notably, some of the women reported using the skills they gained from the trainings at home. Key informants reiterated the transferability of these vocational, marketable skills, highlighting that the women would be able to apply them beyond their businesses, even if they were to leave the production plants.

## **Component 2: MSEs**

Regarding MSEs, they were provided with equipment and/or raw materials/stock items to replenish their shops. These are considered productive assets that will allow them to recover their operations to a certain extent and continue working, and have contributed, to a certain extent, to stabilization. To date, the majority of the participants interviewed continue to use the materials and equipment they were provided with towards their MSE's productivity. The long-term sustainability of these MSEs will depend on their ability to buy raw materials and/or to replenish their stores on their own once their supplies run out, and on their ability to cover maintenance and repair costs for equipment, considering that the majority of them do not have any capital.

Among those interviewed, participants mentioned incorporating some of the techniques from the training in their work. These techniques have the potential to contribute to sustainability. For example, using proper accounting techniques can provide participants with a clearer picture of

revenue, expenses, and profit. Some participants have adopted digital marketing tools or diversified their products, which has contributed to their income.

## Conclusions

Though its scope is relatively small, the project can be deemed relevant in its alignment to national-level objectives regarding economic development and recovery in light of Lebanon's compounded crisis. The project adhered to the proposed selection criteria, and was also relevant in addressing participant needs. However, there is some room for improvement regarding the outreach and selection process, for example, to ensure participation of vulnerable women. The intervention was in particular appropriate for the participating MSEs owners, who expressed their eagerness to recover their livelihoods post the Beirut Port Blast. Among the women participating in the WPGs, they expressed their hopes regarding taking over the dairy production businesses, and the potential impact these income generating businesses could have on their families' livelihoods.

The project team managed to fulfill a significant number of the Component 1 targets (whether for outputs or activities) within the timeframe of Phase I, including identifying participants and forming dairy production groups, providing the women with training to equip them with marketable vocational skills, purchasing necessary equipment and setting up the dairy production businesses. For activities not covered in Phase I, these are accounted for in the extension of the project, Phase II. WPGs are highly satisfied with the training they received, and with the approach used during the trainings. For Component 2, it can be concluded that the expected results have been achieved. The project fulfilled its targets (both outputs and activities), and participants received both capacity building (through trainings and/or one-on-one coaching sessions) and in-kind support in the form of productive assets, and were overall satisfied (to varying extents) with the in-kind items and equipment that they received. This can be, in part, attributed to B&Z's experience in the livelihoods sector as well as the organization's involvement in the Beirut Port Blast response, as well as to the team's dedication.

Several contextual challenges hindered implementation of project activities as planned, particularly inflation and fluctuating dollar rates, and the electricity/generator issue. Accordingly, adjustments were made to various project activities and indicators, and in a prompt manner, speaking to B&Z's adaptability and internal reflection and learning mechanisms. Despite facing a tight budget and timeline, the project team managed to conduct the majority of the project's planned activities within the timeframe of Phase I. It is worth mentioning that some project activities were significantly delayed, particularly those involving procurement processes, which acted as a bottleneck in this project. Identifying participants for the WPGs, as well as localities for the dairy production businesses also significantly delayed implementation. In addition, for both components, communication with participants, especially during project transition times (such as between initial trainings and the launch of the dairy businesses or disbursement of in-kind support) could be improved.

For Component 1, the project is still ongoing, and for Component 2, most participants received their in-kind support only 3-4 months ago and are still facing the country's compounded crisis. As such, no impact on participant income generation from this project has been observed to date. Nevertheless, participants noted the impact of the project on other aspects of their lives. Regarding the WPGs, in Bourj Hammoud, the intervention seems to have contributed, to a

certain extent, to improved relations among the Syrian and Lebanese women participants. For some MSEs, the support they received contributed both to security and stabilization, while for others, it had a positive influence on their emotional well-being. The trainings in particular were beneficial to some MSEs participants, who mentioned learning from each other's experiences, networking, and adopting tips and tricks shared by the business coach to improve their work. Through both components, B&Z participated in and supported the local market, in turn, injecting financial resources into the economy, although the impact of this cannot be ascertained.

The current economic crisis remains a threat to the sustainability of both the WPGs and MSEs that supported by this project. For WPGs, the long-term sustainability of their production businesses will depend on their ability to work together as a cooperative to produce a high quality, marketable product, and also on their ability to buy materials and to cover maintenance and repair costs, while covering other overhead and operating expenses. For MSEs, longer-term sustainability will depend on their ability to replenish materials and maintain equipment, despite not having the capital to do this. For both components, some of the participants have gained skills, which they are able to apply, for WPGs, even beyond their dairy production businesses, and for MSEs, that may contribute to their business' sustainability.

## Lessons learned and recommendations

### Planning and processes

- Outreach mechanisms: Regarding the WPGs, the use of certain vulnerability criteria alone to identify project participants may not be sufficient to identify women willing to commit to and take on the responsibility of starting their own enterprise/business. For future projects, it is important to ensure that some of the women have basic numeric and literacy skills to take on the business end of the project (accounting, record keeping, etc.). Ensuring participation and commitment of vulnerable women is also contingent on incorporating specific mechanisms, discussed further below.
- Regarding the dairy production plants, future similar projects should consider the time required to identify and set up localities that will serve as dairy production businesses. Although some issues were contextual, and could not have been anticipated, this should be one of the first activities in any such project, as the localities are important both for the formation of groups and to conduct practical trainings. Equipment for the training should also be purchased early on to avoid delays in implementation, which may have negative consequences on participant morale.
- Regarding the procurement plan, whether for the WPGs or the MSEs, this could have been improved. Considering that both components of this project required the procurement of equipment and other items, it is likely that a procurement officer dedicated to this project would have been beneficial. Consultation with a technical expert with regards to specifications for certain items and in-kind equipment in areas which the B&Z procurement team did not have experience could also have saved time. The project would also have benefited from a longer timeline, as well as better planning regarding the timeline for both components, so as not to overload the procurement team.

- In a crisis context, it is important to find ways to minimize bureaucratic hurdles that may cause delays such as internal procurement policies and donor requirements and to speed up disbursement of support. This is important to maintain participant trust and morale. Nevertheless, support in the form of productive assets such as in-kind items and equipment was timely, especially considering Lebanon's stagnating economy. Providing these items and equipment as in-kind support is also appropriate, as it can contribute both to security and stabilization of MSEs who are otherwise struggling due to the country's economic crisis.
- Efficiency wise, the project would have benefited either from a larger budget, for example, to allow for hiring of additional supportive staff, whether a procurement officer dedicated to the project, and/or a part-time internal comptroller to deal with donor compliance requirements or from a longer timeline. Additional staff dedicated to the project would allow more balance regarding distribution of roles and responsibilities, and in turn, could minimize any potential staff burnout. A longer timeline could have decreased the load on the project team, who were overstretched. It is also important to factor in the time required for dealing with governmental agencies, such as in the case of hygiene certificates and licensing for the WPGs component.

#### Trainings and group dynamics

- Additional trainings that may benefit the WPGs include occupational health (in light of manual equipment), empowerment/leadership skills and social cohesion trainings (in light of fears expressed), training on the management of cooperatives (regarding how to manage jointly owned, democratic enterprises). Also, in forming the groups, in addition to ensuring that the dairy production businesses are close to their homes, bringing together women who have already previously worked with each other (for example, attended trainings together) or who know each other. The latter may contribute to improved group dynamics, and minimize potential reasons for dropout. Furthermore, minimizing to the extent possible the delay between the theoretical training, practical training, and takeover of the dairy production businesses is key to ensuring retention of knowledge and skills gained.
- Some MSEs benefited from the diversity and experience of businesses represented at the trainings, but for those with more experience, the training was not as beneficial. MSEs could benefit from more focused, one-on-one coaching sessions or specialized trainings. This can be ensured through conducting a thorough capacity building and training needs assessment after participants have been identified. Considering the impact that COVID-19 and ensuing lockdowns had on businesses, online marketing and related digital skills to promote products and skills online would also be beneficial.

#### Gender sensitivity, protection, PSS

- It is imperative that future projects incorporate a gender-sensitive approach in their design, as well as adopt the necessary mechanisms to ensure the participation of women.

This can be achieved through including women in the project team, providing participants with transportation, ensuring that training localities are close to women's homes, providing daycare services, or offering the women protection and psychosocial services. Providing participants with incentives for participation is also key, as this can ensure that they are able to provide for their families before they start generating an income. In addition:

- o Inviting husbands to orientation or informational sessions may ease their concerns about their wives' participation in such projects, as well as mitigate any concerns regarding household and family responsibilities.
  - o On this as well, where possible, equipment should be purchased that would cut production time so as to allow the women to maintain a work/home balance, such as an automatic wash machine.
- The presence of a social worker and provision of protection services, both prior to starting the work and throughout project implementation are vital to creating a safe space for participants, particularly for women. This is important for both WPGs and MSEs (male and female), as participants from both components in the project reported facing psychological distress due to the blast, ongoing economic crisis, etc.

#### Feedback mechanisms, communication

- Maintaining open communication channels with participants, as well as managing their expectations (whether regarding what to expect from a project, or to anticipate potential project delays) is also important for building and maintaining trust them, whether WPGs or MSEs. In a project such as the dairy production plants, where participants are expressing concern about taking on the business, it is important to elicit participant feedback throughout project implementation, starting from the orientation meetings onwards.
- Further clarification on complaint systems available to participants is important, as multiple participants did not recall being informed about these, and the majority believed that their complaints had to go to the project team. It is important to ensure that participants are aware of these complaint systems, whether at the B&Z center, or in the field, and that these systems ensure participant privacy and confidentiality, as several participants mentioned that one should not complain to an organization that is providing them with support. It may also be the case that participants needed to be reminded of this available complaint mechanism.
- Post assessments: Exit interviews should be conducted with dropouts and participants that do not stay on or continue in a project, as this may shed a light on project challenges or limitations. In addition, as was observed through this evaluation, post-assessment surveys do not always capture grievances/complaints; post-assessment data should be triangulated with qualitative data (semi-structured interviews, FGDs) from a sample of participants.

#### Long-term support

- Continuous field visits. This is particularly relevant for the WPGs who expressed fears regarding the future of their production businesses without continuous supervision. Alternatively, creating a board or a steering committee to advise them as they move forward with their businesses. This type of support is necessary in light of Lebanon's rapidly deteriorating situation. Field visits may also be beneficial for MSEs, both in highlighting B&Z's continuous support, and in gathering data on the longer-term impact of participation in this type of intervention.
- Marketing and networking:
  - o Future similar MSEs support projects should capitalize on the networking component, as participants may be able to refer business to one another, or even benefit themselves.
  - o For some of the MSEs and the WPGs, organizing fairs and bazars where participants can market and sell their products.

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## Annex 1: Project documents reviewed

Documents that were made available and that will be reviewed during the desk review include:

- Phase I project proposal and related documents, including Grant Fact Sheet, Description of Action, work plan and annexes (logical framework, budget), signed on January 18, 2021
- Quarterly narrative reports, final narrative report
- Financial reports were provided for December 2021 and January 2022
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) documents, including:
  - M&E plan
  - Indicator tracking tool
  - Templates used for baseline assessments and pre- and post-surveys
  - Selection criteria/scoring tools for selection of participants for both components of the project
  - Women's producers' groups – Pre survey data
  - Baseline assessment for MSEs
  - Attendance sheets for dairy production groups theoretical and practical trainings, and MSEs business planning training
  - MSEs pre and post assessment scores for business planning training
  - MSEs post-survey results and report, conducted for 33 of 40 MSEs
  - Updated distribution list for MSEs, including handover documents and recovery plans
- Participants' database:
  - List of women dairy production groups' members corresponding to Component 1 of the project
  - List of women dairy production groups' dropouts corresponding to Component 1 of the project
  - List of participating MSEs corresponding to Component 2 of the project
- Closing report for the project, dated January 14, 2022
- PowerPoint presentation for the closing meeting for Phase I of the project
- Phase II project proposal, including logical framework and budget
- Email correspondence between B&Z and EF regarding budget changes

## Annex 2: List of stakeholders interviewed

<b>Basmeah &amp; Zeitooneh Team Members</b>		
Talaat Bitar	FSL Technical Advisor	Zoom application
Rachad Maalouf	Project Manager	Zoom application
Ali Jarrah	Project Officer	Zoom application
Mohammad Mashmoushi	Outreach Officer	Zoom application
Mohamad Ibrahim	Procurement Officer	Zoom application
Omar Trad	M&E Manager	Zoom application
Mohamad Barraaj	M&E Supervisor	Zoom application
Fatima Khaddour	Head of Programs	Zoom application
Rimal Ishac	Grants and Partnerships Coordinator	Zoom application
Daria Jamil	Chief Development Officer	Zoom application
<b>Training Consultants</b>		
Lamia Karaki	Dairy Production Consultant	Zoom application
Mohamad Salem	Business Training Consultant	Zoom application
<b>External Stakeholders</b>		
Rewa Al Masry	Project Officer, Expertise France (Donor)	Zoom application
Georges Krikorian	City Councilor, Municipality of Bourj Hammoud (Outreach)	Telephone
Janine Taniaelian	Social Worker, Employment Officer, Karagheusian Association (Outreach)	Telephone
Mohamad Matar	Member of local NGO, previous <i>mokhtar</i> , Karantina (Outreach)	Telephone
<b>Participants</b>		
MSE owners	Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 MSE owners	In-person or over the telephone, based on the participant's preference and availability
WPG members	Two FGDs were conducted with 18 members of the WPGs	In-person
WPG dropouts	Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 dropouts from the WPGs' component	Telephone

## Annex 3: Evaluation study participants' demographic characteristics

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of MSEs participants in the evaluation study (n=20)

Variable		Total (n)
<b>Gender</b>	Female	10
	Male	10
<b>Location</b>	Achrafieh-Gemmayzeh	3
	Bourj Hammoud	6
	Karantina	6
	Mousaitbeh	5
<b>Years in business</b>	1-5 years	
	6-10 years	2
	10+ years	17
<b>Type of business</b>	Provides services	8
	Sells products/items	10
	Both	2
<b>Type of in-kind support received</b>	Equipment	10*
	Stock to replenish store	4
	Equipment and stock to replenish store	6
<b>Number of employees</b>	0 (only self)	8
	1**	7
	≥2	3
	Daily (upon need)	2
<b>Type of household</b>	Man employed	6
	Woman	10
	Elderly	4
<b>Household size</b>	2 members	5
	>2 members	15

N.B. All enterprises who participated in the intervention were micro-enterprises.

\*One of the participants received some rehabilitation and construction work for their store in addition to in-kind equipment.

\*\*This category includes participants who receive help from a family member at their MSE.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of women attending the WPG-FGD by nationality (n=18)

Variable		Nationality		Total (n)
		Syrian	Lebanese	
<b>Location</b>	Bourj Hammoud	3	2	5
	Karantina	9	4	13
<b>Age</b>	18-29	1	0	1
	30-54	11	3	14

	55+	0	3	3
<b>Head of household</b>	Yes	12	4	16
	No	0	2	2
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	0	1	1
	Married	10	5	15
	Divorced	1	0	1
	Widowed	1	0	1
	Separated			
<b>Highest level of education</b>	None	5	0	5
	Primary school	5	2	7
	Middle School	0	0	0
	High school	2	4	6

*Table 3: Demographic characteristics of interviewed drop-outs from WPG groups (n=9)*

Variable		Nationality		Total (n)
		Syrian	Lebanese	
<b>Location</b>	Bourj Hammoud	2	5	7
	Karantina	0	2	2
<b>Age group</b>	18-29			
	30-54	2	5	7
	55+		2	2
<b>Head of household</b>	Yes	0	4	4
	No	2	3	5
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	0	2	2
	Married	1	3	4
	Divorced	0	0	0
	Widowed	0	2	2
	Separated	1		1
<b>Highest level of education</b>	None	0	2	2
	Elementary	0	1	1
	Middle School	2	3	5
	High school	0	1	1

## Annex 4: Data collection tools

All tools were translated to Arabic. Language of interview was based on participant's preference.

### Tool 1: Consent script for B&Z team and external stakeholders

I am (-----name/title-----), at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), and part of a team conducting an external evaluation of the progress and impact of Basmeh and Zeitooneh's (B&Z) [SHABAKE – BEIRUT PORT EXPLOSION ECONOMIC RECOVERY] project, which aimed to “assist the vulnerable Lebanese population, including displaced and impoverished population, in reviving their livelihoods as well as innovatively develop new, integrative and demand-based livelihoods”. This was achieved through two project components. The first component consisted of creating women dairy producer groups, while the second component consisted of supporting micro- and small- enterprises (MSEs) affected by the Beirut Port Blast and economic crisis.

As part of the evaluation, we are interested in learning about stakeholders' perceptions of the project, and what did or did not work well to achieve the project's objectives. Your perspective will help us evaluate, suggest changes, and make recommendations to strengthen the efforts of B&Z with regards to this and other livelihoods projects. The results from this study will be shared in a report and used to teach others.

We are interested in learning about your experience as a stakeholder in the project. You will be asked to participate in a 45 - 60 minutes interview to share your experience and perceptions of the [SHABAKE] project. Questions will be specific to your role in the project. With your permission, we will audio-record and take notes during the interview. In addition, when we report results of studies such as this one, we often use quotes to illustrate themes (as examples of a particular theme that came up across interviews). We would like to use quotes from your interview if you permit us to do so. If you do not wish us to use your quotes, we can proceed with the interview anyway. It is not a requirement for participation.

We do not anticipate any risks associated with participation in the study. If any question asked makes you uncomfortable, you are always free to decline to answer or to discontinue participation at any time. Participating in this study will give you an opportunity to add your ideas and opinions to recommendations for improving this project and similar livelihoods projects for vulnerable populations, including displaced and impoverished populations affected by a compounded crisis like the one Lebanon is currently going through.

Your privacy and confidentiality, as well as whatever information you share with us will be anonymized and protected, and no identifying information will be released to anyone. Your responses will be pooled with those of all other respondents. Only the evaluation team will have access to this confidential information. No individual information such as names or contact information will be recorded or used in any report. Information from this study will be used for research purposes and may be published; however, your name will not be used in any

publications. Questionnaires, notes, and audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Participation is on a purely voluntary basis. There is no penalty for refusing to take part and refusal will not affect your relationship with (-----B&Z-----). Finally, there is no penalty for withdrawing from the study after consenting and withdrawal will not affect your relationship with (-----B&Z-----). There is no compensation for participating in this study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the lead investigator (Ms. Yara Mourad, Assistant Director, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut, Tel: 00-961-1-350000, Ext: 4162; e-mail: ym14@aub.edu.lb). I will give you a copy of this form to keep and you may contact the lead investigator if you need to speak about or have any questions regarding the study.

- Consent to participate

Do you voluntarily consent to take part of the study?

- Consent to Record Interview

Do you voluntarily consent to record this interview?

- Consent to use quotes

Do you voluntarily allow us to use quotes from your interview?

- Consent to Use Name

There may be reasons for which you prefer that your true name be used in presentations and articles related to this research.

Would you like your true name to be used in any oral presentations or written documents resulting from this research?

*[Note that if a participant agrees to have his or her name used, signed consent should be obtained, including a separate signature line for participation, recording (where applicable), and use of name. In such cases, add signature lines to this consent document.]*

- Confirmation of Consent to Record Interview

(Question should be posed again once recording has begun)

May I record this interview?

## Tool 2: Consent script for participants

Hello! My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a \_\_\_\_\_ at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut and we are evaluating Basmeah & Zeitooneh's [Shabake – Beirut Port Blast Recovery] project, of which you were a participant. How are you?

As a participant of [Shabake] project (dairy groups OR MSEs recovery), we are interested in learning about your experience and opinion of the project and its activities. Your perspective will help us evaluate, suggest changes, and make recommendations to strengthen the efforts of B&Z in this and other similar livelihoods projects. If you agree, I would like to ask you a few questions about the project. The interview/FGD will take about 45 – 60 minutes to complete. All of your answers will be held in confidence. Your responses will be pooled with those of all other respondents. Only the evaluation team and its authorized members will know which answers you have given me. Your decision to participate (or not) in this study will not affect your eligibility for B&Z programs or activities.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Ms. Yara Mourad at the number Tel: 00-961-1-350000, Ext: 4162. With your permission, we would like to audio-record and take notes during this interview/FGD. Furthermore, we may use quotes from this interview/FGD if you permit us to do so. No individual information such as your name(s) or contact information will be shared with anyone or used in any report or presentation resulting from this study.

You can also get in touch with Ms. Yara Mourad in case you would like to withdraw from the study at any point after you have consented to begin this interview/FGD. You will not be penalized in any way for this withdrawal, and withdrawal will not affect your eligibility for B&Z projects or activities. In addition to this interview, we may reach out to conduct a case study interview/FGD with you within the next month. Please be assured that your acceptance or denial to participate in this and future interviews is entirely optional and will not affect your eligibility in this or future projects by B&Z.

Before I start, do you have any questions?

· **Consent to participate**

Do you voluntarily consent to take part of the study?

· **Consent to Record Interview**

Do you voluntarily consent to record this interview/FGD?

· **Consent to use quotes**

Do you voluntarily allow us to use quotes from your interview/FGD?

· **Confirmation of Consent to Record Interview** (Question should be posed again once recording has begun)

May I record this interview?

### Tool 3: Interview guide for B&Z staff

#### *Introduce yourself and obtain consent*

- We are independent evaluators of the Shabake project; hope to learn from the project and recommend improvements for future implementation.
- Restate goals and objectives of Shabake project.
- Obtain consent, and ensure that the participant knows that all information they will share will be kept strictly private and confidential, and that their name will not be used in any publications; data they share will be aggregated.

#### *Role in Shabake project*

- What is your position at B&Z? What does this entail?
- Can you describe your connection with/ role in relation to the Shabake project?
- Where you involved in the design of the project or were you consulted prior to project design? *Ask only if interviewee was involved in project design:*
  - Can you describe the project conceptualization process to the best of your knowledge?
  - Who else was involved in the project design? Were stakeholders/participants involved in the design process? If yes, in what ways?
  - Were any special considerations taken into account when designing the project to differentiate between the needs of men and women? What about PwDs or other vulnerable and marginalized populations?
  - Did the project design include any specific mechanisms to ensure participation of women, men, PwDs, other vulnerable groups?
  - In setting the objectives of the Shabake project, were the objectives of other initiatives and/or similar projects/previous projects conducted by B&Z taken into consideration? Can you give us a concrete example?
  - Were lessons from other similar B&Z projects properly incorporated into the project design for this project? Can you give us a concrete example? To what extent were lessons learned from other projects incorporated into the design for this project?

#### *Relevance*

- To your knowledge, to what extent is the project aligned with B&Zs organizational/strategic objectives and priorities?
- How did this project compare to other emergency responses by B&Z post the Beirut Port Blast?
- Can you tell us about the coordination with other groups/clusters (livelihoods, food security, etc.) in planning for this project?
- Considering B&Z's role in the response to the Beirut Port Blast, and the needs assessments conducted in August 2020 post the Blast, in what ways did the project respond directly to the needs of participants?
- To what extent have specific measures been taken to address the needs and priorities of vulnerable groups during implementation of the project? What special considerations were taken into account to ensure participation of women?

### *Efficiency and validity of project design*

- What types of organizational (administrative and managerial) arrangements did B&Z undertake to support the project?
- To what extent was this project informed by lessons learned from other similar projects conducted by B&Z?
- From the activities that you were involved in, to what extent do you feel they were adequately resourced? Please give concrete examples.
- In your opinion, and knowing what you know now (post-project implementation/end of project), could the same results have been achieved for less money/resources?
- What about in terms of time? In your opinion, was the project timeline adequate/sufficient?
- Were planned activities delivered as scheduled?
- Did the project enhance cooperation opportunities with other local or international entities who responded to the Beirut Port Blast in any way? If yes, in what ways? (Please provide specific examples).

### *Effectiveness*

- Were project activities implemented as intended?
- To what extent were the project's objectives and outcomes achieved (fully, partially, not achieved)?
- What results did the project achieve?
- To your knowledge, has the project had any unintended results?
- What would you consider are the project's major strengths?
- What would you consider are its major weaknesses?
- Do you consider the project successful? What factors contributed to or hindered the project's success?
- In your opinion and reflecting on the activities of the project that you were involved in, what were the **main challenges** that were encountered during the project, if any (please list at least 3) (if any)? How were these dealt with?
- Reflecting on the challenges faced during the project, and on what worked and did not work, what do you believe could have been done differently/additionally for the project?
- What do you feel are the **key lessons to be learnt and good practices** emerging from the activities you participated in (if at all)?
- How did you find the communication and coordination between the project team?

### *Impact*

- In your opinion, in what ways have the women participating in the dairy production groups benefited from participation in the project? Can you give us specific examples?
- In your opinion, in what ways have MSEs affected by the Beirut Port Blast and economic crisis benefited from participation in the project? Can you give us specific examples?
- How has B&Z benefited from conducting this project?
- What do you believe is the influence or impact of the project? Can you provide us with concrete examples of impact?
- Were you expecting an impact that was not obtained?

### *Sustainability*

- What tools were the women dairy production groups provided with to ensure the sustainability of their production operations post in-kind assistance and trainings; especially considering the economic crisis?
- What efforts were made by B&Z to ensure sustainability of the MSEs provided with post in-kind assistance and trainings; especially considering the economic crisis?
- Have any of the lessons learned from this project been taken into consideration in the planning of other projects? Can you provide us with specific examples?
- How have the monitoring data and lessons learned from Phase 1 of the project been used to inform the project design for Phase II of the project?
- Are there any elements in this project that you believe are replicable in other/future similar projects implemented by B&Z/that B&Z will be implementing?

*Concluding*

- Do you have any questions for us or are there any issues that you would like to raise?

## Tool 4: Interview guides for training consultants

### Business training consultant

#### *Introduce yourself and obtain consent*

- We are independent evaluators of the Shabake project; hope to learn from the project and recommend improvements for future implementation.
- Obtain consent, and ensure that the participant knows that all information they will share will be kept strictly private and confidential, and that their name will not be used in any publications; data they share will be aggregated.

#### *Demographic questions*

- Title
- Can you tell us about your experience working as a business trainer for MSEs owners?
- Can you describe your role in the Shabake project?

#### *Planning and design phase of the training*

- Can you tell us about the training in business and marketing skills you provided to the MSEs owners (6 sessions)? What about to the WPGs (4 sessions)?
- What were the learning objectives of the training?
  - Component 1: WPGs
  - Component 2: MSEs
- How did you design the training? What factors informed the design? Who was involved?
- Were the different participants' training needs assessed?
- Was a pre-assessment of the participant's knowledge and skills conducted? If yes, can you tell us what this entailed?
- How did you tailor the training to fit capacities (skills/knowledge) of the participants?

#### *Methodology and implementation*

- Was the training delivered as intended?
- Were the planned activities delivered as scheduled?
- In your opinion and reflecting on the activities of the project that you were involved in, in this case the training (in-depth assessment/business recover plans), development of business recovery plan?), what were the main challenges that were encountered, if any? Please list at least 3.
- Did you receive feedback on the content of the training from the participants themselves?
- Did you give any feedback/suggestions to the B&Z team during implementation of the training and other activities that you were involved in? Can you provide us with concrete examples of feedback/suggestions given?

#### *Assessment of skills gained*

- How was the training evaluated to ensure its contents were grasped by the MSEs owners?
- Was a post-assessment conducted?
- What are your perceptions regarding the skills and competencies post-training?

#### *Business recovery plans*

- We want to know more about the needs assessment and business recovery plans:
  - Can you tell us about the process? Who was involved?
  - What factors were taken into consideration?
  - Did the plans include a strategy or next steps for the businesses that they could implement or that would support their businesses' sustainability?

#### *Resources*

- From the activities that you were involved in, to what extent do you feel they were adequately resourced? Please give concrete examples.

#### *Impact*

- What do you believe are the benefits of participating in such a training for participants?
- What about developing a business recovery plan? How was this beneficial for the participants?
- In your opinion, in what ways have WPG/MSEs owners benefited from participation in the Shabake project? Can you give us specific examples?

#### *Lessons learned*

- Reflecting on the challenges faced during the project, and on what worked and did not work, what do you believe could have been done differently/additionally for the project?
- What do you feel are the key lessons to be learnt and good practices emerging from the activities you participated in (if at all)?
- If you were to give this training again to the same group of MSEs owners, would you make any changes? What would these changes be? What about for the WPGs?
- Do you have any recommendations for B&Z regarding this aspect of the project that you participated in? Whether related to recruitment of participants, services or training provided, etc.?

#### *Concluding*

- Do you have any questions for us or are there any issues that you would like to raise?

## Dairy production training consultant

### *Introduce yourself and obtain consent*

- We are independent evaluators of the Shabake project; hope to learn from the project and recommend improvements for future implementation.
- Obtain consent, and ensure that the participant knows that all information they will share will be kept strictly private and confidential, and that their name will not be used in any publications; data they share will be aggregated.

### *Demographic questions*

- Title
- Can you tell us about your experience working as a trainer on dairy production to the women producer groups?
- Can you describe your role in the Shabake project?

### *Planning and design phase of the training*

- Can you tell us about the training on dairy production you provided to the women producer groups?
  - Theoretical? (3 sessions)
  - Practical? (3 sessions)
- What were the learning objectives of the training?
- How did you design the training? What factors informed the design of the training? Who was involved in the design?
- Was a pre-assessment of the participant's knowledge and skills conducted?
- How did you tailor the training to fit the different capacities (skills/knowledge) of the participants? (Either at the beginning or as the training moved along).

### *Methodology and implementation*

- How were the instructional methods of the dairy production process communicated to the participants? (Taking into consideration different capacities/skills)
- Do you use any special communication techniques to ensure the intended information is clearly communicated to the participants? Can you provide us with a concrete example?
- Did you face any difficulties explaining the process to the participants and maintain a standard quality product after the instructions were given?
- Was the training delivered as intended? Why or why not?
- Were the planned activities (of the training) delivered as scheduled?
- In your opinion and reflecting on the activities of the project that you were involved in, in this case the training, what were the main challenges that were encountered, if any? Please list at least 3.
- We know from B&Z that there were multiple dropouts and that the training was provided several times:
- Did you receive feedback on the content of the training from the participants themselves?

- Did you give any feedback/give any suggestions to the B&Z team during implementation of the training? Concrete examples of feedback/suggestions given.

#### *Assessment of skills gained*

- How was the training evaluated to ensure the process of dairy production was comprehended by all the participants?
- Was a post-assessment conducted?
- What are your perceptions regarding the participants' skills and competencies post-training?
- Given your experience, what types of skills are required for the success of such an initiative?

#### *Resources*

- From the activities (*here it would be the training*) that you were involved in, to what extent do you feel they were adequately resourced? Please give concrete examples.

#### *Impact*

- What do you believe are the benefits of such a training for participants?
- In your opinion, in what ways have the women participating in the dairy production groups benefited from participation in the Shabake project? Can you give us specific examples?

#### *Lessons learned*

- Reflecting on the challenges faced during the project, and on what worked and did not work, what do you believe could have been done differently/additionally for the project?
- What do you feel are the key lessons to be learnt and good practices emerging from the activities you participated in (if at all)?
- If you were to give this training again to the same group of women, would you make any changes? What are recommendations and lessons learned to improve this type of training moving forward?

#### *Sustainability*

- Given your experience, what do you believe are the success factors needed to ensure sustainability of the women dairy groups?

#### *Conclusions*

- Would you like to add anything?
- Do you have any questions for us?

## Tool 5: Interview guide for donor

### *Introduce yourself and obtain consent*

- We are independent evaluators of the Shabake project; hope to learn from the project and recommend improvements for future implementation.
- Restate goals and objectives of Shabake project.
- Obtain consent, and ensure that the participant knows that all information they will share will be kept strictly private and confidential, and that their name will not be used in any publications; data they share will be aggregated.

### *Role*

- Can you please describe your title/role in EF?
- Can you tell us about EF's Shabake project?
- In what ways did you engage with B&Z during design and implementation of their Shabake project?
- Can you please describe your overall experience working with B&Z on their Shabake project?

### *Relevance*

- What are EF's objectives for Shabake component 4?
- What were the requirements from B&Z?
- To what extent were B&Z's Shabake project objectives aligned with
  - EF's priorities as a donor?
  - EF's Component 4 focus/objectives?
  - Please elaborate.
- How well do B&Z's Shabake project objectives respond to the priorities and needs of participants affected by
  - The Beirut Port Blast?
  - Economic crisis?
- In your opinion, in what ways did the project respond to/address the specific needs of women? Other vulnerable groups?
- How was the B&Z project selected? On what basis? Why?
- How did the B&Z project compare to other projects funded under component 4 of Shabake?
- What would you consider are the project's major strengths?
- What would you consider are its major weaknesses?

### *Efficiency*

- To your knowledge, would you say that the resources and inputs that B&Z were provided with were converted to outputs and outcomes in a timely and cost-effective manner?
- To what extent were resources allocated strategically to achieve project objectives and/or to address participant needs?
- In your opinion, and knowing what you know now (post-project implementation/end of project), could the same results have been achieved for less resources/a smaller budget?
- Was the project timeline adequate/sufficient?

### *Effectiveness*

- Do you consider the project successful?
  - To your knowledge, to what degree were the project objectives and outcomes (stated in the proposal) achieved? (Fully, partially, not achieved)
  - What results did the project achieve?
  - In your opinion, what factors enabled achievement of project results?
  - In your opinion, what factors hindered achievement of project results?
- Based on your experience/role in the project, what elements of the project (or activity/(ies) that you participated in) do you think worked well and what do you think might have been changed?
- In your opinion and from your involvement in activities of the program, what are key challenges faced? How were these dealt with? Could they have been dealt with in a different way?
- Did B&Z make improvements in the activities where needed? Was your feedback taken into consideration during this process?
- To your knowledge, has the project had any unintended results?
- What could have been done differently (improved) to better achieve the project's objectives?

### *Impact*

- What do you believe is the influence or impact of B&Z's Shabake project (to date)? Please give concrete examples.
- What do you believe were the (critical success/enabling) factors that contributed to the impact or influence that the B&Z Shabake project has achieved?
- Have project results/outcomes impacted EF in any way?
- What could B&Z do differently moving forward to ensure that projects like this one achieve their intended outcomes or that they have an impact?

### *Sustainability*

- How sustainable do you feel the project outcomes are?
- To what extent can long-term sustainable results be expected for all stakeholders from this project?

### *Concluding*

- What lessons can be learned from the implementation of this project to improve performance, results/impact, effectiveness, sustainability in the future? (Impactful both for participants, their own impact on their environments, other stakeholders)
- Do you have any questions for us?

## Tool 6: Interview guide for external stakeholders

### *Introduce yourself and obtain consent*

- We are independent evaluators of the Shabake project; hope to learn from the project and recommend improvements for future implementation.
- Restate goals and objectives of Shabake project.
- Obtain consent, and ensure that the participant knows that all information they will share will be kept strictly private and confidential, and that their name will not be used in any publications; data they share will be aggregated.

### *Demographic questions*

- Name of institution/department/agency:
- Role within institution/department/agency:
- When did you first work with B&Z?
- What has your experience working with B&Z been like?
- Can you describe your role in relation to the Shabake project specifically?
- Can you describe the outreach/implementation process?

### *Evaluation questions*

- In your opinion, is B&Z a trusted organization in the community?
- What were the key needs and priorities of the community in this area post the Beirut Port Blast?
- Considering the aftermath of the blast and Lebanon's compounded crisis (impact of COVID-19, ongoing economic crisis), in your opinion, what are the key needs and priorities of the local community in the Bourj Hammoud-Beirut areas (and other areas in the direct Beirut Port Blast vicinity) today?
- To which of the priorities and needs that you just listed do you believe that B&Z's Shabake project responded to?
- Thinking about the Shabake project's goals and objectives, do you believe that the project **effectively** addressed the needs and priorities of the local community? Why?
- Do you consider this project to be successful?
- What, in your view, are the key factors needed to ensure sustainability of the projects' outcomes (women dairy groups, support to MSEs) in the longer term?
- From your experience working with the project, can you think of any lessons to be learned that would improve its performance, results and effectiveness in the future?
- Ultimately, what do you think will be the main, concrete and enduring **impacts** the project will have in the Bourj Hammoud-Beirut areas (and other areas in the direct Beirut Port Blast vicinity)?
- How would you compare B&Z's Shabake project to other projects implemented in the Bourj Hammoud area in response to the Beirut Port Blast?
- Is there anything you would like to add that we did not ask about?
- Do you have any questions for us or are there any issues that you would like to raise?

## Tool 7: Guides for women's dairy production groups

### Demographic survey

#### **Participant code:**

1. Location:
  - a. Bourj Hammoud
  - b. Karantina
  
2. Nationality:
  - a. Syrian
  - b. Lebanese
  
3. Age: .....
  
4. Educational level:
  - a. None
  - b. Elementary
  - c. Middle school
  - d. High school
  - e. University
  - f. Other: .....
  
5. Marital Status:
  - a. Single
  - b. Married
  - c. Separated
  - d. Divorced
  - e. Widowed
  
6. Are you the head of your household?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
7. Number of household members:.....
  
8. Number of children in the household: .....
  
9. Do you have any previous work experience?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

If yes, what is the experience? If in dairy production, please specify.

10. What is the average household income in LBP: .....

11. Do you receive support from any entity (organization, association, institution, religious institution, etc..)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, who is the entity and what is the type of support received?

Entity	Type of support

12. Does anyone in your household have a chronic disease or special needs?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. When did you join the project? .....

14. Did you participate in theoretical training?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, how many sessions did you attend? .....

15. Did you participate in practical training?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, how many sessions did you attend? .....

## FGD guide

### *Introduce yourself and obtain consent*

- We are independent evaluators of the Shabakeh project; hope to learn from the project and recommend improvements for future implementation.
- Obtain consent, and ensure that the participant knows that all information they will share will be kept strictly private and confidential, and that their name will not be used in any publications; data they share will be aggregated.
  
- How did you hear about the B&Z Shabake project? How were the details of the project communicated to you?
- Why did you agree to take part in this project?
- Tell us about your experience in this project:
  - What was the support that you received?
  - What did you expect from your participation in this project? Were there any surprises for you?
  - What did you enjoy most? Why? (Process or other, such as forming relationships)
  - What did you not enjoy so much? Why?
- Can you tell us about the training you received?
  - Were you satisfied with the training?
  - Did you learn anything new from the training?
  - What did you like about the training?
  - What didn't you like about the training?
  - Have you benefited from the skills you gained from this training in other aspects of your life?
- Did you face any challenges?
  - How did you overcome the challenges you faced?
  - Accessibility/access to the center/training location
  - Time
  - Transportation
  - Communication, in terms of understanding the issues being covered
- Did you know where you could make complaints if you were unhappy about the training/in-kind support you received?
  - Did you make any complaints? Were these addressed adequately?
- Did the project implementers/trainers make improvements in the activities where needed?
  - Was your feedback taken into consideration during this process?
- To date, has the project had any impact on your life? Positive, negative?
- Tell us about your family, friends, neighbors, community. What did they say/think about you being involved in this project?
- Did the activity/project influence extend to beyond yourself? In what ways?
  - Did the project have an influence or impact on your family's livelihood? Well-being?

- Has participation in this project to date affected your family responsibilities and childcare?
- Do you anticipate that participation in the dairy production group will affect your family responsibilities and childcare? Will you have help with these once the business is launched?
- Has participation in this project had an influence or impact on your relationships and networks within the community?
- Are you planning to use any of the skills you gained or information you learned in this project beyond the dairy production unit? What? How?
- Having gone through this entire project, and knowing what you know now, what do you think should/could have been done differently? Why?
- If you could tell B&Z three things what would they be?
  - Any positives about the project?
  - Any negatives about the project?
  - One thing they could do better in future similar projects?
- Is there anything else you would like to add concerning your experience during this project? Perhaps something we did not ask about.
- Do you have any questions for us?

## Interview guide for WPG dropouts

### *Introduce yourself and obtain consent*

- We are independent evaluators of the Shabakeh project; hope to learn from the project and recommend improvements for future implementation.
- Obtain consent, and ensure that the participant knows that all information they will share will be kept strictly private and confidential, and that their name will not be used in any publications; data they share will be aggregated.
- Fill out demographic form.

### *Impact of the Beirut Port Blast and Economic Crisis*

- Was your family affected by the Beirut Port Blast? In what ways (death/injury, displacement, shelter, livelihoods/jobs)?
- What were your household's main priorities for recovery at the time (shelter, livelihoods, healthcare, education/schooling)? How did you finance these priorities?
- What about the current economic crisis? In what ways has it affected your household (access to livelihoods opportunities/household income, shelter, utilities, food consumption, healthcare, education/schooling for children)?
- What are your household's current main priorities?

### *Experience in project*

- How did you hear about the B&Z project? How were the details of the project communicated to you?
- Tell us about your experience in this project
- Initially, why did you agree to take part in this project?
- Tell us about your family, friends, neighbors, community. What did they say/think about you being involved in this project?
- What did you expect from your participation in this project? Were there any surprises for you?
- What did you like?
- What didn't you like?
- Did you face any challenges as a result of participation in this project?
- Why did you eventually drop out?
- Did you know where you could make complaints if you were unhappy about anything during the project?
  - Did you make any complaints? Were these addressed adequately?
- Did the project have any impact on your life? (Positive or negative)

### *Concluding*

- Is there anything else you would like to add concerning your experience during this project? Perhaps something we did not ask about.
- Do you have any questions for us?

## Tool 8: Interview guide for MSE participants

### *Introduce yourself and obtain consent*

- We are independent evaluators of the Shabakeh project; hope to learn from the project and recommend improvements for future implementation.
- Obtain consent, and ensure that the participant knows that all information they will share will be kept strictly private and confidential, and that their name will not be used in any publications; data they share will be aggregated.

### *Demographic questions*

- Gender
- Head of household: Yes/No
- MSE Location: Achrafieh/Bourj Hammoud/Dora/Gemmayzeh/Karantina/Moussaitbeh/Wata Moussaitbeh
- Year of establishment
- Type of business
- Current operational status: Closed/partially open/fully operational
- Number of employees at the time that you were approached to participate in this project?

### *Impact of the Beirut Port Blast and Economic Crisis*

- What damages did your MSE sustain as a result of the Beirut Port Blast?
- What were your main priorities for recovery after the Beirut Port Blast (shelter, livelihoods, healthcare, education/schooling)? How did you finance these priorities?
- What about the current economic crisis? In what ways has it affected the business? What are your current main priorities?

### *Training and in-kind support received for MSE*

- How did you hear about the B&Z project for MSEs? How were the details of the project communicated to you?
- Can you tell us about how you were selected for participation in the project?
- In your opinion, was the selection process fair?
- Can you tell us what was the support you received from B&Z/what activities did you participate in?
  - Can you tell us about the business training you received?
  - Can you tell us about the process of developing your business recovery plan?
  - Can you tell us about the in-kind support you received?
- Did you attend the micro-finance institutes workshop? Can you tell us about the meeting? Was it beneficial?
- What has been the influence or impact of participation in this project on your MSE? Livelihoods? Well-being?
- Did the activity/project influence extend to beyond yourself?
- Did you face any challenges as a result of participating in this project?
- Based on your understanding, what elements of the project (or activity/(ies) that you participated in) do you think worked well?
- Based on your understanding, what elements of the project (or activity/(ies) that you participated in) do you think could have been changed/done differently?

- Did you know where you could make complaints if you were unhappy about the training/in-kind support you received?
  - Did you make any complaints? Were these addressed adequately?
- Did the project implementers/trainers make improvements in the activities where needed?
  - Was your feedback taken into consideration during this process?
- Have you received any other (similar) aid for your MSE?
  - From which organization?
  - How would you compare this type of support to the support you received from B&Z?
  - What do you believe are the pros and cons of the different approaches?
  - Would you have preferred to participate in a different project, or believe this option is better?
- Would you participate in such an project again in the future? Why or why not?
- If you could tell B&Z three things what would they be?
  - Any positives about the project?
  - Any negatives about the project?
  - One thing they could do better in future similar projects?
- Do you have any questions for us or are there any issues that you would like to raise?

## Annex 5: Evaluation matrix

	Evaluation questions	Indicators	Methodology	Data source	Evaluation phase
Relevance	<p>To what extent does the project respond to the needs and priorities of participants (vulnerable Lebanese, including displaced and impoverished persons)?</p> <p><i>Sub-question: Did the project differentiate between the needs of women, men, vulnerable groups?</i></p> <p>Did the intervention address the short- and long-term needs and priorities of targeted participants?</p> <p>Were the project inputs and strategies realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve its planned objectives?</p> <p>To what extent were the main project activities and outputs consistent with the goals and objectives of the project?</p>	<p>Alignment between project's objectives, and the needs and priorities identified by relevant working groups post the Beirut Port Blast</p> <p>Alignment between project's objectives and identified participant needs and priorities</p> <p>Coverage of gender issues; protection issues in project proposal</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Zoom or in-person interviews with B&amp;Z team</p> <p>Interviews with other relevant project stakeholders: municipality, working group</p> <p>Interviews with participants</p>	<p>B&amp;Z profile; B&amp;Z strategy</p> <p>Project proposal, needs assessments, rapid assessment, MSEs damage assessment, and other preparatory documents (such as inception report, launch PPT, ITT)</p> <p>Publications by working groups/networks/coalitions responding to the Beirut Port Blast</p> <p>Project stakeholders</p>	Inception; data collection
Effectiveness	<p>Did the project adhere to its stated overall objectives, specific objectives, results and indicators?</p> <p>What and how much progress was made towards achieving the project's results?</p> <p>Did the project achieve its expected results and objectives as well as the overall intended impact (consider both short-term and longer-term impacts)?</p>	<p>Indicator achievement against milestones and targets (quarterly and final)</p> <p>Level of progress towards project's results; results on target</p> <p>Implementation challenges reported</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Zoom or in-person interviews with B&amp;Z team</p> <p>Interviews with participants</p>	<p>Project M&amp;E plan, logframe, ITT, monitoring and progress reports, project data/outputs</p> <p>Project stakeholders</p>	Inception; data collection

	What were the factors that contributed to (or hindered) the achievement of the project's planned results?	Degree to which the project's design targets the participation of women and other vulnerable groups			
Efficiency	<p>Were project resources allocated in the most efficient way possible (for example, time, financial and human resources)?</p> <p>Were the project activities cost-effective?</p> <p>To what extent was the project conducted in the most efficient way as compared to other alternative ways of conducting the project?</p>	<p>Timeliness and quality of support provided (training, in-kind)</p> <p>Delays in kick-off or implementation; reasons for delays</p> <p>Appropriateness of budget allocations to project outputs; budget revisions, if any; planned versus actual expenditure</p> <p>Adequacy of trainings; dairy production kits; in-kind support to MSEs and level of satisfaction with these</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Zoom or in-person interviews with B&amp;Z team</p> <p>Interviews with participants</p>	<p>Project proposal, monitoring reports, progress reports, financial reports/budget</p> <p>Project stakeholders</p>	Inception; data collection
Impact	<p>To what extent has the intervention had an impact on the lives of participants? What evidence is there for this?</p> <p>What have been the positive effects of this project on participants and the surrounding community?</p> <p>Have any unintended and/or negative effects resulted from the project (to participants, to the</p>	<p>Unplanned benefits or results reported in project documents or via stakeholders</p> <p>Presence of positive outcomes (both expected and unexpected) reported in project documents or via stakeholders</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Zoom or in-person interviews with B&amp;Z team</p> <p>Key informant interviews with other relevant project stakeholders</p> <p>Interviews with participants</p>	<p>ITT, progress and monitoring reports</p> <p>Project stakeholders</p>	Inception; data collection

	<p>community, etc.)? If so, what are these effects and how could they have been mitigated and/or avoided?</p> <p>What lessons were learned that can inform B&amp;Z's future programming to achieve the intended outcomes for the targeted population?</p>	<p>Presence of negative outcomes (both expected and unexpected) reported in project documents or via stakeholders</p> <p>Current participant status compared to their baseline status; perceived increase in skills; increase in household/MSE income</p> <p>Challenges or obstacles identified by project stakeholders</p>			
Sustainability	<p>Did the project work towards achieving sustainability of its results and impact? Was there a plan for this?</p> <p>Were measures taken to ensure the continuity of the project's activities after funding ceased?</p> <p>What is the potential for replication of this project (consider human, organizational and financial factors)?</p>	<p>Degree of participant (particular re dairy groups) ownership and commitment towards project outcomes (for example, dairy-production business)</p> <p>Presence of a sustainability plan and related measures</p> <p>Presence of financial, social, environmental, and political elements to sustain and further build on or replicate project results</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Zoom or in-person interviews with project team</p> <p>Interviews with participants</p>	<p>Proposal, logframe, progress reports</p> <p>Project stakeholders</p>	Inception; data collection
Additional questions	<p>To what extent did B&amp;Z provide the necessary and relevant information (for example, about the organization, its principles, and the project itself) to participants and communities?</p>	<p>Frequency and clarity of communication with participants</p> <p>Any recorded or reported significant changes or</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Zoom or in-person interviews with project team</p>	<p>Project narrative reports; monitoring reports and data</p> <p>Project stakeholders</p>	Inception; data collection

	In what ways, if any, did the project adapt to contextual factors and/or changes (such as Lebanon's ongoing compounded crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic)? To what extent were these effective and adequate?	adaptations made during project implementation; rationale for changes or adaptations	Interviews with participants		
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