



EVALUATION REPORT

“Contribute to improving the resilience of vulnerable rural communities in West Bank and Gaza to enable their access to rights in a sustainable and equitable manner (18-CO1-900)”

Implemented the Palestinian Agricultural Development Association and the Rural Women’s Development Society in cooperation with Fundación Promoción Social

Funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation



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List of acronyms

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development
AWQAF	General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments
CBOs	Community-Based Organisations
CPCs	Community Protection Committees
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ED	Education for Development
ET	Evaluation Team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGDs	Focus Groups Discussion
FPS	Fundación Promoción Social
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GO	General Objective
GS	Gaza Strip
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
HRVs	Human Rights Violations
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
JV	Jordan Valley
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
oPt	occupied Palestinian territory
OTC	Technical Office of the Spanish Cooperation

PA	Palestinian Authority
PARC	Palestinian Agricultural Development Association
PCBS	Palestinian Center Bureau of Statistics
PENRA	Palestinian Energy and National Resources Authority
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
RWDS	Rural Women Development Society
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reliable and Time-Bound
SO	Specific Objective
ToRs	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
UCAS	College of Applied Science
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VAW	Violence Against Women
WUAs	Water Usage Associations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	West Bank
WG	Working Group

A. Main messages

To the Palestinian Agricultural Development Association (PARC): the Convenio was responsive to the diverse needs of targeted populations, effectively tackling multifaceted challenges in rural Palestinian communities through initiatives focused on economic empowerment, gender equality, agricultural development, and resilience building. PARC's approach embodied a holistic perspective towards sustainable development, showcasing comprehensive strategies tailored to local contexts.

PARC's deep-rooted presence and recognition within targeted communities facilitated a precise understanding of specific needs and contexts. Leveraging this unique knowledge, PARC successfully reached the target groups and maintained transparency during the selection processes. Additionally, participatory methodologies ensured inclusive decision-making, nurturing a sense of ownership and mitigating harm to individuals or groups.

The programme's impact on Palestinian farmers was profound, marked by reduced production costs, increased incomes, and adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. PARC's efforts in knowledge dissemination, through training sessions and pilot initiatives involving various stakeholders such as the Water User Associations (WUAs), farmer associations, and the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA), yielded significant benefits. Notable examples include the establishment of a desalination plant benefiting over 130 farmers in the Gaza Strip (GS), innovative waste treatment prototypes for mills adopted beyond the programme's scope, and land reclamation of the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments (AWQAF) properties.

At the community level, the Convenio brought substantial improvements in economic empowerment, resilience, and environmental sustainability. Community Protection Committees (CPCs) emerged as key drivers of change, extending the programme's influence beyond its initial goals.

On a national scale, the Convenio influenced discourse on agriculture, gender equality, and sustainable development. PARC's initiatives, such as conferences addressing wastewater management challenges, engaged representatives from various sectors, fostering awareness and collaboration.

PARC's significant investments in promoting sustainable agriculture techniques and climate change adaptation garnered recognition from stakeholders involved in the Convenio. PARC's role as a leading source of expertise on climate change adaptation, warrants further dissemination of best practices and lessons learned to continue shaping the sector and advocating for environmental sustainability.

To the Rural Women Development Society (RWDS): the intervention successfully identified and addressed the specific needs of women within the target communities, implementing activities aimed at enhancing their economic and social status. Moreover, it is evident that the Convenio was closely aligned with the priorities of national authorities and international standards, protocols, and treaties concerning women's rights and gender equality legal frameworks.

The Convenio made a significant impact on the lives of numerous Palestinian women, empowering them with knowledge about their rights, providing legal counselling to assert those rights, and equipping them with skills and experience to embark on new economic ventures. Women in the West Bank (WB) and the GS established home gardens using sustainable agricultural techniques, ensuring food security for their families and improving their economic circumstances. Additionally, efforts to enhance the production, marketing, and distribution capacities of women's clubs in the WB and the GS had not only bolstered economic opportunities but also had positive social and psychological effects.

The RWDS should explore avenues for further knowledge transfer, enabling women rights holders to influence other women and women's clubs within their communities. Additionally, the RWDS could evaluate best practices and lessons learned from the Convenio, particularly those related to sustainable practices, and consider their application in working with other women's clubs and initiatives.

Recognising the capacity and potential of engaging men in shifting attitudes towards women's rights, gender equality, and fighting discrimination and violence, the RWDS successfully involved men from target communities

in awareness sessions. There is a need to explore strategies to increase the engagement of young men in these activities.

To Fundación Promoción Social (FPS): the Convenio was meticulously crafted based on the collective experiences of the three partners, offering the FPS the chance to champion innovative approaches and support local partners in their research and advocacy efforts for climate-resilient agriculture. Local partners viewed their collaboration with the FPS as not just strategic but also fundamental for executing their own plans and strategies, describing the partnership as equitable and reliable.

The FPS made significant efforts to communicate the achievements of the Convenio and the partners' contributions, developing evidence-based materials to use in their Education for Development (ED) activities and public awareness campaigns.

The FPS would benefit from continuing their current approach of integrating local needs with global objectives. This involves supporting local partners in influencing national policies and establishing platforms for learning where the FPS's global expertise can enrich best practices. By maintaining this collaborative approach, the FPS can further empower local partners and enhance the effectiveness of interventions aimed at sustainable agricultural development in the face of climate change.

To PARC, the RWDS and the FPS: this Convenio stands as a remarkable example of impactful partnership. Each of the three organisations brought forth their unique expertise and experience, significantly contributing to the overall success of the intervention. Furthermore, all parties involved obtained benefits from the exchange of knowledge, research opportunities, and increased visibility garnered through the intervention.

It is imperative for partners to contemplate the continuation of this long-term partnership and uphold their learning-oriented approach. By doing so, they can leverage the insights gained from the Convenio to design future interventions that are both relevant and sustainable, thereby maximising the impact of their collective efforts.

To the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID): the current Convenio aligned closely with the AECID's objectives and plans, serving as a tangible manifestation of Spanish cooperation's commitment to the development of Palestinian agriculture. Through this Convenio, several pilot initiatives were launched, including prototypes for mill waste treatment and the land reclamation of AWQAF properties. Additionally, the Convenio facilitated the production and dissemination of relevant research products focusing on waste treatment and women's economic rights, thereby raising national awareness on these critical issues.

The AECID should consider continuing its support to the Convenio partners in future interventions, which have the potential to expand and deepen the impacts of the current intervention. Furthermore, the AECID may explore avenues to further enhance the mobilisation of national authorities towards climate change adaptation in the agriculture sector.

B. Background and description of the evaluation

B.1. Background of the organisations and intervention

- **FPS**

The work of the FPS in Palestine began in 1995, and since then, 68 projects have been implemented. This experience has been structured in different strategic lines described in the successive strategic plans of the FPS, with the main lines of action being work in education, job creation and agricultural development in a broad sense. Thus, one of the objectives of the FPS in Palestine is to promote sustainable rural development, launching projects that affect the agricultural development sector (6%), water resources (31%) and food security (1%). These lines of action are intertwined and complement each one of the projects, integrating others such as environmental protection and/or gender equality. In these sectors, the FPS has implemented 20 projects, allocating 38% of the total resources managed in this region.

Throughout these decades, the efforts of the FPS and its local partners in relation to the intervention sector have proportionately combined infrastructure, capacity building and awareness raising. The different infrastructures (construction of cisterns for the collection and storage of water, rehabilitation of wells, irrigation and water channelling systems, as well as drainage) have made it possible to improve the access to water resources for rural development, as a means of economic development of highly vulnerable regions.

The training of right holders and holders of responsibilities, both in the form of associations and cooperatives, and the technical training of the FPS members, including the adequate incorporation of the gender approach in the actions, are a key element for the sustainability of the results and objectives achieved. Likewise, the training of municipal technicians in technical and management issues has been promoted, in the same way that national institutions, such as the PWA, have been supported.

In all these actions, the FPS has adopted the Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) to strengthen the capacities of the different actors, so that they can facilitate, demand and/or access human rights (HR) depending on their role.

• **PARC**

PARC was founded in 1983 by a collective of Palestinian agronomists who voluntarily responded to the deterioration of agricultural extension programmes in the Jordan Valley (JV) area (WB) because of the Israeli Occupation. They began by offering specialised advice to impoverished farmers in the area, and this voluntary activity expanded and gained recognition until it became a non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting sustainable development in rural areas of Palestine. Nowadays, PARC is one of the largest non-governmental organisations working in Palestine, both in the WB and the GS, and the largest in the field of rural development, agriculture and the use of renewable energy within the WB. It has extensive experience in the field of food security and water management, with the first strategic objective of the organisation contributing to the improvement of household food security in Palestine.

PARC works in the following areas:

- Ensure additional water for agriculture through the promotion of rainwater collection and reuse of treated wastewater.
- Development and recovery of marginal lands, with land reclamation and opening and rehabilitation of agricultural roads.
- Development of the domestic economy: gardening, beekeeping, livestock, and food processing.
- Improve the skills and knowledge of farmers and women in the field of agriculture and food processing.
- Capacity development: supporting community-based organisations (CBOs) in rural areas.
- Support to the agricultural industry as the main subsector of agriculture to guarantee the increase of employment among the Palestinian population.
- Extension of good environmental and agricultural practices, with special attention to the promotion of organic agriculture, and the development and recovery of local seeds.
- Installation and rehabilitation of irrigation networks to improve water management in agricultural production.
- Empowerment of women in rural areas through the promotion of associations.
- Support for the commercialisation of products through the opening of local markets, development of marketing infrastructure, quality control and marketing.

- **RWDS**

The RWDS is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that was born within PARC, growing and taking on its own autonomy since 2001 due to the importance, scope and specialisation of its projects in gender issues. The RWDS works to achieve equality between women and men in rural Palestinian communities, where it has a significant presence in both the GS and the WB. Its area of work is oriented to:

- Improving the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable women in rural areas.
- The reduction of all forms of gender-based violence.
- Improving the social and political participation of rural women.

Its vision aspires to achieve “equality between men and women, girls and boys in rural Palestine and in coherence with the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, international conventions and standards”. Its mission is “to create a women's movement in the rural areas of Palestine that is capable of declaring and developing the economic, political and social rights of women”. A set of values guides the leadership strategy of the organisation, as well as the decisions, policies and the work of its workers. These values include equity, service to people in vulnerable situations, equality, participation, transparency, voluntariness, credibility and empowerment.

Its extensive trajectory has allowed it to become one of the referenced women's organisations in recent years, with a strong social base in rural communities. More than 3,000 women are active members of the 58 clubs the RWDS has throughout the WB and the GS, constituting these women's clubs in a participation model that only this organisation manages in Palestine.

Since its founding, supporting the livelihoods of rural women has been the basis of its work, and its area of action can be structured into three main areas:

- Extensive experience at the community level aimed at the socio-economic empowerment of Palestinian women and the strengthening of their livelihoods.
- Work aimed at ensuring the social and political participation of rural women, strengthening access to decision-making in their communities through the legitimacy that their participation in the RWDS activities and the training they receive give them.
- Work aimed at preventing gender-based violence (GBV).

- **The partnership between the FPS, PARC and the RWDS**

The programme assessed was based on the lessons learned from recent experiences. Thus, the previous joint work between the FPS and PARC guaranteed the incorporation of a consolidated vision based on the knowledge of the rural sector in Palestine. Furthermore, because of the identification process carried out, in which the Technical Office of Spanish Cooperation (OTC, in Spanish) in Jerusalem has actively participated, its suggestions regarding productivity, the reuse of treated water and the use of alternative energy have been incorporated.

Both, the FPS and PARC, are main partners of the AECID and PARC is a key local actor in the conception of rural development in the WB and the GS. However, one of the novel elements that this four-year Convenio provided was the incorporation as main partner, apart from PARC, of the RWDS, a reference organisation in the gender and rural sector that has been working with women for decades, in rural areas in both the GS and the WB. Incorporating the RWDS vision from the beginning of allowed to include the gender approach throughout the Convenio, having a vision of how to improve women's access to their rights during all the phases of the programme.

The inclusion of this gender perspective was not without challenges, given that the Palestinian population and, specifically the rural population, is very conservative and patriarchal. Therefore, the joint work of the three organisations from the beginning allowed them, throughout the execution of the Convenio, to incorporate lessons learned and good practices in the programme to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian women who

participated in the Convenio and an opening of the mentality of the communities, for both women and men, where the programme was implemented.

In short, the Convenio was a joint work designed to contribute to improving the resilience of men and women in the selected locations, under conditions of equality and improving access to their rights by strengthening their capacities, among others.

B.2. Background of the Convenio

The intervention contemplated in this Convenio took place in the rural areas of the Nablus Governorate, WB (18 locations), and Khan Yunis Governorate, in the GS (7 locations).¹ Following the rights violation approach, the problem to be addressed was the lack of access to available natural resources, which causes food insecurity and hinders the fulfilment of the necessary rights to contribute to the resilience of the vulnerable rural population in Palestine. The situation in rural areas prevents society from reaching an optimal level of income, negatively affecting its economic growth. As it was a problem that was generated by the conjunction of multiple conditions, its resolution required a complex and transversal approach, which included an integrating vision through different approaches and areas of action, and objectives related to environmental sustainability, promotion of clean energy and gender equality. Under this approach, the Convenio supported the building of resilience of the Palestinian population, facilitating sustainable production models and promoting inclusion, through the following areas of action:

- Access to natural resources for the rural population. The adequate access to agricultural land was aimed at increasing agricultural production, and therefore not only guaranteeing access to adequate food, but also improving the economic conditions of the population. The adequacy of the land, training in production techniques and the efficient management of water resources for irrigation represented a necessary combination to solve this problem. Specific reinforcement activities for women were considered, as a group of special vulnerability, and therefore with considerations that justify differentiated actions. In addition, the sustainability criterion applied to such a scarce resource in the geographical context of intervention, such as water, was facilitated through the application of modern techniques and the combination of solar energy, such as the use of solar panels to activate water pumps. The training and generation of skills were basic actions to guarantee the appropriation of new methodologies and their continuity.
- The strengthening of both individual and organisational capacities among the target group were aimed at resolving inefficient marketing practices. The system of associations and cooperatives has an important history in Palestine, but it is a long and complex process that requires accompaniment. Capacity building was carried out under the Convenio at various levels: at the level of duty bearers, both farmers and producers' cooperatives and irrigation associations, and at the level of rights holders. Technical skills (food transformation and processing), management (administrative) and negotiation skills (establishing commercial links between producers and marketers) were promoted.
- Adaptation to climate change, which greatly affects the agricultural sector, was addressed through the promotion and implementation of green energies. The work with the university sector provided significant added value in terms of expertise, capacity building and knowledge transfer. Training in the field of renewable energies had an important practical component aimed at consolidating the knowledge acquired. Along with this, awareness campaigns were carried out on good environmental practices, working on issues such as treatment and reuse of wastewater for agricultural irrigation and proper waste management,

¹ Communities in Nablus for PARC: Boreen, Oreef, Rojceb, Azmout, Borqh, Beit Dajan, Aqraba, Qusrah, Talfeet, Asira Al Shmaliyeh, Asira Al Qibliya, Qaryut, Joureesh, Doma, Deir Hatab, Einyabous, Beit Fourik, and Jumae'n.

Communities in Nablus for the RWDS: Borqh, Beit Dajan, Beit Fourik, and Jumae'n.

Communities in Khan Younis for PARC: Absan Al Saghera, Al Fokhari, Al Qrara, Khuza'a, Qa'a El Qurein, and Gezan Al Najjar.

Communities in Khan Younis for the RWDS: Al Manrah.

among others. The actions were aimed at generating awareness and commitment to introduce new technologies without facing serious cultural or socio-political obstacles. They relied on the communities so that they could fully participate in decision-making related to their own development and their ability to respond to disaster situations. The work with the CPCs, and the preparation of the development plans, influenced the sustainable use of resources, with the aim that they do not have a negative impact on future generations.

- The Convenio addressed the vulnerability of rural women under a gender equality approach, aimed at promoting their socio-economic empowerment, with campaigns in defence of social and economic rights and awareness sessions aimed at women and men, aimed at reducing gender stereotyped approaches. Likewise, specific support services were provided to women, which helped them move from the informal to the formal economy, accessing legal support and to the control of their financial income.

B.3. Background of the evaluation

The evaluation focused on the period of implementation of the Convenio, from February 1st 2019 to June 30th 2023, and its geographical location, Nablus Governorate in the WB and Khan Younis Governorate in the GS, Palestine.

The basic reasons for this final evaluation were:

- Comply with the regulations contained in Law 38/2003, of November 17, General of Subsidies, and RD 887/2006, of July 21, as well as Order AUC/286/2022, of April 6, in which establishes the obligation to carry out a final evaluation in the development agreements financed by the AECID.
- The evaluation was budgeted in the formulation of the Convenio, and it was considered relevant by the OTC of Jerusalem.
- The need to be able to assess the extent to which the intervention was approaching the general objective of the development aid, the fight against poverty and, in particular, the achievement of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with which the Convenio was aligned (SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 13 and 16), in the WB and the GS.
- To be an open learning process that allowed useful conclusions to be drawn for the improvement of methodologies. In fact, another purpose of the evaluation focused on the value of evaluation as a process of learning and knowledge management, as well as its contribution to accountability and transparency among all actors, including the target groups, as the right holders and active subjects that participated in the achievement of development results.
- To ensure the participation of the target groups and ensure the adequacy of the actions taken and open processes of appropriation of the dynamics of change taken as an essential multiplying agent that enhances the viability of the agreement once the external aid ends.
- To study the management of the intervention through systematic and in-depth analysis of the objectives and results expected and achieved.
- Consolidate information channels among local partners, the FPS and the AECID, encouraging participation and transparency of the intervention.

In this sense, the final evaluation was approached from different perspectives to offer an analysis that integrated the interests and needs of each of the key actors of the intervention. Therefore, the general objectives of the evaluation were:

- Evaluate, after the elapsed execution period, the relevance of the intervention and its objectives in relation to the problems and vulnerabilities identified in the Convenio, within the framework of the sectoral strategy on rural development of AECID.

- Value the design and execution of the intervention. The coherence between the expected results and the achievement of the objectives, as well as their scope in the evaluated period, reorienting them if necessary.
- Value the activities carried out, their contribution to the achievement of the results and the optimisation of the resources used to carry them out.
- Analyse the foreseeable impact of the intervention.
- Establish a qualitative and quantitative measurement of the indicators with respect to the different baseline studies conducted and the indicators constructed in the agreement's planning matrix.

The intended users of the evaluation report are the implementing partners – the FPS, PARC and the RWDS –, the Convenio donor, the AECID, and any other interested party/participant. Regarding the usefulness of this evaluation, it was expected to obtain recommendations regarding key elements of the intervention for the partner organisations, referring both to its design and planning as well as to its management and execution. Thus, some of the specific areas from which lessons could be learned and recommendations were:

- Analysis of the FPS, PARC and the RWDS as holders of responsibilities with respect to the actions linked to the agreement and its relationship with the target group, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, as well as possible opportunities for improvement.
- Analyse how these non-governmental organisations (NGOs) positioned themselves and added value in response to both national development needs and others not considered at the time of their formulation.
- Identify successful lines of action and opportunities.
- Identify challenges faced with respect to the time of formulation, especially the context caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Evaluate the strengths, weaknesses and capacities of the intervention in relation to opportunities for cooperation in the WB and the GS.
- Offer guidance for the definition of strategies for the medium and long-term.

This was an external final evaluation where an external consultancy firm, MIMAT Consultancy, with experience conducting evaluations was hired. The Evaluation Team (ET) had the ongoing support and accompaniment of the technical staff in the three partner organisations to implement the evaluation in the most efficient, participatory and useful way.

The ET was responsible for making the evaluation report credible and utility-focused and practice-oriented with specific suggestions for improvements and replication of positive results and findings.

B.4. The situation of the agricultural sector in Palestine^{2,3,4,5,6}

The Palestinian agriculture sector is poorly structured and evolved in a complex political context branded by the Israeli Occupation. Palestinian farmers show relatively low productivity levels due to traditional production methods' low return farming approach. Palestinian farmers are small-scale producers and operate in challenging settings, including poor infrastructure, lack of advanced technologies, and limited governmental subsidies, among others. Furthermore, the Paris Economic Protocol (1994) envisaged that Palestinian trade with other countries

² [Humanitarian Needs Overview for Palestine 2022](#) (December 2022).

³ [FAO Country Programming Framework for Palestine 2018-2022](#) (2018).

⁴ [University-Industry Linkages in Agriculture: The Case of Palestine](#) (February 2022).

⁵ [The unfolding water catastrophe in Gaza](#) (November 2023).

⁶ [Agricultural land destroyed in Gaza](#) (December 2023).

continues to be handled through Israeli sea and airports or through border crossings between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Jordan, which Israel also controls.

The 5.2 million Palestinians living in the WB⁷ and the GS (approximately, 59.8% in the WB and 40.2% in the GS) struggle to survive against prolonged crisis and ongoing Israeli Occupation. Therefore, they are becoming more dependent on aids, less able to produce food, and more reliant on imported goods (90% of primary commodities). Agriculture production is characterised by narrow access margins to natural resources (land and water), severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods (markets), and barriers to infrastructure investment. Over time agricultural imports increased to exceed exports significantly.

While the Palestinian agriculture sector may play a vital role in economic growth, food security, poverty reduction, and rural development, the agricultural sector's contribution to Palestine's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had declined from 36% in the 1970s to about 3% in 2018. Moreover, the agricultural sector's budget remains the least across sectors. In 2018, the agricultural sector's budget did not exceed 1% of the total public budget, indicating a severe failure to strengthen the farmers' steadfastness to increase Palestinian production and sovereignty over food. The Palestinian agricultural sector added a value of US\$ 339.1 million in 2012 at constant prices, representing 4.6% of GDP at that time. In 2018, the value of agricultural production at constant prices was US\$ 540 million, and at peak value, agricultural production rose to US\$ 721.5 million.

Available data from 2020 indicated that 29.2% of the population lived below the poverty line, 13.9% in the WB and 53% in the GS. It is estimated that more than 1/3 of households suffer from food insecurity, especially in rural areas and among households headed by women, as well as those that make a living from agriculture. The low per capita growth rates of recent years (0.1% in 2017) fail to keep pace with population growth, nor are they sufficient to generate adequate employment opportunities, resulting in an unemployment rate of 25.3% in 2020 (14.6% in the WB and 45.1% in the GS).

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), in 2006, the agricultural labour, although stable and sustainable work, represented 16.7% of the total labour force, which fell to 10.4% in 2014, then to 8.7% in 2015, to 6.6% in 2017 and less than 6% in 2019. It is observed that there is a constant decrease in the percentage of workers in agricultural activity. Furthermore, in recent years, the agricultural sector has been recording the lowest salaries in the WB and the GS. This situation weakens the agricultural sector and leads to the inability of farmers to apply the concept of food sovereignty as part of the right to self-determination and is considered the main cause of poverty, unemployment and food insecurity, among others.

Young people (less than 40 years old) make only about 20% of landholders. Palestinian youth lack evidence about opportunities, innovation, and the potential for value addition in agriculture. Moreover, given the tendency for youth to desire a modern/urban lifestyle, Israel's labour market is attractive for the Palestinians, and the relatively high wages offered in Israel lead to youth abandoning agriculture. Noteworthy, 15-20% of the employed Palestinian labour force by the Israeli Occupation work in agriculture.

Traditionally, Palestinian women do not occupy relevant positions in the productive sphere of the agricultural sector, assigning them roles linked to their reproductive and assimilated role as part of their responsibilities as detailed below. To this social barrier is added another linked to the geopolitical situation: the confiscation of the land by the Israeli authorities and the lack of security due to the Occupation, since most of the lands are in Area

⁷ The WB was divided into three areas – A, B and C – as part of the Oslo Accords, signed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel in 1993 and 1995. The agreements led to the establishment of an interim Palestinian government, the PA, which was granted limited powers of governance in Areas A and B. They were also meant to kick-start future peace talks brokered by the United States, with a two-state solution as the desired objective of negotiations. But the outcomes of the Oslo Accords left instead in complete control of the Palestinian economy, as well as its civil and security matters in more than 60% of the WB, designated as Area C. Despite granting the interim government control over administrative and internal security matters in parts of the WB, Israel maintains military control over the entire area.

Today, approximately, Area A constitutes 18% of the WB, and the PA controls most affairs in this area, including internal security. In Area B, which comprises about 21% of the WB, the PA controls education, health and the economy. In both areas, Israeli authorities have full external security control. This means that the Israeli military retains the right to enter these areas at any time, typically to raid homes or detain individuals under the pretext of security. Area C is the largest section of the WB, comprising about 60% of the Palestinian territory.

C, keeps the general population away, and women in particular, of the use and enjoyment of available natural resources. An additional problem for these women is that their participation in the value chain is limited, since they mainly contribute to the work that has to do with the plantations, cultivation and processing of the products, but they do not access the market. Furthermore, the majority do not receive any remuneration for the work performed as it is conceived as part of the household chores to which the distribution of gender roles relegates them. Fundamentally, the problems that women face are the difficulty of working conditions in terms of safety, unpaid work, extra work on top of family responsibilities in their reproductive role – accentuated even more during confinement and the (post)pandemic of COVID-19 –, the lack of ownership of the land and lack of resources to work it, both technological and economic, that allow it to be made profitable. An additional difficulty is the scarcity of loans and additional resources for the sector because they are women, both from private investors and from the aid offered by the government.

Despite the yet-to-be Palestinian state, the reality on the ground suggests the Palestinian Government has limited self-determination. Israel has the upper hand in controlling resources; therefore, the Palestinians suffer restricted access to water sources, supplies, and markets. Palestine's agriculture sector suffers from low technological content and relatively low value-added. Although Palestine and Israel share similar soil and climate, the Palestinian agricultural output and productivity are far behind.

On average, during 1984–2016, the agricultural land area in Palestine (in both the WB and the GS) decreased by 0.65% each year. The Israeli Occupation insists on moving forward with the annexation of parts of the occupied WB lands. Within the plans of gradual dispossession of the Palestinian land and the forced displacement of the Palestinian people, the latest of which is the annexation of the JV and the so-called major settlement blocs in the WB. The land of the JV exposed to annexation is estimated at 26% of the WB. It constitutes 50% of the food basket of the Palestinian people, contains groundwater basins, and is rich in mineral salts.

In the GS, the Israeli Occupation denied access to 18% of the arable land on the eastern and northern borders of the GS under the pretext of security. Besides, the Israeli authorities are exercising all forms of restrictions and repression against fishers through arrest, confiscation of fishing boats, constraints on the fishing zone, in addition to the continued isolation of the entire GS. Continuously changing and unpredictable fishing zone boundaries, along with restrictions on the importation of essential fishing equipment, continue to impact fishermen's livelihoods. Ageing boats, nets, engines and other equipment are in urgent need of rehabilitation or replacement.

Regarding Israel's escalation of violence over the GS, in May 2021, according to the World Bank, the agricultural sector suffered direct damage of approximately 45 million US dollars, while the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) estimated this figure in the range of 55 million US dollars. More than 27,000 dunums of orchards, vegetable crops and greenhouses, and more than 450 livestock and poultry farms were totally or partially destroyed. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Labor (MoL), more than 19,000 workers were affected by direct damage to active facilities, 37% of them working in the agricultural sector. The bombing of the largest agricultural input warehouse, which held 50 to 60% of the agricultural inputs needed in the GS, and the subsequent destruction of the inventory of inputs and chemical fertilisers and pesticides, put the agricultural season in the GS at risk. Exports of fresh agricultural products were suspended for more than a month during and after the escalation, and subsequently did not resume at pre-May levels or at the levels of the equivalent period in 2020.

During the escalation of violence in August 2022, fodder and animal production were at risk due to the closure of entrances/exits to the GS, since the total capacity of fodder reserves in the territory does not exceed seven days. Most fodder traders were unable to import fodder for several days and the continued closure of the crossing caused significant damage to this sector and a serious shortage of white meat in the area. About 18% of businesses reported having food supply problems related to shortages of dairy products and rising raw material prices. It should be said that at the level of agricultural land, there was no major damage.

When the fieldwork was done and while the ET started to analyse the data collected, written, a new escalation of violence began in the GS, following the events of October 7th 2023 in Israel. The Israeli operation in the GS has destroyed a vast amount of agricultural land and water resources. Due to constant shelling and ground incursion, satellite images are the only way of observing the damage. At the time of writing this report, it is estimated that

more than 40% of the arable land has already been destroyed (including greenhouses, olive groves and fields) and more than 40% of the water resources (including infrastructures) have been destroyed too. The high level of violence will leave a lasting mark on the Palestinian enclave, and besides the destruction, it is well-known that the ongoing bombardments are contaminating the soil and water resources, and any other level of the Palestinian ecosystem. Only when the situation improves, organisations and authorities will be able to assess the damage to agricultural lands, farms, water tanks, systems irrigation, etc. which is expected to be extensive, since more than 50% of the infrastructure in the GS has been bombed by ground and air.

Area C is the green basket of the WB and constitutes the most important land and natural resources for Palestinian development, including most of the agricultural and grazing lands, which represent a main source of livelihood for hundreds of families, mostly Bedouins and pastoral communities. In Area C, demolitions of homes and productive assets, confiscations and restrictions on the maintenance and rehabilitation of productive assets, as well as forced transfers, restrictions on movement and expansion of settlements and violence by settlers, contribute to undermining the livelihoods and the standards of living. Furthermore, it is almost impossible for the Palestinian population to obtain construction permits in Area C. Between 2016 and 2020, there were 2,550 permit applications, of which only 24 were accepted; less than 1% of permits were granted within a five-year span. By contrast, in 2019 and 2020, Israeli authorities approved plans for 16,098 units in settlements and issued permits for at least 2,233 housing units. By the end of 2022, 38% of structures demolished in Area C were related to agriculture, and 36% of demolition incidents affect Bedouin and pastoralist communities, in addition to settler violence that represents a threat to the livelihoods and lives of these people. The Bedouins in Area C are identified as the most vulnerable and at risk of being forcibly removed. Their traditional income-generating activities are becoming unsustainable, with even the most basic support assistance for farmers subject to increasingly strict Israeli policies. The pressures on these communities are compounded by the high cost of water and animal feed, as well as the fact that Palestinian farmers are prohibited from drilling new wells and performing essential maintenance on the systems. deteriorated irrigation systems.

Areas A and B of the WB are home to 87% of the WB population, almost 2.4 million Palestinians. These areas face a different set of restrictions that, although less severe, are impacting food security and the viability of their economy. Israeli measures such as roadblocks, checkpoints, ring roads and limited accessibility to natural resources have reduced the competitiveness of its productive entities, hampered the viability of businesses and impeded efforts and initiatives employment creation. Areas A and B face a high prevalence of food insecurity like that prevailing in Area C (18.1%), and a slightly higher percentage of people in need (14.4%) which translates in absolute terms to more than 340,000 needy homes.

Still, the multi-crop structures that result from the advantage of climatic diversity in Palestine help design a resilient sector. Agricultural land is cultivated with many types of vegetables and fruits. The trees mainly include olive and orange trees. Over time, changes in crop structures are a result of coping with Israeli market demand, outsourcing to Israeli distributors, and changes in Palestinian consumption style.

The COVID-19 outbreak brought a significant threat and dramatic global consequences to agriculture and food systems. Agriculture was one of the sectors most affected by the pandemic and Palestine was no exception. However, the fragility of its healthcare system makes the alignment between the economic impacts of the pandemic and the consequences on healthcare a very challenging issue. Thus, the continued movement restrictions and social distancing procedures imposed by the Palestinian (and Israeli) government to control the spread of the Coronavirus directly, damaged all economic operations, including those of farmers, agricultural labour and all actors along the agricultural supply chain.

Furthermore, donor budget support to Palestine has decreased substantially in recent years, falling from 32% of GDP in 2008 to 3.5% in 2019. Relying heavily on agricultural imports and international aid, Palestine's economy is exposed to extraordinary risks after COVID-19. For example, farmers hesitate about when or how much to plant due to ambiguous demand and the perishable nature of their products.

In this context, agricultural cooperatives and clubs represent a key element. Although this factor is true, it must be considered that the agricultural cooperative and club sector faces, on the one hand, external threats that have an

impact on the three levels of the production chain and, in parallel, also with internal weaknesses that exist to overcome. Thus, about primary production, some of the main problems are, as indicated above, the policies imposed by the Israeli Occupation, as well as the increase in production costs, the scarce production support services, the nonexistence of an agricultural insurance system, dependence on foreign aid, the adverse agricultural cycle and dependence on imported Israeli resources, which increases the price and puts quality at risk. At the post-harvest management level, problems are related to inadequate infrastructure and systems for sorting, packaging, and the cold chain for perishable products such as fruits and vegetables. And finally, in reference to the marketing chain, the risks are related to international certificates, Israeli laws that control the entry and exit of agricultural and livestock products, inadequate means of transportation, the low bargaining power of sales prices, the difficulty in maintaining the volumes and quality of the products, the low diversification of the products marketed, the lack of warehouses or adequate storage structures, and the lack of specialised information on the local market, production, the status of prices and the management of distribution and collections.

Palestinian NGOs have for years been calling on civil society organisations (CSOs) and social movements that support farmers' rights to support those who are exposed to the risks of annexation, hunger and poverty, factors that push them to emigrate from their lands. All NGOs, cooperatives and the MoA evaluated the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) as a fundamental value-added partner to guarantee the livelihoods of farmers and vulnerable groups in Palestine. The consensus among all stakeholders is that FAO has a positive impact as a UN institution committed to the development of the agricultural sector through vital support and interventions.

For these reasons, agricultural improvements, such as those carried out from the evaluated Convenio, are essential to create a “greener” and more sustainable agricultural sector, improve the competitiveness of agriculture and access to the local market to, thus, lay the foundation for more liveable conditions in Palestine in the years to come.

B.5. General description of the evaluation process

The evaluation started in June 2023 for a total duration of 47 working days. The fieldwork was implemented during August-October 2023 in the WB, the GS and remote. The assignment was conducted by MIMAT Consultancy, which is composed of Bárbara Drake (Team Leader), Rula Al-Khateeb, Reema Ibraheem and Hala Riziq (Team Facilitators) and Mireia Gallardo (Desk Support). The evaluation and the ET relied on the collaboration and support of the Convenio partners during the whole process.

The evaluation followed the methodology agreed with the FPS, further described in the following sections, and it combined:

- 1 day for the start-up of the evaluation.
- 5 days for the compilation and review of relevant documentation, as well as the preparation of the assignment: evaluation matrix, tools and methodology, selection of respondents and locations, definition of roles and responsibilities, identification of limitations and difficulties, among others.
- 3 days for the confirmation and set up of the agenda, as well as the organisation of any logistics and arrangements needed.
- 18 days face-to-face (in country) fieldwork.
- 4 day for debriefing of the fieldwork.
- 5 days for collection, validation, feedback and analysis of the data.
- 11 days for development and revision of the draft/final narrative report with its annexes.
- 3 days for the presentation and dissemination of the evaluation report.

C. Evaluation methodology

C.1. Desk review⁸

The literature review phase – when the ET reviews the existing documentation related to the Convenio – was an ongoing process during the whole assignment. The objective of this phase was the compilation of primary and secondary information related to the Convenio and the evaluation.

The first stage – conducted between June-August 2023 – was home based and carried out by the consultants. In this case, the desk review raised questions about the Convenio, the evaluation objectives and criteria, overall scope and expectations of the evaluation and the ET, key respondents that should be interviewed and sampling (e.g. rights holders, holders of responsibilities and obligations, locations), roles and responsibilities for each party, issues to take into consideration for the planning and fieldwork phases (e.g. schedule, resources available, limitations, etc.), among others.

After having cleared up any doubts with the Convenio partners, the ET proceeded to collect data related to the following items:

- Identification, selection and sampling of the sources of information (key respondents) and the locations.
- Methodology and the qualitative and quantitative techniques/tools to be used during the fieldwork phase of the evaluation. Both parties discussed, analysed and modified the tools to obtain a final version for the fieldwork.
- Other considerations such as roles and responsibilities, and technical and staffing support (logistics) needed.
- Evaluation tools' matrix.⁹
- Challenges and limitations.
- Ethical and safety considerations and/or guidelines.
- Crosscutting components and/or approaches.

The second stage was carried out parallel to the fieldwork, between August and October 2023 – when the consultants requested additional information to clarify issues identified during the initial desk review, preparation phase and/or because of new needs in the field.

Finally, the third stage was carried out parallel to the data analysis and the elaboration of the draft-final report, between November 2023 and January 2024.

C.2. Methodology, sources of information and sample

The ET was responsible for designing the evaluation methodology and tools. The evaluation followed a qualitative methodology and participants, rights holders and stakeholders, were selected through a non-probability purposive sampling methodology, with informants selected purposively according to the availability, interest and willingness to participate in the evaluation, e.g. to answer specific questions, according to their knowledge, etc. Representatives of all the target groups and actors involved and/or affected by the Convenio were included to ensure that all groups' voices and feedback was considered in the evaluation process. The ET cross-checked the data provided by the selected participants through different tools and sessions, and it concluded that the sample of the evaluation was representative.

The ET conducted the evaluation in a participatory manner through constructive open dialogue and discussions that promoted a learning environment for all stakeholders and respondents involved. To do so, the ET designed

⁸ For more information, please see Annex 1 - Desk Review.

⁹ For more information, please see Annex 2 - Evaluation Matrix.

two tools to assess the Convenio and collected relevant information at qualitative level, and when possible, at quantitative level, triangulating the data to ensure accuracy, richness and comprehensiveness of the results. The tools – individual and group semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) – were developed to assess each one of the criteria included in the Terms of Reference (ToRs)¹⁰ as well as to provide recommendations about the Convenio and to the partner organisations. Despite the socio-political context during the evaluation, the ET was able to apply all the designed tools, which were adapted to each group of informants. Likewise, the ET collated the data provided by the selected participants and concluded that the quality of the information provided was not compromised by this situation and/or limitations.

During the evaluation, the ET held several meetings with the FPS, PARC and the RWDS key staff members to further discuss components of the assignment, e.g. scope and work plan, sampling of respondents, progress, etc. Time for clarifications, questions and answers for both parties was also allocated in those sessions. When needed, partner organisations were responsible to provide the contact information for different actors and they supported the coordination with the facilities to interview staff, service providers and/or rights holders.

The evaluation was conducted in the different locations of the programme in the WB and the GS, for both targeted governorates and all rights holders identified were inhabitants of these areas and/or participated in the Convenio activities.

The ET outlined the selection criteria for the sampling of respondents prior to the process. The ET and the programme partners were fully responsible for the selection of the respondents. All groups were targeted by the ET and their participation in the evaluation process was ensured.

The ET reached a total of 101 respondents. During the evaluation process, it interviewed a total of 53 women and 48 men.¹¹

Evaluation tool	Number of respondents
Key informant semi-structured interviews (individual and group)	5 representatives of the FPS, including 4 women and 1 man 1 representative of the AECID, including 1 man 11 representatives of PARC, including 2 women and 9 men 4 representatives of the RWDS, including 3 women and 1 man 1 representative of the PWA, including 1 man 1 representative of the Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA), including 1 man 1 representative of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), including 1 woman 1 representative of the MoA, including 1 man 1 representative of the Mothers’ School, including 1 woman

¹⁰ For more information, please see Annex 3 - ToRs.

¹¹ For more information, please see Annex 4 - Agenda.

	1 representative of the University College of Applied Science (UCAS), including 1 man
FGDs	4 local council representatives, including 4 men 4 AWQAF representatives, including 4 men 3 trainers, including 3 women 30 rights holders from PARC activities, including 7 women and 23 men 33 rights holders from the RWDS activities, including 33 women

C.4. Rating of the evaluation criteria

Based on the analysis performed during the working process, the ET gave each evaluation criteria a score, depending on the results of the analysis conducted with the available data. This scale allowed displaying in a simple way the extent to which the results / outcomes of the programme were achieved. The higher the value assigned to each criteria, the greater success of the programme in that field. In addition, this rating system allowed the comparison between criteria, clearly showing the strengths and weaknesses of the implemented action. To ensure the highest possible reliability, the following criteria were applied for assessment:

- **High:** it means that according to the criteria, the situation is very satisfactory. All questions that relate to the criteria have positive responses and/or there is an exceptionally positive aspect that compensates for other minor problems. E.g. identification of good practices developed during the implementation of the programme that should be kept and/or replicated during future programme cycles.
- **Medium-High:** it means that according to the criteria, the situation is quite satisfactory. Most questions, which concern the criteria, have positive answers; despite comments or any improvements made, the quality of the activities does not question the good overall performance of the programme.
- **Medium:** it means that according to the criteria, there are minor issues to be corrected because they could affect the overall operation of the programme. Improvements proposed do not involve a major revision of the programme's strategy, but they should be considered as a priority.
- **Medium-Low:** it means that according to the criteria, there are major problems to be corrected; improvements are needed, otherwise the overall implementation of the programme will be affected. Most of the questions concerning the criteria have negative responses. The proposed improvements involve a limited review of the programme's strategy.
- **Low:** it means that according to the criteria, there are weaknesses and problems so severe that, if they are not addressed, the programme could fail. Substantially all the questions, which concern the criteria, have negative responses. Important adjustments and a full review of the programme's strategy are needed; otherwise, the programme is in risk of not achieving its objectives.

C.5. Ethical principles, standards and norms

- **Responsibility:** the report mentioned any dispute or differences of opinion that might have arisen among the ET or between the ET and the commissioner of the evaluation in connection with the findings and/or recommendations. The ET corroborated all assertions, or disagreement with them noted.

- Integrity: the ET was responsible for highlighting issues not specifically mentioned in the ToRs, if this is needed, to obtain a more complete analysis of the intervention.
- Independence: to this end, the ET was recruited for its ability to exercise independent judgement. The ET ensured that it was not unduly influenced by the views or statements of any party. If the ET or the evaluation manager came under pressure to adopt a particular position or to introduce bias into the evaluation findings, it was its responsibility to ensure that independence of judgement was maintained. Where such pressures might have endangered the completion or integrity of the evaluation, the issue was referred to the evaluation manager who discussed the concerns of the relevant parties and decided on an approach which ensured that evaluation findings and recommendations were consistent, verified and independently presented.
- Incidents: if problems arose during the fieldwork, or at any other stage of the evaluation, they were reported immediately to the evaluation manager. If this was not done, the existence of such problems was not used to justify the failure to obtain the results stipulated in the ToRs.
- Validation and credibility of the information: the ET was responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information collected while preparing the reports and it was ultimately responsible for the information presented in the evaluation report.
- Intellectual property: in handling information sources, the ET respected the intellectual property rights of the institutions and communities that were under review. All materials generated in the conduct of the evaluation are the property of the FPS, PARC and the RWDS and can only be used by written permission. Responsibility for distribution and publication of the evaluation results rested with the organisations' local offices. With the permission of the organisation, the ET may make briefings or unofficial summaries of the results of the evaluation outside the organisations.
- Delivery of reports: if delivery of the reports was delayed, or if the quality of the reports delivered was clearly lower than what was agreed, the penalties stipulated in the ToRs were applicable.

C.6. Crosscutting components and/or approaches

As part of the evaluation, the following approaches and/or crosscutting components were taken into consideration:

- Gender approach and mainstreaming: the analysis of gender relations is an essential element to understand the impact that international development cooperation programmes have on rights holders. There cannot be a place for human development and lasting peace without respect for the rights of women and girls, men and boys as well as the promotion of gender equality between women-men in societies benefiting from aid. This equity is also a strategic priority in all actions of the FPS, PARC and the RWDS as well as their stakeholders. Therefore, in all phases of the evaluation process (desk review, fieldwork, data analysis and reporting), gender approach and mainstreaming were a central and crosscutting component for the ET. The evaluation results address the impact that the organisations and their Convenio have on gender relations between women and men.
- Diversity as an asset in a rights perspective: women's and men's different backgrounds and experiences were also recognised by the ET as an asset and valuable to the Convenio and partners' actions. Therefore, they were actively included and respected from a HR perspective during the evaluation process.
- Participatory approach: the ET worked with a participatory approach, in which stakeholders were actively engaged in the development and implementation of the evaluation process. It was a fundamental aspect when it came to the ownership of the process by the FPS, PARC and the RWDS as well as the rights holders. During the evaluation process, participatory techniques were used, based in generating learning and knowledge, e.g. by conducting FGDs with rights holders; by adapting tools according to the age,

group and capacities to ease respondents' participation, and through regular meetings during the evaluation with programme partners, etc.

- Human rights-based approach: the ET worked throughout the evaluation process with a focus on HR. The ET considered and treated actors and participants of their Convenio not as mere recipients of development aid (or beneficiaries) but as holders of rights, responsibilities and obligations. E.g. The ET committed to the rights holders considering the vulnerabilities of HR, for example, in terms of their right to peace, to a dignified and safe life, free of violence, equal opportunities, etc. It also focused on the structural problems that limit rights holders' safe access to provide activities and resources, and it also provided space for rights holders to know their rights and claim them, among others.
- Conflict sensitivity approach: the ET took into consideration the conflict sensitivity approach to gain a detailed understanding of the operational context, the programme, and the interactions between the two, to ensure that both the process and the programme have a positive impact on conflict dynamics. In other words, to ensure that the programme and partners' actions minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict. E.g. conducting an internal conflict analysis and linking it to the Convenio; intersection of other issues (economic, social, etc.).
- Safeguarding approach: the ET made sure that the evaluation process, as well as partners' programme, ensured that everybody enjoys the right to be safe, no matter who they are or what their circumstances are. In other words, all actors involved were being protected from harm, abuse or neglect. E.g. by adapting the language of the tools to avoid tension, misunderstandings, etc.
- Learning and utilisation approach: the ET ensured that it considered throughout the intended final use of the evaluation and the needs of the primary intended users, to maximise utilisation of findings and recommendations.
- Partnership approach: the ET ensured that the evaluation process took into consideration the relationship between the programme partners as well as the relevance and effectiveness of the partnership for mutual learning.

D. Challenges and limitations

- A baseline exercise was conducted which measured the basic indicators for each of the communities, establishing a sort of community profile when it comes to, for example, socio-economic issues. However, this baseline did not provide the basal information or starting point in each community when it comes to the theory of change and the logical framework formulated by the Convenio's partners, this means, according to the objectives, results and indicators proposed by the programme. The lack of this type of baseline was one of the major limitations for the evaluation process. This baseline could have provided – at the beginning of its implementation – an accurate profile of the Convenio's target groups. In other words, “to know where PARC, the RWDS and rights holders were at the beginning of the Convenio, where they wanted to be, and which results they wanted to achieve by the end of the action”. Therefore, the baseline could have also provided a starting point from which comparison could be made to measure, for example, the effects or impact of the action, especially regarding the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data collected. In this sense, it would have increased the utility of the data during the Convenio's cycle.
- Having said that, the lack of a baseline based on the theory of change and logical framework of the Convenio, hindered the assessment of the impact, achievements and tracking changes to the rights holders' lives for PARC and the RWDS activities, how people cope and integrate the knowledge and/or information gained, or the impact of the advocacy activities, among others. Finally, it also affected the accuracy when measuring the planned indicators and outcomes.
- To guarantee the security and safety of all the individuals involved in this participatory evaluation process (e.g. human resources, respondents), the proposed work plan and agenda were modified in accordance

with the security circumstances in the WB and the GS, prior and during the implementation of the fieldwork phase. The ET had all needed support from the FPS, PARC and the RWDS and counted with flexibility from their side to adapt the agenda and the methodology according to the needed changes.

- The fieldwork had several pauses due to the summer holidays (July and August 2023) and the security situation in the targeted areas, which caused that it had to be implemented through several phases, resulting in the fact that the fieldwork period had to be lengthened.
- By the time of finishing the fieldwork in the GS and when the local ET was supposed to start analysing the data for reporting, several Palestinian armed groups launched thousands of rockets towards Israel and breached through the fence that separates the GS from the Israeli area, after which Israel initiated a massive offensive against the GS. The focal point of the ET contacted the FPS to assess the situation and to request an extension of the deadline to submit the report, since it was not possible during the first days of October and the escalation of violence to obtain the data from the GS. By mid-November 2023, the ET contacted again the FPS in order to inform that, due to the situation of the local ET in the GS (forced displaced, homeless, suffering ongoing violence, with their lives at risk and on a survival mode), it was not going to be possible to obtain the data collected and, therefore, the alternatives were to wait for the escalation of violence to end or to proceed with the data collected in the WB, which included also some insights from the GS.¹² The FPS decided to move on without the raw data from the GS for the ET to be able to start working on the reporting phase. The ET considers that, despite the impossibility to obtain most of the data from the GS, it was able to provide a general overview of the results and achievements of the Convenio in the area.

E. Main findings and results

E.1. Relevance

Did the intervention fit the needs and priorities of the population participating in the Convenio?
How did the target groups prioritise their needs? Was there a correspondence of the priorities established by them with the objectives of the Convenio?
Did their priorities change since the beginning of the Convenio?

According to partners and stakeholders, the identified intervention emerged as a response to the complex socio-political and economic landscape in occupied Palestine, and it strategically addressed the specific needs of farmers and rural women in the different target areas, with a focus on empowerment, innovation, and sustainability. Most informants pointed out that the collaboration between various stakeholders and the adaptive nature of the programme underscored its potential to bring about positive change in the region.

All groups of informants in the evaluation agreed that the Convenio was designed to respond to the main needs of farmers, rural women, communities, and local authorities in the target areas. These needs span across various aspects, including socio-economic, political, and environmental factors. Based on the responses of the stakeholders and rights holders participating in the evaluation process, the ET identified the following as the needs affecting target communities and groups:

E.1.1. Lack of economic empowerment

All geographical target areas share economic hardships and high levels of unemployment, especially among women. In general, rural areas offer limited income-generating opportunities for women due to a combination of social, economic, and political factors. While the specific circumstances may vary from a geographical area to other (WB vs. GS or Area A vs. Area C; etc.), some of the common causes include:

¹² Limited information about FGDs with farmers in GS were shared from the GS team prior to the escalation.

- Traditional gender roles: societal norms and traditional gender roles often limit women's participation in the workforce. In many rural areas, there is a prevailing belief that women should focus on household responsibilities, which hinders their ability to pursue income-generating activities outside the home. Women participating in FGDs in the WB and the GS explained that beyond the lack of job opportunities available in the rural areas, they are facing social barriers to access them. In this sense, women interviewed believe that the integrated gender perspective of the intervention was extremely relevant. 90% of women participating in FGDs expressed being negatively affected by traditional social norms at their household/community level.
- Limited education and skills training: women in rural areas may have limited access to education and skills training, which reduces their capacity to engage in diverse economic activities. Lack of education and skills can restrict their employment options and hinder entrepreneurship. Women participating in the FGDs in the WB detailed how most young women at their communities paused their education after getting engaged. Moreover, they mentioned how training opportunities available in their areas are not adapted to the specific needs of young mothers.
- Access to resources: women may face challenges in accessing resources such as land, credit, and technology. Land ownership is a significant barrier for women, limiting their ability to engage in agriculture or start businesses. Women participating in the FGDs expressed that they are often denied their inheritance rights due to entrenched customs and traditions, a preference for male offspring over women, reluctance to transfer inherited assets outside the family, and a lack of awareness regarding legal protections. Additionally, factors such as family poverty, and the desire to maintain family unity also contribute to women being deprived of their rightful inheritance, albeit to a lesser extent.

Furthermore, another reason for women's exclusion from inheritance is the collaborative efforts of men with their fathers in developing agricultural, business, or industrial ventures. Men actively participate in capital growth, business expansion, and the acquisition of land and properties, which further marginalise women from inheriting their fair share.

- Mobility restrictions: the lack of freedom of movement imposed by Israel together with cultural and societal norms, as well as safety and security concerns, may restrict women's mobility. This limitation can affect their ability to seek employment opportunities or access markets for their products. 100% of women involved in the evaluation considered that their lives are affected largely by mobility restrictions imposed by Israel.
- Discrimination and gender bias: most women interviewed believe that discrimination and gender bias persist in various forms, affecting women's ability to secure equal opportunities. This may include unequal pay, limited access to decision-making processes, and social stigma against women pursuing certain professions. Most women participating in the FGDs believed that social stigma against women accessing decision making positions is still prevalent in their communities.
- Lack of infrastructure: inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation and communication networks, can impede women's ability to access markets and sell their products. Poor infrastructure also limits the growth of businesses in rural areas. Moreover, most women participating in the FGDs in the WB do not have a vehicle and they are dependent on their relatives and/or on shared transportation to reach education facilities, work opportunities, etc. They believed that the lack of infrastructure not only hinders the distribution of cooperative products but negatively affects their personal growth.
- Conflict and political instability: the political situation in Palestine, marked by conflict and instability, exacerbates economic challenges. Displacement, insecurity, and damage to infrastructure further limits economic opportunities for women in rural areas.
- Limited market access: women in rural areas may face difficulties accessing markets for their products due to factors such as geographical isolation, lack of transportation, and insufficient market information. Representatives from women cooperatives interviewed declared that prior to their participation in the

programme, they lacked basic knowledge about market access, and strategies to overcome existing barriers.

According to the Convenio partners and stakeholders interviewed, the programme aimed to address these challenges by promoting various economic empowerment initiatives, especially for women and farmers, and creating opportunities for sustainable income in the target areas. In this sense, all groups of informants interviewed agreed that the Convenio's partners adopted specific strategies and designed tailored initiatives to promote economic growth in the target areas.

E.1.2. Gender inequality

As mentioned earlier, according to stakeholders and rights holders interviewed there is clear gender-based discrimination in the Palestinian labour market, affecting women's employment opportunities, job conditions, and overall career advancement. Some of the most mentioned examples by the evaluation participants were:

- Wage disparities: women often face wage gaps compared to their male counterparts for similar roles. Discriminatory practices in salary negotiations and unequal pay for equal work contribute to this disparity. Stakeholders interviewed declared that despite changes in legislation, wage disparities are still prevalent in Palestine. Moreover, trainers involved in the Convenio expressed that most women participating in the training were not aware of their basic rights and had very limited abilities to negotiate employment conditions.
- Occupational segregation: gender-based occupational segregation is prevalent in the Palestinian labour market. Women are often concentrated in certain industries or professions, and these tend to be undervalued or offer lower wages compared to male-dominated fields.
- Limited access to leadership positions: women in Palestine may encounter barriers to accessing leadership and decision-making roles within organisations. Glass ceilings and gender stereotypes may hinder their career progression. In this sense, staff from PARC and the RWDS mentioned the great efforts that both organisations are doing internally, and within their networks of supported organisations and partners, to increase the number of women accessing leadership positions. Yet, they believed there is a greater gap at the local administrations and CBOs level.
- Maternity discrimination: discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity is a significant concern. Some women expressed that they have faced challenges in securing employment due to concerns about potential maternity leave or have encountered bias upon returning to work after childbirth. Moreover, staff from local organisations highlighted the need to increase the support to breastfeeding mothers by adapting timetables and/or by enabling private areas for this purpose at the working places.
- Lack of family-friendly policies: inadequate family-friendly policies, such as flexible working hours and childcare support, can disproportionately affect women. The absence of these policies may force women to choose between family responsibilities and career advancement. 92% of working women interviewed declared facing challenges to combine their family with their professional career.
- Gender stereotypes: traditional gender stereotypes may influence hiring decisions and workplace expectations. Certain professions may be deemed more suitable for men, while women may face prejudice in male-dominated fields.
- Unequal access to training and development opportunities: women may have limited access to training and development programmes, hindering their ability to acquire new skills and advance in their careers. This can contribute to a persistent gender gap in skills and qualifications.
- Workplace harassment and hostility: women may experience workplace harassment and/or hostility based on their gender. This can include verbal, physical, or sexual harassment, creating an unwelcome and unsafe working environment.

- Discrimination in recruitment processes: discrimination can occur at the recruitment stage, with biases affecting hiring decisions. Stereotypes about women's abilities or commitment to work may lead to their exclusion from certain job opportunities.
- Limited representation in non-traditional sectors: women may encounter difficulties entering and thriving in non-traditional sectors. Cultural expectations and biases may discourage women from pursuing careers in fields traditionally dominated by men.

Moreover, Palestinian women are facing difficulties in accessing and exercising their socio-economic rights, including land ownership and inheritance rights, that are extremely relevant to promote gender equality in the rural areas, since they hinder women's possibilities to own lands and to decide on production strategies, etc.

As stated by the Convenio partners and stakeholders interviewed, the programme focused on empowering women economically and socially, raising awareness about their rights, and addressing societal attitudes and norms that contribute to gender disparities. In this sense, the Convenio identified, designed and created programmatic lines specifically oriented to promote the economic rights of rural women.

E.1.3. Agricultural challenges

Limited access to land and water due to political instability, occupation-related issues, and infrastructure deficiencies were highlighted by most informants as the main challenges affecting agricultural development in the target areas, impeding the growth and sustainability of the sector. The region's historical and geopolitical context resulted in fragmented land ownership and restrictions on Palestinian access to fertile areas. This fragmentation hampers the ability of farmers to cultivate contiguous plots and adopt efficient farming practices. Additionally, the scarcity of water resources exacerbates the situation, as competition for water rights intensifies. The unequal distribution of water resources due to the Occupation further restricts the irrigation capacity of Palestinian farmers, limiting their ability to cultivate crops and jeopardising the overall productivity of the agricultural sector. Moreover, the construction of settlements, checkpoints, and barriers that impact the daily lives and livelihoods of Palestinians, are also significant challenges for agricultural communities.

The constrained access to land and water not only impedes agricultural productivity but also exacerbates socio-economic disparities, particularly in rural areas where farming is a primary livelihood. Farmers face uncertainties in securing long-term leases and suffer from the consequences of land confiscation, affecting their ability to plan for sustainable agricultural practices. In all target areas, but specifically in the Nablus Governorate, exists a challenge with agricultural lands in need of reclamation and revitalisation.

In addition, Palestinian farmers face numerous challenges when marketing their products and dealing with the high prices of agricultural inputs. These challenges are often interconnected and contribute to the overall difficulty of sustaining a viable agricultural business in the target areas. When asked what the main challenges are preventing them from establishing sustainable agricultural initiatives, most rights holders mentioned the following:

- Limited access to markets: Palestinian farmers often encounters difficulties in accessing markets for their products. Restrictions on movement, checkpoints, and the Wall in the WB can put difficulties to the transportation of goods, leading to delays, increased transportation costs, and limited market reach. In the GS, the imposed blockade and the control of goods for import and export by Israel, prevent farmers from accessing any market beyond the local one, except for unique and limited initiatives promoted bilaterally by European governments. 100% of farmers interviewed believe that the Occupation related limitations largely affect their economic development. Farmers from the Nablus area declared that main challenges encountered by Palestinian producers are competition on local markets with subsidised Israeli products, and the control of imports and exports by the Israeli authorities. These challenges affect their production capacities and increase their products' prices. Moreover, local markets are flooded with cheaper Israeli products, and Palestinian farmers experience a decrease in income and a waste of produce.
- Market information and transparency: limited access to market information and price transparency hinders farmers' ability to make informed decisions about when and where to sell their products. Farmers

interviewed in the WB believed that this lack of information puts them at a disadvantage in negotiations and limits their ability to maximise profits.

- **Export challenges:** Palestinian farmers face obstacles when trying to export their products, including complex bureaucratic procedures, restrictions on exports, and the overall political and economic context of the region. These challenges impact the competitiveness of Palestinian agricultural products in international markets and limits the marketing scope of the average Palestinian business. Most farmers interviewed were focused on the local market and expressed the enormous challenges faced when trying to broaden the scope.
- **High prices of agricultural inputs:** the cost of agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides, can be prohibitively high. Farmers participating in the FGDs declared that they often struggle to afford these inputs, which affects the productivity and quality of their crops. The high prices are exacerbated by the general economic hardship in the target area, and specifically in the GS communities.
- **Water scarcity:** water scarcity is a significant issue for most respondents, and it was highlighted by 100% of farmers interviewed as one of their main challenges. Farmers declared struggling to secure an adequate and consistent water supply for irrigation. This scarcity not only affects crop yields but also increases reliance on expensive water sources, contributing to the overall cost of production. Farmers from the GS participating in the FGDs identified other challenges related to water such as the high salinity of water, which affects the quality of some of the agricultural varieties; high percentage of losses due to erosion of water networks; high salinity of water wells, resulting from high demand and depletion of wells and non-compensation of the underground reservoir of rainwater, and the lack of water access to subscribers at high pressure, due to intermittent electricity supply.

According to stakeholders and rights holders interviewed, one of the most relevant strategies applied by the Convenio to cope with these challenges was combining water supply increase with renewable energy usage to reduce costs, as per the case of the desalination plant that increased productivity of 130 farmers by around 25%.

- **Limited access to credit:** limited access to credit is a common issue for Palestinian farmers according to the rights holders participating in the FGDs. Without sufficient financial resources, farmers struggle to invest in their operations, adopt modern farming practices, or weather unexpected challenges impacting their long-term sustainability. This challenge was specially highlighted by farmers from the GS who believed that the absence of financial support for agricultural initiatives, hinders their capacities to withstand the full shocks and losses resulting from climate change.
- **Land access and ownership issues:** land access and ownership disputes, including issues related to settlements and land confiscation, disrupt agricultural activities and pose challenges for farmers. The uncertainty surrounding land tenure can also hinder farmers' ability to make long-term investments. Nablus farmers and community leaders interviewed highlighted the importance of facilitating access to agricultural lands by creating or rehabilitating agricultural roads. Farmers who benefitted from road rehabilitation, declared that they were not able to access their lands for decades and this restriction had not only negative economic impact in their households, but it also created a frustration within their families because they were prevented from exercising their property rights.

Partners and stakeholders interviewed believe that the Convenio gave a holistic solution to most agricultural challenges faced by farmers by launching land reclamation projects, by promoting the use of clean energy to reduce costs and to increase the sustainability of the business; and by providing support for agricultural activities, and addressing challenges related to marketing and agricultural infrastructure.

E.1.4. Political and environmental challenges

Rural communities in Palestine are facing numerous challenges related to the political situation, from political instability and economic blockades to settler attacks, confiscation of lands, and infrastructure destruction.

Moreover, since 2018 communities in Area C have seen an unprecedented increase in severe, unrelenting settler violence against Palestinian farmers, shepherds, and villagers. Although these challenges are related to external factors and are beyond the scope of the intervention, or the expertise of the partners, all groups of informants agreed that the programme aimed to strengthen resilience against political challenges and protect lands from external threats. One of the strategies in place highlighted by stakeholders and rights holders interviewed was the establishment and development of the CPCs to support farmers and communities at large.

Moreover, most respondents referred to the environmental challenges faced by Palestinian agriculture and the impact that those challenges posed in the productivity and sustainability of the sector. As mentioned above, water scarcity is a predominant issue, exacerbated by competing demands, climate change, and limitations on Palestinians' access to water resources. The region's semi-arid climate, coupled with irregular rainfall patterns, places immense stress on agricultural activities, leading to suboptimal yields and heightened reliance on irrigation. The inequitable distribution of water resources, influenced by geopolitical factors, further intensifies the struggle for Palestinian farmers to secure a reliable water supply, crucial for sustaining crops and livestock.

Soil degradation poses another significant environmental challenge for Palestinian agriculture. The overuse of agricultural lands, coupled with improper land management practices, contributes to soil erosion and fertility loss. Deforestation and the expansion of urban areas also contribute to diminishing arable land. These environmental stressors not only compromise the current agricultural output but also jeopardise the long-term viability of farming in the target areas.

According to partners and stakeholders interviewed, the Convenio focused on providing an answer to the environmental challenges by promoting sustainable agricultural practices, water resource management, initiatives aimed at soil conservation, and the use of clean energy.

E.1.5. Collaborative and institutional challenges

Stakeholders interviewed also mentioned the lack of collaboration between NGOs, private sectors, and government entities as another challenge affecting the sector. In this sense, according to the partners and the stakeholders interviewed, the programme aimed to build collaboration, strengthen institutional capacities, and create an enabling environment through awareness workshops and collaboration between different stakeholders to mitigate this challenge.

In summary, one statement that appears to be shared by most of the respondents was the recognition of the multifaceted challenges faced by the Palestinian rural population, particularly in relation to economic struggles, gender inequalities, and access to resources. In Palestine, the challenges are deep, stemming from the political and economic instability caused by the Israeli Occupation. People, especially women, face significant difficulties in accessing and exercising their socio-economic rights, among others. These challenges include high unemployment rates, gender-based discrimination, limited access to education, healthcare, and land, and economic hardships exacerbated by the ongoing conflict.

In this sense, the ET can affirm that partners together with stakeholders and rights holders identified a range of needs encompassing economic, social, political, and environmental aspects, and they designed the Convenio to address these needs by implementing targeted initiatives that promoted empowerment, resilience, and sustainable development in the communities. According to all groups of informants, there was a clear correspondence between the main challenges faced by the identified target groups and the objectives of the Convenio.

Moreover, most informants interviewed highlighted the need assessment process undertaken by partners as a key factor influencing the intervention design and its adaptation to the target groups' needs and priorities. The Convenio was designed according to the experiences and lessons learned from previous interventions implemented jointly and separately by the programme's partners. In this sense, prior to this intervention, PARC and the RWDS were already present and deeply integrated in the target communities for many years, and they are well known by the local authorities and the community members. This presence and recognition contributed to the ability of the partners to involve stakeholders and rights holders in the design and implementation of the intervention and ensured that all activities planned were relevant to the targeted population and responding to their needs.

Were the Convenio lines consistent with the guidelines established in the sectoral strategy documents that concern them and with the corresponding country strategy documents? Were the principles of action of the NGOs consistent with the public policies that affect the country?

According to all stakeholders interviewed, the Convenio was fully aligned with the sectoral strategy documents, encompassing social development, women's affairs, agriculture, and cooperatives. Partners staff emphasised contributions to poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, and rural development, reinforcing the programme's multifaceted impact across various sectors. Moreover, beyond the specific lines of action of the Convenio, stakeholders interviewed believe that the Convenio partners' individual strategies and joint strategic plans were consistent with the public policies that affect the country and they were strongly advocating for the fulfilment of rights of the Palestinians.

In general, the Convenio was designed with a strong focus on the promotion of the rights of Palestinians and therefore, it was articulated around the priorities established by the *National Policy Agenda 2017-2022-Putting Citizens first*. Specifically, by targeting the third pillar, "sustainable development" and the tenth national priority, "resilient communities," the intervention was strategically positioned to contribute to key policy objectives. These overarching priorities underscore the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, emphasising the creation of a sustainable environment, the rejuvenation of agriculture, the fortification of rural communities, the increase of disaster response capabilities, crisis management enhancement, the promotion of energy efficiency, and increased accessibility to renewable energy sources. Additionally, the intervention was geared towards the expansion of agricultural land, aligning comprehensively with the broader national agenda for holistic and sustainable development.

The Convenio was also consistent with another crucial reference document, the *National Strategy for the Agricultural Sector 2017-2022*, "Resilience and Sustainable Development". In this case, the intervention designed was aligned with 4 out of its 5 strategic objectives:

- Ensuring the resilience and attachment of farmers to their cultivated lands, and the contribution of the agricultural sector to the development of the Palestinian State.
- Efficient and sustainable management of natural and agricultural resources for better adaptation to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change.
- Increasing agricultural production, productivity, and competitiveness, as well as improving access to local and international markets and the contribution of agriculture to GDP and food security.
- Improving farmers' access to the necessary services to increase the value chain of agricultural products.

Likewise, the Convenio was also aligned with the *National Plan for Rapid Recovery and Reconstruction* in the GS, as presented by the PA during the Donors' Conference in Cairo on October 12th 2014. Donor's response to the Plan has been insufficient since 2014 and, therefore, the agricultural sector remained in need of support for the restoration of farmlands, crops, and fruit trees. According to staff and stakeholders interviewed, the programme activities implemented in the GS contributed to rebuild the livelihoods and enhanced the supply of agricultural products to local markets.

All stakeholders and rights holders interviewed also mentioned that the Convenio promoted HR, equity and gender equality according to national and international standards. Moreover, stakeholders interviewed pointed out the ability of PARC and the RWDS to adapt the international human rights law (IHRL) vocabulary and concepts to the local culture. This was especially true for the activities oriented to promote gender equality since a considerable part of Palestinian stakeholders and institutions (lawyers, judges, legal scholars as well as religious, political and community leaders) oppose the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) in Palestine. Having said that, the ET would like to highlight and acknowledge the great commitment of the RWDS to the promotion of gender equality and the implementation of

the CEDAW. This commitment might have hindered the participation of men in awareness sessions but it pointed out the great efforts that are still needed to challenge societal barriers.

All partners highlighted how the Convenio aligned seamlessly with their own strategies as organisations. This alignment was considered a significant strength, emphasising a harmonised approach among key actors in the intervention.

The alignment was extended to local strategies as well with village councils such as Talfeet, Jorish, and Asira recognising the programme's contributions to local service provision, support for agricultural workers, and land protection. These local strategies underlined the importance of supporting farmers, enhancing resilience, and providing services crucial for community development.

Additionally, the programme was aligned with the goals of specialised authorities such as the PWA, the AWQAF and the PENRA. The focus on water availability, land preservation, and the utilisation of clean energy demonstrated a strategic alignment with broader national objectives, especially in addressing critical issues like water scarcity and climate change. As an example, representatives from the AWQAF interviewed highlighted how the land reclamation activities included in the Convenio, contributed to promote the AWQAF goals and mission.

The MoWA acknowledged the programme's alignment with its strategy by focusing on awareness raising and creating income generating activities for rural women. Similarly, the MoA recognised the programme's contribution to supporting farmers' resilience and empowering female farmers, aligning with its strategic objectives.

In conclusion, Convenio's consistent alignment with diverse stakeholders, national priorities, and local strategies underscored its strategic relevance and potential for sustainable impact. The acknowledgement from various entities, spanning governmental bodies to local councils and specialised authorities, affirmed the programme's comprehensive integration with broader development goals and priorities. This alignment positioned the programme as a catalyst for positive change, ensuring that its interventions resonated with and contribute meaningfully to the overarching strategies guiding Palestinian development efforts.

Was there any consultation and agreement with the competent public authorities, as holders of obligations, throughout the identification, formulation, and execution of the Convenio?

According to all stakeholders interviewed, the participation of holders of obligations during the consultation processes for the design and implementation of the Convenio showcased a comprehensive and collaborative approach. The involvement of holders of obligations - including various organisations, councils, and authorities - was highlighted as integral to the success, ownership and sustainability of the intervention.

Throughout the programme cycle, stakeholders played multifaceted roles, ranging from decision making and strategic planning to on-the-ground supervision and support. Notable collaborations and agreements were evident - e.g., with village councils, the AWQAF, etc. - emphasising a commitment to transparency, inclusivity, and active participation. The engagement of institutions such as the AWQAF, the village councils, the PWA, the PENRA, the Mothers' School, the MoA, and others demonstrated a collective effort towards the programme's objectives.

In terms of identifying needs and priorities, the consultation process involved a bottom up approach, emphasising the importance of local partners and communities in shaping the intervention. Programme partners, together with village councils and other institutions, utilised participatory methods, community FGDs and field visits to engage with rights holders and address their specific needs. Challenges related to awareness workshops, gender-specific consultations, and societal norms affecting women's participation were acknowledged, highlighting areas for improvement.

Based on the responses of partners and stakeholders, the ET can affirm that the consultation processes for the design and implementation of the Convenio applied several key strategies to facilitate the participation of holders of obligations, ensuring a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Some of the main strategies employed include:

- Dialogues and collaborative decision-making: prior to the design of the intervention, during the activity planning and the monitoring processes, the three implementing partners actively engaged in dialogues with administrations and relevant stakeholders. This approach emphasised collaborative decision making, ensuring that the perspectives and concerns of various stakeholders, especially holders of obligations, were considered in the programme design and implementation.
- Participatory design and inclusive partnerships: partners involved ministries, local councils, cooperatives, and professionals from different backgrounds in the participatory design of the intervention. This inclusive partnership approach ensured that diverse perspectives and expertise contributed to the programme's design, fostering a sense of ownership among stakeholders.
- Establishment of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and partnerships: partners invested significantly in forging partnerships with various stakeholders, including signing a long-term MOU with the MoA. These formal agreements facilitated coordination, support, guidance, coaching, and advocacy initiatives, particularly for women farmers, underscoring the importance of structured partnerships in achieving programme goals.
- Strategic decision-making and ownership: entities like the AWQAF actively participated in strategic decision making processes, such as determining programme' sites, geographical distribution, and rights holders' selection processes. The collaborative decision making process ensured that stakeholders had a say in how and where the intervention would take place, promoting a sense of ownership too.
- Supervision and involvement of village councils: village councils played supervisory roles in the programme's activities, including the reclamation of agricultural lands and the construction of agricultural roads. Actively involved in the selection of rights holders, village councils ensured that local perspectives were considered in the decision-making process.
- Active engagement of authorities: authorities such as the PWA and the PENRA played supervisory and advisory roles throughout the programme cycle. Their active engagement, including field visits, quality assurance, and providing recommendations, reflected a consultative and collaborative approach that was highly valued both by partners and the authorities themselves, and it was considered as a model of cooperation to be replicated in future interventions.
- Full involvement of the MoA: the MoA showed full involvement from the needs assessment to the closure of the programme. Actively engaged in decision making at all levels, the MoA continuous participation in sectoral meetings and clusters highlighted the commitment of governmental bodies to the programme's success.
- Community FGDs and needs assessment: PARC and the RWDS used FGDs and comprehensive needs assessments involving rights holders, local authorities, partners, and associations where the different actors had the opportunity to reflect on their main needs and the best strategies to be applied to target them. This approach ensured that the identified needs aligned with the priorities and realities of the communities, and that the Convenio lines of intervention were adapted to the specific needs of each community. This was especially true for the GS communities where partners had to conduct massive adaptations to challenge the extremely difficult economic situation of farmers and women.

These strategies collectively aimed to foster a sense of ownership, inclusivity, and transparency in the consultation processes, ensuring that holders of obligations actively participated in decision-making, strategic planning, and the overall success of the intervention. The emphasis on structured partnerships, dialogues, and community involvement reflected a commitment to a participatory and collaborative development approach.

Having said that, while the consultation process for the design and implementation of the Convenio appeared to be generally effective, there were some challenges and areas that could be considered as potential shortcomings:

- Limited women's participation: responses from holders of obligations interviewed indicated challenges related to gender norms and societal expectations, particularly in representing women's needs directly.

This reflects a broader challenge in ensuring gender equality and active participation of women in public meetings and decision-making processes. While women were actively participating at the rights holders' level, their voice was less present at the holders of obligations level. This was due, in one hand, to the limited number of women at decision making positions, and in the other hand, in certain instances, women were not directly involved in the needs assessment process due to societal norms.

- Limited engagement of the PWA: the PWA indicated that they were not directly engaged in the identification process. The absence of a key stakeholder in this phase might result in potential gaps in understanding water related needs and priorities, highlighting the importance of involving all relevant authorities from the outset. Having said that, the ET is aware of the tremendous efforts made by the Convenio's partners to facilitate and encourage a more active participation of the PWA. According to other stakeholders actively involved in the needs assessment process, partners were flexible and open to schedule meetings and consultations according to stakeholders' availability, and communication channels were always open. Therefore, most informants considered that the PWA limited participation was related to their own internal challenges, e.g., human resources, then to the nature and contents of the assessment.
- Challenges in awareness workshops: the RWDS faced challenges in conducting awareness workshops, especially with sceptical and reluctant male participants. This underscored the broader societal context that may hinder the full and equal involvement of women in decision-making processes, needing targeted efforts to address these societal barriers. Overcoming resistance and scepticism is crucial in ensuring that all stakeholders, including those initially hesitant, fully understand the goals and benefits of the programme. Having said that, the ET is aware of the tremendous efforts made by the RWDS to include male participants in their sessions as well as to increase their involvement and understanding of the objectives and actions of the RWDS within the framework of the Convenio.

Lessons learned from the consultation processes included the importance of gender-sensitive approaches, the need for sustained efforts in overcoming challenges, and the value of collaborative decision making involving diverse stakeholders. The emphasis on participatory methods, from field assessments to dialogues and multi-stakeholder partnerships, reflected a commitment to inclusivity and community-driven development. The Convenio's success was attributed by many informants to the active involvement of stakeholders throughout the programme's cycle, stressing the importance of building strong partnerships and adapting strategies to local contexts.

Did the objectives of the strategy of this intervention present synergies with other policies and programmes in execution? Were they compatible with the objectives and results of the intervention evaluated in the context in which they were carried out?

The coordination efforts of the Convenio with various actors reflected a strategic approach to avoid duplications, promote complementarity, and ensure effective utilisation of resources. Stakeholders involved in the Convenio confirmed that they are integrated into existing clusters in Palestine, such as those for food security, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and protection. This integration facilitated the sharing of information and the identification of synergies with other actors working on similar themes. Notably, the programme considered complementing interventions by the UN agencies, international NGOs (INGOs), and local organisations to prevent overlaps and maximise impact.

The alignment with national and international strategies was evident through partnerships with entities like the FAO and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Coordinating with organisations like the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, Oxfam, Care International, and Première Urgence International, demonstrated a commitment to collaborative efforts, aligning with the spirit of the Agenda 2030. The engagement with UN groups, humanitarian consortiums, and other Spanish institutions in the region emphasised a broader commitment to synergy and efficient resource utilisation.

However, challenges were acknowledged in translating identified synergies into practical implementation. According to partners interviewed, while complementarity was recognised, the practical realisation of coordination

efforts with other donors remained a complex task. The need for continuous dialogues and efforts to map activities and avoid duplications was highlighted, emphasising the importance of ongoing communication and adaptability. The challenging context during the implementation period, including a global pandemic and several violence episodes in the target areas, also hindered, according to partners and stakeholders interviewed, the practical implementation of coordination mechanisms.

Local perspectives from the village councils, such as Talfeet or Asira, suggested neglected areas suffering from the proximity of settlements, limiting the interest of donors in financing projects and programmes that could face destruction. Limited interventions from donors in these areas raise questions about the broader engagement of the international community in addressing specific challenges faced by these Palestinian communities. Similarly, the MoA noted a reluctance from donors to engage closely with areas affected by settlements, indicating a gap in addressing the unique needs of communities dealing with such challenges. In this sense, representatives of the affected village councils pointed out the commitment of PARC and the FPS to promoting the rights of the local population and the importance of the implemented interventions.

Many respondents emphasised the long standing relationship and coordination with the target groups, particularly through women's clubs and farmers' associations. This organic relationship facilitated coordination among various interventions targeting women's organisations, farmers and rural communities at large, ensuring informed decision making and complementarity among different projects and programmes that might be implemented in the same target communities. In this sense, all rights holders interviewed, highlighted the long-term presence of the implementing partners in the communities as a key factor to ensure lack of duplicities or overlapping with other actors. According to stakeholders and rights holders interviewed, the Convenio provided a tailored answer to the communities' needs, considering the specific context, the presence and/or absence of other interventions in the area, and the coordination mechanisms available.

In conclusion, while the Convenio demonstrated a strategic approach to coordination and alignment with various actors, challenges persisted in translating identified synergies into practical implementation, especially in neglected areas facing specific challenges like settlements, or in the GS, where humanitarian and development partners must optimise joint efforts to overcome the extreme difficult conditions of the population. Ongoing efforts to map activities, continuous dialogue with donors, and a commitment to complementarity are crucial to addressing these challenges and maximising the positive impact of the Convenio.

We can conclude that the Relevance of the Convenio is HIGH

E.2. Effectiveness with Coverage

The lack of a common understanding of the baseline purpose by local partners, as well as the staff turnover, hindered the capacities of the Convenio partners to measure some direct and indirect effects of the intervention. Having said that, all stakeholders and rights holders interviewed believe that the intervention largely reached its objectives and created the basis for future development in certain areas, such as the use of solar energy for agricultural purposes in remote and isolated areas.

By the time the field phase took place, partners were still working on the final report, and the ET did not have access to the final quantitative data related to the indicators. Therefore, the analysis of the Convenio's level of effectiveness was based on the qualitative data collected through the testimonies of partners, stakeholders and rights holders during the evaluation. This data was crosschecked with quantitative data provided by partners at a later stage, and no major gaps were found. On the contrary, the quantitative data provided by partners is very aligned with the perceptions of the respondents.

Were the specific objectives and results achieved? What factors, internal or external, influenced the scope of the results?

Regarding the general objective (GO) of the Convenio, focused on the *contribution to the improvement of resilience and the development of capacities of the vulnerable rural population of the WB and the GS so that they can access with guarantee the fulfilment of their rights in terms of equity and sustainability*, the collected responses indicated a unanimous belief that the Convenio contributed significantly to enhancing the resilience of vulnerable rural communities in the WB and the GS. Participants emphasised the multifaceted impact of the programme on various aspects, including agricultural practices, awareness of rights, and access to resources. The provision of tools, such as home gardens and cisterns, training on technical issues, and the increased awareness of existing laws and legislations were highlighted as key contributors to resilience. Specific activities, such as the rehabilitation of earth ponds, irrigation networks, and the use of clean energy were mentioned as transformative measures.

Participants acknowledged improvements in vulnerability, equality, and equity, although recognising that challenges persist in all the mentioned areas. Most informants underscored the positive influence on farmers' access to resources, increased flexibility, and the ability to address risks. Furthermore, the Convenio was credited by most informants with promoting gender equity, empowering women through income-generating activities, and fostering a sense of awareness and advocacy for women rights within the communities. Overall, the Convenio was perceived as playing a crucial role in fostering resilience, empowerment, and sustainable development in the targeted regions.

Rights holders from the WB communities interviewed, highlighted the importance of the CPCs since they were created and/or strengthened under the framework of the intervention. Members of the committees expressed their belief that the CPCs played an important role as active links between farmers, communities and local administrations, facilitating direct participation of rural women and men in public life, and increasing the involvement of the population on the decision making at the community level. In this sense, 100% of rights holders interviewed in the WB stated that they experienced a significant development of their capacities and an improvement in their household's resilience.

Specific objective 1 (SO.1.) - Access and availability of agricultural resources for efficient and sustainable production for the rights holders in Nablus and Khan Yunis promoted.

The level of achievement of the SO.1., focused on *promoting the access and availability of agricultural resources for efficient and sustainable production for rights holders in Nablus and Khan Yunis*, was largely positive. All participants, including partners, various stakeholders, and rights holders, expressed satisfaction with the programme's outcomes and highlighted the successful implementation of planned activities. There was a common agreement among informants that the Convenio managed to increase the access and availability of agricultural resources in the target areas by enhancing agricultural resilience, empowering communities, and promoting sustainable practices. The multifaceted approach, including renewable energy integration and women's involvement, contributed to a holistic improvement in the livelihoods of vulnerable rural communities in Nablus and Khan Yunis.

Farmers and stakeholders interviewed acknowledge an increase in the production in the target areas. Farmers from the Nablus area estimated an increase of at least 20%, due to the reduction of the cost of production and the new agricultural lands accessible thanks to the new agricultural roads, and land rehabilitation activities implemented under the Convenio. Moreover, farmers declared their belief that production will continue increasing in the coming years, since some of the lands have been only cultivated in the last year of the intervention and aren't fully producing yet.

Community representatives from Jorish expressed the importance of habilitating agricultural roads for their farmers. Before the opening of the roads, farmers were not able to access their lands with the needed equipment and machinery and, therefore, the lands were abandoned or not fully cultivated. Representatives from the Jorish village council estimated that at least 38 families benefited from the agricultural roads opened during the intervention.

According to all groups of informants, the different results designed under this objective contributed significantly to its achievement. When asked about which methodologies, strategies, or activities under SO.1. were more successful and contributed to its achievement, farmers participating in FGDs expressed satisfaction with the programme's success on access to resources, improved land utilisation, adoption of sustainable agricultural techniques, and efficient use of water resources. Solar energy was particularly highlighted for its positive influence on reducing production costs and for its environmental impact in the long-term at the community level. Representatives of the women's clubs and individual women participating in the FGDs emphasised the success of home garden projects, which not only provided resources for horticulture but they also empowered women economically and socially. Finally, partners highlighted successful collaborations, impactful training sessions, and the transformative effects of their interventions on the targeted communities.

The ET must say that partners have a long history of joint projects promoting access and availability of agricultural resources for efficient and sustainable production in different rural areas of Palestine. This joint experience and the partners' expertise was pointed out by stakeholders and rights holders as a key factor in the high level of achievement of this objective, with targets being reached and exceeded despite the challenges faced. Moreover, partners expressed that big risks and new perspectives, as the cooperation with the AWQAF, could be undertaken under the present intervention, due to the strong partnership, the long experience and the shared expertise of partners.

From the gathered responses of all groups of informants, the ET identified several implemented strategies that played a role in the high level of achievement of the SO.1.:

- Access to resources: all stakeholders and rights holders interviewed believe that the programme facilitated access to resources for agricultural activities, such as providing in-depth training, introducing efficient agricultural practices - e.g. efficient irrigation systems, composting techniques, use of solar energy for irrigation purposes to reduce dependence on electricity, etc. -, and supplying necessary tools and inputs (e.g. seeds, olive pickers, fertilisers, compost tanks, etc.) to ensure more sustainable productions for individual farmers and for organised groups, e.g. water user associations, cooperatives, etc. Women from the GS who participated in the home gardens initiative, highlighted the importance of the training provided beside the construction of the gardens. They declared that being provided with the compost tanks and trained on how to use them, contributed to the success of their home garden productions.

Farmers from the GS indicated how the use of solar energy to pump water for irrigation purposes from rainwater harvesting pools directly impacted their productions. According to their testimonies, electricity shortage and electricity costs posed great challenges to their productions. Farmers acknowledged that reducing their dependence on electricity extremely improved their irrigation capacities and reduced the production costs. They estimated an average production increase of 20-25%.

- Increased cultivated land: reclamation and cultivation of unused land in the target communities, especially through the partnership with the AWQAF, played a crucial role in increasing the land available for farming.
- Improved agricultural techniques: training sessions conducted by partners and experts led to the adoption of improved and sustainable agricultural practices, with a specific emphasis on incorporating renewable energy systems in farming activities, such as solar power. Farmers participating in FGDs highlighted the positive effects of adopting intercropping techniques in their fields, beyond the obvious sustainability benefits, they pointed out the advantages of intercropping for pest control, since it is possible to concentrate the pest in a smaller area, so that it is easier to control. Another great advantage of intercropping, according to farmers, is lowering the risk of total crop failure since different crops will respond differently to the same external factors.
- Empowering women in agriculture: the Convenio successfully empowered rural women by providing them with means for horticultural production, including home gardens, training on agricultural techniques, and necessary materials.

- **Efficient water resource management:** sustainable and efficient use of water resources was achieved through interventions such as the construction of irrigation networks, the establishment of drip irrigation systems, rainwater collection tanks, rehabilitation of springs, and the adoption of eco-friendly practices. The use of renewable energies, particularly solar power, played a significant role in reducing costs and promoting environmental sustainability. Stakeholders interviewed pointed out the effects and impacts that the functioning of the desalination plant had on the GS farmers. At least 130 families benefited from the available desalinated water, which allowed them to plant new crops such as tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, watermelons, etc. According to the GS farmers interviewed, this new production not only generated new income to their households, but also improved the food security of their extended families.

SO.2. - Organisational and marketing practices of farmers improved.

Based on the information provided by all groups of informants the overall achievement of SO.2. appeared to get positive outcomes, though with certain limitations and ongoing challenges related to cultural barriers and fear of innovation in the rural areas. Having said that, the level of achievement was generally considered satisfactory, with notable improvements in organisational, marketing, technical, and capacity aspects for farmers and women associations. Moreover, stakeholders interviewed believe that the Convenio managed to initiate a conversation at the CBOs, women's clubs, farmers' associations and communities' level around innovation, risk management and market analysis that may contribute to further improvement of organisational practices in the future.

Previous joint experiences of partners pointed out the need to improve the organisational capacities and the marketing abilities of rural organisations to increase their sustainability. Those aspects were identified in previous assessments and evaluations as weaknesses on the value chain of the products. In fact, according to partners and rights holders interviewed, financial, human and time resources invested in this line of the intervention were adequate and influenced during the operational work and decision making processes of the target associations and cooperatives.

In this sense, all groups of informants collectively acknowledged positive changes in organisational and marketing practices. Women associations saw advancements in accessing markets, refining marketing strategies, and establishing sustainable sales points. Noteworthy achievements included the creation and improvement of cooperatives, implementation of educational workshops, and specific interventions for women's clubs. Women and farmers interviewed declared that they improved their capacities, and that they accessed new resources and methodologies that brought a positive impact in their economic initiatives.

Representatives from women's clubs interviewed declared they had no knowledge about marketing prior to their participation in the intervention. They believed a great improvement in this area was achieved, yet there are a lot of barriers and challenges related to the products' distribution.

The achievements in technical and organisational capacities strengthening were evident from the responses of all groups of informants. Women associations and farmers underwent various training programmes and capacity building activities, covering legal, technical, financial, and managerial aspects.

According to all groups of informants, the promotion and protection of farmers' interests, particularly in an equitable manner, was addressed positively by partners. This involved the creation of cooperatives, improvements in water users associations, and efforts towards gender equity within the rural communities, offering opportunities to women to integrate themselves in associations and access their economic rights.

Members of the WUAs interviewed highlighted the positive effects of the exchange visits. They believed the knowledge and information sharing between farmers from different areas was important to assess different solutions for common problems and to increase the awareness of climate change and its impact in the Palestinian agriculture system.

From the gathered responses of all groups of informants, the ET identified several implemented strategies that played a role in the high level of achievement of SO.2.:

- Training initiatives that played a crucial role in empowering farmers and women with the skills needed for improved organisational and marketing practices. Farmers and women interviewed highlighted the importance of the labelling and packaging skills gained and how they contributed to a sales increase.
- Specific interventions targeting women contributed to bridging gender gaps and promoting inclusivity in marketing strategies.
- The creation of selling points in local markets, as highlighted by rights holders, indicated tangible steps toward improving accessibility and visibility for farmers' products. In this sense, women from the Beit Fouriq cooperative participating in FGDs explained about the 12 agreements they signed with different selling points during the intervention, and how their sales rose, at least, 50% during the last year.
- Legal advice and support provided by partners contributed to the formalisation of production units, enabling farmers to navigate legal frameworks successfully. Representatives of women cooperatives and the WUAs declared that partners played a significant role in accompanying them through the bureaucratic and legal processes related to the cooperatives and association functioning. Women from the WB cooperatives explained that their associations are too small to count with paid legal services and, therefore, the support from partners was keen to understand procedures and to avoid risks.
- Ongoing support to enhance technical and organisational capacities was highlighted by rights holders as a very successful methodology. Rights holders stated that they felt accompanied through all the implementation and monitoring stages of the programme. This accompaniment complemented the knowledge acquired during the training sessions and demonstrations and enabled real changes at the associations' level.
- Networking initiatives were pointed out by stakeholders and rights holders and indicated a comprehensive approach to strengthening capacities by connecting producers to markets and facilitating collaboration. According to farmers and representatives from women cooperatives, the exchange visits facilitated by the Convenio were key to establish connections and coordination between different geographical areas. Moreover, women from the GS stated that the opportunities created by the Convenio, e.g. Women day round tables, etc., to share knowledge and expertise with their WB colleagues, was a unique experience they never had before.
- Educational workshops, as implemented by the RWDS and expert trainers, played a key role in raising awareness about gender considerations and educating farmers on defending their rights.
- The creation and strengthening of cooperatives showed tangible steps toward fostering collaboration and protecting the collective interests of farmers.
- Gender equity promotion indicated a commitment to ensuring equal participation and treatment of both men and women in programme's activities.

In summary, the achievement of SO.2. was reflected in the positive outcomes reported by various informants. The contributions of different results, including training programmes, organisational interventions, and gender equity promotion, contributed collectively to the overall success. While acknowledging these achievements, it was also noted that challenges persist, and continuous efforts are needed to address cultural barriers, gender inequalities, and to further enhance the sustainability and impact of the interventions in the future.

SO.3. - Clean energy and climate change adaptation applied and promoted.

The feedback from various informants collectively suggested that the SO.3. made commendable strides in promoting clean energy, climate change adaptation, and building community resilience. The level of achievement was generally positive, though there were nuances and considerations for sustainability within the different decision levels.

All groups of informants unanimously believed that the promotion and application of clean energy and climate change adaptation measures, such as the installation of clean energy sources, such as solar power, and training programmes on waste separation and composting contributed significantly to sustainable practices in the target areas. The emphasis on adopting eco-friendly techniques, like rainwater harvesting and composting, demonstrates a tangible commitment to environmental protection by the Convenio partners. Moreover, the inclusion of specific academic research in these issues, and the application of the research for the development of replicable models, e.g. press olive pilot intervention, were highlighted by stakeholders as an example of the mentioned high commitment of partners.

Rights holders interviewed pointed out that the tangible results of climate change adaptations adopted in their productions (reduction of costs, reduction of waste, production increase, etc.) made other farmers, cooperatives, mills, and associations interested in these practices. The best example was the press olive pilot intervention. At the moment of carrying out this evaluation, the ET was able to confirm the request for two new oil mills to install the waste treatment model developed by the programme. Moreover, rights holders from the areas of Nablus and Khan Younis pointed out the adoption of sustainable environmental practices. The focus on eco-friendly activities, including waste separation, rainwater harvesting, composting, and clean energy applications, illustrated a tangible shift towards environmentally conscious practices within the target communities.

Representatives from Burqa women club, who installed solar panels for the functioning of the club, declared that beyond the cost reduction related to the use of solar energy, they acquired a role as "sustainable model" for other women's clubs in the WB. In this sense, women from other locations who participated in exchange visits to the Burqa club, declared that their experience is an example that they would like to follow in their clubs.

All groups of informants interviewed highlighted the successful transfer of knowledge on solar-powered systems. This involved collaboration with youth, engagement in projects like desalination plants, and training sessions for engineers. The emphasis on transitioning to solar energy due to cost-effectiveness and professional knowledge dissemination contributed to the increased adoption of sustainable energy solutions within the target communities.

Partners and stakeholders highlighted the promotion of research and knowledge transfer as well on renewable energies. Studies on waste management, demonstration sites, and study tours were pivotal in disseminating information and promoting innovative solutions. The emphasis on identifying potential areas for research, problem-solving, and collaboration with stakeholders reflected a proactive approach to sustainable energy practices.

In this sense, all groups of informants interviewed believe that, through the Convenio activities, a needed and relevant discussion about future strategies towards holistic sustainability was initiated at the individual, community and even national level, since partners involved national authorities in discussion panels, awareness activities, etc. The results of these awareness efforts vary from one actor to another. While most farmers acknowledged having changed practices and becoming advocates for change, at the meso and macro level it was difficult to assess, at this point, what the relevant ministries and institutions will do in the future with the knowledge and experience generated through the Convenio intervention.

Regarding the protection and preparedness of the target communities, all groups of informants, and especially the representatives of the villages councils and the rights holders participating in FGDs, highlighted the successful development of the CPCs. These committees were not only trained to identify and prioritise community needs but they also played a vital role in emergency response during the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing a high level of organisation and effectiveness. In this sense, many participants in the evaluation process believed that the Convenio's capacity to continue implementing the planned activities during the pandemic was possible in part to the existence of the committees, who played a vital role in maintaining the communications and solving problems related to accessibility, transportation, and communications with the local administrations, among others. Representatives of the village councils also pointed out that the well-functioning of the CPCs contributed to improving their own role at the councils, since they could delegate functions and projects to the committees and focus on other issues. Women interviewed also acknowledged the importance of the committees on promoting real gender equality, since they were made up of both women and men, representing an example of joint work and

decision-making at the community level. 30% of the women participating in the FGDs in the WB were active members of the committees. They acknowledged being able to participate equally in the decision making processes of the committees and lead community initiatives, mainly related to education and psychosocial activities during COVID-19.

From the gathered responses of all groups of informants the ET identified several implemented strategies that played a role in the high level of achievement of SO.3.:

- Training initiatives: training programmes conducted by partners and experts equipped communities with the knowledge and skills needed to implement clean energy practices and climate change adaptation measures. Moreover, training programmes and awareness workshops played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of environmental responsibility and encouraging sustainable practices. Farmers, women, and engineers participating in training sessions mentioned that they were well adapted to their needs and to their capacities. As an example, women benefiting from home gardens in the GS mentioned the importance of the training received in composting practices in the maintenance of their productions.
- Demonstration sites: the implementation of demonstration sites and study tours, as noted by the MoA, the PENRA, and the PWA, provided practical examples of clean energy applications, reinforcing the learning process and encouraging communities to adopt good environmental practices. Farmers participating in FGDs in the WB declared that after participating in solar energy demos, they were enthusiastic to apply solar systems for irrigation in their production units.
- Youth engagement: involving motivated youth in projects facilitated the transfer of knowledge and skills related to solar powered systems and it established the basis for youth interests in new professional avenues, e.g., green jobs, etc. According to partners' staff and farmers interviewed, youth engagement was particularly important in the GS where the unemployment rates among young people are extremely high. PARC staff in the GS believed that youth participation in training and demo practices exceeded the expectations, creating the basis for future interventions and maybe a greater focus on this target group. Youth participation was also key in the implementation of voluntary community-based initiatives led by the CPCs.
- Collaboration and training: partnerships and training programmes played a crucial role in enhancing the technical capabilities of national technicians and engineers, who play a key role in the dissemination and sustainability of the Convenio achievements. According to partners and trainers, 28 engineers, 14 in the WB and 14 in the GS, were trained under the Convenio framework on how to maintain and fix solar powered systems.
- Practical problem-solving: studies on waste management showcase practical applications and problem-solving approaches. Addressing issues such as olive mill waste was pointed out by partners and stakeholders as a good practice to be replicated in future interventions.
- Committee capacities and emergency response: training sessions significantly enhanced the capacities of these committees, turning them into valuable resources for information and planning. Their effective response during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the practical application of skills acquired through training.

The achievements of SO.3. could be considered commendable, with positive outcomes in promoting clean energy, climate change adaptation, and community resilience. The diverse initiatives, ranging from training programmes to the establishment of demonstration sites, contributed collectively to an increased awareness and adoption of sustainable practices within rural communities. While challenges related to sustainability post-programme are acknowledged, the foundations laid by these initiatives provide a promising trajectory for ongoing environmental responsibility and community resilience. Continuous monitoring and adaptation strategies will be crucial to sustaining and expanding upon these achievements in the future.

SO.4. - Empowering rural women socially and economically.

According to all groups of informants interviewed, the Convenio activities made significant strides in empowering rural women socially and economically. This multifaceted approach, incorporating awareness campaigns, legal assistance, and economic initiatives, resulted in tangible improvements in the lives of rural women. The challenges identified, such as the need for sustained market demand and overcoming conservative beliefs, were acknowledged by all groups of informants, and there was a general agreement on the need to develop future strategies to challenge existing social norms. Beyond that, continuous support, collaborative efforts, and adaptive strategies will be crucial in ensuring the sustained empowerment of rural women in the future. The achievements to date, as outlined by all groups of informants, set a positive trajectory for ongoing progress and socio-economic empowerment at the target communities.

In this sense, partners and trainers pointed out the success of awareness workshops, training sessions, and campaigns conducted throughout the programme duration. Topics covered include women's rights, gender equality, violence against women (VAW), and legal aspects. The diversity in age groups - including mothers, young women, and elderly women - highlighted the inclusive nature of these initiatives, as well as their community orientation. Having said that, partners struggled to promote the participation of men in awareness sessions in the most conservative areas, hindering the ability of the Convenio to challenge social norms, and failing to mitigate the potential backlash from family and community members towards women rights holders. In fact, women participating in these activities declared that they contributed to increase their understanding of rights – e.g. inheritance rights, marital rights, alimony rights, etc. - and they had an impact on their decision-making abilities at the individual level and as members of women cooperatives. In addition, women pointed out the diverse strategies employed by partners to tailor the support to women and women cooperatives upon their needs, such as informative sessions, legal assistance, and studies on the impact of small enterprises. Some of the awareness sessions about women's rights were mixed and attended by men from the community. Women participating in the FGDs expressed the importance of having their male relatives involved in these sessions to reduce tensions at the household level, and to enable well informed dialogues in the communities. The ET had access only to 3 men who participated in these sessions and according to their individual testimonies, sessions were informative, well organised and provided them with new knowledge about inheritance and marital laws.

Rights holders participating in FGDs also indicated the successful initiation of new economic activities by rural women. While challenges such as market demand were acknowledged, collective businesses, support for women's clubs, and training in processing, branding and marketing were pivotal in empowering women economically. Women interviewed acknowledged the benefits obtained by participating in the programme at the individual and collective level, being able to initiate and/or increase their business, applying sustainable strategies that reduced costs or/and increased their benefits.

From the gathered responses of all groups of informants the ET identified several implemented strategies that played a role in the high level of achievement of SO.4.:

- **Training initiatives:** workshops and training sessions played a pivotal role in educating women about their rights, leading to increased awareness at the target communities. Moreover, technical training on labelling, packaging and marketing was described as extremely useful by all representatives of women's clubs participating in the FGDs.
- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** collaborative efforts from partners and other institutions - such as local administrations, MoWA, MoA, university experts, etc. - contributed to a holistic approach in empowering women through legal assistance, awareness campaigns, and skill-building.
- **Sensitization campaigns:** campaigns advocating for socio-economic rights, coupled with informative sessions, contributed to increased awareness among both women and men, although male participation was limited in some locations. According to partners and other stakeholders, men's participation in this type of activity is always challenging, especially in very remote and isolated areas that tend to be more conservative. Having said that, partners considered a success the fact that the sessions were implemented, while other organisations are facing threats and backlash when trying to implement mixed awareness

sessions. They believed that the good reputation of both partner organisations was keen in easing the processes and increasing men's attendance.

- Legal assistance: provision of legal assistance was instrumental in clarifying rights and promoting a deeper understanding of legal mechanisms related to registration, food processing permits, hygiene protocols, etc. for individual women as well as for associations, women's clubs and collective business focused on the distribution of processed food products - e.g., tomato sauces, pastries, labneh, yoghurt, etc. - for individual women as well as for associations, women's clubs and collective business.
- Diversified interventions: diversified interventions, including support for women's clubs, marketing strategies, and capacity building for entrepreneurial initiatives, laid the groundwork for economic empowerment.
- Collective businesses: the establishment and strengthening of collective businesses, showcased practical economic initiatives by women in various locations and it was an example of the success of the Convenio' strategies put in place. Representatives from women's clubs participating in the evaluation, expressed how their participation in the clubs impacted in their lives by increasing their income, their knowledge and their agency.

When asked about what factors, internal or external, influenced the scope of results, informants mentioned the following:

Internal Factors

- Collaborative partnerships: partners, stakeholders, and rights holders emphasised the importance of collaboration between them. Collaborative efforts allowed for a more comprehensive and effective implementation of initiatives, pooling resources, knowledge, and expertise. E.g., cooperation between educational institutions, partners' research teams, private sector and farmers' associations to design and develop prototypes, etc.
- Effective communication and team dynamics: internal success hinged on the establishment of a unified team comprising all partners. Effective communication and a cohesive team, despite turnover challenges, played a key role in overcoming hurdles and ensuring the programme's continuity.
- Participatory approach and coordination: partners emphasised the significance of a participatory approach and effective coordination with stakeholders and rights holders. The creation of committees with active community members contributed to the programme ownership, while coordination with ministries and cooperatives was crucial for success when promoting adaptations for climate change, among others.
- Shared monitoring systems: partners highlighted the significance when ensuring programme's effectiveness. Monitoring actions provided insights, identified challenges, and facilitated informed decision making throughout the implementation of the Convenio.
- High population participation: the active engagement and high motivation of the rights holders were internal factors contributing to the success of most activities. The involvement of people in large numbers and with enthusiasm enhanced the impact of the interventions. Most informants believed that this high level of participation was due to the long-term presence of partners in the target areas, and the trust relationships created over years with administrations, communities, and rights holders. According to partners, the Convenio implemented specific target strategies to engage with youth leading to different levels of success. The ET could verify that youth participated in training and voluntary work related to the CPCs, but according to partners and stakeholders their participation in awareness sessions related to women's rights was limited.
- Capacity building: rights holders and stakeholders believed that focus on capacity building played a crucial role in the level of achievement of the programme. Training sessions and workshops were instrumental in enhancing the capacities of individuals and communities, enabling them to actively participate in, and

contribute to programme objectives. Moreover, exchange of knowledge, expertise, methodologies and strategies between the three partners enhanced their abilities to facilitate, implement and monitor the Convenio activities.

- **Community engagement:** the active involvement of the community, exemplified by the establishment of committees and clubs, as highlighted by most right holders, emerged as a significant internal factor. Engaging the community fostered ownership of projects and initiatives, ensuring their sustainability.

External Factors

- **Political and cultural context:** most informants pointed out the influence of the political and cultural context in the region. The unique challenges posed by the political situation, conservative beliefs, and gender norms served as external factors impacting programme implementation. The broader political context, including the Occupation and its ongoing invasions, affected farmers and women's movement as well as marketing efforts. As mentioned earlier, external resistance from local communities posed a challenge to giving women their rights guaranteed by Palestinian laws. Overcoming societal resistance emerged as a critical factor in achieving socio-economic empowerment goals.
- **Market demand:** external factors related to market dynamics influenced the economic outcomes of the intervention. Ensuring sustained market demand emerged as a challenge in some economic empowerment initiatives.
- **Economic conditions:** economic conditions, both local and national, were identified by the rights holders as external factors influencing the Convenio's results, especially farmers and women from the GS. Economic challenges, including poverty, affected the market demand for products and the overall success of economic initiatives.

Cross-Cutting Factors

- **Global pandemic (COVID-19):** the global pandemic emerged as a cross-cutting factor affecting both internal and external aspects during the programme implementation. Informants highlighted the pandemic's impact on training sessions, community activities, and the overall functioning of committees. While the pandemic created some minor delays in training and awareness sessions, it was also a unique opportunity for the committees to fulfil their primary mission and prove the effectiveness of the capacity building programmes included in the Convenio.
- **Access to resources:** access to resources, natural, financial and infrastructural, played a dual role as an internal and external factor. Partners and rights holders pointed out the significance of adequate resources in programme' success. While access to resources is systematically restricted by the Occupation policies, and Palestinians struggle to fulfil their basic rights, the Convenio provided mechanisms and tools to increase access to resources, e.g. land reclamation, legal counselling, water management, etc.

In conclusion, the achievement of Convenio's results was influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors, such as effective communication, participatory approaches, and high population participation, were critical for programme cohesion. External factors, including the pandemic, political challenges, and resistance from local communities, presented hurdles that required adaptability and strategic navigation. Recognising the interplay between these internal and external factors was essential for a comprehensive understanding of the Convenio's achievements and challenges.

Were the planned activities carried out? Were they sufficient and necessary for the achievement of the results?

The responses from participants in the evaluation process provided, generally, a positive picture regarding the implementation of planned activities. Stakeholders reported no changes, indicating that the planned activities were

adhered to as initially outlined. Moreover, most stakeholders expressed confidence in the successful execution of all planned activities, emphasising the use of high-quality manufacturing materials and the close monitoring of activities' progress. In this sense, most informants believed that the monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) systems established by the Convenio partners contributed to the good level of implementation of activities.

Rights holders responses from different target locations echo the positive sentiment, stating that all programme activities were implemented as intended. However, they mentioned some delays in training and awareness sessions due to factors such as Israeli invasions in the target communities and the spread of COVID-19. According to rights holders, partners were flexible and open to adaptations, and they could respond quickly and properly to the mentioned security and health challenges. In their opinion, close coordination with village councils and with rights holders contributed to partners' understanding of the specific circumstances of each location and eased planning adaptations accordingly. When asked about these changes, partners staff confirmed these minor adaptations but noted that they were not significant, suggesting that adjustments were made but did not deviate substantially from the original plan. Overall, the feedback received during the evaluation suggested a strong commitment to the programme's plan and successful execution of activities, with adaptations made in response to unforeseen circumstances.

When asked if the planned activities were sufficient to achieve the Convenio's goals, most informants believed that the activities were adequate to achieve the results and objectives, that they were implemented according to the original plan, nothing was missing and/or requiring different implementation strategies. This positive feedback suggested a successful alignment between planned activities and the intended results and objectives, with no identified shortcomings. Most informants highlighted successful adaptations tailored to the target population.

While acknowledging the achievement of most results and objectives, there is a lingering sense that improvements could be made, particularly in the SO.2. related to marketing. Partners emphasised the challenges tied to women's perspectives, consciousness, and resistance to change. Despite these complexities, the activities were generally effective and contributed to the achievement of SO.2., yet there may be a need to explore other lines of intervention targeting cultural and mindset issues in future interventions.

How many and how were selected those who have participated in the proceedings of the Convenio? Were there any groups of people harmed by the Convenio? Was anything done to minimise the negative effects? What was the different actors' participation in the implementation of the Convenio?

According to partners and as it was included in the intervention reports, the Convenio managed to reach all the target population and the number of rights holders and stakeholders included in the different action lines reached and occasionally exceeded, the original plans. Having said that, stakeholders and rights holders interviewed believe that the added value of the Convenio was not in the outreach of the programme, in other words, in the large number of individuals benefiting from its activities, but in the collective synergies and initiatives launched, that might create long-term benefits at the community level. Moreover, the geographical focus of the intervention, both in the WB and the GS, created further channels of cooperation between farmers and women's clubs from both areas, isolated *de facto* by the impact of the Occupation. In this sense, most informants agreed that the Convenio reached the population in need in very vulnerable and at risk geographical areas, despite security and safety challenges.

In this regard, most respondents declared the effectiveness of the Convenio's targeting strategies. However, partners acknowledged challenges in targeting specific groups like the youth, leading to adaptive measures for better outreach, maintaining a continuous coordination with other actors to attract youth to the agricultural work and improve youth participation in the programme training and awareness activities. When asked about youth participation, most of the stakeholders believed that the Convenio was partially successful in engaging youth. This was considered by most stakeholders as a success since it is a well-known and a common challenge of all development and HR initiatives in Palestine. In general, the ET can say that partners tried to adapt and reach out

the Palestinian youth through coordination and partnership with third parties, with positive achievements for some activities, especially in the GS, but they did not formalise a specific targeting strategy that could be used in future interventions. In this sense, there is a need to reflect on the good practices and the challenges from the Convenio and build on them specific future youth targeting strategies that could support the work of the partners and other organisations.

Despite some challenges with the participation of men in women's rights awareness sessions, related to the context, all groups of informants believed that the implementing partners were able to reach all the planned target groups. Moreover, most of the informants declared that partners were able to integrate all relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of the intervention as well. Having said that, the level of participation varied a lot from local stakeholders to national stakeholders. On one hand, members of village councils, CBOs and local administrations showed, during the evaluation process, a deep understanding of the intervention activities, beyond the specific activities targeting their own localities. On the other hand, representatives of the ministries and national administrations were less familiar with the programme details and their participation was not uniform. In some cases, stakeholders' initial involvement waned over time, creating challenges in certain areas, e.g. the AWQAF participation.

When asked about individuals or groups of persons harmed by the intervention, all the groups of informants denied this possibility. According to their responses, the Convenio was designed applying a bottom up approach, involving local communities and stakeholders from the needs assessment phase to the design and implementation of the intervention, ensuring that all relevant target groups and stakeholders were included. Moreover, many participants highlighted the efforts applied by partners to ensure equal participation and reach out to include women not only at the "*beneficiary*" level, but at all levels of the intervention, from awareness to decision making. Moreover, most informants mentioned that the transparent and participatory launching and selection processes prevented partners from creating any unwanted harm.

All groups of informants believed that the selection process for participants in the Convenio involved a detailed and transparent approach by the implementing organisations, PARC and the RWDS. Both partners employed rigorous criteria to ensure fair and informed selection. The process involved drafting ToRs and promoting them through various channels, including village councils, mosques and community centres. Interested individuals filled out questionnaires, providing the necessary information for the selection process.

Utilising its network of women's clubs, the RWDS formed committees to select the rights holders. Announcements were disseminated through village councils and mosques, ensuring clear communication of the selection criteria. Interested individuals obtained the application form, completed them, and submitted their applications to be reviewed by the selection committee, composed by representatives from the RWDS, PARC, and the local governance.

PARC held orientation workshops to inform about the programme's activities in the targeted communities. Selection criteria and application forms were provided to village councils and municipalities. Field visits were conducted to verify information provided by the potential applicants and ensure their commitment to the programme. The AWQAF representatives interviewed declared that they worked in partnership with PARC to establish the selection criteria for their land reclamation activities. They also mentioned that the process was transparent and fully shared with the communities, avoiding any misunderstanding or community resistance.

All rights holders and stakeholders interviewed agreed that selection criteria were clear to them when applied. Moreover farmers and women from target communities highlighted that the orientation workshops were key to understand not only the selection criteria but also the purpose and scope of the intervention.

According to all the information exposed above, the ET can conclude that partners applied adequate resources and strategies - such as participatory approaches, networking, national consultation, etc. - to ensure that all relevant target groups and stakeholders were targeted by the Convenio as originally planned. In addition to that, partners involved rights holders, local communities, academic institutions, private sector, local and national administrations in sharing knowledge and decision making spaces, increasing the ownership of the intervention at all the mentioned levels, and ensuring that no individuals or groups were left behind or harmed by the intervention.

We can conclude that the Effectiveness of the Convenio is HIGH and the Coverage of the Convenio is HIGH

E.3. Impact¹³

**What expected long-term effects of the Convenio were achieved or are likely to be achieved?
Was any change of attitude in the rights holders achieved during the evaluated execution period?
Are the target groups aware of the effects achieved or potentially achievable? How were the local partners strengthened and are expected to be strengthened in the long-term?**

The Convenio achieved various expected long-term effects across different sectors, notably in the organisational and programmatic capacities of partner organisations, fostering growth and professionalisation. It also led to significant changes and successes in agricultural practices, water and renewable energy usage, environmental conservation, socio-economic improvement, and education and knowledge enhancement. The programme empowered individuals and communities, particularly women, and strengthened the resilience of the rural population. It contributed to the transformation of attitudes, with rights holders becoming more aware of their rights and obligations, thus leading to positive changes in their daily lives.

According to all groups of participants interviewed, the Convenio had positive impacts in the lives of the individuals who participated in the activities, in the capacities and sustainability of the associations, cooperatives and women's clubs targeted, and in the preparedness and awareness towards climate change adaptations of the communities. Moreover, most informants believed that the Convenio promoted, through various strategies and activities, women's rights and gender equality within the target communities.

Partners and stakeholders also acknowledged the positive impact that the Convenio had in fostering national dialogue and research on agricultural adaptation to climate change.

In brief, the ET collected evidence of the change brought by the Convenio at the micro (individual), meso (community) and macro level (national). These positive changes occurred during the period of implementation of the programme and might evolve in the future if rights holders and organisations share their gained knowledge and good practices; if local administrations and communities maintain and/or increase their commitment to the use of clean energies and sustainable practices, and the promotion of women's rights; and, if national administrations take action and implement part of the recommendations set by the Convenio partners and experts to promote clean energies and sustainable practices in national water management, waste treatment and solar energy. The evaluation concludes that these conditions are necessary to maintain and/or increase the positive impacts of the Convenio in the long-term at all levels.

Considering the information presented in sections E.1. and E.2., for relevance and effectiveness, the ET can affirm that partners put in place some strategies and methodologies to foster long-term impact. The most relevant were:

- Promote ownership by involving rights holders and stakeholders in all phases of the intervention and in decision making spaces.
- Create learning spaces and transfer of knowledge by promoting cooperation between the public and private sector, the academic sphere, cooperatives, women's clubs and associations from different geographical areas.

¹³ For more information, please see Section E.2. - Effectiveness.

- Pilot innovative approaches that could be replicated and extended in the future like the use of solar energy in agricultural production, the design of new prototypes to treat mill waste or the land reclamation of AWQAF properties.

Micro level (individuals)

At the micro level, the Convenio led to transformative impacts on individuals. The programme empowered individuals to demand and secure their socio-economic rights, fostering a sense of self-reliance and financial independence.

Farmers experienced economic empowerment through enhanced access to resources, improved agricultural practices, and increased income. This was reflected in testimonials of improved living standards, ability to cover basic needs, and even significant life changes in young farmers such as marriage or owning a car. This was especially true for farmers in the GS, who reduced production costs by using solar energy and were able to undertake personal and business expenses unaffordable before their participation in the programme. In the case of farmers in the GS, beyond financial stability, informants spoke about experiencing an increase in their self-esteem and confidence due to their enhanced capacities to support their families by providing higher education to their children, covering the basic needs of the extended family, etc. Farmers from the GS also pointed out the positive effect that having contact and sharing experiences with farmers from the WB had in their lives. They mentioned that they have very limited access to these types of exchanges due to the blockade imposed in the GS, and that the Convenio provided a platform for them to learn and share knowledge.

Women gained knowledge and capacities to increase their participation in economic activities. Both women who participated in home gardening activities and members of women's clubs declared that they acquired technical and practical skills they did not have before their participation in the programme. Members of women's clubs highlighted organisational capacities such as planning, risk management and decision making, while women benefiting from home gardens pointed out the importance of combining the provision of resources with the specific training they were given in composting and water management. According to their testimonies, participating in these training courses provided them with a sense of "professionalism" they did not experience before. They started considering their gardens as production units and applying the learnings to increase incomes and reduce costs. Representatives from women's clubs reported an increase in sales and in incomes. Women declared being able to contribute to their household economies and cover up to 40% of their family monthly expenses. Moreover, many women participating in the FGDs explained how their participation in the programme increased their awareness on climate change. There were examples of women who have become very active in promoting environmental awareness in their communities.

Despite the positive impact at the micro level, the ET identified some targeted strategies to address specific challenges and needs that could enhance impact at the individual level in the future:

- Tailored support for youth engagement: addressing the challenges related to youth participation, and the already implemented *ad hoc* good practices, as highlighted by stakeholders, could lead to the development of specific strategies to attract and engage young individuals. Institutionalising innovative approaches and partnerships with youth-focused organisations might enhance the programme's appeal to this demographic group.
- Cultural and mindset interventions: the positive outcomes related to specific objectives, such as marketing (SO.2.), suggested a successful alignment of activities. However, a deeper exploration of cultural and mindset issues, especially those related to women's perspectives and resistance to change, could have further enhanced the impact. Implementing targeted interventions to address cultural nuances might contribute to more deep and sustained changes at the micro level.
- Continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms: while the programme received positive reviews, establishing more robust mechanisms for continuous monitoring and feedback, it could have allowed for real-time adjustments. This would ensure that rights holders' evolving needs and challenges were promptly addressed, fostering a more dynamic and responsive intervention at the micro level.

- Focused awareness sessions: recognising the challenges in the participation of men in women's rights awareness sessions, there could have been a more targeted and nuanced approach to these sessions. Tailoring the content and delivery methods to address cultural sensitivities might have led to a more inclusive and impactful engagement at the micro level.

Meso level (communities)

The impact of the Convenio appears to be particularly strong at the meso level. Community-level impacts were tangible and multifaceted, reflecting positive changes in daily lives, economic activities, and environmental practices. At this level, the programme fostered economic empowerment, resilience, and environmental sustainability within the communities. The enhancement of agricultural infrastructure, the establishment of the CPCs, and the economic activities of women's clubs, all contributed to a holistic and community-wide impact. The cooperative and collective efforts at the meso level created a tangible sense of shared responsibility, leading to a more robust and resilient community.

Representatives of village councils interviewed stated that learnings and activities from the Convenio impacted their community life. They highlighted the effective work done the CPCs undertook during the pandemic, and later by identifying and attending various needs at the community level, such as education or infrastructure, beyond the scope of the Convenio. Members of the committees interviewed agreed with this statement and believed that their participation in these CPCs had an impact on their personal life but also influenced the internal cohesion of their communities. Moreover, they expressed that after participating in the Convenio, they feel their communities are better prepared to protect themselves from external risks.

Members of the CPCs acknowledged gaining knowledge about protection mainstream and about climate change and climate change adaptations at the community level. When asked if they believed that their communities are more aware about climate change, the common answer was that there is now greater awareness, but still there is a need to maintain and increase the work with specific target groups like children and youth, that could lead transformations in the long-term.

Despite promoting gender equality was not the focus of the CPCs, members of the CPCs interviewed also believed that cooperation and engagement with women's clubs increased their knowledge about women's needs and women's rights,

Farmers interviewed believe that through land reclamation and improved agricultural practices, they created a greener and more fertile environment in their communities, and they increased awareness among their neighbours and surrounding communities. In this sense, all farmers interviewed acknowledged sharing gained knowledge with family, neighbours and other farmers in non-formal gatherings such as prayers, weddings, daily conversations, among others. Moreover, according to their testimonials, enhanced agricultural infrastructure did not only facilitate farmers' daily work but it also bolstered the local economy, since agricultural lands, irrigation networks and solar energy infrastructure were designed to provide collective benefits since the identification phase.

Women's clubs representatives believed that the economic activities initiated by the clubs did not only contribute to local economies but they also empowered women socially and economically. According to their perceptions, clubs became sources of economic activity, producing goods for the surrounding villages and creating links with other women and communities.

Macro Level (country)

On a macro level, the Convenio contributed to broader societal impacts, particularly in terms of knowledge dissemination, and national momentum. The programme's emphasis on sustainable agricultural practices, renewable energy usage, and climate change adaptation likely influenced national policies. The increased resilience of the rural population, improvements in environmental practices, and the empowerment of women contributed to the overall development goals of the country.

The Convenio's influence extended to networking with other organisations, fostering collaboration, and creating a platform for shared learning. As partners reported enhancing their capacities and efforts to position themselves

as leaders in relevant sectors, the macro level impact included a potential shift in national discourse and practices related to agriculture, gender equality, and sustainable development.

Having said that, there was no clear evidence during the evaluation of any specific action taken by holders of obligations and decision making stakeholders to implement the recommendations made by the Convenio. While the Convenio invested resources, expertise, research and networking efforts in engaging national stakeholders, their real mobilisation was difficult to assess and should be followed up with future monitoring and lobbying activities.

According to the information provided by national stakeholders and partners, the ET identified some strategies initiated by partners that could be strengthened in future interventions to enhance the positive impact achieved at macro level:

- National policy advocacy: while the Convenio showed success in its targeted activities, a more explicit engagement with national-level policymakers and institutions could have further amplified its impact. Advocating for the integration of successful models and lessons learned into national policies and strategies might foster systemic changes across the country.
- Scaling successful models: identifying and scaling successful models from the Convenio at a national level could have wider implications. For instance, if certain agricultural or renewable energy practices were proven highly effective in specific communities, promoting their adoption on a larger scale could contribute to sustainable development goals at the macro level.
- Knowledge sharing platforms: establishing formalised platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration among various stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, and private sectors, could facilitate the dissemination of successful practices. This could lead to the creation of a knowledge-sharing network, promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and influencing policy decisions at a macro level.
- National awareness campaigns: engaging in national awareness campaigns to showcase the success stories and impacts of the Convenio could elevate its visibility. This increased visibility might attract additional support from various sectors, encouraging a broader understanding and endorsement of sustainable development practices at the macro level.
- Research and data dissemination: following the success of the research and awareness activities implemented during the Convenio in this field - e.g. Studies and national campaigns to advocate on good environmental practices, sustainable land and solid waste management and promotion of renewable energies, etc. - further and maintained dissemination of knowledge could influence national-level agendas and strategies related to agriculture, renewable energy, and women's empowerment.

The organisational and programmatic capacities of partner organisations, the FPS, PARC and the RWDS were significantly strengthened. This was evident in improved professionalism, strategic redefinition, and increased capabilities. All organisations acknowledged the impact of the Convenio and actively assessed and disseminated the results.

According to stakeholders interviewed, the Convenio partners are nowadays recognised as leading organisations on the promotion of sustainable change in Palestine, and as reliable actors in the fields of renewable energy, agriculture innovation and gender equality in rural areas.

Finally, the awareness of the achieved changes was evident, with ongoing evaluations, internal discussions, and dissemination activities. The transfer of knowledge and experiences between different organisations and communities showcases the effectiveness of the programme in creating lasting positive impacts. The Convenio did not only affect the immediate rights holders but also contributed to broader social, economic, and environmental improvements in the targeted communities. Moreover, through their partnership in the Convenio, partners benefited from others' expertise and built capacities on gender mainstreaming, MEAL and risk management.

What was the gender impact of the Convenio? Are the target groups aware of the effects achieved or potentially achievable?

Despite gender being included as a crosscutting component in the previous sections, due to the nature of the programme, in this section, the ET would like to highlight and summarise the most relevant impacts when it comes to gender.

According to most informants, the Convenio made positive strides in promoting gender equality, empowering women economically, socially, and politically in the target communities. However, continuous efforts are needed to overcome existing cultural challenges and ensure a more comprehensive and lasting gender impact. Ongoing monitoring and adaptability to the evolving needs of women and their community will be key issues in sustaining and enhancing the positive outcomes of the Convenio.

Partners, stakeholders, and trainers expressed that the programme contributed to women's empowerment to a certain extent, as highlighted by increased awareness of their rights, demand for property and inheritance rights, and active participation in economic activities. Women interviewed acknowledged that training sessions and workshops played a role in enhancing their capacities, making them more aware of their rights and enabling them to demand these rights in society. They believed that the impact of the Convenio extends beyond economic aspects to social and political spheres, and they expressed how their participation in the programme's activities led them to other social and political opportunities. In this sense, women integrating the CPCs, highlighted how through their contribution to their own communities they felt useful, meaningful, and recognised.

Women also declared being more active in economic decision making at their households and at their own private or collective economic initiatives. In this sense, women who initiated home gardens activities in their households stated that their participation in the programme transformed them into active contributors to their families' income and providers of essential goods. They expressed experiencing a substantial change in their roles within the family structure, being more involved in household economic decisions. Increases in their income improved their lives in general, being able to ensure food security for their families and afford other expenses mainly related to their children's education and health.

Women participating in associations and women's clubs believed that the training and capacity building programmes implemented enabled them to increase their production and sales of goods, fostering economic independence. Besides this economic impact, women at the women's club acknowledged a deep impact in their social life. Through their engagement with the clubs, they gained personal and social skills to be used in other spaces; and they gained confidence in their own abilities and potential.

Moreover, women in the clubs also believed that their participation in the programme had a positive impact at the community level. Women considered that the cooperation, networking and knowledge sharing they established with other institutions and organisations in their communities contributed to community development and the overall resilience of the target population.

Partners and stakeholders agreed with these statements. They considered that applying collective efforts and creating strong partnerships between different target groups and stakeholders within the communities was effective in promoting gender equality at the community level, by fostering an environment where women could actively participate in decision making processes and contribute to the overall development of their communities.

Having said that, all groups of informants acknowledged challenges in cultural shifts. Despite the positive strides, challenges tied to women's perspectives, consciousness, and resistance to change persist, particularly in the marketing domain. Further efforts might be required to address cultural barriers and to promote a more inclusive environment for women in the agricultural sector.

We can conclude that the Impact of the Convenio is HIGH

E.4. Efficiency

Were the funds available in the foreseen times? Were there any variations regarding the original formulation?

When it comes to the availability of funds for the activities and partners in both Palestine and Spain, the respondents from the three partner organisations mentioned that there were no delays, including during COVID-19 times. All respondents mentioned that two transfers were done yearly, to avoid losing funds due to bank expenses. Once 80% of the transferred funds were spent, local partners sent the technical and financial reports with a funding request related to the pending 20% of the funds. In addition to that, FPS respondents mentioned that there was an advanced transfer, prior to the implementation of the programme, to conduct the needs assessment and identification phase.

Finally, partner organisations did not report any variation or reformulation from the original budget of the Convenio. There were only some delays when it came to the expenditure of budget that were related to the delay of the initiation and/or development of the activities in Palestine, mostly because of the COVID-19 or the socio-political situation in both the WB and the GS. However, these delays did not affect the annual expenditure of partners and/or the annual justification of the funds if, if needed, there was a compensation of the expenditure during the next year of implementation. Therefore, by the end of the Convenio, all the budget was spent accordingly and as originally planned.

Were the times foreseen in the formulation fulfilled? What external and/or internal factors influenced the eventual delays?

From the interviews and the documentary review, it is concluded that most of the activities in Spain and Palestine were implemented as planned and there were mostly three factors that caused eventual delays in the implementation of mainly trainings, workshops and awareness sessions:¹⁴

- The COVID-19 which caused restrictions of movement, especially imposed by the Ministry of Health (MoH), and, therefore, rights holders and stakeholders were not allowed to travel. When it comes to the awareness raising and educational activities implemented in Spain, the FPS adapted the activity plan to the crisis context as well as the modality of some of the activities, e.g. conducting sessions online, reducing the number of trips and exchanges.
- The resistance of some community members to implement specific activities, for example, for women and at educational level.
- The socio-political context in the WB and the GS, which influenced the instability of the operational context on the execution of the programme. Besides the internal situation in Palestine, when it comes to strikes, the country needs to deal with the ongoing violations of HR and direct violence against its population. It was especially intense and frequent in the northern and southern area of the WB, especially in Nablus and Jenin Governorates, as well as the JV. And when it comes to the GS, besides the long-term blockade suffered in the area and the ongoing aggressions towards the Palestinians, their resources and livelihoods, there were, as mentioned previously, two escalations of violence in May 2021 and August 2022.

None of these delays needed any substantial modification or request to the AECID. As a positive note and as reported when assessing the effectiveness of the intervention, both local partners responded quickly to these challenges, with the support of FPS, since a risk assessment (which included mitigation responses) was initially conducted and updated during the programme, as it will be explained later in this report. Therefore, partners were

¹⁴ For more information, please see Section E.2. – Effectiveness.

able to introduce the needed solutions, such as reorganising training, workshops and awareness sessions to the best timing possible (e.g. delaying some activities but also advancing others) not to compromise both the achievements of the Convenio as well as the security of all actors involved.

Finally, an extension of the Convenio was requested and approved by the AECID, switching from April 2023 to June 2023, which gave the needed time to finalise minor components of the Convenio as well as some MEAL activities (collection of data and sources of verification, reporting, etc.). In fact, the three partner organisations appreciated the flexibility of the AECID when it comes to the challenges faced by such a long-term programme, the mitigations introduced as well as the extension to finalise the programme with the expected quality.

Was the profile of the managers adequate to the intervention and its objectives? What monitoring mechanisms of the Convenio were used?

- **About the human resources**

In general, it is considered that both PARC and the RWDS shown to be highly competent, accurate and they responded to the needs of the agreement set with the FPS as well as to the needs of the programme. It has been beyond the scope of this evaluation to make a systematic analysis of each person's competencies (jobs descriptions) in relation to their tasks.

In the case of the profile of the staff and the technical performance of PARC and the RWDS, all the respondents interviewed highlighted the reputation and great experience in Palestine when it comes to the working areas targeted by the Convenio, at all levels, being considered consolidated organisations with an excellent reputation and high acceptance among the communities and rights holders, as well as with the rest of the stakeholders. When it comes to the staff, respondents highlighted the knowledge, expertise and professionalism when conducting their work and implementing the programme, showing high motivation, efficiency and involvement – in both the central offices as well as at the governorates in the WB and the GS –, with a participatory, empathic and active attitude, being both close to the participants as well as present during the whole cycle of the programme (from the identification and planning to the evaluation phase). It is important considering that the teams were composed of expert, specialised, and recognised people from the targeted sectors.

In addition, all the respondents interviewed highlighted the important role of PARC and the RWDS staff at management level, both at headquarters and in the field, during the intervention. Due to their high level of commitment – for some of them, a long-term commitment too –, they had the experience and knowledge to cope with the management of the organisations and the programme, including when it comes to the partnership with the FPS and in relation to the local and national stakeholders, thanks to the channels of coordination and communication established, as it was mentioned previously, which helped to solve any possible incidents or challenges faced during the course of the action. Staff in both organisations had a clear knowledge of what decisions needed to be subject to wider consultation, agreement and/or coordination with other staff members, and what was needed to be referred to management. There was a general feeling of having sufficient mechanisms in place to involve them at the decision-making level. Management in both organisations proved to have a good knowledge of the development and cooperation sector, including programme's management and donors' regulations, which was important to guide the rest of the staff members during the implementation of the action, identifying weaknesses and strengths at capacity level which included the provision of training and/or capacity buildings when needed for the staff to be able to perform their tasks and duties. All of this ensured the quality of the cycle of the Convenio when it comes to planning, management and justification (or reporting), among others.

For PARC, the human and technical capacities were more than sufficient to implement all the activities and, therefore, the profile of the human resources matched the level of work and contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness when delivering the activities and during the organisational operations, ensuring an optimal quality for the achievement of the objectives and results.

When it comes to the FPS, some respondents mentioned that, despite the quality of the work implemented, due to the size and capacity of the organisation, as well as due to the nature of long-term programmes, such as the Convenio, more human resources were needed to cover all the technical responsibilities and tasks.

Respondents also mentioned that the RWDS proved to implement the programme with the expected quality but the size and capacities of the organisation were often short to cover all the technical responsibilities and tasks too. The support needed at MEAL level was demanding, and the FPS provided ongoing follow up and assistance to fulfil the gaps and needs to ensure the human resources could fulfil the demands of the programme and, therefore, that there was a correct development of the intervention without compromising the organisational but also programmatic effectiveness and efficiency, among others.

- **About the MEAL mechanisms**

MEAL tools and systems are essential to determine the progress of the indicators, the achievement of results and objectives, as well as to identify difficulties that impede these achievements. It becomes necessary in case variations in the programme are proposed, to eliminate some activities and/or readapt them according to the analysis obtained, among others. To do that, the logical or results framework must be the reference tool used by all the actors involved in the programme – or at least by the implementing partners, donor, stakeholders and, when possible, rights holders – and during the whole programme cycle (from planning to evaluation). One can say that PARC and the RWDS staff members were aware of the existence and/or importance of this tool, leading to the usage of the logical framework. Generally, it was being considered as a reference tool to follow up and monitor the Convenio, which strengthened the MEAL system and the assessment of what was being done in an efficient way.

In addition to that, respondents familiar with the Convenio's logical framework were able to indicate to which extent the foreseen indicators were reached, not without difficulties, as we will detail in this section. Indicators in the logical framework were specific, measurable, achievable, reliable and time-bound (SMART), and included both quantitative and qualitative components, or impact indicators, allowing to assess to which extent were achieved and if there were any remarkable changes within the targeted groups, e.g. knowledge, skills and capacities gained or strengthened; awareness raised among participants; achievements through the campaigns or initiatives; capacity of mobilisation of farmers and women rights holders, as well as holders of responsibilities and of obligations, among others.

Through the responses of mostly the FPS, PARC and the RWDS, the ET concludes that the MEAL systems were designed according to the logical framework and, therefore, the logical framework was aligned with the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the field, including when it comes to the awareness raising and educational activities implemented in Spain. The MEAL tools included the baseline study; sources of verification (e.g. list of attendance, questionnaires, pictures, development plans, etc.); feedback forms; interim and donor reports; trainers and activities' reports; follow up and field visits reports; meetings' minutes; collecting testimonies; programmes plan which allowed partner organisations to review, modify and/or adapt the programme's implementation at technical and financial level. FPS designed a MEAL toolbox but according to respondents and data collected during the evaluation, it was not possible to use it efficiently by local partners staff, mostly because fieldworkers were not MEAL experts and, therefore, the toolbox was mostly overloading the staff rather than easing the processes. The ET would like to highlight that for the awareness raising and educational activities implemented in Spain, the FPS hired several experts - at the level of education, methodology, design, etc. - and together with the experts, it was able to set an efficient MEAL system to assess the activities and the level of achievement of the objectives and results, and it allowed the FPS to assess the information related to the visibility and communication activities related to the programme, which was also included in the reports sent to the donor.

As mentioned, the MEAL tools used by the organisations were collecting relevant information about the quantitative and qualitative progress of the logical framework and the measurement of the quantitative and qualitative indicators, allowing the measurement of the impact and changes within the rights holders (e.g. knowledge, skills, capacities gained, etc.), achievement of the results and objectives, short description of what was implemented and how (e.g. trainings, workshops, demonstrations, etc.), among others. Furthermore, the collection

of opinions and feedback regarding the level of satisfaction, suggestions, etc. was part of the accountability system and it was necessary to ensure that the voice of the participants was included during the MEAL processes.

At the reporting level, internal and donor reports were systematically prepared by all partner organisations, covering all the areas of work and specific activities. Both PARC and the RWDS staff followed the templates provided by the FPS for reporting the activities, which were adapted from the donor's guidelines. However, this is an area of discrepancies between partner organisations. First, local partners informed during the evaluation of submitting reports on time, while FPS mentioned some delays, and that they were not always informed about it. Despite this, both partners always responded to the requirements when further clarifications were needed. Secondly, the FPS highlighted the amount of data collected, but respondents also mentioned that, in some cases, the data was not always properly analysed and, in some cases, there was the feeling that data was lost or not properly reflected in the technical and monitoring reports, that it was only provided when requested to local partners, due to the difference of focus when it comes to the prioritisation of data and/or due to the nature of the baseline designed, among others.

When speaking to PARC, respondents considered that the quality of its MEAL system was good and that they were using the toolbox designed by FPS too. When speaking to the RWDS (as well as to the FPS), it was mentioned that the organisation did not have a written MEAL system, so tools were designed for this programme. The organisation faced some difficulties at the time of reflecting the qualitative data, and they felt supported by the FPS to overcome them. In fact, both PARC and the RWDS mentioned that sometimes they found the AECID requirements and reporting challenging, but with the ongoing support of the FPS staff, they could learn how to solve the difficulties which lead also to an improvement of the organisational capacities.

As mentioned in the limitations and in previous sections, some of the FPS respondents mentioned challenges in the MEAL process related to the fact that the baseline design was providing information about the profile of the communities, but not the starting point of the intervention as well as the targets to be set and achieved. A baseline data designed through the logical framework could have helped to introduce, for example, reformulations (if needed) in the original indicators and time targets that would have enabled a better tracking of changes occurred during the programme, through the comparison with monitoring data collected (before, during and after). It is true that in the Convenio's formulation it was mentioned, both in the indicators and in the sources of verification, but the ET considers that the information collected by local partners was not baseline and endline data since these processes were neither correctly designed nor conducted during the action, and the logical framework does not include baseline information itself. The baseline data could have also helped to understand the data in context, for informing targets and predicting how the data might behave in the future.¹⁵

Internally, the ET concludes that for both, PARC and the RWDS, there was a good level knowledge of MEAL mechanisms and tools and, as a positive note, PARC and the RWDS shared relevant information among the staff members, making clear their participation and/or involvement at MEAL level which improved the staff skills and organisational capacities. In fact, the ET concludes that PARC and RWDS staff were participating in an extensive way in different processes during the whole cycle of the programme, including during the MEAL phase, due to their own internal procedures and mechanisms of the organisations. E.g. All relevant staff were trained on how to use, measure and when to administer the logical framework indicators; staff participated in meetings, training, etc. in a participatory, inclusive and transparent way, with the opportunity to express their thoughts, opinions and suggestions.

As a positive note, the Convenio included information related to conditions for the implementation of the programme, hypothesis, as well as a matrix of risk and assumptions with solutions and mitigations proposed, and there was evidence of the ongoing risk assessment conducted by partner organisations. This was a good place to identify areas where the programme might have interacted with conflict related to the context as well as with any issues associated with the management and operational processes for the organisations and/or the Convenio. A strong risks and assumptions section aided for effective monitoring and helped to ensure that flexibility was built into the implementation phase. For example, if changes to the design were required at a later stage, because of

¹⁵ For more information, please see Section D – Difficulties and limitations and Section E.2. – Effectiveness.

changes in the operational context (internal or external to the programme), donors would be more likely to respond positively if issues were flagged up in the design phase as part of the logical framework risks and assumptions, or risk management planning too. Moreover, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, partners discussed new risks and mitigation solutions related to COVID-19, contemplating different scenarios of action. Lots of discussions were held to decide how to implement the activities (e.g. trainings) without compromising the achievement of objectives and results, how to extend the AECID contract if needed, how to mitigate the current context considering all the unknown situation ahead and/or how to use the resources, among others. This was a good example of coordination and cooperation among partner organisations, which only strengthened their partnership, and it has also shown mechanisms for rapid responses to new needs and/or emerging issues.

Both PARC and the RWDS shared relevant information with the rights holders, and holders of obligations and responsibilities when needed, and it is clear for the ET that the targeted groups always participated and/or were involved and empowered in all stages of the programme: assessment, planning, implementation and MEAL (including during the evaluation). It is important to mention that all rights holders were aware that the activities in which they participated or the services they received were part of a comprehensive programme and this was the reason why it was possible for the ET to ask questions related to, for example, the objectives and results, resources invested, coordination mechanisms, among others. Attention was also brought to the dissemination of results through MEAL activities, to ensure, for example, all rights holders were aware of who was doing what, outputs and changes produced through their actions and/or the programme, among others. The ET believes that providing them with this type of information regarding the programme implemented was also a way to empower the rights holders, increase their engagement with the activities and strengthen the local ownership which, ultimately, will positively increase the impact and ensure the sustainability of the actions.

Finally, the ET considers it is important to highlight the high level of transparency shown by the FPS, PARC and the RWDS with respect to all the technical documents provided during the evaluation. The ET would also like to mention that partner organisations are aware of all the mentioned limitations, and they are willing to work on introducing changes within their organisations that will start to be more tangible and evident during future interventions.

Were the material resources directly related to the achievement of the results? What were the indirect investments for these achievements?

In general terms, the ET concludes that the activities of the programme, both in Palestine and Spain, were cost efficient. Considering the available budget and the large number of participants/rights holders reached, it can be said that the global benefits (outcomes and outputs) generated by the activities of the programme justify the costs.

Starting from the scope of the programme, at the level of activities and rights holders, it is considered that the number of available resources matched with the level of needs and demands to be addressed, which facilitated the response capacity of all the actors involved and, therefore, that the results and outputs of the programme were achieved. In this sense, the Convenio can be considered cost-effective.

The budget was designed from a cost-effective approach by FPS, PARC and the RWDS, according to the needs of the programme and following the logical framework, in compliance with the AECID guidelines as well as FPS, PARC and the RWDS policies and procedures for the administrative and financial functions of the local offices in Palestine, to ensure having the best quality with adequate and available funds. PARC and the RWDS policies and procedures were the main reference during the bidding processes, an activity considered important throughout the intervention. FPS always respected PARC and the RWDS internal procedures and regulations, and they were in line with the AECID regulations on tenders. It is concluded that the bidding and contracting of service providers, equipment, supplies, etc. were adequately managed and that the processes were transparent and suitable, with a positive effect on the efficiency of the programme. In general terms, as indicated above, PARC and the RWDS sought different tenders for certain services, equipment, professionals, etc. to obtain the best price according to the quality and available funds. For each tender and/or contract, PARC and the RWDS prepared a contract with

the rights and responsibilities of each party. Once the supplies, goods and/or equipment arrived, it was verified that they were those requested, that they were not damaged and that they were purchased for the agreed price. Later, they were subsequently distributed under the supervision of the organisations' staff. Finally, PARC and the RWDS proceeded to pay the supplier, receiving all the financial documents related to the acquisition.

Moreover, the budget also took into consideration FPS, PARC and the RWDS previous knowledge and experience of costs, and there was an assessment of prices and services needed. For example, PARC and the RWDS (as well as FSP) were very meticulous and strict when it came to purchasing materials, equipment and/or services conducting, for example, different bidding processes according to the costs of the items, among others, making always sure that contracts were signed with the best service providers according to the best quality/price ratio.

The budget was sufficiently detailed too, showing the concepts broken down by each budget line, specifying the type and number of units, the cost per unit, salary costs, etc. This facilitated the process of justifying the funds. In addition, staff were aware of the budget available, being not only able to access the information that affected their area of work, but as well as taking part of the decision-making processes related to funds allocation. Partner organisations considered its design was efficient, precise and meticulous to include the necessary human resources, materials, etc. for the implementation of the activities and, ultimately, the achievement of the results and objectives.

One can agree that the needs in Palestine are endless and, therefore, the needs for funding to cover them too. However, in this case, according to the responses collected and the documentation review, the ET considers that the funds were sufficient to accomplish the scope of the programme, including the increased of its outreach, as well as to purchase any needed goods and supplies, hospitality and transportation, etc. needed for the staff to conduct the activities or to implement and monitor the programme, as well as needed and/or provided to the rights holders. In fact, it would have not been possible to implement the Convenio with fewer resources since some of the activities and expenses, e.g. trainings, construction and rehabilitation activities, installation of the irrigation systems, solar panels, desalination plant, access to land, agricultural tools, etc. were very costly. All the material resources were acquired, whenever possible, at the local level, thus boosting the local economy, but partners mentioned some delays due to the pandemic crisis for some equipment purchased abroad.

PARC and the RWDS staff also reported that the programme was affected by the fall of exchange rate during the pandemic, and how rights holders were not able to contribute financially but in kind. As a positive note, local partners mentioned the efforts and support provided by the FPS to cover the deficit with its own funds. Moreover, one can say that both PARC and the RWDS dedicated their organisational systems and resources as the programme demanded. The existing structures were used to effectively manage the Convenio and, when needed, the existing equipment and facilities were used too.

Despite human resources not always being sufficient for both the FPS and the RWDS, funds invested as well as the work of the available staff for the three partner organisations was translated into the high quality of the implementation, monitoring and reporting. For both the FPS and RWDS, some respondents mentioned that with more human resources available, it would have been possible to have a better division of tasks, offer more field visits, increase the time for follow up etc.

Staff involved in the programme was hired according to the FPS, PARC and the RWDS requirements and standards, with contracts aligned with applicable Spanish and Palestinian labour laws too. Despite the pandemic restrictions, which limited the presence of FPS staff in the field, it was possible for both local partners' staff to ensure their ongoing presence in the field (counting with the needed permits by both the MoH and the MoA), assessing needs on the spot, participating as much as possible in events and activities, the daily routine of the women and farmers, and ensuring the quality standards of the activities, among others.

Finally, expenditures were aligned with the approved budget and there were no unjustified expenses or deviations. Activities were planned according to annual plans and the available budget. During the pandemic outbreak, an assessment of the situation was made, at technical and financial level. As a good practice, partner organisations conducted sessions to reconduct the situation under the COVID-19 context and, in consultation with the AECID too, and the extension of the activities did not have any additional costs, which showed an efficient use of the available resources. One can say that local partners made an efficient use of available resources, e.g. clear division

of tasks and responsibilities of the staff members distributed between the headquarters and local offices, between offices' staff and in the field; direct implementation of activities, services and/or meetings by PARC and the RWDS staff in its premises which contributed to reduce expenses, among others.

The ET believes that all these detailed practices were also a good sign of the high level of ownership of the programme by the different actors involved.

We can conclude that the Efficiency of the Convenio is HIGH

E.5. Viability

Were people and institutions aware of their responsibilities? Did they develop or possess the necessary capabilities to ensure the flow of benefits?

If the rights holders are the key actors in economic solvency, did they participate by contributing with funds?

If part of the cost of the results had to be covered institutionally at the end of the Convenio, did the public institutions express their commitment to assume them? Do they have the economic and financial capacity to do so?

- **About the responsibilities towards the Convenio and the capacities to guarantee the flow of benefits**

Broadly, PARC and the RWDS missions are focused on improving the situation of the agriculture sector, farmers and women, respectively, in Palestine and, therefore, they were fully aware of their responsibilities in maintaining the achievements of the Convenio. Furthermore, both organisations were aware that their share of responsibility in the viability and sustainability of the Convenio was greater due to the leadership they both exercised throughout its implementation. Generally, their capacities and outreach were shown to be superior when compared to other local NGOs working in the same sector and, as it was expressed previously, they were reinforced through the Convenio. Therefore, the ET considers that both PARC and the RWDS have sufficient institutional and financial capacity to continue many of the activities implemented, e.g. awareness sessions, demonstrations, knowledge exchange visits, home gardens, training and workshops. However, this capacity might be more restricted when it comes to activities that imply a higher economic cost, as indicated when analysing the efficiency of the programme, e.g. land leasing, construction and renovation, installation of systems, etc. Both partners showed a great involvement and appropriation of the Convenio, and the desire to continue in the same line of work, which is already happening together with the FPS through a new Convenio and other Spanish funded projects, e.g. Generalitat Valenciana.

The national authorities and institutions involved have relatively solid institutional and technical capacities, although they suffer from a high financial dependence on their international donors. Due to this financial weakness, they are unable to carry out some of their plans independently and, therefore, their financial support to ensure the flow of benefits might be, in some cases, limited. It should be noted that key people from the different national authorities were interlocutors of the FPS, PARC and the RWDS throughout the implementation of the Convenio, without personnel changes occurring, this being a positive factor for the viability. Despite the alignment of the Convenio to the national policies and strategies, and the involvement of the different national authorities – which was not uniform and it depended on the nature of the activities as well as the needs of the Convenio –, the ET was not able to identify a clear exit strategy to guarantee the full continuity of the achievements of the Convenio by the national authorities, beyond the accompaniment, transfer of knowledge, the use of technical equipment and goods for specific purposes, similar to those included in the programme.

Village councils are now more aware of their weaknesses, especially in the areas of agriculture, gender and women's rights. Besides providing accompaniment and technical experience, all village councils will need external financial support to continue making strong progress in these sectors. The institutional capacities between the village councils were different, but the majority demonstrated that they had sufficient capacity to provide a certain continuity to the activities of the Convenio, e.g. providing the access to local resources, guaranteeing the work in the land as established through the agreements with the AWQAF.

Women's clubs established and/or reinforced cooperatives and CBOs, as well as the newly created CPCs had greatly benefited from the Convenio, and they were aware of their challenges and responsibilities to maintain the achievements of the programme. Their financial resources are limited but they can continue contributing in kind to guarantee the flow of the benefits and the viability of the actions.

Farmers and women rights holders were more aware that they both play an important role in maintaining the results achieved at individual and community level, and that it is important to maintain the mechanisms of coordination and cooperation set during the Convenio, including through their representative bodies (women's clubs, cooperatives, etc.). However, if farmers and women do not continue to be supported with resources – not only financial but materials too – as well as with training and professional development, awareness raising sessions, etc. there is a risk that some of the achievements will be lost in the long-term.

In general, it can be concluded that the Convenio managed to lay solid foundations for the maintenance of its important achievements, although its viability and sustainability in Palestine is not guaranteed due to the lack of financial resources of key actors, such as the national authorities and institutions, and the high dependence on international donors. However, low or zero-cost activities should be able to be maintained by local authorities and rights holders, at individual and community level.

- **About the viability and sustainability of organisations and programmes**

In principle, the concepts of viability and sustainability must be adapted to the local conditions, characterised by very strong external constraints, and due to the characteristics of the interventions (long duration). In fact, the viability and sustainability of a programme in Palestine is rather difficult to attain and sometimes the concepts are detached from the Palestinian reality where the whole future of the Palestinian population is not certain, viable and sustained. The political situation in Palestine is not predictable, compounded by the current geographical division, the ongoing and/or recurrent episodes of violence with Israel, the current post-pandemic situation as well as the effect of international conflicts, such as Ukraine and Russia war, and the ongoing violence of the Israeli Occupation, among others.

Generally, programme partners and the Convenio were addressing sustainability, pretty much uniformly, and they were paying attention to most of their processes, involving stakeholders and rights holders during the different phases. In other words, partner organisations were paying attention to viability and sustainability during the identification, planning, implementation and MEAL levels.

One can say that, when it comes to the services and activities offered to rights holders, communities, etc. PARC and the FSP managed to lay strong foundations for the maintenance of important achievements – including when it comes to gender approaches based on HR – and, as to a different or new programme, its continuity is obviously relying on new funding, private or public, local or international. However, as mentioned earlier, PARC and the RWDS should be able to sustain low-cost activities. Therefore, the viability and sustainability in this case must be intended as the continuity of the commitment by both PARC and the RWDS, with the support of their stakeholders, which can be assessed as medium-high, despite the external threats, e.g. Occupation, harassment by the Israeli Authorities, COVID-19, are still high.

One of the most important aspects of viability and sustainability is the upbringing of human resources, the building-up of human capital through training. This is particularly crucial and difficult in such a politically, socially and financially unstable environment, under the Israeli Occupation and, currently, under the post-pandemic context. Respondents agreed that the programme was very positive for PARC, the RWDS and stakeholders when it comes to enhancing their organisational and operational capacities, at technical and management level, as well

as PARC and the RWDS' position as a referent organisation for the targeted sectors in Palestine and abroad, and, specifically, in the areas of intervention. One can say that, despite always having room for improvement, the technical, managerial and institutional sustainability of PARC and the RWDS are strong, and it should continue being reinforced and/or improved for future replication and/or expansion of their operations in other vulnerable communities of the targeted areas.

In this sense, capacity building should be seen as the process that could help PARC and the RWDS and the programme to enhance their mission, strategies, skills, human resources, etc. to better serve the communities they attend to. To foster and sustain effective programmes, organisations should be both viable and well-managed, because regardless of how imaginative a programme's design may be, its effectiveness will be largely dependent on a variety of factors such as finance, the ability to measure programme performance and/or the engagement and mobilisation of human resources, among others. Therefore, capacity building activities were essential to the sustainability of the programme as well as for PARC and the RWDS, so they can continue to meet stakeholders and communities' needs, problems and/or priorities efficiently and effectively.

Having said that, PARC and the RWDS management and staff should see capacity building as an "investment" for the organisations and integrate progressively the learning and methodologies gained through the programme, to continue elevating the organisation's performance and their accountability to international standards. All of this will strengthen their institutional capacities and sustainability, not only as regards their current donors and supporters but for the rest of the stakeholders and communities too.

At the funding level, the totality of respondents mentioned that despite the organisations having a diversity of funds, without them, PARC and the RWDS will not have the financial capacity to continue with the same volume of activities and services offered with the same number of stakeholders and communities reached or served.

A hypothetical lack of funds may not only affect the performance of the actions, but also the capacity of PARC and the RWDS to maintain and/or expand their activities, keep the staff (because work becomes more and more staff-driven), increase their outreach and/or mobilise other type of resources, e.g. communities or volunteers during awareness activities, among others. Having said that, due to their expertise and knowledge, when comparing to other organisations, and due to the quality of activities provided to the local communities, some of the work of PARC and the RWDS staff, especially in the field, could be replaced by, for example, volunteers – an important human resource for many organisations to conduct certain activities, e.g. collecting and sharing information, awareness actions, transfer of knowledge and experience, follow up with rights holders – due to the nature of their work without compromising the professionalism and expertise of PARC and the RWDS and the work implemented.

As part of the sustainability strategies and considering the delicate situation in Palestine, PARC and the RWDS have a financial sustainability plan to secure their current financial sources, diversify their portfolio of donors, and establish new and alternative sources of funds. It will be important to start focusing, for example, on private donors and individual donation, as well as to approach those donors that provide core-funding or who are flexible enough to allow the organisation to use the funds according to its own needs, plans and criteria.

- **About the viability and sustainability of the Convenio**

As the programme was based at the community level, the ET considers that it collected sufficient evidence to prove the long-term sustainability of the Convenio's outcomes and outputs:

- At an individual level, it is important to emphasise the benefits for individuals beyond their participation in the programme. As an example:
 - Transfer of knowledge, capacities, skills, tools, etc. gained through capacity building, training, workshops, demonstrations, awareness sessions, etc. which allowed them to increase their self-esteem and confidence, motivated them to continue enhancing the professional skills, advocate for their rights, reach their peers and communities, increase their visibility, improve the

effectiveness and quality of their activities and/or services, establish better channels of cooperation and networking with other communities and organisations, etc.

- At an organisational level, focusing on the continuation of the benefits within PARC and the RWDS, such as:
 - Organisational capacities (technical) gained by the staff through the capacity building, training, etc. provided which enhanced their personal and professional skills too.
 - Use of materials and resources produced during the programme such as testimonies collected, social media, etc.
- At community level, focusing on the ongoing support provided to the communities to continue developing and delivering the activities, which is directly related to the benefits at individual level, because empowered and skilled individuals are better prepared to act as agents of change for their peers and communities.

As we can see, the long-term benefits of community-based programme cannot be approached unilaterally since they are not just traditional programme; therefore, it is important to understand some of their features, which apply also to the current action:

- Rely on a community-based approach: community-based approaches are ways of working in partnership with people of concern throughout community-based programme implementation. Individuals and existing bodies, e.g. village councils, CPCs, women's clubs, cooperatives, CBOs, etc. were able to recognise communities' needs, capacities, resources, etc. and use them effectively to provide solutions supporting the communities' goals.
- Imply community's acceptance, involvement and ownership: commonly linked with the previous feature, community's acceptance, involvement and ownership require incorporation of the targeted communities' needs, problems and priorities in all aspects of the intervention. As we could see in this programme, community members were able to better understand their needs and problems and, as such, they were better suited to use their knowledge, skills and resources to identify actual solutions to them.
- Require management capabilities: community-based programmes seek to achieve long-term goals and, to achieve their sustainability, actors involved need to possess adequate technical and financial capabilities to ensure proper implementation, as well as external guidance, if needed – for example, by the implementation partners –, among others.

When it comes to specific evidence, all the respondents considered that the technical training and knowledge acquired by the rights holders helped to improve their agricultural skills, such as production, market access and sale of their products, among others, stating that the results are sustainable in time, and knowledge can be applied in future actions. As it was indicated in other sections, rights holders considered that these training, as well as the ongoing orientations and demonstrations, must be followed to consolidate their acquired knowledge and skills. In all the interviews and FGDs, reference was made to the transfer of knowledge by the rights holders, this being an important achievement that enhances the equipment and materials supplied to them since, without the necessary knowledge and training, the agricultural processes (work on the land, growing crops, home gardens, irrigation systems, reparation of cisterns, etc.) were not able to move forward and maintain themselves over time. In fact, this knowledge transfer had a multiplier effect with the rights holders, as all the rights holders interviewed reported that they shared the knowledge and experiences acquired through the programme with other farmers and women who did not participate in the Convenio with family and neighbours. These were clear examples of the relevance and impact as well as the perceived value of the training, workshops and demonstrations. The written material distributed to the rights holders was also significant, relevant and effective, with all the rights holders interviewed reporting that they still use, and reference materials produced by local partners.

The results of the evaluation also showed that, according to all the participants interviewed, the programme activities that revolve around working the land, home gardens, etc. will continue to have a positive impact on the production of the rights holders, as well as everything related to the marketing and commercialisation of agricultural products, this also being an example of sustainability of the action. In addition to that, and continuing with what was detailed above, all the rights holders interviewed reported that the awareness activities, as well as the materials and equipment provided, helped them apply a green technique and/or practices, innovative and safe. Some respondents from partner organisations added that some of the materials resulting from awareness raising activities will be used in other ongoing programmes.

All the respondents considered that the programme will be sustainable if the rights holders continue to use and/or maintain the equipment and infrastructure set, rehabilitated and/or installed and, obviously, if they manage to expand it, as some of them began to do. All the participants interviewed also emphasised that there was continuity in the experiences they acquired through training, practical demonstrations, and exchanges experiences, etc. Still, it should be said that all the respondents also mentioned that it is necessary to carry out a post-evaluation in the mid-term to be able to quantify the benefits and changes more precisely, as well as the productivity and profitability resulting from the intervention.

Based on early engagement and transparency with local and national authorities and institutions, a high sense of ownership and acceptance of the programme was noted not only among the rights holders interviewed, but also among the communities at large, as they were aware of all the great benefits they could obtain from the programme: material, technical and financial resources; capacity building; professional and personal development, among others. In general, and as mentioned above, the rights holders interviewed felt that the programme worked to respond to their needs and priorities, and that they had the possibility to express what they needed and how they were feeling. The attitude of PARC and the RWDS was key to ensuring the appropriation of the rights holders. The programme's technical team allowed the rights holders to participate in the planning, design and implementation of the activities and they felt that the planning of the activities was constantly adapted to their needs and demands. All of this is particularly notable since a good proportion of these people were women, so this high level of acceptance and integration of their work helped to establish and reaffirm the role of women within the socio-economic sphere as well as in the processes of decision making, despite the challenges and resistances mentioned earlier by some community members. This helped to visualise a positive result beyond the life of the programme, since the work carried out by women was not seen as an extra, complementary and/or separate "contribution", but as a viable socio-economic opportunity for the community. Furthermore, since the programme provided and responded to the actual goods and services that were needed in the selected areas, it can be concluded that the activities will continue. The rights holders interviewed added that their financial benefits, which were invested later in the programme, generally increased their motivation, energy, and persistence to succeed.

We must not forget that the rights holders were part of cooperatives, associations, clubs, etc. so that the benefits of the programme were both individual and collective. The cooperative agricultural sector is like other economic sectors that depend mainly on contributions from members, as well as foreign aid. The programme provided everything that was needed in terms of human resources, financial resources, continuous quality improvement, well-developed strategies, etc. to guarantee its viability and sustainability with the target rights holders. Furthermore, the measures taken to improve awareness at local and national levels, create market linkages and develop capacities, among others, helped to improve not only the capabilities, attitudes and/or practices at the individual level but also indirectly at the level of the organisations and cooperatives.

The participation, coordination and involvement of local and national authorities, during and in the (post)pandemic context, allowed them to participate in different levels and phases of the programme and, as indicated earlier, to provide the necessary support during the implementation, when facing difficulties. This is that the ET translates as joint work that can be sustained beyond the programme and that, in addition, would allow the results to be sustained over time. Even with the situation that the national authorities are going through in Palestine (low budget, scarce human resources, fragility in its structures, etc.), they demonstrated their adaptation and acceptance of the action, continuing to plan and interact with PARC and the RWDS, and the communities at the

level of development, sovereignty of the land, its needs and priorities, etc. and to take note of the lessons learned and good practices during the course of the intervention, including in the pandemic times, by all the actors involved, so that these can be applied in the future, in a similar context or crisis. Furthermore, institutional support is most likely anticipated and expected to mitigate obstacles and challenges that may arise in the future, as these institutional bodies are supposedly positioned to pave the way for these programmes to be sustainable.

Finally, regarding the awareness raising and educational activities in Spain, they became an integral part of the work carried out by the FPS through various actions, so that, for example, it continues to work with the agrarian family schools of Valencia and Alicante. At the time of carrying out the evaluation, the FPS reported that it was presenting this line of work in other calls for proposals to continue with the schools. In addition, activities implemented are rotating, e.g. training, exhibitions, etc., and that they can be replicated in other schools and locations. Evidently, the Convenio allowed FPS to work with several agricultural schools and for a longer period - considering that the school year was followed - and, therefore, with smaller projects, the FPS will have to decide which schools to work with.

We can conclude that the Viability of the Convenio is MEDIUM-HIGH

F. Lessons learned

Based on the analysis of all the processes and good practices put in place by partners to identify, design, implement, monitor and disseminate the results of the Convenio, the ET identified the following lessons learned that could inform future joint or separate interventions:

- Flexibility and adaptability: the ability of the implementing partners to be flexible and adapt quickly to unforeseen circumstances was crucial for successful programme implementation.
- Challenges as opportunities for future interventions: identified challenges, such as cultural barriers, gender inequalities, lack of youth participation and resistance to change, may serve as opportunities for better adapted interventions in the future.
- Importance of collaborative partnerships: collaborative partnerships were emphasised as crucial for a comprehensive and effective implementation of initiatives at all levels.
- Effective communication and participatory approaches: effective communication and a participatory approach were key internal factors for overcoming hurdles and ensuring programme cohesion.
- High population participation as a success factor: the high engagement and motivation of rights holders were identified as internal factors contributing to the success of most activities.
- Capacity building for stakeholders: focus on capacity building played a crucial role in the programme's level of achievement. Training sessions, workshops, demonstrations, and exchange visits enhanced the capacities of individuals and communities.
- Preventing harm through transparency and participation: the transparent and participatory launching and selection processes were crucial in preventing harm, ensuring equal participation and reaching out to include women at all levels.
- Effective targeting strategies: the programme's targeting strategies were effective, reaching the intended population in very vulnerable and at-risk geographical areas.
- Challenges with youth participation: challenges related to youth participation were acknowledged, emphasising the need to explore new approaches in future interventions to ensure higher levels of youth commitment.

- Ownership at all levels: involvement of rights holders, local communities, academic institutions, private sector, local and national administrations in decision-making spaces increased ownership at all levels, enhancing long term sustainability.

There was a common feeling among partners, stakeholders and rights holders that the Convenio created learning spaces at all levels, and that it initiated and contributed to national processes that could be followed up and enhanced in future interventions. Moreover, according to partners, the long-term relation between the three organisations and the expertise of each one led them through the years to significant strategic changes, promoting innovation and learning. Therefore the ET is confident that the lessons learned from this intervention will be applied in the best design of future programmes.

G. Conclusions

The Convenio was designed as a holistic intervention aimed at addressing the complex challenges faced by rural communities in occupied Palestine. The focus on economic empowerment, gender equality, agricultural development, and resilience against political and environmental challenges reflected a comprehensive approach to sustainable development.

Programme partners showed success in reaching target groups, employing effective targeting strategies, adapting to challenges, and maintaining transparency throughout the selection process. The inclusive decision making approach contributed to a sense of ownership and prevented any harm to individuals or groups. The lessons learned from these processes can inform future interventions, especially in improving youth engagement and achieving more uniform participation among stakeholders.

The Convenio's success was rooted in collaborative partnerships, internal communication, and participatory approaches that facilitated effective implementation of its objectives. The programme's achievements included positive impacts on agricultural practices, increased resilience, and notable advancements in women's empowerment and clean energy promotion. Challenges such as cultural barriers, market dynamics, and external political contexts were acknowledged, emphasising the need for adaptability. The interplay of internal and external factors, alongside a focus on capacity building and community engagement, contributed to the programme's overall success. Looking forward, recognising these factors will be crucial in refining future interventions, ensuring sustained impacts, and addressing ongoing challenges in vulnerable rural communities.

The evaluation of the Convenio paints a compelling picture of success across various dimensions, affirming its substantial positive impact at micro, meso, and macro levels in Palestine. At the micro level, individuals experienced transformative changes, from economic empowerment among farmers to enhanced capacities and awareness among women. However, targeted strategies are recommended to address specific challenges, such as tailored support for youth engagement and nuanced cultural interventions.

The meso level witnessed robust community-wide impacts, fostering economic empowerment, resilience, and environmental sustainability. The CPCs emerged as key drivers of change, showcasing the programme's holistic influence beyond its immediate focus. Recommendations include reinforcing national policy advocacy, scaling successful models, and establishing knowledge-sharing platforms to amplify positive outcomes.

At the macro level, the Convenio's influence extended to broader societal impacts, influencing national discourse on agriculture, gender equality, and sustainable development. However, there is room for enhanced engagement with national-level policymakers, scaling successful models nationally, and promoting research findings to influence evidence-based decision-making.

Organisational and programmatic capacities of the three partner organisations were significantly strengthened, positioning them as leaders in promoting sustainable change in Palestine. Ongoing evaluations, internal discussions, and dissemination activities underscored the programme's commitment to learning and knowledge transfer.

In summary, the Convenio achieved commendable success in empowering individuals, fostering community resilience, and contributing to broader societal transformations. To sustain and increase these achievements,

targeted strategies, enhanced stakeholders' engagement at all levels, and a continued commitment to knowledge transfer are essential. The Convenio stands not just as a programme but as a catalyst for lasting positive impacts, poised to shape a more sustainable and empowered future for Palestinian communities.

PARC and the RWDS, as key implementing partners, exhibit strong institutional and financial capacities, paving the way for the continuation of many programme activities such as awareness sessions, knowledge exchange, and training. However, challenges emerge when higher economic costs are involved, indicating a need for strategic financial planning. The national authorities demonstrated solid institutional and technical capacities but they face financial dependence on international donors, potentially limiting their support for the Convenio's benefits. Village councils, while more aware of their weaknesses, will require external financial support for continued progress in agriculture, gender, and women's rights.

Women's clubs, cooperatives, and the newly created CPCs expressed awareness of their challenges and responsibilities in maintaining the Convenio's achievements, with limited financial resources, but a commitment to contribute in kind. Farmers and women rights holders recognised their gaps in sustaining the achievements but highlighted the importance of ongoing support, emphasising the risk of losing gains without continued resources. Overall, while the Convenio laid solid foundations for maintaining key achievements, sustainability is not guaranteed due to financial constraints among key actors and dependence on international donors. In the challenging Palestinian context, viability and sustainability must be understood within local conditions, marked by external constraints and uncertainties linked to the political situation. PARC and the RWDS, recognising the importance of capacity building, present plans to secure financial sustainability through diversification of funding sources, including private donors and individual donations.

Finally, the evaluation underscored the importance of continued human resource development in such a politically, socially, and financially unstable environment. Despite challenges, the technical, managerial, and institutional sustainability of PARC and the RWDS is deemed strong, with ongoing efforts needed for continuous improvement. At the community level, the Convenio's impact was seen as sustainable through the transfer of knowledge and ongoing support, emphasising the benefits beyond individual participation. The community-based approach, community acceptance and involvement, and management capabilities contributed to the sustainability of the programme. The evidence suggested that, with the right strategies and ongoing support, the Convenio's outcomes and outputs can be sustained in the long-term, promoting positive change at individual, organisational, and community levels.

H. Recommendations

H.1. Relevance

- Programme partners may continue conducting regular needs assessment and/or context analysis – both qualitative and quantitative, and taking into consideration crosscutting issues such as gender, women's rights, youth rights, environment, etc. – in cooperation with their rights holders and stakeholders, in order to identify what is working best as well as any new problems, needs and demands, identify potential partner groups, etc., so it will be able to adjust its performances according to new operational contexts.
- The methodology of conducting regular needs assessments (with qualitative and quantitative approaches) may be maintained in cooperation with partners and donor organisations, when possible, to identify potential target groups and needs, as well as to update needs and issues that can be addressed. through the activities of the implemented programmes.
- Programme partners may develop targeted strategies to enhance youth participation, considering the unique challenges faced by young individuals in the Palestinian context; and explore innovative approaches to attract and involve the youth in program activities.

- Programme partners may maintain and consolidate their strong partnership with local and national stakeholders and maintain updated information about their understanding of the different target groups' needs and constraints.
- Programme partners may maintain their links and fluent communication with women and farmers, as well as youth, to update their understanding of the communities needs and priorities.
- Programme partners may maintain and/or increase the participatory approach enabled in this programme to ensure that future interventions continue to be aligned with the needs of stakeholders and rights holders.
- Programme partners may maintain and/or increase their strategic partnership since it was proven that the experience and expertise of each one (knowledge of the national context, experience in the activities, experience in community based sustainable initiatives, etc.) highly contributed to identify and design a successful and relevant intervention.

H.2. Effectiveness

- FPS should consider leading the baseline processes in future joint interventions to ensure that the methodology applied is aligned with the MEAL needs, and with the donor's requirement.
- Programme partners and other stakeholders involved should reflect together on the factors that influenced youth participation in the programme's activities to apply lessons learned in future joint interventions.
- In this regard, programme partners may consider collaborating with youth-focused organisations to enhance future intervention's appeal to this demographic group.
- Given the complexities related to cultural perspectives and resistance to change, programme partners, and especially the RWDS, may consider increasing cultural awareness programmes into interventions. Addressing cultural and mindset issues can enhance the overall effectiveness of activities.
- Programme partners may consider strengthening gender sensitisation programmes to engage men in awareness sessions, especially in conservative areas, addressing cultural barriers to women's rights, and promote the active involvement of men in discussions related to gender equity, encouraging a collective and inclusive approach.
- Programme partners are encouraged to maintain and or increase the ongoing cooperation between various stakeholders and rights holders, strengthen partnerships by fostering open communication, trust-building, and knowledge sharing.
- Programme partners may consider maintaining, expanding and strengthening already successful collaborations with universities and private sector, and when needed, to include new partners or institutions that can bring additional expertise and resources in specific technical fields to maintain their innovative approach.
- Programme partners may continue promoting a participatory approach in programme's planning and implementation, fostering community ownership by establishing and maintaining the CPCs, farmers' cooperatives and women's clubs that actively engage in decision making processes.
- Moreover, programme partners may continue exploring innovative ways to maintain high levels of community participation, possibly through the promotion of community-led initiatives.
- Programme partners may consider fostering stronger collaboration with national-level stakeholders and ministries to ensure a more uniform and informed participation throughout the programme duration and encourage the active involvement of national-level stakeholders in programme's planning and implementation.

H.3. Impact

- Programme partners may consider scaling up pilot initiatives implemented in the current Convenio to enhance the long-term impact of the intervention. Moreover, partners may consider exploring the possibility of replicable models and innovations that can contribute to sustainable practices in other geographical areas.
- Programme partners may continue to encourage the transfer of successful initiatives and practices among communities and organisations, fostering a culture of shared learning.
- Programme partners may maintain and/or increase their leading position in national and international coalitions to strengthen the scope and impact of climate change adaptations promoted during the Convenio. Moreover, programme partners may advocate for supportive policies at local and national levels to create an enabling environment for sustainable development and, explicitly, to engage with national-level policymakers and institutions to integrate successful models and lessons learned into national policies.
- Programme partners may consider increasing their strategies to address challenges tied to women's perspectives, consciousness, and resistance to change to enhance the impact of economic initiatives. In this sense, programme partners may consider developing interventions focusing on cultural and mindset shifts to enhance the impact on marketing objectives.
- Considering the war on the GS launched at the end of the implementation period, partners may consider revisiting their contingency plans to address very unlikely and unforeseen events like the current one.

H.4. Efficiency

- Programme partners may conduct cost-effectiveness analysis in their programmes – being, simply, “value for money”, or the degree to which the programmes benefit the largest number of people at the lowest reasonable cost –to, for example, design an accurate funding strategy and financial monitoring system in future actions, including at gender and human rights level, and as well as to identify good practices and lessons learned. The cost per right holder can measure the total cost of a programme divided by the number of direct rights holders. At its simplest, a cost-effectiveness programme means being able to achieve the results (and, ultimately, the objectives) at a reasonable cost if not the lowest possible cost.

This seemingly straightforward analysis can be applied any time before, during or after a programme implementation, and it can greatly assist during decision-making processes in assessing the programme's efficiency. This analysis is also useful for PARC, the RWDS and/or the FPS to better know and/or share the outcomes they desire, and, for example, it can also determine which set of activities achieve the greatest outcome for the costs. It is also useful in cases where outcomes are either intangible or otherwise difficult to monetise, e.g. awareness activities, which fall into this category since we expect long-term interventions to achieve sustainable changes.

- Programme partners may review, assess and/or improve (when/where needed) their MEAL systems to adjust them to new programmes, components and/or monitoring needs.
- Following the previous one, the FPS may continue supporting its partners, PARC and the RWDS, at the time of designing MEAL systems and tools to ensure a proper and common MEAL programme' system, especially when it comes to joint interventions, that guarantees the collection of relevant data, the measurement of the indicators (quantitative and qualitative) and the quality of the achievements. Moreover, if needed, indicators and MEAL tools may be readjusted to align the logical framework with the baseline designed and the data collected from the field.
- PARC and the RWDS may continue increasing staff capacities at MEAL level, especially when it comes to fieldworkers, but not exclusively.

H.5. Viability

- PARC and the RWDS may continue identifying potential implementing and funding partners, e.g. donors, for new areas of implementation, etc.
- PARC and the RWDS may continue putting efforts to ensure the institutional legitimization and acceptance of the action, as well as the viability of its work, which ultimately impacts on the future sustainability of the programme.
- PARC and the RWDS may continue working with local and national authorities to be able to maintain and consolidate their association and networking with the programme, keep them informed and updated on the interventions, to have their support at an institutional level but also with resources (whenever possible), etc.
- PARC and the RWDS may continue offering capacity building activities to its staff to ensure organisational and operational sustainability.
- PARC and the RWDS may continue promoting the transfer of information, knowledge and know-how to communities to ensure both ownership and sustainability for future actions (including replication).
- PARC and the RWDS may continue offering and/or increasing capacity building to national and local authorities, making sure that a representative sample of the staff members is included, e.g. technical staff, administrative and finance staff, decision-making responsible, etc.
- PARC and the RWDS may continue offering and/or capacity building to national and local authorities to make sure the staff is able to continue with the started actions, to replicate and/or disseminate the materials produced, the activities implemented, etc.