IOB Evaluation

Between Prospects and Precarity

An evaluation of Dutch assistance to refugee reception in the Syria region (2016-2021)

March 2024

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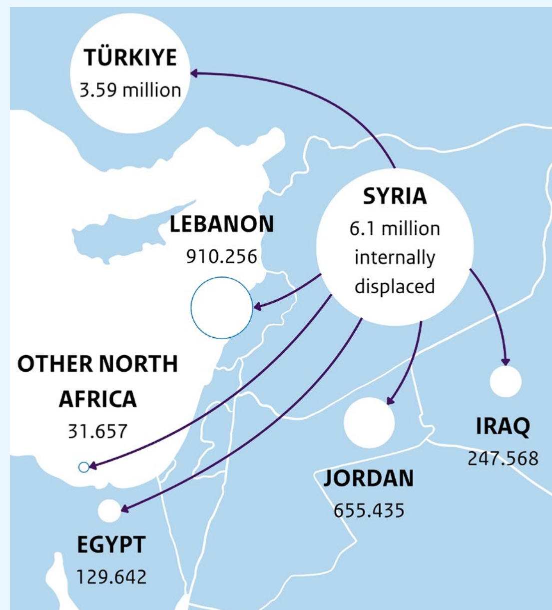
Executive summary

As a result of the civil war in Syria, around 7 million people have fled the country. Around 80% of them are hosted by Syria's neighbouring countries (see map).[1] Approximately 1.4 million Syrians have found asylum in Europe.

The presence of such large numbers of refugees has put severe pressure on infrastructure, public service delivery and social relations in the host countries, with potentially negative consequences for regional stability.

Three developments formed the background against which the Dutch policy on refugee reception in the region was developed:
1. the increasing numbers of refugees and irregular migrants arriving in Europe (in particular the 2015 European asylum crisis),
2. international consensus on the need for new approaches to dealing with protracted situations of displacement, and
3. the development of new European migration policies.



Source: UNHCR/Reliefweb, AFP. The data regarding Syria is from December 2019. Other data is from March, 2020.

In addition to the rapidly growing number of refugees, it was taking longer and longer for refugees to return home, and they were increasingly staying in cities and villages rather than in refugee camps. For these reasons, the Netherlands and international partners adopted a development-oriented approach to complement traditional humanitarian types of assistance. Support was aimed at the (temporary) integration of refugees into the societies and economies of host countries to allow them to become self-reliant. In addition, host countries were supported economically to be able to host refugees and even benefit economically from their presence. In addition, support specifically targeted the more vulnerable members of host communities – who might be negatively affected by the presence of large numbers of refugees – so that they were not disadvantaged compared to the refugees being supported.

In addition to the objective of improving the prospects of refugees and their host communities, a political motive underlying the financial support for refugee reception in the region was to prevent the onward migration of refugees to third countries, including Europe and the Netherlands. The argument that support for protection, education and employment in host countries could prevent the onward migration of refugees was substantiated by a reference to a UNHCR report from 2015. However, this objective has not been operationalised or monitored. Between the end of 2017 and 2021, this argument was no longer mentioned in policy documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) evaluated Dutch support for the reception of refugees in the region in Lebanon and Jordan in the period 2016-2021. In this period, the Netherlands spent EUR 475 million on Development Approaches to Forced Displacement (DAFD) in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. This includes EUR 170 million that was spent through the Prospects partnership, which started

[1] Notwithstanding the number of refugees officially registered by UNHCR, the estimated number of Syrians in Lebanon is around 1.5 million and in Jordan around 1.3 million. As such, these countries host the largest (Lebanon) and second largest (Jordan) number of refugees per capita in the world.

in 2019.[2] The Dutch contribution to the reception of refugees in Türkiye was provided through the EU-led Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT), which was evaluated by the EU. Lessons learned from this evaluation have been included in the IOB report.

Evaluation questions

The key question of the evaluation was:

> *'What has been the Dutch contribution to improving the prospects of refugees from Syria and their host communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, and how can this contribution be improved?'*[3]

The main question thus related to the *effectiveness* of the policy. The intended objective had two dimensions: a) improving the prospects of refugees from Syria and their host communities, and b) preventing onward migration to third countries, including the Netherlands and other countries in the EU.

Explanatory sub-questions also focused on the relevance and coherence of the policy, including attention to the specific needs of women and girls:

1. What was the relevance of the development-oriented approach (also known as *DAFD*)? Were the Dutch-supported interventions aligned with the needs of refugees and host communities? Was Dutch support relevant in preventing refugees' onward migration to third countries? What is known about the social cohesion and participation of refugees in local communities and about the economic participation and economic impact of refugees on local communities?
2. To what extent has a gender perspective been meaningfully integrated into the Dutch-supported interventions? Has sufficient attention been paid to the specific needs of women and girls?
3. How coherent was the policy? To what extent did the policy objectives and approach match the priorities of the host countries, international frameworks, other donors' interventions and the broader Dutch support to these countries?
4. What did the different funding modalities (types of support programmes) mean for the quality of programme management, in particular the selection of partners, the cooperation between the policy department in The Hague and the embassies, and the cooperation between humanitarian and development partners?

[2] Interventions supported under this partnership were not included in this evaluation, as the partnership is being evaluated separately. With some exceptions, the projects analysed in this evaluation started prior to the introduction of the Prospects partnership in 2019.

[3] Within this study, the policy reconstruction, literature review and online conversations with refugees and host communities focused on Iraq as well. The context analysis, assessment of projects and country visits were limited to Lebanon and Jordan.

Main conclusion

Although Dutch support to hosting refugees in the region has achieved positive short-term results for refugees and host communities, it has not effectively contributed to improving the prospects of refugees from Syria or their host communities in Lebanon and Jordan. The overarching policy objectives of increased self-reliance and improved socio-economic prospects for refugees and host communities have not been achieved, and have become more elusive. For many, prospects have deteriorated, particularly in Lebanon. This was partly due to negative contextual trends beyond the influence of the Netherlands, such as political crises and economic decline, aggravated by Covid-19. And partly because a critical assumption underlying the policy – i.e. that host countries would be willing to adopt an inclusive approach towards refugees – did not hold in Lebanon and only partially in Jordan. In both countries, refugees had little access to decent work in the formal economy.

The economic participation and impact of refugees in local communities was mainly limited to the informal sector, which accounted for about half of the economy in both countries. When refugees did work, it was mainly temporary and low-paid work, often under poor conditions. At the same time, their presence put pressure on infrastructure and services in an already worrying socio-economic situation.

This combination of factors limited the effectiveness of the Dutch-supported activities, most of which were local in scope. Nevertheless, short-term results have been achieved. Examples include the access of refugee children to education and improved conditions in schools, the protection of women and girls from domestic violence, and the ability to provide daily livelihoods through financial transfers to families.

Despite the fact that the Netherlands supported both refugees and host communities, the public perception remained that foreign aid benefited refugees more than the local population. Combined with segregated education and increasing competition for low-paid work in a stagnating economy, discrimination and tensions among and between refugees and the local population increased.

The political rationale for supporting the reception of refugees in the region was partly based on the idea that this would help to reduce the onward migration of refugees to Europe, including the Netherlands. However, the evidence for a causal relationship between development assistance and refugees' onward migration is weak. Based on a literature review, IOB concludes that Dutch DAFD programming focused on themes (protection, education and employment) that may play a role in influencing refugees' aspirations and capabilities for onward migration. However, refugees' decisions on whether or not to move on are highly complex and depend on many factors.[4] In practice, safety and legal protection, access to education, and secure and dignified employment for refugees remained major challenges in both Jordan and Lebanon. Hence, the lack of financial resources and networks made onward migration impossible for most refugees.

[4] To illustrate the complexity of this relationship, migration research shows that the initial stages of development can even induce migration.

Specific conclusions

The lack of effectiveness can be partly explained by the limited relevance and coherence of the policy. Although the supported projects thematically matched the needs of refugees and host communities, their relevance was often limited by setting unrealistic goals or ignoring factors that were crucial for achieving (sustainable) results, such as differences in religious, cultural and social norms, lack of government capacity and gender-related constraints.

The Dutch programmes were flexible in the sense that they allowed ongoing projects and the programming of new ones to adapt to important contextual changes, such as the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic or the increasing need in Lebanon to shift from development-oriented interventions to meeting basic needs.

Policy coherence was limited in various ways. First, assistance was more donor-driven than demand-driven. As the interests and perspectives of host countries differed from those of international donors, they had different funding priorities. Second, local donor coordination, i.e. preventing overlap, limiting funding gaps, and promoting synergies, was complicated by the fact that critical funding decisions are generally taken in donors' capitals. As a result, coordination focused more on sharing information and establishing joint positions on local developments. Third, promoting a coherent package of Dutch support was limited by the large number of Dutch instruments in both countries, most of which were decided upon in The Hague. Nevertheless, the embassies have made good efforts to connect these instruments and found some niches, such as in agriculture, water and private sector development.

At two points in time (in 2016 and 2018), spending pressure put the quality of funded activities under strain, as large DAFD funds were made available before results frameworks, sound management arrangements and sufficient staff capacity were in place. The shift from a portfolio of individual projects towards a partnership with large international agencies has facilitated contract management. However, managing and further developing such a large and complex partnership required more staff than was anticipated. The subsequent allocation of additional staff to embassies and the policy department brought staffing levels in line with the needs of the task.

The embassies played an important role in programme management in the different aid modalities (including the project portfolio and Prospects partnership), although the policy department remained formally responsible as the budget holder. At times, this 'hybrid' division of roles led to confusion among the embassies and project partners, particularly when the embassies and the ministry were not fully aligned. Cooperation between the ministry and the embassies has improved in recent years because investments were made in the working relationship. Working structurally with the Prospects partners – key players in international refugee policy – has contributed to the knowledge and a learning culture in the policy department and embassies.

Overall, mainstreaming gender in Dutch projects was unsuccessful. With some exceptions (mainly projects on gender-based violence), this remained limited to adding women as a target group, rather than addressing specific gender needs.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation, IOB makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Reassess the objectives and strategy at the regional and/or country level.

- Make key policy assumptions explicit and regularly examine their validity in specific contexts, preferably with partners and local stakeholders.
- Be realistic about what the policy can achieve in terms of promoting self-reliance and consider adjusting the highest-level objectives. In volatile contexts, such as Lebanon, it may be necessary to 'shift back' to more humanitarian types of assistance. Scenario thinking could allow for timely shifts between types of interventions and instruments.
- Clarify how gender mainstreaming and gender equality should be prioritised and operationalised in DAFD programming to prevent it from becoming an afterthought in activities, and to ensure that when it is addressed, it is done in a meaningful way and in line with the development of a 'feminist foreign policy'.
- Avoid creating and giving in to spending pressures. Newly released development funds should not be spent until a sound policy approach and results framework have been developed.

Recommendation 2: Maintain dialogue and an open attitude towards host governments and alternative pathways, even when interests and perspectives are far apart.

- Although promoting policy space for the inclusion of refugees is difficult, keep exploring ways to promote more inclusive approaches, the most promising of which is direct funding of inclusive policy measures, either at the national or local level.
- Consider possible innovative pathways to increase self-reliance. For instance, skills development (language, ICT) could benefit refugees and create a pathway for them to find legal routes to third countries.
- Consider strengthening the Dutch approach to responsibility sharing, for instance by increasing the resettlement quota and making this more visible to host governments. Engaging in a discussion on safe and dignified return, while adhering to its conditions and the principle of *non-refoulement*, rather than dismissing the idea of return 'for the time being', is a way of recognising the deep concerns of host governments and remaining in dialogue.
- Try to work with local governments (municipalities), taking care to avoid potential negative unintended effects.

Recommendation 3: Work as contextually and locally as possible.

- Ensure that policies, programmes and interventions are based on national (and even local) contexts and needs. Properly integrate centrally funded activities and results into a country-specific strategy, based on a sound analysis of local needs and the added value of the Netherlands.
- Develop mechanisms to involve local stakeholders and refugee representatives in all phases of programming, including during the needs assessment, project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Continue to focus on preventing tensions and promoting social cohesion and consult local organisations, including refugee organisations, to implement projects in a more context-sensitive way.
- Address the effort to make assistance more locally-led in a more structural way, for instance by embedding overarching and consistent contractual conditions in the framework agreements with Prospects partners. Try to mobilise like-minded donors to do the same and address the issue jointly in relevant meetings at UN Headquarters.

Recommendation 4: As the minister has decided to extend the Prospects partnership until 2027, continue to build the partnership, try to expand the donor base and connect it to other initiatives in the region.

- Clarify what the 'New Way of Working' implies and when it has been successfully implemented, recognising that it is a means to an end.
- Continue to try to broaden the donor base and develop governance arrangements that allow other donors to join without diluting the partnership's bold ambition.
- Allow flexibility for other organisations to join as partners when this adds value in a particular country context.

Recommendation 5: Ensure sufficient staff capacity for programme management, dialogue, political economy analysis, and monitoring and learning.

- Invest in longer-term specialised staff dedicated to working on DAFD and establish career paths within the organisation to support this effort. Managing the Prospects partnership and related programmes requires a specific mix of knowledge and competencies.
- Build on the learning culture that has been developed within the policy department and involve embassies and local partner offices to promote inter- and intra-regional learning. Learning requires constant attention and (therefore) staff capacity.

Sub-studies

IOB believes it is important to include the voices of both refugees and host communities in research. We therefore worked with a specialist team from Upinion to conduct online conversations with respondent panels in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. This exercise identified the greatest needs of refugees and host communities, economic and social participation, and the results of international support.

A team from University College London (UCL) has carried out a literature review of the factors relevant to refugee onward migration to third countries, social cohesion and economic participation in and impact on the economies of host countries.

1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale and aim of the evaluation

In response to the European refugee crisis in 2015 caused by the Syrian conflict, the Dutch government allocated a large budget to support the reception of refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries. In this context, policymakers were under intense political pressure to act quickly, scale up rapidly and coordinate with international and local stakeholders. The broad political support for solidarity with Syria's neighbouring countries in the Netherlands has been multifaceted, with arguments ranging from a sense of urgency to address rising humanitarian needs, to a growing demand for shared responsibility, to a strong sense of self-interest to prevent the influx of migrants to Europe. Although the underlying arguments for Dutch assistance to refugee reception in the region (in Dutch: *Opvang in de Regio*) differ, political support for assisting Syria's neighbouring countries has been consistent since 2015.

At the time, support for refugee reception in the region became a key pillar of Dutch migration policy, and the Netherlands adopted a developmental approach (Development Approaches to Forced Displacement – DAFD) in addition to traditional humanitarian approaches. For its implementation, the Netherlands followed the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, which calls for structural changes in the aid system by linking relief and development efforts to respond to the needs of vulnerable people. Dutch DAFD efforts coexisted with and built on humanitarian action, aiming to offer prospects beyond basic needs and promote refugees' self-reliance and inclusion into host communities. The underlying assumption of Dutch policy was that this would give refugees the opportunity to rebuild their lives in dignity during their displacement.

Refugee reception in the region has figured high on both the Dutch and international political agenda and is expected to remain so for the foreseeable future. During the period under evaluation (2016-2021), the Netherlands invested large amounts of money in the response to forced displacement, both through bilateral programmes and multilateral partners. In 2016, the government allocated EUR 260 million for the reception of refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries of Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. For the period 2019-2023, around EUR 500 million was committed to the Prospects partnership in the Horn of Africa and the Syria region, which aims to promote better links between humanitarian assistance and development. Through this partnership, the Netherlands aims to be at the forefront of responses to forced displacement. The DAFD budget for the coming years remains substantial: the minister has announced a budget increase from EUR 219 million in 2022 to EUR 357 million in 2027, reflecting the political significance attached to the challenges of hosting refugees.[1]

This evaluation examines the effectiveness of Dutch-supported DAFD in improving prospects for refugees from Syria and host communities in the Syria region in the period 2016-2021.[2] By focusing on the implementation strategy chosen in the context of emerging policy and the release of rapidly increasing budgets, this evaluation aims to answer the main research question:

> What has been the Dutch contribution to improving the prospects of refugees from Syria and host communities in Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, and how can this contribution be improved?

To account for the results achieved and to provide relevant lessons for improved policymaking the study addresses questions pertaining to:

- The effectiveness of the underlying intervention strategy aimed at improving prospects for refugees and vulnerable host communities;
- The relevance of Dutch DAFD interventions to improve the prospects of the target groups and reduce incentives for onward migration;
- The coherence of Dutch interventions with broader Dutch foreign policy towards these countries, with host country priorities, international frameworks and other donor interventions;
- The management of different funding modalities, including the selection of implementing partners and the division of roles and responsibilities between different stakeholders within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); and
- The extent to which gender issues were meaningfully integrated into the implementation of Dutch-funded interventions.

For the full set of evaluation questions, the reader is referred to the Terms of Reference of this evaluation.

1 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Beleidsnotitie 2022. Doen waar Nederland goed in is. Strategie voor Buitenlandse Handel & Ontwikkelingssamenwerking*, KST 36180-1, 24 June 2022, pp. 10-11.

2 The Terms of Reference indicate that the evaluation focuses on the period 2015-2021, from the first interventions in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, defined as DAFD, up to and including the programmes launched in 2019-2020 under the latest funding framework. However, document analysis shows that the first DAFD interventions in response to the Syrian refugee crisis started in 2016. Therefore, the IOB researchers decided to limit the evaluation period to 2016-2021.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 Case selection

This evaluation focuses on Dutch DAFD efforts in the Syria region due to the large-scale movements of refugees from Syria to neighbouring countries, the region's proximity to Europe, and the volume of Dutch expenditure in this region (approximately EUR 475 million in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq in the period 2016-2021). The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) selected three countries for data collection in the Syria region that host large numbers of refugees from Syria: Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. While the case studies of Lebanon and Jordan were included in all elements of this evaluation, Iraq was only included in the literature review and the online conversations with refugees and host communities conducted by Upinion. The research team decided to limit the focus on Iraq in this evaluation, due to the smaller budget size of Dutch DAFD programming in Iraq in 2016-2017[3] and the different thematic focus of DAFD interventions in Iraq, which was mainly on post-conflict peacebuilding.

Although Türkiye is hosting the majority of refugees from Syria, it is not included in this evaluation. The Netherlands has supported the reception of refugees in Türkiye through a contribution to the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT), which has its own evaluation agenda.[4] As the strategic mid-term evaluation of FRiT is already available, lessons relevant to the IOB evaluation have been incorporated into the synthesis of joint EU evaluations presented in Annex 3 of this report.

1.2.2 Policy instruments

The evaluation primarily examines the effectiveness and relevance of DAFD interventions and activities funded under the additional funding of EUR 260 million for DAFD in the Syria region for 2016-2017 and the Migration and Development 2019-2022 subsidy tender of EUR 35 million. Many of the funded projects ran until 2021 or 2022.

For the Prospects partnership, which started in 2019, IOB examined the design- and decision-making processes, devoting attention to mutual expectations, partners' perceptions of added value and the management of the partnership (see Chapter 7). However, IOB has not evaluated the interventions financed through this partnership, as Prospects has a separate evaluation agenda. Some of the lessons learned from the 2022 mid-term evaluation of Prospects have been incorporated into this report (see Chapter 7).

In addition to the evaluation of Dutch-funded interventions, IOB has synthesised relevant findings and lessons from the available (mid-term) evaluations of joint European programmes in the Syria region, covering the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT), the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis (Madad), and the (first phase of the) Regional Development and Protection Programme in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP).[5] These findings have been incorporated throughout the report to reflect on the implementation of DAFD programming in Lebanon and Jordan, while a synthesis of the findings of these evaluations can be found in Annex 3.

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3 The MFA allocated EUR 20 million of the additional DAFD funding to Iraq, compared to EUR 86 million to Lebanon and EUR 60 million to Jordan. See Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, KST 19637-2254, 8 November 2016.

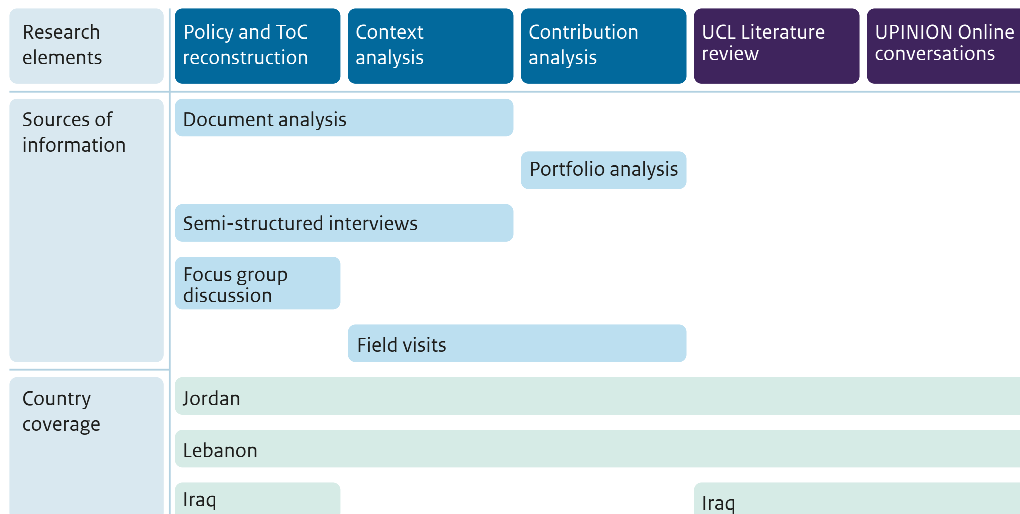
4 See the website of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT) for more information.

5 The Netherlands has contributed financially to these joint initiatives: EUR 94 million to the FRiT in 2016, EUR 2.25 million to the MADAD Fund in 2018 and EUR 0.5 million to the RDPP (first phase) in 2015-2017. Source: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.

1.3 Methodology

IOB has reconstructed how the Dutch policy on refugee reception in the region developed throughout the period 2016-2021 (considering relevant events in 2015 and 2022). Although the policy has become increasingly explicit and the choice of instruments has changed considerably, the underlying assumptions and policy principles have largely remained the same. An important element of the analysis was the reconstruction of the Theory of Change (ToC) of Dutch development approaches to forced displacement in the Syria region 2016-2021. Based on document review and semi-structured interviews, IOB collected evidence on the various elements of the policy theory, the underlying assumptions, the key concepts that entered the vocabulary, the decision-making process and the cooperation between policy departments and embassies (see Chapter 2). This provided the research team with an analytical framework for evaluating the funded projects, as well as for drawing lessons about the incremental development of the policy as such. A focus group discussion with policy staff at the ministry and embassies was organised to validate and refine the reconstruction of the ToC, including the policy assumptions.

Figure 1.1 *Overview of methods used*



IOB has commissioned a literature review to synthesise evidence from academic and grey literature on the reception of refugees from Syria in Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq.[6] The literature review discusses (I) relevant factors for refugees' decisions to stay or migrate onwards to third countries; (II) social cohesion in situations of protracted displacement; and (III) the economic participation of refugees in, and their economic impact on, local communities. In doing so, it provided relevant insights for identifying trends in forced displacement, clarifying key concepts, validating assumptions underlying Dutch DAFD, and serving as input for the analysis of the relevance and effectiveness of Dutch DAFD interventions.

IOB worked with a specialist team from Upinion to gather insights, perceptions and opinions from refugees and host communities on their needs and the results of international assistance. In the final quarter of 2021, Upinion conducted online conversations through secure social media platforms with a selected panel of respondents in Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq.[7] Some of the responses and outcomes from the conversations have been incorporated into the report to triangulate the findings.

6 This review was carried out by a team from University College London (UCL): E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, A. Greatrick and E. Carpi, with A. Shaiah Istanbouli, *Development approaches to force displacement from Syria in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq: A literature review of the evidence relating to onward migration, social cohesion and refugees' participation in local communities and economies*, London, UCL Migration Research Unit (MRU), 2022.

7 The data collection took place by means of two rounds of online conversations between 10 September and 15 December 2021. The number of participants who started conversation round 1 was: 893 in Lebanon, 322 in Jordan and 1472 in Iraq; the number of participants who started conversation round 2 was: 429 in Lebanon; 105 in Jordan and 537 in Iraq.

For Lebanon and Jordan, IOB used a contribution analysis approach to assess the contribution of Dutch DAFD to improving the prospects of refugees and vulnerable host communities.[8] Building on the insights from the reconstructed ToC, the literature review and online conversations, IOB collected data by means of a desk study, complemented by field research in Jordan and Lebanon.

The desk study consisted of a context analysis, project sampling and analysis, document selection and analysis, combined with interviews and focus groups. The evaluation includes an analysis of a reasoned sample of 13 projects: five in Jordan, seven in Lebanon and one in both countries (see annex 2 for an overview of sampled projects).[9] For the sampling exercise, IOB used a combination of selection criteria, including budget and coverage, type of partner and theme.[10] The sample covers approximately 58% of Dutch DAFD spending in Lebanon and 69% of DAFD spending in Jordan over the period 2016-2021, excluding spending via the Prospects partnership.[11] For the sampled projects, all relevant project documentation was analysed and synthesised. Interviews were held with relevant MFA and embassy staff, project implementers, direct beneficiaries and indirect stakeholders (e.g. relevant ministries). Given the small size of the subsidy tender (2019-2022), IOB was not able to compare the quality of the selected subsidy projects with the portfolio of previous projects.

IOB is aware of the dynamic nature of the context in which the DAFD policy was developed and implemented, and how this could affect the project implementation, the ability to achieve results and the interpretation of findings. Therefore, IOB conducted a context analysis for Lebanon and Jordan, which included the influx of refugees from Syria, the host countries' refugee reception policies, socio-economic trends in Jordan and Lebanon, and the situation of refugees and host communities (see Chapter 3). IOB used various sources for its contextual analysis, including UN vulnerability assessments for Lebanon and Jordan, UNHCR databases, relevant academic and grey literature, and (international) policy documents. The interviews conducted during IOB's visits to Jordan and Lebanon were particularly important in gaining a thorough understanding of the country contexts.

The country visits to Jordan and Lebanon took place in July and September 2022. During these visits, policy-level interviews were conducted with relevant staff from the Dutch embassy and other donor offices, government ministries, the EU delegation, UN agencies, and academic and think-tank experts. At the same time, the team visited project sites and interviewed project implementers, beneficiaries and secondary stakeholders. In addition, roundtable discussions were held with national and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in both countries.

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8 A more detailed version of the methodology can be found in the Terms of Reference for this evaluation.

9 A detailed overview of project assessments can be found on the IOB website. Note: In addition to the sampled ABAAD project (Lebanon), two other DAFD-funded projects by ABAAD were assessed during the country visits and incorporated into the overviews: Strengthening Gender-Based Violence Prevention & Response (Lebanon) – ABAAD (2019-2021); and Covid-19 ABAAD Lebanon – ABAAD (2020).

10 The following selection criteria were used to select a sample of projects representative of the whole DAFD project portfolio for Lebanon and Jordan from 2016-2021: 1) geography; 2) time period; 3) funding modality; 4) budget; 5) partners; 6) theme; 7) gender mainstreaming; and 8) target group.

11 Funding to the Prospects partnership was not included in the these percentages.

Figure 1.2 *Overview of respondents*

1.4 Limitations

The following limitations apply to this evaluation:

1. The findings of the evaluation relate specifically to Dutch DAFD in Lebanon and Jordan and do not necessarily speak for DAFD interventions in the broader Syria region. The evaluators have mitigated this limitation by synthesising relevant findings from available evaluations of joint European programmes in the Syria region, including FRiT. However, the findings do not apply to DAFD in other regions of the world.
2. DAFD programming is only one instrument that contributes to the three thematic policy objectives of improved access to and quality of education, enhanced protection, and better livelihoods for refugees and host communities. This evaluation focused only on DAFD programming by the Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) and did not consider the wider regional programming by other policy departments of the ministry, nor the diplomatic efforts to support the Dutch comprehensive agenda on migration. Nonetheless, the study did explore how the policy department ensured coherence between the various instruments.
3. The research team found gaps in the available project documentation, such as progress reports, monitoring reports and project evaluations. These gaps have been filled by triangulating the analysis of project documents with existing evidence in the literature, combined with data collected from interviews with relevant stakeholders. However, this does not fully fill the data gap and has limited the extent to which conclusions can be drawn.
4. The Prospects partnership has been the main DAFD policy instrument since 2019, and the largest share of the available DAFD budget has been allocated to the Prospects partners. This evaluation, however, does not cover interventions financed under the Prospects partnership, which makes it difficult to apply conclusions and recommendations based on the project evaluations to the current approach to policy implementation. Nevertheless, IOB has tried to formulate relevant lessons for the Prospects partnership based on the findings regarding the partnership as presented in Chapter 7 on the management of instruments. Moreover, the findings regarding the earlier DAFD programming may be applicable to the subsidy tender that will be implemented with local partners from 2024 to 2027.[12]
5. In 2023, the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (*Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking* – BHOS) decided to extend the Prospects partnership from 2024 to 2027. This report has therefore not been able to inform this decision. However, IOB remained in close contact with the policy department throughout the evaluation and shared preliminary findings on the Prospects partnership.

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[12] Government of the Netherlands, Programme grant Migration and Displacement, 3 July 2023, (accessed 22 January 2023).

1.5 Research and quality control

The evaluation was conducted by IOB, which has an independent position within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The report was written by a research team consisting of Bas Limonard, Charlotte van Eijk, and Stephanie Bouman. In earlier stages, the research was supported by (former) senior IOB researchers Meike de Goede, Johanneke de Hoogh, and Peter Henk Eshuis. The literature review was authored by a team of researchers from University College London: Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (team leader), Aydan Greatrick and Estella Carpi, and with Amal Shaiah Istanbouli. The online conversations study by Upinion was conducted by Noor Lekkerkerker and supervised by Pinar Okur. The field visits were supported by IOB researcher Michelle Homan and interpreter Khalil Yousef (Jordan) and consultant Yasmin Chahal (Lebanon).

Quality control was carried out by an internal IOB sounding board and an external reference group. The sounding board consisted of Rens Willems, Meie Kiel, Johanneke de Hoogh, and Peter Henk Eshuis, who provided regular feedback throughout the evaluation. The members of the reference group were: Prof. Dawn Chatty (Oxford University), Prof. Ulrike Krause (Osnabrück University), and Dr. Katie Kuschminder (University of Amsterdam), Warner ten Kate (head of policy department DSH-MO), Noor Cornelissen (former senior policy officer DSH-MO), Ana Uzelac (senior policy officer DSH-MO), Sven van den Berg (senior policy officer DSH-MO), Ruud van der Helm (former coordinating strategic advisor DAM), Jesper Saman (senior policy officer DAM), Camilla Veerman (First Secretary of Development Cooperation at the Dutch embassy in Jordan). IOB is grateful to the members for their valuable feedback. The responsibility for this report rests solely with IOB. Both the sounding board and the reference group were chaired by Rob van Poelje (IOB).

2 Policy development and implementation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the development of the Dutch policy on refugee reception in the region (*Opvang in de Regio*) and its corresponding policy approach (Development Approaches to Forced Displacement – DAFD). It looks at both the definition of policy objectives, approaches and guidelines, the underlying policy assumptions, as well as the various elements of the intervention strategy and policy instruments chosen to pursue the objectives. As such, this chapter looks at how and why the policy and intervention strategy has developed over time.

IOB's findings in this chapter are as follows:

- The European refugee crisis of 2015 generated broad political and societal support for finding ways to deal with the challenges of migration and protracted forced displacement. Accordingly, a political consensus on the need to provide diplomatic and financial support for the reception of refugees in the region as a policy priority within the broader Dutch migration policy has persisted over the years.
- The key policy objective of improving the prospects of refugees and their host communities has remained constant over the years. However, the budget available to the DAFD increased substantially. Funding modalities have changed significantly, from a wide variety of (smaller) projects to a structural partnership with international partners, forging enhanced collaboration between humanitarian and development partners and attempting to put the 'New Way of Working' into practice.
- Preventing the onward migration of refugees to Europe was an important political rationale for supporting refugee reception in the region, but it was never operationalised as an objective, nor monitored.

2.2 Developments in the international refugee response

2.2.1 International policy developments

The development of the Dutch policy approach to refugee reception in the region was clearly embedded in international policy trends to which the Netherlands actively contributed at the same time. Over the years, the international community has developed various guiding principles in response to the increasing large-scale movements of refugees and migrants and protracted situations of displacement worldwide. In 2015, the massive influx of refugees from Syria and migrants from Africa across the Mediterranean to Europe brought about a significant shift in the international response to refugees, leading to the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the following corresponding 2018 initiatives: the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration.[13] These (non-binding) commitments reflected the notion of refugee hosting as a global public good, meaning that the protection of those who flee, and the support for countries that shelter them, are a shared international concern and responsibility.

The GCR provides a blueprint for a wide range of partners[14] to commit to and deliver on shared responsibility, with four overarching objectives:

- Ease pressure on host countries;
- Increase refugee self-reliance;
- Expand access to third-country solutions (i.e. voluntary resettlement); and
- Support conditions in countries of origin for safe and dignified return.[15]

The GCR moves from a solely humanitarian approach to long-term solutions for protracted displacement by enabling development actors to play a more prominent role in addressing protracted refugee situations. It also underlines the need for increased assistance to host countries, including through (innovative) financial and in-kind contributions. The CRRF, which is part of the GCR, provides a framework that helps to operationalise this new refugee response in an effective, efficient and sustainable way in different contexts.[16]

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[13] United Nations General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 3 October 2016; United Nations General Assembly, *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195)*, 19 December 2018; United Nations, *Global Compact on Refugees - Booklet*, 17 December 2018; UNHCR, *Bringing the New York Declaration to Life, Applying the Comprehensive Refugees Response Framework (CRRF)*, January 2018.

[14] These include amongst other governments, international organisations, international and local NGOs, international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society and refugee organisations.

[15] UNHCR, *The Global Compact on Refugees,* 2023(g), (accessed 30 March 2023).

[16] UNHCR, 2023(g); A. Betts, 'The Global Compact on Refugees', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 30, no. 4, December 2018, p. 623-626; T. Alexander Aleinikoff, 'The Unfinished Work of the Global Compact on Refugees', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 30, no. 4, December 2018, p. 611–617.

The GCR and the CRRF emphasise the promotion of self-reliance and the inclusion of refugees in host societies through improved inclusive access to public services and the labour market. This is in line with the trend of most refugees living outside camps in urban and rural areas. The underlying assumption here is that enabling refugees to participate in host communities will benefit refugees and host communities alike.[17]

2.2.2 The international policy response to the Syria region

In response to the Syria crisis and the influx of refugees from Syria into neighbouring countries, the 2014 Regional Refugees and Resilience Plan (3RP), the national refugee response plans in Jordan and Lebanon (2015), as well as the EU migration agreement with Türkiye and the EU Compacts with Lebanon and Jordan (2016), were attempts to translate the new refugee response narrative into concrete policies linked to financial contributions.[18] While recognising the continued need for humanitarian assistance, these new regional commitments emphasised the longevity of forced displacement and redefined host countries as key stakeholders. These initiatives brought together the different components of protection and humanitarian assistance and the elements of socio-economic resilience, stabilisation and development.[19] The objective of providing inclusive access to refugees from Syria can also be seen in these initiatives, but in different ways, ranging from the integration of refugees into national systems (FRiT in Türkiye), to inclusive access to public services and the labour market for refugees (Jordan Compact and 3RP), to minimal emphasis on refugee integration into national structures (Lebanese initiatives).[20]

2.2.3 The role of the Netherlands

The Netherlands has actively participated in shaping the international framework for the refugee response. For instance, it has advocated for the incorporation of the Dutch priority of facilitating inclusive access to education and employment for refugees.[21] Similarly, trends in the international policy discourse on the refugee response also informed the formulation of the Dutch policy on refugee reception in the region and the respective DAFD policy approach. Moreover, the Jordan Response Plan, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and the EU Compacts were considered to be guiding documents for Dutch DAFD funding in Jordan and Lebanon.

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17 UNHCR, *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*, 2023(c), (accessed 30 March 2023); United Nations, 2018; UNHCR, 2023(g); Betts, 2018, p. 623-626.

18 3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan, *An introduction to The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)*, June 2022; European Commission, *EU – Lebanon partnership, the Compact*, updated August 2017; European Council, *EU-Turkey statement*, 18 March 2016; Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, *Lebanese Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016*, 2 February 2016; Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, *Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis 2016-2018*, 14 January 2016(a); Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, *The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis*, 7 February 2016(b).

19 3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan, 2022; European Council, 2016; Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2016; Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2016(a); Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2016(b); European Commission, 2017; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Fiche 1: Mededeling gedwongen ontheemding en ontwikkeling*, KST 22112-2148, 3 June 2016; Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, KST 19637-2030, 2015; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Actuele situatie in Noord-Afrika en het Midden-Oosten*, KST 32623-163, 24 February 2016.

20 3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan, 2022; European Commission, 2017; European Council, 2016; Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2016(b).

21 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Migratiebeleid*, KST 30573-166, 10 December 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-163, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 22112-2148, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Vreemdelingenbeleid*, KST 19637-2253, 8 November 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, April 2016; V. Barbelet, J. Hagen-Zanker and D. Mansour-Ille, *The Jordan Compact: Lessons learnt and implications for future refugee compacts*, Briefing/policy papers, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), February 2018, p. 3.

2.3 Development of the Dutch DAFD policy approach over time

2.3.1 The emergence of DAFD within Dutch migration policy

The use of DAFD as a policy approach by the Netherlands has evolved in response to an increase in forced displacement[22] (primarily the European refugee crisis of 2015), trends in the international policy discourse, priorities and strategies set in EU migration and asylum policies, developments in the broader Dutch migration policy, and institutional changes within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (MFA).

In 2013, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) announced an increased commitment to migration and development, both at a bilateral and European level.[23] Subsequently, in late 2014, 'refugee reception in the region' (*Opvang in de Regio*) was introduced as one of the four priorities of the ministry's revised migration policy.[24] Refugee reception in the region has since been the consistent terminology in Dutch documents to express the Dutch commitment to supporting the reception of refugees in their region of origin, DAFD as the policy approach of choice. The phrase 'refugee reception in the region' itself reveals a desire to host refugees in their region – thus adapting to the pre-existing regional nature of refugee responses – as opposed to hosting them in Europe. The government assumed that by investing in the protection and reception of refugees in the region, it responded to 'what refugees saw as the desirable solution'. In addition, it would enable refugees to return to their country of origin and rebuild their lives as soon as the situation allowed.[25]

Local integration of refugees in host countries has been the cornerstone of the Dutch DAFD policy approach as compared to the other internationally agreed 'durable solutions' of voluntary resettlement to third countries and voluntary return in safety and dignity. For the Netherlands, voluntary repatriation ('return') of refugees from Syria has been an unrealistic policy option, given the ongoing safety and security challenges in Syria. Dutch commitment to voluntary resettlement has been limited, largely due to political reluctance and the high cost of hosting large numbers of refugees in the Netherlands.[26]

In 2014, the MFA's migration division was transferred from the Consular Affairs and Visa Policy Department (DCV) to the Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Affairs (DSH). This provided an opportunity to further define policy and implementation in response to the European refugee crisis as of 2015, and to better embed migration issues into the broader development policy. The guiding principle here was that prolonged situations of forced displacement require long-term development cooperation in addition to humanitarian assistance.[27]

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22 UNHCR, *Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2021*, 16 June 2022(a), p. 2: 'The number of people forced to flee due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order climbed to 89.3 million by the end of 2021.'

23 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Beleidsnota Wat de wereld verdient: Een nieuwe agenda voor hulp, handel en investeringen*, KST 33625-1, 14 May 2013.

24 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Migratiebeleid*, KST 30573-129, 8 December 2014. The other priorities were: 1) Strengthening migration management, 2) Involving the diaspora in the Netherlands for the development of the country of origin, and 3) Facilitating voluntary return and sustainable reintegration.

25 Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, *Vreemdelingenbeleid en Migratiebeleid: Integrale Migratie Agenda*, KST 19637-2375, 3 April 2018.

26 R. Hansen, 'The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: A Commentary', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, June 2018, pp. 131–138; For the reallocation efforts of the Netherlands, see Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, *Meerjarig beleidskader hervestiging 2020-2023*, KST 19637-2608, 26 May 2020.

27 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2030, 2015; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-163, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 22112-2148, 2016; Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.

In 2016 and 2017, the Minister for BHOS presented the first contours of the DAFD policy framework in various letters to parliament. It should be noted that the policy (at the bilateral level) at the time predominantly referred to the Syria region, including Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.[28] It was only after the arrival of the third Rutte government (October 2017) that a more elaborate DAFD policy framework was formulated in 2018, including a Theory of Change (ToC) narrative.[29] As of 2018, the Dutch DAFD policy approach referred to refugee responses in other regions, following the renewed focus in the BHOS policy note on 'focus-regions' (West Africa/Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)), to tackle the root causes of poverty, migration, terrorism and climate change.[30] As of 2018, policy documents refer to the reception of refugees in the region as one of the pillars of an integrated approach to respond to the challenges of migration and to promote inclusive, sustainable development in line with the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda of 2023.[31]

2.3.2 The intervention logic of Dutch DAFD in the Syria region[32]

The starting point for the Dutch government to support refugee reception in the region by means of DAFD is that the vast majority of refugees and displaced persons in need of international protection seek refuge in neighbouring countries.[33] The presence of large numbers of refugees puts pressure on local communities' public service systems, including the health care sector, the education system and infrastructure, as well as on the local economies of host societies. As such, hosting large numbers of refugees makes host countries vulnerable to increased instability, with the risk of turning host states into countries of transit or origin. The Dutch DAFD policy aims to facilitate the local integration of refugees in host communities, thereby increasing the self-reliance of refugees and reducing tensions between refugees and their host communities.[34]

Since the introduction of refugee reception in the region as a policy priority in 2014 and its related development approach, the key objectives, principles and focal themes have remained largely the same. However, changes in the political context and broader policy developments have led to some minor policy adjustments.

[28] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-163, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal letter, March 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *'Beleid ten aanzien van ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Vreemdelingenbeleid'*, KST 32605-182, 10 May 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Actuele situatie in Noord-Afrika en het Midden-Oosten*, KST 32623-166, 22 June 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, October 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2253, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 22112-2148, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat van Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (XVII) voor het jaar 2018*, KST 34775 XVII – 49, 27 December 2017.

[29] This policy approach was mainly elaborated in the following documents: Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, KST-19637-2375, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Beleidsnota Investeren in Perspectief: Goed voor de wereld, goed voor Nederland*, KST 34952-1, 18 May 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Theory of Change Migratie en Ontwikkeling*, 2018.

[30] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018.

[31] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2375, 2018.

[32] The DAFD's intervention logic as presented here is based, among others, on the 2018 Theory of Change (ToC) on Migration and Development. However, the 2018 ToC encompasses the broader theory on Dutch migration policy, including migration cooperation and return; it is not specific to the Syria region and does not involve country-specific DAFD strategies that were already implemented in 2016-2017. Hence, IOB conducted a policy document review, organised interviews and focus group discussions with relevant MFA staff that engaged in DAFD policymaking from 2015 until 2021 to uncover the intervention logic of DAFD policy in the Syria region.

[33] See UNHCR, *Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2018*, 20 June 2019; UNHCR, *Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2019*, 18 June 2020; UNHCR, *Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2020*, 18 June 2021; UNHCR 2022(a); UNHCR, *Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2022*, 14 June 2023(a) for the percentages of people in need of international protection that lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Theory of Change*, 2018.

[34] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018; Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, KST 19637-2375, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, November 2014; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-163, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-166, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, October 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2253, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 22112-2148, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34775 XVII – 49, 2017.

The main objectives can be outlined as follows:
1. Improving the prospects and sustainable living conditions of refugees and their host communities
2. Preventing onward migration to third countries

Ad.1 Improving the prospects and sustainable living conditions of refugees and their host communities
This objective is the centrepiece of Dutch DAFD. It implies improving socio-economic prospects for both refugees and host communities through the provision of education, basic services and employment opportunities. In addition, policy documents have emphasised the need for protection and humanitarian assistance for refugees in order to reinforce their rights and freedoms.[35] In 2018, when the MFA prepared a Theory of Change Migration and Development, the three main pillars of improving prospects were refined as follows (see Box 2.1):

Box 2.1 *The three pillars of improved prospects*[36]

Better protection and legal status of refugees: The lack of legal documentation, clarity on rights and responsibilities, and access to legal instruments makes refugees vulnerable to (sexual) violence, abuse, exploitation, and child labour and marriage. This hinders their access to basic services and prevents them from participating in host communities. To strengthen the legal status of refugees in their country of residence, the Netherlands invests in better protection for refugees and vulnerable host communities and advocates for a better legal status of refugees.

Access to education and integrated service delivery: Given the challenges of setting up and maintaining adequate reception conditions for large numbers of refugees, host countries need support to develop their public services, such as education, health care, water and sanitation. In this context, the Netherlands contributes to the expansion and improvement of service delivery systems for refugees and host communities. Dutch support focuses primarily on education, on the assumption that investing in the quality of and access to education makes people less vulnerable, more self-sufficient and increases their contribution to the local economy. The Netherlands takes into account the conditions that determine whether refugees can go to school, such as transport, sanitary facilities and language classes.

Economic development and access to decent work: The Dutch government believes that: (1) refugees have the potential to participate in and contribute to economic development in host countries; (2) greater access of refugees to the labour market of a host country has a positive impact on both refugees and host communities and can lead to reduced vulnerability, higher incomes and positive fiscal effects for host communities. The extent to which these benefits occur depends on contextual factors, however.

Host countries, by contrast, are reluctant to integrate refugees into local systems and economies, and often exclude refugees from a host country's labour market. Given the challenges of refugees' access to the host country's labour market, Dutch DAFD has focused on all income-generating activities. It thus invests in projects that provide vocational training, in line with the demands of the labour market.

35 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.
36 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018, p. 2-3; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, 2019.

Ad. 2 Preventing onward migration to third countries

The argument that supporting the reception of refugees in the region could help reduce the (often risky) onward migration of refugees to Europe played a role as a political rationale for funding DAFD. It was first made explicit by the State Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and was mentioned on several occasions in subsequent years.[37] The argument was substantiated by reference to a 2015 UNHCR report, which stated that the lack of access to education and employment in the surrounding region was increasing the influx of asylum seekers in Europe.[38] However, reducing onward migration has never been operationalised as an objective of DAFD, nor has the government tried to monitor actual onward migration. Interestingly, after the 2017 coalition agreement, the motive of reducing refugees' onward migration was no longer mentioned in policy documents of the Minister for BHOS.[39] According to policy staff involved, this can be attributed to the lack of evidence on a causal link between improving prospects and reducing onward migration, as well as the emphasis on improving prospects as preferred by the Minister for BHOS.[40] However, the fact that the argument was still mentioned in the Comprehensive Agenda on Migration (2018) and the 2022 BHOS policy note indicates that the motive of preventing onward migration has retained political value. [41]

Key principles and cross-cutting themes of Dutch DAFD

In addition to these objectives, the policy strategy and implementation were characterised by several key principles, which have remained largely the same throughout the period under review.

a) Facilitating (temporary) local integration (inclusion[42]) of refugees in host communities

The Dutch government sought to promote the social and economic participation of refugees in the local systems and economies of host countries until a return to their countries of origin would be possible. This corresponded to the three main pillars of improving prospects (protection, education and employment). In this way, the Netherlands sought to avoid the maintenance of parallel systems by humanitarian organisations, which hinders refugees' self-reliance and participation in host communities and leads to excessive costs and limited sustainability of aid.[43]

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37 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2030, 2015; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal letter, March 2016.

38 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; UNHCR, *Syrian Refugee Arrivals In Greece - Preliminary Questionnaire Findings April-September 2015*, 8 September 2015, p. 2: 'This preliminary analysis by UNHCR was conducted on a large number of interviews results (1,245), conducted by UNHCR border protection teams in various locations in Greece. Interviews were conducted with Syrian refugees who arrived in the country between April and September 2015. The sampling methodology used was not randomized, and therefore is not representative of the entire caseload of Syrian refugees coming through Greece.'

39 These include Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018; and Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018.

40 Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.

41 Rijksoverheid, *Coalition Agreement Confidence in the Future*, 10 October 2017; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2375, 2018; Rijksoverheid, Coalition Agreement 2021-2025 Looking out for each other, looking ahead to the future, 15 December 2021; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 36180-1, 2022, pp. 10-11.

42 As many host governments are reluctant to accept and publicly endorse the (temporary) local integration of refugees, dialogue and advocacy, in addition to programmatic support, have largely been directed at the 'inclusion' of refugees rather than their integration into national systems. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018; Focus group discussion on the Theory of Change of the Dutch DAFD in the Syria region, 16 and 17 March 2022; Interviews with Dutch embassy staff, Dutch MFA staff, an EU diplomat and academic expert.

43 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2375, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-166, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, October 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2253, 2016.

b) Engaging in ongoing dialogue with and providing financial support to host countries hosting large numbers of refugees

In 2015, supporting host countries to cope with the influx of refugees was declared a secondary policy objective although it was seen as an enabling factor to improve the prospects of refugees and host communities rather than an objective in and of itself.[44] Following this line, Dutch DAFD policy instruments were to be aligned with the national refugee response plans of the host countries, including the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) and the Jordan Response Plan (JRP).[45] This logic also led to the participation of the Netherlands in the Global Concessional Financing Facility, as one of its founders.[46]

c) Providing equal support to refugees and their host communities

Real or perceived inequalities in the provision of assistance could result in tensions and conflicts between the vulnerable local populations and refugees.[47] Therefore, the Netherlands sought to strengthen vulnerable host communities, overcome the disadvantaged position of host communities, and improve the social cohesion among refugees and their host communities through an integrated approach that targeted both vulnerable refugees and host communities.[48]

d) Responsibility-sharing: Being a 'responsible' donor

The need for international cooperation in the reception and support of refugees was first enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention.[49] However, it was only with the introduction of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 that the principle of global solidarity and responsibility-sharing became a real focus of refugee and migrant protection. International responsibility-sharing was articulated in the three durable solutions for displacement: 1) voluntary return in safety and dignity; 2) local integration; and 3) resettlement to a third country.[50]

The Netherlands has been committed to the idea of hosting refugees as a shared international responsibility and has made efforts to operationalise the three internationally agreed 'durable solutions for displacement'. In practice, however, the focus has been mainly on supporting (temporary) local integration (or 'inclusion') of refugees into the host state societies and economies.

e) The Humanitarian-Development Nexus

The MFA aimed to effectively align humanitarian assistance and development approaches to forced displacement, also known as the 'Humanitarian-Development Nexus'. In the first years of DAFD implementation (2016-2017), a separate budget was created for development assistance in situations of forced displacement, while the parallel humanitarian budget covered immediate, life-saving needs.[51]

After the introduction of the 'New Way of Working' (NWoW) in 2016 (see Box 2.2), which is closely linked to the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, the Netherlands saw a role for itself in attempting to follow up on this new approach.

44 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2030, 2015; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2375, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018.
45 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-166, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, October 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2253, 2016.
46 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Vergaderingen interim-Committee en Development Committee*, KST 26234-202, 19 May 2017; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal BEMO, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, June 2016.
47 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018.
48 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2375, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-166, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, October 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2253, 2016.
49 UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol relating to the status of refugees*, undated, p. 13.
50 United Nations, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, 3 October 2016, p. 13.
51 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2030, 2015; Interviews with Dutch MFA staff; Focus group discussion with Dutch MFA and embassy staff on ToC Dutch DAFD in the Syria region, 2022.

Box 2.2 *Facilitating a 'New Way of Working'*[52]

In an attempt to find solutions to the broader challenges of bringing together humanitarian and development actors, the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit launched the 'New Way of Working'. The NWoW is at the heart of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus and aims to move beyond the traditional silos of humanitarian assistance and development approaches. The NWoW can be understood as an attempt to have humanitarian and development actors work together, based on their comparative advantages, towards collective outcomes that reduce the needs, risks, and vulnerabilities of vulnerable groups through joint planning and programming over a longer period.

The Netherlands saw itself as a pioneer in facilitating the NWoW in the context of the Dutch policy approach of DAFD. In 2018, this resulted in the establishment of the 'Prospects' partnership with five humanitarian and development actors (World Bank, IFC, ILO, UNICEF and UNHCR) and the development of a ToC specifically for the NWoW in 2020. The outcome of the NWoW, as described in the ToC developed by the MFA, is in line with the above and is worded as follows:
'a transformation in the way partners and other global/regional stakeholders respond to forced displacement crises'.

In addition to these key principles, the DAFD policy was to be characterised by several cross-cutting themes:

- Special attention to vulnerable groups, in particular women and girls. All Dutch interventions were required to include gender mainstreaming, as it was thought that an active commitment to the integration of the interests and needs of women and girls in all phases of Dutch-funded programmes was needed to strengthen gender equality.[53]
- Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for refugees fleeing crisis situations has been a focus of DAFD interventions, addressing issues of trauma, abuse and violence, child marriage, (sexual) gender-based violence and child labour.[54]
- Strengthening local institutions and developing locally-led policy approaches in line with the MFA's broader localisation agenda.[55]
- Improving socio-economic prospects for youth and facilitating youth participation.[56]
- Supporting private sector development. The EU Compacts with Jordan and Lebanon were seen as ways by which DAFD interventions could stimulate trade between the private sectors of Lebanon and Jordan on the one hand and the EU market on the other.[57]

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52 Based on: ECORYS & HERE-Geneva, *Prospects Mid-term evaluation*, Final Report, Rotterdam, 18 August 2022, p. 10; United Nations, 2018; UNHCR, 2018; IFC, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WB, *Vision note for a new Partnership between the Government of the Netherlands, IFC, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF and the WB*, 2018, p. 5; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, March 2020; OCHA, *Humanitarian Development Nexus*, undated, (accessed 30 March 2023); Inter-Agency Steering Committee, *Humanitarian-Development Nexus: What is the new way of working*, (accessed 30 March 2023); Interviews with Dutch MFA staff and a researcher.

53 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018, pp. 22, 26 and 27; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-166, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2253, 2016.

54 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Theory of Change, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018, p. 48; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-166, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, October 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2253, 2016.

55 The Netherlands has been committed to the Grand Bargain agreement to enable the meaningful engagement and leadership of local and national actors in humanitarian response, enhancing capacity exchange and increasing direct funding. For more information, see Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *The Grand Bargain (Official website)*, (accessed 30 September 2023).

56 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, '*Investeren in Perspectief - Youth at Heart Jongerenstrategie*', KST 34952-104, 24 February 2020; UNICEF, *MENA Generation 2030: Investing in children and youth today to secure a prosperous region tomorrow*, April 2019: Youth is defined as people between the age of 15 and 24 years; In the MENA region, approximately half of the population is under the age of 25.

57 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32605-182, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 32623-166, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, October 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2253, 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, October 2016.

2.3.3 Overall policy assumptions

In its policy reconstruction, IOB has identified a number of assumptions underpinning the (implementation of) Dutch DAFD policy in the Syria region (see Box 2.3).[58] In the following chapters, IOB will reflect on the validity of these assumptions based on the evidence collected for this evaluation.

Box 2.3 *Key assumptions underlying Dutch DAFD*[59]

	Assumption	Assessed in Chapter
1.	Improving prospects and sustainable living conditions for refugees and host communities in and around conflict regions will reduce the need to migrate (onward) to third countries.	Ch. 5
2.	Increased levels of stability in a host country will reduce the need for onward migration and prevent host countries from becoming transit countries or countries of origin.	-
3.	Host governments are able and willing to offer inclusive access to public services to refugees. If this willingness and/or ability is lacking, host countries can be motivated by international donor support.	Ch. 4
4.	Refugees have the potential to participate in and contribute to the economies of host countries.	Ch. 4
5.	An integrated approach that targets both refugees and their host communities will strengthen vulnerable host communities, overcome the disadvantaged position of host communities, and improve relations between refugees and host communities.	Ch. 5
6.	Strengthening inclusive local and national systems in host countries (in the areas of employment and livelihoods, education, protection and legal status) improves the prospects and sustainable living conditions of refugees and host communities alike.	-
7.	Improved employment and livelihoods for refugees and their host communities will have a positive impact on the economic development of the host country and vice versa.	Ch. 4
8.	Better access to and quality of education will contribute to employment and livelihood opportunities (from learning to earning).	Ch. 4
9.	Integrating mental health psychosocial support into education promotes children's well-being, resilience and healthy development, and improves their learning outcomes.	Ch. 4
10.	Gender mainstreaming is interwoven in Dutch support to strengthen gender equality and address the specific needs of women, girls and other vulnerable groups, such as LHBTIQ+ migrants.	Ch. 5
11.	Working in a partnership with a small number of large humanitarian and development actors and promoting the 'New Way of Working', can lead to more effective and efficient collaboration between these partners and, in the medium term, to better outcomes for refugees and host communities.	Evaluation Prospects

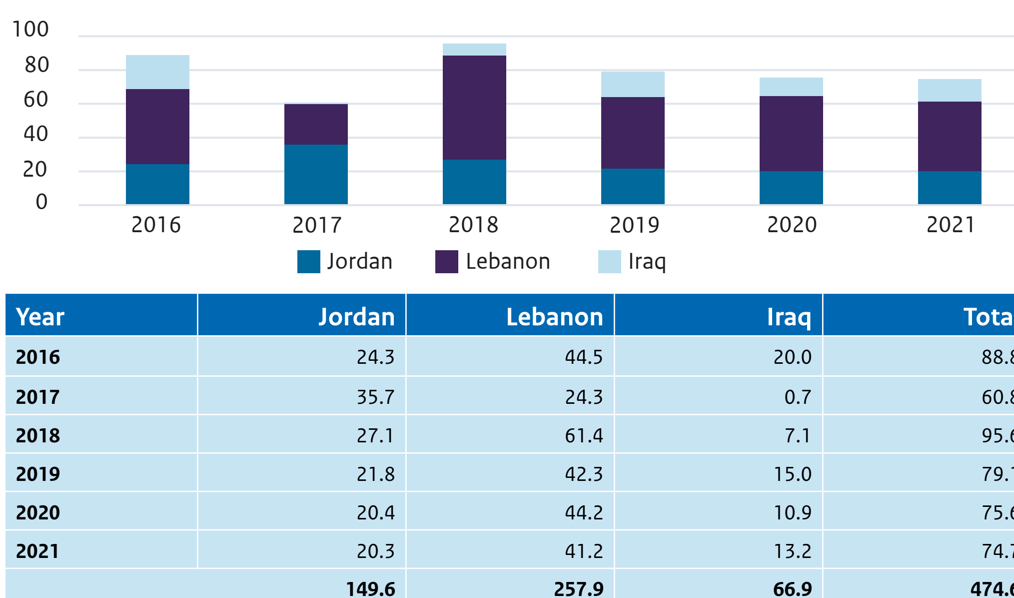
[58] This was done by means of a document analysis, interviews with (former) staff at the MFA and embassies in Amman and Beirut, followed by a group discussion with (former) policy staff to confirm the assumptions identified.

[59] IOB was not able to assess assumptions 2 and 6. With regard to assumption 2, it was not possible to establish a link between the stability of Jordan and Lebanon and the number of refugees originating from these countries. The lack of success in promoting inclusive systems in these countries prevented IOB from assessing assumption 6. However, IOB concludes that the lack of inclusive access to local and national systems has hindered the improvement of socio-economic prospects.

2.4 DAFD policy implementation

Until 2015, Dutch support for refugee reception in the region was financed through the humanitarian assistance budget. In 2016, a separate budget line was created to finance DAFD. This was based on the idea that forced displacement is a long-term game and requires a development-oriented approach that is not compatible with the traditional humanitarian aid framework and its funding mechanisms.[60] Moreover, a development approach was considered more in line with the reality that most refugees lived outside camps and were in search of education and employment.[61] The Dutch government decided to provide additional structural funding at both the national and EU levels.[62] In the period 2016-2021, the Netherlands spent a total of EUR 474.6 million[63] on DAFD in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (see Figure 2.1) and contributed EUR 94 million to the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

Figure 2.1 *Dutch DAFD expenditures 2016-2021, million euros*



Year	Jordan	Lebanon	Iraq	Total
2016	24.3	44.5	20.0	88.8
2017	35.7	24.3	0.7	60.8
2018	27.1	61.4	7.1	95.6
2019	21.8	42.3	15.0	79.1
2020	20.4	44.2	10.9	75.6
2021	20.3	41.2	13.2	74.7
	149.6	**257.9**	**66.9**	**474.6**

Source: IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

2.4.1 Main policy instruments

While the policy objectives and principles remained the same throughout the period under review, the implementation modalities changed significantly. The initial funding of EUR 260 million that was made available to DAFD for 2016-2017 was allocated to concessional loans (EUR 30 million to the Global Concessional Financing Facility) and a portfolio of projects in Lebanon (EUR 86 million) and Jordan (EUR 60 million). The budget for Türkiye (EUR 94 million) was disbursed via the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT), while the budget for Iraq (EUR 20 million) was contributed to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Funding Facility for Expanded Stabilisation.

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60 The humanitarian assistance framework is based on the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and provides aid to those who need it the most. In line with the core elements of this framework, the MFA provides mostly unearmarked core funding. The principles of humanitarian assistance do not correspond to the focus country policy, nor do they involve long-term cooperation with the authorities, which is a premise of development cooperation (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Mensen eerst: Nederlandse koers humanitaire diplomatie en noodhulp*, KST 34 952-62, March 2019).

61 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 22112-2148, 2016; Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.

62 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2030, 2015; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme -Artikel 100 brief*, KST 27925-570, 3 February 2016; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 22112-2148, 2016.

63 Of which EUR 149.8 million in Jordan, EUR 257.8 million in Lebanon, and EUR 67.0 million in Iraq.

The third Rutte government, which took office in October 2017, decided to make structural investments in DAFD in the years to come. Of the EUR 400 million in additional development aid to be spent each year, EUR 128 million was channelled to DAFD.[64] In addition, the new government's 'focus country policy'[65] made Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan eligible for structural development assistance in other priority areas as well, including education and scholarship programmes, increased funding to promote security and rule of law, private sector development, food security, water and sanitation, and climate.[66]

In order to disburse the increased DAFD budget from 2018 onwards, the MFA developed two new instruments:
1. A partnership ('Prospects') between the MFA and five international organisations, with a total budget of EUR 500 million for the period 2018-2023, to be spent in eight countries in the MENA region and the Horn of Africa (including Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq); and
2. A subsidy framework for Migration and Development (2019-2022) of EUR 35 million in total for DAFD activities implemented by NGOs, knowledge institutions, social enterprises and businesses in the same eight countries as the Prospects partnership.

1. The Prospects partnership

As mentioned in Box 2.2, the Netherlands wanted to play a leading role in operationalising the 'New Way of Working'. In the course of 2017, the staff of the policy department took the first steps in this transformative agenda and started developing a multi-annual partnership with a group of international organisations. The aim of the partnership was to improve the prospects of refugees and host communities, while forging closer collaboration between partners to follow up on the 'New Way of Working'.[67] The underlying assumption here is that joining forces and scaling up significantly will increase the impact of DAFD. The partners involved were the World Bank (WB), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).[68]

The partnership needed to significantly reduce the fragmentation and management burden for the MFA (both department and embassies) as well as for implementing organisations, while maintaining flexibility under umbrella contracts. As such, the partnership responded to concerns within the MFA about the fragmentation of the project portfolio and the resulting overhead costs. The partnership was also seen as an opportunity to work with local NGOs through the national chapters of the partner organisations and their joint country plans.[69]

The actual implementation of the Partnership started in 2019. In 2018, the MFA provided seed funding to the partners, i.e. to cover the budget needs to continue programming and to prepare 'country vision notes' and future programming) on the basis of the 'global vision note' (see also Chapter 7). This global vision note was finalised in the spring of 2018 and represented the shared vision and ambition of the partners. As such, it provided a general thematic focus, as well as a framework for the country teams (local offices of the Prospects partners) for the development of country vision notes for the specific context of the respective countries.[70]

64 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018, p. 43 and p. 100.
65 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Voortgang opvang in de regio*, KST 35570 XVII-52, 25 January 2021.
66 These other programmes were managed by various MFA departments, including the Social Development Department (DSO), the Inclusive Green Growth department (IGG), the Security Policy Unit (DVB), and the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE).
67 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, June 2018.
68 During the development of the Prospects partnership no other partners than these five were approached.
69 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal memo, June 2018.
70 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, 2018; Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.

The partnership is built around the thematic pillars outlined in Box 2.1. The 'New Way of Working' became the fourth pillar and focuses on strategic collaboration, in line with the 'One UN' agenda, which proposes enhanced coordination to capitalise on the comparative advantages of UN agencies, to create synergies for added value, to learn from each other and to reinforce the objectives of linking relief and development in contexts of forced displacement (see also Box 2.2).[71]

2. Subsidy framework for Migration and Development (2019-2022)

In 2018, a new subsidy framework for migration and development was launched, which made it possible to work with NGOs, knowledge institutions, social enterprises and businesses to complement the collaboration with large international agencies under the Prospects partnership. The subsidy framework was specifically designed for DAFD activities (EUR 35 million in total) and migration cooperation interventions (EUR 6 million). Following a public tender, 11 projects were funded under the subsidy framework, 6 of which were implemented in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, mostly led by NGOs.[72]

[71] ECORYS & HERE-Geneva, 2022, p. 10; IFC, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WB, 2018, p. 5; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, March 2020; Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.

[72] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Vaststelling van beleidsregels en een subsidieplafond voor subsidiëring op grond van de Subsidieregeling Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 2006 (Migratie en Ontwikkeling 2019–2022)*, Staatscourant 2018-54481, 20 September 2018.

An overview of the various DAFD funding modalities described above, as well as other DAFD-funded activities, is provided in the timeline below (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 *Timeline of Dutch DAFD funding for the Syria region*[73]

Until 2015	2016-2019	2019 onwards
BHOS article 4.1 (Humanitarian assistance)	BHOS article 4.3 (Security and rule of law)	BHOS article 4.2 (Refugee reception in the region)
↓	↓	↓
Main Financial instruments	**Main Financial instruments**	**Main Financial instruments**
2014-2015 • The Relief Fund: EUR 570 million in total • Top-up humanitarian budget: EUR 200 million in total	**2016-2017** • World Bank Concessional Finance Facility to Lebanon and Jordan (2016-2021): EUR 30 million in total • Additional funding of EUR 260 million in total: - Türkiye, FRIT: EUR 94 million - Lebanon, LCRP: EUR 86 million - Jordan, JRP: EUR 60 million - Iraq, FFIS: EUR 20 million	**2019-2023 (will be followed up in period 2024-2027)** • Prospects partnership: EUR 441 million in total - ILO: EUR 89.3 million - IFC: EUR 42.5 million - UNHCR: EUR 108.3 million - UNICEF: EUR 132.6 million - World Bank: EUR 68.3 million • The Opportunity fund: EUR 73 million in total - UNHCR: EUR 22 million - ILO: EUR 29.7 million - UNICEF: EUR 18 million - WB: EUR 3.3 million
2015 • Additional funding for DAFD specific: EUR 110 million in total	**2018-2019** • Seed funding to Prospects partners: EUR 41 million in total - ILO: EUR 10.7 million - IFC: EUR 4.3 million - UNHCR: EUR 4.6 million - UNICEF: EUR 5.1 million and EUR 10.3 million (RACE II) - World Bank: EUR 6 million	**2018-2023** • Subsidy Framework: EUR 35 million in total - Lebanon: EUR 8.3 million in total - Jordan: EUR 4.1 million in total - Iraq: EUR 4.0 million in total - Jordan and Iraq: EUR 3.6 million in total
	Between 2017 and 2020 • Additional funding: - Education program Iraq: EUR 5.4 million in total - Contribution to EU Madad: EUR 3 million in total - UNHCR cash assistance for Lebanon and Jordan: EUR 29.3 million in total - Contribution to Stabilisation Fund: EUR 3.9 million in total - Contribution to IOM Iraq: EUR 3.5 million in total - Feasibility study: EUR 398,000 in total	**2020** • Covid-19 activities in Lebanon and Iraq: - Lebanon: EUR 2.0 million in total - Iraq: EUR 1.1 million in total

[73] The project analysis includes the following financial instruments: the additional funding of EUR 260 million (2016-2017), the additional funding (2017-2020), the Subsidy Framework (2019-2020) and the Covid-19 funding in Lebanon (2020).

3 Context analysis

3.1 The influx of refugees from Syria

As a result of the Syrian civil war, which started in 2011, more than 14 million Syrians have fled their homes in search of safety. Some 6.8 million of them remain internally displaced in Syria, while more than 7 million have left the country. The vast majority of refugees from Syria (approximately 5.5 million) live in five countries in the region: Türkiye (3.6 million), Lebanon (805,000), Jordan (660,000), Iraq (263,000) and Egypt (145,000).[74] As not all refugees have been registered by UNHCR,[75] the actual number of refugees is likely to be much higher. Therefore, the exact number of refugees from Syria who have found refuge/shelter in Jordan and Lebanon remains a matter of conjecture. Moreover, different sources provide different figures, and the large number of Syrians already living (temporarily) in Jordan and Lebanon, mostly for (seasonal) work, adds to the complexity of determining the actual numbers. The Lebanese government estimated that up to 1.5 million Syrians were staying in the country, while in Jordan the figure was between 1.2 and 1.6 million.[76]

74 UNHCR Operational Data Portal, *Syria regional refugee response*, last updated 31 October 2023(a).

75 In 2015, the Lebanese government suspended the registration of Syrian refugees by UNHCR.

76 Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2022 country report Jordan*, 2022(b); Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2022 country report Lebanon*, 2022(c); OCHA, *Influx of Syrian Refugees in Jordan*, 14 February 2021; UNHCR, *Lebanon*, 2023(e), (accessed 21-07-2023).

While the number of Syrian refugees hosted in Iraq is significantly lower, 5.8 million people in Iraq were internally displaced between 2011 and 2022 as a result of the conflict with Islamic State (IS).[77]

With a total population – including refugees – of around 6 million (Lebanon) and 11 million (Jordan), these countries host the largest shares of refugees per capita in the world. It is important to note that not all refugees from Syria have Syrian nationality. Iraqis, stateless Palestinians and other refugees of non-Syrian origin have fled the country. In addition, Lebanon and Jordan host refugees from other countries as well, such as Sudan, Yemen and Iraq.[78] However, many Western donor programmes or 'refugee-inclusive' government policies have focused exclusively on refugees from Syria.[79]

Box 3.1 *Hosting Palestinian refugees*[80]

Lebanon and Jordan were no strangers to hosting refugees. During the Palestinian War in 1948, many Palestinians fled the country and sought refuge in Lebanon and Jordan. At the time, they constituted 10% of the Lebanese population and 50% of the Jordanian population. Unlike in Lebanon, where they were not accepted as Lebanese citizens, most of the Palestinians in Jordan have been naturalised and granted citizenship. By 2022, Lebanon hosted some 174,000 to 479,000 Palestinians and Jordan 2.1 million Palestinians.

In Jordan and Lebanon, few Syrian refugees lived in camps. In Jordan, about 20% of registered refugees lived in camps, while 80% lived in urban areas. The Lebanese government has prohibited the building of refugee camps. The majority of the refugees there lived in residential structures, with around 20% in temporary tent settlements and 10% in non-residential structures, such as factories, farms, schools, construction sites and warehouses. More than half of the refugee shelters were classified as 'hazardous homes', meaning they were overcrowded, in danger of collapsing or below humanitarian standards.[81]

On average, Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon were relatively young. About half of the Syrian refugee population in these countries consisted of children under the age of 18,[82] with a relatively small proportion of older people.[83] This meant that about 45% were of working age. In both countries, the male-female ratio was about 50-50.[84]

77 By the end of 2022, 1.2 million Iraqis were still internally displaced and lived in camps. Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2022 country report Iraq'* 2022(a); Internal displacement monitoring centre, *Country profile Iraq*, last updated 24 May 2023.

78 By the end of 2022, another 12,100 refugees were registered in Lebanon, more than half of which came from Iraq, followed by Sudan and Ethiopia. Jordan hosted another 87,400 registered refugees fleeing Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and Somalia. UNHCR global focus, *Lebanon*, 2023(b), (accessed 25 May 2023); UNHCR global focus, *Jordan*, 2023(a), (accessed 25 May 2023); UNHCR, *Jordan*, 2023(d), (accessed 25 May 2023).

79 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, p. 44.

80 M.A. Moghli, *The mobilizing power of Palestinians in Lebanon*, Commentary, Al Shabaka, 7 March 2022; Bertelsmann Stiftung, (2022(b)); UNWRA, Where we work (Lebanon), last updated July 2023; UNWRA, Where we work (Jordan), last updated July 2023.

81 UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, *2021 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (VASyR)*, 25 January 2022.

82 In Jordan, 48.7% is below 18, in Lebanon this is 54%. In Jordan, 50% is between 5 and 11, in Lebanon the majority is between 5 and 11.

83 4.2% in Jordan and 3% in Lebanon.

84 Brookings, *Syrian refugees in Jordan: A decade and counting*, 27 January 2022; UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Syria regional refugee response (Jordan), last updated 31 October 2023(b); UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Syria regional refugee response (Lebanon), last updated 31 October 2023(c).

3.2 Host country policy towards refugees from Syria

The way in which refugees from Syria have been received in Lebanon and Jordan has been strongly influenced by previous experiences of hosting large numbers of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. The Palestinian experience in particular created a reluctance to accept a new population of refugees as anything more than temporary guests.[85] While both countries were initially more welcoming, Lebanon and Jordan became increasingly reluctant as refugee numbers grew and it became clear that their displacement would be a long-term matter. Neither Jordan nor Lebanon is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention.[86] However, this does not mean that these countries have no responsibility to provide temporary asylum or sanctuary. As signatories to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Lebanon only),[87] both countries are obliged to abide by the principle of *non-refoulement*. This principle implies that refugees shall not be deported or forced to return (to the country of origin) if there are serious threats to their lives, including persecution, torture, ill-treatment or other human rights violations.[88]

While the Jordanian approach has been more accommodating to refugees, granting some of them legal residency, the Lebanese government has never been willing to officially recognise those fleeing from Syria as refugees, only as 'displaced people residing temporarily in Lebanon until they can return to Syria'. The government has also opposed the building of refugee camps for fear of creating 'permanent structures' to prevent a repeat of the Palestinian experience (see Box 3.1). In Lebanon, with its consociational political system, the presence of large numbers of refugees (mostly Sunni Muslims) was perceived by many, in particular religious minority groups, as a threat to the sectarian balance and thus to social peace and political stability in Lebanon. In 2015, the Lebanese government asked UNHCR to stop registering refugees from Syria. Since then, Syrians have only been allowed to enter the country on work or tourist visas, and unregistered Syrians are required to have a Lebanese 'sponsor', e.g. an employer, otherwise they are considered to be residing in the country illegally.

Although local integration in the host country is one of the three so-called 'durable solutions' on which there is international consensus, (the others being voluntary repatriation to their country of origin ('return') and resettlement to a third country),[89] both Lebanon and Jordan have rejected the idea of fully integrating refugees into their societies and economies.[90] As a result, the international community began to advocate 'inclusion' or 'temporary local integration'.

The Lebanese government held the international community responsible for the reception of refugees and has been pushing for their return to Syria. In Jordan, the government has not been pushing for return[91] but has demanded that the international community shoulder the financial burden of hosting refugees. During the period covered by this evaluation (2016-2021), the international community did not consider return to Syria a safe option and therefore did not support return policies.

85 K. Lenner and S. Schmelter, 'Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon: between Refuge and Ongoing Deprivation?', *IEMed Yearbook 2016*, September 2016, p. 122.

86 This UN treaty defines the term 'refugee' and outlines their rights as well as the international standards of treatment by host countries in order to lead a dignified and independent life. UNHCR, *About UNHCR - The 1951 Refugee Convention*, 2023, (accessed 30 May 23).

87 OHCHR, *Status of ratification interactive dashboard*, last updated 21 February 2023.

88 OHCHR, *The principle of non-refoulement under international human rights law*, no date, (accessed 18 September 2023).

89 In terms of a durable solution, full integration would ultimately mean granting Jordanian or Lebanese citizenship. For the reasons mentioned above (e.g. the number of Palestinian refugees in both countries), this was a clear no-go for Lebanon and not the most desirable solution for Jordan either.

90 UNHCR, *Solutions*, 2023(f), (accessed 27 June 2023).

91 This concerns the period covered by this evaluation. More recently, the rhetoric has shifted towards talks about voluntary return and calls for investment in Syria's reconstruction.

3.3 EU engagement

With the consolidation of the power of Assad's regime in 2015, a significant number of Syrians fled directly to Europe, which, together with increased arrivals from countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Eritrea, resulted in the so-called 'European asylum crisis'. In its wish to avoid such 'uncontrolled flows' in the future, the EU's updated approach to migration policy aimed to accommodate and register as many refugees as possible in neighbouring countries.[92] The idea was that this would make it easier for refugees to either integrate or return home in due course. In addition, it would bring more order to migration flows, including by discouraging refugees from making the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean.[93]

To support these neighbouring countries in hosting refugees and preventing onward migration to Europe, the EU has concluded bilateral agreements with many of these neighbouring countries. In March 2016, the EU and Türkiye reached a deal to 'stop the flow of irregular migration via Türkiye to Europe, to break the business model of smugglers, and to offer migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk'.[94] In return for EUR 6 billion,[95] Türkiye would host Syrian refugees and prevent onward migration to the EU. In 2016 and 2017 respectively, Jordan and Lebanon agreed with the EU on the so-called 'migration compacts'. In short, these compacts focused on relaxing the EU rules of origin to facilitate exports to the EU in exchange for allowing refugees from Syria to be employed in certain sectors (agriculture, construction and manufacturing) (see section 3.4 for more details on the EU-Jordan compact).

However, there is much criticism of the EU's new approach to responsibility sharing. It is argued that by placing the responsibility for registering and accommodating refugees on neighbouring countries, the EU has largely withdrawn from the formal obligation to accommodate refugees in Europe. As a result, the EU is seen to have retreated from welcoming refugee boats into the EU and from supporting operations at sea to rescue migrants.[96] Some refugees are welcomed based on resettlement agreements with host countries, but this only happens on a voluntary and ad hoc basis and falls short of the number called for by UNHCR.[97]

In the period 2013-2022, about 1.4 million refugees from Syria have sought asylum in the EU,[98] which is about half of the refugees hosted by Lebanon alone. Seventy per cent of these refugees are being hosted by two EU member states: Germany (59%) and Sweden (11%). The Netherlands (4.5%) is in a middle group with Austria (7%), Greece (6%) and France (2%), while other countries host less than 2%.[99]

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92 T. Fakhoury, 'The external dimension of EU migration policy as region-building? Refugee cooperation as contentious politics', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol 48, no. 1, November 2021, pp. 1-19; S. Fine, *All at sea: Europe's crisis of solidarity on migration*, ECFR policy brief, 14 October 2019; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 19637-2030, 2015.

93 Government of the Netherlands, *Tackling the refugee policy*, (accessed 21 July 2023).

94 European Parliament, *EU-Turkey statement & action plan – Legislative train schedule*, 20 March 2016.

95 This was topped up with another EUR 4 billion in 2021.

96 Fine, 2019.

97 Ibid.

98 Eurostat, *Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - annual aggregated data*, 2 June 2023. On average, more than 90% of asylum applications are being granted.

99 Eurostat, 2023; Middle group percentages: IOB calculations based on Eurostat, 2023.

3.4 Socio-economic trends in Jordan and Lebanon

Lebanon and Jordan faced many socio-economic problems, the causes of which often pre-date or are not necessarily linked to the arrival of refugees from Syria, such as high levels of poverty, scarcity of resources or lack of effective governance institutions.[100] However, the presence of large numbers of refugees is likely to have aggravated existing problems.

Both countries have suffered economically from regional instability. The closure of borders with Syria and Iraq has limited access to export markets (including Türkiye), and the Syrian conflict has hindered investment and economic growth. With economic growth stagnating – aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic – both countries were faced with huge public debts and budget deficits, placing an increasing burden on public service delivery and state subsidies, and keeping them dependent on foreign assistance.

Jordan

In 2019, the Jordanian government said that hosting refugees was taking its toll on the Jordanian economy and that Jordan did not have the fiscal space to finance this, while already at that time (before the outbreak of Covid-19), more and more Jordanians were vulnerable and in need of international support.[101] As the needs of refugees and vulnerable host communities grew, the Jordanian government increasingly focused its social policies on Jordanians only, leaving the responsibility for refugees to the international community.[102]

Although the EU-Jordan Compact was presented as a model for other countries to follow, it has not lived up to its promises. While the Jordanian government did eventually issue the agreed number of work permits,[103] the Compact has largely failed to jumpstart exports and generate the employment gains it set out to. The Jordanian government's issuance of sector-specific work permits has been severely delayed and has not had the desired impact on refugee employment. First, because employment in the sectors targeted by the Compact – agriculture, construction and manufacturing – tend to be informal in nature, the possession of a work permit alone was far from a guarantee of employment. In addition, increased access to the European market for Jordanian firms was conditional on a firm both employing Syrians and operating out of a 'special economic zone'. These zones, however, were located nowhere near the main Syrian population centres.[104] Moreover, the Compact created unequal competition for other migrants, mostly Egyptian agricultural workers.[105]

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the socio-economic situation in Jordan, as mobility restrictions negatively affected businesses, in particular those operating in the informal economy, and the large group of temporary (e.g. daily and seasonal) workers who lacked access to social security and safety nets. Although Jordan began to recover from the pandemic shock, weaknesses in the labour market persisted. The official unemployment rate increased from 15.3% in 2016 to 18.4% in 2021, but the actual unemployment rate tended to be much higher. When looking specifically at youth employment, the figures are even worse, with almost 50% of Jordan's youth unemployed in 2022.

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100 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, p. 62.

101 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging – berichtenverkeer on Jordan for the period October 2017 – June 2022.

102 For example, the energy subsidy scheme that was introduced in 2022 for Jordanian (multi-person) households only. See Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging – berichtenverkeer on Jordan.

103 Until 2021, agriculture, construction and manufacturing were the only sectors in Jordan that Syrian refugees were allowed to legally work in. Since 2021, the Jordanian government has issued work permits to displaced Syrians in all sectors open to non-Jordanians, including services and sales, crafts, forestry and fishery, plant and machinery and basic industries. For Covid-19 specifically, some Syrian refugees obtained work permits to work as health care professionals. UNHCR, *Jordan issues record number of work permits to Syrian refugees*, 25 January 2022(b).

104 For a discussion, see e.g. E. Empociello, *The Jordan Compact's Failure to Create Jobs and Power Exports: Explaining a Missed Opportunity*, Noria Research, December 2021.

105 Interviews during IOB country visit Jordan. See also e.g. A. Zohry, S. Abou Hussein and D. Hashem, *The impact of the Syrian influx on Egyptian migrant workers in Jordan*, The American University in Cairo, September 2020, pp. 44-45.

Moreover, Jordan's business and investment climate remained weak, despite some reforms to encourage private sector development. In particular, start-ups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) faced various constraints, such as in obtaining permits, getting access to finance and investor protection.[106]

Lebanon

In September 2019 Lebanon's political leadership declared a 'state of economic emergency' as a result of long-standing structural problems.[107] The severity of the public debt was straining Lebanon's public resources, undermining the provision of public services such as infrastructure, education and health care. The Syrian crisis and the arrival of so many refugees from Syria have put severe pressure on Lebanon's already dysfunctional public infrastructure. Road networks have deteriorated, and electricity production has been highly ineffective and unreliable.[108]

The Covid-19 containment measures and the explosion at the port of Beirut in August 2020 have further exacerbated the economic crisis.[109] According to the World Bank, Lebanon's economy contracted by more than 20% in 2020 and continued to worsen in 2021.[110] According to the World Bank, Lebanon was in a 'deliberate depression' in 2020, as the many crises that kept piling up were the result of years of bad policies, a corrupt government and an unwillingness to reform. In its 2021 report, the World Bank further criticised the political elite for orchestrating the world's greatest national economic recession, arguing that 'the depression was self-imposed, or more precisely, imposed onto the general population by the elite that has long ruled the country and captured the state and its associated economic rents'.[111]

In 2021, more than half of all Lebanese were living below the poverty line. Forty-one per cent of Lebanese households lacked sufficient access to food and basic goods and were in need of humanitarian assistance.[112] Public services have virtually ground to a halt in the gravel pit of patronage and corruption. The state-owned electricity company costs the state billions annually and only supplies an average of one hour of electricity per day in Beirut. Drinking water, telecommunications and health services are also on the verge of collapse.[113]

Lebanon struggled to form a stable cabinet after the 2018 elections. A government of exclusively pro-Syrian parties was formed in January 2020, but the Beirut blast of August 2020 brought it to an end. After several short-lived cabinets, new elections were held in 2022. Much political energy was expended on the battles over the Independent Commission of Inquiry into the Beirut Port explosion. With the exodus of civil servants, Lebanon's ministries have become 'empty shells', lacking any planning and implementation capacity.

Despite efforts by international donors to apply conditionality to their aid, Lebanon's political elite has never shown any sense of urgency for reform. Lebanon's political elites know how to put pressure on the international community by pointing to the risk of instability in the country and of one million Syrians arriving on the shores of Europe. As such, the country is leveraging its own weakness towards Western powers. The increased eligibility of the Lebanese population for humanitarian support is gnawing away at the basis of conditionality, as the alternative – no support for the most vulnerable Lebanese – is difficult to justify from a humanitarian perspective.

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106 Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022(b)), pp. 18-28.; ILO, *Promoting Decent Work in Jordan*, 2023(a), (accessed on 7 November 2023). World Bank, *The World Bank in Jordan*, 9 January 2023; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, *MACS Jordan 2023-2026*.

107 A public debt of close to 170% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), low GDP growth and a high budget deficit of almost 10% of GDP.

108 Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022(b)), p. 30.

109 As most of Lebanon's imports come through the Port of Beirut, the explosion deeply affected the productive economic sectors and threatened many people's livelihoods in the country. See Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2021 (2021 update)*, 12 March 2021, pp. 10-11.

110 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging, berichtenverkeer on Lebanon.

111 The GDP in dollars has decreased by 40%, and the Lebanese pound has lost more than 90% of its value since 2019. Inflation is unimaginably high and savings accounts have gone up in smoke. The minimum wage fell from USD 450 to USD 40. World Bank Group, *Lebanon Economic Monitor: The Great Denial*, 2021.

112 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging – berichtenverkeer on Lebanon; World Bank Group, 2022.

113 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging – berichtenverkeer on Lebanon.

High unemployment and lack of prospects in both countries, in particular among the youth,[114] are driving human capital abroad, while those who remain are increasingly poor and frustrated, creating fertile ground for crime and radicalisation. Combined with increasing political turmoil, lack of economic reform, shrinking civic space (less freedom for civil society and media) and stalled democratisation, the stability of both Jordan and Lebanon has become increasingly fragile.[115] The socio-economic challenges have left both countries dependent on foreign aid to cover persistent budget deficits.

3.5 The situation of refugees and host communities

3.5.1 Protection

In Jordan, the overall protection status and access to employment and education of Syrian refugees had improved in the years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Most refugees who were registered with UNHCR had valid documentation, which ensured their protection and facilitated access to services. Registered refugees were also less likely to be detained or deported and benefited from exemptions and reduced fees for health, education and employment services.[116]

Since UNHCR registration was banned in Lebanon in 2015, 74% of Syrian refugees over the age of 15 are not registered. This leaves many Syrians without registration, birth certificates and access to job opportunities, education and health care. In addition, the authorities in Lebanon are putting increasing pressure on Syrian refugees to return to Syria. Measures taken include the destruction of temporary shelters, the arrest of informal Syrian workers, and the deportation of Syrians who entered Lebanon irregularly and/or without proper documentation. The deportations often take place without procedural safeguards, and deported Syrians are often handed over to the Syrian authorities. As a result, Syrian refugees generally do not feel comfortable moving around the country or leaving their homes. This, in turn, contributes to the difficulty (see also next section) of finding employment to support themselves and integrate into society.[117]

3.5.2 Employment, income, and coping strategies

During the period under review, employment among refugees declined, particularly in Lebanon, to one-third of refugees of working age in 2021.[118] In both Lebanon and Jordan, Syrians were only legally allowed to work in specific sectors, including agriculture, construction and manufacturing.[119] Even before the Syrian crisis, Syrians in both countries were employed (on a daily or seasonal basis) in the agricultural and construction sectors in both countries.

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[114] Lebanon's unemployment jumped from 11.4% in 2019 to 60% in 2022, and the percentage of youth that is neither employed nor in education or training stood at 62.3% (Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, *2020 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (VASyR)*, 19 February 2021; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022).

[115] See e.g. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, *MACS Jordan 2023-2026*.

[116] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging – berichtenverkeer on Jordan.

[117] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging – berichtenverkeer on Libanon; See also 'Libanon deporteert Syrische vluchtelingen: 'Laat ze lekker sterven'', *NRC*, 10 May 2023; 'Libanon zet vluchtelingen uit naar Syrië. Wat hen daar staat te wachten, is 'niet ons probleem'', *de Volkskrant*, 17 May 2023.

[118] In Lebanon from 57% in 2017 to 33% in 2021. In Jordan from 35% before to 31% after the pandemic. In both countries, about 45% of refugees were working-age individuals in 2021. (Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon – VASyR 2017*, December 2017; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, *2021 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (VASyR)*, 25 January 2022; UNHCR, Action Against Hunger, ILO, *Jordan: Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Population Study 2019*, 9 April 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP, *Jordan: Vulnerability Assessment Framework: 2017 Population Survey Report, Sector Vulnerability Review*, July 2018; Samuel Hall, UNHCR, *Vulnerability Assessment Framework: Population Survey of Refugees Living in Host Communities Jordan 2022*, 20 June 2022)

[119] Until 2021, agriculture, construction and manufacturing were the only sectors in Jordan that Syrian refugees were allowed to legally work in. Since 2021, the Jordanian government has issued work permits for displaced Syrians in all sectors open to non-Jordanians, including services and sales, crafts, forestry and fishery, plant and machinery and basic industries. For Covid-19 specifically, some Syrian refugees obtained permits to work as health care professionals. (UNHCR, *Jordan issues record number of work permits to Syrian refugees*, 25 January 2022(b). In Lebanon, refugees from Syria were only legally allowed to work in the construction, environment, and agriculture sectors. The environment sector encompasses promising industries such as waste recycling and green and renewable energies (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020 (2019 update)*, p. 125). Even for these sectors, there were only a limited number of work permits provided.

The main barriers to employment for Syrian refugees in Lebanon were lack of employment opportunities, lack of skills and/or experience, having dependent family members and medical conditions.[120]

The possession of a work permit was associated with higher income and expenditure per capita, as well as more manageable debt. While the Jordanian government issued 239,000 sector-specific work permits for Syrian refugees in 2021, the Lebanese government only issued a small number. In both countries, most of the employed refugees worked in the informal economy and in low-skilled jobs, exposing them to poor labour conditions, low wages and insecurity of payment.

Throughout the period under review, Syrian households in Lebanon continued to depend on non-sustainable sources of income, such as cash assistance and (informal) credit and debts from friends and family, to meet basic needs.[121] Partly due to steep inflation, households were often unable to cover non-food expenses, such as rent, health and education, which increased their vulnerability. While three-quarters of Syrian refugee households in Lebanon had already been living below the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) since 2016,[122] the socio-economic crisis in Lebanon pushed even more into extreme poverty (91% below the MEB). Given their inability to meet basic needs, a large share of Syrian households had gone into debt (60% in 2016 vs 92% in 2021), mostly by borrowing money from friends and relatives living in Lebanon. In Jordan, Syrian refugees' vulnerability remained high as well over the years (75% faced high or severe vulnerability in 2021, according to the (Survival) MEB.[123] Accordingly, per capita debt levels remained high. Paying the rent, healthcare expenses and buying food were the main reasons for borrowing money, mostly from friends, relatives or neighbours.

Apart from Syrian refugees, the Lebanese population was also increasingly affected by poverty. By March 2021, 78% of Lebanon's population was estimated to be living in poverty (triple the estimated number in 2020), while 36% of the population was living in extreme poverty (up from 8% in 2019 and 23% in 2020).[124]

Refugee households used different types of strategies to cope with the lack of resources. The most common coping mechanisms were taking on debt and buying food on credit, reducing essential non-food expenditure and spending on health (including medicines) and education, using savings and selling household goods. Less frequent but more severe were withdrawing children from school, child labour, selling productive assets, begging and child marriage. In Lebanon, the percentage of refugees that adopted food-related and livelihood-based coping strategies remained extremely high throughout the period 2016-2021, with little change. In Jordan, the use of crisis and emergency coping mechanisms declined somewhat over the years, as did the overall use of food and livelihood coping strategies. However, the latter increased again in 2021.[125]

[120] UNHCR, Action Against Hunger, ILO, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC (2021); UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022.

[121] UNHCR, Action Against Hunger, ILO, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2021; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022.

[122] 71% in 2016, 75% in 2017, 68% in 2018 and 73% in 2019 (Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon - 2016*, 16 December 2016; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2017; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon - VASyR 2018*, 25 December 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, *2019 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (VASyR)*, 23 December 2019).

[123] This percentage cannot be compared to former assessments, due to different measurements (MEB instead of SMEB). Samuel Hall, UNHCR, 2022; UNHCR, Action against Hunger, ILO, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP, 2018.

[124] Human Rights Watch, *Lebanon Events of 2021*, 2023, (accessed 14 June 2023).

[125] UNHCR, Action Against Hunger, ILO, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2021; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022.

3.5.3 Tensions between refugees and host communities

In Lebanon, tensions among and between refugee groups and host community members have increased significantly in recent years. In Jordan, tensions have been less pronounced, but there have been some examples of clashes.[126]

The number one driver for community tensions has been increased competition for jobs[127] and competition for resources and services.[128] This is exemplified by the perception among Lebanese host members that Syrians are stealing jobs and driving down wages, and by Syrians complaining about exploitation and poor working conditions. Moreover, the political discourse in Lebanon among various political groups has consistently pointed to refugees as the ones to blame for having a negative impact on the economy of host communities.[129]

Perceptions, interpersonal and community interactions are also largely shaped by local-level dynamics, which differ across regions, neighbourhoods, municipalities and settlement types. As the literature shows, integrated school activities targeting both Syrian and Jordanian students and teachers have had a positive impact on communication, while double-shift models in Jordanian public schools have fuelled bullying, violence and discrimination.[130]

Potential tensions are mostly driven by perceptions and assumptions about differential treatment between groups in terms of access to essential services, access to foreign (cash) assistance or competition for jobs.[131] Fuelled by politicians and negative (social) media reports, many Lebanese feel that refugees are favoured by international donors and that Lebanese are neglected, while they too live in poverty. In the media, refugees are often scapegoated and increasingly unfairly blamed for all kinds of problems facing the country. In Jordan, this is less the case, although the presence of refugees is increasingly being portrayed as a heavy burden on the country.

3.5.4 Education

Although both Jordan and Lebanon have opened their education systems to refugee children, large groups still do not attend school regularly or have never attended school. In Lebanon, Syrian refugee children aged 6-14 have the highest enrolment rate in formal education compared to other age cohorts.[132] Formal education enrolment rates for Syrian refugee children under the age of 5 and between the ages of 15-24 in Lebanon have remained very low since 2017 (both around 11%).[133]

In Jordan, 136,000 out of a potential 233,000 school-age Syrian refugee children were enrolled in the national education system in 2020-2021. More than 200 schools in host communities in Jordan continued to teach Syrian children in second (afternoon) shifts. Due to Covid-19, school attendance rates slightly decreased between 2018 and 2021.[134]

The decline in school attendance can be partly attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic and the worsening socio-economic situation. Other reasons in both countries were the cost of education (transport and materials), family obligations or lack of interest in education. Gender and age play a role here: for example, having a job is an important motive for boys (see negative coping mechanisms), while for girls child marriage[135] has been a reason not to attend school (29% in 2019 to 20% in 2021). In Jordan,

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[126] Interviews IOB country visit Jordan; Data Upinion online conversations, 2022.

[127] 34% in 2016, 47% in 2017; 38% in 2018; 51% in 2019; 40% in 2020 and 62% in 2021. (Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2016; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2017; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2021; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022.)

[128] 9% and 8% in 2016; 13% in 2017; 21% in 2018; 20% in 2019; 8% in 2020 and 31% in 2021. (Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2016; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2017; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2021; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022.)

[129] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, Chapter 6.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

[132] 52% in 2016-17; 70% in 2017-18; and 52% in 2020-2021. (Source: UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2017; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022.)

[133] UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2017; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2021; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022.

[134] Samuel Hall, UNHCR, 2022, p.129. It decreased by about 5% from 70% in 2018 to 65% in 2021.

[135] Child marriage is defined as children between the ages of 15-19 years that are married.

bullying, distance to school, family income, poor infrastructure and lack of access to equipment or the internet were reported as challenges associated with Syrian refugee children dropping out of school. The number of out-of-school children remained alarming with a total of 112,016 children not attending basic education in 2020.

3.5.5 Onward migration

According to the literature review commissioned by IOB,[136] where decent education, secure and dignified employment and pathways to rights, safety and residency exist, refugees are more likely to see a future for themselves and their families in host countries. Where barriers to access to educational opportunities, secure employment or safety remain, the desire to migrate onward may increase. However, the decision to migrate or to stay is determined by many other factors that are difficult to predict (including family composition and social networks in other countries),[137] changes over time and varies according to refugees' perceptions of their current and future situation.[138] Actual decisions to leave are informed by both refugees' aspirations and their capabilities. While aspirations for onward migration remain high, onward migration is often impossible for refugees given their limited resources, and so they must 'make do' with staying in situations of 'protracted temporariness'.[139]

Limited access to the labour market and education, precarious legal status, increased harassment and the risk of further turmoil in the region have increased the desire of many refugees to leave the region. Most Syrians with sufficient resources have already left for Europe. However, for the majority of those who have fled to neighbouring countries, it is impossible to travel through the regular refugee and migration routes. European border policies, as well as increasingly restrictive Turkish border policies, have severely complicated onward migration for refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.[140]

Although there are no official figures on onward migration of refugees, it appears to be a relatively small phenomenon.[141] However, following the multiple crises in Lebanon, more and more Syrians have tried to leave the country by boat. And, increasingly, it is not only Syrians but also Lebanese themselves that are resorting to this option. In 2022, UNHCR registered an increase in boat departures from Lebanon, with a total of 4,629 people leaving the country by boat. This was almost three times the number of people who made such movements in 2021 (1,570 people). Several deadly incidents were reported in 2022, for example in April and September 2022.[142]

[136] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022.

[137] Others are the proximity of friends and family, similarity of the host country's culture and traditions to their own, staying in neighbouring countries makes it easier to return when the time comes, the dangers involved in making the trip to Europe, experiences from other refugees who have migrated onward.

[138] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, chapter 1; G. Tyldum and H. Zhuang, 'Next stop: Europe? Aspirations for secondary migration among Syrian refugees in Jordan', *International Migration Review*, 7 December 2022.

[139] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, Chapter 1.

[140] Lenner and Schmelter, 2016, p. 125.

[141] Based on the number of refugees and asylum seekers leaving Lebanon and Jordan. (Source: UNHCR, *Refugee Data Finder*, (accessed 14 November 2023)).

[142] European Union External Action, *Concept note – Side event organised by EuroMed Rights, CLDH, ASGI & ALEF ahead of the Brussels VII Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region: "Dead on the land and dead at sea": no alternatives for Syrian refugees in Lebanon*, 7 June 2023.

4 Effectiveness

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the effectiveness of Dutch-supported DAFD interventions in Jordan and Lebanon. It discusses the extent to which Dutch-supported projects have achieved their intended results and contributed to the policy objective of improving the prospects of refugees and host communities. The chapter starts with a reflection on the overall Dutch contribution to this policy objective (section 4.2). Subsequently, section 4.3 discusses whether Dutch-funded projects have contributed to protection, access to education and public services, and decent work and building livelihoods. This section also discusses how successful Dutch projects have been in integrating a gender perspective. Section 4.4 focuses on the extent to which the (integrated) approach of targeting both refugees and host communities has contributed to the participation of refugees in host communities. The final section (4.5) examines whether Dutch support has benefited host communities economically. In this chapter, as well as in the next one on relevance, IOB discusses whether some of the key assumptions underlying Dutch policy (presented in Box 2.3) were valid in the context of Jordan and Lebanon.

The findings are primarily based on the analysis of a sample of 15 Dutch-funded projects that started in the period 2016-2018 and ended in the period 2019-2022. The sample did not include interventions financed under the Prospects partnership (see Chapter 1). Where relevant, the chapter refers to findings from evaluations of joint European programmes in the Syria region.

IOB's findings in this chapter are as follows:

- Dutch DAFD achieved short-term positive results for refugees and host communities. Access to education was facilitated, learning environments in schools were improved, protection services for women and children were enhanced, knowledge and skills were enhanced by means of vocational training, cash assistance allowed refugees to cover urgent basic needs, and small and medium-sized enterprises were set up or enabled to grow through training, scholarships, loans and coaching.
- However, the overarching policy objectives of increased self-reliance and improved socio-economic prospects for refugees and host communities remained, and became even further, out of reach. This was mainly due to contextual factors beyond the control of the Netherlands. These include the ongoing Syrian conflict, a deteriorating economic situation aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and host country attitudes and policies that were not conducive to development opportunities for refugees. These factors harmed on the long-term results of Dutch-funded interventions.
- In addition, key assumptions underlying the DAFD policy were not met in Lebanon and only partially in Jordan. The first one was the assumption that host governments would be willing to adopt an inclusive approach towards refugees or could be motivated to do so by international donor funding. IOB found this to be unrealistic in Lebanon, while in Jordan the government showed a certain willingness to – temporarily – include refugees in return for donor funding and trade preferences. The second assumption, that improved access to and quality of education would contribute to employment and better livelihoods ('from learning to earning'), was not met in Lebanon and only partly in Jordan. The opening of the labour market to refugees was not achieved in either country.
- The projects reviewed have made only a limited contribution to refugees' social and economic participation in host communities, as this was complex. Given refugees' limited access to the labour market, the projects did not succeed in helping refugees find decent jobs. Increased access to protection services and formal education could not prevent the segregation of refugees and the local population, which negatively affected their relationship and increased the likelihood of bullying, discrimination and violence.
- Given the economic decline and barriers to the economic participation of refugees in both countries, the projects analysed have at best generated local and short-term economic benefits.

4.2 Improved prospects for refugees and host communities

Dutch-supported interventions have contributed to various positive results, such as increased access to education, improved learning environments in schools, better protection services for women and children, increased knowledge and skills by means of (vocational) training, the start-up and growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and financial resources for refugees and members of host communities to meet basic needs. However, the overall objective of improving prospects and sustainable living conditions for refugees and host communities was not achieved during the period under review. IOB found that the objectives were even more difficult to achieve, mainly because of factors beyond the control of the Netherlands. These included host country resistance to the integration of refugees, economic decline, political crises and the Covid-19 pandemic (see Chapter 3). Efforts by national actors and the international community, including the EU and the Netherlands, were insufficient to address the political and economic challenges in this region. Consequently, the socio-economic prospects for refugees from Syria and their host communities in the region have not been improved, but have largely deteriorated, in particular in Lebanon.

The discrepancy between the immediate, short-term results of Dutch-supported projects and the failure to move closer to the overall policy objectives is partly related to the fact that the following assumption was not or only partially met: *'Host governments are able and willing to offer inclusive access to public services to refugees. If this willingness and/or ability is lacking, host countries can be motivated by international donor support'*.[143] IOB found that the governments of Jordan and Lebanon resisted the (temporary) local

143 Assumption #3.

integration of refugees. In Jordan, following the EU-Jordan Compact, the government showed some willingness to include refugees into the formal labour market, for example by issuing work permits (see Chapter 3). In Lebanon, there was no such willingness. This is consistent with findings from the available evaluations of joint European programmes in the Syria region, which show that while financial support and international solidarity created policy space in Türkiye and Iraq, international donor assistance had a limited impact in Jordan and essentially no impact in Lebanon on the governments' willingness and ability to offer inclusive access to refugees.[144]

As a result of the limited willingness of Jordan and Lebanon to include refugees into their societies and economies (though Jordan was substantially more receptive to refugees than Lebanon), Covid-19 and the broader political and economic context in these countries, the positive results achieved by Dutch DAFD interventions were mostly local and short-lived. Higher-level results, such as increased access to work or overall poverty reduction, were not achieved.

4.3 Contributions to education, protection, and livelihoods and decent work[145]

4.3.1 Education

IOB found that Dutch-supported education projects – as well as joint European programmes – have enabled access to education services and have contributed to improving the learning environment in schools for (refugee) children and youth, including girls and young women. IOB's project analysis found that most of the targets related to facilitating and improving education services were achieved. These included the organisation of parallel educational structures (including catch-up and drop-out classes) for out-of-school children, the facilitation of second shifts and extracurricular activities, such as awareness sessions, after-school activities, sports activities, and the installation of renewable energy sources in classrooms.[146] Syrian refugee children were the largest group reached by these projects.[147]

The Netherlands funded DAFD interventions consisting of integrated education, child protection and psychosocial support programmes.[148] For example, War Child's psychosocial and life skills activities, combined with education efforts, contributed to creating more protective learning environments for children and youth in Akkar, North Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. Similarly, UNICEF's education programme in Jordan integrated the element of (unconditional) education-labelled cash assistance to vulnerable families and provided child protection services, including psychosocial support activities, better parenting workshops and early childhood development services. In this way, UNICEF enabled vulnerable families to take protective measures against harmful coping mechanisms, such as child marriage and child labour, and promoted the education and overall social wellbeing of children supported by these services. Based on these examples, the first part of the policy assumption '*integrating mental health and psychosocial support into education promotes children's wellbeing, resilience and healthy development and improves their learning outcomes*' appeared to be valid.[149] However, IOB was not able to establish a causal link between protection activities and improved learning outcomes – the second part of the assumption.

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[144] See Annex 3; Landell Mills, *Strategic Mid-term evaluation of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey 2016-2019/2020*, Volume I: Main report, June 2021.

[145] The final subsection (4.3.4) discusses how successful the Dutch projects were in integrating a gender perspective.

[146] Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Princess Alia Foundation, War Child, UNDP, and ABAAD.

[147] The disaggregated data presented by UNICEF Jordan, War Child and ABAAD shows that in most instances, the percentage of Syrian refugee participants exceeded that of local participants. For some project elements, result indicators with a reach of 100% Syrian refugee participants were presented. The project by the Princess Alia Foundation, on the other hand, reached more Jordanians.

[148] Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, ABAAD and War Child.

[149] Assumption #9.

Research shows that the (re)integration of out-of-school children into formal education and the reduction of dropout rates remain a challenge.[150] Indeed, evaluations of joint European programmes also found that, despite the access to education achieved, the drop-out rate and number of out-of-school children (mostly refugee children) remain high.[151] UNICEF's education programme in Jordan was designed to tackle such issues, but project analysis demonstrates that UNICEF struggled to reach its targets for (re)integrating out-of-school children into formal education and reducing drop-out among students due to family and work constraints. The introduction of the (unconditional) education-labelled cash assistance to vulnerable families, as mentioned above, has possibly limited drop-out rates among children. This has proved to be an effective tool in promoting school attendance among children from these households.[152]

4.3.2 Improved protection

The Dutch DAFD projects under review have facilitated access to protection services and psychosocial support for both refugees and vulnerable host communities – with a particular focus on children, and women and girls – through awareness-raising sessions about refugees' rights and obligations, psychosocial support activities and capacity-building activities (e.g. training) for community actors, such as social workers and caregivers.[153] The implementation of protection-related activities has improved the knowledge, skills and approaches of these actors and the beneficiaries themselves to address child protection risks and gender-sensitive issues, such as child labour, child marriage and gender-based violence (GBV), which helped to improve the protective environment for vulnerable children, and women and girls.[154]

The online conversation by Upinion among refugees and host communities presented a mixed picture on whether international donor support has contributed to increased safety and wellbeing over the period 2016-2021. While the panel in Jordan was divided about whether donor support contributed to increased safety and wellbeing, more than half of the respondents in Lebanon said that it had not contributed to improved overall safety and wellbeing.[155]

4.3.3 Livelihoods and decent work

The reviewed DAFD projects that aimed to promote employment opportunities and stimulate economic growth were less successful. There is little evidence of the creation of decent work[156] and improved livelihoods for refugees in Lebanon and Jordan through Dutch-supported livelihood projects. Moreover, the livelihood interventions had varying degrees of success in achieving their objectives, and the projects did not always focus on facilitating refugee participation.[157]

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150 Project analysis UNICEF Jordan. For more information on sector achievements and challenges associated with vulnerable out of school children that are at risk of dropping out, see e.g. UNICEF Jordan, *Jordan Country Report on Out-of-School Children Middle East and North Africa Out-of-School Children Initiative*, December 2020.

151 See Annex 3.

152 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan; The Hajati program implemented by UNICEF Jordan included the element of cash-based assistance. An independent evaluation conducted at the end of the 2018-2019 school year showed that children are more likely to go to school when they receive Hajati (with Hajati 91% of children go to school and without Hajati 86% go to school (Source: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, *The Difference a Dollar a Day Makes - A Study of UNICEF Jordan's Hajati Programme*, May 2021).

153 Project analysis: ABAAD, War Child and UNICEF Jordan.

154 Project analysis: ABAAD, War Child and UNICEF Jordan.

155 In response to the question: 'Has international donor/NGO support contributed to increasing safety and wellbeing in the period 2016-2021?', around 33% of the respondents from the Jordanian panel said yes, around 28% said somewhat and around 30% said no. In Lebanon, around 55% said no, around 24% said somewhat and around 17% said yes (Data Upinion online conversations).

156 ILO definition of decent work: *'Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.'* International Labour Organization, *Decent Work*, 2023, (accessed 21 March 2023).

157 Project analysis: GIZ, Eco Consult, Spark, UNICEF Lebanon, FAO, ESFD, UNDP, and Berytech Foundation.

The activities implemented under the livelihood projects in Lebanon and Jordan[158] were largely accessible to host communities, including Lebanese and Jordanian farmers, SMEs, businesses and trade-oriented companies, and universities. In contrast, project partners struggled to directly target (Syrian) refugees in their activities and the anticipated number of refugees involved in a project was not always reached. Most refugees were active in the informal economies of Jordan and Lebanon, and government restrictions further limited refugees' potential to participate in the formal labour market (see Box 4.1). As a result, outputs for refugees were mostly limited to skill-building activities, including technical and vocational training, internship programmes and job matching events, rather than creating real employment opportunities.[159]

Box 4.1 *The informal labour markets in Lebanon and Jordan*[160]

In both Jordan and Lebanon, the informal economies were substantial, with the majority of working individuals and businesses operating outside the purview of the government. Refugees, in particular, depend on informal job opportunities, as government restrictions have limited refugees' access to formal employment in most sectors. According to a technical report by ILO, '67,4% of all employed individuals were working in the informal sector' in Lebanon in 2021, with exceptionally high percentages for Syrians (95%) and Palestinians (93.9%). In Jordan, around 1.207 million people are estimated to be employed in the informal sector in 2021, representing half of the Jordanian labour market. While the Jordan Compact has formally improved access to work for Syrian refugees through the issuance of work permits, the expected trade benefits and actual job creation have not materialised. The informal economy has serious decent work deficits, which is reflected in the lack of social protection, labour rights and adequate working conditions in informal jobs (mostly seasonal and daily work).

Dutch-supported livelihood projects invested in the provision of loans and/or subsidies to SMEs, trade facilitation and export to new markets (including the EU), tax regulation reform and legal, regulatory and procedural frameworks to improve access to the formal sector for working people (both refugee and local workers) and businesses. The Netherlands also maintained a dialogue with the Jordanian and Lebanese governments on the issue of employment, including the issuance of work permits and private sector development (e.g. in the agriculture sector).[161] Although some of these activities were successful,[162] the broader objectives of opening the labour market to refugees and stimulating private sector development were not achieved. This can be largely attributed to broader contextual challenges, including the economic crisis and high unemployment rates, Covid-19 and the limited willingness of the government to open the labour market to refugees (see Chapter 3).[163]

Moreover, DAFD projects financed by the Netherlands in Jordan and Lebanon struggled to achieve their intended results with regard to increasing decent employment opportunities. Projects mainly focused on building the skills of refugees and local people, including through technical and vocational training, matchmaking workshops and internships, to increase their employability. However, the main obstacles to better livelihoods for refugees and vulnerable host communities were related to the lack of demand for

158 Examples of activities: the disbursement of grants or loans to start-ups, the provision of business advice services, the implementation of capacity-building activities to strengthen the capacity of local implementing partners (such as the Chamber of Trade and Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture), technical and vocational trainings, the setup of internship programmes and the creation of jobs (mostly daily or seasonal) (Source: Based on an analysis of project proposals, concept notes and appraisal memorandums of Eco Consult, GIZ, Spark, Berytech Foundation, FAO, ESFD, UNDP, and UNICEF Lebanon).

159 Project analysis: UNICEF Lebanon, Spark, GIZ, UNDP and Eco Consult.

160 International Labour Organization, *Assessing Informality and Vulnerability among Disadvantaged Groups in Lebanon: A Survey of Lebanese, and Syrian and Palestinian Refugees*, Technical Report, June 2021, p. 9; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, p. 103; Jordan Strategy Forum, *Jordan's Informal Economy: A Potential Opportunity for Higher Productivity and Economic Growth*, May 2023; International Labour Organization, *Informal Economy*, (accessed 21 August 2023).

161 Interview with Dutch embassy staff; NGO roundtable Jordan; Project analysis: Eco Consult, GIZ and Spark.

162 Examples of successfully implemented activities: In GIZ's project, 45 businesses received various trade-related services, 56 benefited from the Advance Ruling mechanism under trade facilitation services and 56 businesses received employment services; the project, led by the Berytech Foundation, benefited 12 innovative start-ups in the agri-food sector with seed capital and business coaching (Project analysis: GIZ and Berytech Foundation).

163 Project analysis: GIZ, Berytech Foundation, FAO, UNICEF Lebanon, Spark, Eco Consult, ESFD and UNDP.

labour, including job creation and sufficient employment (e.g. better working conditions and employees knowing their rights).[164] This finding is in keeping with lessons from evaluations of joint European programmes, which indicate that DAFD programmes targeting the labour market have focused too much on the supply side of the labour market. Hence, the assumption that *'better access to and quality of education would contribute to employment and livelihood opportunities ('from learning to earning')'*[165] was not met in Lebanon and only partly in Jordan. The online conversations by Upinion present a similar picture, with most panel members in both Lebanon and Jordan indicating that vocational training has not helped in finding employment.

4.3.4 Gender results

A gender focus was incorporated into all of the projects analysed, in line with the commitment to mainstream a gender perspective in all policy areas of the MFA.[166] However, IOB observed that the degree to which Dutch-funded DAFD projects successfully addressed the specific needs of women and girls and other vulnerable groups (mostly disabled persons) depended on whether or not these projects put gender equality at the centre of the project design and implementation.

In Lebanon, the Netherlands supported several projects that approached gender equality as an essential condition for sustainable social and economic development. ABAAD, the Lebanese organisation that led these projects, invested in improving national mechanisms for dealing with GBV cases, produced guidelines on GBV prevention and gender-sensitive media coverage, and organised mental health services for victims of GBV and self-care sessions for practitioners. The project also raised awareness among men and provided a sexual education toolkit targeting youth. As such, ABAAD successfully advocated for the development and implementation of policies and laws to increase women's effective socio-economic participation, eliminate GBV and bring about tangible change in gender justice.[167] In doing so, the project endorsed the assumption: *'Gender mainstreaming within Dutch support strengthened gender equality and addressed the specific needs of women, girls and other vulnerable groups, such as LHBTQI+ migrants'*.[168]

ABAAD's projects, however, were an exception when it came to prioritising gender equality in the project design and implementation. In most of the projects analysed, gender was mainstreamed at the output level, mainly in terms of the number of women (or women-led community-based organisations) who participated in an activity.[169] Although most targets were achieved, this does not mean that the projects contributed to the effective empowerment of women or that the mainstreaming within these projects changed existing socio-cultural norms about gender roles.[170] In line with this, the UCL literature review addresses the potential risks of harassment, abuse and violence that women might face 'as a result of programmes and policies that directly or indirectly require or promote female participation in the labour market'.[171] For example, the IOB's project analysis highlighted the potential perverse effects of an overemphasis on women's entrepreneurship in Lebanon. In one of the projects reviewed, 30% of the loans had to be earmarked for female entrepreneurs, which pushed husbands and brothers into false ownership. Here, the project partner focused on setting specific targets rather than integrating the actual needs of women and/or girls concerning their economic empowerment in the project logic.[172]

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164 Project analysis: GIZ, Spark, UNICEF Lebanon, Berytech Foundation, Eco Consult, UNDP and FAO.
165 Assumption #8.
166 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Eco Consult, GIZ, Princess Alia Foundation, Spark, UNICEF Lebanon, FAO, Berytech Foundation, UNDP, ESFD, ABAAD and War Child; IOB, *Gender mainstreaming in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Beyond 'add women and stir'?*, June 2021.
167 Project analysis: ABAAD.
168 Assumption #10.
169 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Eco Consult, Spark, Princess Alia Foundation, GIZ, UNICEF Lebanon, FAO, Berytech Foundation, UNDP, and ESFD.
170 IOB, 2021, p. 67; M. de Goede, *Fostering inclusion of refugees in host communities – Evidence from Lebanon and Jordan*, unpublished, 2021.
171 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, p. 75.
172 Project analysis: ESFD.

On a more positive note, several of the DAFD-supported projects in the Netherlands addressed gender-related barriers, including a lack of (safe) transport to work or school, negative attitudes towards female entrepreneurship and the ability to bring children to day care.[173] For example, the employment project led by Spark addressed the risk of negative attitudes towards entrepreneurial women in Jordan by providing mixed training. Other examples include the provision of part-time education for young mothers and women-only classes.

Interestingly, the Covid-19 pandemic increased the participation of women and girls in some training and education activities. The switch to online modalities made it easier and safer for women to participate in training or education from home.[174]

4.4 The social and economic participation of refugees in host communities

One of the assumptions underlying Dutch DAFD was that *'refugees have the potential to participate in and contribute to the economies of host countries'*.[175] The Netherlands aimed to increase the socio-economic participation of refugees in host communities through income-generating activities, promoting access to public education, providing inclusive protection services and integrated service delivery.[176] However, IOB's research shows that targeting both refugees and host communities in a way that it contributes to increased refugee participation has been complex. The projects reviewed have made a limited contribution to the refugees' social and economic participation in host communities.

In particular, livelihood interventions have mostly contributed to refugee participation in the informal economies of Lebanon and Jordan, rather than to active participation in host economies with rights and dignity.[177] These projects mainly targeted Lebanese or Jordanian start-ups, SMEs, and farmers. Syrian refugees were targeted more indirectly by these projects, due to their limited access to formal employment in both Lebanon and Jordan. Most of the jobs that were created consisted of informal seasonal or daily jobs (mainly in agriculture and manufacturing). Moreover, the economic malaise in Lebanon (and to a somewhat lesser extent in Jordan) and the resulting high unemployment rates among the local population forced more Lebanese and Jordanian workers to seek informal, low-paid jobs. This increased the competition for low-paid labour among refugees and the local population (see Chapter 3).

Education and protection interventions have somewhat improved access to safe and quality public education services for both refugee children and children from host communities.[178] UNICEF's informal education programme enabled many out-of-school children to re-enter formal education.[179] The literature review conducted by UCL highlighted the importance of access to education and training in improving the future economic participation of refugees. Moreover, this study suggests that mixed (refugee-host community) classes can contribute to more positive perceptions and stronger relationships between refugees and host communities. Nevertheless, the literature shows that inclusive education can also have disadvantages for refugee children, particularly if their literacy and/or numeracy levels are lower than those of their peers. These inequalities can lead to social stigma, increased tensions between students and isolation. On the other hand, UCL also presents literature highlighting the fact that segregated education, such as second shifts for refugees, negatively affects their relationship with local children and increases the likelihood of bullying, discrimination and violence.[180]

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173 Project analysis: UNICEF Lebanon, UNICEF Jordan, GIZ, Spark, UNDP, ABAAD and War Child.
174 Project analysis: War Child, UNICEF Jordan, and UNICEF Lebanon.
175 Assumption #4.
176 The latter includes infrastructure interventions focused on electricity, water and solid waste, as well as the construction, rehabilitation and development of public spaces and social services, and specific activities related to capacity building of municipal police forces (Project analysis: UNDP).
177 Project analysis: GIZ, Eco Consult, Spark, Berytech Foundation, FAO, UNDP and ESFD.
178 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Princess Alia Foundation and War Child.
179 Project documents show that 35% of children involved in the programme (1,705) re-integrated into the formal system (80% Syrians) (Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan).
180 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, p. 66 and p. 90.

Although Dutch-supported education projects increased access to education services for refugees, most refugees were placed in segregated second-shift classes, mainly due to capacity issues in public schools. IOB's fieldwork found evidence of bullying of children who participated in second-shift classes. For example, in Jordan, children in first-shift classes wrote on a blackboard: 'We leave you our rubbish and clean it up'.[181]

Box 4.2 *Quotes from the Upinion online conversations*[182]

'The second shift or afternoon class has been allocated to refugees, and of course the school in the winter season has no heating oil and is not preparing the school with the best equipment. The children of host communities were put in shifts before noon, and it is forbidden for our children to participate in these shifts.'
Refugee/migrant from Syria in Lebanon

'The refugees in the schools were separated from the local community because the donors supported a second shift for the Syrians. The result was that the teachers treated the Syrians as if they are bad and do not deserve a serious education. In fact, they were subjected to violence and bullying by the teachers themselves, and as the refugees are not from a clan here, they have no protection. I used to hear this a lot from the parents because they did not complain about their children being subjected to violence as they were afraid that members of the local community would harm them because they do not have the protection of the community and the clan or the extended family […].' **Refugee/migrant from Syria in Lebanon**

The Dutch-sponsored education project implemented by UNICEF Jordan was not able to include children from refugee camps in public schools outside the camps. This was mainly the result of limited capacity in public school buildings and the unavailability of transport to public schools outside the camps. As a result, their chances of participating in host communities in the future are slim.[183]

4.5 Economic benefits for host communities

IOB's project analysis found little evidence that the following assumption was met: *'improved employment and livelihoods for refugees and their host communities will have a positive impact on the economic development of the host country vice versa'*.[184] Overall, Lebanon and Jordan have experienced negative economic trends over the past decade. Lebanon in particular has been struggling with a severe economic crisis, including the collapse of the banking and financial sectors, high unemployment, rising inflation and the weakening of small-scale businesses.[185] In Jordan, the economic situation has been less severe, but economic growth has still stagnated, and unemployment rates have been high. In this context, Dutch DAFD projects are expected to have delivered limited economic benefits at the local level, the sustainability of which is uncertain (see Chapter 3).

Livelihood projects have created some benefits for private sector development in Jordan and Lebanon. For instance, the provision of technical assistance to SMEs has increased the knowledge and skills of new entrepreneurs and SMEs to start or expand a business, and the financial support provided to start-ups and SMEs (including revolving funds, low-interest loans and subsidies) has facilitated their growth. Moreover, DAFD projects have helped to create job opportunities for both Syrian and local workers – mostly seasonal and daily work.[186] Interventions that specifically focused on equipping youth with the necessary skills to make the most of new job opportunities were less likely to deliver immediate economic benefits, but those supported have the potential to play an economic role in the near future.[187]

181 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Princess Alia Foundation and War Child. The weaknesses of a two-shift education system was also mentioned by respondents from the Upinion online conversations in relation to the question about whether international donor support contributed to the quality of and access to the education system from 2016-2021.
182 Data Upinion online conversations.
183 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan.
184 Assumption #7.
185 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, pp. 101-102.
186 Project analysis: GIZ, Eco Consult, FAO, Spark, Berytech Foundation, UNDP, UNICEF Lebanon and ESFD.
187 Project analysis: UNICEF Lebanon, Spark and UNDP.

Projects sponsored by UNDP in Lebanon and the Princess Alia Foundation in Jordan, which focused on tackling the challenges in the infrastructure, waste and energy sectors, created positive (short-term) effects on public service delivery. For example, the project led by the Princess Alia Foundation installed renewable energy sources in public schools in Jordan, including solar power systems. As a result, energy costs for more than 100 public schools were reduced by almost 100% throughout the project. UNDP invested heavily in infrastructure, including the rehabilitation and construction of agricultural roads, irrigation canals, public markets, domestic water networks, solid waste management and (renewable) energy sources, which were available to several communities in Lebanon, including Baalback, Saida and Nabatieh.[188] However, IOB's field visits to Jordan and Lebanon revealed that most of the newly built infrastructure was not maintained after project completion, due to lack of funding and social and political challenges.

188 Project analysis: Princess Alia Foundation and UNDP.

5 Relevance

5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the relevance of Dutch DAFD projects in Lebanon and Jordan. Relevance helps us to understand whether an intervention is doing the right thing. This chapter assesses a) whether Dutch interventions were geared towards factors considered relevant to reduce refugees' incentives to migrate onward to third countries (section 5.2); b) the extent to which the interventions' goals were aligned with the needs of refugees from Syria and their host communities, including women and girls (sections 5.3 and 5.5); c) the quality of the project designs of Dutch-supported DAFD interventions (section 5.4); d) whether Dutch interventions were sensitive to local realities, including changes, such as the unfolding crisis in Lebanon and the Covid-19 pandemic (section 5.5); and e) whether the Netherlands provided support to both refugees and their host communities and how this approach of targeting both refugees and host communities can avoid tensions between them (section 5.7).[189]

[189] This is in line with the OECD definition of relevance (OECD, *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, 15 March 2021).

IOB's findings in this chapter are as follows:

- Preventing refugees' onward migration to Europe has been an important political motive for supporting refugee reception in the region. However, the relationship between assistance and refugees' considerations for onward migration is not straightforward.
- Dutch DAFD interventions addressed relevant areas of concern for refugees and their host communities, and they focused on issues (protection, education and employment) relevant to promoting socio-economic prospects. However, project objectives were often unrealistic and the majority of project designs overlooked factors that are important for achieving (sustainable) results.
- With some exceptions, gender mainstreaming in programming remained limited to adding women as a target group, rather than addressing specific gender needs.
- Dutch DAFD implementation was flexible to adapt programming to changing circumstances, such as Covid-19 and to address more immediate needs.
- Dutch DAFD programming targeted both refugees and host communities as beneficiaries. However, in both Lebanon and Jordan, the public perception remained that foreign aid benefited refugees more than the local population.

5.2 Reducing onward migration incentives

Based on the literature review by UCL, it can be concluded that the Dutch DAFD, with its focus on protection, access to education and integrated services, and employment, addressed issues that are considered relevant to reducing refugees' aspirations to migrate further. However, it must be recognised that many other factors influence the actual decision to migrate.[190] Where there is access to quality education, secure and dignified employment, and pathways to rights, safety and residency, refugees are more likely to see a future for themselves and their families in host countries. Where barriers to access to education, secure employment or safety remain, aspirations to migrate onward may increase. However, the relative importance of these factors is difficult to predict, changes over time and depends on refugees' perceptions of their current and future situation.[191] Consequently, *the assumed causal link between improved prospects for refugees in host countries and reduced incentives for onward migration* is not straightforward.[192] Factors influencing aspirations and decisions to leave include a lack of access to rights and protection, insecure livelihoods, low markers of social cohesion, and perceptions that European countries offer better long-term reception, rights, and opportunities. High aspirations for onward migration reflect refugees' frustrations with their situation and the fear and insecurity they face due to discrimination, social exclusion and a pervasive sense of precariousness in their lives.[193]
A 2018 IOB literature review on the relationship between development and migration concluded that international development can have both negative and positive effects on migration. Although this study did not focus on refugees, it illustrates the complexity of the relationship between development and migration. The study found that 'increased levels of development, which go hand in hand with better education and higher incomes, initially not only increase opportunities but also the desire to migrate. It is only above a certain level of development, that emigration decreases'.[194] However, migration and international development cooperation can be influenced by various factors (...) and in such cases, there is no causal link.[195]

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[190] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, Part 1; These factors include family composition and social networks in other countries, the proximity of friends and family, similarity of the host country's culture and traditions to their own, staying in neighbouring countries makes it easier to return when the time comes, the dangers involved in making the trip to Europe, experiences from other refugees who have migrated onward.

[191] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, Chapters 1-3.

[192] Assumption #1.

[193] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, Chapters 1-3.

[194] IOB, *Literature study - Development and Migration*, IOB Study no. 427, The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2018, p. 57.

[195] IOB 2018, p. 57.

In practice, given the perilous situation most refugees in Lebanon and Jordan find themselves in (see Chapter 3), aspirations for onward migration remain high. However, as onward migration is often impossible for them, they have to 'make do' with staying in situations of 'protracted temporariness'.[196]

5.3 Responding to needs

Overall, Dutch DAFD interventions focused on themes (protection, education and employment/livelihoods) that are relevant to promoting the socio-economic prospects of both refugees and their host communities. For refugees, access to legal protection, safe housing, education services and job opportunities/decent work were priority areas to improve prospects and create sustainable living conditions. Host communities were most interested in employment and economic development-oriented interventions.[197]

The reluctance and/or inability of host countries to provide inclusive access to the local systems and economies had an impact on the extent to which Dutch-funded DAFD projects were able to respond to the needs of refugees. For example, the limited access of refugees to certain sectors in both Lebanon and Jordan posed challenges for DAFD project partners in facilitating formal employment for refugees through livelihood projects.

Dutch-supported education and protection projects were found to be more responsive to refugees' most urgent needs than other interventions. These addressed the issues of xenophobia[198] and strong reservations of host populations towards refugees, limiting child protection risks (such as child labour and child marriage) and preventing sexual and gender-based violence. Dutch-funded education projects also addressed key challenges to refugee children's access to (formal) education, including financial and capacity constraints and poor learning conditions.[199] Online conversations by Upinion confirmed that a 'lack of means to pay for school fees, children's school supplies and transport costs' were the main reasons for children (aged 6-17) in both Lebanon and Jordan not to attend school. In addition, many respondents in Lebanon cited 'children having to work to earn income' and 'harassment, intimidation or unsafe environment' as the main reasons why children were out of school.[200]

The focus on promoting employment and economic development in livelihood projects addressed a major concern for the large group of displaced Syrian youth and adults in both countries, many of whom were looking for work. As the Upinion online conversations show, the lack of decent work, including extremely long working hours, very low wages, an unsafe work environment and highly insecure jobs/irregular income, was a key challenge for the majority of the panel in both Lebanon and Jordan.[201] There were Dutch-supported DAFD projects that included activities to promote decent work, including the provision of soft skills training at the management level and the development of modules and services to enhance employability skills and inform people of their rights.[202]

Through skills-building activities, projects have sought to improve the professional readiness of beneficiaries, thereby increasing their employability. However, as noted in Chapter 4, educational attainment does not address the problem of lack of (decent) job opportunities. However, DAFD projects have not been able to effectively address the problems on the demand side of the labour market, including formalising the labour force, facilitating private sector development and expanding trade and export markets. In Lebanon, in particular, Dutch-supported DAFD projects invested mainly in the informal labour market, as formal job creation was not a viable option.

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196 Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, Chapter 1.

197 Data Upinion online conversations; In line with the UN Vulnerability Assessments (Source: UNHCR, Action Against Hunger, ILO (2019); UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2016; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2017; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2019; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2021 ; UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, IAC, 2022; Samuel Hall, UNHCR, 2022).

198 Xenophobia refers to the fear of and hatred against people from other countries.

199 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Princess Alia Foundation and War Child; De Goede, 2021.

200 Data Upinion online conversations.

201 Ibid.

202 Project analysis: Spark, GIZ, UNICEF Lebanon, Eco Consult, FAO and UNDP.

In Jordan, the government showed more openness to the formal employment of refugees by issuing work permits (including through the Jordan Compact) (see Box 4.1). However, Jordan was also experiencing an economic downturn, which had a negative impact on the availability of formal jobs (Chapter 3).

Although not a specific focus of DAFD policy, many of the livelihood interventions in both countries have been in the agricultural sector. Indeed, building resilience in the agricultural sector is a logical choice when trying to address the needs of both refugees and host communities in terms of food security, economic development and employability. Moreover, a large number of refugees from Syria have been active in the agriculture sector – they are legally allowed to work in this sector – which enabled DAFD partners to reach out directly to Syrian refugees in their projects, for example by offering seasonal or daily work opportunities.[203]

5.4 Quality of design

The project analysis revealed a mixed picture with regard to the quality of the project designs. Many project designs were flawed, lacking thorough Theories of Change and overlooking contextual factors essential for achieving relevant and sustainable results.[204] Moreover, project goals were unrealistic, such as reaching the entire target group, and project designs presented outputs that were unlikely to ensure that the intended results would be achieved.[205] The short time frame in which projects had to be identified in 2016, combined with a lack of staff capacity and development expertise, made it difficult to select relevant projects with foreseeable sustainable outcomes.[206]

The project analysis shows that project partners generally overlooked contextual factors relevant to the achievement of project results, such as low levels of youth entrepreneurship in Lebanon and Jordan, religious, social and cultural differences, child labour, and gender-based barriers to access to work, and limited government capacity. IOB also found that project partners largely followed the contextual analysis and stakeholder analysis presented in the national refugee response plans (the LCRP in Lebanon and JRP in Jordan) to formulate the objectives of interventions, rather than detailing the specific interests of stakeholders.[207]

In addition, the implementing partners (organisations – often local – contracted by the project partner) had little opportunity to influence the design of the projects, as they became involved after the project had been approved by the MFA. These implementing partners come with a strong local network, extensive knowledge of what is needed and feasible on the ground, and a nuanced understanding of relevant contextual factors. However, field visits and interviews demonstrate that these benefits were not always exploited in the projects evaluated.[208] Consequently, relevant conditions for project success were not always in place, as observed in half of the projects, such as childcare facilities for young mothers who want to pursue education, flexible working hours for women who want to work, good infrastructure to facilitate trade to new markets, human and labour rights to facilitate formal employment opportunities,

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203 Project analysis: Eco Consult, Berytech Foundation, FAO, Spark and GIZ; Interview with Dutch embassy staff.

204 An example of a flaw in the project design: Eco Consult's project, which focuses on the idea that hydroponic farming limits water use. This is not the case, given that hydroponic farming does not limit water use, nor is it less water-intensive. Also, copy-pasting greenhouses from the Dutch context to the Jordanian context will not necessarily produce the same, successful results as in the Netherlands (Project analysis: Eco Consult).

205 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Spark, GIZ, Eco Consult, UNDP, UNICEF Lebanon, FAO, War Child, ESFD and Berytech Foundation; an example of such an output is the number of written business plans in the Spark project. The business plan target for this indicator was easily achieved, yet this does not mean that these business plans will all be ready to be implemented or that Spark can support all of the entrepreneurs in implementing their business plans (Project analysis: SPARK).

206 Interviews with MFA and embassy staff.

207 IOB analysed activity appraisal documents for all projects included in the sample; Project analysis: Spark, GIZ, UNICEF Jordan, Eco Consult, Princess Alia Foundation, UNICEF Lebanon, FAO, Berytech Foundation, ABAAD, War Child, ESFD, UNDP; NGO roundtables Jordan and Lebanon.

208 Project analysis: GIZ, Spark, UNICEF Lebanon, FAO, ESFD, UNDP and War Child; NGO roundtables in Jordan and Lebanon.

and safety measures for workers.[209] IOB found that project proposals were written to match the MFA's policy agenda, sometimes at the expense of a logical relation between activities undertaken and project deliverables.[210] Similarly, in the project appraisal process, the MFA focused more on limiting general risks, including the organisational capacity of the implementing partner and on checking principles that were important to the Netherlands as a donor (e.g. gender mainstreaming, see section 5.4), rather than a on thorough assessment of the project logic.

IOB found that in most of the DAFD interventions under review, the sustainability of the projects was not properly considered in the project design phase. Projects often have short- or medium-term results and lack a clear exit strategy or clear incentives for beneficiaries to sustain gains after the project ends, which limits longer-term outcomes.[211] The Princess Alia Foundation, for instance, struggled with sustainability issues: the project partner installed solar power systems in public schools in Jordan to reduce the schools' energy bills, improve the learning environment in the classrooms, and increase the knowledge of community members about the use of sustainable energy sources. However, the project partner did not consider that the revenue from the excess supply of returned electricity should be invested in a fund administered by the Jordanian Ministry of Finance, instead of flowing back into the school systems. As mentioned by interviewees, by not returning excess revenue to the schools to invest in them, there was no incentive for the school authorities to maintain the solar panels. In addition, the project has budgeted for the maintenance of the solar panels. However, no resources have been allocated to continue the maintenance after the project ends. This will harm the performance of the solar panels in the long term.

5.5 Gender mainstreaming

Dutch DAFD projects in Lebanon and Jordan performed poorly in addressing the specific needs of women and girls. With the exception of projects focusing on addressing gender-based violence (GBV), most interventions were not designed with gender-specific needs in mind. Like the Dutch DAFD interventions, the joint European programmes aimed for a gender balance and specific attention for women and girls.[212] Although the Dutch and joint European programmes did reach women and girls and thus met some of their needs (e.g. supporting female entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses, enabling home-schooling for young girls, providing safe public transport to school or work), in terms of reporting this was more of a tick-the-box exercise, meaning that these programmes focused mainly on including women and girls as project beneficiaries (e.g. using a 50/50 approach with 50% women/girls and 50% men/boys) without taking into consideration their specific needs. There was no pre-determined gender strategy and no distinction between gender-specific needs and issues.[213]

Gender mainstreaming means taking account gender differences and inequalities in the design and implementation of projects. Moreover, social and cultural norms about gender, both among refugees and host populations, can have an impact on whether outputs and outcomes are achieved.[214] IOB's country visits revealed that DAFD projects, in particular livelihood interventions, did not always take into account existing social and cultural norms about gender. For example, social and cultural norms made it unlikely that refugee women living in Lebanon and Jordan would seek jobs in the sectors open to refugees, such as construction. Interviewees mentioned that a focus on facilitating home-schooling and home-based businesses within projects was much more in line with the needs of women and girls.[215]

209 Project analysis: GIZ, Spark, UNICEF Lebanon; Eco Consult; UNICEF Jordan; and UNDP; NGO roundtables in Jordan and Lebanon.
210 An example is the number of people trained, which does not say anything about whether the training activities were of the right quality or useful for finding employment (i.e. project analysis: Eco Consult, Spark, UNICEF Lebanon); another example is the number of children enrolled in classes (e.g. catch-up or drop-out classes), which does not say anything about whether students actually learned something during these classes (Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan).
211 Project analysis: Eco Consult, Spark, Princess Alia Foundation, GIZ, UNICEF Jordan, UNICEF Lebanon, UNDP, FAO, Berytech Foundation, War Child and ABAAD.
212 Annex 3.
213 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Princess Alia Foundation, Spark, GIZ, UNHCR, Eco Consult, ESFD, Berytech Foundation and FAO.
214 IOB, 2021; Focus group discussion with MFA and embassy staff on 16 & 17 March 2022; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, *MACS 2019-2022 Lebanon*; Project analysis: ABAAD, War Child, GIZ and UNDP.
215 Project analysis: GIZ, ABAAD and War Child, UNICEF Jordan; Interview with government officials in Jordan.

5.6 Dealing with local realities, changes over time and government agencies

5.6.1 Adaptive programming

IOB's research has demonstrated that the Netherlands has acted as a flexible donor. The MFA has allowed for adjustments in project design and no-cost extensions (mostly due to Covid-19) to ensure that outputs (sometimes alternative outputs due to restructured or expanded activities) were achieved and contributed to policy objectives.[216] In Jordan, for example, project partner Spark was given additional time to restructure the overly ambitious project design during project implementation and to increase the number of implementing partners to maximise results.

Overall, Dutch DAFD programming was adaptable to changes in the wider political and economic context. Lebanon's economic and financial crises primarily impacted the implementation of DAFD livelihood interventions and led to the discontinuation of one of the projects that aimed to support SMEs with low-interest loans.[217] Projects that were able to continue despite the political and economic challenges were given more time and/or had the opportunity to adjust or expand project activities to adapt to the changing context. For example, the project led by the Berytech Foundation shifted the focus towards helping start-ups and SMEs to expand their import and export markets at the international level. It also changed its thematic pillar from agriculture, industry and energy to agri-food, energy and waste management to better respond to the economic challenges in Lebanon.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic affected the implementation of many of the projects under review.[218] The Netherlands provided additional funding[219] and allowed project partners to reprogramme and expand activities to ensure that they continued and better responded to the health challenges of Covid-19. Most of the partners were able to apply mitigating measures (e.g. online modalities) and continued to implement activities, thus achieving their targets.[220] Nevertheless, certain activities did not allow for an immediate adaptive response, limiting the achievement of the intended outputs.[221] For example, the zero-mobility policy affected logistics and trade in Jordan and had a detrimental effect on the cultivation and production outputs of DAFD livelihood interventions, including the projects led by Eco Consult and FAO.

5.6.2 Working with government agencies

Approximately half of the projects analysed cooperated with relevant government agencies, including ministries and chambers of commerce and trade.[222] In both countries, coordination with government agencies was challenging, mainly due to capacity issues, in particular in Lebanon. Given the political challenges, the Netherlands often opted for projects with a bottom-up approach, working through (local) non-state actors. Some of the projects under review contributed to the preservation or creation of parallel systems of service delivery.[223] One example is the use of water trucks instead of investing in the development of a water infrastructure system.[224]

Lebanon was in the midst of a political crisis, and the relevant ministries had neither the capacity nor the financial resources to work with the donor community on the issue of refugee reception. In addition, the willingness to cooperate was limited and largely dependent on individuals within the ministries. As a result, project partners experienced delays and had to adjust activities throughout the project implementation.[225] For instance, In Lebanon, ABAAD had to terminate its cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs due to capacity issues in the ministry, which led to the adjustment of one of the project activities.

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216 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Eco Consult, GIZ, Spark, Princess Alia Foundation; UNICEF Lebanon, FAO, Berytech Foundation, UNDP, War Child and ABAAD.
217 The discontinuation concerns the project led by ESFD.
218 Project analysis: UNICEF Lebanon, Spark, GIZ, Eco Consult, ESFD, FAO, War Child and ABAAD.
219 EUR 1.1 million of the total Covid-19 budget was spent on projects in Iraq and EUR 2 million of Covid-19 expenditures went to Lebanon. ABAAD was funded from the EUR 2 million that went to Lebanon.
220 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, War Child, ABAAD, Spark and Eco Consult.
221 Project analysis: FAO, Eco Consult, Spark and GIZ.
222 Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, GIZ, ABAAD, UNDP, UNICEF Lebanon and FAO.
223 Project analysis: UNDP, Berytech Foundation, ABAAD, UNICEF Jordan and UNHCR; Interview with embassy staff.
224 Project analysis: UNDP.
225 Project analysis: ABAAD, FAO, ESFD, UNDP, UNICEF Lebanon.

In Jordan, government agencies also faced capacity issues, although to a lesser extent than in Lebanon. The high turnover of ministers and civil servants in public offices translated into a lack of understanding of the aim of interventions and insufficient knowledge and expertise to implement projects. Despite the institutional challenges, project partners have been able to implement projects in cooperation with government bodies in Jordan.[226] The Catch-Up Education programme of UNICEF cooperated with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and handed over the programme to the MoE as a means of sustaining project results after project completion.

5.7 Targeting both refugees and host communities

The Netherlands has funded DAFD projects that targeted both refugees and their host communities. The underlying assumption here was that *'an integrated approach that targets both refugees and their host communities will strengthen vulnerable host communities, overcome the disadvantaged position of host communities, and improve relations between refugees and host communities'*.[227] According to the literature review by UCL, inclusive programmes and policies have the potential to 'enhance social cohesion between members of different communities and institutions'.[228]

Several education and protection projects included activities in which refugees and host community members participated together, such as community sessions, mixed training and sports activities to improve the quality of refugee-host relations and the participation of refugees in host communities.[229] For example, the integrated after-school activities in UNICEF's education programme in Jordan facilitated better communication between Syrian and Jordanian students and teachers involved in the programmes and strengthened their sense of community and belonging. The literature supports this finding, emphasising that 'markers of social cohesion are more likely to be improved through policies and programmes that enhance the frequency, nature and quality of social interactions between refugees and hosts, than through improving service delivery or municipal capacity alone'.[230] Nevertheless, Dutch-supported DAFD interventions did not always succeed in creating mixed classes.[231]

Livelihood projects were less likely to contribute to improved refugee-host relations and more positive perceptions of each other. Most of these projects did not focus much on an inclusive approach, nor did they integrate specific activities to improve relations between local and Syrian refugee workers and entrepreneurs.[232]

Overall, IOB's fieldwork in Lebanon and Jordan revealed that while activities may have benefited or even brought together beneficiaries from both groups, little is known about the contextual conditions required for these activities to contribute to increased security at the community level and reduce tensions between the various groups. Moreover, the isolated, short-term nature of many of these projects reduced the likelihood of contributing to safe forms of integration and participation of refugees in local communities. This is particularly relevant in the context of rising tensions between host communities and refugees in Lebanon (see Chapter 3). This is in line with findings from the Upinion online conversations, in which more than half of the respondents (56%) in Lebanon believe that the coexistence of host communities and refugees/internally displaced persons (IDPs) has worsened over the period 2016-2021.[233] According to respondents, the main reasons for the deterioration in relations were 'socio-economic deterioration', 'an imbalance in aid', and 'increased competition in the job market'. Moreover, approximately a third of respondents in Lebanon mentioned that international donor support has negatively impacted the coexistence of refugees and host communities.[234] During the field visit to Lebanon, IOB researchers learned about the host communities' negative feelings and perceptions about

[226] Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, GIZ, Spark, Eco Consult and Princess Alia Foundation.
[227] Assumption #5.
[228] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, pp. 58-59, 62.
[229] Project analysis: Princess Alia Foundation, UNICEF Jordan, War Child, ABAAD, UNDP, and UNICEF Lebanon
[230] Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2022, pp. 64-65.
[231] Project analysis: UNICEF Jordan, Princess Alia Foundation and War Child.
[232] Project analysis: FAO, Berytech Foundation, ESFD, GIZ and Eco Consult.
[233] Data Upinion online conversations: 24% of the respondents in Lebanon mentioned that some things have improved while other things have gotten worse.
[234] Data Upinion online conversations.

the perceived imbalance in assistance to refugees and host communities. Cash transfer programmes in Lebanon, for example, were found to fuel tensions, hate speech and violent incidents against refugees at cash points, as many host community members believed that vulnerable Lebanese were being neglected by these aid programmes (see Box 5.1).[235]

Box 5.1 *Quotes from the Upinion online conversations*[236]

'The poorest groups in the host communities must be supported in light of the economic crisis that is affecting the whole country. When residents in the host communities see refugees queuing in front of one of the ATMs, they become very hostile and think that this money should be theirs, so I have heard a lot about attacks on ATMs recently'
Syrian refugee in Lebanon

'To give salaries to displaced people, even if they are small, to give them food allowances, to give education to displaced children, and to give nothing to the citizens of the host country'
Local resident in Lebanon

[235] Interviews with embassy staff, project partner, local government agency and beneficiaries in Lebanon; see for example House of Peace, UNDP, *Conflict Sensitive Cash Assistance in Lebanon*, p. 8, which presents similar observations.
[236] Data Upinion online conversations.

6 Coherence

6.1 Introduction

Coherence refers to the compatibility (possible overlap, gaps or synergies) between interventions in a country, sector or institution. The evaluation looked at a) the coherence between Dutch DAFD interventions and broader Dutch policy towards these countries (section 6.2), b) the alignment of Dutch DAFD interventions with the host country plans (section 6.3), and c) the coordination of Dutch DAFD interventions with other donor interventions and whether synergies were created (section 6.4).

IOB's findings in this chapter are as follows:

- Diverging interests and perspectives between host governments and international donors made it difficult to align foreign aid with government plans. While Dutch programming was formally aligned with national response plans, it did not necessarily follow host governments' priorities.
- Local donor coordination in Jordan and Lebanon did little to identify funding gaps and overlap or create synergies, with serious risks of duplication. The Dutch embassies played a constructive but limited role in coordination forums, which focused mainly on sharing analyses and coordinating diplomatic messages.
- Beyond DAFD, the Netherlands supported host countries in a number of relevant areas. Embassies made good efforts to link and leverage this support and found niches in sectors such as agriculture, water and private sector development. However, the large number of instruments, mostly managed in The Hague, made it difficult to achieve optimal coherence.

6.2 Coherence between Dutch DAFD and non-DAFD interventions

Dutch DAFD interventions were part of a broader policy approach towards the region and the respective host countries. In 2017, the incoming Dutch government designated Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq as new so-called 'focus countries' within Dutch development cooperation. This meant that they became eligible for increased development funding and more instruments (see Chapter 2). As a result, the Dutch presence in both Jordan and Lebanon has increased considerably since 2016, both in terms of programming and embassy staffing. During the period under review, DAFD programming accounted for a substantial share of total Dutch programming: in Iraq, it represented approximately a quarter of total Dutch expenditures, in Jordan about half of the expenditures and in Lebanon about two-thirds.[237]

Most of the development instruments implemented in these countries were managed by the MFA in The Hague, with only a few smaller programmes delegated to the embassies (e.g. the Shiraka programme[238] and the Human Rights Fund).[239] This meant that the way in which Dutch development aid was allocated depended to a large extent on the decisions made by various policy departments of the MFA. The instruments that come together in these countries do not automatically align, as there is no central steering mechanism to achieve optimal coherence at the country level. Despite the fact that, since 2018, the programmes have been implemented under a multi-annual country strategy (MACS) prepared by embassies and the relevant MFA departments, the mix of programmes in a given country has remained the result of the MFA's global thematic priorities.[240] Some of these programmes, such as those implemented in Lebanon, addressed issues relevant to hosting refugees, such as the Addressing Root Causes programme[241] or support to the UN Education Cannot Wait programme.

The very large number of instruments implemented per country,[242] mostly managed by the MFA in The Hague, made it unrealistic for the embassies to have oversight of all the interventions funded by the Netherlands. However, the embassies did try to bring together all Dutch programming and leverage it to achieve maximum policy impact.

Beyond the specific DAFD objectives, the Netherlands has aimed to contribute to the stability and resilience of Jordan and Lebanon in various ways. Stability in both countries – which is crucial for hosting refugees and preventing them from becoming 'countries of origin' – has been fragile due to many factors, including economic decline, lack of good governance, high unemployment, poverty, declining public service delivery, shrinking civic space, regional political dynamics, risks to food and water security, and the effects of climate change.[243] Among other things, the Netherlands has supported the (official) security sectors in both countries (focusing on issues such as civil-military cooperation, integrated border management, counter-terrorism, and preventing radicalisation and violence), promoted human rights and the rule of law, and contributed to sustainable development and trade and investment.[244]
In Jordan, the Netherlands has found a niche in supporting the agricultural sector and the related water sector, both within and beyond DAFD programming. In particular, the agricultural sector has been important in creating employment opportunities for refugees and for Jordan's economic recovery. The availability of water in Jordan is under severe pressure. IOB's country visit revealed that the Dutch focus on agriculture and water was commended by the Jordanian government and by other donors.
In Lebanon, the Netherlands has tried to find opportunities to support the productive sector, including agriculture, in the absence of important economic macro-economic reforms. Creating economic activity is difficult but crucial for increasing employment opportunities for both Lebanese and refugees (the demand side of the labour market), for self-sufficiency and for reducing dependence on imports.

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[237] See Annex 1 on DAFD and non-DAFD expenditures.
[238] Netherlands Enterprise Agency, *Netherlands-MENA-Partnership – Shiraka*, (accessed 18-09-2023).
[239] Government of the Netherlands, *Human Rights Fund*, (accessed 18-09-2023).
[240] An internal IOB review in 2022 of the MACS process concluded that the MACS had yet to prove itself as a strategic management instrument (IOB, internal document, *Meerjaren Landen Strategieën: Op weg naar strategische sturing?*, 2022).
[241] See MMM Consultants, *Synthesis Addressing Root Causes Programme*, report commissioned by IOB, 24 February 2023; Education Cannot Wait, *'Lebanon'*, 2023 (accessed 11-09-2023).
[242] Based on an inventory by both embassies, this amounts to several dozen per country.
[243] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, *MACS Jordan 2023-2026*; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, *MACS 2023 to 2026 for Lebanon*.
[244] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, *MACS 2019-2022: Jordan*; Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal document, *MACS 2019-2022 Lebanon*.

6.3 Alignment with government policies

Aligning donor interventions with host government policies was complicated by their different outlooks on how to deal with the presence of refugees and how to prioritise assistance. In terms of funding, host governments preferred that donors increase their fiscal space for hosting refugees through direct budget support, which the majority of bilateral donors, including the Netherlands, were not in a position to provide. The Jordanian government *de facto* laid the financial responsibility for the hosting of refugees from Syria with the international community and, particularly after Covid-19, argued that donor funding should also target the local population. In Lebanon, political elites blamed the international community for perpetuating, if not creating, the refugee crisis and did not want donors to support refugees at all. At the very least, they argued that aid should also benefit vulnerable Lebanese as well. At the same time, the international community saw the severe economic and social crisis in the country as the result of a failing political system.[245]

In the early period of Dutch DAFD programming (2016-2017), the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) were seen as the guiding framework for Dutch programming. Project proposals had to be aligned with these plans to qualify for funding.[246] As these documents had a broad scope, this provided little guidance. The Prospects partnership worked with UN and World Bank Group organisations, agencies that by default coordinated their interventions with the governments of Lebanon and Jordan. This did not mean that Dutch-funded interventions automatically reflected the governments' priorities or that governments felt they had a say (see below), but at least there was dialogue and the government was well-informed.

IOB's country visits revealed that in both Jordan and Lebanon, stakeholders considered foreign assistance to be donor-driven, rather than country-led. A (growing) discrepancy was perceived between the government and donors in terms of funding priorities. In Jordan, several donors seemed to have lost sight of the National Response Plan (JRP) as an important guiding document. The Jordan Response Plan was heavily underfunded[247] and some representatives of donor office representatives were critical of the JRP. While it was initially seen as a good practice – the Jordanian government taking ownership – it did not work as a prioritisation tool for donors as the government had begun to use it as a 'fund-raising tool'. In both Jordan and Lebanon, UN organisations were less negative than donors about the national response plans and the related coordination structures.[248]

Government officials in Jordan expressed a desire to be involved earlier and more meaningfully in donor programming. Ministries felt that they were informed too late to have a meaningful influence. Some donors and implementing partners interviewed noted that the government tried to push back on some donor approaches, such as refugee protection or mental health and psychosocial support. A lack of good coordination and information-sharing between ministries was also identified as a challenge. The government also objected to the high operating costs of project proposals, including those from UN agencies.[249]

The embassy in Amman had a regular dialogue with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), while the Prospects partners each had their own bilateral policy dialogues with government counterparts. In addition, the embassy set up regular meetings between all Prospects partners, MoPIC and line ministries. The idea was that Prospects partners would bring common issues to their bilateral discussions. At the very least, partners were aware of the issues of common concern. In order to increase the commonality of the messages to the government, the embassy, in consultation with the Prospects partners, drafted a joint strategy for dialogue in 2022.

245 Interviews with diplomatic missions and donor offices in Beirut.
246 IOB's project analysis.
247 According to the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, in 2022 only 30% of the identified needs were funded: *'Jordan Response Plan only met 30% of funding requirements in 2022 – Planning minister'*, *The Jordan Times*, 15 January 2023.
248 Interviews with UN agencies and diplomatic missions in Jordan and Lebanon.
249 Interviews with Jordanian government officials and round-table discussion with (I)NGOs in Jordan.

There has been a proliferation of aid structures in Lebanon, with new ones being set up after each new crisis.[250] The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) and Economic Response Plan (ERP) planning structures were co-led by UN agencies and government ministries, but without substantial donor involvement. The Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) was the only structure in which donors and the government engaged in a structured dialogue. However, the absence of a functioning government was a huge challenge for donors. There was no inter-ministerial policy programme and no substantial planning or implementation capacity. With the exodus of civil servants, government ministries had become empty shells. Therefore, the embassy in Beirut was not engaged in a bilateral policy dialogue with the Lebanese government on DAFD issues. However, Prospects partners had their own coordination with line ministries.

6.4 Donor coordination

The multiplicity of donors, each with their own programmes, interests, approaches, structures and procedures increases the transaction costs of aid for donors and partner countries and diminishes the potential impact of aid. Donor coordination is intended to counteract this.[251] Many donor representatives in Lebanon and Jordan saw a clear need to improve donor coordination. While funding needs were increasing, available resources were expected to decrease due to other crises in the world, making effective coordination and the search for the optimal added value of aid even more important. However, as in many other countries, donor coordination in Lebanon and Jordan was hampered by structural constraints. Most importantly, donor programming is largely defined in donor capitals, leaving little room for local actors to synergise and optimise their collective efforts.

While dialogue with the government in Jordan was more constructive than in Lebanon, aid coordination faced more or less the same challenges in both countries. Despite a multitude of coordination forums in both countries, there was no structural attempt to fill gaps or create synergies in aid programmes. Nor did donors have a joint strategy to influence government policy or cooperation among UN agencies.

In Jordan, there were a number of (informal) coordination structures, some with and some without the involvement of the Jordanian government. Donor coordination focused predominantly on sharing information and analysing current trends, rather than on filling funding gaps or creating synergies in programming. Aid interventions were generally considered to be rather isolated. Several donor representatives observed that the EU delegation did not play a coordinating role. As in many other developing countries, the EU's focus has shifted from joint programming to so-called 'Team Europe Initiatives', flagship initiatives that pool contributions from the EU, selected Member States and banks (EIB, EBRD) on specific themes.[252] The Netherlands contributed to one of the two ongoing Team Europe Initiatives.[253]

In Lebanon, most bilateral donors, including the EU, met about once a month in the so-called 'informal donor group'. The focus was on sharing information and analyses of ongoing developments and trying to arrive at joint messages to the government. Given the rapidly deteriorating political and economic situation, the latter became increasingly easy. However, this does not mean that donors have a joint strategy for influencing Lebanese government policy.

[250] The most important ones are the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP, 2015), focusing on the Syrian refugee crisis; the Emergency Response Plan (ERP, 2021,) focusing on the humanitarian needs of (mainly) the Lebanese population; and the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF, 2020), focusing on the victims and damage from the August 2020 Beirut port explosion.

[251] G. Ashoff, *Donor coordination: a basic requirement for more efficient and effective development cooperation*, Briefing paper 7/2004, German Development Institute, 2004.

[252] N. Keizer, A. Burni, B. Erforth and I. Friesen, *The Rise of the Team Europe Approach in EU Development Cooperation - Assessing a Moving Target*, Discussion Paper 22/2021, German Development Institute, 2021.

[253] This was the Aqaba-Amman Water Desalination project. See European Investment Bank, *Quenching Jordan's thirst*, 22 May 2023.

According to stakeholders, donor representatives located in Amman and in Beirut did inform each other in general terms about their aid programmes, but there was no structural focus on synergising interventions. At the same time, many respondents in both countries pointed to the risk of duplication of funding while funding gaps remained, but were unable to provide concrete examples. With regard to cash assistance, respondents in both countries highlighted the issue of duplication due to the lack of a single registration system covering the beneficiaries of all schemes, as beneficiaries of cash-based assistance may receive cash from different schemes. In Lebanon, the overlap between the coordination structures for aid to refugees (LCRP) and for Lebanese beneficiaries (ERP) was said to increase the risk of duplication.

Coordination of Dutch interventions

In both Jordan and Lebanon, the Netherlands played a constructive role in donor coordination, but as one of many donors, the influence the Netherlands can have on this coordination is relative. In Jordan, the Dutch embassy co-chaired the humanitarian donor group in 2022, a semi-formal coordination structure between humanitarian donors. In this role, it represented the donor group in the policy dialogue with the Jordanian government. In Lebanon, the Netherlands was among a group of donors advocating for a streamlined (and ideally single) aid structure. In support of this effort, the embassy in Beirut mapped existing coordination structures, an exercise that was appreciated by other donors.[254] However, so far it has proven difficult to promote a simplification and integration of parallel aid coordination structures.[255]

The finding that donors do not structurally seek to create synergies between their interventions is consistent with IOB's analysis of the project sample. IOB found no evidence of synergies with other interventions, although project proposals did refer to other projects (mostly funded by the Netherlands as well). Where project plans did refer to alignment with other projects, this alignment was not reflected in project reporting. For example, visits to Dutch-supported schools in Jordan revealed that these schools had also benefited from various other donors and were considered 'donor darlings'.

The international organisations involved in the Prospects partnership also received funding from other donors. Dutch funding was therefore closely linked to that of other donors. Some Prospects interventions directly benefited from the involvement of several donors.[256]

254 Interviews with donor offices in Lebanon.

255 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging – berichtenverkeer on Lebanon. Interviews with Dutch embassy staff and other diplomatic missions in Lebanon.

256 One example is the Estidama++ social security fund in Jordan in 2022, which was financed by Norway and the Netherlands (via Prospects partner ILO), while other donors were considering a contribution. See International Labour Organization, *Jordan and ILO sign agreement to support the extension of social security coverage and promote formalization*, 24 May 2022.

7 Management of instruments

7.1 Introduction

During the period under review (2016-2021), DAFD was implemented through three types of funding modalities, namely a project portfolio (2016/2017), a subsidy tender (2018/2019) and the Prospects partnership (2019 and beyond). This chapter examines how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has managed these programmes and how the MFA and the Dutch embassies in the hosting countries have collaborated in this process (section 7.2). Furthermore, it assesses how the Prospects partnership contributed to the new policy ambitions of the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, the ‘New Way of Working’ (NWoW) and locally-led development (section 7.3).

IOB's findings in this chapter are as follows:

- In both 2016 and 2018, spending pressure was created when substantial DAFD funds were made available before results frameworks, sound management arrangements and sufficient staff capacity were in place. This made it difficult to identify good-quality projects. In 2016, the need to disburse large funds in the absence of a results framework and sufficient management capacity complicated the development of good-quality projects. In 2018, spending pressure was again created when substantial funds had to be disbursed before the arrangements for the Prospects partnership were in place.
- The shift from a portfolio of projects to a partnership with large international agencies eased the contract management burden on the policy department and embassies. It also allowed for a more structured dialogue with key global players in DAFD (such as UNHCR and the World Bank), which contributed the MFA's knowledge of the field. At the same time, the management and further development of the partnership after its launch required more staff than had been anticipated.
- The embassies played an important role in the management of both the project portfolio and the Prospects partnership at the country level, but their roles were not always clear and cooperation with the ministry was not always smooth. Post-Covid-19, the policy department and embassies have invested in their relationship, resulting in improved cooperation.
- In the early years of DAFD programming, the Netherlands adopted a development approach that was intended to complement traditional humanitarian forms of refugee assistance. It was only with the introduction of the Prospects partnership that it sought a better link between the two approaches (the 'Humanitarian-Development Nexus') by promoting a joint approach between humanitarian and development partners. As a bold attempt to follow up on the 'New Way of Working' ambition, promoting increased cooperation between Prospect partners faced several challenges.
- Project funding in the early years of DAFD programming allowed for the funding of interventions designed by local organisations. Localising aid through the multilateral channel under the later Prospects partnership was not obvious and proved challenging.

7.2 Managing the different instruments

7.2.1 Project portfolio 2016-2017

In 2016, EUR 260 million was committed to Development Approaches to Forced Displacement (DAFD) in the Syria region, to be disbursed within two years. In Lebanon (EUR 86 million) and Jordan (EUR 60 million), this was done through separate projects. Given the political pressure to spend the budget, there was little time to identify and select projects. Due to the short time frame, the MFA decided not to issue a public tender but to start an informal process of project identification, with embassies taking the lead.
In 2016, apart from several letters to Parliament, there was still no elaborated policy framework or results framework. Consequently, the selection process resulted in a wide range of projects.

While the Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) was responsible for programme management as the budget holder, the embassies also played an important role. They were given the lead in identifying partners and soliciting proposals, as they were considered to have a better understanding of the local context, contacts with the authorities and knowledge and understanding of the national crisis response plans. Project proposals were assessed jointly by the embassies and DSH. Thematic MFA departments[257] were asked to provide input based on their thematic expertise (e.g. education, gender, employment, agriculture).

[257] These include the Social Development Department (DSO), the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE) and the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG).

Although formally the responsibility of the budget holder (DSH), the embassies drafted the first versions of the appraisal memoranda (Bemos), made an initial assessment of the progress reports, and maintained contact with the implementing organisations in case of problems. This 'hybrid' division of labour was logical given the embassies' proximity to the implementation context. However, it was not formalised from the outset, nor was it written down. The result was an implicit and unclear division of labour.

At the time, the embassies in Amman and Beirut did not have much of a track record in development programming and lacked the staff capacity, both in terms of numbers and programming experience, to properly set up this portfolio. Following indications that the embassies were overstretched, they were temporarily reinforced with project staff from The Hague.[258] Nevertheless, individual staff members felt a sense of responsibility in having to make decisions about large sums of money.

According to the staff involved, the lack of a results framework made it difficult in some cases to motivate the rejection of proposals. It also allowed for slightly different perspectives on prioritisation between the embassies and The Hague. While in most cases their assessments were similar, they had slightly different perspectives. The embassies focused more on the local context and the broader needs of the country. DSH, on the other hand, paid more attention to the managerial capacity of the candidate implementing organisations and a clear, strong refugee focus.[259]

As a results framework was not yet in place, DSH hired a consultant in 2017 to categorise projects and, based on this, extract a results framework and identify indicators. This was after most contracts had been signed and many projects had already started. Not all project implementers were keen on the new reporting requirements.[260]

7.2.2 The Prospects partnership

The idea of developing a partnership with development-oriented international organisations originated within DSH in early 2017. Apart from the policy considerations outlined in Chapter 2, including the aim to promote better links between humanitarian assistance and development through the New Way of Working (see section 7.3), one of the reasons for exploring such a partnership was the need to allocate a large DAFD budget effectively with limited staff capacity.[261] The idea was that this could be better achieved by moving away from a fragmented set of smaller projects and allocating the bulk of the funds to a group of trusted international organisations and joining forces with them.

DSH approached potential partners in 2017. The choice of partners was based on the tacit knowledge and personal assessment of the staff members involved, rather than on objective criteria.[262] The 2022 mid-term evaluation (MTE) of Prospects concluded that while the five partners appear to be a good mix and bring specific added value related to finding solutions to forced displacement, Prospects could have benefited from greater flexibility in terms of having other or more members as part of the arrangement, given the local context of each country and the size and scope of these potential members' activities in the area of forced displacement.[263] This is consistent with IOB's finding that embassy staff and partner representatives could have imagined other organisations being included in the partnership.

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[258] The Government Audit Service (ADR) was critical of the lack of management capacity at the embassies, and the Chef de Poste in Amman sounded the alarm that embassies were overwhelmed by the workload, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, internal messaging – berichtenverkeer on Jordan.

[259] Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.

[260] Interview with Dutch MFA staff.

[261] Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.

[262] Interviews with Dutch MFA staff. Initially, UNHCR was not one of the envisaged partners as it was not oriented towards long-term development planning (interviews Dutch MFA staff and a Prospects partner). In 2018, UNHCR was included in the partnership at the instigation of the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (2018 Memorandum).

[263] ECORYS & HERE-Geneva, 2022, p. 10.

The partnership itself was co-created by the MFA and the partners. The partners were invited to share their vision on the partnership and, after extensive discussions, this resulted in a 'Global Vision Note' in the spring of 2018.[264] Subsequently, 'Country Vision Notes'[265] were drafted in each of the eligible countries by the local country teams (representatives from the local offices of the partners) under the supervision of embassy staff.

In the early stages of partnership development (2017, early 2018), little consideration was given to the financial management requirements of the partnership. As a result, by mid-2018, these arrangements still had to be developed under great time pressure. The original idea behind the partnership was that working with trusted partners would allow for a light management and accountability structure, and this expectation was also raised among partners. After extensive internal reflection on possible contractual structures, DSH decided to sign separate contracts with each partner organisation. Under this arrangement, DSH decides on the allocation of funds per partner and provides non-binding guidelines, based on which the partners subsequently decide on the allocation per country.[266] Given the ambition to create synergies and leverage the comparative advantages between the partners,[267] it would have been conceivable to allocate funds per country, for example through a trust fund. However, it was considered too complicated (mainly because of the differences between the partners' internal procedures) and time-consuming to develop such an arrangement.[268]

As a result of the chosen arrangement, disbursement and formal reporting took place at the partner level. Organisations reported individually on their activities in all eight Prospects countries on an annual basis, whereas joint reporting at the country level would have provided more meaningful feedback on results and lessons learned. At the same time, partners at the country level worked within the framework of jointly drafted multiannual country plans. These were updated annually by the country team (representatives of the partners' local offices) and discussed with DSH. As such, DSH was informed at headquarters and at the country level.

The level of detail of the information on activities required by the MFA (for disbursement and monitoring) was higher than what partners had expected during the development of the partnership. Nonetheless, the information provided by partners is much less detailed than the monitoring and reporting requirements that come with project financing. The reporting for Prospects does not always include information that is of value to the embassies, such as the local organisations with which some partners work in Lebanon.[269]

As there were fewer but larger contracts to manage, contract management was more efficient for DSH and the embassies than project funding. However, setting up the partnership and developing it once it was up and running took a lot of time and energy from DSH and embassies. Partners also felt that coordination costs were very high in the early years. It seems that DSH underestimated the level of staff capacity required to develop and run a partnership when it was first conceived. Over the past few years, DSH has gradually invested in staff capacity, recognising that managing the Prospects partnership requires both a thorough understanding of DAFD in complex contexts, as well as programmatic knowledge and policy influencing skills. The Prospects team at DSH has developed a learning culture aimed at optimising the coordination and policy impact of the partnership. The larger and structural funding relationship and frequent consultations with the partners have contributed greatly to DSH's and the embassies' understanding of DAFD and how partners work. In addition, compared to a funding relationship based on ad hoc and smaller projects, the partnership also gave DSH more weight when trying to compel partners to adapt their approach to the Dutch policy agenda.

264 This Global Vision Note set out the expected value-added, thematic focus, expected outcomes and mechanisms of collaboration. IFC, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WB, 2018.
265 The Country Vision Notes described the country context, identified needs and challenges, as well as the desired results, the strategies to be followed and the ways in which partners could work together or even create synergies.
266 The allocation decision was complicated by the fact that for some countries, the Netherlands had made pledges in international donor conferences, which – partially at least – determined the flow of funds.
267 IFC, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WB, 2018, p. 2.
268 Interviews with Dutch MFA staff.
269 Interview with Dutch embassy staff Lebanon.

Cooperation between The Hague and embassies under Prospects

When the Prospects partnership was being developed in 2017 and early 2018, the embassies felt ill-informed and were disappointed by the lack of opportunity to provide input. In their view, the partnership was more or less 'imposed' on them without due regard for the contexts in which they worked, the relationships they had built with some of the partners and the track record (or lack thereof) of some of them. Despite initial scepticism, the embassies have adapted to the new implementation strategy and have shown a high degree of responsibility and ownership, particularly after the deployment of additional staff.[270] The embassies began to play an active role in managing the partnership at the country level, while DSH managed the partnership at the global level.

In the early years of Prospects, there remained a degree of ambiguity about the division of labour, which sometimes made communication between the embassies and The Hague difficult. Some partners perceived a slight disconnect between advice and guidance from the embassy and guidance from The Hague, which sometimes led to additional challenges and delays.[271] Initially, The Hague's vision sometimes differed from what the Prospects country team and the embassy saw as possible and relevant in the local context, particularly in Lebanon. The embassy in Beirut felt that humanitarian types of interventions were more appropriate in the Lebanese context, while the MFA advocated for more innovative, development-oriented approaches. The embassy has made great efforts to explain the local context to The Hague.[272] Post-Covid-19, the policy department (DSH) and the embassies have invested in their cooperation through several country visits by MFA staff, regular online meetings between MFA and embassy staff, and semi-annual retreats, resulting in an open exchange and a better understanding of the local contexts among policy staff.[273]

In addition to facilitating and promoting cooperation between partners, embassies are also asked to play a monitoring role, including visiting projects. This role is not formalised, and it is not exactly clear what is expected of them. Embassy staff have limited time to devote to this, and it is unclear how a monitoring role relates to the facilitating and stimulating role they play within Prospects.

Another role for the embassies was to 'give visibility' to the partnership and explain it to other donors. This could support local donor coordination and stimulate interest from other donors in possibly contributing to the partnership in the future. In the early years, however, the focus of the embassies (together with DSH) was more on making the partnership work and achieving results. However, the embassy in Jordan reached out to partners and frequently mentioned the partnership at donor meetings, including EU meetings.[274] Most of the donor representatives IOB spoke to during the country visits had a general understanding of what Prospects was about.

Overall, the Prospects partners were satisfied with the role of the embassies. Interviews revealed that the embassies were seen as more collaborative and partnership-based than what was perceived as a more directive, top-down approach from The Hague. One of the partners mentioned the staff capacity at the embassy as a point of attention, an issue that was also raised in the 2022 Prospects mid-term evaluation.[275]

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270 The embassy in Beirut hired a full-time policy officer to manage the partnership at country level. Later, this position was combined with another position at the embassy. In Amman, a policy officer for migration was appointed.

271 Interviews with Prospects partners.

272 Interviews with Dutch embassy staff Lebanon.

273 Interviews with Dutch MFA staff and Dutch embassy staff in Lebanon.

274 Interviews with various donor missions in Jordan.

275 ECORYS & HERE-Geneva (2022), pp. 51 and 57; Interview Prospects partner Lebanon.

7.2.3 Subsidy tender

In addition to the Prospects Partnership, a subsidy tender for NGOs was launched in 2018 (see Chapter 3). At that time, the Dutch DAFD policy was more elaborate and, compared to the previous project portfolio, there was more time to develop a results framework. This allowed for the application of criteria and thus a more transparent appraisal process. Also, there was more time, staff capacity and experience with the DAFD policy in these countries. According to the staff involved, this made the project assessment more objective compared to the 2016-2017 project portfolio. Due to the small size of the tender, the project sample used for IOB's project analysis includes only two projects financed under the tender.[276] Therefore, it has not been possible for IOB to compare the quality of the selected subsidy projects with the previous project portfolio.

7.3 New policy ambitions embedded in Prospects

7.3.1 Humanitarian-Development Nexus

The Humanitarian-Development Nexus is defined as an approach that favours linking humanitarian activities to development activities.[277] During the period under review, the interpretation of the notion and its relevance to DAFD has shifted somewhat. In the early years of DAFD (2016-2017), staff in DSH's Migration and Development division (DSH-MO) saw the nexus concept mainly as the application of a development approach in the context of protracted conflict and displacement, in addition to a purely humanitarian approach. The division was keen to secure a separate budget from the humanitarian budget and to operate in a different mode, focusing on longer-term interventions.[278] In later years, the thinking shifted towards linking and optimising the mix of humanitarian and development interventions, depending on the context.[279]

The decision in 2016 to create a budget for DAFD, separate from the humanitarian budget, was not in itself aimed at better connecting humanitarian and development interventions. It succeeded in ensuring solid budgets to address both the humanitarian needs in conflict-affected countries, such as Syria, and to support development opportunities in neighbouring countries hosting refugees. The introduction of the Prospects partnership, which included partners with different mandates, was explicitly aimed at better linking humanitarian and development responses (see 7.3.2).

The Prospects partnership proved to be flexible in the sense that it allowed interventions to be adapted to changing (local) needs and enabled basic needs to be addressed during Covid-19 in Jordan.[280] In Lebanon, UNICEF was allowed to reshuffle its allocation between two projects, and the World Bank was authorised to transfer EUR 20 million to UNHCR.[281]

The flexibility to redirect aid to more short-term needs comes with a dilemma. Due to the multiple crises in Lebanon and the lack of economic development opportunities to support, the international aid response to Lebanon since 2019 has shifted from a refugee-focused development response to a more humanitarian response, increasingly focused on meeting the basic needs of both refugees and the host population. There is a risk that foreign assistance and UN agencies are increasingly providing services that should have been provided by the government, thus partly taking over government responsibilities and allowing the government to shirk its responsibilities. Another related issue is that more and more expenditures went to cash assistance and running costs (e.g. fuel, teachers' salaries), and this type

276 In the countries covered by this evaluation, only five projects were funded under the subsidy framework: two in Lebanon, two in Jordan and one in Iraq, with a total budget of EUR 11.3 million. IOB's project sample includes two projects: the project by War Child (the Future is Ours) and the project by ABAAD (Strengthening the prevention of Gender-Based Violence).

277 This is also referred to as the 'double nexus'. The 'triple nexus' refers to interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace work. For a critical discussion of the double and triple nexus, see for instance: L. Cochrane & A. Wilson, 'Nuancing the double and triple nexus: analyzing the potential for unintended, negative consequences', *Development Studies Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2023.

278 The majority of Dutch humanitarian funding is spent through unearmarked contributions to large international humanitarian organisations. For more information, see IOB, *Trust, Risk and Learn: Humanitarian Assistance Given by The Netherlands – Funding and Diplomacy 2015-2021*, February 2023.

279 Focus group discussion with Dutch MFA and embassy staff on the Theory of Change, 16 and 17 March 2022.

280 Interview with Dutch embassy staff Jordan.

281 Interview with Dutch embassy staff Lebanon.

of assistance creates or increases dependency on international donor support. As a consequence, international donors support or maintain parallel systems and take over responsibilities from the government. It is questionable whether this situation is financially sustainable and whether it gives the Lebanese government just enough room to delay sorely needed reforms. However, there are no other viable alternatives to keep the country afloat.

7.3.2 The 'New Way of Working'

Closely linked to the Humanitarian-Development Nexus is the ambition of the 'New Way of Working' (NWoW). Launched at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the NWoW calls on humanitarian and development actors to work together, based on their comparative advantages, towards 'collective outcomes' that reduce need, risk, and vulnerability over multiple years (see Chapter 2). As such, the NWoW has been incorporated into the Prospects partnership as a 'fourth pillar', alongside the three thematic pillars.[282] The 2022 mid-term evaluation of Prospects focused on assessing the extent to which the Prospects partnership has contributed to the transformation of the ongoing responses to protracted forced displacement and, specifically, promoted the 'New Way of Working' (NWoW) between the partner organisations.[283] Whether this has led to more effective interventions will be the subject of the final evaluation of Prospects (due in 2024).

In the early years of Prospects, a number of factors made it difficult for partners to work together. IOB found that several Prospects partners felt that the MFA was heavily focused on promoting the NWoW, while it was unclear what exactly this entailed. They thought that the level of required cooperation needed more clarification. In addition, fundamental differences between the Prospects partners in terms of their mandates and operating procedures complicated joint programming, in particularly between UN agencies and World Bank Group partners. This had a negative impact on the extent to which they saw opportunities for cooperation and creating synergies.[284]

When it comes to the success of the collaboration in practice, it is still too early to make a full assessment, given that the partnership only started in 2019 and Covid-19 caused delays. The mid-term evaluation of Prospects (2022) concluded that so far there was little evidence that the NWoW within Prospects had led to a change in the behaviour of the agencies involved. The NWoW had not yet become a habit.[285] While the partners individually had their engagement with other policy frameworks for coordinating refugee/IDP responses (e.g. national development plans, CRRF, HRP or 3RP), for Prospects as a partnership this seemed limited.[286] The MTE concluded that it was the funding that drove Prospects forward. Without the financial incentives, the partnership was likely to come to an end. Nevertheless, interviews in 2022 suggested that Covid-19 had delayed the collaboration and that the partner organisations were beginning to find each other more easily and to understand each other's perspectives better.[287]

282 The three other pillars being education, employment and protection.
283 ECORYS & HERE-Geneva, 2022.
284 ECORYS & HERE-Geneva, 2022, p. 11.
285 ECORYS & HERE-Geneva, 2022, p. 11.
286 ECORYS & HERE-Geneva, 2022, p. 12.
287 Interviews with Dutch MFA staff, Dutch embassy staff in Jordan and Prospects partners.

7.3.3 Locally-led development

Localisation, one of the ambitions under the Grand Bargain,[288] generally refers to the transfer of resources and decision-making to local and national actors.[289] Local organisations bring in local knowledge and perspectives, which makes it possible to tailor interventions to real needs from a multidimensional, holistic perspective. While many donors endorse the importance of involving local organisations in programming and implementation, they struggle to put this into practice. The lack of NGO capacity to manage donor funds and the lack of staff capacity to manage small-scale support to local NGOs are frequently cited as obstacles. As a result, donors often prefer to work with international NGOs as intermediaries. Based on interviews and round-table discussions with NGOs in Jordan and Lebanon, IOB concludes that local NGOs are still rarely involved in the design of interventions. They also lack the structural funding that would allow them to retain quality staff and invest wisely in organisational capacity.[290]

It is evident that some of the Prospects partners, such as UNHCR and UNICEF, work by default with local organisations as subcontractors. However, this is not the same as giving local organisations a voice in the development response. The embassy in Beirut indicated that it was not even clear which local organisations were involved in Prospects interventions, which prevents them from engaging with them.[291] The discussions with NGOs in both countries revealed that large international organisations generally do not pass on the benefits of multi-annual and flexible funding to local NGOs, which hinders capacity development. IOB's findings echo those of the Prospects mid-term evaluation, which noted that the issue of involving national and local actors has not been addressed in a coherent and consistent way across country programmes.[292] Attention to locally-led development within the policy department has increased since Covid-19. It is only since 2021 that the migration policy division has explicitly devoted attention to promoting locally-led development. In 2023, it launched a subsidy tender to support and strengthen the capacity of local NGOs in refugee-hosting countries.

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288 The Grand Bargain was launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016. It is an agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations who have pledged to get more resources into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.

289 A literature review commissioned by IOB provides a critical reflection on the concept of localisation, practices and research on the phenomenon, see: V. Barbelet, G. Davies, J. Flint and E. Davey, *Interrogating the evidence base on humanitarian localisation: a literature study*, HPG Literature review, London: ODI.

290 Jordan has a strong NGO community, with an important distinction between 'royal' and 'non-royal' NGOs. The former are generally better equipped in terms of organisational and financial management and, have more leeway from and access to the government. The latter are fully independent, but generally have less organisational capacity and sometimes face government obstruction (project approval of projects can take a very long time).

291 Interview with Dutch embassy staff Lebanon.

292 ECORYS & HERE-Geneva, 2022, p. 31.

8 Conclusions and recommendations

The Syrian civil war, which started in 2011, caused around seven million people to flee abroad. Around 80% of these refugees are hosted by Syria's neighbouring countries (Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq). Approximately 1.4 million Syrians have found asylum in Europe.

Despite substantial investments, the Netherlands and its European and wider international partners have not been able to reverse the political and socio-economic trends in a positive way in the countries studied (Lebanon and Jordan). The expectation that Jordan would benefit economically from hosting refugees through trade benefits and foreign investment in basic infrastructure has not materialised. While the EU-Jordan Compact has formally improved Syrian refugees' access to the labour market through the issuance of work permits, the expected trade benefits and actual job creation did not materialise. Economic growth has stagnated, partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, the lack of good governance and the absence of political and economic reforms. In Lebanon, there was widespread political and societal opposition to the presence of large numbers of refugees from Syria, while the country was faced with a deep political and social crisis and one of the worst economic crises in recent memory.

The situation for refugees remained precarious. Employment among refugees was low (approximately a third of the labour force). Most of the employed refugees worked in the informal economy and in low-skilled jobs, exposing them to poor labour conditions, low wages and insecurity of payment. Poverty and socio-economic vulnerability remain a major concern for refugees. The socio-economic crisis in Lebanon pushed 91% of refugees into abject poverty, while in Jordan this figure was approximately 75%. In Lebanon, tensions among and between refugee groups and host communities have increased in recent years. In Jordan, tensions have been less pronounced, but there have been examples of clashes. Although both Lebanon and Jordan, with the help of international donors, have opened their education systems to refugee children, large groups of children do not attend or have never attended on a regular basis or never had (see Chapter 3 of this report).

Conclusions

Effectiveness

1) **Although Dutch support to hosting refugees in the region has achieved positive short-term results for refugees and host communities, the overarching policy objectives of increased self-reliance and improved socio-economic prospects for refugees and host communities remained, and became even more elusive. This was partly due to negative contextual trends beyond the control of the Netherlands (political crises, economic decline, Covid-19) and partly because the assumed willingness of host countries to adopt an inclusive approach towards refugees was lacking.**

IOB found that Dutch DAFD projects in most cases achieved their planned outputs and short-term results at the outcome level. For example, access to education was facilitated, the learning environment in schools was improved, protection services for women and children were enhanced, knowledge and skills were increased through vocational training, cash assistance allowed refugees to meet urgent basic needs, and SMEs were set up or enabled to grow through training, grants, loans and coaching. In this way, Dutch DAFD has made a positive contribution to the lives of refugees and their host communities.

Despite the considerable financial efforts by the Netherlands, its European partners and the international donor community, the overall objective of improving the prospects for refugees from Syria and their host communities was not achieved. In both Jordan and Lebanon, the overall security and socio-economic situation of refugees from Syria and their host communities has not improved. In Lebanon, the situation has deteriorated.

The longer-term effectiveness of DAFD interventions has been negatively affected by the political and economic context in Jordan and Lebanon. This includes the ongoing Syrian conflict, a deteriorating economic situation, aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and host country policies that have not been conducive to development opportunities for refugees.

Apart from the fact that the Netherlands, as a medium-sized donor country, can by definition only make a relatively modest contribution to macro-level policy objectives, most of the projects supported were local in scope and the sustainability of project results was not always ensured.

The discrepancy between the often positive short-term project results and the lack of achievement of policy objectives relates to the finding that two key assumptions underlying DAFD were not, or only partially, met in Jordan and Lebanon. First, the assumption that host governments would be willing to adopt an inclusive approach to refugees, or would be motivated to do so by international donor funding, was only partially borne out. In Lebanon, IOB found this unrealistic because of the government's opposition to the long-term presence of refugees. In Jordan, the government showed some willingness to – temporarily – integrate refugees into national systems, such as the labour market, in return for donor funding or trade preferences.

Second, the assumption that better access to and quality of education would contribute to employment and better livelihoods ('from learning to earning') proved invalid in Lebanon and only partly valid in Jordan, given the lack of decent jobs in both countries. As a result, the Dutch DAFD projects to promote employment for refugees, which focused mainly on learning and skills development – i.e. the supply side of the labour market – had only limited success.

Relevance

2) **Preventing the onward migration of refugees to Europe was an important political motive for supporting refugee reception in the region, but it was never operationalised as an objective or monitored. While Dutch DAFD programming focused on issues that may influence migration considerations, evidence of a causal relationship between development assistance and refugees' onward migration is weak.**

Based on the literature review, IOB concludes that Dutch DAFD programming focused on themes (protection, education and employment) that may play a role in influencing refugees' aspirations and capabilities for onward migration. At the same time, the assumed causal link between improved prospects for refugees in host countries and reduced incentives for onward migration is not straightforward. The decision to migrate is determined by many factors that are difficult to predict, change over time, and depend on refugees' perceptions of their current and future situation. To illustrate the complexity of this relationship, research on migration shows that the initial stages of development can even induce migration.

In practice, safety and legal protection, access to education, and secure and dignified employment for refugees remained major challenges in both Jordan and Lebanon. Actual onward migration is known to be low, although no official figures are kept. For most refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, onward migration was impossible due to a lack of financial resources and networks, and so they had to 'make do' with staying in situations of 'protracted temporariness'.

3) **Dutch DAFD interventions addressed areas of concern for refugees and their host communities and they focused on themes (protection, education and employment) that are relevant to promoting socio-economic prospects. Their relevance was limited because project objectives were often unrealistically formulated and most project designs overlooked factors that were important for achieving (sustainable) results.**

Indeed, IOB found that protection, education and employment were relevant to improving the socio-economic prospects of refugees. However, most project designs overlooked certain contextual factors essential for achieving success, such as different religious and cultural norms, weak government capacity and gender barriers. In addition, most project partners formulated overly ambitious outcomes, such as aiming to reach the entire target group or making unrealistic assessments of how contextual challenges would develop. Furthermore, the short time available for project identification, combined with limited staff capacity in the embassies and policy department, made it difficult to select well-designed projects that would have a lasting impact.

4) **Dutch DAFD implementation was flexible in the sense that it was able to adapt ongoing projects and the programming of new projects to changing circumstances, such as Covid-19 and the increasing need to meet basic needs in Lebanon.**

Dutch DAFD programming and the requirements for implementing partners were sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in the wider context, such as Covid-19 or the increasing humanitarian needs due to Lebanon's political, economic and financial crisis. The Netherlands proved to be a flexible donor, allowing for changes to project designs and no-cost extensions to ensure that – sometimes alternative – outputs (such as online classes) were achieved to still meet project objectives. As a result, the interventions remained relevant to the needs of refugees and host communities. Nevertheless, some activities had to be suspended, such as agricultural production and employment activities, due to the mobility restrictions related to Covid-19, and a project on low-interest loans for SMEs due to the financial crisis in Lebanon.

5) **With some exceptions, gender mainstreaming in programming remained limited to adding women as a target group rather than addressing specific gender needs.**

While Dutch projects were expected to be gender-sensitive and to promote gender equality, few projects addressed the specific needs of women and girls (mainly projects addressing gender-based violence). Project designs did not usually focus on addressing specific gender needs. All Dutch-supported projects were asked to report on the number of women and/or girls reached, even if this was not part of the project logic. In some cases, the introduction of targets created perverse incentives to artificially include women as beneficiaries. These findings are in keeping with lessons drawn from the larger European programmes in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as from an earlier IOB evaluation on gender mainstreaming (2021).

6) **Dutch DAFD programming targeted both refugees and host communities as beneficiaries. However, in both Lebanon and Jordan, the public perception remained that foreign aid benefited refugees more than the local population.**

Projects focusing on protection and education were more likely to reach refugees than livelihood and private sector development projects, which were more likely to target host communities. However, the (increasing) reluctance of the Jordanian and Lebanese governments to integrate refugees into national systems made it difficult to bring refugees and their host communities together in joint activities. Evidence suggests that the latter are beneficial in promoting social cohesion and reducing tensions, although there is also a risk of creating tensions. Overall, however, Dutch-funded projects did not report on their contribution to social cohesion or tension reduction. In both countries, there was a strong public perception that foreign aid benefited refugees more than the local population.

Coherence

7) **Diverging interests and perspectives between host governments and international donors made it difficult to align foreign assistance with government plans. While Dutch programming was formally aligned with national response plans, it did not necessarily follow the priorities of host governments.**

International donors and host governments had fundamentally different interests and perspectives on how to deal with refugees from Syria. While international donors were interested in reinforcing the already regional nature of the refugee response and preventing it from spilling over into other regions, host governments called for greater responsibility-sharing by the international community. Reinforced by the fact that the national population could also increasingly rely on international support due to economic stagnation and declining public service delivery, this translated into different funding priorities for donors and host governments. For example, governments preferred more direct government funding (rather than funding through UN agencies or NGOs), which most donors were unable or unwilling to provide.

In the first years of Dutch DAFD programming (2016-2017), the national response plans of Jordan and Lebanon served as guiding documents for project selection, but given their broad scope, they provided little guidance. Later versions were taken less seriously by donors. Despite intensive dialogue between donors and the Jordanian government, significant differences in funding priorities remained. In Lebanon, government engagement with donors was minimal as political elites blamed the international community for the presence of large numbers of refugees.

The Prospects partnership works through multilateral agencies, which by default coordinate their interventions with the government, either bilaterally or through aid coordination structures. This does not mean that their interventions are automatically aligned with government plans. However, supporting interventions that go beyond government priorities does not mean that they are not relevant for achieving the objectives, such as supporting the prevention of gender-based violence or mental health and psychosocial support.

8) Local donor coordination in Jordan and Lebanon barely focused on identifying funding gaps, overlaps or creating synergies, with serious risks of duplication. The Dutch embassies played a constructive but limited role in the coordination forums, which focused mainly on sharing analyses and coordinating diplomatic messages.

Despite the existence of several coordination forums, local donor coordination was mostly limited to exchanges of analyses of the local situation and coordinating messages to the authorities. While donors informed each other about programming, joint planning was hindered by donors' different programmatic scopes/priorities and modalities, which were predominantly defined in donor capitals, leaving little room for local actors to synergise. In both countries, representatives from the government, donor offices and implementing partners pointed to the risk of overlap and duplication. Aid interventions are generally considered to be rather isolated, as was the case with Dutch project financing in the early years of DAFD programming. With the introduction of the Prospects partnership, Dutch funding automatically flowed together with financing from other donors. In both countries, the Dutch embassies were active members of the donor forums. In Jordan, the embassy took on the role of co-chair of the humanitarian donor group in 2022. In Lebanon, the embassy actively contributed to joint donor efforts to rationalise the aid structure.

9) The Netherlands has supported host countries in several relevant areas beyond DAFD. The embassies have made good efforts to combine and leverage this support, finding niches in sectors such as agriculture, water and private sector development. However, the large number of instruments, mostly managed in The Hague, made it difficult to achieve optimal coherence.

The Netherlands has supported Jordan and Lebanon beyond DAFD programming in relevant areas, such as security, agriculture, water and private sector development. Most of the instruments implemented were managed by the MFA in The Hague. Some of them addressed issues relevant to the reception of refugees and were in line with DAFD objectives. Overall, the programmes were not fully aligned, and the large number of instruments made it difficult for embassies to have a full overview. Despite the introduction of multi-annual country strategies in 2018, programming in a given country remained dependent on global prioritisation by thematic policy departments in The Hague. Embassies found some niches, for example in agriculture, water and private sector development.

Programme management

10) In both 2016 and 2018, spending pressure was created when large DAFD funds were made available before results frameworks, sound management arrangements and sufficient staff capacity were in place. This made it difficult to identify good-quality projects.

In 2016, the pressure to disburse the available DAFD budget and the political desire to show results meant that projects eligible for funding had to be identified in a very short time frame. This, combined with the lack of an elaborate policy and results framework to assess the quality of proposals and the lack of development expertise and network in the embassies and the policy department, reduced the quality of projects and made it difficult to achieve the desired results. A results framework was only developed after most projects had already been approved. The ministry addressed the lack of project staff by stationing additional staff members at the relevant embassies.

The development of an innovative and complex partnership in 2017-2018 was time-consuming but was assigned to a small group of policy staff. As the new structural budget for DAFD was spread evenly over five years (EUR 128 million per year), large funds had to be disbursed already in 2018, while neither the contractual setup, financial arrangements nor the country-specific plans for the partnership were in place yet. The MFA decided to allocate part of the funds to the Prospects partners as seed funding to cover the extension of ongoing programmes and organisational costs of preparing the partnership, as a bridge to the partnership that really began in 2019.

11) The shift from a portfolio of projects to a partnership with large international agencies has facilitated contract management by the policy department and embassies. It also allowed for a more structured dialogue with key global players in DAFD (such as UNHCR and the World Bank), who contributed to the MFA's knowledge of the field. At the same time, the management and further development of the partnership after its launch required more staff than was anticipated.

In addition to policy considerations, such as following up on the 'New Way of Working', the development of a partnership was inspired by the need to allocate a large DAFD budget with relatively limited staff. While there were far fewer contracts to manage and monitoring was not as heavy a task as the project portfolio, administering and coordinating the partnership still placed a heavy burden on the policy department (and embassies). In addition, in the early years of its operation, many governance decisions had to be taken and communicated to partners. As a result, the staff capacity required was greater than originally anticipated.

The allocation of additional, dedicated staff to embassies and the policy department brought staffing levels in line with the needs of the task. Attracting external staff and gaining experience in developing the partnership created the right mix of knowledge and instilled a learning culture in the policy department. Staffing levels in the embassies were not always adequate. The embassies and the policy department gained a lot from working closely with the Prospects partners, but staff turnover made this knowledge base vulnerable.

12) Embassies played an important role in managing both the project portfolio and the Prospects partnership at the country level, but their roles were not always clear and cooperation with the Ministry was not always smooth. Post-Covid-19, the policy department and the embassies have invested in their relationship, resulting in improved cooperation.

In the early years of DAFD programming, programme management was hybrid, with the policy department as the formal budget holder taking the decisions, while the embassies were heavily involved in project identification, selection and monitoring. The distribution of tasks was not formalised, which sometimes led to friction. Embassies felt that they had not been properly consulted on the establishment of the Prospects partnership and that the partnership was being imposed on them. However, once the partnership was up and running, the embassies took ownership and played a stimulating and facilitating role at the country level. In the early stages of Prospects, partners sometimes noticed differences in perspectives between the embassy and The Hague and received diverging instructions. Particularly after Covid-19, both sides have invested in the relationship through visits, regular online meetings and retreats, resulting in a closer working relationship that is appreciated by both sides.

13) In the early years of DAFD programming, the Netherlands followed a development approach that merely complemented traditional humanitarian forms of refugee assistance. It was only with the introduction of the Prospects partnership that it sought to improve the link between the two approaches (the 'Humanitarian-Development Nexus') by promoting a joint approach between humanitarian and development partners. As a bold attempt to follow up on the 'New Way of Working' ambition, promoting greater cooperation between Prospects partners faced several challenges.

In the early years of DAFD programming (2016-2017), staff at the policy department interpreted and operationalised the nexus approach as promoting development assistance in the context of protracted displacement. As such, it succeeded in shielding the DAFD budget from Dutch humanitarian assistance, which follows a different funding logic. In later years, the nexus was understood as finding a mix of both humanitarian assistance (meeting direct, short-term needs such as shelter, food and income) and development assistance (long-term socio-economic development, promoting the resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities), depending on what the context required. By bringing together humanitarian and development partners, Prospects was presented as a 'nexus partnership'.

This 'New Way of Working' calls for humanitarian and development actors to work together, based on their comparative advantages, towards 'collective outcomes' that reduce needs, risks, and vulnerabilities over a number of years. Thanks to Prospects, the partners involved have started to work together and learn from each other by sharing information and analysis, although Covid-19 caused delays. Joint planning and programming were still rare and complicated by differences in partners' mandates, ways of operating and portfolio sizes.

14) Project funding in the early years of DAFD programming made it possible to fund interventions designed by local organisations. Localising aid through the multilateral channel under what would become the Prospects partnership was not obvious and proved challenging.

Localisation of aid presupposes a leading role for local organisations in the design of aid interventions, which also have or are developing the capacity to do so. While localisation was not yet a strong priority in the early years of DAFD programming (2016-2017), the project modality of those years allowed for the funding of projects designed by local organisations. Indeed, 5 of the 13 projects sampled by IOB were designed by local organisations.

With the introduction of the Prospects partnership, it was simply assumed that some of the Prospects partners had traditionally worked through local organisations as subcontractors. However, this is not the same as giving local organisations a voice in project design and investing in capacity development. International organisations are not known for passing on their favourable conditions (flexible and multi-year financing) to subcontractors. Local NGOs have hardly been involved in the design of interventions. They also lack the structural funding that would allow them to retain quality staff and invest wisely in organisational capacity. Since Covid-19, the localisation agenda has received more attention from the policy department. However, it proved difficult to encourage Prospect's partners to localise, partly because it was not part of the contractual arrangements.

Recommendations

Given the political stalemate in Syria, the possibilities for the safe and dignified return of refugees from Syria will remain limited in the coming years. As a result, the continued presence of large numbers of refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries, which are already facing significant political and economic challenges, poses risks to regional stability, with possible negative spill-over effects on Europe. The need for support will remain high, while international funding for the region is likely to come under pressure from other crises around the world. This forces the government to reflect on more effective and efficient policies.

Based on these conclusions, IOB has formulated the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Reassess the objectives and strategy at the regional and/or country level

- The MFA should make explicit its key policy assumptions (see Box 2.3 in this report) and regularly examine their validity in specific contexts, ideally together with partners and local stakeholders. If necessary, the assumptions should be adapted, which may have implications for the intervention logic at the regional and country level.
- In these challenging contexts, where host governments oppose the idea of local integration and (to varying degrees) even temporary inclusion, the MFA must have realistic expectations in terms of promoting the resilience and self-reliance of refugees and may need to adjust the highest-level objectives.
- The Humanitarian-Development Nexus does not imply a one-way shift towards more and more development interventions. Rather, in volatile contexts such as Lebanon, there may need to be a 'shift back' to more humanitarian types of assistance that address the basic needs of both refugees and host communities. However, there is a risk of over-reliance on short-term responses that do not promote much-needed economic recovery and take over responsibilities that lie with the government. Scenario thinking could allow for a timely shift between types of interventions and instruments.

- The MFA should clarify how it intends to prioritise and operationalise gender mainstreaming and gender equality in DAFD programming, to prevent it from becoming an afterthought in activities and to ensure that when it is addressed it is done in a meaningful way and in line with the development of a 'feminist foreign policy'.
- The MFA should avoid creating and succumbing to spending pressures. A broader lesson from this evaluation is that newly released development funds should not be spent until a sound policy approach has been developed.

Recommendation 2: Maintain dialogue with host governments and an open attitude to alternative ways forward, even when interests and perspectives are far apart.

- The MFA, embassies and the political leadership would do well to engage actively in diplomatic dialogue with government actors in host countries, even when interests are far apart. In Jordan, there is ample room for dialogue, although interests remain divergent. In Lebanon, it is very difficult to engage in a constructive dialogue with senior government officials. However, some level of dialogue is necessary to maintain a degree of goodwill and to identify political interests.
- In the current political climate, promoting policy space for refugee integration is unrealistic in Lebanon and only possible to a limited extent in Jordan. Nevertheless, where opportunities arise, the MFA and embassies would do well to continue to explore ways to promote more inclusive approaches, the most promising of which is direct funding of inclusive policy measures, either at the national or local level.
- Recognising that a safe and dignified return to Syria is not possible, and that local integration is being denied, the MFA should consider possible innovative pathways to increase self-reliance. For instance, skills development (language skills, ICT) could benefit refugees and provide a pathway for them to find legal routes to third countries (possibly including but not necessarily to Europe). This may be the only viable durable solution in the medium term.
- In order to increase support in the host countries for the reception of refugees, the Dutch government could consider strengthening its approach to responsibility sharing by taking into account the other durable solutions to displacement besides (temporary) local integration. For instance, increasing the resettlement quota and making this more visible to host governments can demonstrate a willingness to take responsibility beyond financing. The Netherlands and international partners are right to insist on the conditions of safe and dignified return and the principle of *non-refoulement*. However, engaging in a discussion rather than dismissing the idea of return 'for the time being' is a way of acknowledging the deep concerns of host governments and keeping the dialogue going.
- As long as the government in Lebanon lacks planning and implementation capacity, the MFA and implementing partners should try to work with local governments (municipalities), while taking care to avoid potential negative unintended effects (e.g. fuelling local favouritism or over-focusing on certain regions).

Recommendation 3: Work as contextually and locally as possible.

The evaluation found that the policy framework was not sufficiently contextualised and that needs assessments in projects were often too general and overlooked factors or specific interests that were crucial to the success of the project. Engaging with local NGOs, including refugee organisations, can be of great benefit in designing effective interventions.

- The MFA, embassies and implementing partners should ensure that policies, programmes and interventions are based on national (and even local) contexts and needs. This requires continued efforts by thematic and regional departments and embassies to ensure that centrally funded activities and results are properly integrated into a country-specific strategy based on a sound analysis of local needs and Dutch added value.
- The MFA, embassies and implementing partners would do well to develop mechanisms to involve local stakeholders and refugee representatives in all phases of programming, including during the needs assessment, project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Preventing tensions/promoting social cohesion are important issues that need to be addressed in both countries, particularly in Lebanon. Consultation with local organisations, including refugee organisations, helps to implement projects in a more context-sensitive way, given their knowledge of social, cultural and religious nuances.

- In order to encourage Prospects partners (in particular UN organisations) to work more locally, the MFA should consider addressing these efforts in a more structural way, for instance by embedding overarching and consistent contractual conditions in the framework agreements with these partners. Beyond bilateral donor relationships, the MFA should try to mobilise like-minded donors to do the same when contracting UN partners and to raise the issue collectively in relevant meetings at UN Headquarters.

Recommendation 4: As the minister has decided to extend the Prospects partnership until 2027, continue to build the partnership, seek to broaden the donor base and link it with other initiatives in the region.

The Prospects partnership is a bold attempt to better connect humanitarian and development partners and to embed the New Way of Working in their modes of operating. The evaluation has shown that it has taken time and that the MFA had to overcome various challenges in order to promote meaningful cooperation among the partners. Although the cooperation between these partners is beneficial in itself, the establishment and maintenance of separate coordination mechanisms does not fit well with the idea of the New Way of Working.

- The MFA should seek to make the 'New Way of Working' more operational by clarifying what it means and when it is successful, while recognising that it is a means to an end.
- The MFA should continue to seek to broaden the donor base and develop governance arrangements that allow for other donors to join without diluting the partnership's bold ambition.
- The MFA should allow flexibility for other organisations to join as partners where there is added value in a specific country context. The current composition of the partnership was built on tacit knowledge and personal assessment of organisations, without due consideration of country contexts.

Recommendation 5: Ensure sufficient staff capacity for programme management, dialogue, political economy analysis, and monitoring and learning.

The evaluation found that staffing levels at the policy department and embassies were sometimes tight and that investments (sometimes temporary) had to be made. Effective management of a complex partnership such as Prospects, as part of a broader intervention strategy, requires that both sufficient staff numbers and the right mix of skills are ensured in the future.

- The MFA should invest in longer-term specialised staff dedicated to working on DAFD and establish career paths within the organisation to support this effort. Managing the Prospects partnership and related programmes requires a specific mix of knowledge and competencies: in-depth knowledge of the region and of refugee issues, knowledge of implementing partners and their strengths and weaknesses, knowledge of aid effectiveness, and persuasive skills. Retaining high-quality, specialised staff is only possible if there are career and growth opportunities within the same policy area.
- The MFA should build on the learning culture that has been developed within the policy department and involve embassies and local partner offices to promote inter- and intra-regional learning. Learning from experience and improving practice requires constant attention and (therefore) staff capacity. This pays off in more successful interventions. Lessons learned are ideally shared with other donors.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Breakdown of DAFD budget

A1.1 Budget for ministry-wide DAFD policy

Contrary to humanitarian aid or education, for example, the DAFD policy did not originally have an individual budget line. Until 2015, DAFD expenditures came from the humanitarian budget line (BHOS 4.1), and for the period 2016-2018, they were placed under the 'security and rule of law' budget line (BHOS 4.3). Although sometimes pre-budgeted, these were often one-off expenditures (see Table A1.1). With the new coalition agreement in 2017, there was an increased focus on DAFD policy. Additional funding of EUR 128 million a year was announced,[293] and from 2019 onwards, DAFD policy had its own budget line: BHOS 4.2 'asylum and protection in the region, cooperation on migration'. This meant that from this moment on, the budget for DAFD policy became more structurally available.

Table A1.1 *One-off expenditures on DAFD policy*

Year	Amount	Destination	Budget line
2015	EUR 110 million	DAFD-wide policy	Humanitarian budget line
2016-2017	EUR 260 million	DAFD policy for the Syria region: EUR 94 million Türkiye EUR 86 million Lebanon EUR 60 million Jordan EUR 20 million Iraq	EUR 100 million was redirected within the BHOS budget while EUR 160 million was added to the BHOS budget.
2017	EUR 30 million	DAFD-wide education programmes for refugees and host communities	Security and rule of law budget line

Table A1.2 *4.2 budget line expenditures, in millions of euros*[294]

Asylum and protection in the region, cooperation on migration	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total		**€ 87.1**	**€ 229.8**	**€ 170.5**	**€ 157.6**	**€ 174.1**
Asylum and protection total	€ 177.7	€ 60.7	€ 196.2	€ 138.0	€ 128.1	€ 140.4
Subsidies		€ 18.6	€ 16.0	€ 12.5	€ 16.5	€ 9.3
Contribution to (inter)national organisations	€ 177.7	€ 42.1	€ 180.2	€ 125.5	€ 111.6	€ 131.1
Migration and development total		€ 26.4	€ 33.6	€ 32.5	€ 29.5	€ 33.7
Subsidies		€ 3.1	€ 2.2	€ 2.7		
Orders			€ 0.4	€ 0.2		
Contribution to (inter)national organisations		€ 23.3	€ 30.9	€ 29.6	€ 29.5	€ 33.7

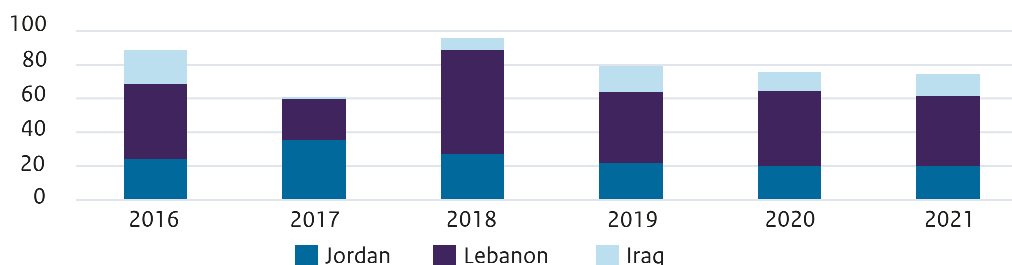
Source: 2016 data = Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 'Jaarverslag en slotwet Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2018', KST 35200 XVII-1, 15 May 2019; 2017-2021 data = Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 'Jaarverslag en slotwet Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2021', KST 36100 XVII-1, 18 May 2022.

[293] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, KST 34952-1, 2018, pp. 43-44.
[294] The 2021 annual report has retroactively placed the DAFD expenditures for the years 2017 and 2018 under 4.2 instead of 4.3.

A1.2 Budget for DAFD policy in Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq

In the period 2016-2021, a total of EUR 474.6 million was spent on DAFD policy in Jordan (EUR 149.8 million), Lebanon (EUR 257.8 million) and Iraq (EUR 67.0 million). Although the budget may be lower than when the DAFD policy did not have its own budget line, the budget available for each country remained relatively stable. The BHOS 4.2 budget line was accompanied by multi-annual programmes and longer-term budgetary commitments. Some of these are the Prospects partnership (2019-2022) and the Subsidy Framework (2019-2022).

Figure A1.1: MFA DAFD expenditures in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, in millions of euros



Year	Jordan	Lebanon	Iraq	Total
2016	24.3	44.5	20.0	88.8
2017	35.7	24.3	0.7	60.8
2018	27.1	61.4	7.1	95.6
2019	21.8	42.3	15.0	79.1
2020	20.4	44.2	10.9	75.6
2021	20.3	41.2	13.2	74.7
	149.6	**257.9**	**66.9**	**474.6**

Source: IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

Some three-quarters of the 2019-2021 DAFD budget line went to the Prospects partnership (EUR 170.4 million). The largest share of this went to UNICEF (EUR 54.7 million) and UNHRC (EUR 62.1 million). While the ILO and World Bank budgets were evenly divided between the three countries, the other partners' budgets were skewed towards one country. For IFC and UNICEF about half of the budget was directed to Jordan and Lebanon respectively. For UNHCR more than 80% was directed to Lebanon.

Table A1.3: Prospects expenditures split out per partner, in millions of euros					
	Prospects partner	**Total**	**Jordan**	**Lebanon**	**Iraq**
2019	IFC	**€ 2.0**	€ 1.1	€ 0.6	€ 0.3
	ILO	**€ 8.6**	€ 3.3	€ 2.5	€ 2.8
	UNICEF	**€ 22.8**	€ 8.0	€ 11.1	€ 3.7
	UNHCR	**€ 25.9**	€ 3.5	€ 21.7	€ 0.7
	World Bank	**€ 3.3**	€ 1.2	€ 1.0	€ 1.1
2020	IFC	**/**	/	/	/
	ILO	**€ 8.2**	€ 3.5	€ 2.1	€ 2.6
	Of which opportunity fund	*€ 2.6*	*€ 1.3*	*€ 0.4*	*€ 0.8*
	UNICEF	**€ 14.3**	€ 4.9	€ 7.1	€ 2.4
	Of which opportunity fund	*€ 0.4*	/	*€ 0.3*	*€ 0.1*
	UNHCR	**€ 21.5**	€ 2.9	€ 18.0	€ 0.6
	Of which opportunity fund	*€ 0.4*	*€ 0.02*	*€ 0.3*	/
	World Bank	**€ 7.0**	€ 2.5	€ 2.2	€ 2.3
2021	IFC	**€ 5.4**	€ 2.9	€ 1.7	€ 0.9
	ILO	**€ 4.9**	€ 2.1	€ 1.3	€ 1.6
	Of which opportunity fund	*€ 1.2*	*€ 0.6*	*€ 0.2*	*€ 0.4*
	UNICEF	**€ 17.6**	€ 5.2	€ 9.1	€ 3.2
	Of which opportunity fund	*€ 2.7*	/	*€ 1.9*	*€ 0.8*
	UNHCR	**€ 14.7**	€ 1.9	€ 12.5	€ 0.4
	Of which opportunity fund	*€ 1.6*	*€ 0.1*	*€ 1.5*	/
	World Bank	**€ 14.1**	€ 4.9	€ 4.4	€ 4.7

Source: IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq.

The remaining EUR 59 million (spent through the subsidy budget and tenders) concerns programmes of local and international organisations. The majority of this (EUR 20 million) went to UNHCR in Lebanon. Another EUR 3.1 million was dedicated specifically to Covid-19.

Table A1.4: Expenditures other than Prospects, per partner, in millions of euros

Organisation	Country	2019	2020	2021	Total	% of total
UNHCR	Lebanon		€ 10.0	€ 10.0	**€ 20.0**	34%
Eco Consult	Jordan		€ 2.9	€ 2.3	**€ 5.2**	9%
Stichting Spark	Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq	€ 2.1	€ 1.5	€ 1.0	**€ 4.6**	8%
Stichting War Child	Lebanon	€ 0.9	€ 2.1	€ 1.0	**€ 3.9**	7%
ABAAD	Lebanon	€ 1.9	€ 0.9	€ 0.6	**€ 3.5**	6%
IOM – Int. Organisation for Migration	Lebanon, Iraq	€ 1.4	€ 0.2	€ 1.7	**€ 3.2**	5%
UNICEF	Iraq	€ 2.3			**€ 2.3**	4%
Finn Church Aid	Jordan	€ 1.0	€ 0.6	€ 0.5	**€ 2.1**	4%
VNG International B.V.	Iraq	€ 0.6	€ 0.8	€ 0.7	**€ 2.1**	4%
Save The Children	Lebanon	€ 1.0	€ 1.0	€ 0.05	**€ 2.0**	3%
Siren Associates	Jordan	€ 1.0	€ 0.9		**€ 1.9**	3%
Terre Des Hommes	Iraq	€ 0.8	€ 1.0	€ 0.05	**€ 1.9**	3%
(ILO) International Labour Office	Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq	€ 1.8			**€ 1.8**	3%
GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH	Jordan		€ 1.4		**€ 1.4**	2%
SEEFAR	Iraq	€ 0.6	€ 0.5	€ 0.06	**€ 1.2**	2%
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization	Lebanon		€ 0.7		**€ 0.7**	1%
Stichting Nuffic	Lebanon	€ 0.4			**€ 0.4**	1%
UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency	Lebanon	€ 0.4			**€ 0.4**	1%
Berytech Foundation	Lebanon		€ 0.1		**€ 0.1**	0%
René Moawad Foundation	Lebanon	€ 0.1			**€ 0.1**	0%
Stichting Wereld Waternet	Lebanon	€ 0.1			**€ 0.1**	0%
SEO Economisch Onderzoek	Jordan	€ 0.03			**€ 0.03**	0%
Multiple Parties	Jordan, Lebanon		€ 0.02	€ 0.001	**€ 0.02**	0%
Stichting GreenfieldCities	Jordan	€ 0.02			**€ 0.02**	0%

Source: IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq.

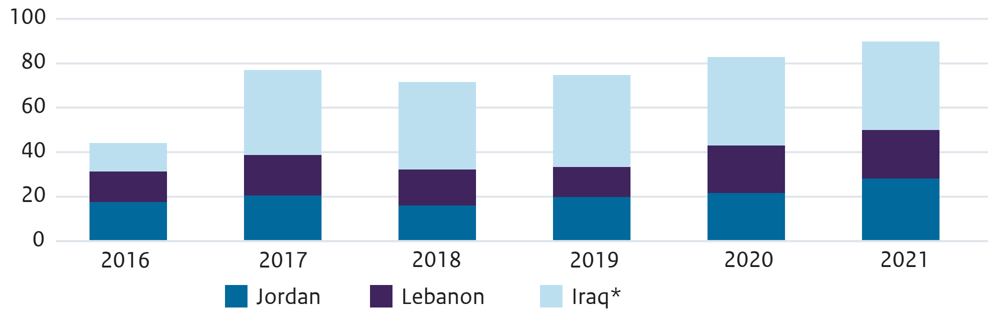
A1.3 Other expenditures in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq

In addition to the programmes and expenditures dedicated to DAFD policy, the MFA has also made other expenditures in the three countries that could indirectly benefit refugees. These include spending on climate, the fight against crime and terrorism, food security, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and trade and investment. In the period 2016-2021, a total of EUR 914.4 million was spent in Jordan (EUR 274.2 million), Lebanon (EUR 362.5 million) and Iraq (EUR 277.6 million).[295] 52% of this amount was dedicated to DAFD policy and 48% to other programmes. Figure A1.2 displays the division per country per year.

In 2019, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq were added to the list of focus countries of the MFA. The additional budget that came with this focus has largely been spent on the private sector and the labour market. It went from almost no spending to an average of EUR 13 million per year. Civil society, SRHR, HIV/AIDS, food security and water also saw their budgets more than double.

[295] IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq.

Figure A1.2 *MFA expenditures in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq other than DAFD, in millions of euros*



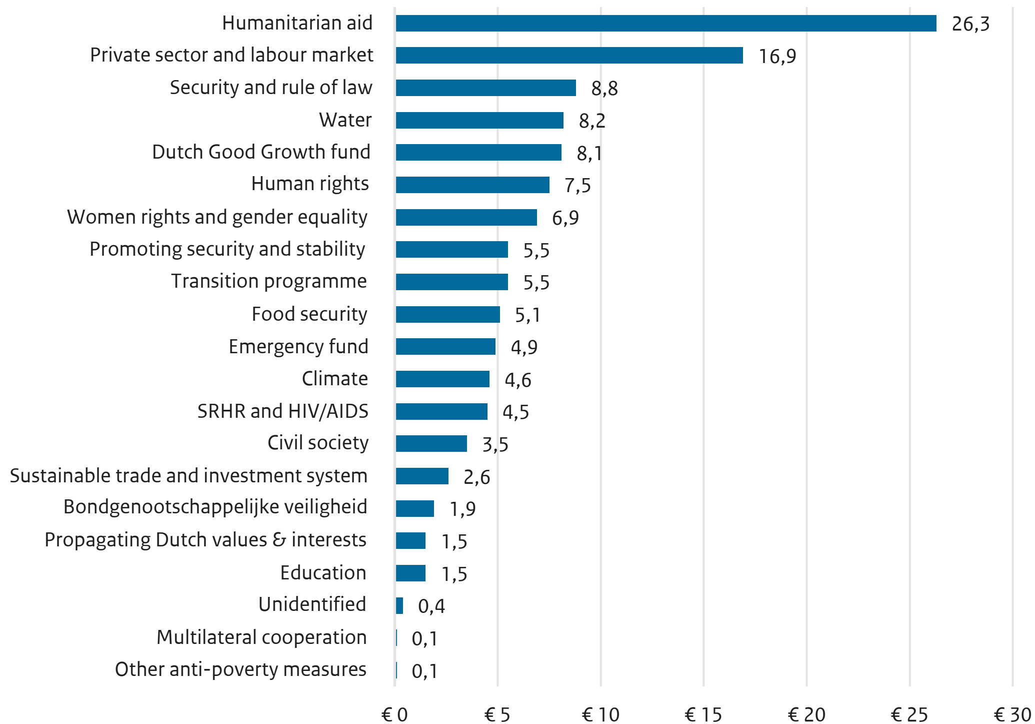
Year	Jordan	Lebanon	Iraq
2016	17.8	13.5	12.7
2017	20.7	18.1	38.1
2018	16.1	16.2	39.3
2019	19.8	13.7	41.3
2020	21.8	21.3	39.6
2021	28.3	21.9	39.6

Source: IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq.

**The increase in expenditures in Iraq from 2016 to 2017 can be mainly explained by an increase of EUR 10 million in the budget for both promoting security and stability, and the emergency fund. However, this is not a continuous increase, as the composition of the sectors changed in the following years (e.g. the emergency fund, as a budget line, was discontinued after 2018, and the budget for promoting security and stability was reduced to EUR 3 million in 2018 but increased again to EUR 17.8 million in 2019, and the budget for security and rule of law increased significantly from 2018 onwards).*

The largest share of the EUR 124.4 million spent in Jordan was dedicated to humanitarian aid[296] (21%) and private sector and labour market (14%). Other sectors receiving more than 5% are: security and rule of law, water, Dutch Good Growth Fund, human rights, and women's rights and gender equality.

Figure A1.3 *MFA expenditures in Jordan other than DAFD, in millions of euros*

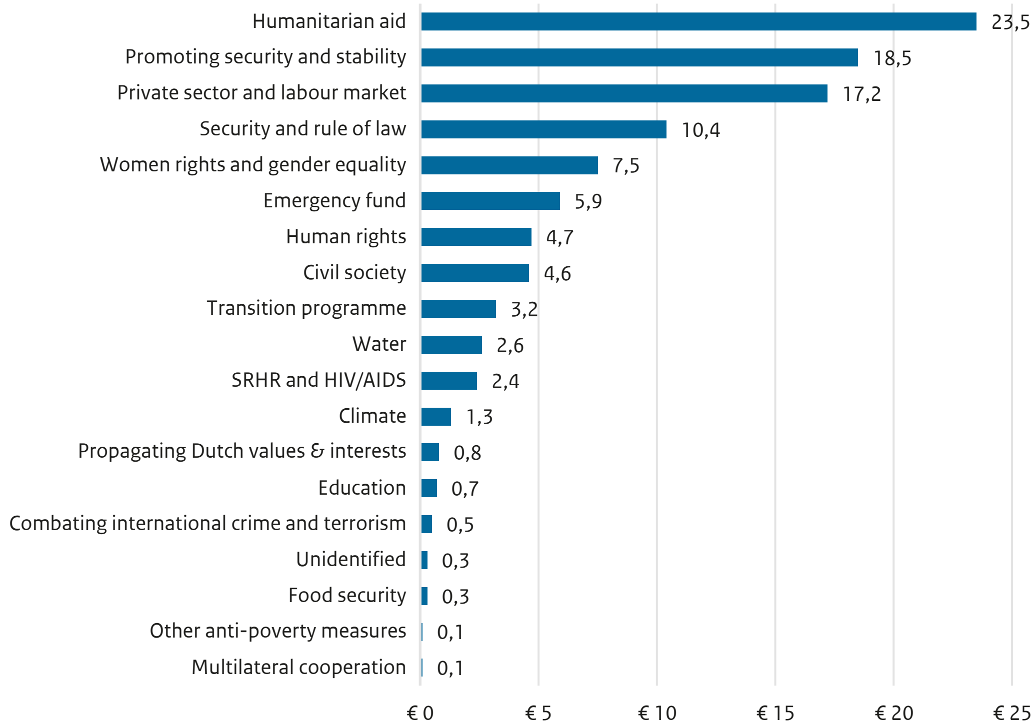


Source: IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq.

[296] This concerns mainly support for Palestinian refugees.

In Lebanon, more than half of the budget (EUR 104.7 million) was dedicated to three sectors: humanitarian aid (22%), promoting security and stability (18%), and private sector and labour market (16%). Other sectors accounting for more than 5% of the budget are security rule and rule of law (10%), women's rights and gender equality (7%) and emergency fund (6%).

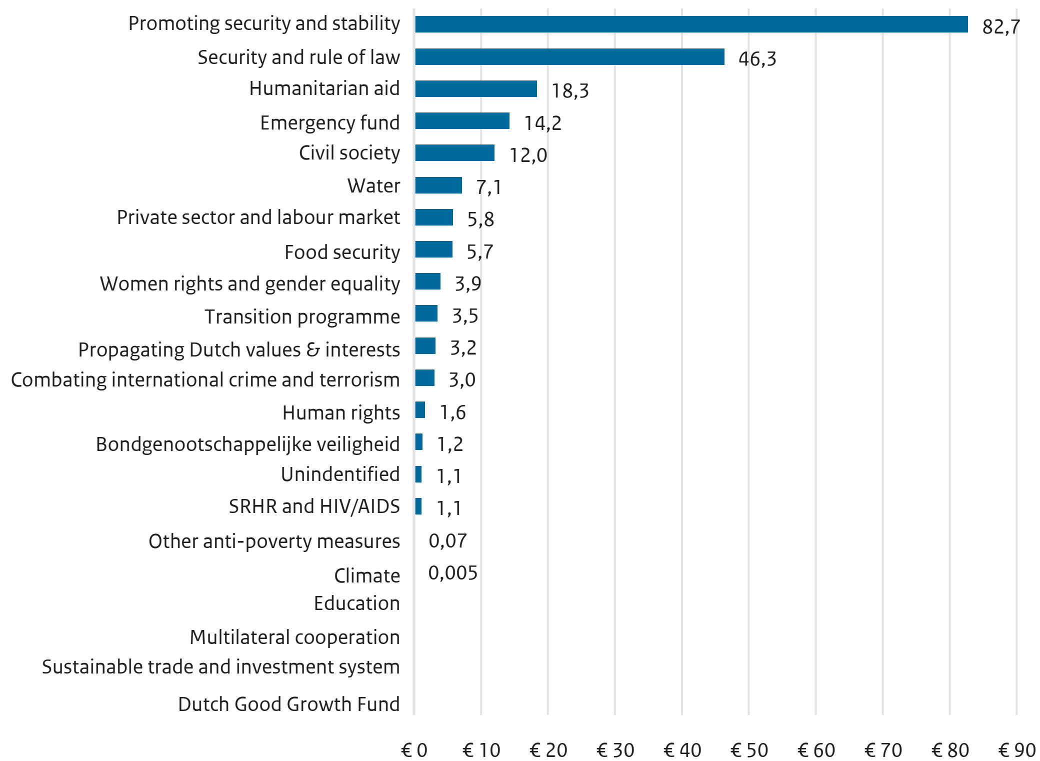
Figure A1.4 *MFA expenditures in Lebanon other than DAFD, in millions of euros*



Source: IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq.

In contrast to Jordan and Lebanon, humanitarian aid is a much smaller but still significant part of the Iraqi budget. Almost 40% of the EUR 210.6 million budget is spent promoting security and stability. Together with expenditures on security and rule of law, emergency fund and civil society, these four sectors account for 82% of the budget.

Figure A1.5 *MFA expenditures in Iraq other than DAFD, in millions of euros*



Source: IOB calculations based on Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, MIBZ data, country sheets Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq.

Annex 2 – Sampled projects

The reader is referred to the online annex for an overview of project assessments.

Jordan

Project 1: UNICEF – Catch-up Education Jordan

Project	Details
Full project name	Support to the Government of Jordan to Realize the Jordan Compact Commitments on Education (Catch-up Classes Program, Drop-out, Makani, Hajati and Nashatati Programmes)
Budget	EUR 14.0 million
Project duration	1 October 2016 – 31 March 2019
Overall objective	To contribute to ensuring sustained quality educational services for children and youth impacted by the Syrian crisis.

Project 2: Eco Consult – Hydroponics Agriculture and Employment Development Jordan

Project	Details
Full project name	Hydroponics Agriculture and Employment Development (HAED-JO)
Budget	EUR 12.8 million
Project duration	1 November 2016 – 30 June 2022
Overall objective	To contribute to a more competitive Jordan greenhouse sector that can provide more long-term jobs for both the Jordanian domestic workforce as well as the Syrian refugees. Jordan's horticultural sector will be exposed to Dutch horticultural technology, which should result in a stronger Jordan – Netherlands horticultural institutional and business partnership.

Project 3: Spark – Improve Employment Opportunities in Jordan

Project	Details
Full project name	Improve Employment Opportunities in Jordan
Budget	EUR 8.8 million
Project duration	1 December 2016 – 31 December 2020
Overall objective	To supply Syrian, Palestinian and Jordanian youth with all the necessary skills to make the most of newly arisen chances and focus on sectors that show new growth opportunities under the Jordan Compact. The programme seeks to stimulate youth to grow or start their own micro, small or medium-sized enterprises, if possible, with members of the host community. The programme offers ample opportunity not just for creating jobs in Jordan, but for preparing the community for return and economic development in Syria once a peace agreement is in place.

Project 4: Princess Alia Foundation – Sustainable Education through Renewable Energy in the Governorates Affected by the Syrian Crisis

Project	Details
Full project name	Sustainable Education through Renewable Energy in the Governorates Affected by the Syrian Crisis
Budget	EUR 7.2 million
Project duration	1 July 2017 – 1 September 2019
Overall objective	To contribute to the overall efforts aiming at mitigating the impact of the Syrian crisis in line with the JRP, focusing on the northern governorates that are most affected by the Syrian crisis. This will be achieved through the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency systems to reduce the growing demand for energy, improve the learning environment in schools, increase enrolment and retention of Jordanian and Syrian students, improve the livelihoods of surrounding communities and simultaneously promote social cohesion.

Project 5: GIZ – Trade for Employment

Project	Details
Full project name	Trade for Employment – Improving the conditions for Jordanian companies to trade and export while creating employment for Jordanians and Syrians
Budget	EUR 5.8 million
Project duration	September 2017 – October 2025
Overall objective	To improve business support services and institutions; support trade and business associations and chambers of commerce; implement legal and regulatory reform to improve the business and investment climate; strengthen the private sector's institutional capacity; and foster public-private sector dialogue. In addition, the project tries to simplify and harmonise international import and export procedures; and support to customs and other border agencies, including in particular the implementation of the provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement; and tariff reforms.

Lebanon

Project 6: UNICEF – Fostering Active Youth

Project	Details
Full project name	Fostering Active Youth
Budget	EUR 20 million
Project duration	1 September 2016 – 31 March 2020
Overall objective	To support the youth in different ways to engage in quality (vocational) learning, to take up employment opportunities and to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Project 7: FAO – Water and Agriculture

Project	Details
Full project name	FAO Water and Agriculture
Budget	EUR 7.4 million
Project duration	1 December 2016 – 31 May 2020
Overall objective	To support the Green Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture to revive agricultural livelihoods through investment in small-scale farming infrastructure while creating temporary jobs for unskilled workers and sustainable yearly seasonal work opportunities for displaced Syrians and Lebanese host communities.

Project 8: Berytech Foundation – Smart Agri-Food Innovation Hub

Project	Details
Full project name	Smart Agri-Food Innovation Hub (Agritech)
Budget	USD 3.1 million
Project duration	1 November 2016 – 31 August 2019
Overall objective	To create prospects for youth by accelerating job creation and stimulating Lebanon's competitiveness. This entails leveraging and developing the capacities of local SMEs and start-ups, involving both Lebanese and Syrian youth in the knowledge economy, to support innovation for a smarter agri-food sector in the MENA region and to support exports within MENA and the EU, using linkages with leading innovation organisations from the Netherlands.

Project 9: UNDP – Social Cohesion in Host Communities, Lebanon

Project	Details
Full project name	Support to Economic Recovery, Community Security and Social Cohesion in Lebanese Communities Affected by the Syrian Crisis: Supporting resilience in a time of crisis
Budget	EUR 20.0 million
Project duration	1 January 2017 – 31 October 2019
Overall objective	To reduce level of tension between refugees and host communities in target areas.

Project 10: ESFD – Boosting Economic Growth and Job Creation

Project	Details
Full project name	Boosting Economic Growth & Job Creation
Budget	EUR 3.8 million
Project duration	01 August 2018 – 31 December 2020
Overall objective	To contribute to the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture in Lebanon's disadvantaged areas by providing SMEs with the opportunity to invest and hire new employees while offering business advice to help them develop the right business plan. Provide them with the necessary financial and non-financial support to start or expand sustainable small enterprises and create decent job opportunities.

Project 11: ABAAD – Protection and Mitigation of GBV in Lebanon

Project	Details
Full project name	Protection and Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence against women and girls in Lebanon among Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities
Budget	EUR 5.3 million
Project duration	1 March 2017 – 28 February 2019
Overall objective	To ensure a better quality of life free from violence for women and children in Lebanon by contributing to improved protection, prevention and service delivery.

Project 12: UNHCR – Multi-purpose cash assistance in Lebanon and Jordan

Project	Details
Full project name	UNHCR Multi-purpose cash assistance in Lebanon and Jordan
Budget	EUR 10.2 million
Project duration	1 December 2018 – 31 November 2019
Overall objective	To support the most vulnerable Syrian refugee families living in Lebanon and Jordan.

Project 13: War Child – The Future is Ours: An integrated approach to protection and education for vulnerable children and youth in Lebanon

Project	Details
Full project name	The Future is Ours: An integrated approach to protection and education for vulnerable children and youth in Lebanon.
Budget	EUR 4.0 million
Project duration	1 June 2019 – 31 July 2023
Overall objective	To provide integrated and targeted child protection, psychosocial and educational support to children, and youth at risk in four vulnerable governorates in Lebanon.

Project 14: ABAAD – Strengthening GBV Prevention & Response

Project	Details
Full project name	Strengthening Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention & Response
Budget	EUR 3.4 million
Project duration	1 July 2019 – 30 November 2021
Overall objective	To better protect refugees and vulnerable host communities from violence and abuse by changing the social norms around masculinity, femininity and gender-based, violence-related behaviour.

Project 15: ABAAD – Covid-19 ABAAD Lebanon response

Project	Details
Full project name	Covid-19 ABAAD Lebanon response
Budget	EUR 1.0 million
Project duration	1 June 2020 – 31 March 2021
Overall objective	To improve the protection of refugees and host communities from violence and abuse through increased quality SRHR education.

Annex 3 – Lessons from joint European programmes in the region

A3.1 Introduction

The previous chapters described the Dutch policy on development approaches to forced displacement (DAFD) and the programmes and support provided specifically to the Syrian region. In addition to the policies of individual Member States of the European Union (EU), there is also an EU-wide policy on migration and asylum. The Common European Asylum System (CEAS), in place since 1999, aims to ensure the protection and equal and fair treatment of refugees in the EU. It has been reformed and extended twice, in 2008 and 2015.[297] The 2015 reform resulted in the European Agenda on Migration. The aim of this agenda is 1) to respond to the need for swift and decisive action in response to the human tragedy across the Mediterranean, and 2) to serve as a blueprint for the EU's reaction to future crises, 'whichever part of the common external border comes under pressure from East to West and from North to South'.[298] The agenda consists of four pillars:

- Reducing the incentives for irregular migration
- Border management – saving lives and securing external borders
- Europe's duty to protect: a strong common asylum policy
- A new policy on legal migration

While the main focus is still on the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean and the arrival of migrants in Europe, there is now also a reference to the Syria crisis. The text points out that the EU should step up its support to host countries.

In 2020, the CEAS was replaced by the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. With this New Pact, the European Commission (EC) aims 'to increase solidarity and burden sharing by focusing on the root causes of irregular migration, combatting migrant smuggling, helping refugees residing in third countries and supporting well-managed legal migration, through partnerships with countries of origin, transit and destination'.[299]

This New Pact covers seven key areas. Area 5 – working with our international partners – focuses on, among other things, refugees and forced displacement and is thus linked to the Dutch DAFD policy. This concerns *'Protecting those in need and supporting host countries'* and *'Building economic opportunity and addressing root causes of irregular migration'*.[300] To this end, the EU has set up both regional programmes in the Syria region (e.g. FRiT, RDPP, MADAD),[301] and bilateral programmes with Jordan and Lebanon,[302] and has also pledged its support to refugees and the Syria region at different international conferences.

Several of these programmes have been subject to detailed evaluation for accountability and learning purposes. As these programmes are much larger (both in terms of budget and number of partners) than the Dutch projects analysed in this evaluation, and some are set up differently (e.g. FRiT), it is interesting to compare the findings and lessons learned with those of IOB regarding the relation to Dutch DAFD programming. The main findings and lessons are synthesised below. Many of the findings and lessons drawn from the evaluations of joint European programmes correspond with IOB's findings on Dutch DAFD programming. For a full account of the findings and lessons learned, please consult the respective evaluations, all of which are publicly available.

297 European Commission, *Common European Asylum System*, undated(a), (accessed 29 April 2022).

298 European Commission, *A European Agenda on Migration*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of Regions, Brussels, 13.5.2015 COM (2015) 240 final.

299 European Commission, *A New Pact on Migration and Asylum*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of Regions, Brussels, 23.9.2020 COM (2020) 609 final.

300 Ibid.

301 See below for more information.

302 The EU migration policy is broader than just the Syria region; however, in this context we are only focusing on the Syria region.

A3.2 The programmes and their evaluations

A3.2.1 The programmes

Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP)
The RDPP 'combines humanitarian and development funds with the objective to support Lebanon, Jordan and Northern Iraq to better understand, plan, and mitigate the impact of forced displacement of Syrian refugees on the host communities'.[303] It is supported by eight European donors[304],[305] and managed by Denmark. The programme aims to 1) ensure that refugees can fully benefit from durable solutions, and 2) support socio-economic development in host countries to the benefit of both host populations and refugees.[306] In addition to the protection of refugees and socio-economic development components, the programme also has a strong focus on research,[307] and on advocacy and political dialogue. The programme was set up in 2014 with a budget of EUR 41.6 million for the first phase (2014-2018). After 2018, it continued with a second (2018-2022) and third (2023-2026) phase.

Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRiT)
FRiT is a mechanism set up to share Türkiye's burden of hosting close to four million refugees. Unlike other (regional) programmes and support, FRiT is not a fund in itself but coordinates the mobilisation of resources from the EU budget. A total of EUR 6 billion has been mobilised by the EC and EU Member States in two tranches (2015-2021 and 2021-2025). The projects focus on humanitarian assistance and protection, education, health, socio-economic support, municipal infrastructure and migration management.[308]

EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis (MADAD)
The EU Trust Fund or MADAD was launched in 2014 and aims to help refugees thrive rather than just survive (focusing on educational, economic, social and health needs), and to assist host countries and communities with the additional economic and social costs associated with the reception of refugees.[309] The Trust Fund supports projects in the areas of basic, higher and further education, health, livelihoods, water and sanitation, protection and social cohesion in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Türkiye, Armenia, Egypt and some countries in the Western Balkans.[310] While the programme ended in 2021, several projects are still running until 2025.

A3.2.2 The evaluations

IOB has synthesised four evaluations of these three programmes.[311] The evaluations had by and large the same objectives. First, they assessed the (first phase) projects on their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability in addressing the needs of refugees and promoting socio-economic prospects. In addition, they focused on the added value and coherence of the programme with other EU programmes, other donors and (the interaction) between specific activities. To a lesser extent, they focused on support to host countries and the realisation of the nexus between humanitarian aid and development aid. Finally, they aimed to identify elements for the next phase of the programme.

303 DANIDA, *Evaluation of the Regional Development and Protection Programme in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq 2014-2017*, April 2018, p. 8.
304 European Commission (DG INTPA), Ireland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Norway and Denmark.
305 The Netherlands only supported the first phase from 2014 to 2018.
306 European Union External Action, *RDDP (Regional Development and Protection Programme for refugees and host communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq*, 8 August 2016.
307 A share of the budget has been committed to research regarding the impact of displacement on refugees and host communities. The programme has produced several research papers.
308 European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) – The EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey*, (accessed 08 March 2023); Landell Mills, 2021.
309 European Commission, *EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis – about*, (accessed 8 March 2023).
310 European Commission, *EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis – our work*, (accessed 8 March 2023).
311 Two evaluations have been conducted for MADAD, one focusing on higher education and one focusing on livelihoods: Particip Consortium, *Evaluation of Madad-funded Programmes/ Projects for Higher Education*, Final Report, November 2018; Particip Consortium, *Evaluation of EUTF Syria-funded Programmes and Projects for Livelihoods*, Final Evaluation Report, July 2019.

Main results achieved
The evaluations show that the programmes have been relevant in addressing the needs of Syrian refugees and have contributed to their welfare, prospects and social cohesion. However, the analyses of results show a mixed picture. For several of the projects within these programmes, it was not possible to assess the results because the projects had not matured enough.[312] One evaluation also reports that 'weaknesses in project design and reporting methods make it difficult for the evaluators to come to hard conclusions in terms of real results'.[313]

Looking at the aspects of the programmes that the evaluations were able to comment on, it is clear that most, if not all, of the planned outputs were achieved. The number of trainings to be delivered, the number of people to be trained and the number of scholarships to be provided were all achieved. Cash assistance projects have enabled refugees to meet urgent human needs and gain access to education, the health care system and protection services.

However, these are all short-term results. The desired long-term outcomes (e.g. reduction of poverty and unemployment rates) and overall objectives (improved prospects) were often not met. Despite the access to education that has been achieved, there are still many drop-outs and out-of-school children. As the economy deteriorates and local currencies depreciate, cash-based assistance is increasingly unable to cover the basic needs of refugees. Most importantly, the labour market has not been opened up to Syrian refugees.[314] As a result, some of the training provided is proving to be of little value and maintaining a decent livelihood is becoming increasingly difficult.

A3.3 Common threads

All the evaluations reported that the programmes were 'unprecedented in scale and reach', that the 'provided support contributed to sustain the livelihoods of refugees', that the 'impacts would not have been possible for Member States alone', and that 'the programmes should be adapted and replicated elsewhere'. Despite this praise, the evaluations also report major flaws and weaknesses in the programme implementation that need to be tackled first. The common threads or lessons learned are presented below.

Sufficient time for the start-up phase is crucial (all 4)
The dire situation many of the refugees find themselves in could trigger a hasty response by donors. However, rushing through the start-up phase could lead to less effective results as projects do not necessarily align with the local context, leading to unrealistic assumptions and objectives. This applies not only to taking the time to carefully select partners and select projects but also to (budget for) having constructive dialogues with (other) donors and partners on project design, coordination of projects and forward-thinking on monitoring. The RDPP framework allowed sufficient time for project identification, while the FRiT evaluation found a trade-off between the rapid deployment of the instrument and the quality of project selection. It is also important to carry out needs and risk assessments before moving forward with the programme. This was not the case in the MADAD programmes, for example.

312 RDPP and MADAD livelihoods.
313 This concerns the MADAD higher education programme.
314 This concerns all four countries, albeit to a slightly lesser extent in Türkiye.

The Humanitarian-Development Nexus is a commendable objective but difficult to realise (RDPP, MADAD 2, FRiT)
All three programmes aimed to work on the nexus between humanitarian aid and development aid. While the situation called for this nexus – humanitarian aid to meet the most urgent needs combined with development aid to provide longer-term prospects – it appeared difficult to realise. The overly-ambitious goals and limited funding time frames meant that many projects were not sustainable and ran the risk of 'framing the nexus as doing development in humanitarian time frames with significant challenges to viability'.[315] Indeed, the MADAD evaluation notes that in terms of livelihoods, the humanitarian (supporting the most vulnerable) and development (local development and sustainable jobs) aspects are becoming conflicting objectives.[316] And, as seen in FRiT, the investments made in education and health were all short-term investments for quick relief, with no longer-term aspect.

The RDPP evaluation points out that there is very little evidence to date on whether the new policies and programmes that have been designed are actually achieving this link, and whether they are the appropriate modality for doing so. The report also states that 'the very concept of the nexus remains largely undefined and amorphous'.[317] This is also reflected in how the three programmes define and approach the nexus. The FRiT sought to 'bridge the Humanitarian-Development Nexus by promoting early recovery and building the resilience and self-reliance of refugees, whilst also supporting host communities'.[318] Like the FRiT, the RDPP also aims to link short-term assistance to address acute needs and vulnerabilities with a long-term development perspective that will address chronic needs and vulnerabilities. It also talks about a 'new way of working' in which international and local stakeholders (including researchers) from both the humanitarian and development sectors need to work together rather than independently. The MADAD evaluations, on the other hand, barely mention the nexus and recommend that 'future EUTF funded LLH projects should be driven by a clear understanding of the nexus set by interventions between targeted groups and outcomes and objectives'.[319]

Government buy-in not always present (MADAD 1 and 2, and FRiT)
The level of (national) government buy-in and commitment varies from country to country. While it was relatively good in Türkiye and Iraq, it was limited in Jordan, and virtually absent in Lebanon. In Türkiye, the government was proactively engaged in the implementation of the programme (MADAD) and the design and selection of projects (FRiT). In Jordan, on the other hand, MADAD was not actively engaged beyond transactional needs with the State Secretary. In Lebanon, the programmes were confronted with an absent and fragmented state. While in the RDPP the (local) implementers of the programmes did have (policy) dialogues with the government, this was not the case for the donors.

The evaluations suggest that active interaction with the government at the front line increases the alignment of the programme with national policies and thus the government's buy-in for both the programme and the reception of refugees. This in turn can lead to greater effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. If the interaction is limited to just the transactional moments, the programmes may miss the opportunity to improve policy at the institutional level.

One way to improve this, according to the evaluators, is to involve EU delegations and the Member State's embassies in the countries to promote policy dialogue and promote the programmes. Rather than the current practice of managing from the EU capitals and overly prescriptively telling governments how to do things.

315 DANIDA, 2018, p. 49; Particip Consortium, *Evaluation of EUTF Syria-funded Programmes and Projects for Livelihoods*, Final Report, July 2019, p. 322.
316 Particip Consortium, 2019.
317 DANIDA, 2018, p. 26.
318 Landell Mills, 2021, p. 24.
319 Particip Consortium, 2019, p. 322.

Projects are mainly supply-driven (MADAD 1 and 2)
The projects targeting the labour market were too supply-driven. By providing training and education, they improved the skills of refugees, but this did not lead to a significant increase in job opportunities. The programmes lacked contextual analysis and thus did not take into account the limitations of the labour market and national policies. For instance, they underestimated the reluctance of governments to allow refugees to participate in the labour market, particularly in Lebanon. Moreover, (cooperation with) the private sector (e.g. chambers of commerce, SMEs) was not always included.

Regarding the education projects, the programmes focused mainly on overcoming the entry barrier, but not on the transition to the next step. While the programmes provided access to education for refugees, they did not, or only to a limited extent, support the transition from secondary school to higher education or from higher education to the labour market.

Do not neglect the informal market (MADAD 2 and FRiT)
Due to the reservations by governments to let refugees participate in the labour market, as well as the culture, preferences and household composition of refugees, many refugees prefer working in the informal labour market or through home-based business. By (only) addressing the formal labour market in the programmes, a significant share of female and/or vulnerable refugees is not reached.

Approaches to gender lacked strategy (all 4)
Like Dutch DAFD, the EU programmes stated that they would ‘strive for a gender balance’ and ‘devote specific attention to girls and women’. Although the programmes did reach out to women and girls and provided for some of their needs, in terms of reporting, this appeared to be more of a tick-the-box exercise. There was no predetermined gender strategy, nor a distinction between gender-specific needs and issues.

Approaches to host community support and social cohesion lacked strategy (MADAD 1 and 2, and FRiT)
The same can be said for host community support and social cohesion. The programmes mention that the underlying projects should also support host communities and improve social cohesion, but there were no underlying strategies. Projects did benefit host communities, but not in a structural manner, and some forms of support even excluded host communities.[320] This uneven support between refugees and host countries has contributed to increased tensions, as the local population felt that refugees were better off as a result of the aid. Projects aimed at improving social cohesion were found to be isolated and one-off events. The FRiT evaluation reports that the development of specific strategies and a consequent focus on support to host communities could go some way to addressing the increasing tensions and lack of social cohesion.

While targeting is needed, it could lead to refugees falling by the wayside (FRiT and RDPP)
Given the vast number of refugees, but also of local populations in need of aid, and the (often) limited number of resources, some form of targeting is needed to ensure that assistance is delivered effectively. In the RDPP, there was a predetermined division between the share of Syrian refugees and the local population receiving aid. This resulted in some people receiving aid who would not have been selected if ‘most vulnerable’ has been used as an indicator. The FRiT targeted support to the provinces hosting the most refugees. In order to receive support, refugees were required to remain in the province of registration. These were often the border provinces where the number of jobs available was limited. As many left the province for work, they missed out on the health and education services provided. As the programmes generally struggled to reach socially isolated groups (LGBTI+ people, people with disabilities), some refugees were doubly excluded.

[320] In certain areas, the provision of school transport was exclusively available to refugees (Landell Mills, 2021).

Localisation (all, but mainly RDPP)
Although sometimes mentioned, the evaluations did not focus extensively on localisation. However, RDPP did work with local organisations to identify the most pressing issues and to avoid duplication of support. Some of the programme resources were available to the local partners to use for their own capacity building (e.g. advocacy) or strategic thinking. Nevertheless, the evaluations suggest that more emphasis should be placed on partnering with local stakeholders (e.g. municipalities, NGOs and institutions) in projects and investing in their capacity building in order to generate multiplier effects and increase sustainability. These partnerships should be based on equality and avoid the common practice of '*"using" national NGOs as "implementing partners" for projects designed by international agencies*'.[321]

Regional focus of the programmes (all 4)
All four programmes had a regional focus (i.e. the Syrian region). The idea is that with regional programmes (as opposed to isolated national programmes) it is easier to attract large funds, to learn from the different regions, build on existing structures and scale up. The downside is that regional programmes are likely to be more complex. However, the results at the regional level were limited. There was no regional coordination mechanism to coordinate with the different countries or a regional counterpart to represent the host countries. There did not appear to be an overarching strategy for the region, nor were there any activities conducted at the regional level. Coupled with the wide variation in country contexts, the expected benefits of regional programmes did not materialise. There was, however, the advantage of having one management structure instead of three.

Coherence, complementarity and synergies (all 4)
As mentioned above, there is an EU-wide policy on asylum in the region and support to host countries. All four evaluations provide evidence that the programmes are consistent with the objectives of the EU policies and regional policies (e.g. 3RP). Regardless of the scope of the programme and the number of projects it contains, there appears to be only a limited duplication of aid and overlap between the projects. Despite this complementarity, there does not seem to be any synergy between the projects or with other EU programmes. This means that they do not build on or strengthen each other. When it comes to cooperation or exchange between programmes, donors still seem to be working in silos. For partners and implementers, this applies both between programmes and within programmes. Complementarity and synergies with non-EU programmes do not seem to be pursued.

[321] DANIDA, 2018, p. 54.

Abbreviations

3RF	Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework
3RP	Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan
BHOS	Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DAFD	Development Approaches to Forced Displacement
DAM	North Africa and Middle East Department
DSH	Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid
DSH-MO	Migration and Development division within DSH
ERP	Emergency Response Plan
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FRiT	EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVN	Global Vision Note
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFC	International Finance Cooperation
IGG	Inclusive Green Growth Department
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department
JRP	Jordan Response Plan
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MACS	Multi-Annual Country Strategy
MEB	Minimal Expenditure Basket
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NWoW	New Way of Working
RDPP	Regional Development and Protection Programme
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
ToC	Theory of Change
UCL	University College London
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank

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A young Syrian girl writes a poem outside her home in Amman, Jordan.

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Syrian students are back in class in Beirut, Lebanon.

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A construction worker working on a construction site in Jordan.

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Syrian refugees have found temporary safety in informal settlement Kafar Kahel in Lebanon.

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Syrian and Jordanian women working in a garment factory.

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In Jordan, many migrant workers and Syrian refugees work in agriculture.

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The Za'atari refugee camp has several Oases safe spaces for women and girls.

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Some of the poorest refugees in Lebanon receive cash assistance.

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Refugee workers working at a tomato farm in Mafraq, Jordan.

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Refugees receiving training on product standards, marketing and labeling in the Ein El Helweh refugee camp in Lebanon.

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