

Valiance – Basala Project

Final Evaluation Report

**Submitted to:
ActionAid Australia**

**Submitted by:
PLAN-Strategic Management and Planning Consultants**

12 August 2021

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II.Executive Summary:

Valiance “Basala” Project was implemented by Action Aid Palestine in Hebron’s H2 area over a period of three years. The project was designed to meet three objectives: 1. to enhance women’s voices and status in households and communities, 2. to effectively address key concerns of women through women-led advocacy actions and 3. to increase women’s income and decision-making power over that. A total of around 90 women were targeted in the project, distributed among four groups two from each location; one group of 75 women (26-50 years) and another group of 17 young women (17-25 years) were formed in the targeted areas.

Based on the numerous data collection methods used during the field work phase, the consultants deduced findings relevant to the project’s seven key evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness and impact, sustainability, women’s livelihoods, efficiency, disability inclusion and shifting the power and localization.

Overall, the project is largely **relevant for the stakeholders**, both in its objective and in the three results it aimed to achieve. The relevance of the project was assessed to explore whether the project strategic objective and expected results are a priority for all stakeholders; people in the targeted communities, women groups, and the Palestinian Government.

Effectiveness and impact were mainly seen in relation to the improvements in the attitudes of the men and women, the involvement and responsibilities of the beneficiaries/right holders and duty bearers in the different activities and the economic situation of women benefiting from the income generating projects. The effectiveness and impact of the project was assessed based on an analysis of changes (planned and unplanned) in the lives of women and how these changes are valued by the communities themselves. Moreover, the assessment investigated how the most marginalized women were reached, and the impact of the activities on their income, status in the home and freedom of movement.

In terms of **sustainability**, several aspects of the project contribute to the continuation of its outcomes beyond the life of the project. Namely, the changes in the women groups, their improved wellbeing and increased confidence and agency in personal decision making and in engaging with their families, the changes in the attitudes of male community members, the networking and contacts that the women established, the results of the advocacy actions on the community and the income generating projects are things that will remain beyond the life of the project.

As for **disability inclusion**, the Basala project consciously targeted women with disabilities at all three levels; awareness-raising, advocacy initiatives, and income generation. The project’s interventions impacted women with disabilities at three main levels. Firstly, women with disabilities who participated in the project reported increased awareness of rights and tools available to defend these rights. Secondly, out of the 39 women who were supported with income generating projects, 14 were women with disabilities, exemplifying the affirmative action policy adopted by the Basala project. Thirdly, one of the main initiatives that were implemented in the project focused on the needs of women with

disabilities and resulted in the rehabilitation of their homes and provided employment opportunity for these women.

Lastly, **the shifting power and localization** within the Basala project were evident. Several indicators suggest that the women's groups are strong, they reported that their presence in a group increased their confidence and abilities, particularly as they felt that they were part of a larger collective that shared their needs, concerns, and views. Moreover, the Basala project intentionally intended and took measures to ensure that the project is localized, particularly in light of the sensitive nature of working with women in the H2 area.

III. Introduction:

Analysis of Israel's policies in H2 area including Hebron Old City reveals a system that infiltrates every aspect of daily life for Palestinian residents. International humanitarian and human rights law is violated under the comprehensive Israeli occupation regime creating a coercive environment that triggers forcible transfer of Palestinians living in the area. Since the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Old City in the 1970s, Israel has not only added to its range of oppressive policies, but also has, in a number of cases, intensified these policies so severely that the existence of Palestinians in H2 area including Hebron Old City becomes almost impossible. Israel restricts many Palestinian rights, including freedom of movement and access to property, while strengthening military protection of illegal Israeli settlers, which in turn emboldens them to harass, abuse and attack the Palestinian population.

This project targeted women and young women in H2 area including Hebron Old City in Hebron Governorate, south West Bank Area in the Palestinian Occupied Territory. Women in Hebron Old City face discriminatory social norms, laws, policies and practices that prevent them from achieving their full potential and their rights. Much of the issue stems from the Occupation as explained above and leaves women under the double jeopardy of patriarchal social norms and Israeli occupation.

Valiance "Basala" Project commenced in the H2 area of Hebron in September 2018 for a period of three years through a community led planning process that was facilitated by ActionAid Palestine team. Assessment of key power dynamics within CBOs operating in the area was conducted and a series of action with the aim of introducing the Basala project were outlined. ActionAid Palestine's approach to women and young women's empowerment is built on the premise that by enabling the space for women and young women's activism and strengthening their knowledge, skills and confidence to discuss, plan and negotiate for matters that affect their own lives, women will be able to foster positive changes in their lives and the lives of others around them. Thus, the project was designed to meet three objectives: 1. to enhance women's voices and status in households and communities, 2. to effectively address key concerns of women through women-led advocacy actions and 3. to increase women's income and decision-making power over that.

The project comprises three components which are inter-connected and build upon each other: 1. Facilitating women's voice and agency: A total of around 90 women were targeted in the project, distributed among four groups two from each location; one group of 75 women (26-50 years) and another group of 17 young women (17-25 years) were formed in the targeted areas. Awareness raising on women's rights and processes of reflection-action were utilized as the main methodology. 2. Women analyzed their situation and collectively decided the key priority areas. Changes took place through developing action plans, collectively organizing and addressing the common concerns through engaging with stakeholders, networking and advocating for their rights at both community and household levels. 3. Livelihoods: Support for livelihoods deepened the project's reach for very poor women by providing the most vulnerable women with skills and capital to establish viable small business/income generating activities according to their interests. A participatory process was implemented with the communities to identify the participants according to clear criteria. Supporting

women's access to economic activities, allowed women to become socially empowered and better positioned to contribute to decision making processes at household and community levels.

IV. Evaluation Methodology:

In order to meet the evaluation objectives as agreed upon with ActionAid, the evaluation team adopted an integrated, participatory approach such that all stakeholders, as well as beneficiaries, participated in and contributed to the evaluation of the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and possible impact, as well as disability inclusion and impact on the targeted women including the effect on targeted women's livelihoods, the sustainability of the interventions in addition to the shifting of powers and localization. The following detailed steps were taken to conform to the assignment TOR.

Review of relevant documents and reports: To better understand the projects implementation and evaluation processes, the evaluation began with a preparatory meeting with ActionAid team members and a comprehensive review of all available literature related to the project. This review included project documents such as the project proposal and implementation plan, baseline report and project progress reports.

Field work and data collection: The evaluation team collected data through a number of methods, using three main tools¹, from different stakeholders involved in the implementation and management of the project. The data collection included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and quantitative survey:

The evaluation team conducted several meetings with the relevant stakeholders: focus group discussions with a sample of the participating women and support committee in the targeted locations and carrying out in-depth interviews with representatives of the partner civil society and official institutions in addition to a quantitative survey targeting a representative sample of the women beneficiaries as follows²:

1. A total of **two** focus group discussion with participating women and young women in the target area
2. **One** focus group discussion with male and female members of the support committee (community leaders and staff in partners civil society organizations) in the targeted area
3. A total of **four** in-depth interviews held with: representatives of official and civil society institutions, woman beneficiary and ActionAid staff.
4. A total of 30 quantitative survey to a sample of the targeted women from both age groups (15 from each group)

¹ For a list of used evaluation tools, please refer to Annex 1

² For a full list of people interviewed please refer to Annex 2

Analysis and Reporting: The data and information collected during the activities described above were thoroughly analyzed to arrive at findings and conclusions that answered the key evaluation questions relative to the projects' seven key criteria. This report presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

V.Evaluation Findings:

Based on the numerous data collection methods used during the field work phase, the consultants deduced findings relevant to the project's seven key evaluation criteria; relevance, effectiveness and impact, sustainability, women's livelihoods, efficiency, disability inclusion and shifting the power and localization. The following section presents these findings.

5.1.Relevance

The relevance of the project was assessed to explore whether the project strategic objective and expected results are a priority for all stakeholders; people in the targeted communities, women groups, and the Palestinian Government. Overall, the evaluation team found that the project is largely relevant for the stakeholders, both in its objective and in the three results it aimed to achieve mentioned in the introduction above.

Relevance to the Targeted Communities:

The vulnerability in the targeted communities, as discussed earlier, stems from the location of these communities in H2 including the Old City of Hebron, is profoundly impacted by the Israeli occupation, and Palestinians have experienced loss of land and livelihoods, displacement, family dislocation, restrictions on movement and planning developments, lack of basic services and destruction of infrastructure. All of this coupled with a conservative community that adds a new layer of oppression on women and girls.

The project interventions were relevant to the community members' needs on more than one level; enhancing the awareness of women and men on women's rights at the social, health, political participation and economic rights among other issues, implementation of local initiatives designed and led by women for the benefit of the community and enhancing the livelihoods of marginalized women from the communities through income generating projects. Additionally, the change that was seen in the participating women helped in altering the societal view about women's role and abilities which is something that the targeted communities needed. This comes in light of the conservative nature of the targeted communities and the lack of women participation in various aspects.

Relevance to the Women Groups

All the women that benefited from the project are residents in the Old City of Hebron or Al Jalajel areas that fall within the H2 area in Hebron Governorate. Most of these women had never participated in any public activities and had hardly left their homes before their engagement in the project. Moreover, these women, as explained earlier, live under very difficult conditions whether they are economic, social, psychological, or plain marginalization. This project opened the door for 85 women to participate in awareness raising activities, debriefing sessions, networking, development efforts of

the community, and in some cases in income generating projects. The women participating in the final evaluation had confirmed that the project's importance and relevance stems from the comprehensiveness of the interventions provided and implemented in their communities. The work with women on realizing their rights and self-esteem, raising their awareness on vital issues, providing them with opportunities to network with other women and organizations, knowing where to file a complaint or get help when needed and helping them reach economic independence all were relevant to their needs and realities.

Although the initiatives and the income generating projects were very small and the targeted areas are very marginalized with high needs for a lot of necessities, but any development efforts are highly welcomed in the community. It is worth mentioning that the initiatives were selected based on the needs of the women and the communities and the income generating projects were given to women in need after submitting their ideas and an agreed upon selection criteria.

Relevance to the Palestinian Government

The Palestinian National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 (NPA)³, specifically National Priority 7: *Social Justice and Rule of Law*, National Priority 9: *Quality Health Care for All*, and National Priority 10: *Resilient Communities*, all consider the wellbeing of citizens and specifically women in vulnerable areas such as H2 as a priority. More specifically, priority 7 and within its national priority 15- Escaping Poverty, calls for “*Strengthen economic and social empowerment programmes benefiting vulnerable groups and the poor.*” Additionally, priority 9 under its national policy 24- Improving Citizens’ Health and Well-Being, calls for “*Strengthen preventive health care, raise awareness and promote healthy lifestyles.*”. Lastly, priority 10 in more than one of its national policies focuses on enhancing the resilience of Palestinians living in vulnerable communities “*while striving to revitalize our once flourishing agricultural sector, expand tourism and strengthen our cultural heritage*”. All the above, confirm that Basala project is relevant to the NPA.

Moreover, the MOH Strategy; National Health Strategy (NHS) 2017-2022⁴, considers mainstreaming youth and gender issues with health dimensions, especially reproductive and sexual health, adolescent and youth health, sexually transmitted diseases, women empowerment and health care for women and men throughout their life cycle as a priority. More specifically, the NHS specifies “*Objective 2: Promote programs for the management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), preventive health care, community health awareness and gender issues.*” as one of its main objectives for the years covered in the strategy. Thus, this project came as a supporting and complementary initiative to the strategic objective concerning community awareness and women’s health program.

The importance of such a project, as explained by interviewed MOH official, stems from the limited resources that the ministry has to support community awareness and women’s health in H2 area and the high need in this area coupled with the reluctance of women to go for regular check-ups or attend awareness sessions. Thus, the MOH directorate in Hebron in collaboration with ActionAid, provided

³ [palestine_draft_final_npa.pdf \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org/palestine_draft_final_npa.pdf)

⁴ [OhV2yDbk3NBuMaBgzXrM13Tgf5Ek46VMsiNeNQ9CvdRJ68xSlueheN_CUmin4TqPtVNgd7v3aBpOzbD57AZWI5OPIGu6RsGzmnu3mNE745Rr5.pdf \(moh.ps\)](https://moh.ps/OhV2yDbk3NBuMaBgzXrM13Tgf5Ek46VMsiNeNQ9CvdRJ68xSlueheN_CUmin4TqPtVNgd7v3aBpOzbD57AZWI5OPIGu6RsGzmnu3mNE745Rr5.pdf)

awareness raising and free health services to the women targeted in the project who themselves helped in inviting and bringing additional women to come to these activities.

Thus, this project came as a supporting and complementary initiative to at least three National Priorities within the NPA and falls within the main objectives and programs of the NHS both covering the period between 2017-2022 which overlaps with Basala project.

5.2. Effectiveness and Impact

The effectiveness and impact of the project was assessed based on an analysis of changes (planned and unplanned) in the lives of women and how these changes are valued by the communities themselves. Moreover, the assessment investigated how the most marginalized women were reached, and the impact of the activities on their income, status in the home and freedom of movement.

Although it is still early to see the impact of the project on the targeted women and communities, some results of the project have already emerged, especially in relation to the improvements in the attitudes of the men and women, the involvement and responsibilities of the beneficiaries/right holders and duty bearers in the different activities and the economic situation of women benefiting from the income generating projects. This section presents these effects and sheds light on some of the perceived impact as shown in five selected case studies.

The project strategic objectives as stated in the project documents are: 1. to enhance women's voices and status in households and communities, 2. to effectively address key concerns of women through women-led advocacy actions and 3. to increase women's income and decision-making power over that. The evaluation team found evidence that the project activities within the two communities have made certain effects on enhancing women's status, address key concerns and increase women's economic independence as further explained in this section.

Enhance Women's Voices and Status in Households and Communities

The Basala project in all its activities combined influenced the targeted women's voices and status in their households and communities. The involvement in the project has comprehensively helped the women at the personal, household, and community levels. The project has supported women in three main pathways; awareness-raising of women themselves and their communities in a variety of topics, support in identifying priorities and designing and implementing advocacy initiatives, including through networking, and lastly the provision of seed funding and support in setting up income generating projects, including for women with disabilities.

In terms of improvement on the ability of women to network and their relationship with other institutions working in the community. The evaluation results⁵ showed that there was significant improvement on the women's perceptions of their ability to network and contact organizations. The below numbers stipulate the women's perceptions before and after their participation in the project on several issues:

⁵ Based on the results of the quantitative survey

- Only 27% of women took part in awareness raising activities, in partnership with other organizations, that target women before participating in the project compared to 93% after Basala.
- The percentage of women that are aware of decision makers and organizations that support women has increased from 16.7% to 93% after Basala.
- As for the relationship with decision makers, the percentage of women that have a “very strong” or “strong relationship” with decision makers has increased from 10% to 77%.
- Similarly, the women that have a relationship with institutions has increased from 10% to 77%.
- Regarding the women’s relationship and networking with other women, 23% of the women said that their relationship with other women was either “strong” or “very strong” before Basala compared to 90% after.
- 80% of the women said that their networking with institutions and decision makers for the benefit of their communities has become either “very strong” or “strong” after Basala compared to 10% only before.

The work done under the Basala project has focused on individual empowerment on both the formal and informal levels. At the formal level, women’s access to resources was promoted through income generating projects (more details are available in section entitled “increase women’s income and economic decision-making”). At the informal level, improvement was witnessed on several levels. Women firstly reported improved wellbeing and increased confidence and agency in personal decision making and in engaging with their families. For example, one woman participant said *“I learned how to deal with the pressure from my children during the period of the war.”* In reference to the ongoing political tension that takes place in H2 area.

Secondly, the work with women increased their awareness of their political and economic rights, and particularly their right to work and participate in political and public life. This was crucially complemented with work with male members of the family, which supported increasing their consciousness and influencing their attitudes toward women, such that there was decreased restrictions on women’s very basic freedoms. This is seen in women’s reporting of increased mobility and improved decision-making powers. For example, one woman participant said *“I started to take my own decisions and convince those around me of my desires and I felt I was able to make change in the community and participate in economic, public, and political life.”*

The results of the evaluation have clearly show a significant increase in the women’s understanding of their different rights. The table below stipulates the increase of the women’s perception of their knowledge on a scale from 1- 10, 1 being “I don’t know anything” and 10 “I know completely”:

Social, Political and Economic Rights	Average answer before Basala	Average answer after Basala
Women’s right in political participation and work	3.5	8.3

Women's right in establishing her own business	3.7	9.4
Women's right in political participation	4.1	8.3
Women's right in running in elections	4.1	8.0
Women's health rights	5.8	9.5
Women's sexual rights	5.2	8.1
Women's right in establishing an organization or group	3.0	7.9
Women's right to education	6.9	9.8
Importance of education to women	6.3	9.9
Women's right to movement	5.6	9.2
Risks of early marriage	5.2	9.3
Dangers of GBV	4.3	9.1
Legal implications to GBV	3.3	8.3
Knowledge of institutions that support victims of GBV	2.23	8.2
Dangers of dropping out of school	5.0	9.3

Similarly, when the women participating in the evaluation were asked about the increase in their ability to participate in economic, political and social life in addition to their networking and advocacy abilities, their perceived abilities have increased significantly. The below table stipulates these changes.

Women's Ability	Percentage increase
To participate in economic activity and labor	55.3%
To participate in elections as candidate and voter	44.7%
To participate in social activities within families and friends	47.0%
To participate in activities organized by different institutions	48.7%
To participate the right to education	37.0%
To freedom of movement	40.3%
To participate in the decision-making process within the family	39.0%
To mobilize and advocate for your rights and demands	50.0%
To network with institutions that work on women's rights	53.7%
To present an important case and engage in discussion	48.7%
To present demands and priorities	46.7%
To express her opinion	50.7%

While the work done predominantly focused on the individual level, some of the advocacy initiatives had an impact at the collective formal level. For example, one of the initiatives sought to address the high drop-out rates of girls from schools due to the absence of public transportation, and another due to the availability of only one co-educational school. The provision of a bus to transport the students and the opening of another school just for girls had a collective impact on girls in protecting their right to education.

Additionally, on a minimal scale, informal collective changes in attitudes and norms were observed. For example, at the beginning, women faced numerous restrictions by their nuclear family and community on participating in the awareness-raising and debriefing activities. However, with the progress of the project and particularly after the setting up of income generating projects, women not only were able to challenge these restrictions, demonstrating increased agency, but also were encouraged by their nuclear family to continue to engage with the project activities. For example, one participant said that her husband started to remind her of the times of the activities of the project when during the early stages of the project he was completely against it. Another example extends to the role of the Support Committee of the project⁶, which reported that even the views of one of the influential radical religious groups in Al-Jalajel area changed, as their leader was previously a major opponent to the project and women's engagement in economic and political life, and later understood that the project does not contravene any Islamic principles and doctrines.

Effectively Address Key Concerns of Women through Women-Led Advocacy Actions

The Basala project has gradually empowered the women and young women, including women with disabilities, in the H2 area by strengthening their knowledge, skills and confidence to discuss, plan and negotiate for matters that affect their own lives and foster positive changes in their lives and the lives of others around them. ActionAid supported the groups of women in the Old City of Hebron and Al Jalajel in planning designing and implementing five community advocacy initiatives that were led by the women themselves and aimed at enhancing the realities for these women within their community. The initiatives focused on key aspects affecting the lives of the women in these two areas. Three of the initiatives were implemented in the Old City and two initiatives were implemented in Al Jalajel.

In the Old City of Hebron, three advocacy initiatives were jointly planned, designed and executed by the women themselves. The first initiative focused on early marriage and targeted girls aged 16 years old, their mothers and fathers. The initiative aimed at raising the public's awareness on dangers of early marriage in addition to influencing the public perception on the importance of increasing the age of marriage. This advocacy action not only managed to raise public awareness but also contributed in empowering the women to take decisions within their households on issues related to their daughters' future.

⁶ Projects' support committee involves key actors in the target areas. This committee met bimonthly (six times each year, 17 meetings during project's lifetime)

A second advocacy action in the Old City tackled the difficult economic situation of the women in this area and the limited available opportunities for marketing their products. The women, in cooperation from the ActionAid, Hebron University, Hebron Center, Halhul Bazaar and the Childhood Welfare Association, organized a bazaar in which the women felt empowered to take action that will improve their lives and were able to market their products. Aside from the tangible results of these advocacy actions on the realities of the women, the main changes are seen in the ability of the women in voicing their needs without feeling inhibitions or fear and their increased awareness of their rights.

A third initiative focused on integrating women with disabilities and was done in partnership with Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR) and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). The initiative was launched based on the dire realities of women with disabilities in the H2 area. Thus, ActionAid in partnership with BASR and YMCA rehabilitated and made accessible homes and facilities for seven women with disabilities. These women were also trained on manufacturing soap and natural creams so that they can work from their homes and marketing their production electronically and via social media platforms. Furthermore, this initiative succeeded in securing paid internships for three women with disabilities that were employed with local institutions. Also, a core group of women with disabilities (6 women) was formed through BASR, the YMCA and ActionAid to reflect the needs of people with disabilities in the area. This group became the main focal point between people with disabilities and institutions working with disabilities.

In Al Jalajel area, the problem of school drop out for girls was a priority for the women groups there. Thus, the women, through support from ActionAid, identified the issue of concern, analyzed the root causes of the problem, designed and implemented an advocacy action focusing on access to education for girls in the community. One of the major challenges that hinder girl's access to education, as concluded from the planning phase and root cause-analysis, was the lack of public transportation in this area. The problem is further exacerbated by the Israeli occupation policies and restrictions on movement that are implemented in H2 area. Therefore, the women targeted the Ministry of Transportation and other duty bearers to provide a public bus that would assist in transporting of schoolgirls to and from their schools. The women were successful in their advocacy efforts and a bus was provided that would be available at certain times to help in facilitating the movement of girls and school students.

Another action in Al Jalajel which is also linked to the issue of girls' school drop-out, was the advocacy towards the establishment of a girls' school. The only available school in the area was a co-education school with two shifts, which given the conservative nature of the area, hindered girls' access to education. Thus, the empowered women group, with support from ActionAid, targeted the Ministry of Education and were able to successfully push for the establishment of a new school for girls. The advocacy action, in which women were able to voice their voices and concerns to decision makers, resulted in a positive impact on these women.

One of the women participating in the evaluation has summarized the impact of these initiatives on the life of the participating women. She explained that *"through these initiatives, we felt that we accomplished*

something and created solutions that our community benefited from". Another participant said that: "the positive impact helped us prove our role as women, we learned independence, and this change contributed to persuading our families and husbands of the importance of what we do because they felt the change".

Increase Women's Income and Economic Decision-Making Power

As per ActionAid's philosophy in enhancing women's agency through economic independence and control over their resources, Basala included support for 39 women with income generating projects (22 in year 2 and 17 in year 3) that significantly contributed to increasing these women's income. This component of the project commenced with providing vocational training and capacity building for the women in the groups on food processing and knitting. Following that, ActionAid and in a participatory manner, developed a selection criterion based on vulnerability for winning projects from among 60 women that presented their concepts. The supported projects were built on the skills that the women had acquired in the trainings. Thus, the projects were either food processing, agri-business, knitting and sewing or cosmetics productions are creams. Most of the projects, as expressed by the women participating in the evaluation, were new projects with some support given to already existing business. The majority (79%) of the women participating in the evaluation and who have received income generating projects, have confirmed that their projects are "stable" or "growing and expanding". Unanimously, the women have confirmed that the income generating projects have contributed to an increase in their monthly income. When asked about the average increase in income after the project, the average amount was 255 ILS (equivalent to 79 USD) per month compared to zero ILS before participating in the project.

The increase in income has, with no-doubt, increased the women's ability to make decisions within her household. More than 80% of the women surveyed confirmed that the project has enhanced their positioning within the household to make decisions not only concerning themselves but also those of other family members. For example, one participant said: *"The project affected my income in a good way, as my income increased and I became self-reliant, therefore I became involved in decisions within the family."* The following three case studies exemplify the experiences and impact of women who participated in the project:



My name is **Aisha** and I have a diploma in laboratory analysis, I worked for a while after my graduation but then I left my work and stayed at home. After that I realized that I wanted to work again and get out of the house. I started attending the workshops and sessions with the women group with ActionAid where I learned new skills. After a while, I was granted an income generating project which was a 250m greenhouse. During Covid-19, my husband and I started improving and expanding the greenhouse where it reached 1 dunam that I planted with tomatoes, cucumbers, and every seasonal produce. Prior to this project my economic condition was very difficult but now my life has changed; I did not use to get out of the house but now I am barely at home and I am very busy. My husband is my biggest supporter despite the norm within my community that impose specific gender roles for men and women. Nevertheless, at the beginning I faced a lot of challenges, the land that we currently plant on was not connected to water nor electricity and was under Israeli threat of confiscation. ActionAid came to our help and provided agricultural materials, and once we started planting it, we were able to protect it from confiscation.



All thanks and love to ActionAid because they got me at the beginning of the road and a special thanks to Nour because she has always supported us and I hope that they will continue the meetings and courses.

My name is **Maysar** and my family consists of 9 members. I'm here to share my story with you:

My husband had cows and our economic condition was good but then things changed and our situation became difficult, so I had to leave the house to help my husband in providing for the family. I started to sew and work as a tailor which kept me away 6 hours from my home with low pay. I started working in sweets and desserts with the help of ActionAid along with another 5 women, and we used to go to Al-Mahawer which was a long walk from home with no transportation. So, along with other women from the same place, we started thinking that we need help, so we asked ActionAid to come to our area and give us workshops and trainings for our development.



Through ActionAid, I went to an educational institute where I learned how to make sweets and took a certificate in that. I also continued improving my skills using my own money. At the beginning I feared what people in my community used to think or their questioning about my whereabouts, but I had a goal and I wanted to conquer it. My husband was also restricting my

movement at the beginning but then after I started my project, everything changed, and I started participating in the decisions regarding my family and I have a source of income now. Today my social life and networking have expanded, and people started knowing me outside Hebron district.

I call on ActionAid to increase the number of income-generating projects so that more and more women can benefit because these projects help women escape neglect and abuse and they give women a chance at a better life with new dreams to conquer.

My name is **Almaza**, I live in area H2 in Hebron. My economic situation was very difficult and I was just a housewife. My husband stopped working due to an illness (he has heart problems).



At that time I heard that ActionAid was giving income generating projects. I started to attend the meetings and so I felt like I was able to do something useful in my life even if it's something very small. After that I took a course on making sweets and desserts and I started my own business. People started to know me through my social media pages and ActionAid helped provide a refrigerator through which I was able to display my work. As a result of this business, I was able to provide education for my children as well as covering my house expenses since I became the main provider for the house. My family supported me but I had some people around me that tried to discourage me and questioned my whereabouts and the value of my work and that put a lot of stress on me, but I didn't let these voices decide my path because all I wanted to do was to follow my dreams and I did that. The occupation was a challenge too especially because I lived in an area where people are scared to get close to because of all the restrictions on movement that the occupation imposes, so I started to deliver to the people but that added extra cost, and I used to walk far distances when I wanted to go to meetings organized by ActionAid but that didn't affect my determination it only made me more persistent on doing what I do. I'm thankful for ActionAid because they gave me a chance and changed my life. I went from being an ignorant housewife to being a business owner. I also hope they provide a recreational area for children here and continue their support for women in this area.

5.3. Sustainability:

Overall, the evaluation team expects that the projects' sustainability is likely due to the following factors:

Changes in the women groups: Women's improved wellbeing and increased confidence and agency in personal decision making and in engaging with their families in addition to the increased awareness

of their political and economic rights, and particularly their right to work and participate in political and public life are things that will remain with the women beyond the project implementation.

Furthermore, the women that received the vocational training and participated in the project activities will remain connected with ActionAid and are considered a reference contact for any future activities that the ActionAid carries out in H2 area. Furthermore, some of these women will very likely continue supporting the local community in spreading the knowledge within their surroundings and among their friends and family. The majority of the 75 women targeted by the project (or at least the ones participating in the evaluation) have confirmed their commitment to women issues within their community and expressed their willingness to participate in any future activities organized by ActionAid.

Changes in the attitudes of male community members: the work with male members of the family, which supported increasing their consciousness and influencing their attitudes toward women, such that there was decreased restrictions on women's very basic freedoms is something that will remain after project completion.

The networking and contacts that the women established, as a result of their involvement in the project, will remain long after the project is over. The Basala project, over its three years of implementation, worked closely and in cooperation with other specialized civil society organizations and institutions working in the area. The women groups were put in contact with these organizations and institutions whether they were service providers or provided guidance for the women. The women confirmed that they will continue to contact organizations like the YMCA, Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS), Women Center for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association (PFPPA), Child Rescue, Arab Society for Rehabilitation and others in case they need any support. It is worth noting that these organizations provide a number of services for the community ranging from health services and health related awareness raising (PMRS, PRCS, Arab Society for Rehabilitation, PFFPA) to advocacy, counselling and psychosocial support (WCLAC, PFFPA, Child Rescue).

Results of the advocacy actions on the community: The results will remain long after the project is over. The four actions that were implemented in the two targeted communities will remain of benefit to the communities. More specifically, the allotment of a bus to carry the students from Al Jalajel community to their school and the establishment of a new school for girls will continue to serve these communities.

The income generating projects: One of the main components of the project that will remain after Basala's completion is the income generating projects. All interviewed women have confirmed that they are able to continue their projects with minimal support after Basala is over. The technical capacities and managerial skills the women acquired, coupled with inductive environment that was created due to the women's empowerment, will support that sustainability of the income generating projects.

5.4. Women's livelihoods:

Given the conservative nature of the communities targeted in the Basala project, it was natural for the project and its participants to experience backlash. However, with the skills acquired through the trainings and awareness session, coupled with the participation in the advocacy action, significantly empowered women to put a limit to the backlash experienced from the immediate family and the wider community. This empowerment was further enhanced for the women that received the seed-funding and improved their income. These women, even though experiencing backlash and harassment from their community asking about their whereabouts at the beginning of their involvement, managed to overcome these challenges.

On the collective level, the women group and the project as a whole was under attack. The Support Committee undertook some work in Al Jalajel for example after hearing of violent backlash on the women and the project. The committee organized field visits to the area and conducted several meetings and awareness sessions to community leaders. These efforts succeeded in shifting public perceptions on women participation and rights.

5.5. Efficiency:

Efficiency usually measures the outputs - qualitative and quantitative - in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the implementing organization uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. The evaluation tries to answer whether the activities were cost-efficient, the objectives achieved on time and whether the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives.

Selection of Beneficiaries and Priorities:

The selection process of the beneficiaries was supply driven, meaning that the women heard about the Basala project from either the partner organizations like Sharek Youth Forum and Al Jalajel Kindergarten. These women then invited their neighbors and other women from their surroundings to the awareness sessions that were organized under this project. The building of the groups was done gradually, which provided the women with a sense of commitment and trust in the work. This was then followed by identifying the map of resources within each community and then identifying the needs and priorities in a participatory manner.

Human Resources

The project had one project coordinator supervised by a project manager that is supervising other projects. The ActionAid management worked on ensuring that the donor regulations and ActionAid principles are being met. The evaluation team feels that the size of the project team was enough to implement all project activities successfully.

Financial and Time Resources

The total budget of the project and the timeline were enough to carry out all planned activities. The total project budget was 70,000 USD. The Basala project also relied on local contributions from civil society organizations that supported in hosting some of the project's events and in providing some of the awareness sessions from within their own budgets as per their mandate. The seed-funding,

which was given to the seventeen women was a small amount that did not exceed 2,000 USD but was enough to get the businesses running.

5.6. Disability Inclusion:

The Basala project consciously targeted women with disabilities at all three levels; awareness-raising, advocacy initiatives, and income generation. In doing so, the project has adopted an intersectional approach in their intervention. This stems from the project's recognition of the disproportionate impact of the occupation and patriarchy over women with disabilities in light of their gender and disability. Disability inclusion has been measured against the effectiveness of the project in including women with disability and the impact of the project on them.

The project's interventions impacted women with disabilities at three main levels. Firstly, women with disabilities who participated in the project reported increased awareness of rights and tools available to defend these rights. Secondly, out of the 39 women who were supported with income generating projects, 14 were women with disabilities, exemplifying the affirmative action policy adopted by the Basala project. Thirdly, one of the main initiatives that were implemented in the project focused on the needs of women with disabilities and resulted in the rehabilitation of their homes and provided employment opportunity for these women. Women with disability participants reported increased ability in challenging harmful social norms and stigma, including bullying from the public. This is reflective of improved self-confidence and assurance as stated by the participants, as well as a higher degree of public engagement and support from the income generating projects. The following two case studies exemplify the experiences and impact of women with disabilities who participated in the project:

My name is **Raghad** and I have a physical disability. I heard about the ActionAid project through Sharek and knew that they support women with disabilities. I contacted ActionAid and started attending their awareness sessions and got to know that they have income generating projects. Thus, I took a training course through which my personality improved, and my managerial and financial skills developed. I was able to buy children's clothing and toys and sell them to people in my neighborhood. Before the project I didn't have any income and I hardly left the house and had very limited relationships with my surroundings. After the project I started to feel my value and had my own income which helped me buy things that I needed, I started going out and buying new clothes and toys for my business and did some marketing in my area, and so people started knowing my business since there aren't any shops in the area that provide the things I provide (children's clothes and toys). Due to this project, my life has changed, and I have hope since I became integrated in the community. I thank the ActionAid for changing my life and I hope they will continue to support me so that I can open my own shop and teach us recreational activities and provide treatment for us.



My name is **Shireen** and I have a physical disability, I work as a receptionist at the Tareq Bin Ziyad Community Center. I was able to get this job through cooperation between ActionAid and the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation under their employment program. I got to know the project through Sharek which affected my life positively; before the project I didn't like to get out the house or talk to anyone, which caused me to get into depression because I live alone, and I don't have anything to do in my life.

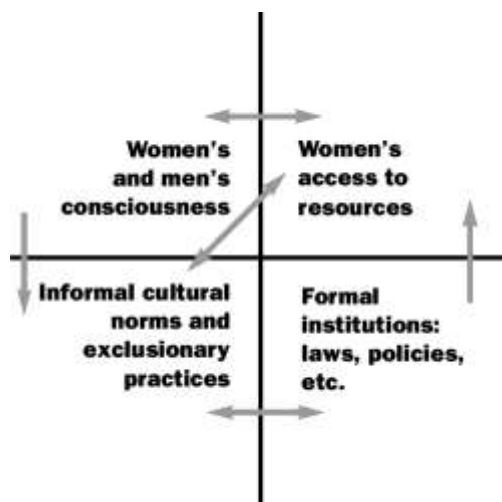


However, after I started participating in the project's sessions, I started coming and attending the sessions which helped me blend in and become more social with people around me. My financial situation also improved even if it's a little, and my psychological status improved because of the debriefing sessions. I used to face a lot of challenges especially that I cannot move around except in a private Taxi which used to cost me a lot. Another challenge was that I could not leave the house alone because I was dependent on other people. People used to bully me and make me feel like I couldn't do anything which really hurt my feelings and made me feel like a failure.

I thank ActionAid for their support to me, and I hope they will work with the municipality to allow me to display my products in the Tariq Bin Ziyad Center.

5.7. Shifting the Power and Localization:

This evaluation relies on the following model in assessing empowerment and improvement in women's status. The model specifies changes/improvement at the individual/collective levels and the formal/informal levels. For example, individual formal change includes increased women's access to resources, while collective formal change includes change in institutions, laws and policies. On the informal level, individual informal change focuses on women's and men's consciousness, while collective informal change focuses on changes in informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices.



As explained in section 5.2 (effectiveness and impact), improvement was mainly seen at the individual level, both in its formal and informal dimensions, while collective change was observed at a smaller

scale. In this sense, the income generating projects improved women's access to resources, while the awareness raising and debriefing sessions done with both women and men affected their consciousness. The advocacy activities also impacted at the collective formal level, and small traces of impacting informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices were observed. The success of the advocacy initiatives helped in changing the public opinion about women's role in the community.

Several indicators suggest that the women's groups are strong. For example, these groups have demanded and continued to engage with the awareness-raising work delivered by community-based organizations and organizations that they connected through the networking aspect of the Basala project. It is important to highlight that both the community-based organizations and more fully fledged organizations were receptive and continued to provide the requested support. Another example is the group work on the advocacy initiatives, such that the women were organized into different groups and supported in identifying a common priority and design and implement an advocacy action to address the priority issue. This demonstrates that the project was successful in building communication and teamwork skills at the individual level for these women to work collectively together.

On another level, the women participants reported that their presence in a group increased their confidence and abilities, particularly as they felt that they were part of a larger collective that shared their needs, concerns, and views. This conducive environment encouraged the women to identify common priority issues and tackle them through group advocacy initiatives as clarified above, as well as their request to continue awareness-raising sessions in topics of their own choice.

The Basala project intentionally intended and took measures to ensure that the project is localized, particularly in light of the sensitive nature of working with women in the H2 area. Firstly, the setting up of the support committee, which included community leaders and women and men from organizations working in the area, was intended to and successfully provided protection and support to the women participants in the project. The support committee elaborated that their intended mandate was to *“facilitate the project implementation, address challenges and act as a reference point to the community in case any issues arise.”* Secondly, the project adopted a participatory and bottom-up approach in all its stages, including the selection of awareness-raising topics, focus of advocacy initiatives, and the ideas for the income generating projects. Lastly, the Basala project builds on a previous project implemented by ActionAid with the entirety of the community in the H2 area, which facilitated the targeting and provision of support for the women in a relatively sensitive context.

VI.Recommendations and Lessons Learnt:

Replication of the project: The evaluation team believes that the Basala project should be replicated in similar communities and in other locations due to its importance and relevance to the Palestinian context especially in H2 area. This comes since the H2 area lacks essential eservices and substantial infrastructure to counter the Israeli occupation policies in the area especially in the Old City. The work that ActionAid has been doing under the Basala project is unique and covers some of the gaps in the

targeted areas, but a lot still needs to be done due to the difficult conditions that H2 area faces. A three-year project is not enough to address all the needs of the community and thus it is important to continue this work.

Increase the number and scope of awareness raising and the training sessions: There was enough evidence that the women's involvement in the awareness sessions and the training were a first step for their life changing journey. The collective experience of being part of a bigger group and working together on a joint cause, has increased women's agency and self-worth. A big part of this change was due to the women's involvement in the awareness sessions, the design and planning sessions in addition to the training. Thus the evaluation team recommends that the number and scope of these sessions increase to include different subjects such as women rights, health rights, economic sustainability and marketing methods.

Build on the networking and cooperation with other service providers in the community which has proved to be a good strategy for ActionAid in implementing the Basala project. The networking not only supported the women groups but also provided additional services and protection.

Replicate the inclusion and localization component of the project. This component sets it apart from other interventions usually implemented in marginalized communities. The creation of the Support Committee as one of the localization factors is something that needs to be replicated in other projects. Similarly, the inclusion of women with disabilities was something very unique, especially when considering that 36% of the women receiving the income generating projects are women with disabilities that had, according to their testimonies, no prospects for participation in public life or independence before their involvement in the project. Thus, it is of the utmost importance to continue including women with disabilities in future projects and interventions.

Expand the income generating projects in size and coverage. The support given to the women recipients of the seed-funding has significantly contributed to the success and the possible sustainability of the projects. However, the number of granted income generating projects is very limited in comparison to the actual needs and thus it is highly recommended that in future projects, the number and size of income generating project are increased.

Introducing unconventional ideas for income generation projects. Although the capacities, available resources and interests of the women have shaped the type of the income generating project, there is a need to diversify the type of projects that are being supported to include less conventional ideas. The projects can include IT services, maintenance, and other ideas relevant to the context. There is also a need to extend the support beyond receiving seed funding and focus on the packaging and marketing and all other relevant elements that increase the competitive edge in marketing

VII. Annexes

7.1. Annex 1: Evaluation Tools

7.2. Annex 2: List of people interviewed

In-depth interviews:

Institution	Date of Interview	Interviewees	Title
ActionAid staff- Basala Team	5/7/2021	Ibrahim Ibraigheth	Country Director
		Amani Mustafa	Program Director
		Noor Jaber	Project Coordinator
Health Directorate in Hebron	17/7/2021	Ahlam Sawayfa	Psycho-social Specialist
Family Planning and Protection Association	17/7/2021	Maisa Shalaldeh	Social worker and coordinator of the Women Program
Sharek women group	17/7/2021	Sameera	Woman participant

Focus Group Discussions:

Group	Date of Session	Number of Participants	Location of Session
Women beneficiaries in the Old City	12/7/2021	14 women	Sharek Youth Forum
Women beneficiaries in Al Jalajel	13/7/2021	10 women	Al Jalajel Kindergarten
Project Support Committee	12/7/2021	3 women- 1 man	Sharek Youth Forum