REACH in Jordan: Monitoring the Jordan Emergency Services and Social Resilience Project

The protracted Syria crisis has forced over four million people to flee the country, mostly to neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. Of the 656,198 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Jordan as of August 2016, approximately 83% live outside of formal camps, in host communities across the country. This has placed considerable strain on already over-stretched infrastructure and service delivery capacity of both local and national authorities. Municipal services have been particularly strained in the governorates hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees, namely Amman (27%), Maafraq (24%) and Irbid (21%).

In response to these challenges, the Jordan Emergency Services and Social Resilience Project (JESSRP), led by the World Bank and funded by the UK, Canada, Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark, was launched to address the immediate service delivery impacts of refugee arrivals, and to strengthen municipal capacity in supporting local economic development. The two components of the project are (i) municipal grants, which will provide direct grants to municipalities hosting the largest concentration of Syrian refugees in order to finance public services and programmes, and (ii) institutional development and project management, which will provide technical support in grant management and project coordination to the participating municipalities and implementing agencies.

In order to assess the implementation and impact of this project, REACH, in collaboration with JESSRP partners, is implementing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework across targeted municipalities in northern Jordan. The framework consists of a baseline assessment, two monitoring rounds and an endline assessment. The monitoring assessments are intended to highlight good practices and lessons learned to inform ongoing improvements and timely revisions to JESSRP design and implementation. So far, REACH has conducted the baseline and a first monitoring round (August 2015) which identified progresses, challenges and immediate outcomes of the JESSRP.

During the first monitoring round, data was collected through 1,164 household surveys, 35 community key informant (KI) interviews, nine municipality KI interviews, and four project stakeholder interviews. Findings indicate that interventions have been addressing self-reported priority community needs — with solid waste management (SWM), public roads, and public lighting as the top three reported priorities — and that most public works funded through 2014 grants have been completed and equipment was received by most municipalities. However, pre-existing municipal capacity challenges resulted in certain inefficiencies in service delivery and project implementation, such as the necessary human and financial resources for SWM, or the equal distribution of resources in rural and urban settings. Key recommendations from this report include further training for municipal officials on procurement processes; thorough internal and external preliminary evaluations of municipalities’ financial and human resource capacity; and, overall, better information management and coordination among all actors in the intervening municipalities, whether involved with JESSRP or not, so as to provide comprehensive coverage without overlap of service delivery.

The second monitoring round which began in August 2016 will build on these past experiences to further evaluate impact and inform project design and implementation. Focusing on processes and outcomes, the monitoring rounds enable the tracking of ongoing progress to inform timely improvements and revisions throughout the implementation of
the project. Specifically, they evaluate relevance of the intervention, accountability of the selection and implementation process of projects, efficiency of implementation, and effectiveness, particularly the quality of services.

The overall objective of the M&E framework is to evaluate the impact of the intervention by comparing observed level of change between baseline data collection (conducted prior to the delivery of services in August-September 2014), and the endline assessment, expected to be conducted upon project completion in late 2016 or early 2017. The inclusion of such a comprehensive framework within a municipal support intervention is particularly innovative and will enable the sharing of cross-applicable lessons learned to similar projects outside of Jordan.

Overall, REACH’s monitoring assessments provide insight into the framework of the JESSRP intervention, with an in-depth understanding of internal processes of municipalities, their implementation capacity, the quality of municipal services and relationships between municipalities and their citizens. The overall evaluation of the effectiveness of this intervention will enable a better understanding of factors linked to service provision challenges such as social cohesion and resilience, and can be used to inform the design and development of similar initiatives in the future.