World Vision
Lebanon

"Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development" Project
Evaluation Report

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The work on which this report is based was undertaken to advance learning in this development project area, as well as fulfill the requirements of World Vision's design, monitoring and evaluation learning system. The views expressed are those of the authors and may not reflect the views of World Vision Lebanon and the funding organization.

Affirmation

Except as acknowledged by the references in this paper to other authors and publications, the report and research described herein consists of our own work, undertaken to advance learning as part of the World Vision's Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Learning System.

The primary quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the evaluation process remain the property of the farmers, families and communities described in this paper and must be used only with their consent

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Alex and Rodolph

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List of Acronyms

DME	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
EDTC	Extension, Demonstration and Training Center
FAO	United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization
FY	Financial Year
IMC	Mediterranean Institute for Certification
IR	Intermediate Result
LEAP	Learning through Evaluation with Accountability & Planning
MEERO	Middle East and Eastern Europe Regional Office
MC	Mercy Corps
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Environment
NO	National Office
OA	Organic Agriculture
PY	Project Year
RFA	Request for Application
SABIL	Sustainable Agri-Business Initiative for Lebanon
SARD	Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Project
SO	Strategic Objective
ToR	Terms of Reference
USAID	United States of America Agency for International Development
WV	World Vision
WVI	World Vision International
WVL	World Vision Lebanon
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

Executive Summary

The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) project was the largest organic agriculture project in Lebanon. The duration of the project was from November 7, 2002 through November 6, 2005. This three year project was designed and implemented by World Vision Lebanon (WVL) to improve the quality of living of Lebanese farmers. The total project budget was $6,285,715, such that the greater part was funded by a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Through expanded economic opportunities in organic agriculture, the SARD project contributed to strengthening the agricultural infrastructure by providing extension, demonstration and training services to the farmers. This was realized thru the establishment of five centers spread in five growth poles. In addition SARD facilitated the access of farmers to national market and to agro-processing facilities.

The aim of this SARD end of project Evaluation is to learn with accountability, and to objectively assess progress, impact and sustainability.

The SARD project was found to be highly relevant for its importance for expanded economic opportunities in Lebanon and its appropriateness to the needs of intended beneficiaries, policy environment and socio-cultural setting.

The preparation and design were ambitious for a three year project and should have involved more beneficiaries. The internal logic and coherence of the project design focused on the establishment and functioning of the five Extension Demonstration and Training Centers (EDTC). However marketing issues were not tackled in details.

The project staff encountered considerable challenges in managing the business aspect of the project, namely to ensure quality control, market the products and introduce a proper accounting system. Nevertheless, almost all of the initial targets were achieved and the budget was fully spent on time.

At the beginning of the project the necessary infrastructure and facilities were not in place. There were some management staff with previous experience, however most of the staff were young and had to gain experience in implementing a large project like SARD and acquire new technical skills in organic agriculture.

SARD's direct impact is tangible; however this newly introduced sector still needs to be reinforced. The project successfully promoted organic agriculture. Around 200 farmers are currently cultivating 500 hectares following organic agriculture practices according to EEC[1] Regulation. No 2092/91. SARD created the opportunity to market the farmers' produce through BioCoop Lubnan under the brand name "Campagnia®" in about 40 outlets. Besides, it has significantly contributed to the drafting of a Government Regulation on organic agriculture. The environmental impact should be very positive since the application of conventional pesticides was stopped.

SARD largely contributed in setting a strong foundation for organic agriculture in Lebanon. The cooperative witch was supposed to take over the project did not arrived to autonomy However to reach sustainability and ownership to such a project more time and support are required.

[1] European Union counsil

Main Report

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Project

The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) project was the first nation-wide and so far largest organic agriculture project in Lebanon. It was designed and implemented by World Vision Lebanon (WVL) and funded with a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for $4,956,045, with additional match from World Vision ($815,000) and the community ($514,670). The total project budget was $6,285,715. The duration of the project was from November 7, 2002 through November 6, 2005.

It has been designed with a Goal to improve the quality of living for people in Lebanon through expanded economic opportunities in organic agriculture. Its strategic objective is "Improving the quality of life of farmers and their families through adopting new agricultural techniques related to organic farming." The project aims at establishing the infrastructure for organic agriculture in a comprehensive approach with different components regarding extensions on agricultural techniques, agro-processing and marketing.

SARD had three intermediate results, namely (IR1) increased access of farmers to new agricultural techniques; (IR2) increased access to agro-packaging and processing units; and (IR3) improved capacity to market agricultural products. For further details, see attached logical framework in annex 4.1.

The project worked in five growth poles spread over the country (see map in Annex 4.2). Each of the sites has different site conditions and unique characteristics, offering learning opportunities (see Table 1).

While the SARD project has formally ended, many of its activities are continued by the "Sustainable Agri-Business Initiative for Lebanon (SABIL), another organic agriculture project implemented by WVL. SABIL has started in November 2005 for a two-year project duration, endowed with a 6.2 M$ USAID grant.

Table 1: Project Areas

Growth Pole and size (ha)	Bio-physical characteristics	Main livelihoods / crops	Major challenges	Project innovations
Bsharre (5,000 ha)	- Precipitation 1,200 mm - Altitude 500 to 2,500 m - Average relative humidity 70%. - Majority of brown fertile soils	Apples, livestock production (goats), tourism	- Smallholders, - No mechanization, - Terraces, - Irrigation by gravity, - Lack of educated and professional farmers, - Extension Services Provided by Agriculture Input Companies. - Marketing the produce, - Unemployment especially during winter,	Marketing Organic Agriculture Produce; Extension Service on Organic Agriculture; Organic Agriculture Inputs; Agriculture Machinery; Apple Processing to Juice;

East Sidon (8,500 ha)	- Precipitation 900mm. - Altitude 400m to 1000m. - High relative humidity. - Calcareous (white) and clay (Ph 8) soils, mainly with low fertility.	Vegetables production, open fields and under green houses. Fruit trees production, mainly olives, citrus and Banana. Table grapes.	- Marketing the produce, - Low market prices. - Lack of extension services - Lack of educated and professional farmers - Wild boar (causing damages to the lands)	Medicinal plants, Grapes, Fruit trees, Plant Nursery, Composting, Extension Services on Organic Agriculture, Packaging and Marketing of Organic Produce; Organic Agriculture Inputs.
Bekaa (200,000 ha)	- Precipitation 700mm. - Altitude from 900 to 1000m. - Average relative humidity 65%. - Fertile soils.	Vegetables, Cereals, Fodder Crops, Fruit Trees, Grapes, Poultry, Wine production.	- Extensive use of Pesticides and Chemical Fertilizer, - Unemployment, - Low Market Prices, - Extension Services Provided by Agriculture Input Companies. - High Attack by Insects and Diseases.	Plant Nursery, Composting, Extension Services on Organic Agriculture, Packaging and Marketing of Organic Produce; Organic Agriculture Inputs.
Nabatieh / Marjayoun (52,560 ha)	- Precipitation 900mm. - Altitude from 500m to 1200m. - Average relative humidity 69%. - Black, and red soils with good fertility.	Olive, Fruit trees; Vegetables, Cereals, Fodder Crops, Goats, Poultry, Tomatoes processed products.	- Small Properties. - General Economical and Sociological Regression in the Region. - Lack of Market and Processing Plants. - High Attacks with Pests and Diseases. - Lack of extension services. - Shortage in Irrigation Water. - Migration. - Unemployment.	Plant Nursery; Fruit trees; Green Houses, Packaging and Marketing Organic Agriculture Produce; Extension Service on Organic Agriculture; Organic Agriculture Inputs; Composting; Agriculture Machinery.
Bent Jbeil (8,229 ha)	- Altitude 480 to 850 m. - Precipitation 700mm; - 65 % average relative humidity; - Red to white soils with average humidity.	Tobacco, olives, laurel, goat.	- High difference in day/night temperature. - Scarcity of water. - Far from Wholesale Markets. - Lack of extension services. - Migration. - Unemployment. - Non-Educated Farmers.	Operating an olive mill; Plant Nursery; Fruit trees; Packaging and Marketing Organic Agriculture Produce; Extension Service on Organic Agriculture; Organic Agriculture Inputs; Composting; Agriculture Machinery.

2.1.2 Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope

Evaluation is defined by World Vision as a "time-bound exercise that attempts to assess, systematically and objectively, the relevance, performance and success, or lack thereof, of ongoing and completed programs and projects".

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), the evaluation purpose is to assess objectively the performance of the SARD project, in order to reach a deeper understanding of the project process and impact. It is thus almost similar to the objective of this evaluation which is to assess the progress, impact and sustainability of the SARD project. The evaluation should give particular attention to the Extension, Demonstration and Training Centers (EDTC) supported by the project (see detailed ToR in chapter 0).

Important aspects to be covered include design process, implementation process, access for stakeholders to new agricultural techniques, access to agro-packaging and processing units, socio-economic impact on intended beneficiaries, and marketing.

The evaluation looks at the specific project outcomes and goals from the design. It has been designed as a final evaluation. It will thus focus on the higher levels of the intervention logic, particularly the achievement of intermediate results, impact on intended beneficiaries and project sustainability as well as lessons-learned for similar undertakings. It will have to make recommendations about the future continuation or transition of the project.[2]

The evaluation aims not only to assess the accountability for the funding organization (USAID), but also strives to systematize learning especially for the project staff. In line with "Learning through Evaluation with Accountability & Planning" (LEAP), World Visions approach to Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DME), the evaluation has been carried out in a spirit of a joint learning exercise, looking at performance with a view to continuous improvement.

Along these lines, the evaluation team has been composed of an external consultant, Alexander Horst and an evaluation support team. The external consultant brings in an outside perspective while the evaluation support team has intrinsic experience and knowledge about the local socio-economic, cultural and bio-physical environment. The whole evaluation process has been carried out in a participatory way, actively encouraging stakeholders to participate in the evaluation, share responsibilities and provide critical feedback to the team. The underlying notion has been that when stakeholders are involved in the evaluation process, the results will more likely be accepted. The detailed composition of the team is shown in annex 4.4.

The evaluation design, persons contacted and documents consulted are presented in annexes 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 respectively.

[2] As stated above, SABIL is seen as a new, different project by the funding agency as well as WVL, which is not subject to this final evaluation. The design of the SABIL project has already been completed, but it is hoped that some of the recommendations of this evaluation can be still taken on board, so far they have not yet been addressed. Besides, some of the recommendations given may be redundant, as the evaluation team had to consider the SABIL project as non-existent.

2.2 Relevance

2.2.1 Importance of organic agriculture for expanded economic opportunities

Lack of job and economic opportunities, especially in rural areas, has been identified in the project proposal as one of the key problems to be addressed. Agribusiness and Light Agro-Industry was recognized as one of the three sectors with the best potential for economic growth in the request for application (RFA).

During project design, organic agriculture was selected as focal area due to its income generation and value-added potential and the ability to realize higher prices for the farmers. It also reflected the difficulties conventional agriculture was facing in marketing conventional products and competing with cheap imports. Without doubt, the project's idea was innovative and novel.

Organic agriculture can cater to "niche markets" for high-value fresh and processed foodstuffs. As Lebanon's topography and natural resource base can support a wide range of crops not cultivable in neighboring countries, there is export potential especially to the Gulf region and Europe, provided high quality standards are met and proved by independent certification. Organic agriculture is also more labor-intensive than conventional agriculture, and can thus create additional jobs.

Organic agriculture has – in the long run – the potential to be an engine of growth for employment, income, tax revenues and foreign exchange earnings as well as to improve urban-rural linkages. It is thus certainly relevant for expanded economic opportunities in Lebanon.

Organic agriculture will gain importance in the future as food quality standards will be enforced for conventional agriculture. According to a article in the Aldyar newspaper published on 17.01.06, certain agricultural products available on the market are to be considered non-consumable for the high amount of pesticides residues (over the allowed threshold). The awareness of the health risks of conventional food will further increase in the population.

Unequal development of key economic sectors and geographic areas, excessive urban concentration and polarization around Beirut, huge disparities in income and quality of life, and weak regional structures cause rural-urban migration and emigration. Many rural areas have lost their youth, elites and investors, minimizing the ability for economic take-off.

Growth stipulated by organic agriculture can discourage rural exodus and create valuable rural-urban linkages. Organic agriculture, relying on locally-available resources and avoiding the application of imported pesticides and chemical fertilizers with negative impact on the environment, can contribute to rural development and sustainable livelihoods. It's also better in line with eco-tourism than conventional agriculture. It is thus highly relevant for revitalizing rural areas.

2.2.2 Appropriateness of project objectives to the policy environment

The agricultural sector in general and organic farming especially is not a priority for Lebanon's policy makers. The Lebanese Government, with its limited resources, continues to focus on infrastructure and service provision to Beirut and other urban coastal centers – leaving rural development literally to donors.

Some agricultural policies, such as subsidies for tobacco growing, have a negative impact on organic agriculture which is not supported at all. Despite the unsupportive policy environment, the project is still very relevant, as it fills a gap left by the government. As the first nation-wide organic agriculture project, it assisted in raising awareness about benefits of organic agriculture with opinion-formers and the wider public. It has for instance significantly contributed to the drafting of a Government regulation on organic agriculture.

While the project has not been a Government priority, it is certainly not contradictory to existing policies and thus warrants donor support.

2.2.3 Appropriateness of project objectives to the needs of intended beneficiaries

The lack of income and job opportunities in rural areas is definitely a key concern for the intended target groups and beneficiaries. In respect to the wider application of organic agriculture, main constraints for intended beneficiaries were limited markets for organic products, limited knowledge about organic agricultural techniques (e.g. organic pest management, composting etc.) and limited access to packaging and processing units. The project strategy to focus on improved capacity to market agricultural product, increased access for farmers to new agricultural techniques and increased access to agro-packaging and processing units was thus fully justified.

2.2.4 Appropriateness of project objectives to the socio-cultural setting

Traditionally, Lebanese farmers are producing organically on their home yard for self-consumption through a system called *Baladi*. Lebanese are willing to buy organic food for health considerations. Culturally, organic agriculture is aligned with traditional practices and customer preferences.

A social impact analysis has not been conducted during project formulation. It should have been included in the project design routine.

The project was relevant to USAID's SO3 which is related to the environment and WVL's core values. In sum, the SARD project is rated as highly relevant.

2.3 Design

2.3.1 Comprehensiveness of the project planning process

The Request for Applications (RFA) was issued by USAID on June 13, 2002, giving a closing date of July 31, 2002, i.e. the project had to be developed within a 7-week time frame. The original proposal took a cross-sectoral approach, covering organic agriculture, information and communication technology (ICT) and tourism. The originally requested grant amount was about US$15million. However, USAID informed WVL later that only about US$5million (i.e. a third of its original amount) can be allocated for the project, and therefore a focus on organic agriculture was suggested. The project had to be revised within one week. On September 13th 2002, the addendum was submitted.

The required downsizing of the project within a short time period resulted in some weaknesses of the project design. Firstly, the project had now to employ a sectoral approach. Secondly, even in the remaining agricultural component, some measures had to be skipped. As a comprehensive project design needs time, it should be considered by the donor to give applicants more time to properly redesign the project proposal.

Due to time pressure during project design, some necessary elements of a comprehensive and participatory planning process were lacking. Most importantly, the intended beneficiaries were not sufficiently involved in the project planning process. Yet, because of WV's previous work in Lebanon there was a basis from which the project could be formulated. The presence of WVL in the targeted areas through the implementation of the Area Development Programs (ADPs) was informative since the areas' teams were able to provide some data to inform the assessment and design.

The evaluation team recommends to always involving intended beneficiaries in project design, even under time pressure. This is to be considered best practice in development. A stakeholder analysis as well as a participatory assessment of the problems and solutions together with the intended beneficiaries should have been conducted.

The project design was built on previous project experiences of WVL in organic agriculture (WV-Mercy Corps/USDA project) and available documentation. WV Lebanon had previous experience working with government agencies from projects. However, it seems that not all available relevant experiences were considered. For example, with respect to strengthening the work of cooperatives and BioCoop Lubnan specifically, experiences of other agricultural cooperatives could have been used. During project design, a systemic analysis of all related interventions should be carried out. Besides, it should be always ensured that lessons learnt and recommendations from evaluations are incorporated in project design. Finally, it is suggested to improve the documentation of lessons-learned of predecessor projects, in order to improve project design.

The project design tried to integrate the project in the existing WVL Area Development Program (ADP) structure and was successful in mobilizing contributions from ADPs. Based on the practical experience of SARD, it seems that integration can be further improved. This will partly depend on additional planning efforts (esp. in terms of organizational structure, coordination, communication and M&E) to fully realize synergy effects.

In regard to the M&E system, the design left it to the Grant Manager, Program Officer, and Finance Officer in cooperation with the relevant technical staff members to develop it later. In order to ensure its full functionality shortly after commencement, more efforts should be devoted to devising a proper M&E system during the planning process. Some key indicators were provided by USAID one year into the project which caused additional complications in the design of a M&E system since related baseline data were not available.

2.3.2 Internal logic and coherence of the project design

The project was designed in a relatively short time period. Moreover, as the first large, nationwide organic agricultural project not many experiences were available on which the design could have been built. In recognition of this, the design was adequate, yet it showed some shortcomings.

The logical framework could have been more coherent. For example, the strategic objective was too vague in respect to the benefits ("improved quality of life") for the intended beneficiaries.[3] Indicators for the strategic objective were not provided in the initial logframe attached to the proposal addendum. It also lacked necessary activities in order to achieve the IR 1.3 "Improved capacity to market agricultural product." Main activities such as "establish and support agricultural extension services" and "train farmers on new sustainable agricultural techniques" are somewhat overlapping, with the result that sub-activities such as "conduct farmer field visits" and "prepare technical sheets for farmers" can fall under both main activities. More time should be spent reviewing the logical framework in the design face to ensure consistency.

A major flaw in the design was that institutional issues were not appropriately addressed. It is not that the project designers were unaware of the institutional challenges ahead, as can be seen from the following citations from the proposal, yet the main problem was that no corresponding institutional strengthening activities were included in the project design (logframe and workplan):

"The services of EDTCs will be sustained after the three years of this award as the ADP takes activities such as: green houses, nurseries, processing, packaging, propagation chambers, etc. In the case of Bent Jbeil, income earned from the processing, packaging and nursery activities will be retained to cover the operating costs. The ADP will manage them in collaboration with the communities. Eventually the EDTC will be completely run by the communities and WV will remain as a resource." (pg. 16)

In respect to EDTCs, they were to be run by hired project staff (team of about 5 people) and there were no measures designed which would enable the ADP staff and later the communities

[3] Improved quality of life is valid on goal level, where is was also mentioned.

to take over the management of EDTCs. For instance, it should have been asked whether ADP staff has indeed the capacity and time to take over this rather complex intervention after project end. Besides, the responsibilities should have been clearly defined.

"During year two and three the marketing and distribution center will be evaluated and a decision will be made about its future." (pg 30).

To say that the decision about the future of the central marketing and distribution center will be basically made shortly before project end is haphazard.

"World Vision will assist BioCoop in conducting training workshops and in strengthening its structure and organizational frame. This cooperation will also encourage the cooperative approach to interested farmers." (pg. 36).

These activities can only be found in a table elaborating on partner roles, yet neither in the logframe nor in the Gantt Chart.

It is recommended to always carry out an institutional analysis during project design, identifying capacity building needs and corresponding measures. Required measures have to be integrated into the logframe and operational plans.

In retrospect, it would have been logical to vest the long-term responsibility for the management of the EDTCs as well as the marketing and distribution center in one institution, namely the BioCoop Lubnan right from the project start. This decision was taken in May 2003, but did not result in an updating of logframe and nor was it integrated into the detailed implementation plan. Proper project design should ensure that a major revision of an on-going project can be avoided. If it is necessary, work plans and tools need to be revised and updated thoroughly.

This design weakness caused negative repercussions in respect to project sustainability since it was not clear how most of the activities can be sustained after project end. Long-term sustainability needs to be embodied in the project design; it must be clear from project start how project activities can be sustained by intended beneficiaries. If ADP support is foreseen after project end, it should be limited to a bridging period. Although this was supposed to happen, a clear exit strategy was lacking.

The design did not give sufficient attention to the overriding marketing issue. Improved capacity to market agricultural product (IR 1.3) was to be achieved by carrying out market surveys, facilitating the process of organic certification, initiating marketing campaign, establishing a market and distribution centre and conducting conference exhibitions. It lacked the development of a fully-fledged marketing strategy, involvement of the private sector and most importantly, defining and strengthening an appropriate institution to handle the commercial transactions. The design also planned only three packing and refrigeration units which was insufficient. During project design, external expertise in specialist fields may need to be mobilized by the applicant in order to improve project design.

By design, the proposed training measures for agricultural experts and farmers were focusing on technical aspects. Training in managerial, leadership, financial and marketing skills was not sufficiently considered as project experience shows. Many farmers said that they can handle the technical issues, but marketing is the problem. During evaluation it also became clear that BioCoop Board Members lack managerial and leadership skills. A training needs assessment should have been carried out, either during project design or shortly after project start. This would have resulted in more client-orientated trainings.

2.3.3 Practicality, risk assessment & realistic assumptions

The design as a nation-wide pilot project on OA was over-ambitious for the 3-year duration of the project. SARD did attempt to address too many issues at once. It would have been better to either devise it as a short-term pilot project which in a second stage would be replicated at a larger scale, or the project duration should have been longer. The conversion from conventional to organic agriculture alone takes 2-3 years for farmers depending on the land, the history of the

agricultural practices and the crops to be cultivated. Farmers should at least be supported during the duration of the conversion process which bears additional risks for them (some farmers joined only in the 2nd or 3rd year of the project), but better would be another 1-2 year support to ensure self-sustainability. Many of the supported farmers are at an important phase.

It is recommended to make conservative assumptions during project design, even if this reduces the changes of getting funding. In the long-run, it is better for the implementing organization to deliver on the intermediate results and strategic impacts.

A proper risk analysis during project design was lacking. As evidenced, farmers face economic and ecological risks during the conversion period. The production will decrease by about 20%, besides pest and diseases cannot anymore be treated with conventional pesticides. Experiences with the application of organic pesticides and fertilizers have to be acquired, sometimes on a trial and error approach. A risk analysis should be mandatory during project design.

The project design did not adequately incorporate the needs of poor farmers. During conversion period to organic, they are vulnerable to risks and external shocks and may need supplementary support. It is suggested that implications for the overriding policy objective poverty reduction should be systematically assessed during project design.

The design did not factor in the difficulties with marketing organic products and thus was too ambitious in terms of number of intended beneficiaries. Basically, marketing did not keep pace with the growth in farmers. Many of the original farmers stated that their benefits decreased as more farmers joined the project since a lesser portion of their products were marketed through the project. Thus, a financial and economic analysis of the project should be carried out during project preparation, in order to avoid watering-down effect of too many beneficiaries.

Project design was overexcited in the expectation that a significant number of young people are willing to practice OA. Agriculture is considered as outdated business and involves physical work many youth are not willing to do. They prefer to migrate to the urban areas and follow higher education. If young people are to be stay in rural areas, other supplementary non-agricultural measures in the rural areas may have to be designed.

The personnel plan had deficits; some key positions especially in regard to quality control and accounting for BioCoop were not identified. Particular attention need to be given to identifying the required human resources before project start since later changes negatively impact on project performance.

The project proposal listed 14 partners whose detailed role however in implementing the project was not always clear. The level of cooperation varied with different partners. This reflects the fact that not all identified institutions followed the same joined objective and for some only a minor role had been foreseen. In the view of the evaluation team, the number of partners should be limited to the ones, which are required for successful project implementation since partner coordination costs limited resources.

Implications of the project in terms of managing store and farmer accounts were not addressed. It was found necessary during project implementation to create an additional position. This should be ultimately the responsibility of the BioCoop. Financial management aspects need to be thoroughly addressed during project design.

2.4 Efficiency

2.4.1 Implementation process

2.4.1.1 Managerial level

The original organizational structure of the SARD project changed over time to meet the realities of project implementation. The original organizational chart submitted with the proposal listed 38 full-time staff: 6 staff at National Office (NO) level and 32 staff at the growth poles. Besides, 4 WVL staff including the National Director contributed between 10-50% of their time to the project. During the course of the project, additional positions were added including an agricultural coordinator (30%, Jun 05), a technical coordinator (100%, May 04), a BioCoop accountant (100%, Nov 04), a stock-keeper (100%, Apr 04), graphic designer (75%, Jul 04), 2 drivers (100%, May 04) and a communication and awareness officer (for 6 months).

The regional centers had different number of staff: the larger centers in Marjayoun and Bent Jbeil had 9 staff each, Bsharre and East Sidon had 5 staff each and Bekaa had only 4 staff. The basic composition was a center manager, an agricultural engineer, an administrative assistant and an accountant. With the exception of Bekaa, all centers had a marketing coordinator.

The high number of staff posed certain challenges in recruitment as well as human resource management. The project provided much needed job opportunities. Most of the hired staff was young and relatively inexperienced.

The project management initially lacked the experience in managing a large grant. Management experience had to be gained on the job. The project's efficiency needs to be evaluated against this background.

At the beginning, many management meetings were conducted at the NO, inviting all center managers. The meetings were participatory in nature, but not always efficient, resulting in debates. They lacked clear rules and procedures such as the distribution of minutes. Since the meetings were not productive, they were later significantly reduced in number, which resulted in a lack of communication and experience exchange. Meetings have to have a clear objective, agenda and procedures. Some need to be done on regular basis, others when a need arises. There was improvement made on this during the course of implementation.

Management decisions where not always taken timely and staff criticized that follow-up was often lacking at management level. It has to be assessed how this can be improved, for instance through management training or quality management systems.

Center managers reported during interviews that their opinions were not adequately reflected in decision-making. There was different understanding by staff what participation means, especially in respect to decision-making. While management staff believes that it has to make decisions since it is ultimately responsible for the timely and successful implementation of the grant, the subordinated staff expressed desire to be more involved in all decisions related to the centers. A common understanding of participation should be developed, using the definition of participation in the LEAP manual as a starting point which was not developed at that time. Consequently, it should be examined on which level decisions are to be made and by whom. The possibility for devolution of power should be investigated as this can speed up the decision-making at local level. The challenge ahead is to arrive at participatory decision-making on a timely basis.

Part of the problem was that the management decisions were not always sufficiently explained to staff. Feedback and communication need to be improved at all levels.

Staff appraisals were carried out annually, yet it seems that staff performance was not closely monitored. Subordinated staff sometimes took wrong decisions, which could have been avoided by better guidance and supervision. As evidenced by staff complaints, there was a lack of team

building skills at management level. Management should thus receive training in leadership and team building skills.

2.4.1.2 Functional level

The WVL Organic Agriculture project manual (referred to as SARD manual) was published in July 2004, after a long process of consultation with and incorporating feedback from staff. It covers administrative and financial management, technical structure and the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. The SARD manual was supposed to not only set the standards for data collection and analysis systems but outline the management processes of the SARD project. It is an ambitious effort with a lot of useful information; however, it had mainly three problems:

1. It was only finalized in July 2004, i.e. about half-way through the project. The centers had at that time basically devised their own basic systems, which therefore were not standardized.
2. The system was not user-friendly. It consisted of many forms and for some (e.g. background information form, monitoring form for plots in conversion) the information was cumbersome to get. Center managers and field engineers complained about the burden of reporting which cost a lot of time which could not be spent in the field.
3. As a consequence, staff did not completely follow the SARD manual and did not fill in all of the forms diminishing the usefulness of it.

Management systems and processes should be developed right after the project commencement and communicated consequently to staff. It is important to devise efficient systems, meaning only relevant data has to be collected in the least time-consuming way. In that respect, it was correct to revise it and distinguish between obligatory and optional forms in the final version of the SARD manual. It is key that the system is implemented. The manual should be continually updated as needs are identified.

Regular reporting was done, internally on a monthly basis and on a quarterly basis to USAID.

In respect to M&E, the project faced a challenge since it firstly had to monitor the indicators given in the logical framework submitted with the project proposal. Secondly, USAID Lebanon requested in the project year (PY) 2 to additionally monitor indicators for measuring the project's contribution to expanded economic opportunities which is relevant for USAID's work in the region. Problems were firstly that some of the baseline data were not available and secondly, provided indicators were not necessarily SMART, i.e. specific, measurable; available at acceptable cost; relevant, time-bound. For example, additional annual income per agricultural beneficiary ($ value) is not available at acceptable cost as it has to be calculated for each individual farmer participating in the project. Besides, farmers in Lebanon are not willing to openly state their income and secondly the income (price, production) through conventional agriculture must be known. It is suggested to agree on indicators at project start, focus on key indicators, which should be SMART. Instead of income, proxy indicators may be used.

The detailed implementation plans were prepared at National Office on a yearly basis, without sufficient participation of the center managers and marketing officer. They should be involved in operational planning since they are basically in charge of implementing them. It is further suggested to prepare operational plans for each center on a quarterly basis. This will help to monitor the achievements and update plans as needed.

A number of consultancy reports, studies and internal and external evaluations were prepared during project course. They varied in quality, yet provided many useful recommendations. Some recommendations were followed, yet there was no systematic follow up. It is proposed to prioritize and implement recommendations of evaluations and consultancies.

2.4.1.3 Financial level

The grant money was spent fully which can be considered a success. There was some backlog in the beginning because new staff had to be acquainted with USAID financial procedures. The Financial Officer received a number of trainings, which were informative and helpful.

Some of the larger machinery was ordered too late. It therefore had to be delivered with air cargo, which was not cost-efficient. Besides, some procured machines (bug skimmer for salad, cereal screener) could not been assembled and one refrigeration unit could not be completed. Major procurements of equipment should be done at the beginning of the project, not only to avoid these problems but also to train staff in operating it.

The grant management appreciated the 100% line item flexibility given by USAID. Since the budget had to be fully spent by project end, certain allowable activities were added. According to the finance officer, some equipment had to be bought to meet the US regulations. Delays occurred in buying vehicles from the US and getting expenses for international consultants approved. The stipulation that procurements >$100T have to be made in the US was not found useful. For example, because of the regulation it was not possible to procure smaller and cheaper refrigeration pickups for all 5 five centers from Europe. Two large refrigeration pickups had to be imported from the US which could not serve all centers at the same time and whose capacity could not fully used.

Only US consultants could be hired from the grant. Due to the difficulty of finding qualified US consultants willing to come to Lebanon, the training budget could not be fully used. Besides, engineers frequently stated that the training provided by the European consultants (paid by WV match funds) was more appropriate for the Lebanese context. Therefore, in justified cases exceptions from the procurement rule should be allowed.

The financial system was altogether efficient and is based on state-of-art software from Sun System, Vision Reports and Excel. A problem was faced when the project started to sell fruit and vegetables. There was initially no system in place for managing farmers and customer accounts. The WVL financial system reflecting the non-profit nature of WV basically monitors the expenses of the grant but could not handle incomes. It was agreed with the donor that profits can be reinvested in the project. Initially, various software packages were tested and the first accountant was still a student. The situation improved when an experienced accountant was hired in November 2004 who was well acquainted with the procured Lebanese commercial accounting software. However, it took her much time to input the previous data and fill in data gaps caused by missing invoices and vouchers. Now, the accounting is properly functioning. An external auditor closed the books for FY 2004 and 2005 and the balance sheet for BioCoop was given to the Directorate of Cooperatives and the Ministry of Agriculture.

There was reallocation of budget from one center to the other which caused some annoyance with center managers. More financial autonomy and more equal sharing of resources should have been given.

For all purchases over $500, WVL gets three bids from suppliers. The procurement rule was followed. Sometimes delays occurred with the procurement. A reason was that the specifications are sometimes not clear for the procurement staff. Certain agricultural inputs such as organic fertilizers and pesticides have to be procured timely and since they are not available in Lebanon had to be imported. There were some cases where center managers complained that they did not receive the requested items in time, although they have identified potential sources abroad.

2.4.1.4 Human resource level

The project was delayed due to late staff recruitment which was partly due to the fact that there were only few people in Lebanon with some experience in organic agriculture and they were all being hired at the same time. WVL first attempted to recruit people for the centers in the respective area, which was not very successful. After several months, it was decided to recruit

staff from other regions as well. This helped in filling vacancies. Besides, the positions as agricultural technicians could not be filled; therefore freshly graduated agricultural engineers were hired for these less paid positions.

The HR unit faced particular challenge in recruiting a qualified marketing officer. During the course of the grant three different people were hired, but no one was the right person for the job. The HR staff felt that it did not have the capability to judge the candidates professionally; therefore an external consultant was included in the selection process. Despite that, the recruitment process failed.

At the beginning, the positions were not advertised widely. Later, advertisement was expanded to include newspapers and universities, which was more successful. Open positions should be announced openly and widely to ensure that the best available candidates are recruited.

The staff turnover was about 20%, which reduced efficiency. Five staff (10%) was requested to leave the project during the three years of implementation, another four left the project for personal reasons or better job offers outside WVL. Additionally, some staff changed from the SARD project to WVL full-time positions.

Job descriptions were prepared by the HR, inviting comments from the manager in charge. Not all job descriptions were regularly updated. Some did not really reflect the needs on the ground. Some staff performed additional or other duties than the ones in the job descriptions. The job descriptions should be regularly updated.

Some of the grant staff was not fully aware of the original project design. At the start of the project, orientation about the project content should be given to the staff, for example in a kick-off meeting or briefing session.

Staff incentives were limited to moral incentives with the exception of staff that had to live away from the family. It should be considered to pay financial incentives for marketing staff, which performed above target.

It was acknowledged by HR that staff sometimes lacked certain skills and capacities. Particularly during the first year, many trainings were given but primarily on a technical level. More effort should be taken to build the capacity of staff relating to issues such as business management, administration, finance, conflict resolution, coaching.

2.4.1.5 Communication level

Communication is an issue that needs improvement on all levels. As previously stated, internal communication could have been more efficient.

The communication among staff in the different centers varied and was dependent on personal relation. There were no frequent information exchange for instance for agricultural engineers. It would have been beneficial if agricultural engineers would have had the opportunity to participate for example in an annual or bi-annual information exchange workshop in the field.

The communication with partners was not done regularly. Partners stated that they were not really aware of project progress. It is proposed to hold regular meetings with partners and send quarterly reports to them. A multi-stakeholder project steering committee should have been set-up as well. This does not only help in information exchange, but also in project monitoring and steering. Moreover, members could have provided technical or managerial inputs, facilitated contacts with other organizations and improved lobbying processes.

The communication with BioCoop members and farmers was mainly on technical issues during field work and training workshops. Yet, they reported that they are not adequately informed about the project progress and the BioCoop. Farmers repeatedly referred to WVL as the buyer of their products (instead of the BioCoop). Some meetings took place in the centers, yet so far they did not really provide a communication platform and meeting place for the farmers.

The communication with the donor was good. There was intensive contact with the USAID Office in Lebanon and regular contact with the USAID regional office in Amman, Jordan as well as the head office in the USA. The staff of the Lebanon office conducted regular field visits.

2.4.2 Extension, Demonstration and Training Centers

Five Extension, Demonstration and Training Centers (EDTCs) are up and running. The centers are spread all over Lebanon and all have their unique characteristics. The centers in Marjayoun and Bent Jbeil were operating from constructed facilities and were better equipped than the others operating under rented facilities. The center in East Sidon is situated close to the coast and is important as it can provide organic products all year. In the winter, it is the most important production area. The center in Zahle lies in the Bekaa valley, the bread basket of Lebanon. The center in Bsharre is located in an apple growing region in the Lebanon mountains where only in the summer agricultural products can be produced. The center in Bent Jbeil is located in a remote location in the South relatively far away from the next village. It has been established under a separate grant from the MercyCorps/USDA. The dispersed location caused a managerial and logistical challenge, for instance in packaging, transporting and central marketing. It is recommended to carry out a comparative analysis of the sites and allocate future resources in line with the site potential.

The selection of farmers was done on the basis of a number of selection criteria such as size and location of the converted plot, commitment to organic, level of dependency on agriculture as primary income source etc. In the beginning, the project staff was keen to have many farmers joining the project. Besides, farmers operating demonstration plots on their land received free inputs, which might have been the trigger to join the project. The outcome was that some of the farmers were not fully committed to organic agriculture.

It appears that at least some of the farmers willing to convert to organic agriculture were more wealthy land owners, who allocated some parcels for testing it on limited scale. This option does not exist for small landholders, leaseholders or landless people. In the evaluation team's view, considering the risk involved, it could be justified to initially focus on larger farmers, yet selection criteria should include poverty criteria and should be applied consistently. It should have also been assessed whether the involvement of poor farmers is in line with expectations.

Center staff was not always performing as expected. This was partly due that the staff was not sufficiently supported and monitored. Besides, time management can be improved, for instance by preparing regular time and work plans.

The project over-achieved the planned targets but one exception (see Table 2). Demonstration plots were only established in PY1, and then maintained on that level.

Table 2: Outcomes against planned targets in respect to EDTCs

Activity	Target	Achieved
Number of centers established	5	5
Number of farmers trained	805	1213
Number of agricultural specialists trained	340	904
Number of demonstration plots started	72	53
Number of nurseries established	3	3
Number of hectares converted to organic agriculture	70	491

Source: Indicator Performance Tracking Table, Final SARD report

The project achieved more in relation to sub-activities such as farmer field visits, preparation of technical sheets, provision of awareness materials, operation of agricultural labs (for more quantitative details refer to the SARD final report) which are not monitored in the Indicator Performance Tracking Table.

2.4.2.1 Trainings

The trainings on technical issues for agricultural engineers were rated mostly positive. Some agricultural engineers found some of the trainings offered were too general or not very relevant for them. Some asked for specific trainings on issues which are important for their daily work with farmers, for instance on organic control of a certain pest. For agricultural engineers, training in management and marketing issues was missing and thus should be provided in the future.

Most of the farmers appreciated the trainings provided and the field visits provided by the agricultural engineers. Some complained that the engineers were too young and inexperienced providing sometimes advice that was not effective. Others said that they are (now) able to handle the technical issues, but assistance in marketing is needed.

It is recommended to carry out training needs assessments before the exact training contents are specified. Besides, it should be attempted to provide training not only to agricultural engineers and farmers, but all project staff including administration and accounting.

During the lifetime of the project, 2,330 field visits to farmers were conducted. Assuming that 7 field engineers were involved, each engineer conducted 333 visits. This is a fairly large number and higher than the original target of 5 visits per month and field engineer. The farmers' satisfaction with the field visits varied. While some were appreciating them highly, saying they could even phone the engineers during non-working hours, others argued the engineers were not there when they needed them.

2.4.2.2 Demonstration plots

The project established less demonstration plots than originally planned. There was some ambiguity whether the indicator has to be achieved annually or not. The evaluation recommends that indicators need to be clearly defined and specific for good monitoring and accountability.

In any case, the demo plots established in the first year were found to be sufficient. The planning was too ambitious especially in regard to individual farmer plots. Besides, during implementation the staff seems to have concentrated on the establishment of central demo plots. The evaluation team observed that in practice the demo plots were not only managed for demonstration, but also for production. This is particularly justified for the individual farmer plots, as they should provide practical examples for other farmers. Since new techniques are applied on all converted land, all of the converted land can be considered as demo plots. It is therefore recommended to abandon the previous concept of individual farmer demo plot, and use the plots of successful organic farmers as training ground/exchange platform for other farmers.

On the other hand, the larger project-run demo plots should be used primarily for research and demonstration, and not production, since only here it is ensured that instructions are followed. Besides, the farmers should become able to satisfy the market demand in the near future and there is no reason why the project should compete with farmers. During discussions with staff, it became clear that there is no clear strategy on how experiences are to be analyzed and disseminated to farmers. It is recommended to clarify the objectives and work out better management strategies and plans for demo plots.

The services of the demonstration plots were so far not sufficiently used by the farmers. In order to add value to them, researchers or students should be invited to carry out applied research. New techniques should be tested here before they are introduced on farmers' fields.

Another issue which requires attention is the equal access to and benefit from the demo plots. Some farmers were permitted to produce on project-run demo plots while others were not.

Moreover, selected farmers received free inputs for the establishment of individual demo plots, although they were not always adequately maintained or used.

2.4.2.3 Access to awareness materials and technical information

The project produced an awareness strategy during FY04. Awareness activities included a theatre play and organic game for children at school, presentations to women, children, parents and teachers, exhibitions, events, website, brochures, quarterly newsletter on OA. The total number of beneficiaries was almost 52,536 people, of which 46,350 were at the national level and the rest on the center level. This has raised the awareness about OA. Some of the awareness material produced such as instructive brochures (e.g. on natural enemies of aphids and mites) is more appropriately classified as technical information.

The project developed 3 technical bulletins (apple, grape, peach) with the assistance of a local consultant and 17 technical sheets. In the detailed implementation plan, the development of 64 technical sheets was foreseen. Considering that the project employed at least 15 agricultural engineers, the output is not very impressing. Some of the sheets were translated into Arabic. It is suggested to put more efforts into preparing farmer-friendly dissemination material.

2.4.2.4 Library services

The library services offered by the project in Zahle (through the partner Chamber of Commerce), Bent Jbeil and Marjayoun were used primarily by the agricultural engineers, but not by farmers. Most of the literature was scientific in nature and in a foreign language. The project staff should use the literature for preparing technical sheets in Arabic. The library in Zahle was centrally located in a partner's office and thus better accessible (e.g. for agricultural students) than the other libraries in the centers. One option for more intensive use could be to bring in students for field research at the centers.

2.4.2.5 Nursery services

Three nurseries were established as planned, namely in Marjayoun, Bent Jbeil and East Sidon. In Bekaa, a nursery was rehabilitated while the climatic conditions in Bsharre were not found conducive for nursery establishment.

During the time of the field visit (December), the nurseries were not producing. It seems that during production season the nurseries' capacity has not yet been fully used.

Some farmers obtained organic seedlings from the nurseries while others bought them elsewhere. Some farmers complained that the quality of some seedlings was not good or demanded varieties were not available. Not all farmers were aware of the service provided. Some were producing their own seedlings in the nursery. It is proposed to document and analyze experience made in organic seedling production.

The seedlings were provided at a subsidized price. It is proposed to gradually phase out subsidies and use the organic seedling production for revenue-generation for BioCoop.

2.4.2.6 Composting services

All centers received mobile composting units consisting of a tractor and a shredder in June 2004. There was no indicator for composting services given in the planning documents, therefore its efficiency cannot be truly assessed. It appears that efficiency and quality of composting service varied. Some farmers were satisfied with the quality of compost bought from the project while others produced it themselves or bought goat manure instead. Considering the investment made and equipment available, it looks as the production of compost can still be improved in terms of quantity as well as quality. In the future, composting should be managed as revenue-generating activity for BioCoop.

2.4.2.7 Accessibility of equipment, machinery, and laboratories

Not all procured machinery of the centers is efficiently used or managed. Some centers started to lease out tractors to BioCoop members in order to improve cost-efficiency while others are still hesitating. The price for this service includes all costs incl. depreciation and is offered below the rental price of the private sector and is thus appreciated by farmers.

Three portable soil labs were maintained. The Marjayoun center received equipment for an agricultural laboratory in June 2005 and in Bent Jbeil a lab was established under the MC/USDA project. Both have so far not been used extensively. The partners LARI and AUB operate fully equipped laboratories which can be used for more sophisticated analyses of soils, pests, fauna and flora. It seems that these facilities in conjunction with portable soil labs are fully sufficient.

2.4.3 Agro-packaging and processing

The project achieved the targets for packaging facilities, but not for processing facilities. The project fell short in training people on quality control (see Table 3).

Table 3: Outcomes against planned targets in respect to agro-packaging and processing

Activity	Target	Achieved
Number of packaging facilities rehabilitated, opened or constructed	3	6
Number of processing facilities rehabilitated, opened or constructed	3	0
Number of persons trained on quality control	420	65
Number of persons utilizing agro-processing facilities	200	97
Number of persons utilizing packaging facilities	200	192

Source: Indicator Performance Tracking Table, Final SARD report

2.4.3.1 Agro-packaging

Agro-packaging facilities are now fully operational in all 5 centers. In 2004, the central packaging unit in Beirut was rented and a new facility in Marjayoun was constructed; in 2005, the existing centers in Bent Jbeil and Bsharre were upgraded and premises for packaging units were rented in East Sidon and Bekaa. The facilities in Marjayoun and Bent Jbeil are spacious while the others have limited space. The decision to package the products in the regional centers is fully endorsed by the evaluation team. It creates more jobs in the region and it allows for the direct rejection of low-quality products at source. Besides, the capacity of the CPU in Beirut was insufficient. It is now operating as a hub for marketing purposes (mainly sales and distribution).

Refrigeration units are currently functional in Marjayoun and in Beirut. In Beirut, the rented facilities were not the most suitable for vegetables. It was constructed for cooling cheese, and has only two cooling rooms with different temperatures instead of three. Besides, the floor has to be made wet manually every day to increase humidity. In Bent Jbeil, a refrigeration facility has been constructed under a previous project funded by MC/USDA, yet the refrigeration equipment (compressor) is not yet in place. In the other three centers, there are not any refrigeration facilities which means storage time has to be minimized. Perishable products need to be immediately delivered to outlets in order to ensure freshness. This is a logistical challenge considering that only 2 refrigerated trucks (Ford and GMC) were being used for supplying organic crops from the 5 growth poles; the 2 Peugeot Partners and 1 refrigerated truck (Daihatsu) were being used following a routing chart serving all distribution channels.

The capacity of the refrigeration trucks is currently not fully used. It would have been more efficient to procure 5 smaller refrigeration trucks, but this was not possible due to the

requirement to procure them in the US. Refrigeration facilities important for quality and should have been put in place in each center. Renting additional facilities would have done the job.

Some of the equipment procured is not yet operational due to late procurement. It needs still to be assembled.

The packaging units are generally in easy reach for the farmers; only the facility in Bent Jbeil is a bit remote. There were no complaints about the location, as farmers generally have access to modes of transport.

2.4.3.2 Processing

The original design narrative was not very specific. It proposed to establish agro-processing facilities, but later refers to a single facility to be used for demonstration and training. It was not entirely clear what crops will be processed (apples, apricots, prunes, grapes, rose flower, olives) and what should be the final processed product. The location was also not defined. In the logframe, the indicator refers to the establishment of one apple processing facility in Bsharre, an essential oil extraction facility in East Sidon and a steam distillery in Bent Jbeil. They were all not established.

The project management decided to use existing facilities of private companies, namely *Kassatly Chtaura* for apple juice processing and of *Wadi El Teim* Cooperative for tomato processing. The project also produced olive oil in Bent Jbeil (here, the center owns an olive mill) and in Marjayoun and rose water in cooperation with the World Rehabilitation Fund (WRF) project in Jezine. The decision to use existing facilities is endorsed by the project team since it lead to reduced investment costs and processing facilities are generally more efficiently managed by private companies than by a development project. An outstanding issue is the certification of these facilities.

Processing is important for increasing shelf life of the product and market less quality product, which is a key concern for farmers. The project focused on a limited number of processed products, which increased efficiency.

2.4.3.3 Quality control

The proposal foresaw the development of training programs for farmers in quality standards and control. The quantitative target on farmer trainings was only partly achieved.

It is obvious that first the necessary standards have to be developed, before the training can start. Clear quality standards for organic products are still lacking. For the marketing team, there are basically two standards, namely one quality (A) products that can be sold to customers and the others which are not sellable. In practice, the quality standards for conventional products are adopted (focusing on size and appearance), which can be justified as long as a new product is introduced into the market. The aim must be not to compromise the positive image of organic products. In a next step, customer awareness about organic product has to be increased, along the line that organic products may look less appealing, but are more healthy and tasty.

Farmers and staff frequently referred to quality A, B, and C; however it was not necessarily clear what the differences are. A center manager with a background in quality control developed standards, which however were only adopted in a simplified version. It is recommended to develop a common quality standard for organic products building on available information, and disseminate it to producers and consumers alike via trainings/guides/leaflets. It should be approved by the certification bodies and LIBNOR.

At the beginning, there was significant wastage due to inefficient quality control. For example, 500 kilos of tangerines had to be thrown away due to quality problems and tomatoes from Bsharre had poor quality etc. There were a number of steps taken to improve the efficiency of quality control:

- With the recent restructuring of the marketing team, a position for a quality control officer was created. Initially, there was no quality control officer.
- The BioCoop Accountant who was hired end of 2004 is now monitoring the production and sales, i.e. quality control issues can be more easily detected and corrected. For example, amounts of waste and amounts of returned products were tracked.

2.4.4 Marketing

The project achieved most of the targets almost entirely, only in regard to the number of new crops introduced it achieved less than 30% of the original target. The design here was too ambitious (see Table 4)

Table 4: Outcomes against planned targets in respect to marketing

Activity	Target	Achieved
Number of farmers certified as organic growers	200	192
Number of new crops introduced	20	73
Number of flyers advertising organic farmers products	150,000	150,000
Number of farmers who change strategy to meet market demand	200	192
Number of new customer contracts	40	56[4]

Source: Indicator Performance Tracking Table, Final SARD report

The efficiency of the marketing team suffered by frequent management changes (3), vacancies in the regions, relocation of staff and physical distance of management at WVL HQ from CPU.

Since Beirut was perceived as the biggest potential market, all marketing coordinators were relocated from the region to the CPU in Beirut during the implementation phase. As a consequence, regional market prospects did not get sufficient attention. The recently started restructuring and reorganization of the marketing and quality control team should continue; particularly the vacant posts of marketing specialist need to be filled. Besides, it has to be decided who will take over the task of marketing in the regions.

The decision to centralize marketing was not widely accepted, esp. by the staff working in the regions. Regional markets should receive more attention for a number of reasons, such as more job opportunities in the rural area, less payment delay, reduced transport and packaging costs, fresher product, health benefits for rural residents.

The efficiency of marketing has improved during the course of the project (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

[4] 16 outlets withdrew in 2004

Figure 1: Monthly sales realized until October 2005

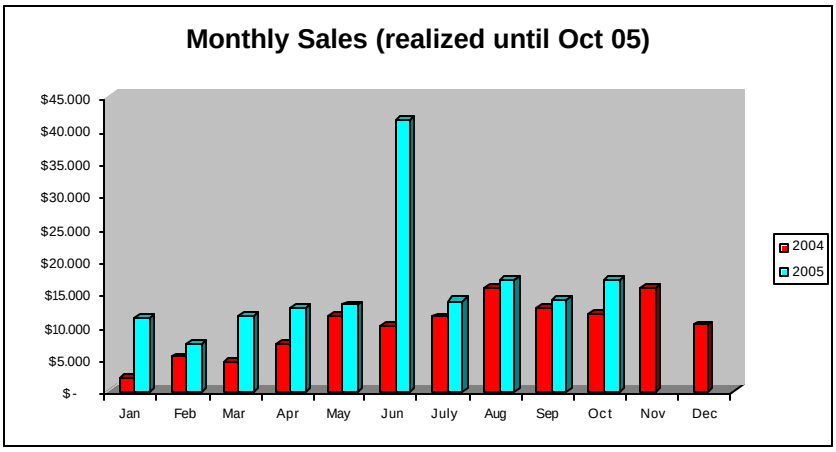
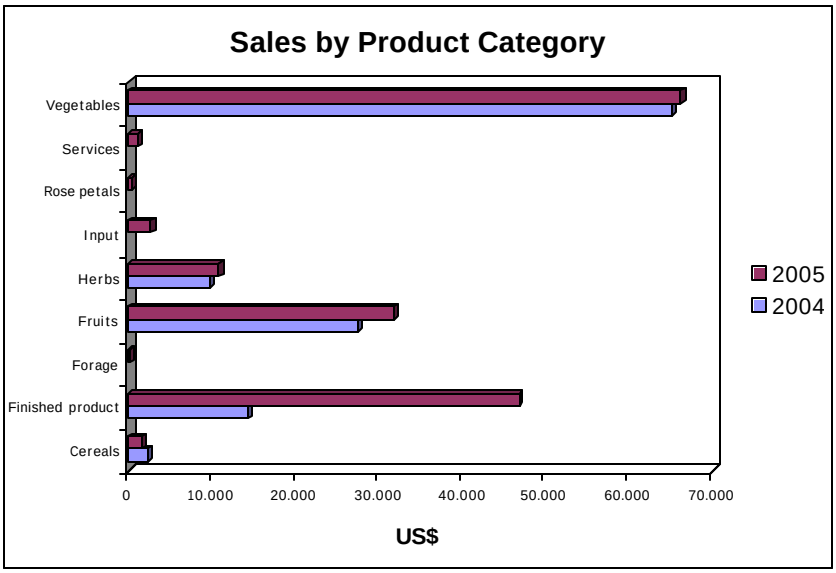


Figure 2: Sales by product category until Nov 6, 2005



2.4.4.1 Campagnia brand

The project successfully developed its own name brand, namely Campagnia. The brand is introduced in the market and the product line can be found in large, well-known supermarkets. Besides, Campagnia products are sold on a weekly market (*Souk el Tayib*) in Beirut. Customers buying organic products know the brand well. The packaging material for Campagnia designed with support of the project is very attractive, but its cost effectiveness should be reviewed.

2.4.4.2 Market survey and analysis

A baseline market survey was prepared by Masri Sarl, a local consulting company. Besides, Mr. Naji Moubarak prepared a marketing strategy for SARD. A marketing strategy for 2005 was also prepared in early 2005 by the then SARD Market Officer.

The baseline market survey covered the national, but not the international market. The survey should have been regularly repeated and provided the basis for a preparation of a comprehensive marketing strategy looking at sales, profitability, prices, competitors etc. Despite various attempts, this has been lacking until now.

2.4.4.3 Certification

Farmers were efficiently supported by field engineers in fulfilling the certification requirements. So far, 48.3 ha have been certified organic, additional 491 ha are currently in conversion to organic. While the number of farmers supposed to be certified has not fully been achieved since some farmers dropped out (192 instead of 200), the area under going certification has largely exceeded the initial target of 70 ha converted to organic farming. Field engineers and farmers knowledge of certification need to be further improved on specific topics and latest development through short-term trainings.

2.4.4.4 Marketing campaign

The project conducted marketing campaigns for farmer organic products using various media. It was supposed to develop a nationwide outreach strategy. It was also originally planned to develop 3 posters, produce flyers (20,000 each time) and buy TV air time. The target of 150,000 written documents (brochures, newsletter) was achieved; however airtime on TV was not bought, apparently for cost reasons. Instead, the project contributed to several talkshow programs on TV that were of good impact with minimal cost. In the implementation plan for 2005, it was additionally foreseen to produce danglers, billboards, documentary, press releases. While creativity and new ideas are generally welcome, it is recommended to stick more with the suggestion of the original proposal when preparing detailed implementations. This facilitates project implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation.

The project efficiently produced attractive and informative outreach material. It should have been considered to produce more simple material in Arabic for local people as well. In terms of design, this activity could have merged with the provision of awareness material as part of agricultural extension measures.

2.4.4.5 Market distribution center

A market distribution center has been established in Beirut. It was correct to combine it with the Central Packaging Unit (CPU) described earlier. They are both situated in the same premises. It efficiently provides the link between rural producers and urban customers. During the lifetime of the project, the products were sold throughout a total of 56 outlets but at the end of the project the Organic products are sold through 40 outlets as planned which is a considerable achievement.

2.4.4.6 Conference exhibitions

It was initially planned to prepare an exhibition on organic agriculture to be shown in all growth pole areas. This was not done, instead project staff actively participated in exhibitions and weekly markets. Besides, contacts and cooperation with different stakeholders was established. Instead of planning ambitious conferences, it would have been better for instance to organize organic fairs and farmer days in the regions.

2.5 Effectiveness

2.5.1 Increased access for farmers to new agricultural techniques

The EDTCs are not yet cost-effective for a number of reasons. The main reason is the short existence of the centers, but also the lack of experience with organic agriculture in Lebanon, both on agricultural engineer as well as farmer level. Some centers still lack some facilities. Yet, through the SARD project, a solid foundation is laid on which organic agriculture in Lebanon can build. All actors should improve the cost-effectiveness of services and equipment by systematically learning from the experiences made. Besides, serious efforts need to be made by the center staff to improve service provision for the ultimate client, namely the farmer.

The EDTCs provided some new services and provided others for lesser costs. For effectiveness, it is proposed that the centers focus on those services which are demanded by the farmer and cannot be achieved by them without external assistance. The center may also support farmers in providing services to others or establish micro-businesses such as production of compost or organic seedlings.

The field visits and on-the-job trainings generated much experience in organic agriculture and an atmosphere of trust. The experience need to be appropriately documented, further increased through participatory action learning and disseminated to farmers. Agricultural engineers should intensify their extension efforts and acquire new soft skills in respect to community work and mobilization.

The project did already increase the community awareness of OA. This was not only limited to the households supported by the project. Yet, during field visit it became apparent that particularly the farmers who left the project were disappointed and did not talk positive about organic agriculture. It should be avoided to have two distinct groups in the rural area, one pro, the other contra OA. It is thus very important that the project staff enters into a positive and constructive dialogue with all farmers. Ultimately, the most effective way of raising community awareness in the rural area is having farmers successfully producing organic.

2.5.2 Increased access to agro-packaging and processing units

The packaging units were also not yet effective. The newly constructed facilities in Marjayoun and Bent Jbeil have both much larger capacities than are currently used. In order to use the full capacity, production as well as sales needs to be significantly increased. The challenge will be to find the right balance between supply and demand. The effectiveness of sup-optimal packaging units can be increased by renting/procuring appropriate refrigeration units.

Apple juice and olive oil has been processed in existing processing facilities. It is less risky to pay them for the service provided than to do an investment into own processing facilities with a (long) payback period. It also allows concentrating on the marketing and production of organic products. The main issue here is the required certification for these facilities, since otherwise the product cannot be sold as organic. Existing processing facilities should be assisted in getting certification. The need for certification alone is no justification to build new facilities, it must make economic sense as well. This needs to be proven through a feasibility study before any investment is made.

Farmers frequently complained about wastages during post-harvest. The wastage appears to have declined (at one point, 30 tons of potatoes had to be thrown away), but there is a long way to go until being effective. The management of the whole post-harvest supply chain needs to be improved as outlined by the consultancy report of Tuscarora Organic Growers. This report contains many useful recommendations which are not repeated in this evaluation. Especially the capacity for quality control has to be strengthened at all levels, from farmers' field to the final outlet.

The used packaging material is attractive, but costly. With the exception of supermarkets, less attractive packaging material or bulk sales could be used. It is recommended to assess the cost-effectiveness of various packaging materials. Another way of cost-reduction is to order large quantities for all centers at once.

2.5.3 Improved capacity to market agricultural products

The production calendar aims to balance supply and demand. So far, it is not effective. The marketing team argues that farmers do not stick to the production calendar while the farmers say that the marketing team does not take the entire demanded product. Fact is, there are often gaps between supply and demand and both sides have to improve their performance to be effective. The planning horizon for the production calendar is currently set at three months,

causing some interruptions before a new calendar is prepared. A more continuous process approach with frequent updates would be more effective. Besides, farmers with the assistance of the agricultural engineers should make production forecasts, so the market team knows what amount of products are available for sale in the near future.

Presently, the agricultural engineers prepare commitment charts in which the ordered quantities are allocated to individual farmers. There are no clear guidelines how this allocation should be done. For instance, can all farmers producing a certain crop at a certain time sell the same amount of produce, or should those farmers be preferred who deliver reliable, high quality product timely and in the requested quantity. The latter approach would lead to increased effectiveness, while the first to more equity.

Farmers criticized that marketing is not effectively done. Marketing efforts have to be increased in order to expand the project and allow additional farmer to join the BioCoop. More business-oriented marketing is required incl. advertisements, branding, special offers. Besides, new market segments need to be explored.

Farmers have a problem since they can sell only the best quality of their production as organic (they referred repeatedly to 20% of best quality products although it cannot be confirmed by data). Options for marketing lower quality products need to be explored. Feasibility studies should be carried out to assess the potential of an organic wholesale market or local markets in the region.

Supermarkets need a steady supply of a variety of products, otherwise they will withdraw the Campagnia product line. The marketing team complains that at certain times certain demanded products are not available. This might be due to the fact that the production of a certain crop in small quantities to a certain unfavorable time (winter) is not cost-effective for the farmers. It is suggested that the agricultural engineers look into this issue. It might be well the case that the farmers just need to get the right incentives to deliver the necessary product in time.

Certification system has already been proven effective in identifying farmers spraying forbidden pesticides. The certification system has to be further strengthened, covering the whole production chain. Besides, more monitoring visits should take place. Cost-effectiveness could be increased if there are a number of certification bodies competing for clients. The project should thus encourage the set-up of other certification bodies in Lebanon.

The effectiveness of marketing can also be increased through better two-way communication about produce availability, market demand, current prices, profit margins and realized sales etc.

2.6 Impact

2.6.1 Impact in respect to expanded economic opportunities

The project created new jobs. According to the USAID Strategic Objective Indicator Table in the final report, 31 new positions were created for staff working for the project. It should however be stated that these are fixed-term contracts. Besides, 156 new jobs were created in agri-business/agro-industry. This number refers to the number of casual labor hired by centers. Only very few of these positions can be sustained if no external funding can be mobilized after project end. The long-lasting impact of the project is better measured in terms of permanent jobs created.

Currently, 182 farmers are undergoing certification as organic producers, however, they are not yet in the position to sell and export certified products as the whole production chain is not yet certified. The impact would be larger if the entire certification system would be in place and the produce could be exported. As the customers in Lebanon do currently not pay premiums for fully certified products, in an economic sense certification is currently not needed for the domestic market. The certification costs are justified if better prices can be realized. This potential exists particularly on the international market.

The project achieved that 40 marketing outlets now offer organic products, which is a considerable impact. Yet at times demanded product is not available. In order to ensure impact, products should be always delivered which requires functioning and continually updated production calendars and forecasts.

The production was roughly reduced by 20% in average, but this is compensated for by higher income (see Table 5). However, those high income increases can only be realized for the quality A product taken by the project which accounts now for only about 20% of production. The other 80% can presently only be sold for conventional price. Therefore, it is key to increase the share of high quality product on the overall production. This is an important indicator to be used.

Table 5: Income increase at farm gate through organic production compared to conventional for selected crops

Crop	Average Income Increase
Apples	41%
Citrus-Lemon	41%
Potato	250%
Lettuce-Roman	168%
Cucumber	167%
Squash	229%
Beans	153%
Peas-Green	270%
Cabbage	280%

Some farmers lost harvests or natural assets (esp. fruit trees) due to pest problems. About 25 farmers withdrew from the project. This issue requires attention. Compensation for losses (to be covered by the BioCoop) may be required for hardships arising especially during conversion period. Certain criteria would need to be applied such as that the farmer strictly followed the advice of the agricultural extension staff.

Not all farmers benefit equally from the project, some may even loose especially at the beginning when experiences are lacking. Using average numbers for monitoring impact will not be able to detect the variation. The distribution and variation of economic impacts has to be monitored as well. The generic project approach to cover certification costs and subsidize certain inputs for all farmers should be gradually phased out. Instead, this should be more selectively applied for farmers benefiting less than average albeit following project advice.

Altogether 2117 attendees benefited from capacity building activities undertaken by SARD. The staff and farmers acquired new knowledge and skills for realizing new economic opportunities.

Farmers currently benefit from monopoly status of organic agriculture in Lebanon. This however may change as more national and international competitors enter the Lebanese markets. Therefore, the farmers need to be prepared for increasing competition.

Due to positive image of OA, small-scale farmers stated that they have already gained new local customers through the spread of mouth. It is worthwhile to explore the local and regional markets more in order to increase economic impact.

Although the cost per beneficiary is very high for SARD, it should be taken into consideration that the project basically supported the development of the whole organic agriculture sector in Lebanon. Here, it certainly made an impact.

2.6.2 Environmental impact

The environmental impact of the SARD project is highly positive since conventional chemical pesticides and fertilizers are phased out which are extensively applied in Lebanon without adequate control. Farmers often spray higher doses than recommended or use forbidden pesticides. They are directly exposed to the pesticides causing respiratory problems or even cancer. Besides, residuals of pesticides enter the food chain.

Some farmers reported that beneficial insects have already returned. Unfortunately, the plots under organic are still small and dispersed which means that negative impacts from neighboring fields under conventional agriculture cannot be avoided. The environmental impact could be improved on local level if contiguous plots are converted to organic.

It is very likely that the project has already improved ecosystem health and services, but quantitative information is lacking. An initial attempt to establish an environmental baseline and carry out environmental monitoring for SARD was done by ECODIT, a local consultancy company. Regrettably, this effort was not really successful and as a consequence, no environmental monitoring took place so far. Local expertise for environmental monitoring seems to be lacking. It is considered important by this evaluation to prove the environmental benefit of organic agriculture as this is an important selling point for convincing customers and getting policy support. The costs to be spent for environmental monitoring are worth the investment, if the monitoring system is well designed. It is recommended to follow-up on the baseline study done by ECODIT, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and environmental NGOs. If no local expertise can be found, an international consultant should be hired.

The food quality is improving through less pesticide residues. The adherence to food quality standards is already ensured through accredited independent certification bodies. The project should contribute to the improvement and further development of quality standards for organic agriculture in Lebanon. Applied research in cooperation with partners should be supported to fill information gaps and quantify impact on food quality.

The plastic and nylon bags currently used for packaging are not environmentally-friendly. In line with the environmental principle that organic production should "utilize biodegradable, recyclable and recycled packaging materials," the SARD program should make noteworthy strides to minimize and gradually phase out harmful packaging. Along this line, paper and cardboards used by the project should also be certified by an accredited certification body. It is acknowledged by the evaluation team that this will result in additional costs but those have to be considered mandatory.

A few farmers also mentioned positive side effects, for instance that edible snails reoccurred on organic plots. This has had a positive environmental as well as economic impact.

2.6.3 Contribution to the wider policy or sector objectives

The SARD staff contributed to a Lebanese Standard Organizations (LIBNOR) regulation on OA which will be adopted after being enforced by the legal framework law on OA. It should be considered to organize policy workshops in order to improve policy impact and lobby for a supportive policy framework for organic agriculture. For example, high subsidies for conventional cash crops such as tobacco are not supportive for organic agriculture which has to live without subsidies.

The project also lobbied successful with the Mediterranean Institute for Certification (IMC) to open up a local office in Lebanon. This resulted in reduced costs and closer and more frequent contacts with farmers. The awareness for certification at all levels should be further increased by PR activities, campaigns etc.

It appears that stakeholders in organic agriculture followed so far mainly their institutions' interest. It is recommended to strengthen communication and networking with stakeholders in order to increase policy impact.

2.7 Sustainability

2.7.1 Ownership

It was apparent that farmers did not yet feel ownership of the SARD project. They frequently referred to WVL as the buyer of their organic products. As a result, any failure in marketing was blamed on WVL staff, without acknowledging that they themselves could have also performed better, for instance through delivering high quality, fresh and clean products in the requested amounts. If ownership would have been higher, farmers would have understood that not always the marketing staff was underperforming, but that the customer preferences were different or the market conditions unfavorable. It was not fully understood by the farmers that the project staff is there to assist them in their marketing efforts, but not to function as middleman making profits.

This misperception came about since project staff was basically making all decisions for the BioCoop leaders and farmers. The project staff has to be made fully aware that they are not running an organic agriculture program forever; instead they are hired to assisting farmers to set-up a cooperative and micro-enterprises on organic agriculture. It is strongly recommended to sensitize staff as well as BioCoop leaders in that respect and train them in facilitation, communication and community mobilization skills and participatory management approaches. As a matter of fact, almost all staff had a pure technical background.

For the same reason, there was practically no local ownership of EDTCs. The centers were seen as WVL property, yet not as a center to be owned by the participating farmers. Therefore, the facilities were not really been used by the community. It is proposed to involve farmers in planning and implementing activities in the centers on a voluntary basis and gradually hand-over the centers to the local farmers organized in the BioCoop.

The lack of ownership also holds true for the BioCoop. Some farmers were not even aware of its existence. Many farmers did not know the local representative on the BioCoop board. It also seemed that farmers were not really committed to take a function in the management of the BioCoop. Some stated they elected the candidate for the Board who had time yet not necessarily the qualification. In order to increase ownership, it should be made explicit to farmers what are the benefits in joining the BioCoop. In a next step, the BioCoop members need to be empowered by transferring management responsibility to them.

Not all farmers knew that their product is marketed under the Campagnia brand. Most of the farmers were aware of the brand name and a few visited outlets to see their products displayed. The project also organized some market exposure activities for the farmers which were appreciated. In general, farmers do not feel full ownership of Campagnia brand. They were not involved in selecting the name. Many would prefer an Arabic name, others said the name does not reflect the organic nature of the product. This is yet not possible until certification is obtained. The awareness of farmers about Campagnia brand should be increased by exposing more of them to outlets and hold organic farmers days or fairs in the regions.

The ADPs did not take full ownership of SARD. This was partly due because ADP managers were not fully involved in the design of the project. Some argued that important components concerning their region were cut during the revision of the project. Moreover, some were not willing / able to use ADP money for funding the continuation of SARD. After the management decision was made to transfer the ultimate management responsibility to BioCoop and not the ADPs, without their involvement, ADPs were further disinterested. If ADPs are expected to take over operation of a project after project end, the ADP managers need to be better informed about project progress. They must also be involved in strategic management decisions relating to their area.

2.7.2 Economic and financial sustainability

The project has still a long way to go until it is economically and financially sustainable. Alone the staff salaries amounted to approximately US$480k annually, assuming 40 staff getting US$1k a month. Certainly not all staff can be taken over by the BioCoop in future. It should be also considered to replace some agricultural engineers with agricultural technicians, since technicians are cheaper (relation 1:2 or 1:3) and with adequate training better suited for field work with farmers than engineers who are overqualified for it. It is suggested to assess the implications of current overhead costs and staff levels on the financial sustainability of BioCoop. Besides, a full cost-benefit analysis of the project should be conducted.

In order to be financially sustainable, the EDTCs have to generate enough income through services provision and membership fees to cover their operation costs, replace depreciated equipment and acquire new appropriate technologies. The EDTCs must increasingly charge for services provided, not only for rented out machineries, but also for extension services such as field visits. The willingness of the farmer to pay for the services received will ultimately prove their value for the farmer. Membership fees for the BioCoop have to be charged and partly used to cover the expenses of the centers. For sustainability reasons, this transition has to be started before project end.

A pertinent issue for financial sustainability is the reduced productivity as well as the higher costs for organic inputs compared to conventional production. The prices realized for organic must compensate for the higher production costs. Some individual farmers may already be financially sustainable, others not. There is a definite need to carry out financial and economic analyses on individual farmers' level. The project lacked the expertise of an agricultural economist who analyzed financial and economic sustainability. Financial cost-benefit analyses should be carried out for all crops produced as well as intercropping systems.

It is clear that the BioCoop is not yet financially sustainable. It can only become financially sustainable if farmers pay membership fees for the services offered. Prospects for financial sustainability of the BioCoop would significantly increase if the EDTCs would be transferred to them. Ultimately, financial and economic sustainability of the project can only be achieved if the farmers are able to sustain increased levels of income to pay for the services provided by BioCoop. This in turn requires effective management and successful marketing.

2.7.3 Institutional sustainability

The institutional sustainability is not yet ensured. Institutional issues did so far not get sufficient attention. This is partly due to an imperfect project design in regard to institutional issues (see chapter 2.3). In acknowledgment of this flaw, the project management decided to vest long-term sustainability in the BioCoop, an at that time non-functioning institution existing only on paper that needed to be activated.

The evaluation team believes that this decision was justified and still made in time (about half year after official project start), however the decision was not well communicated to staff, BioCoop representatives and farmers. As a result, many project staff was not convinced that the BioCoop is the right institution to take over the project. Since a strategy and action plan for the institutional strengthening of BioCoop was not elaborated and no resources for institutional strengthening measures were allocated, the project took his course basically unchanged.

Only towards the end of the project (June 2005), a confidential business plan was prepared for the Bio Coop Lubnan by a local consulting firm. The business plan is not well known. It should be a key priority to develop a management strategy and operational plans involving BioCoop

management, building on the business plan and incorporating experiences from other countries and ultimately communicating it to members.

Although not much progress has been made up to now, it would certainly be wrong to hold the BioCoop responsible for this and replace it with another institution. It is recommended to continue working with the BioCoop, however serious attempts are required by all stakeholders to make it fully operational.

The BioCoop has already been legally established and is known by the Directorate of Cooperatives, yet it is not yet operational as it lacks executive management. The board needs to democratically reelected and then strengthened. Competent management staff (especially Executive Director) need to be recruited as soon as possible. Besides, the duties and responsibilities of a full membership status need to be communicated to BioCoop members. It should also be considered to reorganize the BioCoop into relatively independent regional divisions under a national umbrella organization. This would facilitate day-to-day management, reduce transaction costs and make communication among members easier.

The EDTCs are still operating independently from the BioCoop. To give more weight to the BioCoop, the EDTCs should be gradually handed over to the BioCoop. The EDTCs should be strengthened to become independent profit centers for the BioCoop, however with common systems and standards.

During the course of the evaluation, the impression was gained that farmers are willing to take over more responsibility in the management of the BioCoop. It became apparent during focus group discussions that the farmers appreciated the opportunity to share views and discuss crucial issues. It is suggested to feedback the outcome of this evaluation to the farmers and consequently conducting regular BioCoop meetings building on the process initiated.

There has been limited experience exchange with other agricultural cooperatives. It is proposed to generate knowledge value-added and formalize dissemination mechanism and networking with them.

Ultimately, a shift from development project to business needs to be made in order to arrive at a sustainable, grower-owned marketing BioCoop.

2.7.4 Socio-cultural and gender aspects

The vast majority of the farmers and staff were men. The project should strive for more gender balance on staff as well as farmer level. At least in some areas in Lebanon, women perform the same hard physical work as men; therefore this cannot count as excuse for less women participation. It should also be considered to encourage domestic agro-processing for women.

Farmers in Lebanon are used to work on an individual basis and a cooperative approach is somewhat new for them. The project staff should keep this mind when developing the BioCoop. What is better done on individual level should be continued being done individually, only those activities which bring about a positive synergy effect (bulk order of inputs, joint branding and marketing, procurement of equipment etc.) should be done on cooperative level. Besides, the social relationships and cooperative spirit among BioCoop members should be strengthened, among others by using the centers as meeting places and closer integration with ADPs working in the area.

Customers in Lebanon are willing to buy organic agricultural products, yet they culturally have a preference for an appealing look and large size. Customers need to be made aware through farmer contacts and media campaigns that perfect shape and size are not synonymous with better quality and taste. Besides, customers like to pick and select their products which would speak for unpackaged products to be sold at weekly markets or small organic outlets.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

In the chapter below, the main conclusions and recommendations are presented for each evaluation criteria in a tabular format. Wherever deemed necessary, a corresponding recommendation was provided for each key conclusion.

3.1 Relevance

RELEVANCE	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
Organic agriculture can contribute to expanded economic opportunities in Lebanon.	
Organic agriculture can potentially combat rural-urban exodus & emigration.	
The project addressed the needs and priorities of the intended target groups and beneficiaries, especially by provision of marketing and extension services.	Carry out participatory needs assessment during project formulation.
The project objectives had only limited relevance in respect to the prevailing agricultural policy environment, yet filled in a gap left by Government policies.	As long as a project is not contradictory to existing Government policies, donors shall continue supporting projects which are not necessarily host country priority.
The project objectives were appropriate in regard to the socio-cultural setting.	Introduce social analysis as a routine during project formulation in order to ensure social relevance.

3.2 Design

PROJECT PREPARATION & DESIGN	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
Comprehensiveness of the project planning process	
Based on donor requirements, the initial project budget had to be significantly downsized in a very short period. This resulted in weaknesses in the project design.	In case of required budget cuts, it should be considered by the donor to give applicants more time to properly redesign the project proposal. A good and comprehensive project design needs time.
The intended beneficiaries were not involved in the project planning process.	A stakeholder analysis as well as a participatory assessment of the problems and solutions together with the intended beneficiaries should be carried out during project design.
The project design was built on previous project experiences of WVL in organic agriculture (Mercy Corp project).	During project design, a systemic analysis of all related interventions should be carried out. Besides, it should be ensured that evaluations of predecessor projects are timely available.

PROJECT PREPARATION & DESIGN	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
The project design rightfully attempted to integrate the project in the existing Area Development Program (ADP) structure.	Additional planning efforts are needed to ensure better integration of grant projects into ADPs.
It was left to the Grant Manager, Program Officer, and Finance Officer in cooperation with the relevant technical staff members to develop a M&E system after project start.	The project design should be more specific in regard to the M&E system, in order to ensure the full project duration is covered and relevant baseline data is collected timely.
Internal logic and coherence of the project design	
The intervention logic in the logframe had shortcomings.	Carry out quality check of logical framework before submission.
A major flaw in the design was that institutional issues were not appropriately addressed.	An institutional analysis should be carried out during project design, identifying capacity building needs and approach.
The original design did not include a cooperative entity but relied soley on the ADPs.	Proper project design has to ensure that a major revision of the project can be avoided. If ADP support is foreseen after project end, it should be limited to a bridging period having a clear exit strategy.
The design had weaknesses in respect to project sustainability.	Long-term sustainability needs to be embodied in the project design; it must be clear from project start how project activities can be sustained by intended beneficiaries.
The design did not give sufficient attention to the overriding marketing issue.	During project design, external expertise in specialist fields may need to be mobilized by the applicant.
By design, the proposed training measures for agricultural experts and farmers were focusing on technical aspects; training in managerial, leadership, financial and marketing skills was not sufficiently considered.	A training needs assessment should be carried out, either during project design or shortly after project start. In the latter case, the exact content of the training measures should not be specified in the proposal.
Practicality, risk assessment & realistic assumptions	
Design as a nation-wide pilot project on OA was over-ambitious for the 3-year duration of the project, i.e. SARD did attempt to address too many issues at once.	Apply focused approach, be realistic and make conservative assumptions, even if this reduces the changes of getting funding. In the long-run, it is better for the implementing organization to deliver on the intermediate results and impacts.
A proper risk analysis was lacking	A risk analysis needs to be carried out during project design.
The project design did not adequately incorporate the needs of poor farmers. During conversion period to organic, they are vulnerable to external shocks and may not be able to take the risk without supplementary support.	The implications for the overriding policy objective poverty reduction should be systematically assessed.

PROJECT PREPARATION & DESIGN	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
The target of 200 farmers was set arbitrarily. It did not factor in the difficulties with marketing organic products and thus was too ambitious in terms of number of intended beneficiaries.	A financial and (socio)-economic analysis of the project should be carried out during project preparation, in order to avoid watering-down effect of too many beneficiaries.
The personnel plan had deficits; some key positions were not identified.	Particular attention need to be given to identifying the required human resources before project start.
The project relied heavily on newly recruited staff, due to the limited availability and effectiveness of agricultural extension staff.	It should have been attempted more seriously to collaborate and build the capacity of existing extension staff where available.
The project proposal listed more than 10 partners whose detailed role however in implementing the project was not always clear.	The number of partners should be limited to the ones which are required for successful project implementation since partner coordination costs limited resources.
Implications of the project in terms of managing store and farmer accounts were not addressed.	Financial management aspects need to be thoroughly addressed during project design.

3.3 Efficiency

EFFICIENCY	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
Implementation process (internal)	
Initially, meetings (staff, coordination) were too numerous and not conducted efficiently. Later, they were drastically reduced in number.	Meetings have to have a clear objective, agenda and procedures (e.g. preparation of minutes) in order to be efficient and effective. Some need to be done on regular basis, others when a need arises.
Management decisions were not sufficiently explained to staff	Feedback and communication need to be improved.
Management decisions where not always taken timely.	Examine on which level decisions are to be made and by whom. Investigate the possibility for devolution of power.
There was different understanding by staff what participation means.	Arrive at a common definition of participation.
There was a lack of team building skills at management level.	Management should receive training in team building.
Subordinated staff sometimes took wrong decisions.	Provide better guidance to staff to prevent mistakes.
Project was delayed due to late staff recruitment.	Speed up recruitment process with the assistance of external recruiters.
There were difficulties in finding qualified and committed staff.	Post open positions widely and carry out recruitment more competitively.

EFFICIENCY	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
High staff turnover reduced efficiency.	Improve staff satisfaction and be careful when transferring staff to new positions.
Establishment of management systems took time: they were complicated and not well communicated to centers; thus centers developed their own, non-standardized systems.	Particular attention should be given to development of standardized & harmonized management systems at the appropriate level; corresponding training measures to staff should be provided.
Grant money was spent fully after some initial backlog.	Major procurements of equipment should be done at the beginning of the project.
There was limited follow up on studies and evaluations.	Prioritize and implement recommendations of evaluations and consultancies.
Some staff performed additional or other duties than the ones in the job descriptions.	Update job descriptions regularly.
Not all management staff was fully aware of the project design.	At the start of the project, orientation about the project should be given to the staff, e.g. in a kick-off meeting.
Communication with partners was not done regularly.	Organize regular partner meetings and set-up a multi-stakeholder project steering committee.
The detailed implementation plans were prepared at National Office, without sufficient consultation of staff in charge of implementation.	Operational planning should have been done in cooperation with center managers.
EDTCs	
5 EDTCs are operational, yet the efficiency seems to differ.	Conduct a comparative performance analysis taking into account the different investments made and site characteristics.
Demonstration plots were not sufficiently used by the farmers.	Clarify objective(s) and work out better management plans for demo plots.
Access to and benefit from individual as well as center demo plots was unequal.	Equity issue requires attention.
Trainings on technical issues were generally of good quality and sufficient, yet management and marketing issues were not covered.	Carry out training needs assessments and develop training for all staff.
There was some staffing inefficiency.	Improve leadership and more efficient time management.
There is still room to improve the efficiency of the composting units.	Manage composting as revenue-generating activity for BioCoop or individual farmers.
The capacity of the nurseries was not yet fully used and some varieties did not prove successful.	Systemize learning in nursery management & produce demanded varieties
Library services were not used by farmers.	Literature should be in Arabic; partner with universities and/or research institutes in field research.

EFFICIENCY	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
Some of the procured equipment was utilized efficiently while some could have been better utilized, for example the vegetable washer.	Ensure that the procured equipment is efficiently used and costs are recovered for later replacement.
Agro-Packaging/Processing	
It was decided to not establish new agro-processing units, instead existing ones were used.	
Refrigeration facilities do not yet exist at 3 centers and are sub-optimal in one other center and the CPU.	They are important for quality and need to be put in place in each center (renting would do it).
2 refrigeration trucks are serving 5 centers, and their capacity is not yet fully used.	5 smaller refrigeration trucks would have been more efficient.
There was initially wastage due to inefficient quality control, packaging and marketing, which was later reduced.	Increase efficiency of quality control, packaging and marketing through quality management systems.
Quality control system was initially not in place, yet was later improved, but still not understood by farmers	Quality standards for organic products need to developed and communicated to farmers and customers via trainings/guides/leaflets.
Marketing activities	
Decision to centralize marketing was not widely accepted, esp. in the regions.	Regional markets should receive more attention for a number of reasons (more jobs in rural area, faster payment, reduced transport and packaging costs, fresher product, health benefits, less CO_2-emissions)
Baseline market survey was done for the national, but not for the international market.	The survey should have been regularly repeated and provided the basis for a preparation of a comprehensive marketing strategy.
Farmers are supported in fulfilling the certification requirements by field engineers.	Field engineers and farmers knowledge of certification need to be further improved through short-term trainings.
The efficiency of the marketing team suffered by frequent management changes (3), vacancies in the regions, relocation of staff and physical distance of management at WVL HQ from CPU.	Started restructuring and reorganization should continue.
Project produced efficiently attractive and informative outreach material.	Consider to produce more simple material in Arabic for local people.
Project staff actively participated in exhibitions and weekly markets, but did not organize conference exhibitions.	Organize organic fairs and farmer days in the regions

3.4 Effectiveness

EFFECTIVENESS	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
Effectiveness of ETDCs	
EDTCs are not yet cost-effective for a number of reasons (lack of previous experience, short existence).	Improve the cost-effectiveness of services and equipment (e.g. by renting out).
New services were provided, others were provided for lesser costs.	Concentrate on those services which are demanded by the farmers.
The field visits and on-the-job trainings effectively generated knowledge and atmosphere of trust.	Agricultural engineers should spend more time for field visits.
The project did effectively increase community awareness of OA	Most effective way of raising community awareness is having farmers successfully producing organic.
Effectiveness of agro-packaging & processing units	
Refrigeration units were not yet effective but one exception.	
Apple juice and olive oil has been effectively processed in existing processing facilities, however, those were not certified.	Existing processing facilities should be assisted in getting certification. The need for certification alone is no justification to build new facilities, it must make economic sense.
Farmers frequently complained about wastages during the post-harvest supply chain.	Improve the effectiveness of the post-harvest supply chain to ensure freshness
Quality control system has improved, but there are still quality problems.	Improve quality control through capacity building at all levels.
Effectiveness of marketing	
Production calendar is not effective; there are often gaps between supply and demand.	The production calendar needs to be more frequently updated and respected from both producers and marketers.
Farmers complain that marketing is not effectively done, but steps in the right direction have been made.	More aggressive, business-oriented marketing is required incl. advertisements, branding, special offers.
Supermarkets need a steady supply of a variety of products, otherwise they will withdraw the Campagnia product line.	Farmers need to get the right incentives that they deliver the necessary product in time.
Farmers have a problem since they can sell only part (20% best quality) of their production as organic.	Carry out feasibility studies for marketing lower quality products (organic wholesale, local markets in the region) and expanding into new market segments.
Certification system has already been proven effective in identifying farmers spraying forbidden pesticides	Certification system has to be further strengthened, covering the whole chain, more monitoring visits should take place.

3.5 Impact

IMPACT	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
Expanded economic opportunities	
New permanent and seasonal jobs created.	Monitor how many jobs were permanently created for various professions.
Farmers are undergoing certification as organic producers, however, are not yet in the position to sell/export certified products.	Ensure credibility of the entire certification system and certify the whole production chain to allow for exports.
New market and outlets for organic products created, yet at times demanded product is not available.	Improve and continuously carry out production planning and forecasts.
Production was reduced by 20% in average, but this is compensated for by higher prices.	Explore possibilities for a new price structure depending on certification level (certified, under conversion).
Some farmers lost harvests or natural assets (fruit trees). About 20 farmers withdrew from the project.	While subsidies can provide perverse incentives, compensation may be needed during conversion period (i.e. cover certification costs, subsidize inputs).
Farmers acquired new knowledge & skills for realizing economic opportunities.	Strengthen the skills further, especially in running a private enterprise.
Farmers currently benefit from monopoly status in Lebanon.	Make farmers fit for increasing competition, including international.
Due to positive image of OA, small farmers gained new local customers.	Include local and regional markets in marketing activities.
Environmental impact	
Some farmers reported that beneficial insects returned.	Environmental impact can be improved if contiguous plots are converted to organic.
It is likely that the project improved ecosystem health and services, but quantitative evidence is lacking.	Prove the environmental benefit of the project through environmental monitoring (follow-up on baseline information provided by ECODIT), cooperating with MoE and environmental NGOs
Food quality is improving through less pesticide residues.	Try to quantify impact through applied research in cooperation with partners.
Plastic and nylon bags are used for packaging which is not environmentally-friendly.	Minimize and gradually phase out harmful packaging and certify paper and cardboard.
Policy impact	
Contributed to LIBNOR regulation on OA which is being adopted as legal code.	Conduct policy workshops to improve policy framework.
IMC Lebanon was created due to lobbying.	Advocate for certification at all levels and try to bring in other certification bodies in order to increase competition.
Stakeholders in organic agriculture followed mainly their institutions' interest.	Strengthen relationships with stakeholders (ALOA etc.) through networks

3.6 Sustainability

SUSTAINABILITY	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
Ownership	
There is no ownership of BioCoop by farmers.	Empower BioCoop members/transfer management responsibility to them.
There is no local ownership of EDTCs.	Involve farmers in planning and implementing activities in the centers (unpaid).
Project staff was making the decisions for BioCoop leaders and the farmers.	Train staff and BioCoop leaders in participatory management approaches.
Farmers do not feel ownership of Campagnia brand and seem to prefer Arabic name.	Increase the awareness of farmers about Campagnia by exposing them to outlets
ADPs did not take full ownership of SARD	ADP managers need to be fully involved in design and management decisions if they are expected to take over operation.
Economic and financial sustainability	
BioCoop is not yet financially sustainable.	The recently developed business plan needs to be communicated to BioCoop members and implemented.
Some individual farmers may already be financially sustainable, others not.	Continued external support is required, but needs to be gradually phased out.
It seems that current overhead costs and staff levels are too high.	Assess implications on financial sustainability of BioCoop.
The cost per beneficiary is very high, yet the project supported the whole organic agriculture sector.	A full cost-benefit analysis of the project should be conducted.
Institutional	
BioCoop is legally established, yet is not operational and lacks executive management.	Strengthen board, recruit management and communicate duties and responsibilities to BioCoop members
EDTCs are operating independently from BioCoop.	Strengthen EDTCs to become independent profit centers applying common systems.
Management strategy for BioCoop was not in place during entire project duration	Develop management strategy and operational plans based on other experiences.
There has been limited experience exchange with other cooperatives.	Generate knowledge value-added and formalize dissemination mechanism and networking.
Socio-cultural/Gender	
Most of the farmers and staff were men.	Strive for gender balance and encourage domestic agro-processing for women.
It seems that particular in certain areas farmers prefer to work on individual basis.	Strengthen social relationships/cooperative spirit

SUSTAINABILITY	
Conclusions	**Recommendations**
Organic agricultural products are generally accepted, yet customers have strong preference for appealing look.	Raise the customer awareness about OA and that perfect shape and size is not synonymous with better in quality and taste using various media.

4 Annexes

4.1 Logical framework matrix

	STRATEGY	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
	GOAL			
	To improve the quality of living for the people in Lebanon through expanded economic opportunities in Organic Agriculture			Political situation remains stable Imported organic products from neigboring countries remains negligible; Clusters have the ability to maintain long-term sustainability
	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1			
SO1	Improve quality of life for farmers and their families through adopting new agricultural techniques			Precipitation levels remain stable; Cluster members willing to utilize newly learned information. Cooperation of Chamber of Industry and Agriculture
	INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1.1			
IR 1.1	Increased access for farmers to new agricultural techniques	Number of farmers trained	Project reports	Farmers able to dedicate time to attend training sessions
		5 EDT Centers established	Project reports	Fruitful cooperation between community and World Vision
		Number of agricultural specialists trained	Project reports	Agricultural cooperatives wherever present support the program
		Demonstration plots started	Project reports	Fruitful cooperation between community and World Vision
		Number of dunums converted to new agricultural techniques	Project reports	
	ACTIVITIES			
1.1.1	Establish and support agricultural extension services	A team of agricultural professionals in organic production will be distributed all over Lebanon according to specialty crop grown in area. In Bsharri, an expert in Apple production will be available, whereas in the coastal areas and Eastern Sidon, expertise on vegetable, citrus fruit and banana production is required. In the Bekaa, medicinal and grape production will be the focal point. In Marjayoun area, fruit trees and olive. In Bent Jbeil, olive, vegetable and cereal production. Wherever, there are similar crops the information and experience will be shared so not to duplicate efforts and encourage cultivated crop diversity.		
1.1.2	Train agricultural professionals on new technologies (organic agriculture)	Sustainable organic agricultural practices will be transmitted in training sessions (2/year) to project agricultural engineers (6) and agricultural professionals (20/ training) operating in each growth pole area.		

1.1.3	Train Farmers on new sustainable agricultural techniques	Following TOT, farmers will be trained on organic practices. In Bsharri, 2 trainings/year for 20 farmers / year (Y2) & 40 farmers /year (Y3); Bekaa 1 training/year for approximately 20 (Y2)-40(Y3) participants each time; East Sidon 2 trainings/year for 20 farmers / year (Y2) & 40 farmers /year (Y3); marjayoun 2 trainings/year for 20 farmers / year (Y2) & 40 farmers /year (Y3); Bent Jbeil 2 trainings/year for 20 farmers / year (Y2) & 40 farmers /year (Y3)		
1.1.4	Establish/ support demonstration plots	In Bsharri, establish fruit trees, apple orchards (20000m^2), medicinal ornamentals, vegetables, cereal and legume (30000m^2). In Bekaa, support demo plots in Tal Amara and establish new ones at farmer's field on medicinal plants, new fruit varieties, and organic crops.In East Sidon, establish medicinal plant and new fruit trees demo plots (30000 m2). In Bent Jbeil, establish greenhouses, 2 organic olive plot medicinal plants and support vegetable demo plot (30000m2).In Marjayoun, establish a demo plot on olive, fruit trees, vegetable, medicinal plants,and greenhouses (150000 m2)		
1.1.5	Establish nurseries for improved varieties that are more productive within the areas climatic conditions	In each growth pole area, different crops will be grown in nurseries. In Bsharri, the focus will be on fruit trees, Bekaa on medicinal plants and fruit trees, East Sidon on medicinal and olive trees, Bent Jbeil and Marjayoun on medicinal plants, cereals orchards and vegetables.		
	INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1.2	**INDICATORS**	**MEANS OF VERIFICATION**	**ASSUMPTIONS**
IR 1.2	Increased access to agro-packaging and processing units	Number of packaging facilities rehabilitated, opened or constructed	Project reports	There is enough production to operate the facilities
		Number of processing facilities rehabilitated, opened or constructed	Project reports	Quality products
		Number of persons trained on quality control		
		Number of persons utilizing facilities	Project reports	Cost pricing is effective
	ACTIVITIES			
1.2.1	Improve/ build refrigeration and packaging facilities for agricultural produce in the area	In Marjayoun, the project will construct an agro-packaging facility (including refrigeration, library & resource center, office)		
1.2.2	Establish agro-processing units	In Bsharri, the project will establish an agro-processing unit related to apple production. In East Sidon and essential oil extraction and packaging unit for medicinal plants (including flower water, rose water), and a steam distillary in Bent Jbeil area.		
1.2.3	Develop a logo for project product in order to facilitate marketing			
	INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1.3	**INDICATORS**	**MEANS OF VERIFICATION**	**ASSUMPTIONS**
IR 1.3	Improved capacity to market agricultural product	200 farmers certified as organic growers	Certification documents	Ability of farmers to meet certification requirement

	Number of new crops introduced		Crops suitable for ecosystem Support from local government
	Number of farmers who change strategy to meet market demand		Increased capacity of farmers to compete
	Number of new customer contracts	Contracts	National standards for organic farming is adopted by Lebanese authorities; selling price is moderate Farmers remain loyal to customers during validity of contract

	ACTIVITIES	
1.3.1	Baseline market survey on the demand for organic products in the local and international markets	Survey on traditional natural products such as flower water, rose water, sumac, orange juices concentrate, fresh produce according to environmental conditions of each production area.
1.3.2	Facilitate the process of organic certification	Support 200 farmers (20 for Y2 and 40 for Y3 from each organic agriculture production growth pole) with 50% of certification fee for the conversion period i.e.2 years. For this purpose WV will cooperate with BioCoop, Qualité France and Veritas
1.3.3	Initiate marketing campaign for farmers' products	A nationwide strategy will be developed to initiate marketing campaign for farmers' products that is crop and cluster specific. A link with Beirut as a main market center.
1.3.4	Establish a market and distribution center	In Beirut for all clusters in order to strengthen link between urban and rural areas.
1.3.5	Organize and conduct conference exhibitions for all growth poles on organic agriculture in Lebanon	The same exhibition will be duplicated in all growth pole areas. Each time new participants will join in. After the round of the 5 clusters is made, another exhibition will be conducted in Beirut open to the public.

4.2 Map of project area

Refer to the brochure on the Hard Copy.

4.3 Terms of Reference

WV Lebanon – SARD Project End of Project Evaluation

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

The SARD end of project evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR) was developed in the compliance with the standards and principles outlined in the Learning through Evaluation with Accountability and Planning (LEAP) document, a WV framework for DME. The ToR have been prepared by the Evaluation Officer and the Agriculture Coordinator of WVL, and reviewed by the Grants Coordinator and the SO Programme Specialist. This document will also be shared with key staff from the SARD project and with Bio Coop Lubnan board, as well as with key staff from partners' institutions.

2. Programme description

Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) project

To date the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) project is the largest organic agriculture project in Lebanon. The duration of the project was from November 7, 2002 through November 6, 2005. This three-year project was funded with a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for $4,956,045 and with additional match from World Vision and the community. It was designed and implemented by World Vision Lebanon (WVL) **to improve the quality of living for people in Lebanon through expanded economic opportunities in organic agriculture** (Goal).

This Goal was reached by the following Strategic Objective 1 (SO1) and intended results:

SO1: Improve quality of life for farmers and their families through adopting new agricultural techniques.

IR1.1 Increased access of farmers to new agricultural techniques

The principal approach to all activities was to develop **Extension, Demonstration and Training Centers (EDTC)** in five growth poles within Lebanon. The growth pole locations are in areas where WVL has already been implementing community development projects through the Area Development Project (ADP) approach. They are located in the North, more specifically the **Bsharri** district located approximately 125 km north of Beirut; the **Bekaa** growth pole is situated in the Bekaa Valley 30 km east of Beirut; the south growth pole is located in the area around **East Sidon**; the **Nabatieh/Marjayoun** growth pole which is located in the extreme South at the border with Syria and Israel and the **Bent Jbeil** growth pole also in the South of the country and within the Liberated area.

This approach allows for the transfer of technology, knowledge and produce between Beirut and the EDTCs and between the EDTCs and the farmers.

The main functions of the EDTCs are to:

a) Establish demonstration plots which include open fields, greenhouses, nurseries, compost units and poultry houses to test for improved varieties and the best combination of material (in case of compost) that are more productive within the areas climatic conditions to later invite the farmers to observe and learn how to apply it on their farms.
b) Provide training to farmers and agricultural professionals in agricultural and poultry production systems.
c) Act as an advisory service to farmers.
d) Facilitate market linkages between producers and consumers.

Therefore, EDTCs is the catalyst of getting farmers closer to new technologies.

After the three years of the project period, the management of the EDTC centers will be turned over gradually to BioCoop Lubnan, the first organic cooperative in Lebanon.

N.B. The USAID project proposal states that the already existing World Vision ADP centers will share the management of the centers with the community members. However, in a later stage it was decided that the handover of the EDTC management will be to BioCoop Lubnan staff. Although this was not included as such in the proposal

IR1.2 Increased access to agro-packaging and processing units

Five packaging and refrigeration units were established in the Bekaa, East Sidon, Marjeyoun, Bent Jbeil and Dekwaneh-Beirut (Central Packaging and Distribution Unit – CPDU). (For detail refer to 1 Proposal Addendum 1, Paragraph ***D.Interventions/ Technical Approaches:*** **1-**The Extension, Demonstration and Training Center (EDTC)).

IR1.3 Improved capacity to market agricultural products

A wide range of products such as fruits, vegetables, cereals and processed products is marketed through BioCoop Lubnan, the first organic cooperative in Lebanon, under the brand name of Campagnia® to various hypermarkets, supermarkets and health shops distributed mainly in Beirut and its suburbs.

In order to sustain the organic agriculture project, WVL reinforced BioCoop Lubnan by strengthening the cooperative's infrastructure, building its staff capacity, participating in local and international exhibitions and conducting intensive awareness sessions that targeted more than 12,000 community members, among other activities.

Please refer to document: Addendum Appendix A Logical Framework (Which represent the original log frame presented with the proposal), as well as to document: Monitoring and Evaluation-Revised plan as per Framework, for indicator).

3. Stakeholder groups

The following list represents major stakeholders that should be contacted as appropriate:

- Donor (US AID)
- WV US Support Office
- Major Partners:
    1. LRA (Litani River Authority)
    2. LARI (Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute)
    3. Catholic Archbishopric (St.Anne -Marjeyoun)
    4. Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture - Zahle
    5. BioCoop Lubnan
    6. Ministry of Agriculture (Directorate of Cooperatives)
    7. Ministry of Environment
    8. Municipality of Rmeish (South Lebanon)

- Beneficiaries:
    1. Farmers (who benefited directly from services and facilities offered by the Project).
    2. Agriculture professionals, (who benefited from technical trainings).
- Grant Staff
- Consumers/Clients
- Outlet owners.

4. Evaluation purpose

The evaluation exercise attempts to assess objectively the performance of the SARD project, in order to reach a deeper understanding of the project process and impact. The evaluator must demonstrate high ethical attitudes, ideas and behaviour throughout the evaluation to insure most stakeholders' active participation in a positive and relaxed atmosphere. This approach will guarantee the most value from the evaluation work.

5. Evaluation objectives

The objective of this evaluation is to assess the progress (design, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness), impact and sustainability of the project as a whole as well as on the EDTCs (Extension Demonstration and Training Centre) level. (EDTCs should be given a special attention since those EDTCs will be functioning in the future with a big margin of independency).

This objective will be measured in the light of:

1. Socio economic and environmental impact on farmers, partners and community (opportunities, incomes, ownership…)
2. Design process and document.
3. Implementation process (Functional, Managerial and financial).
4. Access for staff and farmers to new agricultural techniques.
5. Marketing process and impact
6. Access to agro-packaging and processing unit.

For suggestions on the methodology to be applied, please consult the Evaluation Matrix attached to the ToR and the contract.

6. Limitations

- Political struggles and security issues, especially that SARD project has 60% of its' activities in south Lebanon.
- SARD Project has also 60% of its' activities implemented in mountainous areas, and during the evaluation period some of these areas might be difficult to reach.
- Since the evaluator is non Lebanese speaking, direct communication with beneficiaries will be almost impossible.
- Framework condition will be discussed with the evaluator and the evaluation team during the inception meeting (at the beginning of the mission)

7. Team members and roles

1. Evaluation team Leader: the external evaluator.
2. Evaluation Support Team:
    - Evaluation Officer (team member)
    - Programme Officer – WVL (team member)
    - International Programme Officer – WVUS (team member)
    - Agriculture Coordinator (resource person)
    - Grants Coordinator (resource person)
    - SARD Executive Assistant (resource person)

The above described evaluation team will be responsible to plan and conduct the evaluation exercise.

8. Team advisor

Ms. Gisela Poole programme specialist for MEERO from World Vision Germany will be acting as the evaluation team advisor. She will be consulted on the followings:

1. Development of the ToR.
2. Development of the Evaluation Matrix.
3. Comment on the draft and final evaluation report.

9. Time frame

The end of project evaluation will be conducted within two months from the date of contract signature by the external evaluator. It is anticipated that the evaluator will spent 3 weeks in Lebanon (starting as of Dec. 4th, 2005) for data collection, discussions with key stakeholders etc, leaving a checklist behind regarding further steps necessary for the finalisation of the evaluation exercise and report development, and will come back in January 2006 for a period still to be defined for finalisation and dissemination of the report.

Once the first in country briefing for the external evaluator took place a time table and work plan will be developed that should fix the amount of time needed for the whole evaluation process.

The timetable should allow for some flexibility but the evaluation should not exceed 50 work days altogether.

10. Products

The following table describes the process and the expected products to be delivered.

Process & Product	Responsibility
Inception meeting minutes, including timetable and a workplan	External evaluator with the evaluation team and the team advisor
The final Evaluation Matrix.	Evaluation team and team advisor
Briefing of all concerned WVL staff on the evaluation process (this could be done with a power point presentation)	External evaluator
Minutes and photos of interviews (staff, old staff, stakeholders…), focus groups and observations…	External evaluator with the Evaluation team
Elaborate a draft evaluation report	External evaluator
Compile feedback on the draft evaluation report from the evaluation team, WVL relevant staff, the evaluation advisors, and major stakeholders.	WVL with the support of the external evaluator
Final evaluation report including feedbacks	External Evaluator

11. Budget

Budget item Description	Estimated Cost	Responsibility
Travel from Germany to Lebanon and vice-versa twice.	€ 2.600	WVG
Evaluator's fee	€ 6.000	WVG
Evaluator per diem 43$/day or 36 Euro/day	2,150$	WVL
Hotel accommodations and stay ($30/ day) for 1 persons for up to 50 days)	$ 1,500	WVL
Local transportation	$ 800	WVL
Meals at working time	$ 900	WVL
Miscellaneous expenses (photocopies, phone calls…)	$ 1,000	WVL
TOTAL	**$6,350**	

12. Documents to be consulted

The below document will be provided by WV and should be studied at the first stage of the evaluation.

1. LEAP document in general and chapter 6 in particular.
2. US AID Request For Applicants (RFA) Lebanon 02-010
3. SARD proposal and its appendixes that include log frame, detailed activity chart, monitoring and evaluation plan (original and adjusted versions)….
4. SARD Marketing Strategy prepared by Mr. Naji Moubarak a marketing expert.
5. Market Exposure activity for farmers conducted by Mr Nizar Rammal
6. SARD Diligence report for BIO COOP conducted by Maitre Tarek Mougharbel.
7. SARD narrative and financial reports: Monthly and yearly.
8. Media tools related to SARD.
9. Baseline report and mid- term evaluation conducted by ECODIT (environmental and socio economic evaluation)
10. Mid-term external evaluation conducted Ms. Rim BenZeid from Cornel University.
11. Mid-term internal evaluation conducted Mireille Akl Monitoring and Evaluation officer at WVL
12. Consultancy on system management conducted by Rebecca Soble.
13. Consultancy on strengths and weaknesses of our cooperative conducted by Tuscarora Organic Growers
14. SARD Manual.

4.4 Composition of evaluation team

In the table below, the composition of the evaluation team is shown, distinguished between core and support staff.

Name	**Affiliation**	**Role**
Core team		
Alexander Horst	Independent	External Evaluator, Team Leader
Rodolph Abou Gebrael	WVL	Monitoring & Evaluation Expert
Support team		
Wajdi Khater	WVL	Resource person on organic agriculture
Philip Denino	WVUS	Resource person on project design & management, US Government regulations
Pascale Dagher	WVL	Resource person on reporting, monitoring & evaluation
Hala Dakhil	WVL	Logistical and administrative support

The team was supported by a team advisor, namely Ms. Gisela Poole, MEERO program specialist from World Vision Germany.

4.5 Evaluation design

Introduction

The evaluation design is a detailed orderly plan for collecting, analysing and reporting information. This document describes what information will be collected, the primary methods to be used, the schedule of activities, and primary resource documents. Previously, consensus on the ToR has been reached by the stakeholders.

It was felt that a separate evaluation design document has added value for the evaluation, especially in respect to prioritization of issues and information needs and selection of appropriate methodologies.

Evaluation purpose

The main purpose of the evaluation is to objectively and systematically assess the relevance, progress, impact and sustainability of the SARD Project, with a view to ensure learning and accountability.

Evaluation objectives

The specific objectives for the evaluation are the following:

To objectively assess the past performance and evolution of the project (against indicators);
To identify the reasons for success or failure of the project and lessons learned;
To assess the impact on the intented beneficiaries;
To assess sustainability and make recommendations about the future of the project;
To systemize the learning process with a view to continuous improvement.

Information needs

The primary information needs in respect to the main evaluation criteria are the following:

Criteria	Primary information needs	Priority
Relevance	Importance of OA for expanded economic opportunities in Lebanon	Medium
	Appropriateness of project objectives to the policy environment	Low
	Potential to combat rural-urban exodus & emigration through sustainable rural development	Low
Design	Practicality, risk assessment & realistic assumptions	Medium
	Logic and completeness of the project planning process	Medium
	Internal logic and coherence of the project design	Medium
Efficiency	Training (EDTCs) and capacity building for farmers to convert to OA	Medium
	Efficiency of marketing (and branding) via Biocoop	High
	Implementation process (functional, managerial, financial)	Medium
	New agricultural techniques introduced by the project	Medium
Effectiveness	Contribution made by results to improved quality of life	High

	Effectiveness of decision-making processes	Medium
	Effect of assumptions on project achievements	Low
Impact	Socio-economic impact on beneficiaries	High
	Environmental impact of OA (=new techniques)	High
Sustainability	Marketing aspect (name brand of campagnia)	High
	Institutional aspect	High
	Ownership	High
	Financial sustainability, especially for the EDTCs	High
	Increased income and improved quality of life in rural area	High

It was found necessary by the evaluation team to consider the whole project region as research area since each of the five project sites has its own peculiarities.

Methodology

The methodology section shows the procedures and rules used by the evaluation team to conduct the exercise:

A. Creation of an evaluation Team and recruitment of an external evaluator; according to the SARD grant, WVL senior Mangers took the decision to conduct the SARD End of Project Evaluation an evaluation team was assigned to do this task. To insure the objectivity WVL with the help of WV Germany recruited an external Evaluator to lead the process and the team. (See the ToR Annex 4.3)

B. The Evaluation officer, the agriculture coordinator and the program officer of WVL prepared ToR for the SARD End of Project Evaluation, after which these ToR were shared with the Evaluation advisor in WV Germany, the program officer of WV US and the WVL Management team for feedback and advice.

C. Two evaluation matrices have been developed by the evaluation team with the assistance of the evaluation advisor, one for the process (project design and implementation process), the other on the strategic objective and intended results of SARD. The matrices provide information on the intervention level; subjects to evaluate, key questions, data collection methodology, tools to be used/developed, key resource persons and indicators .

D. Once the matrices were set The Evaluation Team collected and reviewed documents listed in the TOR and started *documents review* to better understand the project.

E. The Evaluation team prepared the evaluation criteria, a list of the Key stakeholders and staff of the SARD Project, and the list of questions to answer the Evaluation criteria.

F. The Evaluation team chooses to answer these questions via four qualitative research methods: Documents review, Observation, Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Group discussions.

G. The Evaluation team prepared the tools that will be used in Evaluation Field visits and interviews:

1. The Evaluation message to all interviewees to focus on the Evaluation purpose and objectives and to unsure confidentiality of the information provided.
2. Guidelines for focus group discussion with farmers
3. Semi-structured questionnaires for staff from the central processing and marketing unit and the Extension, Demonstration and Training Centres (EDTC), ADP staff.
4. Semi-structured questionnaires for farmers, branch managers of the BioCoop Lubnan and other partners.

H. After the gathering of all the interviews and the Focus Groups' notes the evaluation Team and the notes taker sorted the information according to the Evaluation criteria: Relevance, Design, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability.

I. Once all the information was sorted as mentioned above, the Evaluation team prepared the major conclusion and recommendation to present in a reflection meeting with all the SARD Staff and the WVL ADP managers was, this meeting objective was to integrate the participant's feedback on major conclusions and recommendations.

J. After including all feedback the Evaluation Team will write the report, and then will ask for the management input to finalize the report.

K. Once the report is submitted to the donor, a summarized version in Arabic will be shared with all the SARD Stakeholders.

4.6 List of persons/organizations consulted

Field Visits in Bsharre- North Lebanon

#	Date	Title	Name	Type of interview	Location
1	Dec. 12, 2005	Center Manager	Norma Wakim	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC Bsharre
2	Dec. 12, 2005	Admin Assistant	Mirella Younan	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC Bsharre
3	Dec. 12, 2005	Accountant	Mireille Abi Issa	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC Bsharre
4	Dec. 12, 2005	Farmer enrolled in SARD	Joseph and Nathalie Keyrouz	Semi-Structured interview	Farmer's plot in Bsharre
5	Dec. 12, 2005	Farmer enrolled in SARD	Tony Tawk	Semi-Structured interview	Farmer's house in Bsharre
6	Dec. 12, 2005	Field Engineer	Charbel Hsein	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC Bsharre
7	Dec. 13, 2005	Worker	Elie Raffoul	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC Bsharre
8	Dec. 13, 2005	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1) Charbel Geagea 2) Fard Tawk 3) Tony Tawk	Focus Group I	EDTC Bsharre
9	Dec. 13, 2005	Ex- BioCoop representative	Badr Fakhry	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC Bsharre
10	Dec. 13, 2005	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1) Paul El Semaani 2) Bedwani Makhlouf 3) Elie Elia 4) Elie Karam 5) Tony Fakhry	Focus Group II	EDTC Bsharre
11	Dec. 13, 2005	ADP manager	Kozhaya Hanna	Semi-Structured interview	North ADP Office

Field Visits in Marjeoun- South Lebanon:

#	Date	Title	Name	Type of interview	Location
1	Dec. 14, 2005	Farmer enrolled in SARD	F. Joseph Wakim	Semi-Structured interview	Farmer's plot
2	Dec. 14, 2005	Farmer enrolled in SARD	Akram Sheet (Ghassan Sheet's plot)	Semi-Structured interview	Farmer's plot
3	Dec. 14, 2005	Consultant	Siham Daher	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
4	Dec. 14, 2005	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1) Yusuf Jamil Attalah 2) Riad Ibrahim Nader 3) Anwar Assaf El Haddad 4) Hatem Yusuf	Focus Group I	EDTC
5	Dec. 15, 2005	ADP Manager	Hanna Swidan	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
6	Dec. 15, 2005	Center Manager	Hicham Frem	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
7	Dec. 15, 2005	Partner	Bishop Hayek	Semi-Structured interview	Catholic Bishopric
8	Dec. 15, 2005	BioCoop representative	Anwar Nakfour	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
9	Dec. 15, 2005	Accountant	Roger Rizk	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
10	Dec. 15, 2005	Technician	Tony Rizk	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
11	Dec. 15, 2005	Admin Assistant	Walid Nassour	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
12	Dec. 15, 2005	Marketing Assistant	Nalitta Najem	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
13	Dec. 15, 2005	Driver	Joseph Kessrwani	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
14	Dec. 15, 2005	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1) Ibrahim Nicolas 2) Jawad Fares 3) Milad Nehmatallah	Focus Group II	EDTC

			4) Zaki Haddad		
15	Dec. 15, 2005	Field Engineer, ex-Technician in Bint Jbeil	Dany Yammouni	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC

Field Visits in Bent Jbeil - South Lebanon:

#	Date	Title	Name	Type of interview	Location
1	16-Dec-05	Center Manager	Georges Khoury	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
2	16-Dec-05	Librarian / stockkeeper	Georges Hachem	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
3	16-Dec-05	Marketing coordinator	Faten Iskandar	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
4	16-Dec-05	Accountant	Georgette Tanios	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
5	16-Dec-05	Farmer enrolled in SARD	Ibrahim Jawad	Semi-Structured interview	In his plot – Ayta El Chaab
6	16-Dec-05	Farmer enrolled in SARD	Georges Assaf	Semi-Structured interview	In his house - Rmeish
7	16-Dec-05	BioCoop representative	Maroun Assaf	Semi-Structured interview	In his house - Rmeish
8	17-Dec-05	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1) Wadih Saker 2) Soubhieh Srour 3) Elias Boulos Amil 4) Kamal Maatouk 5) Therese Louka	Focus Group I	EDTC
9	17-Dec-05	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1) Ayoub Aabdouch 2) Yusuf Farhat Farah 3) Ibrahim Jawad 4) Yusuf Elias	Focus Group II	EDTC
10	17-Dec-05	Field Engineer	Charbel Hanna	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC

Field Visits in BeKaa:

#	Date	Title	Name	Type of interview	Location
1	Dec. 18, 2005	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1) Hussein Ibrahim 2) Atieh Yehya 3) Elias Ibrahim 4) Hussein Hamieh 5) Charbel Farhat	Focus Group I	Bekaa Office
2	Dec. 18, 2005	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1) Kamil Aakoury 2) Said Jedeon 3) Michael Moussalem 4) Fawzi Abou Dib 5) Akl Alam 6) Michail Ghorra 7) Amine Issa 8) George El Hajj Moussa 9) Mazen Maalouf	Focus Group II	Bekaa Office
3	Dec. 18, 2005	Center Manager	Gerges Rizk	Semi-Structured interview	Bekaa Office
4	Dec. 19, 2005	Admin Assistant	Nada Lawen	Semi-Structured interview	Bekaa Office
5	Dec. 19, 2005	Accountant	Chantal Hanna	Semi-Structured interview	Bekaa Office
6	Dec. 19, 2005	Field Engineer	Michel Hallak	Semi-Structured interview	Bekaa Office
7	Dec. 20, 2005	Farmer enrolled in SARD	Mazen Maalouf	Semi-Structured interview	Farmer's plot
8	Dec. 20, 2005	Extension Field Engineer	Said Gedeon	Semi-Structured interview	Chamber of Commerce - Zahle

9	Dec. 20, 2005	BioCoop representative	Fadi Sarkis	Semi-Structured interview	Bekaa Office
10	Dec. 20, 2005	ADP manager	George Nassrallah	Semi-Structured interview	Bekaa Office

Field Visits in East-Sidon- South Lebanon:

#	Date	Title	Name	Type of interview	Location
1	Dec. 21, 2005	LRA	LRA (Litani River Authority)	Semi-Structured interview	LRA Station
2	Dec. 21, 2005	Farmer - Biocoop Board Member	Abdallah Mahfouz	Semi-Structured interview	Farmer's house
3	Dec. 21, 2005	Accountant	Pascale Maouchantaf	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
4	Dec. 21, 2005	Administrative Assistant	Michel Agha	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
5	Dec. 21, 2005	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1- Gibran el-Hajj 2- Jamal Hassan 3- Abdel Salam Taha – Jacqueline Jouraysati (wife) 4- Shouki Khoury 5- Rv. Joseph Wakim 6- Henry Nahhas 7- Joseph el-Hajj 8- Denis Fares Tego 9- Abdallah Mahfouz (Biocoop representative)	Focus Group I	EDTC
6	Dec. 22, 2005	Field Engineer	Philippe Nehme	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC
7	Dec. 22, 2005	Field Engineer	Maroun Zoughaib	Semi-Structured interview	EDTC

8	Dec. 22, 2005	Marketing Assistant (Daily Worker)	Layal Libbous	Semi-Structured interview	Packaging Unit – East Sidon
9	Dec. 22, 2005	Farmer enrolled in SARD	Napoleon Azwat	Semi-Structured interview	The farmers' plot
10	Dec. 22, 2005	Farmer enrolled in SARD	Maroun Sader	Semi-Structured interview	The farmers' plot
11	Dec. 22, 2005	Farmers enrolled in SARD	1- Ibrahim Elias el-Hajj 2- Edmond Youssef Khawand (Member Biocoop Audit Committee) 3- Maroun Sader 4- Naji Hanna Najem 5- Elie Nammour 6- Napoleon Azwat 7- Joseph Fares	Focus Group II	EDTC

Interviews in the National Office of WVL - Mansourieh:

#	Date	Title	Name	Type of interview	Location
1	Jan. 20 2006	Grant program Officer	Pascale Dagher	Semi-Structured interview	NO
2	Jan. 20 2006	Chief Accountant	Pascale Khalil	Semi-Structured interview	NO
3	Jan. 23 2006	Grant Manager previously Marjeyoun Center Manager	Kamil Wanna	Semi-Structured interview	NO
4	Jan. 23 2006	Finance officer	Ziad Abi Abdallah	Semi-Structured interview	NO
5	Jan. 23 2006	Grants and relief coordinator previously Grant Manager	Tony Matar	Semi-Structured interview	NO

6	Jan. 24 2006	Procurement Officer	Rana Bassous	Semi-Structured interview	NO
7	Jan.24 2006	Agriculture coordinator previously Bent Jbeil Center Manager	Wajdi Khater	Semi-Structured interview	NO
8	Jan.24 2006	Admin/ HR Manger and HR Officer.	Salwa Haddad and Nassib Rahhal	Semi-Structured interview	NO

4.7 Literature and documentation consulted

- LEAP document in general and chapter 6 in particular.
- US AID Request For Applicants (RFA) Lebanon 02-010
- SARD proposal and its appendixes that include log frame, detailed activity chart, monitoring and evaluation plan (original and adjusted versions)
- SARD Marketing Strategy prepared by Mr. Naji Moubarak a marketing expert.
- Market Exposure activity for farmers conducted by Mr Nizar Rammal
- SARD Diligence report for BIO COOP conducted by Maitre Tarek Mougharbel.
- SARD narrative and financial reports: Monthly and yearly.
- Media tools related to SARD.
- Baseline report and mid- term evaluation conducted by ECODIT (environmental and socio economic evaluation)
- Mid-term external evaluation conducted Ms. Rim BenZeid from Cornel University.
- Mid-term internal evaluation conducted Mireille Akl Monitoring and Evaluation officer at WVL
- Consultancy on system management conducted by Rebecca Soble.
- Consultancy on strengths and weaknesses of Biocoop Lubnan cooperative conducted by Tuscarora Organic Growers
- SARD Manual.