

Executive Summary

Evaluation of EcoSec’s Microeconomic Initiatives in Libya-2019-2024

Evaluation information	
Commissioning unit	Economic Security Department, Libya Delegation
Evaluation typology	Decentralized
Evaluation timeframe	July 2024 – December 2024
Geographic scope	Tripoli, Misrata, Sabha, and Benghazi sub-delegations in Libya
Period under evaluation	2019 – 2024
Evaluation team-TANGO International	
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Executive summary

Introduction

Since 2018, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Economic Security (EcoSec) Department in Libya has implemented microeconomic initiatives (MEIs) that provide productive grants for the establishment and rehabilitation of small businesses and vocational training to improve the career skills and employability of vulnerable population groups. The MEI program in Libya targets conflict-affected households, specifically those led by women, households with a breadwinner disabled by conflict, preventing them from previous livelihood activities, and returnee households that lost livelihood assets due to the conflict. The primary objective of an MEI is to provide its beneficiaries with an income that supports them to meet their household's basic needs from its own resources.

Scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the effectiveness, relevance, and impact of MEIs implemented by EcoSec in Libya between 2019-2024. It was guided by four overarching evaluation objectives:

- I. Assess the relevance of the MEIs implemented in Libya over the past five years.
- II. Determine the effectiveness of the MEIs in achieving their intended goals and objectives.
- III. Assess the contribution of the MEIs to livelihood/economic and possible other types of impact/results on the conflict-affected population.
- IV. Provide insights and recommendations for future interventions and resource allocation in Libya.

The evaluation addressed seven key evaluation questions organized by relevance, effectiveness, and impact OECD-DAC criteria, as well as cross-cutting themes relating to program monitoring and AAP.

#	Evaluation question	Criteria
EQ1	To what extent have MEIs addressed the specific needs and challenges faced by the conflict-affected population in Libya?	Relevance
EQ2.1	To what extent did the intervention achieve its intended goals and objectives?	Effectiveness
EQ2.2	What are the internal and external enablers and barriers that affected results?	Effectiveness
EQ3	What impacts have MEIs had on beneficiaries' livelihoods, economic well-being, and self-reliance?	Impact
EQ4	What are the key lessons learned from the implementation of MEIs over the past five years? How can these lessons be used to improve the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of future MEI programming in Libya?	Relevance, Effectiveness, Sustainability
EQ5	To what extent is the design and implementation of the MEI program aligned with the AAP Framework?	Cross-cutting (AAP)
EQ6	How effective is the monitoring system in providing EcoSec with routine and useful information for managing the MEI activities?	Cross-cutting (Monitoring)

[TANGO International](#), a global research and evaluation firm, was hired by ICRC to externally conduct the evaluation. TANGO partnered with its local partner, [Golden Tulip](#), to support field data collection activities.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a primarily qualitative mixed methods approach. Three data collection methods were used: (1) semi-structured document review (2) key informant interviews (KIIs), and (3) focus group discussions (FGDs). The evaluation did not collect primary quantitative data.

Remote and field data collection occurred between September 1st and October 8th, 2024. The Evaluation Team completed 11 remote KIIs with EcoSec staff at SD, delegation, regional, and HQ levels, as well as 17 KIIs and 8 beneficiary FGDs (4 male, 4 female) across SDs. Overall, 93 individuals were purposively consulted for this evaluation, and over 90 documents were reviewed. Data was analyzed using multiple analytical techniques, including semi-structured thematic analysis, contribution analysis, triangulation analysis, and internal and external validation exercises.

Findings and conclusions

EQ1

To what extent have MEIs addressed the specific needs and challenges faced by the conflict-affected population in Libya?

- **Finding 1:** Targeted beneficiaries' main challenges are re-establishing businesses and securing stable incomes.
- **Finding 2:** Productive grants and vocational trainings have been relevant in addressing income and employment needs by empowering beneficiaries to start or rehabilitate businesses and gain technical skills.
- **Finding 3:** While MEIs generally address economic needs, challenges persist in supporting rural populations, providing sufficient funding, and offering ongoing, tailored training to ensure longer-term business success.

Conclusion: MEIs are relevant to the specific needs of conflict-affected households in Libya. Specifically, MEIs are responsive to needs for access to sustainable livelihoods and stable income generation. The basic approaches and SOPs for productive grants and vocational training align with leading practice in the sector and are the appropriate activities to help beneficiaries start or rehabilitate businesses and gain technical work skills. Geographic targeting is also right, though programming is not adjusted to differences across sub-delegations.

EQ2.1

To what extent did the intervention achieve its intended goals and objectives?

- **Finding 4:** Assessing program effectiveness is limited by the absence of internal performance data, impartial output data, and a lack of disaggregated analysis by EcoSec activity.
- **Finding 5:** MEIs have made good progress towards increasing beneficiaries' income levels in the

short term.

- **Finding 6:** Productive grants and technical skills training have been effective in helping beneficiaries gain stable employment.

Conclusion: There is limited data on the quality of the interventions and there is no data on progress against targets. Despite a lack of quantitative performance data, qualitative evidence generally indicates that MEIs have made good progress towards modest increases in beneficiaries' incomes. Medium and long-term changes in income cannot be assessed due to the lack of monitoring beyond the 1-year project cycle; however, the evaluation findings suggest that about half of beneficiaries have businesses that continue after project support ends. Beneficiary feedback indicates that vocational and business skills training activities have increased beneficiaries' employability and contributed to securing stable employment. The evaluation team finds these results in line with what can be reasonably expected.

EQ2.2

What are the internal and external enablers and barriers that affected program results?

- **Finding 7:** The primary internal enablers include strong staff commitment and knowledge, flexible program design, and partnerships.
- **Finding 8:** Various internal barriers have affected program results, including institutional resource constraints, the 12-month program cycle, lack of course corrections using performance data, the inadequacy of productive grant amounts, and micro-focused evaluation.
- **Finding 9:** Relative improvements to the security context, partnerships with qualified vocational training centers, and communities' willingness to engage in planning, implementation, and feedback mechanisms are external enablers.
- **Finding 10:** Multiple external barriers have negatively affected program results, including inflation, liquidity issues, weak national financial system, and LRCS volunteer turnover.

Conclusion: Internally, the program benefited from the strong commitment and expertise of staff, flexible program design, the integration of productive grants and vocational training, and effective operational partnerships. However, limited institutional resources for programming, a restrictive 12-month program cycle, and insufficient productive grant amounts, negatively affected results. There are also serious organizational systems, process and practice gaps specifically related to information management, including assessment and analysis, performance measurement, adaptive management, and structured application of AAP into programming.

Externally, improvements in the security context, partnerships with skilled vocational training institutes, and active community participation in planning and feedback processes were key enablers. Conversely, the program was impacted by multiple external factors, including inflation, liquidity challenges, and the unstable security environment, which made it difficult for some beneficiaries to sustain business projects. High LRCS volunteer turnover has affected the consistency and quality of monitoring data needed for adaptive decision-making.

EQ3

What impacts have MEIs had on beneficiaries' livelihoods, economic well-being, and self-reliance?

- **Finding 11:** Beneficiaries who have successfully grown their business are employing more formal staff.
- **Finding 12:** Beneficiaries who participate in MEIs have increased self-reliance and confidence.
- **Finding 13:** Program trainings facilitate communal connection and serve as a networking platform for sharing resources, good practices, and support.

Conclusion: Despite gaps in ICRC organizational processes, the program produces benefits in the short term along sustainable and resilient livelihood pathways. MEIs facilitate beneficiaries increasing income levels through acquisition of stable livelihoods. Primary evidence indicate that beneficiaries with successful businesses are employing more formal staff and technical skills gained through BST and vocational training increase employability. In addition, MEIs are driving several positive unintended impacts, including increasing beneficiaries' self-reliance and confidence, as well as facilitating communal connections and professional networking systems.

EQ4

What are the key lessons learned from the implementation of MEIs over the past 5 years? How can these lessons be used to improve the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of MEIs in Libya?

- Evaluations must be scoped within the broader context of the delegation's priorities.
- Integrating vocational training and grants enhances beneficiary retention.
- The 12-month program cycle is inadequate for the current design.
- MEIs are not a long-term economic development program.
- Existing beneficiary business readiness and knowledge is critical to success.
- Regularly adjust grant amounts to match rising costs.
- Tailor training topics to meet beneficiaries' specific needs.
- Digital marketing can significantly strengthen business visibility, customer engagement, and overall growth.
- Ongoing support and monitoring promote EcoSec accountability and beneficiary success.
- Frequent training is essential for effective volunteer-based monitoring.
- Tiered program phases are conducive to developing realistic business plans.
- Align vocational training with market demands and through partnership.
- External factors significantly hinder beneficiaries' business performance.

Conclusion: The main lessons indicate that the MEI program does not align with similar, more evolved employment programs implemented by peer organizations. This includes shifting away from vocational training providers as service providers, as well as selecting vocations based on strong assessment and analysis of market demands. Across the sector, peer organizations are shifting to market-driven determination of vocation types and grant sizes, forming strong private sector partnerships that offer beneficiaries training and mentorship, networking, and financing

opportunities. The evaluation finds that MEIs are not a longer-term economic development program, but a package of shorter-term economic support interventions implemented at the tail end of a response cycle.

The successful integration of vocational training with productive grants has demonstrated improved beneficiary retention and program effectiveness, yet regular adjustments to grant amounts are essential to ensuring beneficiaries can cover rising business expenses. Furthermore, the 12-month program cycle is insufficient for quality service delivery, longer-term outcome monitoring, and adapting to program interruptions. An 18-to-36-month timeframe is better suited for the current program design.

EQ5

To what extent is the design and implementation of the MEI program aligned with the AAP Framework?

- **Finding 14:** There is moderate involvement of beneficiaries in MEI program design and implementation.
- **Finding 15:** EcoSec has used beneficiary feedback to adjust the productive grant payment method and tailor training content.
- **Finding 16:** Despite strong utilization of community call centers, there is need for more two-way dialoguing and transparent communication about how feedback is utilized.
- **Finding 17:** Inclusivity and non-discrimination were partially addressed in the program design.
- **Finding 18:** EcoSec recently added an indicator to measure the MEI program's effect on reducing beneficiaries' exposure to protection risks.

Conclusion: Overall, the program demonstrates some alignment with the ICRC AAP Framework. Beneficiaries are consulted through focus groups during the program planning phase and can submit complaints and suggestions through community call centers. EcoSec has made some efforts to incorporate beneficiary feedback; however, feedback has a limited effect on programmatic adjustments. The lack of strong two-way dialogue regarding how feedback is reviewed and used by EcoSec to adjust program activities remains a key issue for ICRC building trust with target communities. While it is presumed that MEIs do not always reach the most affected people, the evaluation lacks an understanding of how MEIs are complemented by other delegation efforts.

EQ6

How effective is the monitoring system in providing EcoSec with routine and useful information for managing the MEI activities?

- **Finding 19:** The monitoring system has limited effectiveness and faces several challenges.
- **Finding 20:** MEI indicators do not provide useful information on the quality of programming.
- **Finding 21:** There is concern about the quality of monitoring data collected due to limited staffing, high LRCS volunteer turnover, and a lack of resources to train new volunteers.
- **Finding 22:** Institutional maturity around using the MEI multiform tool is low.
- **Finding 23:** While substantial data is routinely collected, the information/analysis from this data

is insufficiently used by management.

- **Finding 24:** Senior management in Libya have disinvested in A&E at the delegation level.

Conclusion: The monitoring system is not effective and faces several serious issues. There is clearly existing capacity to collect data, but too much time and resources are spent on collecting data that is not useful for program management. This is partially due to a lack of performance measurement indicators that measure program quality, as well as the absence of A&E specialists positioned at the delegation level. Disinvestment in A&E at the delegation level due to budget reductions has produced a disconnect between program staff and A&E support functions. There is also skepticism around the reliability of collected data as volunteer-based monitoring teams face high turnover rates that are not met with adequate monitoring training.

Recommendations

Recommendation	Priority, timing, responsibility
1) Address the following technical challenges in MEI programming within current parameters: - Multi-year planning: Undertake multiyear planning within the understanding of a 12-month program costing model to anticipate interruptions to programming and ensure quality delivery of vocational training, productive grant activities, and longer-term outcome monitoring. This includes working with delegation management to approve multi-year budget planning in the PfR. - Market assessments: Annual market assessments per sub-delegation that collect quantitative and qualitative information on business needs, market environment, competitive landscape, and business expenses of key sectors are recommended. Assessment results with recommendations by sub-delegation staff should directly feed into adjusting the grant amount. - Beneficiary selection: Given the high business attrition rate, revise the beneficiary selection criteria and include rationalization that demonstrates why specific individuals are selected and why this selection criteria is the most effective, efficient, and impactful way to reach those who are most vulnerable in these areas. In addition to using the minimum expenditures basket, beneficiary selection should have an additional criterion for individuals to have the basic resources needed for business success. This includes exploring appropriate criteria around readiness to receive MEIs. - Grant amount: The productive grant amount should be adjusted based on routine analysis of inflation and market assessment results. - Additional training: Provide a 1-day business skills refresher training to beneficiaries that covers costs and profits, pricing and marketing, and managing finances. In addition, provide a 2-day follow-up training that covers business topics relevant to beneficiaries' interests (i.e., digital marketing, financial forecasting, market analysis, branding, and risk management). Training topics/content should be based on beneficiaries' interests identified in monitoring/consultations.	<u>Priority:</u> High <u>Timing:</u> In current PFR planning cycle <u>Responsibility:</u> Senior Program Staff and Sub-delegation Team Leaders Delegation Management approves multi-year budgeting Economic Security Unit in Geneva also revisits the beneficiary selection criteria for MEIs
2) Set clear expectations for MEI program results.	<u>Priority:</u> High <u>Timing:</u> In current

Recommendation	Priority, timing, responsibility
If ICRC concurs with the evaluation that MEIs are end-of-response phase activities, then it is recommended that EcoSec develops a Theory of Change that: - Is instituted in the EcoSec delegation strategy and referenced in PFRs. A 1-page summarized Theory of Change should be presented in the main body of the strategy document, and the detailed Theory of Change should be included in an annex. - Delineates start and stop points that clarify whether the program takes place at the end of a response or as a longer-term economic development initiative. If ICRC chooses to engage in a fully economic development program, then tailor the ToC to display how the program contributes to long-term success. - Is inclusive of ICRC, partner, and stakeholder contributions and roles. This includes designating outcomes that ICRC is contributing to, and where ICRC expects partners to step in. This will clarify responsibilities internally and facilitate clearer communication with partners by explicitly outlining each party's role in achieving immediate and intermediate outcomes.	PFR planning cycle <u>Responsibility:</u> Delegation Management, Program and A&E staff
3) For EcoSec programming, address the following challenges to streamline/simplify the program monitoring system: - Establish performance indicators: Select key performance indicators from the EcoSec Cookbook and establish structured target setting that aligns with the ToC and provides management with useful information on programming quality. Indicators can be tailored while remaining consistent and aligned to indicator guidance and standards. - Stop collecting data that is not used: Collect only data that is needed to assess performance against indicators (i.e., program quality and progress towards targets). Stop collecting data for indicators that are neither used nor institutionally required. - Develop a localized monitoring system at delegation level: Develop a fit-for-purpose, user-friendly monitoring system that uses data collected to provide reflection on progress against targets and quality of work for the key performance indicators. This includes extending the monitoring system results to Libyan Red Crescent Society field officers and volunteers, as well as providing a brief training to all levels of staff from LRCS through to senior delegation leadership on (1) KPIs for EcoSec activities, (2) monitoring tools, (3) organizing verification/validation meetings with affected people (including non-beneficiaries, and (4) how feedback will be provided on an annual or semi-annual basis. Also ensure that LRCS volunteers involved in monitoring have received adequate training on performance indicators, tools, and research techniques.	<u>Priority:</u> High <u>Timing:</u> In next PFR planning cycle <u>Responsibility:</u> Program and A&E staff
4) For EcoSec programming, hire an Analysis & Evidence specialist at delegation level. Acknowledging resource parameters, explore the hiring of at least one full-time A&E staff member who can partially dedicate time to EcoSec initiatives, including implementing the actions under evaluation recommendation #3. The A&E specialist should be included in routine EcoSec program meetings, channel feedback to the A&E regional office, and support program alignment with A&E regional guidance on monitoring practices, including streamlining indicators. When ready, the A&E function can be expanded to other areas of the delegation portfolio.	<u>Priority:</u> High <u>Timing:</u> In current PFR planning cycle <u>Responsibility:</u> Senior Delegation Management

Recommendation	Priority, timing, responsibility
5) Develop a costed roadmap to implement the AAP strategy into EcoSec programming. The roadmap should include: - Conducting structured assessment and analysis of protection risks, existing capabilities, and needs to inform program design, prior to implementation. - Rationale: Develop a small note for file that clearly explains EcoSec's rationale on AAP-related decisions (i.e., impartiality, selection criteria) in the context of Libya. - Impartiality: Navigating the principle of impartiality for EcoSec programs that do not target the most vulnerable (i.e., MEIs). - Respecting the dignity of affected people: Providing transparent communication to beneficiaries on how their feedback is reviewed and/or incorporated in programming. In addition, ensure there is focus on strengthening the community contact center and exploring other approaches to provide affected people with effective, accessible, and timely information and feedback. For example, by incorporating a frequently asked questions (FAQ) list on beneficiary selection.	<u>Priority:</u> High <u>Timing:</u> In next PFR planning cycle <u>Responsibility:</u> Program staff with guidance from the AAP Unit