

Durable Solutions for Collective Centre Residents – CEB Grant Projects

Ex post evaluation Abstract

The two grant projects covered in the present evaluation were implemented based on an agreement in 2003 whereby the CEB and a UN Agency agreed to collaborate in their efforts to improve the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons within CEB's member states. The evaluation encompasses two individual grant project agreements implemented in the Balkan sub-region, for a total CEB grant contribution of 800 000 USD.

The objective of both grants was to provide vulnerable households with support to enable their return to their pre-conflict residences, in line with international agreements, through the reconstruction of homes and the provision for some of the beneficiaries of complementary start-up assistance. The selected beneficiaries were still living in emergency accommodations. Under the first project, a group of female-headed households that were unable to return, for various reasons, to their pre-conflict residence, was supported by receiving accommodation at a new location, based on an agreement with all stakeholders.

The UN Agency engaged, for both projects, locally operating implementing partners (NGOs) with a long experience in design and construction of cost-efficient housing solutions for displaced persons. After the discontinuation of reconstruction activities by the first partner at the end of 2004, the UN Agency worked with another partner for the successor project, while retaining the approach of the first project, though with a stronger start-up component of household equipment, consumable items and livelihood generating items (e.g. agricultural tools or livestock).

The evaluation found that both grant projects had been fully implemented and that in total 52 eligible beneficiary families had relocated to houses of the intended minimal inhabitable surfaces. Final beneficiary selection had mostly been carried out prior to signature of the CEB Contribution Agreement, as the selection process required an intensive dialogue with potential beneficiaries and sufficient time for their decision making process to return to the locations from which they had fled.

The grant projects were implemented cost efficiently: procedures ensured that only basic housing surfaces were funded, with external rendering and similar items being left for future completion by beneficiaries' own funds. Construction designs were standardized for cost-efficient tendering and contracting processes (notably in the first project). The costs of accompanying beneficiaries in their decision making and transfer process, as well as administrative costs, were fully (first project) or largely (second project) funded by implementation partner funds. According to the evaluation findings, all main beneficiaries still reside at the funded location, though in some cases, younger family members relocated to more urbanised environments upon marriage. The maintenance of buildings and equipment is the private responsibility of the beneficiaries (with unclear ownership in one municipality) and was found satisfactory, with reservations concerning some start-up items and the difficult income situation of some of the beneficiaries, while additional improvements were carried out at locations with growth potential.

The sustainability outlook is more favourable at locations with growth prospects; while pensioners are less affected in that respect, the younger generation from marginal locations will tend to follow the overall rural-urban migration process, which is beyond the control of such projects. The NGOs continue their socio-economic integration efforts through smaller follow-up support activities for some of the beneficiaries.

Overall, both projects were rated satisfactory, with a particularly high social added value. Shortcomings concerning the reporting status and communication gaps between the CEB and the UN Agency were identified.

It is recommended that the UN Agency continue the dialogue with the aforementioned municipality in order to reach an agreement, with the CEB as fund provider, on a satisfactory ownership agreement for the houses constructed in said municipality.

It is recommended that both the UN Agency and the CEB consider operational implementation cycles right from the approval phase and, during implementation, strengthen their supervision of adherence to agreed reporting procedures. All submitted report elements should be easily identifiable with the grant project in question. In the same context, it is recommended to the CEB to tighten its follow-up processes, so that mismatches and gaps in reporting are identified and communicated in a timely manner.

The CEB should establish only such reporting intervals and requirements which it is comfortable to monitor and follow up on – including agreements on reasonable feedback periods by the CEB to reports received – and should insist on obtaining approved final reports on time. Direct communication channels to the local implementation level should be considered.

The CEB should aim for a clearer agreement on visibility expectations, including a realistic means of achieving them and an appropriate mode of reporting on the issue.