



RIGHT TO PLAY
PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Education (EQIE)

Qualitative Case Study Report - Palestine

Final Version

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

CO	Country Office
CoP	Community of Practice
CP	Child Protection
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWD	Children With Disabilities
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EQIE	Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HQ	Headquarters
ISELA	International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MOEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOS	Out-Of-School
PBL	Play-Based Learning
PE	Physical Education
PSS	Psychosocial Support
RCA	Read, Connect and Apply
RTP	Right To Play
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SES	Socio-Economic Scale
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

This midline evaluation report assesses the implementation and outcomes of the Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Education (EQIE) program, led by Right To Play (RTP) in Palestine, with funding from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The EQIE program focuses on improving the quality of education and fostering inclusivity through play-based learning (PBL), targeting children in primary grades (1-4), and aims to enhance their reading and socio-emotional skills. The program operated under challenging socio-political conditions, including the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher strikes, and the ongoing conflict in Gaza and the West Bank.

This evaluation highlights the program's significant contributions to improving education outcomes in a complex and volatile context while offering insights into areas requiring further support and improvement.

Due to the ongoing conflict and challenging context – including severe travel restrictions – the study was revised to a fully qualitative methodology. We therefore refer to the study as a Qualitative Case Study Report.

Key Findings:

Relevance:

- The EQIE program aligns well with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's (MOEHE) priorities, particularly in literacy and PBL strategies. Despite the challenges posed by the political and socio-economic environment, the program responded effectively by adapting to remote learning, integrating psychosocial support (PSS), and maintaining relevance in a rapidly changing context.
- The program's interventions, including training teachers, supervisors, and principals, were tailored to meet the needs of students and fostered an inclusive learning environment.

Effectiveness:

- The program effectively built the capacity of educational staff, leading to positive shifts in attitudes towards PBL. Teachers and supervisors appreciated the training and reported improvements in student engagement and participation, particularly among children facing learning difficulties.
- Notable improvements were observed in children's reading and socio-emotional skills, attributed to the engaging nature of PBL. Activities like the National Reading Competition and mobile library buses were particularly successful in motivating students and fostering a culture of reading.
- However, challenges such as public health emergencies, political instability, and war hindered the full adoption of PBL practices.

Efficiency:

- Despite logistical and staffing challenges, RTP staff made significant efforts to ensure efficient implementation of the program. Flexibility in administrative procedures, such as delegating responsibilities to local teams, helped streamline operations.
- Coordination with MOEHE and other partners enhanced the program's coherence, but delays in approvals and occasional communication gaps within MOEHE sometimes impacted the timely delivery of project outputs.

Sustainability:

- The program created a foundation for sustainability through its strong partnership with MOEHE and the training of educational supervisors. Supervisors were equipped to train new teachers, contributing to a self-sustaining model that ensures the continued use of PBL methodologies.
- The program also fostered political support for PBL, and MOEHE demonstrated a willingness to expand the program. However, scalability remains a challenge due to budget constraints and the need for additional resources.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The EQIE program successfully enhanced the quality and inclusivity of education in the West Bank. It effectively adapted to the challenging context and provided valuable lessons for future education programs in Palestine.

Recommendations include expanding support for teachers in managing large classrooms, improving logistical planning, and further integrating PBL into the national curriculum to ensure long-term sustainability. Additionally, enhancing coordination with MOEHE and other stakeholders will be essential for scaling up the program.

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and structure of the report

This report outlines findings from a qualitative study aiming to assess progress made and identify lessons from Right To Play's (RTP) Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Education (EQIE) program in Palestine. Following a redesign of the evaluation methodology, data was collected internally by the RTP team, and analyzed by Learn More.

The report is structured in four sections. **Section 1** provides background to the project's design and context, while **Section 2** outlines the evaluation methodology. **Section 3** presents the evaluation findings on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. **Section 4** outlines lessons learned and recommendations stemming from the evaluation.

Annexes include the project's Theory of Change (**Annex 1**), the respondent list (**Annex 2**), the Emerging Findings Workshop list of participants (**Annex 3**) and the bibliography (**Annex 4**).

1.2 Background to the study

1.2.1 Right To Play

Right To Play (RTP) is a global organization committed to improving the lives of children and youth affected by conflict, disease, and poverty. Established in 2000, RTP has pioneered a play-based approach to learning and child development that focuses on quality education, life skills, health, gender equality, child protection (CP) and building peaceful communities. RTP's mission is to support children through play-based methods, leveraging the power of play to improve their lives. Today, the work of RTP revolves around three different primary areas¹:

1. **Education, using play to improve learning outcomes.** RTP usually develops activities to improve children's literacy and numeracy skills, mainly targeting primary-school pupils, but also teenagers, youth or children in pre-primary education.
2. **Gender-sensitive programming.** RTP initiatives apply a gender-sensitive approach through training, implementation, and advocacy sessions. Some projects are more directly gender-focused and include behavioural change on gender-based violence (GBV) and forced marriage as the explicit project goal.

¹ For more detailed information, see the RTP website [here](#).

3. **Health, well-being, and PSS.** This is a newer area for the organization, which has more long-standing experience in education. The projects targeting health range from sexual and reproductive health, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, to psychosocial support (PSS).

1.2.2 EQIE

The Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Education (EQIE) program is implemented by RTP in Mozambique, Lebanon, Palestine, Ethiopia and Tanzania with the collaboration of local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and government partners. The project started in 2020 and will continue until December 31st, 2024, with funding from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).

RTP began working in the Palestinian Territories in 2003 after subscribing to an agreement with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to work with schools in refugee camps.

Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Education (EQIE) is a five-year education program (2020-2024) financed by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and implemented by RTP and various local partners.

In the West Bank, EQIE aims to improve children's proficiency level in reading and social-emotional life skills such as concentration, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication, focusing on children in primary Grades 1-4. These objectives are being achieved by: i) building the capacity of educational staff through training on PBL teaching practices to enhance children's reading skills; ii) providing learning materials for children; iii) training parents and caregivers to implement supplemental reading activities for children outside school; iv) creating safe and inclusive learning environments. The project in the West Bank is delivered in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) and originally planned to target 78 schools distributed in Nablus, South Nablus, Hebron, Yatta, Salfeet, Qalqiliyeh, Tulkarem and Tubas.

In Gaza, EQIE aims to increase school enrolment, attendance and retention of out-of-school children with disabilities (CWD) by providing Civil Society Organization (CSO) partners with training and mentoring on organizational development needs; and supporting out-of-school children with disabilities to enroll in target educational institutions, temporary learning spaces or alternative education programs. The project in Gaza is implemented in collaboration with CSO partners in Rafah, North Gaza, Middle Gaza and Gaza City. It reached 7,419 children in 2021 and 4,454 children in 2022.

Through these interventions, the program contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG4, ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all”, including its underlying principle of “leave no one behind”.

EQIE’s approach to learning improvements is holistic, involving teacher training in literacy and other areas to foster a positive learning environment. Changes in the learning environment would thereafter lead to improved learning outcomes. This comprehensive model extends beyond the classroom, incorporating training of educational supervisors, parent engagement and the establishment of other community initiatives. This holistic approach to education is at the core of the EQIE program design.

The main feature of the EQIE program, and RTP’s approach in general, is the use of Play Based Learning, whose characteristics are presented in detail in [Section 1.3.4](#) of this study.

Due to the conflict in Gaza, the evaluation focused only on program activities in the West Bank.² The planned activities were as follows³:

Table 1: Activities planned in the EQIE program (2020-2023)

Reading and socio-emotional skills
+ Training of teachers, principals and supervisors on PBL
+ Fostering teachers’ attendance at Communities of Practice (CoP) meetings
Improvement of the learning environment and provision of supplemental reading activities
+ National Reading Competition
+ Palestinian Child Day, International Teacher Day and other education initiatives
+ Training of caregivers to support children’s learning at home (Learning Together Toolkit)
+ Staff training
+ Provision of learning materials to schools (classroom libraries, mobile library bus, puppet theatre, reading corners)
+ Provision of supplemental learning activities (out-of-school learning days, inside-school learning days, reading marathons)
Improvement of the learning environment
+ Rehabilitation/construction of spaces and or facilities

² The evaluation was initially designed to focus on EQIE interventions in three countries: Lebanon, Mozambique, and Palestine. Due to the ongoing attack on Palestine and Lebanon by Israel, the approach of this Midline Evaluation has been adapted to ensure the highest standards of child protection and data quality. For further details, see [Section 2](#) on Methodology.

³ Source: RTP Progress Reports made available to the Consultancy.

+ Awareness sessions about school-based child protection referral mechanisms, positive discipline, children's learning at home

Within EQIE's implementation period, teacher training was carried out in the following directorates: Nablus, South Nablus, Hebron, Salfeet, Qalqiliyeh, and Tulkarem. Due to the challenging Palestinian context and the interruptions faced by the project, it was not possible to train teachers in Yatta and Tubas. In response to the interruptions, the mitigation plan was to train the supervisors from Yatta and Tubas, who in turn trained the teachers in these targeted areas. For Tubas, the training was planned for 2024, and it is currently being targeted. In Yatta, some schools were targeted in 2023, with the remainder being addressed currently. The 2023 Yatta teachers were trained and capacitated by educational supervisors who had received training in 2021. These supervisors were responsible for training the Cycle 4 targeted teachers in both areas. Therefore, RTP did not directly implement the training in these cycles.

Study findings are based on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with RTP team members and implementing partners, including the MOEHE, as well as potential NGO partners, principals, education supervisors teachers and caregivers. The data was collected by RTP team members and analyzed by the Learn More team. No data was collected with children. Due to the reduced study scope and sample size, as well as potential response biases, this study should be interpreted as a qualitative case study report, and findings should not be generalized. Nonetheless, they can provide some interesting lessons learned for RTP and its partners to consider.

1.3 EQIE in Context

This section outlines desk-review findings on the socio-economic and educational environment of Palestine. It also includes findings on the characteristics of the communities where EQIE is implemented, as reported by project stakeholders.

1.3.1 Socio-economic Context

The Palestinian Territory comprises the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. As of 2021, the total population within the Palestinian Territories was estimated to be 5.3 million, including 3.2 million in the West Bank and 2.1 million in the Gaza Strip.

In 2023, the World Bank estimated Palestine's GDP per capita to be approximately USD 3,360, while the poverty rate was 32.8% overall, and much higher in Gaza ([World Bank, 2023](#)). Prolonged and ongoing conflict has led to the closure of productive sectors such

as agriculture and manufacturing and resulted in high unemployment rates in both Gaza and the West Bank ([ILO, 2023](#)). People living with disabilities in Palestine are more likely to be living in poverty than those without any disability ([ILO, 2021](#)). In 2021, 12.3% of children aged 2-17 reported having at least one functional challenge. The percentage was found to be higher in the West Bank, at 13.4%, compared to Gaza, at 9.8% ([UNICEF, 2021](#)).

The ongoing war on Gaza, which escalated severely after October 2023, has led to large-scale displacement and destruction. As of August 2024, 86% of the Gaza Strip had been subject to displacement orders, and over 1.9 million people were displaced, including more than 1.7 million within Gaza itself ([UNICEF, 2024](#)). This situation exacerbates already dire conditions, including shortages of food, water, and essential services, with 72% of buildings destroyed, leaving many without homes to return to even in the event of a ceasefire ([OCHA, 2024](#)).

1.3.2 Government Education Policy and Plans

Palestine's MOEHE was established in 1994 with the mandate of overseeing education provision, teacher recruitment and supervision of both private and public education institutions to ensure that students receive a high-quality education. Education can be accessed through schools under two forms of management or ownership: government schools under the MOEHE, and private schools operated by either for-profit or not-for-profit organizations. It is important to note that a large share of the Palestinian population is internally displaced, and accesses schooling through UNRWA provision. As of December 2023, 1.7 million people in Gaza, or over 75% of the population, were internally displaced – a number that has continued to rise in recent months ([UNHRC, 2023](#)). As of the 2021/2022 school year UNRWA provided education to 219,100 children in grades 1-9 in Gaza ([UNRWA, n.a.](#)) and to 45,883 children in the West Bank as of the 2019-2022 school year ([UNRWA, n.a.](#)). Education provision has been severely disrupted due to the ongoing conflict, with more than 645,000 children losing an entire academic year due to the conflict ([UNRWA, 2024](#), [UNICEF, 2024](#)). Schools have been damaged or destroyed, and UNRWA, which provides education for a large proportion of Palestinian children, faces increasing difficulties. Continuous hostilities, combined with a lack of resources, have severely hindered educational provision. In August 2024 alone, over 524 schools in Gaza had sustained damage, representing 92.9% of all school buildings ([UNICEF, 2024](#)). Additionally, attacks on educational institutions continue to put both students and teachers at risk, further undermining the stability of the education system ([UNICEF, 2024](#)).

The MOEHE continues to struggle under these circumstances. While it oversees both private and public institutions, ensuring quality education has become an increasingly

challenging task in light of the ongoing conflict, displacement, and infrastructure damage ([UNICEF, 2024](#)).

1.3.3 Education System and Learning Outcomes

Access to education in Palestine varies greatly by location and by education level. Only 34.2% of children aged 3-4 years old attended ECD centres in 2021 ([UNICEF, 2021](#)). Access to primary education is much higher: in 2020, approximately 95% of children of compulsory education age (6-15) were in school ([UNICEF, 2022](#)). Classrooms can be overcrowded: in the Gaza Strip, as of 2021/2022, the average class size was 41.2 ([UNRWA, n.a](#)).

Completion rates significantly decline as children get older: it is estimated that only 62% continue to complete secondary school ([UNICEF, 2022](#)). Non-attendance among boys increases as they get older, with 13.9% of boys aged 15 not attending school regularly. Additionally, as of 2021, more than one in four children of secondary school age did not attend secondary school, either due to not transitioning from primary to secondary school or dropping out. ([UNICEF, 2021](#)). Moreover, as reported by UNICEF in 2022, completion rates significantly decline as children get older: it is estimated that only 62% continue to complete secondary school ([UNICEF, 2022](#)).

In terms of school performance, as of 2021, 52.7% of children demonstrated foundational reading skills – with boys performing worse than girls (47.8% compared to 57.3%) ([UNICEF, 2021](#)). A higher share of non-refugee children (55.2%) reached this threshold, compared to refugee children (49.3%) (ibid).

Older children also present low learning outcomes in reading. PISA results for students in the Palestinian Authority in 2022 found low scores in mathematics, reading and science compared to the average scores in OECD countries ([OECD, 2022](#)).

This data highlights several challenges. First, the school dropout rate increases as children get older, and is higher among boys, children from low-income households and children living with disabilities ([Humanity and Inclusion, 2022](#)).

Second, prolonged periods of conflict and political instability are a huge barrier to children's education. Conflict affects psychosocial well-being, destroys educational facilities and ultimately results in learning losses ([UNOCHA, 2018](#)). Destruction of school infrastructure has been a key feature of Israel's offence in Gaza. Data from UNICEF found that, by August 2024, 524 school buildings had been directly damaged by October 2023 – representing 92.9% of school buildings in the Gaza Strip ([UNICEF, 2024](#)). Higher education institutions have also been severely affected, with over 88,000 students unable to attend university. The ongoing conflict has created

widespread fear and trauma among students and educators, leading to significant learning losses that will likely affect an entire generation of Palestinian children ([GCPEA, 2024](#)).

1.3.4 Play-based Learning and Its Effects on Socio-Emotional Learning and Reading

There is evidence of the beneficial effects of play-based learning (PBL) on socio-emotional skills and academic outcomes at the pre-primary level, including in emergency settings. Theoretical and empirical studies across different countries highlight the role of play in developing socio-emotional competencies of children aged four to five, including cooperative skills, social interactive behaviours, feelings of capability, social identity construction, positive peer relationships, and social literacy skills ([Pyle et al., 2017](#)). Other studies emphasize the effectiveness of play-based activities and in particular of directed play, in teaching literacy skills to children of the same age, including print conventions, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, and writing behaviours ([Pyle et al., 2017](#)).

Evidence regarding primary school children is scarce. A study carried out in Palestinian primary schools found that students whose teachers had been trained in play-based pedagogies attained higher test scores in math compared to a control group, with girls achieving the highest scores ([Murtagh et al., 2022](#)). A preliminary study conducted in Zambia found that the *Catch Up* intervention implemented by the government, which has a play-based component, promoted the development of empathy and conflict resolution skills among primary school children ([Phiri et al., 2023](#)). Another two-year intervention in Northern Ireland with children in the first two years of primary school showed that the play-based curriculum had no significant positive effects on reading and mathematics in the medium term ([McGuinness et al., 2013](#)). However, the overall quality of the learning experience in the same play-based classrooms was significantly higher in terms of children's learning attitudes, social development and emotional well-being compared to traditional teaching classrooms ([Walsh et al., 2010](#)).

Recent research from Right To Play (RTP) and Unbounded Associates also points to the linkages between PBL and improvements in children's psychosocial well-being. For example, the evaluation of the MA'AN/TOGETHER program in Palestine found that the percentage of students reporting feelings of social connectedness increased by 19% throughout the lifetime of the program, while the percentage of students reporting improvements in their psychosocial well-being increased by 14% ([Right To Play, 2023](#)).

In general, evidence about PBL should be taken with caution. There is widespread agreement on the role of play in fostering children's socialization, enjoyment, problem-solving skills, physical and emotional growth, and overall well-being.

However, opinions differ regarding its effectiveness in academic learning, which might derive from the challenge of defining play for the purpose of research ([Murtagh et al., 2022](#)). Evidence suggests that the understanding of and value placed on play vary across different sociocultural contexts, highlighting the importance of culturally relevant play-based approaches (for example, [Mendenhall et al., 2021](#)). In Palestine, a recent study of teacher attitudes and perspectives found that, while their perceptions of PBL are overall positive, they face barriers to implementation due to limited skills to apply these methods in practice ([Khalil, N. et al., 2022](#)).

1.4 Limitations and challenges to the implementation of the EQIE Design

Right To Play (RTP) had to adapt the EQIE program significantly due to a range of contextual challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers' strikes, political instability⁴ and the expanding attack of Israel on Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon, which heavily affected the region during the program's duration. The COVID-19 pandemic led to substantial learning loss among students, and the prolonged teachers' strikes in the West Bank in early 2023 further disrupted the education system, causing long closures and interruptions to planned activities. Since October 2023, the conflict has created unprecedented difficulties, especially in Gaza, where schools were either closed or repurposed as shelters for displaced people. Similarly, increased security risks and movement restrictions in the West Bank have limited teachers' ability to attend training sessions, and students now experience inconsistent access to education, with distance learning occurring only a few days per week.

The primary challenges during these periods stemmed from strikes, COVID-19, and political instability, which forced a shift to online teaching. The transition hindered the implementation of RTP methodologies, particularly play-based learning (PBL). Regular follow-up and coaching by RTP staff and supervisors were significantly reduced due to restricted access, and Communities of Practice sessions could not be held consistently, further hampering program effectiveness.

Since the outbreak of the conflict in October 2023, the situation has worsened considerably. In Gaza, ongoing violence has forced the closure of most schools, and

⁴ The likelihood of political instability and the extent to which it was incorporated in the risk register was not specifically addressed in the evaluation framework of this study or in the topic guides. However, as per the information available in the EQIE Results Report 2023, political instability was acknowledged in the project's risk register, particularly in the updated Risk Analysis from November 2021. Mitigation strategies included shifting to online modalities and coordinating with local partners.

many have been repurposed as shelters for internally displaced people, severely disrupting educational activities, including PBL. In the West Bank, security risks and movement restrictions have intensified, making it increasingly difficult for teachers to access schools and for RTP staff to provide in-person training or follow-up support. The conflict has further exacerbated existing challenges, with distance learning now being implemented sporadically and often inconsistently. According to the EQIE Results Report 2023, the overall ability to support children with disabilities and provide necessary resources has been severely affected, further limiting the program's reach. The ongoing violence, especially in Gaza, made it difficult to carry out key program activities, including the planned midline evaluation, which had to be cancelled due to the heightened security risks. As the conflict intensified, movement restrictions and safety concerns in the West Bank also increased, further limiting the project's capacity to monitor and report on key indicators (for further details, please refer to [Section 2.3](#)).

Training sessions for teachers and educational staff have frequently been rescheduled or cancelled due to lockdowns, movement restrictions, and security concerns, further delaying the program's progress. Despite these challenges, RTP has made efforts to adapt, for example by shifting to online modalities (for further details on the program's adaptability to context, see [Section 3.1.1](#)). However, these adaptations have been limited by the infrastructure damage and lack of consistent internet access in conflict zones, particularly in Gaza. This has significantly constrained the program's ability to engage effectively with its core methodologies and maintain continuity in education.

2 Evaluation Methodology

The political situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Gaza has had considerable implications for the programme implementation, which subsequently influenced this study's design and execution. Learn More was initially contracted in October 2023 to lead the Midline Evaluation, following the baseline conducted in 2020 as part of the EQIE project's monitoring and evaluation framework. However, following the outbreak of the war on Gaza in October 2023, the conflict escalated rapidly. As Israel intensified its operations in both Gaza and the West Bank, it became clear that continuing programme activities in these areas posed significant challenges. To ensure the safety of participants, Right To Play (RTP) and Learn More decided to cancel the originally planned midline evaluation, as proceeding with in-person data collection under such volatile conditions was considered risky. Consequently, the project was unable to report on certain key outcome indicators.

In February 2024, Learn More was engaged to support a smaller, qualitative study with a reduced scope, tailored to reflect the evolving context. For this study, RTP’s MEL team in Palestine led the data collection efforts, while Learn More oversaw data analysis and reporting. Due to the ongoing conflict, the study focused solely on the West Bank, as access to Gaza was not feasible. The evaluation concentrated on interventions related to intermediate outcomes 1100, 1200, and 1300⁵, covering the period of the EQIE project from 2020 to 2023. Please refer to [Table 2](#) for further details on tasks, timeframe and responsibilities of the current study.

Table 2: Tasks, timeframe and responsibilities of the present Qualitative Study

Study phase	Lead	Period
Design phase, finalization of the evaluation plan	Right To Play	January 2024
Design of the data collection tools	Right To Play	February 2024
Data collection phase	Right To Play	March and April 2024
Data quality assurance and translation	Right To Play	May 2024
Reporting phase- data analysis and reporting	Learn More	From June to October 2024

In light of these constraints, this study should be regarded as a light-touch qualitative case study rather than the originally planned midline evaluation, with limitations on the generalizability of findings due to the restricted sample size and reliance on virtual data collection methods.

2.1 Overview of Evaluation Design

This study focuses on the five criteria provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)⁶, namely:

- + **Relevance** – The extent to which the intervention’s objectives and design respond to participants, country, and partner needs, policies, and priorities.

⁵ Intermediate Outcome 1100: Increased integration of play-based learning by teachers to enhance children's reading skills in target educational institutions; Intermediate Outcome 1200: Increased supplemental reading practice of children [in target locations]; Intermediate Outcome 1300: Improved safe and inclusive learning environments in target educational institutions.

⁶ For further information, please refer to the OECD DAC webpage [here](#).

- + Coherence – The extent to which other interventions and policies support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa.
- + Effectiveness – The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.
- + Efficiency – The extent to which the intervention was well-managed.
- + Sustainability – The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.

Please refer to [Table 3](#) for further details on the Evaluation Framework.

Table 3: Evaluation Framework

OECD Criteria	Key Evaluation Question	Data Collection Method	Key Informants
Relevance and Coherence	To what extent has the EQIE project been able to respond to and/or adapt to the needs of children, including the needs of children with disabilities and other project participants? How has the EQIE project responded to changes in national educational needs and priorities in the context of fragilities relating to the COVID pandemic, strikes and war/conflict? To what extent is the EQIE project aligned to national priorities, needs and strategies including the Education Sector Strategic Plan? And with other development partners' programmes in Education including the priorities of the Education Cluster?	Desk review Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	RTP Staff MOEHE Staff Local stakeholders (local CSOs and NGOs/INGOs) Program participants (teachers, supervisors, parents, school principals)
Effectiveness	To what extent were the EQIE project's intended results achieved, taking into account adaptations or changes made to the initial results framework due to the changing context of Palestine? What unintended results (positive or negative) occurred? What is helping or hindering the EQIE project to achieve its objectives? What works best for whom, why and when?	Desk review Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	RTP Staff MOEHE Staff Local stakeholders (local CSOs and NGOs/INGOs) Program participants (teachers, supervisors, parents, school principals)
Efficiency	How have the human, financial, and administrative resources and procedures within the project supported or impeded the pursuit of	Desk review	RTP Staff

	the EQIE project's objectives, adaptation and innovation in relation to the changing context of Palestine? To what extent has the EQIE project been able to timely deliver its outputs given the changing context in Palestine?	Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	MOEHE Staff Local stakeholders (local CSOs and NGOs/INGOs) Program participants (teachers, supervisors, parents, school principals)
Sustainability	To what extent has the EQIE project been able to generate political will and support partners and stakeholders in developing capacities and establishing mechanisms to ensure ownership and the sustainability of the play-based methodology including the changing context of Palestine?	Desk review Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	RTP Staff MOEHE Staff Local stakeholders (local CSOs and NGOs/INGOs) Program participants (teachers, supervisors, parents, school principals)

The main goal of the study is to understand how the EQIE program has been implemented in the challenging context of Palestine. It aims to identify the adaptations or changes made since the project's design, the reasons behind these changes, and to provide key lessons to inform future education programs that better respond to the needs and context of Palestine.

The study aims to explore the alignment of the EQIE program with national priorities and strategies, including national educational goals. It seeks to draw key lessons from past and current cooperation and provide clear, forward-looking options that lead to strategic and actionable recommendations for improving the quality of the next project cycle. Additionally, it aims to identify factors that contribute to or hinder the successful implementation and achievement of results.

2.1.1 Sampling Approach

The study used a purposive sampling technique to select participants based on a stakeholder map prepared by the EQIE team. The sample selection considered gender, regional coverage in the West Bank, and the inclusion of all stakeholder types. **Table 4** below offers an overview of the evaluation participants consulted.

Table 4: Evaluation Participants

Evaluation Participants	Gender			Data Collection Tool
Implementers and Stakeholders	Female	Male	Total	
RTP staff	5	1	6	2 in-depth interviews; 2 group interviews
Ministry of Education	3	4	7	1 in-depth interview; 3 group interviews
Local NGO	0	1	1	1 in-depth interview
International NGO	1	0	1	1 in-depth interview
Sub-total	9	6	15	
Project Participants	Female	Male	Total	
Supervisors	13	6	19	2 FGDs
Teachers	42	7	49	5 FGDs
Principals	8	1	9	1 FGD
Parents	9	0	9	2 FGDs
Sub-total	72	14	86	
Total	81	20	101	

Key informant interviews (KIIs) involved a total of 15 interviewees and were conducted with project staff, as well as stakeholders from top- and middle-level management in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) and other potential development partners, including local and international NGOs. Focus group discussions (FGDs) involved 86 participants including project beneficiaries such as supervisors, teachers, principals, and parents. The respondents' list is presented in [Annex 3](#).

Due to time and resource constraints for the rapid study, RTP had to reduce the number of interviews and FGDs. FGDs included trained teachers from Nablus, South Nablus, Hebron, and Tulkarem, as these directorates had the largest proportion of trained teachers compared to Salfeet and Qalqilia.

There was a significant gender imbalance among participants, with more female than male participants. This discrepancy was also observed throughout the project and aligns with the higher percentage of female teachers at the primary level in Palestine reported by UNESCO, with 77.19% of primary-level teachers being female in 2022.⁷ Additionally, there was a notable gender gap in parent participation in FGDs, with a much higher number of mothers attending school activities compared to fathers.

2.1.2 Qualitative Data Collection Tools

Data collection entailed a total of ten key informant interviews (KIIs) and ten focus group discussions (FGDs).

2.1.2.1 Key Informant Interviews

The study included KIIs with stakeholders from the MOEHE and RTP staff involved in implementing the program. This provided valuable feedback on the processes and results of the EQIE program and included both implementation and policy perspectives. Two potential partner organizations were also interviewed. Due to time and resource constraints, some group interviews were also conducted, where participants with similar roles and association with the project were interviewed together. The KIIs were conducted in Arabic, transcribed, verified, and then translated into English before analysis.

2.1.2.2 Focus Group Discussions

FGDs with selected project participants were held remotely due to the unstable political situation. Participants included supervisors from the School Education Department and the Students Activities Department, teachers and principals from targeted schools, and parents who participated in EQIE activities from various directorates. Each FGD, led by the RTP MEL

⁷ For more information, see: <https://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=3801>

team, included 6-12 participants who provided qualitative insights into the interventions. The FGDs were conducted in Arabic, transcribed, verified, and then translated into English.

2.2 Data Collection

As mentioned, qualitative data collection focused only on the West Bank. Due to the current political situation, all FGDs were conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams, as participants were from different locations and directorates in the West Bank. Additionally, KIIs with participants residing outside Ramallah were conducted remotely. The remaining interviews were conducted in person within Ramallah.

Out of the 10 KIIs and 10 FGDs, only nine of each were recorded after obtaining participants' consent. One interview was not recorded because the participant did not consent, and one FGD was not recorded due to technical issues. Notes were taken manually for these two instances. The interviews and FGDs were conducted in Arabic, and transcriptions were verified for quality. Once verified, all data was translated into English and shared with the Learn More team for analysis and reporting.

2.3 Limitations

Due to the volatile context in Palestine, all interviews were conducted internally by RTP team members, as external data collection was not feasible. Due to movement restrictions, all focus group discussions (FGDs) were held online, which presented additional challenges compared to in-person sessions. These challenges included difficulties in interpreting non-verbal cues and managing group dynamics, which may have impacted the quality of the data collected. Furthermore, direct data collection with children was not included in this study, so information on child-related outcomes was gathered from indirect sources.

To mitigate these challenges and ensure data quality, the evaluation team adhered to principles of independence, transparency, ethics, and impartiality. During interviews and FGDs, detailed notes were taken alongside recordings, which were later transcribed in Arabic by head coaches. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Coordinator (MELC) then verified the quality of the transcriptions by cross-referencing them with recordings and notes, before translating them into English.

Additionally, mitigation strategies included triangulating the data with project documentation and relevant literature wherever possible. The Emerging Findings Workshop, held on 3 July 2024 with RTP members and local and institutional partners, provided an opportunity to discuss limitations, identify research gaps, and gather any missing information.

Due to these constraints, this study should be considered a **light-touch qualitative case study** rather than a comprehensive evaluation.

Due to significant differences in design, scope, and methodology, this study is not comparable to the Baseline Evaluation. The baseline used a quasi-experimental design with longitudinal tracking, whereas this assessment shifted to a light-touch qualitative study with a reduced sample size, limited to the West Bank, and focused on a narrower set of outcomes due to the ongoing conflict. These differences prevent any meaningful comparison between the findings.

3 Findings

3.1 Relevance and Coherence

Relevance and Coherence Summary of main findings	
+	The EQIE program aligns well with the MOEHE strategies, particularly in literacy and PBL.
+	EQIE effectively adapted to the challenges posed by COVID-19, teachers' strikes, and the ongoing conflict.
+	Effective coordination with MOEHE, the Education Cluster, and partners like Save the Children and UNICEF helped promote coherence and avoid duplication of efforts.
+	Teachers and supervisors reported that PBL strategies answered their and students' needs, but they still faced difficulties. This may point at a need to provide more follow-up, coaching and mentoring to teachers in order to implement the methodology in a transversal way.

According to the Evaluation Framework, this criteria aimed to assess:

- How aligned the EQIE program is with national priorities, the Education Sector Strategic Plan, and other development partners' education programs, including the Education Cluster priorities.
- How the EQIE program has responded to changes in national educational needs and priorities during the COVID pandemic, strikes, and conflicts.
- How well the EQIE program has responded to and adapted to the needs of children, including those with disabilities and other participants.

While there is sufficient data on the first two questions, there is limited information about the project's adaptations to the needs of Children With Disabilities (CWD).⁸

Most data to answer these questions comes from Right To Play (RTP) staff and Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) representatives, with additional insights from FGDs with teachers and supervisors. The available data do not provide sufficient information about the project's relevance to the caregivers and the broader community.

⁸ One possible explanation is that we did not include Gaza in the evaluation, which is the area where activities focus more on the inclusion of children with disabilities (CWD). It is also important to note that the interview questions generally assessed relevance to children's needs without explicitly mentioning CWD.

3.1.1 Relevance to Context

Since its inception, EQIE's implementation has faced numerous obstacles due to various contextual factors. The first major challenge was the significant learning loss among students caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, teachers' strikes in the West Bank in February and March 2023 led to prolonged public school closures. Finally, since October 2023, the attack on Gaza and the West Bank has severely impacted education and has created unprecedented challenges for the implementation of the EQIE program. In Gaza, where violence escalated rapidly, schools were closed or repurposed as shelters for internally displaced people, disrupting the play-based learning activities that are central to the program. Similarly, increased security risks and movement restrictions in the West Bank made it difficult for teachers to attend training sessions, and students had inconsistent access to schools. Teachers reported that, under the current conditions, children do not go to school every day. Instead, there are a few days each week dedicated to distance learning. The closure of schools and the restrictions on movement particularly in areas like Hebron and Nablus severely disrupted program delivery. The EQIE program adapted to the challenges posed by COVID-19 by shifting to online and virtual activities and integrating psychosocial support (PSS). PSS activities were indeed cross-cutting and were integrated into awareness-raising sessions for parents and children under the EQIE project in the West Bank. Also, in response to the emergency, PSS and learning kits were distributed to children in public schools in the West Bank to enhance their well-being and psychosocial health. These efforts aimed to support both the educational and emotional needs of children amidst the ongoing challenges. This adaptation ensured some level of educational continuity despite disruptions. EQIE also demonstrated flexibility in addressing needs arising from teachers' strikes and ongoing conflict. It continued to support educational activities even when other organizations paused, indicating a commitment to educational continuity under challenging circumstances.

"We were among the first institutions that as soon as COVID-19 started, or when there was a teachers' strike, or when the war broke out, [was] the first to send direct messages to the Ministry and partners to respond to the [emerging] needs. Immediately, we conducted a kind of initial assessment for everyone involved or working with us so that we could respond. We managed to respond, whether [offering activities] related to PSS skills or the aids needed by children with disabilities. When we created the PSS resources in 2020 to respond to the reality of COVID-19 or the psychosocial well-being package, we did it within less than a month. I believe our response was really quick."
Right To Play staff member

3.1.2 Relevance to participants' needs

The EQIE program was designed after extensive assessments to ensure alignment with the specific needs of Palestinian children. As reported by RTP staff, it aimed to meet the needs of children, including those with disabilities, by focusing on education quality and inclusivity. This project was also designed to address children's learning loss and low levels of literacy and numeracy, which have been worsened by recent crises.

Teachers and supervisors from the targeted areas noted that playful learning helps meet children's needs using less traditional and more engaging approaches.

"As for the project, it was in line with the needs of students and children, especially since children don't like rigid and rote learning. We ask teachers to diversify their teaching methods."

"Learning through play considers the developmental characteristics of children and that children learn while playing."

"Playful learning directly or indirectly addresses educational needs because it affects the quality of the curriculum. The interventions were appropriate because they focused on updating teachers and improving the classroom environment and structure."

Supervisors from targeted directorates

Teachers greatly appreciated the support from EQIE in helping them transition from traditional teaching methods to more playful and interactive techniques. Although many teachers were already interested in moving away from traditional teaching methods, they lacked the resources and knowledge to implement more innovative approaches. Before participating in EQIE's activities and training, they did not have access to the appropriate materials or opportunities to develop these skills. The EQIE program addressed this gap by providing exactly what the teachers needed: comprehensive training and resources that empowered them to adopt and apply new, engaging teaching strategies.

"Some teachers [already] wanted to [...] move away from rote learning, but they did not know how to do it or what methods and strategies they could use. This project [...] taught us how to deal with students and use these strategies in our classes. It came as a support and reinforcement of active learning, which education has been oriented towards for years. But now, my colleagues [...] pointed out that this is emergency education due to the current political situation [...], which means there is less opportunity to use these strategies or implement the project on the ground because of the lack of time."

Teacher, Hebron

While teachers appreciated the play-Based Learning (PBL) methods, they also reported encountering challenges in implementing these approaches effectively.

One of the most frequently cited concerns was the difficulty of implementing PBL in overcrowded classrooms. Teachers felt that managing large numbers of students made it difficult to use active games in their lessons. Since PBL is designed to work in such environments, this may point to the need for more training to help teachers apply PBL strategies effectively in these conditions.

Teachers also felt time-pressured, noting that PBL activities were difficult to fit into their already busy schedules due to curriculum demands. This pressure further increased due to the current emergency context. As PBL is intended to be integrated into daily lessons, more coaching may be needed to show teachers how to seamlessly incorporate it without adding to their workload. In addition, some teachers found the preparation for PBL overwhelming, despite RTP's encouragement to use simple, familiar games. This confirms the need for ongoing support to help teachers integrate PBL more easily into their teaching practices.

Concerns were also raised about student engagement. While PBL boosted motivation and concentration, it didn't always address deeper learning issues, such as reading comprehension. Teachers noted that some students, particularly those with learning challenges, participated in games without fully understanding the content. This feedback suggests that while PBL fosters participation and engagement, further differentiation in activities might be needed to ensure that all students, including those with learning difficulties, can benefit fully from the method.

Overall, the obstacles to implementing PBL may arise more from the challenging teaching context than from the methodology itself. Greater emphasis on training, coaching, and integration of PBL into the curriculum could help address these concerns. However, these insights are based on anecdotal evidence, and further research is needed for a more comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges teachers face.

3.1.3 Coherence

According to respondents, the EQIE program aligns with the MOEHE education policy objectives, particularly in the areas of literacy and PBL. Several respondents from the MOEHE highly appreciated the strong dialogue RTP carried out with them, which helped set clear goals and align with the MOEHE's needs.

"In my opinion, the specific interventions of the project closely align with the Ministry's strategies regarding literacy, specifically [as] literacy is one of the goals the ministry seeks to achieve in the [...] in the present and in the future. It is a project to improve the quality of education focusing on teaching Arabic language and reading, as well as mathematics, through play. Therefore, in this specific aspect, it intersects with the Ministry's strategic plan, which focuses on reading as its primary goal. [...] Let's say the current concern, especially post-COVID, is the significant educational loss related to

literacy and reading effectiveness. Hence, we need an appropriate intervention to meet this need.”

MOEHE Representative

Right To Play’s project staff emphasized that the interventions were designed to match national educational goals. EQIE’s focus on improving the quality of education through innovative methods such as teaching literacy and numeracy through play was considered relevant. Respondents highlighted its potential in addressing educational losses post-COVID and improving literacy rates.

Different RTP staff highlighted how coordination with the MOEHE, the Education Cluster⁹, and other development partners working in the education sector was generally effective in promoting coherence and alignment, helping to avoid duplication. They also reported how coordination efforts with organizations like Save the Children and UNICEF ensured resources were utilized effectively.

The project incorporated mechanisms for regular review and alignment with changing government strategies and priorities, including annual evaluations and regular meetings with partners. This ongoing feedback ensured that the project responded to emerging needs from the MOEHE, from other partners or from its beneficiaries.

“There are joint efforts between us and the institutions that aim to achieve the same goal. Many joint meetings have been held to attempt to distribute the efforts made to improve the quality of inclusive education. These efforts serve as a reference for us during project planning. [...] For example, a certain institution within the education clusters may be involved in rehabilitating health facilities. [...] Some institutions also contribute and provide psychological and social support, which influences children's education and holistic development. There is certainly ongoing coordination between us (Right To Play) and the education groups, and during our planning, this coordination serves as a reference for us. This allows for the division of [responsibilities for] these needs among the various entities in the Education Cluster according to our tools and the changes we can make based on the available budget.”

Right To Play staff member

⁹ The Global Education Cluster is a convener of a wide range of education in emergency stakeholders at both country and global levels. The Occupied Palestinian Territory Education cluster works in close partnership with the Ministry of Education and UNRWA to prepare and respond to crises including attacks on schools, risks facing children on the way to school, school demolitions and other threats to education and protection. For further information, visit: <https://www.educationcluster.net/country/occupied-palestinian-territory>

However, a member of the RTP staff noted that the complex bureaucratic structure of the MOEHE sometimes hindered the Ministry's ability to lead the coordination among all actors and partners in the education sector. A stronger leadership role from the MOEHE would have been beneficial, especially considering that in the current crisis, CSOs and partners are more focused on implementing their projects.

3.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness Summary of main findings	
+	The EQIE program effectively trained supervisors and principals, improving their understanding of PBL and building capacity within the MoE. Positive shifts in attitudes towards PBL were noted among participants. The training also fostered professional relationships among teachers and supervisors, enhancing the exchange of experiences and materials.
+	Continuous support and follow-up sessions for teachers helped maintain momentum and encouraged the adoption of PBL strategies. Teachers reported significant improvements in their pedagogical practices.
+	PBL strategies created more engaging and inclusive learning environments, particularly benefiting students facing learning challenges. Teachers and principals observed improved student participation and interest in learning.
+	Activities like the National Reading Competition and the mobile library bus were highly appreciated, with calls for their continuation and expansion. Sensitization activities for parents increased their commitment to supporting their children's education and improved the home learning environment.
+	The volatile political context hindered the program's smooth implementation.

According to the Evaluation Framework, this criteria aimed to assess:

- To what extent were the EQIE program's intended results achieved, taking into account adaptations or changes made to the initial results framework due to the changing context of Palestine?
- What unintended results (positive or negative) occurred?
- What is helping or hindering the EQIE program to achieve its objectives?

Most participants gave details about certain activities such as teacher, supervisor, and principal training; awareness sessions with caregivers; the National Reading Competition; and the mobile library bus. Other activities like out-of-school learning days, in-school learning days, and the rehabilitation and construction of spaces or facilities were not covered.

3.2.1 Supervisors' training and professional development

Training supervisors is an important part of the EQIE program in Palestine, thanks to Right To Play's (RTP) strong partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE). In recent years, the MOEHE has adopted and approved RTP's literacy and numeracy resources specifically for training Educational Supervisors.

Several respondents have positively commented on the effectiveness of the EQIE program in training supervisors and building partner capacity. According to RTP program managers, the training of trainers (ToT) sessions have been successful. These sessions have helped supervisors understand the importance of playful learning methods, and many supervisors have shown a positive change in attitude towards PBL during the training.

“I’ll give you an example, specifically about a supervisor because I attended the supervisors’ training. In the beginning, specifically during the Training of Trainers (TOT), there were people, without naming names, especially a supervisor, who didn’t like the training at all. He was not at all pleased with the idea of using games and playing in training. He was not convinced at all that at his age [that] he needed to use such methods. He was very skeptical about the whole concept. [...] But towards the end of the training, after 11 days [...] when I saw him during the refresher training in Jericho, [...] he was now supportive, talking about play-based learning, and actively participating.”
Right To Play staff member

All interviewed RTP staff confirmed this; reporting that the training for supervisors was highly praised for its quality and effectiveness. Both supervisors and MOEHE representatives who attended training sessions reportedly expressed their appreciation.

All supervisors involved in data collection confirmed that the quality of the training was excellent. They reported that it helped improve or build their knowledge of PBL and taught them the importance of a teaching approach that focuses on the well-being and psychological aspects of child development. Additionally, they praised the training’s practical focus.

“During my follow-up period with the Right To Play [training], [I observed that] supervisors have indeed gained many skills. Let’s be honest, most supervisors didn’t have teaching strategies for reading, math, or play-based learning as part of their skill set initially. They acquired these skills through problems that arose in play-based activities and projects to improve the quality of education.”

“Although I did not attend the training that my colleagues attended, I felt that they benefited from it, and its impact became clear in some of the workshops that a colleague of mine presented in some of the secondary schools. I noticed that [the effect of the training] was reflected in the [competencies’] level of my colleague as a supervisor. [...] The training that you provided to the supervisors was of a good standard, and I hope that you will complete it.”

“According to my opinion and the extent of benefit from the training, there is no doubt that it is excellent. I personally benefited a lot from the workshop and training. For the first time, the training is a practical aspect. This is a beautiful and important thing. It is not a rigid, difficult, and sterile theoretical subject. Rather, it was excellent despite the

*crowded time for its implementation.”
Supervisors from targeted directorates*

3.2.2 School staff professional development and adoption of PBL practices

Among the activities of the EQIE program, RTP also carries out PBL training for **principals**. RTP staff explained that involving principals is crucial because they are teachers’ primary supervisors. By training principals, RTP aims to create a system where principals can effectively support, motivate, and monitor the quality of teaching. This approach helps to ensure that the benefits of the training extend throughout the school. Training principals has proved to be an effective strategy for building a comprehensive, self-reinforcing system, which is further strengthened by the training of supervisors and teachers.

*“It’s good that they [trained] the principals because we want to see how to [support] our teachers and not [let them] take [this new approach] on their own. This was great.”
Principal from targeted school*

Similar to the supervisors, many principals reported a positive shift towards PBL. Initially, they were doubtful, but after the RTP training, they became more supportive. The training helped them understand the importance and potential of playful teaching.

*“My first view was that learning through play can be a waste of time for children because they will spend a lot of time playing to the detriment of the[learning], but when we [participated in the training] with Right To Play or even with any other [...] institutions, we benefited a lot as teachers, principals, and students. [...] It benefits the student, as normal teaching gives only the mental skills [such as] analysis, knowledge and memory, but when the student practices and understands the information through playful learning, this makes the student develop creativity [and] creative thinking, higher mental skills, it opens the student’s brain. [...] The more I follow the methods and the teachers [have] experience in teaching, the more [they can] meet the needs of students at different levels. I am in favour of learning with play, especially from the first to fourth grade, and as a principal, of course, I benefited a lot from the topic, I also learned about new methods.”
Principal from targeted school*

The EQIE program has effectively provided continuous support to **teachers**, helping them adopt and implement PBL strategies. Training principals and supervisors has been highlighted as a key method to ensure teachers receive ongoing support. Additionally, the continuous training and follow-up sessions have been crucial in maintaining momentum. This ongoing, hands-on support has been praised by MOEHE representatives.

“During the training, trainers [...] conducted the training excellently. The Right To Play organization continuously followed up, and through communication with the Ministry, they monitored teachers in their workplaces, and classrooms, followed them, gave them tips, and more.”

MOEHE staff representative

According to respondents, teachers have shown significant improvements in their pedagogical practices, with many effectively adopting and applying PBL methodologies in their classrooms.

“Teachers [have moved] away from the traditional indoctrination method and have become more like facilitators in the classroom.”

Principal from targeted school

Some teachers who had previously participated in other PBL training praised RTP’s approach for helping them better organize activities and making this teaching method more accessible.

“We were using these [methods] before we took the training. We were [already] adding play to learning, but what I gained from [RTP’s training] was more organization and a better methodology in terms of steps and clear goals for [the games and PBL]. This provided more structure and feedback on how to use these games more effectively in our work.”

Teachers, Hebron and Tulkarem

Moreover, both teachers and supervisors noted that these trainings allowed them to get to know their colleagues better, fostering professional relationships and encouraging the exchange of relevant experiences and materials.

“The course was an opportunity to get to know our coworkers and we even got to know new [teaching] styles and strategies from them, and we built relationships and [had] meetings between us, and we benefited from them, each one transferred her experiences and strategies [to the other participants] and [this gave] us more than what the course [gave] us.”

Teacher, Hebron

3.2.3 Changes in Children’s Reading and Socio-Emotional Skills

3.2.3.1 Children’s Reading Outcomes

According to respondents, the EQIE program has had a noticeable effect on various factors that contribute to children's reading abilities. There were not many respondents who directly referred to EQIE leading to reading improvements. Most of them, including teachers,

supervisors, principals and MOEHE representatives, highlighted the project's success in creating an engaging and motivating learning environment through PBL activities.

Respondents identified three key reasons for children's improvement in reading: the PBL approach encourages participation and motivates learning, it simplifies learning and makes teaching more effective, and it creates a more engaging learning environment.

Many teachers reported that using games and playful activities increased children's interest in the content of their lessons, motivating students to learn so they could better participate in classroom games and activities.

"I noticed, on both the good and weak levels of my participation in the learning-by-play strategy, that they started trying more to read in order to be able to play."
Teacher, Hebron

For example, one principal conducted a small experiment to test the effect of PBL. Two different classes were tested during math lessons: the same teacher used the PBL approach in one class and the traditional learning approach in the other. When the teacher was absent, the group using traditional methods was happy, while the PBL group went out to find the math teacher or begged to find another teacher using the same methods. While the evidence is anecdotal, it points to children's increased interest and enthusiasm during lessons applying PBL methods.

"I agreed with the teacher to do an experiment and we had two divisions, A and B. We taught to class A using PBL, and [the other continued] with traditional learning, [using] the usual tools, the book and the notebook. We noticed that [...] if the teacher was absent, the students [of the PBL group] went out to find the Math teacher, [asking] 'Where is the teacher? We need someone that [teaches as] Ikram', [...] while the class [using traditional methods] did nothing, students were happy that the Math teacher was absent."
Principal from targeted school

Many respondents observed a general increase in children's participation, both during lessons and extracurricular activities like the National Reading Competition. Several respondents mentioned that activities like these boosted students' confidence and participation, observing a positive increase throughout the competition implementation period in the number of students enrolled.

"I am talking about the implementation of the National Reading Competition. It has certainly had a positive impact on students in schools, and the results have been very good in terms of the number of students participating [...]. We notice an increase in numbers from year to year."
Supervisor from targeted directorates

The second reason for children's improvements in reading is that the PBL approach simplifies learning and makes teaching more effective. Using games and playful activities makes the content more interesting for children and easier to understand. Teachers reported that simplifying abstract concepts and linking them to children's daily lives helps them learn without relying solely on memorization.

"The various reading games simplify the reading skills and abstract concepts [...], and therefore when these skills are linked to life contexts, this helps [children] to improve. Simplifying abstract concepts and keeping [children] away from boredom, routine, and memorization in education, so they love the Arabic language and [develop] a greater interest in it, [...] all of this results in a noticeable improvement [in all students]."
Teacher, Nablus

The third reason some respondents attributed to children's improvement is that PBL creates a more engaging environment where all relationships improve. This makes children more attracted to the school environment and more interested in learning. Encouraging social interactions among students allows them to participate more easily.

"The classroom environment, school environment, student-student relationships, student-teacher relationships, and teacher-teacher relationships have all improved. The project introduced new methods that made teaching enjoyable and created a more cohesive and attractive environment in schools."
MOEHE representative

A few teachers also attributed children's improvements in literacy and numeracy to the use of games and their specific structure. They observed how PBL had a direct positive effect on children's reading and comprehension skills.

"The [PBL] strategy impacted [students'] speed in reading and enhanced their reading comprehension. Students became able to understand the text [...]. We hear the students discuss how they relate this to their lives, the students gain new life skills and improve in reading, [they] think, [they] criticize. I emphasize that reading speed and reading comprehension increased."
Supervisor from targeted directorate

"The good thing about the game is that all the students participate and even the weak students participate and play, but what you noticed is that they don't understand what they are doing."
Teacher, South Nablus

Overall, while PBL has shown a positive effect on different elements conducive to children's learning, some limitations remain in balancing playfulness with the learning and academic goals of the PBL approach, pointing to the need for more follow-up visits from RTP staff and supervisors, especially during the initial stages of implementation, and coaching for teachers. This would provide more consistent support and guidance to help teachers effectively integrate PBL with academic outcomes.

3.2.3.2 Children's Socio-Emotional Learning Outcomes

Many respondents highlighted how the project positively affected children's life skills. They reported improvements in children's self-confidence, which led to increased participation in lessons and activities, especially for students facing learning challenges. Other respondents praised the PBL methodology for enhancing students' relational and communication skills, making the entire class environment more cooperative.

"I noticed that even weak students became creative thinking, motivated students to explore solutions, they started looking for alternative solutions, and they also developed social skills, there was social interaction and cooperation, these things also raised the motivation of students, and I have positive participation with peers, which means that students feel that they work as a team, not individually, I am for learning with play, not only for primary grades, for all stages."

Principal from targeted school

3.2.4 Learning Environment and Culture of Reading

3.2.4.1 Safety and Inclusivity of Learning Environment

The play-based learning (PBL) methodology is designed to enhance inclusivity in learning environments, particularly in overcrowded classrooms. Traditional teaching methods often exclude some students in large classes, while PBL ensures that all children can actively participate, making lessons more inclusive and helping to leave no one behind. As noted by an RTP staff member, the project has made significant progress in fostering inclusive learning environments by involving all students. However, as highlighted in [Section 3.1.2](#), some teachers still struggle to manage large groups of students when using active games. Since PBL is intended to work in such settings, this may suggest a need for additional training to help teachers apply these strategies more effectively.

Principals from targeted schools also appreciated how games enabled teachers to include all students in their lessons, including those facing learning challenges. They highlighted that the RTP training made them feel more responsible for children who may need additional support, ensuring these children are no longer marginalized but involved in all activities.

“I mean, usually, students who are at a low level are a bit neglected in class, but the game learning strategy allowed students who are at a low or below average level to participate in the game, so we have participation from all levels in the class.”

“Right To Play training drew the teacher's attention to the special cases within the class, which in the past was a marginalized group. The teachers [used to] work with those who can work with them, but now teachers have become responsible for this [previously marginalized] group and have special activities for some [students] to integrate them into the educational process. We noticed that many female students [...] that in the past they were marginalized now within the activities and games carried out in the classroom they enjoy their improvements [...].”

Principals from targeted schools

A teacher reported that using games helped her better identify potential special needs in her students that were not evident before adopting the PBL approach.

“Sometimes the game reveals some things to the teacher. [...] I noticed that some games can reveal some gaps in the students. ”

Teacher, South Nablus

From a broader perspective, many respondents, including supervisors and teachers, confirmed that the PBL approach has particularly significant results for students facing learning challenges or needing additional support.

“One of the satisfactory results [of this project] was the positive impact of the methodology on low-achieving students, [as] they achieved very great achievements and their level of achievement increased significantly, not to mention the psychological aspect.”

“The benefit spread to include low-achieving, low-level, and intermediate-level students, and I noticed that they made significant progress in both reading and writing.”

Teachers, Nablus

3.2.4.2 Initiatives Supporting Reading

The project has successfully provided supplemental learning opportunities, although challenges in implementation have been noted.

Besides training teachers and supervisors and offering sensitization initiatives for parents and the broader community, the EQIE program also designed additional activities to improve children's access to supplemental learning opportunities. Among these was the National

Reading Competition, which, as described in [Section 3.2.3.1](#), was highly favoured by most respondents, who expressed a desire for its continuation.

"I support the continuation of the National Reading Competition because the benefits are clearly reflected in the students across various fields. It is not limited to just reading. The students' ability to criticize, write stories, and be creative in multiple areas has become evident. This is an important point, but there are practices that should also continue, including quality."

*"It is necessary to repeat the National Reading Competition every year, ensuring that all schools with students from the first to third stages participate because of its positive impact on students, whether their participation is to benefit academically or personally."
Supervisors from targeted directorates*

Respondents also mentioned the mobile library bus and wished for its continuation and expansion in the coming years, so more mobile library buses can support a larger number of children.

"The reading stations are for a group of students [from] all age stages and [...] have had a high positive impact on all schools, both in remote and non-remote [areas]. It was fun for the students to leave [...] the textbook and the traditional school library system, go out to the bus, choose a story, and read it. [These were] new stories not usually available in the school library. We strongly support its presence for longer periods."

*"The mobile library has a great and clear resonance, and students loved it a lot. I suggest that one bus is not enough, and I support the [addition] of a second mobile bus. The students' reactions to the mobile library are shocking due to their intense love for it. It has a large and clear impact on the students, and with a second library, the period of students' benefit from it increases throughout the year."
Supervisors from targeted directorates*

While these supplemental opportunities were highly appreciated, some respondents also identified areas for improvement. For access to books and stories suitable for different age groups, some supervisors pointed out the need to directly support school libraries. Regarding the reading marathons, a supervisor noted that holding these activities in big and crowded cities distracts from learning activities due to the chaotic surroundings.

3.2.4.3 Home Environment

In its effort to create safe and inclusive learning environments, the EQIE program also offers sensitization activities like awareness sessions for parents, teachers, and children about child rights and PBL.

Many parents showed a strong commitment to supporting their children's learning. For example, they enroll their children in other competitions (like the Holy Quran competition) or take them to the municipal library. They understand how crucial their support is for their children's learning journey.

Parents who participated in these activities appreciated the opportunity to spend time with their children and the broader importance of the PBL approach in their children's learning and development. They valued how PBL offered an alternative to time spent on phones or in front of the television.

"I have always loved the time [we spent at the RTP activity]. I will never forget when they asked children, 'Why do you love your mom?'. We were asked the same question. [I loved] the idea of participating in activities with your child, in things that are sweet and strengthen their personality. Our children are currently deprived of [...] playing games. But it's very nice to develop the idea of playing with study, and this is what I liked about the project. I was very pleased with it. [...] We try to get our children to do activities, move, get away from the phone, get away from the TV, but [this] is the main factor that [ruins] them and makes them waste time with their study [...], but playing really strengthens them. I saw how happy they were, as well as the mothers. The day I participated with the children was very good. God willing, we will participate more often."

Parent from targeted shcool

Other parents also explained how participating in these activities made their children more interested in learning.

A mother highlighted how these sessions helped her better support her child.

"The [training provided] was of high quality. It helped the mother in how she dealt with the child, for example, how she taught him English and Arabic, how she focused, and how the child was in class. This course develops active methods of teaching and learning."

Parent from targeted shcool

A principal observed how these activities greatly improved the cohesion between parents, teachers, and children.

"As for playful learning, frankly, the most attractive thing was the link between the local community and parents with the teacher to create this wonderful atmosphere. There was a lot of bonding here."

Principal from targeted school

Overall, the project has strengthened the relationship between parents, teachers, and children, enhancing the learning environment and making it more inclusive.

3.2.5 Success and Hindering Factors

3.2.5.1 Factors Supporting Implementation

Respondents were generally satisfied with EQIE implementation, with several success factors highlighted by RTP staff, teachers, supervisors, and MOEHE representatives.

The project's effective planning, organization, and logistics were frequently mentioned as key contributors to its successful implementation. According to RTP program managers and coordinators, the project maintained regular monitoring at all levels, which was crucial for sustainability and responsiveness. MOEHE representatives also appreciated the excellent communication skills and adherence to deadlines, rating the project's coordination efforts, planning and logistics highly.

“First, we need to acknowledge that the project has not fallen short in this aspect. Good planning and adherence to deadlines have been evident. [Right To Play has] also shown excellent communication skills. I personally give them an A rating; they deserve five stars for this aspect. [...] The coordination, planning, communication, and logistics have been excellent from the start. [Right To Play] has been consistently prepared, and we just [had] to request what we needed.”

MOEHE Representative

Adaptability and flexibility in addressing logistical challenges were also noted. For instance, RTP personnel described how adjustments in the procurement process, such as delegating tool purchases to local staff, facilitated smoother operations and supported community involvement (for further details, see [Section 3.3.1](#)).

Government interest and support were significant factors in the project's success. RTP staff pointed out that the Ministry's support of the RTP project during the teachers' strike period demonstrated the project's value.

“However, within our capabilities, I believe we achieved a lot and you can see this, from the ministry's [support to] us and the adoption of our special methodology because we were the only ones working during the teachers' strike period. We were the only ones working [at that time], meaning Right To Play was the only INGO allowed to work during that period of crisis. This reflects the value of what we offer, which the ministry and people see.”

RTP staff member

Involving a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, supervisors, parents, and school principals, contributed significantly to the project's effectiveness and sustainability. This approach helped create a cohesive and self-sustaining system that understands the potential of PBL and supports its use (see also [Section 3.4.1](#)). Moreover, RTP's continuous support to trainees strongly enhanced the implementation of the PBL approach in schools.

"When comparing this project to previous ones, we used to rely solely on teacher training without expanding and involving broader categories. However, now we target anyone who influences children's learning, including teachers, supervisors, parents, and school principals. We have become accustomed to holding regular meetings with decision-makers in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE). The picture has become clear to the project participants, especially after they have experienced the benefits and effectiveness of the activities completed and the extent to which this methodology is adopted."

Right Too Play staff member

"The continuous follow-up and monitoring by the Right To Play organization provided support and guidance to teachers, ensuring they implemented the methodologies correctly. The integrated and multi-level approach has also been effective, with training provided to supervisors, principals, and teachers in a structured manner, enhancing overall adoption and sustainability."

MOEHE Representative

3.2.5.2 Factors Hindering Implementation

First and foremost, the ongoing political instability, conflict, and strikes were major hindrances to the project's implementation. These external factors led to irregular attendance, cancellation or delays of activities, and disruption of project plans. Follow-up visits and coaching from RTP staff were minimal, and Community of Practice sessions could not be conducted effectively, which affected the program's support structure (for further details, refer to [Section 1.4](#)).

In addition to the contextual challenges, RTP staff, teachers, and other respondents identified other issues affecting the program's implementation. However, the details provided were limited, and there was no in-depth analysis of these challenges. As a result, this anecdotal evidence does not give a full understanding of how much these issues impacted the program's effectiveness and smooth execution. More thorough analysis will be needed in future evaluations.

A recurrent issue raised by RTP staff was the limitation of available staff, which affected the team's capacity to manage the high volume of activities. The team composition included 1 Program Manager, 1 Project Officer (despite turnover among three officers), 3 Project

Coordinators, and 2 MEL staff, which was later consolidated into 1 MEL Coordinator due to staff resignations. Although some staff members reported feeling “overwhelmed,” specific details on which activities were delayed or hindered due to these constraints were not provided.

However, it is possible that the high turnover in key positions, a common challenge for many organizations in the region, contributed to the perception of being overburdened and of inefficiencies in activity management.

Challenges were also reported within the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) team, particularly regarding the management of diverse donor reporting requirements and indicators. However, respondents did not provide specific examples of inefficiencies. It appears that the MEL team struggled with an excessive number of indicators, and staff turnover may have contributed to disruptions in data collection and reporting processes. Although these challenges are typical within the region’s limited job market for MEL professionals, the lack of standardized processes to address varying reporting requirements may have exacerbated the situation.

Logistical challenges, particularly those related to procurement, were also highlighted. Delays and unclear planning in procurement processes were commonly mentioned, although respondents did not provide specific instances of how these issues impacted project timelines. It was noted that external factors, such as coordination with the Ministry of Education, contributed to these delays. Additionally, financial constraints were identified as a challenge, though the specifics of these constraints were not clearly outlined by respondents.

Further examination of these areas in future evaluations would be necessary to fully assess the extent of these challenges and their potential impact on the program’s successful implementation.

3.3 Efficiency

Efficiency Summary of main findings	
+	RTP staff made strong efforts to ensure efficiency despite unexpected challenges and changes required by the Palestinian context.
+	Effective communication among team members and partners, along with comprehensive oversight by the project manager, contributed to efficient and adaptive implementation.
+	Flexibility in administrative and logistical procedures improved operations. Adjustments, such as delegating tool purchases to local focal points facilitated work and saved time.
+	Financial resources provided consistency and continuity.
+	Communication with government partners, especially MOEHE, enhanced project efficiency. However, coordination challenges, delays in approvals, and inconsistent communications within the MOEHE sometimes hampered the timely delivery of project outputs.

The revised evaluation framework of this study aimed to assess:

- How human, financial, and administrative resources and procedures supported or impeded the EQIE program's objectives, adaptation, and innovation in Palestine's changing context.
- To what extent the EQIE program delivered its outputs on time given the changing context in Palestine.

It is important to note that this section draws exclusively on qualitative data from interviews with Right To Play (RTP) and Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) staff about the components perceived to provide the highest or lowest efficiency. For a more comprehensive assessment of project efficiency, future evaluations should include a quantitative analysis of project expenditures against the planned budget.

3.3.1 Operational Efficiency

In the volatile Palestinian context, all respondents agreed that RTP staff made a strong effort to ensure the most efficiency possible, considering all the unexpected challenges and changes required by the context.

As for **human resources**, RTP staff noted that effective communication among team members and partners contributed to efficient and adaptive implementation. Clear advice, follow-up, and feedback were highlighted as enhancing professionalism and efficiency. Additionally, having the program manager oversee all activities provides a comprehensive and clear overview of the entire project, which ensures its efficiency.

“Regarding human resources, effective communication between us as the Right To Play team and our partners and supporters, including trainees and others, formed a supportive link that enhanced the professionalism and efficiency of our work through clear and precise advice, follow-up, and feedback.”
Right To Play staff member

Some respondents highlighted the need for continuous adjustments and adaptations to the changing context, and how positively RTP staff responded to emerging needs and changes in plans. Flexibility in **administrative and logistical procedures** facilitated the project's operations and improved efficiency.

“Regarding logistical matters, some adjustments were needed, such as the transportation of tools from our headquarters to the activity site, which posed an additional burden and responsibility. However, this was overcome by delegating the task of purchasing tools to the responsible person at the activity center, rather than requiring a team to travel from headquarters to the activity center for transportation and delivery. This not only supports the community where the project is being implemented but also facilitates our team's work, saving time and effort.”
Right To Play staff member

Right To Play (RTP) staff highly appreciated the support provided by **financial resources**, which granted consistency and continuity to the project. Despite frequent procedural changes, which the RTP finance office promptly adapted to, financial processes were considered supportive and alleviated many operational issues, although no specific details were provided.

3.3.2 Partnership efficiency

Right To Play (RTP) staff reported that efforts in communication with government partners significantly enhanced project efficiency, as confirmed by MOEHE representatives as well. RTP staff tried to understand and communicate with all involved Ministry departments to improve efficiency.

"Right to Play was very involved in this matter [PBL], which is very good, and [they] differ from other [organizations] in terms of precision in execution and coordination. Of course, coordination was high, and there was also great cooperation between them and us as a Ministry."

"I agree. There was accuracy in communication, and their work was more precise than many other organizations. They would not go to [do activities in the] schools without informing us. Communication is excellent."

MOEHE Representatives

Coordination challenges with the MOEHE were also noted. Delays in approvals, changes in internal structuring, and occasional communication gaps between departments, sometimes affected the timely delivery of project outputs. Given the current challenges and emergency context, and how these may have significantly impacted operations, future evaluations may explore whether these issues were primarily driven by the ongoing situation or reflect broader, systemic coordination needs.

3.4 Sustainability

Sustainability Summary of main findings	
+	The EQIE program generated MoE's willingness to support the PBL methodology.
+	Training supervisors created a self-sustaining model by equipping teachers to train new teachers,.
+	The project's multi-level approach supports long-term sustainability and cross-sectoral collaboration.
+	There is interest in expanding the program to more schools and directorates, but budget constraints and the need for a larger training team pose challenges.
+	The partnership with the MOEHE has strengthened, with RTP resources approved for training and alignment with the Palestinian Curriculum. While the MOEHE is committed to PBL, its long-term focus on the methodology remains uncertain due to the pressing need to address the current crisis and related challenges.

The sustainability analysis of the EQIE program focuses on understanding to what extent and how the project has generated political will, supported the development of capacities, and established mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of PBL methodologies in the changing context of Palestine. This analysis relies on qualitative data from various stakeholders, including Right To Play (RTP) staff, Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) representatives, and community members. Although many respondents offered valuable insights, there is limited information on concrete plans for sustainability.

3.4.1 Prospects for Sustainability

Several respondents indicated that the EQIE program successfully generated the political will (the commitment of government and key institutions to adopt, support, and sustain the play-based methodology through policies, resources, and capacity-building efforts) to continue supporting the PBL methodology. RTP staff observed that the MOEHE showed strong buy-in, as evidenced by plans to independently continue activities like the National Reading Competition after the project's end. Some respondents from the MOEHE noted that while there is political support, limitations remain in the inclusivity and practical implementation of the PBL methodology across all educational levels (school, community, administrative, ministerial and grassroots). They suggested that broader adoption and continuous methodological improvement are needed to more significantly impact the entire education system, confirming the strong Ministry interest in the PBL methodology and its positive effects.

"While our success in many schools is commendable, it's not enough to say we've impacted the education system in Palestine. We lean more towards demonstrating practical evaluation of classroom performance, perhaps through conferences documenting success stories at the school level, academic achievement level, and teacher level. There needs to be positive aspects to the use of play in education, with training for teachers starting even at the university level, incorporating this methodology practically into their studies. It's essential for the results of play-based learning to be visible to expand this methodology across universities, teachers, and policy levels. Enriching the methodology itself by identifying gaps, developing, and updating it is also crucial. Play-based learning needs to be a widely used methodology in all Palestinian schools, especially given the country's circumstances where a sense of security is lacking, and the school environment is not adequately conducive to learning."
MOEHE representative

Many respondents from both the RTP team and the MOEHE said that the supervisors' training is one of the key mechanisms granting the project's sustainability. By equipping supervisors who then train new teachers, the project aimed to create a self-sustaining model.

"I believe the project's sustainability involves training and strengthening the project. [Right To Play] trained supervisors and followed up with teachers in the training and

development processes. They tried to ensure project sustainability even if the project ends or support from the organization stops because they trained and mentored individuals who witnessed how teachers work in the classroom, identified areas for improvement, and facilitated knowledge exchange among teachers and schools across the institution and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.”

MOEHE representative

Another aspect identified by RTP staff as contributing to long-term sustainability is the integrated and holistic design of the EQIE program. Activities were designed to spread the PBL methodology at various levels, including school, community, administrative, ministerial, and grassroots levels. This multi-level integration may create a comprehensive support system for PBL, building capacity at different levels of the education system to support others and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration.

“We created an interactive classroom [in a school]; we repaired and rehabilitated this classroom, but after a while, the school's principal asked us where we got our furniture from and if there were certain standards we adopted in preparing this interactive class. So, we went for the second time [to the school], and [the principal] invited us to inaugurate [another] class, similar to the one Right To Play created, [repaired] through community efforts and school management. This is one of the successes we achieved. We don't necessarily have to do it ourselves because we also want sustainability, and this is what we saw on the ground.”

Right To Play staff member

Additionally, the project showed potential for scalability. Both RTP personnel and Ministry representatives expressed interest in expanding the program to more schools and directorates. Government representatives praised the project's positive results and expressed the desire to include more schools in future phases. Some parents also expressed interest in implementing these activities beyond schools, such as in parent committees and local associations. However, RTP staff reported challenges to scalability, including budget constraints and the need for a larger training team.

According to RTP's progress report¹⁰, the partnership with the MOEHE has strengthened in recent years. The MOEHE approved RTP's resources for training educational supervisors and began aligning RTP's Numeracy and Literacy Manuals with the Palestinian Curriculum. This mapping exercise aims to integrate RTP's games and activities with Arabic Language and Math Textbooks for grades 1-4. The process, divided into three phases, will conclude by 2024. Once

¹⁰ NORAD, *Progress report form – Palestine: Reporting year 2021*, Right To Play, 2022.

completed, all grade 1-4 teachers in Palestinian primary schools will have resources for using PBL to teach numeracy and literacy in a more child-friendly way. This partnership is a significant achievement, indicating strong support from the MOEHE.

While the MOEHE has demonstrated a strong commitment to the play-based methodology, the current emergency in Palestine, with ongoing conflict and instability, places immense pressure on the Ministry and has the potential to shift its priorities. MOEHE representatives have highlighted the urgent need for enhanced teaching strategies to address the immediate challenges, particularly improving reading and learning skills, maintaining the quality of online education, and compensating for the significant learning deficits in Gaza. Although the Ministry recognizes the importance of supporting and motivating teachers, including through financial incentives, it is uncertain to what extent the PBL methodology will remain a central focus in achieving these goals, given the overwhelming demands of the current crisis. Future evaluations will be crucial to determine whether the Ministry's support for PBL can be sustained as the situation evolves.

4 Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Given the severe contextual limitations and challenges, the EQIE programme in Palestine proved its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in improving teaching and learning through the use of the play-based learning methodology.

Every conclusion, lesson learned and recommendation should be read bearing in mind that the situation of war, unsafety, uncertainty and violence that the Palestinian people are suffering makes it extremely complicated, and yet necessary, to implement programmes for the improvement of competencies, skills and well-being of children.

Relevance:

- EQIE's design is strongly aligned with MOEHE's priorities of enhancing literacy and PBL. The project has been highly collaborative from the outset, responding closely to Ministry expectations as well as to the changing and highly challenging context. Changes made during COVID-19 and in response to political crises and conflict through the inclusion of digital education and PSS resources are highly relevant to the increasingly challenging Palestinian context.

Effectiveness:

- To accurately assess the end goal of improving children's reading skills, it would have been essential to have direct measures of the children's progress, such as academic assessments or interviews specifically focused on reading achievements. Due to the worsening situation caused by the attack on Gaza and the West Bank, it was not possible to collect such data. Respondents recognized improvements in teachers, supervisors and principals' capacities and attitudes towards PBL, which are leading to a more positive, inclusive and playful learning environment. Supervisors and principals reportedly provide ongoing support to teachers and contribute to the application of PBL in the classroom.
- It's important to recognize that teachers are operating in a challenging environment that limits the application of PBL in practice.

Efficiency:

- The EQIE program demonstrated varying levels of efficiency. Internal efficiencies were supported by effective communication and financial consistency. Some difficulties arising from high staff turnover are common to organizations working in the region and do not seem to point to substantial problems or inefficiencies due to staffing and administration. External efficiencies were facilitated by strong partnerships with government partners, although coordination issues and late approvals sometimes posed challenges.

Sustainability:

- The EQIE program has made progress in generating political will and establishing mechanisms to support the sustainability of the PBL methodology. Positive feedback from various stakeholders, including Right To Play (RTP) staff, MOEHE representatives, and community members, highlighted the training of supervisors, the integrated multi-level approach to spreading PBL methodologies and gaining MOEHE support as key strategies for long-term sustainability.

4.2 Lessons Learned

This evaluation identified three sets of lessons learned and recommendations, which respectively refer to EQIE's design, its implementation, and the research process. Lessons learned, and their corresponding recommendations, are outlined in this and the following section.

Design

- Teachers found PBL strategies effective but struggled to integrate them. The fact that teachers pointed out limited time, overcrowded classrooms, and difficulty in preparing the extra activities may point to a need to coach and supervise teachers more consistently, especially in the initial phase, as the methodology is designed to be implemented transversally and specifically in overcrowded classrooms.

Implementation

- The difficulties indicated by RTP staff (different reporting criteria for various donors, complexities in project management and monitoring) may point to a need for additional training in the initial phases, given that MEL and reporting procedures of RTP are standardized, do not present any particular complexity, and adhere to donor requirements.

Research Process

- The research process faced severe limitations, previously highlighted. When redefining so heavily the scope of a study and its design, the methodology and expected results should be changed and adapted accordingly.

4.3 Recommendations

Design

- Training and ongoing support should emphasize that games are not the only thing that constitutes PBL. This should allow teachers to design playful and engaging activities, beyond games. Activities could be contextualized to each subject and resemble traditional Palestinian games. Additionally, organizing games in the training resources by subject and age range would help teachers quickly find suitable activities for their lessons.

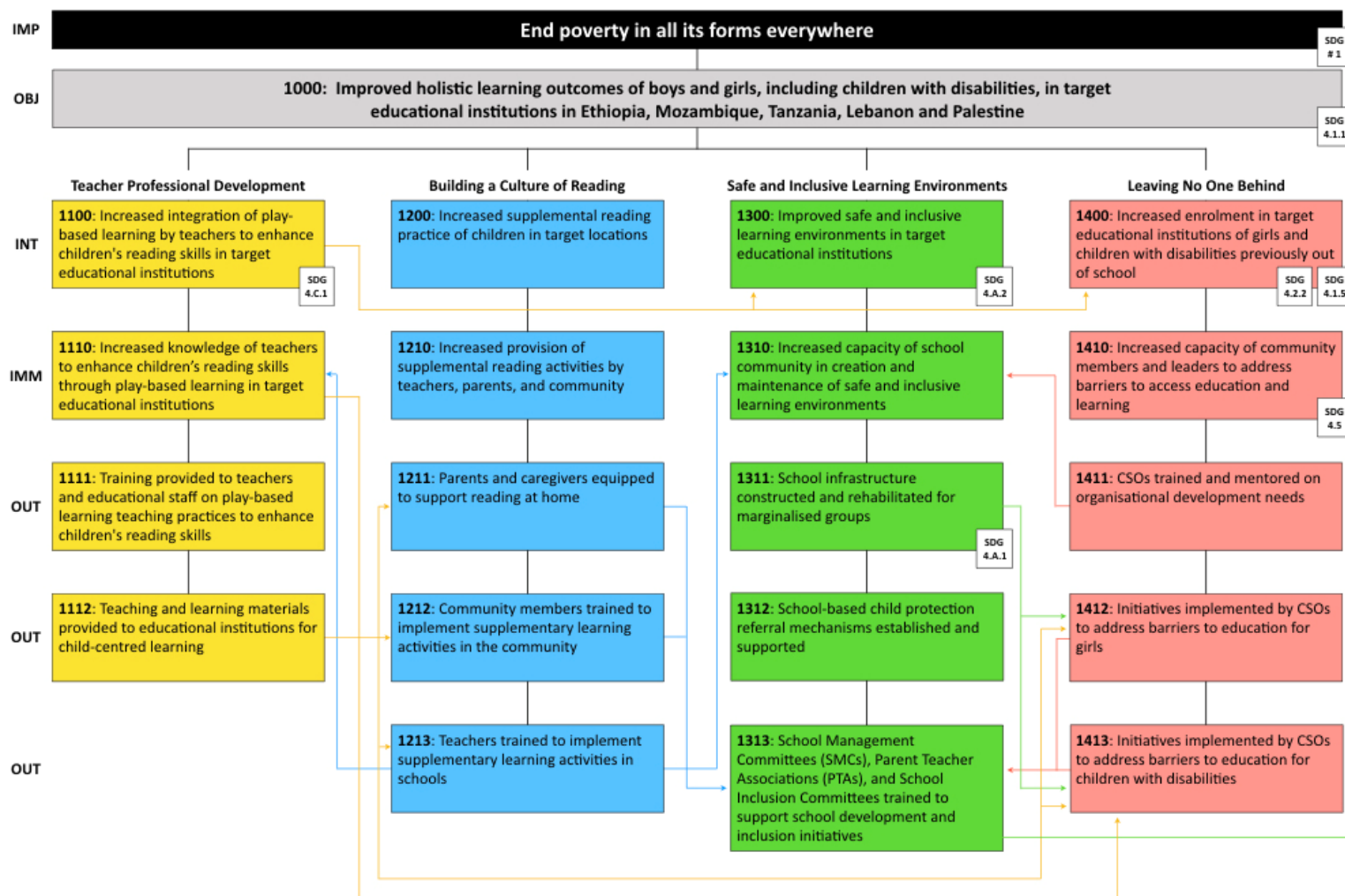
Implementation

- Enhancing high-level knowledge of duties, tasks, responsibilities and procedures across all offices may facilitate better understanding, communication, and efficiency in cross-office interactions
- Teachers should consider implementing multiple activities to ensure educational objectives are met and use experiential methods to accommodate all learning needs effectively.

Research Process

- If possible, the objective and scope of the evaluation should be introduced with plenty of details to respondents, and interviewers should always ask follow-up questions. Interviewers and data collectors should be extensively trained on the project's content and methodology and be familiar with the objective and scope of the evaluation.

5 Annex 1: Theory of Change



6 Annex 2: Respondent List

Table 5: Evaluation participants consulted for interviews

IDI #	Participants	Role	Data collection method	Data collection mode	Date of the interview
1	Jackline Jazrawi	RTP- Project coordinator - West Bank	In-depth interview	Virtual	March 12, 2024
2	Bushra Rashid	RTP- Finance Manager- West Bank	Group interview	In-person	March 21, 2024
	Reham Abdo	RTP- Logistics Officer – West Bank			
3	Kholoud Salameh	RTP- Program Manager	In-depth interview	Virtual	March 21, 2024
4	Moath Mereb and Haya Shahwan	RTP- Project coordinators - West Bank	Group interview	In-person for Haya and Moath joined virtually	March 26, 2024
5	Doaa Ghousheh	MoE- Program Manager in the National Training Institute (focal person)	Group interview	In-person	March 31, 2024
	Helmi Hamdan	MoE- Trainer of supervisors in the National Training Institute			
6	Ahed Ayyash	MoE- Chief Arabic Lang. supervisor (current focal person)	Group interview	In-person	March 31, 2023
	Mutaz Asfour	MoE- Director of Department of Humanities (used to be focal person until 2022)			
7	Hamed Mokho	MoE- Director of activities dept.	Group interview	In-person	April 1, 2024
	Nadeen Nakhleh	MoE- Cultural activities Manager (Focal person)			

8	Dania Hasarma- Technical Exper- World Bank	Potential development partner (International NGO)	In-depth interview	In-person	April 1, 2024
9	Suhair Qasem	MoE- Head of the school education department	In-depth interview	In-person	April 2, 2024
10	Usama Zamen- Program Manager- Techer Creativity Center	Potential development partner (Local NGO)	In-depth interview	In-person	April 4, 2024

Table 6: Evaluation participants consulted virtually for focus group discussions

FGD #	Participants	Location	Number of participants	Date of the FGD	Notes
1	Supervisors from the activities department	Different directorates including Tulkarem, Hebron, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jerusalem	10 (3M, 7F)	April 7, 2024	These participants participated in EQIE activities that were conducted at the national level such as National Reading Competition and Marathons. Also, they were trained by the project to provide coaching and mentoring on the implementation of activities that are conducted outside the classroom using play-based methodology.
2	COTT Teachers	Hebron 1	13 (3M, 10F)	April 20, 2024	Teachers from targeted schools in Hebron received training on RTP's continuum of teacher training (COTT) manual in using inclusive PBL approaches for child-centred teaching practices in the classroom to improve learning outcomes. Also, these teachers participated in several EQIE activities such as CoP sessions, and outside learning days.
3	COTT Teachers	Nablus	8 (0M, 8F)	April 20, 2024	Teachers from targeted schools in Nablus received training on RTP's continuum of teacher training (COTT) manual in using inclusive PBL approaches for child-centred teaching practices in the classroom to improve learning outcomes. Also, these teachers participated in several EQIE activities such as CoP sessions, and outside learning days.
4	Supervisors from the school	Different directorates including	9 (3M, 6F)	April 22, 2024	Supervisors from targeted directorates received the project training of trainers on how to train, coach and mentor grade 1-4

	education department	Hebron, Tulkarem, Nablus, South Nablus			teachers to apply knowledge gained in Implementing PBL methodology in their classroom practice.
5	Principals from targeted schools	Different directorates including Hebron, Tulkarem, Nablus, South Nablus	9 (1M, 8F)	April 22, 2024	These principals were trained by the project on how to provide support and follow-up teachers who received COTT on the implementation of the PBL methodology.
6	Parents of children in targeted schools	Different directorates including Hebron, Tulkarem, Yatta, Salfit	6 (0M,6F)	April 24, 2024	These parents participated in the Learning Together activity to create an engaging home literacy environment. However, it is worth mentioning that 12 mothers were invited to participate and reminded of the participation, but only six mothers participated in the FGD.
7	COTT Teachers	South Nablus	11 (2M, 9F)	April 24, 2024	Teachers from targeted schools in South Nablus received training on RTP's continuum of teacher training (COTT) manual in using inclusive PBL approaches for child-centred teaching practices in the classroom to improve learning outcomes. Also, these teachers participated in several EQIE activities such as CoP sessions, and outside learning days.
8	Parents of children in targeted schools	Different directorates including Hebron, Tulkarem, Yatta, Salfit	3 (0M, 3F)	April 25, 2024	Parents participated in awareness session activities with their children on topics raised based on the schools' needs for example child protection, and child caring responsibility. However, it is worth mentioning that 12 mothers were invited to participate and reminded of the participation, but only three mothers participated so the FGD was conducted with these mothers only.
9	COTT Teachers	Tulkarem	10 (2M, 8F)	April 27, 2024	Teachers from targeted schools in Tulkarem received training on RTP's continuum of teacher training (COTT) manual in using inclusive PBL approaches for child-centred teaching practices in the classroom to improve learning outcomes. Also, these teachers participated in several EQIE activities such as CoP sessions, and outside learning days.

10	COTT Teachers	Hebron 2	7 (0M, 7F)	April 27, 2024	Teachers from targeted schools in Hebron received training on RTP's continuum of teacher training (COTT) manual in using inclusive PBL approaches for child-centred teaching practices in the classroom to improve learning outcomes. Also, these teachers participated in several EQIE activities such as CoP sessions, and outside learning days. It is worth mentioning that two FGDs were conducted with teachers from Hebron because the proportion of teachers trained from Hebron was the largest.
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7 Annex 3: Emerging Finding Workshop List of Participants

Name	Role	Organization	Location
Abeer Hilaneh	Acting Country Director	RTP	WB
Bushra Rashid	Finance Manager	RTP	WB
Rima Hanna	People and Culture Specialist	RTP	WB
Reham Abdo	Logistic Officer	RTP	WB
Wissam Abu Khalil	Project Officer	RTP	WB
Haya Shahwan	Project Coordinator	RTP	WB
Moath Mereb	Project Coordinator	RTP	WB
Maram Alamm	Project Coordinator	RTP	WB
Nevin Samara	Project Coordinator	RTP	WB
Anas Saleh	Project Coordinator	RTP	WB
Qossai Jebrin	Logistics Assistant	RTP	WB
Ahmad Al Qabat	Project Coordinator	RTP	Gaza
Ahmed Muamar	Project Coordinator	RTP	Gaza
Elham Wishah	Project Coordinator	RTP	Gaza
Abdallah AlNeirab	Project Coordinator	RTP	Gaza
Abdel Aziz Afifi	Project Coordinator	RTP	Gaza
Hani Allouh	Project Coordinator	RTP	Gaza
Jamal Al Rozzi	CEO	National Society for Rehabilitation	Gaza
Hend Dahman	Project Coordinator	National Society for Rehabilitation	Gaza
Nafieh Assaf	Deputy Minister	MOEHE	WB
Ayyoub Olyan	Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs	MOEHE	WB
Sadiq Khmour	Assistant Undersecretary for Students' Affairs	MOEHE	WB
Mohammad Matar	General Director of the Center for Educational Research and Development	MOEHE	WB
Suhair Al Qasem	General Director of the National Institute and Supervision Department	MOEHE	WB

Hamed Makhou	General Director of the Students Activities Department	MOEHE	WB
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8 Annex 4: Bibliography

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