

An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of  
Prisoners to Society

**Final Evaluation**  
for  
**Towards the Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration of Prisoners to Society with a Focus  
on Female Prisoners – Start Life**

Submitted to  
**Drosos Foundation**

**Final Draft**  
by  
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## Table of Content

<b>Executive Summary</b>	4
<b>Introduction</b>	8
<b>Statement of Purpose</b>	11
<b>About The Community Hub</b>	12
<b>Evaluation Approach</b>	12
<b>Participatory</b>	12
<b>Asset-based</b>	12
<b>Evaluation Methodology</b>	13
<b>Demographics of the Sample</b>	17
<b>Age</b>	17
<b>Governorate</b>	18
<b>Highest Education and Specialization</b>	18
<b>Household Information</b>	19
<b>History and Story</b>	21
<b>Evaluation Outcomes</b>	23
<b>Partnership with the Government</b>	23
<i>Signing Protocol with the Ministry of Interior</i>	24
<i>Raising Awareness about Service Provision</i>	24
<b>Access to Psychosocial and Legal Support Services</b>	25
<i>Accessibility of Services and Referrals</i>	25
<i>Psychological Services</i>	29
<i>Legal Support</i>	36
<b>Economic Status, Services, and Reintegration</b>	37
<i>Economic Status</i>	37
<i>Economic Support Services</i>	43
<i>Economic Reintegration</i>	45
<b>Satisfaction of Services and Life Satisfaction of Beneficiaries</b>	53
<i>Satisfaction with services</i>	53
<i>Life Satisfaction Scale</i>	54
<b>Shelter Housing</b>	56
<b>Case Management System</b>	58
<b>Community Outreach</b>	60

<b>Conclusion</b>	61
<b>Relevance</b>	61
<b>Efficiency</b>	62
<b>Effectiveness</b>	63
<b>Sustainability</b>	64
<b>Impact</b>	66
<b>Recommendations</b>	66
<b>Limitations</b>	72

## **Annexes**

Annex 1 - Logframe with Indicators Table-Midterm
Annex 2 - Logframe Indicators Matrix for 3 years Implementation
Annex 3 - The Community Hub Company Profile
Annex 4 - AI Workshop Documents
Annex 5 - Beneficiaries Questionnaire in English
Annex 6 - Beneficiaries Questionnaire in Arabic
Annex 7 - Instructions for Data collection
Annex 8 - FGD Guide for Beneficiaries
Annex 9 - Consent Forms
Annex 10 - FGD Guide for Families of Released Prisoners
Annex 11 - Interview Guide for Specialists
Annex 12 - Quantitative data coding
Annex 13 - Qualitative data coding
Annex 14 - Start Life Financial Report as of Jan 2018 to June 2019
Annex 15 - Photos of Shelter Visit
Annex 16 - Synthesis of Lessons Learned from 3 projects with released prisoners
Annex 17 - Panel Discussion on Regional Conference Photo

## Executive Summary

Drosos Foundation is supporting the Project “Start Life” to target a marginalized group of released prisoners by partnering with Life Foundation for Development and Community Reintegration, to implement a 3-year project that started in August 2016 and concluded in September 2019. This is an executive summary of the outcome evaluation report submitted by The Community Hub, after conducting an assessment and review of lessons learned for the project. This is a summary of the achievements rendered by the project by a review of targets placed and actual results that were realized; its impact on beneficiaries and stakeholders; main findings in correlation to the evaluation criteria and a set of recommendations for Life Foundation for Development and Community Reintegration and Drosos Foundation. While this summary is a short version of the concerned evaluation report, the final evaluation report itself should be referred to for a comprehensive review and assessment of the aforementioned project.

The assessment used mixed methods, **quantitative and qualitative**, to gather data. A desk review to all project documents and reports and a review of literature on national and international models was conducted to start the assessment and design the evaluation tools. Quantitative data was gathered through a questionnaire from beneficiaries, and qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with specialists and project staff, focus groups with beneficiaries and their families, and an Appreciative Inquiry workshop and group discussion with staff. The evaluation sample is 83 released prisoners, 17 family members of released prisoners, 13 project staff, 4 specialists who are managing 3 projects that are working on the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners and released prisoners in Egypt, from Life Foundation for Development and Community Reintegration, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Children of Female Prisoners Association (CFPA). Results from data collection reveal the achievements of the project as follows:

**Relevance.** It is important to stress that throughout implementation and even after, project objectives remain fully relevant and aligned with the overall objective of reintegrating released prisoners and has met the needs of the targeted group. The project relevance is also highly dependent on the comprehensive services it provides, which is very responsive to the sensitivity and vulnerability of the released prisoner at the main aspects needed, psychological, legal, social and economic support, at multi-levels of the ecosystem. The project also is one of 3 projects

working with the same target population, under Drosos Foundation, which also increases the relevance to other initiatives and magnifies and asserts the importance of working with released prisoners and being able to gather knowledge, lessons and best practices to continue/enlarge support in this direction, in particular as regards partnerships at the national level.

**Efficiency.** The project has adequately managed its financial, human, and knowledge resources to operate at full capacity, and has achieved outstanding quantitative outputs. The project targeted 300 released prisoners at the start of the project, and has increased the target to 350 at the mid of the project, and have reached 421 released prisoners by the end of the project implementation to provide them with pre and post released services. The low achievement was related to the output linked to pre-release service in prison, which was due to a change in strategy as a response to the existing resources and difficulty of entering the prisons and the delay of signing the protocols with the Ministry of Interior. The existing monitoring system is more focused on measuring the achieved outputs but lacks assessment to the process of implementing the activities.

**Effectiveness.** Project has achieved its planned objectives in the measure that a tool has been designed and some capacity building has been provided to use this tool for the purpose of operationally defining reintegration of released prisoners in context. Data from the final evaluation, challenges the definition of reintegration because it indicates that many of the beneficiaries are at a survival state and at risk for recidivism, specifically who are still struggling with their projects or who are still in debt. There is no doubt that the project has provided services and has given the beneficiaries hope for life and has helped in lowering the risk of them returning to the same crime, with very high effectiveness in the legal, social and psychological services, but the satisfaction of the beneficiaries is not high, specifically in the economic empowerment service, and specifically in the income generating project that were not built on existing assets or market demands. The project has contributed initially to accessibility of support services to released prisoners with very effective outreach strategy and partnership with the public sector, while lacking linkage to the private sector.

**Sustainability.** The project focuses on building initial case management system and setting standards of offering services for the target group through 4 prisons, through developing analytical tools and a database to be used to help the project identify the necessary definitions of reintegration

and return to crime and building an active public-civil society sector network who have a stake in the field. An administrative and operational manual was designed for Life Foundation and for the Shelter in Sharkia, which includes an organizational structure, identifying roles and responsibilities of team members, as well as explaining and defining the case management system and its flow and stages. The project has also invested a lot in building the capacity of the project staff and strengthening their skills in their specializations and that has contributed to the growth of the staff on the professional and personal levels, and sharing knowledge and exchange of experiences at the regional level. The public-civil sector partnerships is key to raising funds because at this level of service provision, which is the main highlight of the project.

**Impact.** The project has established a solid model that with some changes and adaptations can be the base of a strong model for offering service to released prisoners. The project duration has limited timeframe to be able to measure impact, but data has revealed short-term outcome delivery at high performance.

The evaluation shows the establishment of a solid model for service provision to released prisoners in Egypt; the following is a summary of recommendation for Life Foundation for Development and Community Reintegration and Drosos Foundation to consider for the future:

- *Pre-released services*, continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Interior for information exchange and examine process of initial assessment, and work with the prisons proximal to the headquarters of the foundation to ensure access, work in parallel with local community and expand work in prisons with other organizations such as CFPA and UNODC, and others who provide services to the targeted groups.
- *Shelter and meeting basic needs*, set a limited time for the rescue model with a plan to live independently to leave room for other released prisoners, and to achieve reintegration, and a strategic plan with a business model by utilizing the space on the second floor of the existing shelter in Sharkia to contribute to the economic reintegration of the beneficiaries by signing protocols with the public and private sectors. A feasibility study needs to be conducted on the area in which the shelter is located, to identify the needs of the community and provide training to released women prisoners on crafts and vocations that are needed by the community. Most importantly, partner with the Ministry of Social Solidarity to utilize other services offered to



#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

beneficiaries and replicating the model in several governorates while building the capacity of other local community-based service organizations in other locations.

- ***Post-release Services***, continue to offer comprehensive, focused and non-specialized services for mild to moderate mental health disorders, supported by legal and economic support, until reintegration is achieved, by a team of specialized coordinators in different areas of service-provision, while adding a section in the operational manual on staff care and wellbeing, to avoid burnout and secondary PTSD among staff members who deal with the beneficiaries. *Legal services* should only be available at the initial phase with filtering cases that can be resolved in a convenient timeframe, but it is very curtail to continue to offer the legal support to ensure the reintegration process. For the *economic reintegration services*, it is recommended to follow the UN Women OVOP model where all micro projects running in the same industry in the same geographic location can be treated as one production cluster, attracting more micro projects into that industry, while members of this production cluster should receive grants in order to develop their own production unit and equip it with the needed material/ equipment, and grants can be given to the cluster as a whole unit in order to manage its expansion. In addition to, treating the family as one economic unit where all family members get trained with the organization, multiple roles in the business get assigned to different family members, and with the size of the grant increasing with the number of household members involved in the project. Besides promoting self-employment, it is important to strengthen the job placement/ employability component where it is better for the target group in terms of preferences, values, and sets of skills. Moreover, depend more on referrals for offering *social services* that are beyond the capacity of the foundation; hence, expand and update the referral list and raise awareness of Community-based Organizations about the needs of the the targeted population. As for the *psychological services*, it only requires some improvements to the assessment and reporting processes that feed into the case management system.
- ***Community Outreach***, launch awareness campaigns in local communities to reduce the stigma around released prisoners and raise awareness about avoiding loans and being in debts and signing cheques as it is one of the main reasons for detention to many of the prisoners. Collaborate with community-service organizations and build their capacity to offer basic services and raise their awareness on the needs of released prisoners.

Drosos Foundation is supporting the Project “Start Life” (SL) to target a marginalized group of released prisoners by partnering with Life Foundation for Development and Community Reintegration, to implement a 3-year project that started in August 2016 and concluded in September 2019. The main purpose of SL is to provide released prisoners with psychosocial and economic support with the aim of rehabilitating and reintegrating them in their societies, and help them survive the stigmatization that results from their imprisonment. In doing so, Drosos is improving the living conditions of the released prisoners, and limits the possibilities of returning to prison.

Life Foundation for Development and Community Reintegration is a civil foundation that was established in May, 2015 that aims to rehabilitate and integrate former prisoners with focus on female prisoners who are at high risk as a result of their imprisonment, such as women migrants, women with HIV and with drug addiction. In light of that, Start Life Project is implemented to provide legal, psychosocial and economic service, as well as shelter for released prisoners to rehabilitate and reintegrate them back into the community, and aiming to improve their economic, health, and psychological conditions. Life operates from two branches, one in Sharkia and the other one in Alexandria.

To achieve that goal, the project worked on 6 main objectives:

**Objective 1:** Provide access to pre and post release services for prisoners in PortSaid, Damanhour, Banha and Zagazig prisons to support their reintegration to society.

**Objective 2:** Provide access to psychosocial support; access to justice; legal aid and referral to health and social protection services for post-release prisoners.

**Objective 3:** Improve job related skills among post-release prisoners with job placement and job creation programmes (communal micro enterprise projects).

**Objective 4:** Establish a shelter in Sharkia for the transitional accommodation of post-release female prisoners and their children as needed.

**Objective 5:** Monitoring, evaluation and documentation capacity related to the rehabilitation of post-release prisoners and prevention of re-offending.



**Objective 6:** Sensitization of local community to reduce stigma associated with imprisonment especially in relation to former female prisoners.

The project has been implemented since 2016, and has stopped operating for 4 months from providing services, during the midterm evaluation, where a participatory and detailed restructuring of the project and redefinition of service provision took place. The project has followed a computerized case management system and an operational manual that outlines the following:

The project targeted released prisoners as the direct beneficiaries with focus on women and young people. The following are the **criteria of the target beneficiaries** (as per the operational manual):

- Prisoners must be between 20 - 35 years old
- The prison sentence is from 6 months to 10 years
- The case is not in political or religious
- In the case of non-Egyptians, their presence in Egypt must be legal
- The prisoner does not have a legal advisor and needs prison assistance
- The female prisoner must be without a breadwinner, and not have many visitors in the prison

The **outreach** is done through 4 channels; signing protocols with the Ministry of Interior, the Human Rights Sector, and the After Care Department to coordinate the visits to prison and to exchange data of released prisoners and those who received services, where the names of released prisoners are sent to Life Foundation. Outreach is also through police stations, civil society organizations who can refer cases to Life Foundation, and finally, through the word of mouth from the good relationship the team of Start Life has established with their beneficiaries, when they tell their acquaintances or people who were with them in the prison.

**Service Provision** is done through a team of 2 legal, 1 psychosocial and 1 economic coordinators to manage the case. There are 2 teams operation in Sharkia office and 1 team operating in Alexandria office of Life Foundation. Once the case is reached through either of the channels, there is an assessment tool that was amended by the team during the midterm evaluation to identify the level of vulnerability and need of services and this tool is administered pre service provision and post to identify the level of reintegration, which is defined by “the graduation phase”, where the tool results in a score that indicates whether the beneficiary still needs services or is ready to

be reintegrated in the community. The pre and post assessment tool consists of 4 components (legal, psychological, social and economic), that have 14 indicators created by the team, collaboratively, and based on the work that has been done in the first year of the project.

The **case management** system includes 4 main steps, which are the roles of the service provision team:

- Identify the situation in all its aspects and humanitarian needs
- Work on a plan to deal with the situation to reach the stage of reintegration into society
- Provide comprehensive services individually, tailored for each case
- Follow up on the case to provide more support and rehabilitation, in order to ensure the achievement of the overall goal of the project

The **legal services** are provided at three levels, the first is providing identification documents for cases who need it, and defending cases that are considered and which represents a high degree of risk to return to prison again. The second level involves working on cases of honor, returning to jobs, obtaining pensions, the economic activity registration papers to start projects, while the third level works at additional legal services like working on cases of divorce, which is secondary but necessary for the reintegration.

The **psychological services** are provided to released prisoners who have psychological disorders and problems such as depression, anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, due to the time spent in prison at three levels. First level is individual therapy from 3 to 4 sessions to work on self-exploration and planning priorities. The second level is providing psychosocial support such as Life Skills training on 4 modules that was reviewed through out the project to include 8 modules, as well as group therapy, psychodrama, art therapy, and trips. Finally, the third level is provided specialized psychological therapy to cases that require a longer term plan, under the supervision of the consultant psychologist, and referring the cases that need medication to hospitals.

The **social services** provided through the project depends on referrals and includes services such as obtaining safe housing, providing health care, family relations and integration, and providing access to literacy services, insurance, and pension.

The **economic empowerment services** offered by the project is also classified into 3 categories; income generation and beneficiaries who join this have to fit criteria including completing the ILO training, apply for the grant, and contribute to the capital of the income generating activity, that can be operated from home. The second category of the economic reintegration is enterprise based training and employment through vocational on the job training in governmental, nongovernmental institutions and local workshops. This leads to employment placements in the same place of the training or another place, or opening a project by having a business plan in place and the project supports with material or equipment to open the project. Third category is direct placement in a job.

As per the cumulative report for the period of 30 August 2016 to 30 October 2019, the whole duration of the project, it has succeeded to reach 421 of its direct beneficiaries, who are released prisoners - 259 cases from Sharkia, 130 cases from Alexandria, 18 cases from Qaliubia, 9 cases from Beheira, 4 cases from Cairo and 1 case from Port Said, through 4 prisons (Port Said, Damanshour, Banha, Zagazig).

## Statement of Purpose

This report is a Final Evaluation for the project “Start Life”, which focuses on:

- 1- Assessment of the outcomes of the project against the proposed logical framework
- 2- The project’s efficiency in implementing the planned activities
- 3- The effect the project left on the community
- 4- The change the project posed in the lives of released prisoners and their families
- 5- Evaluating the sustainability and replication of the service provision model presented for rehabilitation and reintegration of released prisoners.
- 6- Conduct a financial review to the project from the period of January 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019.

### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

In this report, the outcomes of the evaluation will be presented by objectives as per the project logical framework (Annex 1), which was revised and edited during the midterm evaluation to reflect the actual targets of the project after it started. Annex 2 lists the final performance and indicators reached in percentages on the logical framework, towards the end of the project.

## About The Community Hub

The Community Hub (TCH) – company profile is in *Annex 3* – was contracted by Drosos Foundation for the months of August and September 2019 to carry out the assignment. TCH is a consulting company that offers advocacy and influencing strategies and campaigns, program design, and community assessments – all based on evidence. TCH’s team worked on this assignment, the CEO, Hana Fahmy, who has expertise in monitoring and evaluation and community assessments, the COO, Farah Shash, who has expertise in Issues of Gender-Based Violence, and the Project Specialist, Nada Shalabi, who has experience in monitoring and evaluation. In addition, TCH hired two other experts in the field of finance and economic participation of women, Fady Attia and Karen Fanous, respectively.

## Evaluation Approach

### Participatory

TCH followed a participatory approach throughout the assignment to achieve the stated goals of the project. This entails involvement of different stakeholders in various phases of the evaluation process. For this purpose, TCH facilitated a 1-day workshop to work on framing more specific evaluation questions through reflecting on the logical framework of the project with different stakeholders including – beneficiaries (released prisoners), start life project team, and Drosos Project Manager. This process of questioning involved and required a lot of participation from the participants, and allowed them to work in groups. Project team were also involved in the process of reviewing the tools and in the data collection.

### Asset-based

An asset-based evaluation suggests the replacement of the needs-based and problem-solving model to evaluation. It focuses on strengths and successes of the project being evaluated or the available

### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

assets and resources, which does not ignore problems or challenges but addresses them in a significantly different way and through strength-based tools. The asset-based approach is a more constructive approach to evaluation. Using needs-based evaluation might ignore the strengths of the project success stories; however, asset-based evaluations are more likely to cover challenges and improvements to the project. The consultants used Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a capacity building, strategic, and data collection tool to facilitate the participatory workshop and to design the tools.

## Evaluation Methodology

### Data Collection Methods

Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from key informants of the project, the released prisoners who benefited from the project, their families, project staff, and other active and direct stakeholders. Quantitative data was gathered through a questionnaire from beneficiaries, and qualitative data was gathered through focus groups with beneficiaries and their families, AI workshop with staff, and semi-structured interviews with staff, midterm evaluator who evaluated the project midway through its implementation, and key persons managing projects in United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Children of Female Prisoners Association (CFPA).

### Sample

The sample of the final evaluation of the project was n= 83 released prisoners, n= 29 of which (22 females and 7 males) participated in the focus group discussions, and n= 54 (39 females and 15 males) participated in the questionnaire. The sample represents 19.7% of the overall sample of 421 beneficiaries. Moreover, n= 17 family members of released prisoners participated in focus group discussions (14 females and 3 males), some of which are service recipients from Start Life such as training, microgrants, or living in the shelter. N= 13 project staff, n= 1 program manager from Drosos, and n= 2 female beneficiaries attended the AI workshop, n= 3 project staff (psychosocial coordinator, economic coordinator, and legal coordinator) were interviewed to reflect on the project implementation. Finally, n= 4 specialists participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

### Desk Review

#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

TCH reviewed the following documents before designing the tools and during the data collection process. An initial meeting was held at Drosos premises where an introduction to the project was presented to TCH team, and putting together an initial plan to the evaluation. An inception report was then submitted to Drosos and Start Life Project team with the designed tools for data collection. During the data collection phase, an additional meeting was held with the project staff from the legal, psychosocial and economic department to walk through the case management system and review all operational and monitoring forms. Below are the documents reviewed:

1. Project Proposal
2. Project logical framework
3. Revised project logical framework with indicators
4. Baseline Report
5. Midterm Evaluation Report
6. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
7. Progress reports (quarterly and semi annual)
8. Reports on the design and development of the Management Information System
9. Operational manual for project
10. Procedure Manual for Shelter / Operational Strategy for Shelter
11. Life Skills Training Manual and application
12. Reports on achieved target beneficiaries by cases and service received
13. Sample of Case Management Report Forms (economic, psychosocial and legal status)
14. Booklet for Services
15. Grant submission and assessment forms
16. Confidentiality and Information Management Codes and Policies

#### **Data Collection Tools**

With the support of Life Foundation, TCH were able to collect data through the following tools:

#### *A 1-day Appreciative Inquiry Workshop*

The workshop was a 6-hour workshop, with 2 breaks in between, and attended by 16 participants and facilitated in Arabic by 2 team members from TCH. Participants included, 13 project staff (lawyers, psychosocial providers, economic reintegration provider, administration from the shelter, economic reintegration consultant, Management Information System Project specialist,

and Director) , 2 beneficiaries, and Drosos Project Manager. The first part of the workshop, the participants worked in groups to review the targets and what has been achieved at each of the indicators of the logical framework, and then they were able to discuss and frame evaluation questions for each indicator to guide the design of data collection tools. In the second part of the workshop, the beneficiaries left because they had family and work commitments, and the project staff participated in a discussion, guided by an Appreciative Inquiry questions. Workshop documents including agenda, list of participants, formed evaluation questions, AI questions, and photos are in annex 4.

### *Structured Questionnaire with Released Prisoners*

A 50-item-questionnaire was designed to assess the changes that the project has achieved in the lives of released prisoners, based on the evaluation questions developed in the workshop. The questionnaire had the following sections: Consent form and Brief, Biodata, Household Information, History and Story, Service Provision, Income Generation, and Life Satisfaction Scale. The questionnaire was designed in English (annex 5) and then translated into Arabic (annex 6), and the questions had branches and were mostly quantitative of nature, but there were some qualitative (open-ended questions). Data was collected from 54 beneficiaries (released prisoners) in Alexandria and Sharkia at the Life Foundation offices or via phone (depending on the willingness of the beneficiary to commute to the office. TCH had developed guidelines (annex 7) for collecting data and have trained 3 project staff to collect the data from the beneficiaries.

### *Focus Group Discussions with Beneficiaries*

TCH conducted 4 focus group discussions with 37 beneficiaries, 29 of which are released prisoners and the rest are family members who have received services from the project. One focus group discussion was with female beneficiaries in Alexandria, and another 2 were with female beneficiaries in Sharkia Alexandria and Sharkia (one with beneficiaries who received services in the beginning of the project and the other was with beneficiaries who have recently received services. Finally, one focus group discussion was held with male beneficiaries (all are released prisoners) in Sharkia. The main purpose of the focus group discussions with the beneficiaries is to walk them through the process and document in-depth stories of how their participation in the project has changed their lives, if any change is noticed and acknowledged by them, and what is their take on how to intervene in the future. Focus Group Discussion Guide with beneficiaries is

An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned  
in annex 8. Consent forms were read out loud and explained to participants and to approve their participation and recording the discussions. Consent form is in annex 9.

### *Focus Group Discussions with Families of Beneficiaries*

TCH conducted 2 focus group discussions with 9 family members of beneficiaries who were mothers, sons, daughters, and sisters, and who have also benefited from the services of Start Life, such as living in the shelter with their mother. The main purpose of the discussion was to understand how the project has affected them indirectly and directly, and the financial status of their family, and the level of acceptance to the released prisoner from their families. Focus Group Discussion Guide with beneficiaries' families is in annex 10. Consent forms were read out loud and explained to participants and to approve their participation and recording the discussions. Consent form is in annex 9.

### *Semi-Structured Interview with Specialists*

Semi-Structured one-on-one interview was designed to collect data from key specialists to assess the sustainability of the project, and possibility to build on the findings and lessons learned, and how the represented organization of the interviewee can take a part in any future plans, as well as assess the existing models in other similar projects. 3 interviews were conducted with the Directors of Life Foundation for Development and Community Reintegration, CFPA and UNODC, as they were implementing projects funded by Drosos, with the same marginalized group of prisoners and released prisoners. Interview question guide is in annex 11.

### *Non-Structured Interview with Project Staff and Midterm Evaluation Consultant*

Non-Structured one-on-one interview was done to collect data from project staff - 1 lawyer, 1 psychologist, 1 economic reintegration specialist, and the consultant who carried out the midterm evaluation, as he worked with the project staff extensively for one year to restructure the project' service provision, operation, and case management system. The main purpose of the interviews is to get a close look and hands on data from project implementers to be able to document the efficiency of the project and the areas of development.

### *Observational Visits*

A visit was conducted to the shelter in Sharkia to assess the infrastructure and lodging of the place. Photos were taken to document the status of the shelter at project conclusion. On the same day,



#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

the consultants observed and looked into the filing system and data flow of the case management system by reviewing a sample file, with the guidance and explanation of the economic and psychosocial coordinators of the project.

#### **Data analysis**

Qualitative data was analyzed through deductive thematic content analysis derived from the interviews, focus group discussions and workshop discussions, while quantitative data from the questionnaire was analyzed through SPSS. Annex 12 & 13 include the quantitative and qualitative data coding, respectively.

#### **Financial Review**

A total of 2 visits were conducted to the head quarter of Life Foundation to review the documents, finances, and previous reports. The audit was prepared in accordance with Egyptian Accounting Standards, relevant Egyptian Laws, and policies and procedures of Drosos Foundation referred to as “The Accounting Framework.” It complies with all available laws and regulations to identify material misstatements and their effect on the project. The outcomes of the financial review is reported in annex 14, with no risks.

### **Demographics of the Sample**

The total number of beneficiaries who took the questionnaire were 54, 72% (n = 39) were females, and 28% were males (n = 15). A total of 46 beneficiaries and their families – 30 females, 7 males, and 9 family members – participated in focus groups. From the 421 targeted beneficiaries of the project, 174 (41%) of them were males and 247 (59%) were females (fifth progress report of the project). The project originally, targeted 75% females and 25% males but because during the first phase of the project, the numbers of males sent by the MoI was more than males, they exceeded the 25% target, but Start Life team worked with the ministry to filter and screen the cases and worked on the criteria to balance the number of females to better meet their target.

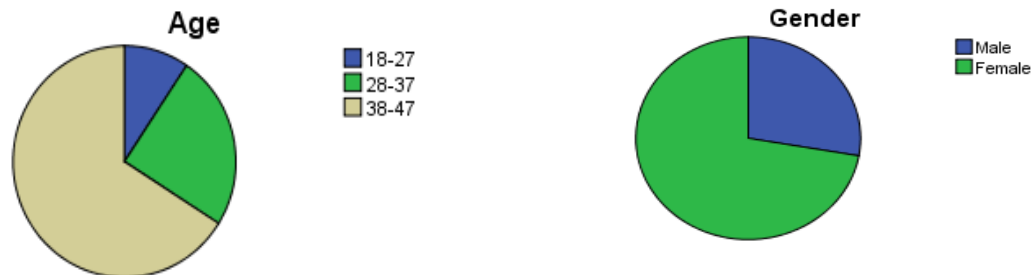
#### **Age**

The The largest group from the questionnaire responses were at the age range of 38 to 47 (65%, n = 35), followed by the age range of 28 - 37 (24%, n = 13), and finally the age range of 18 - 27 (9%, n = 5). Almost 65% of the sample were above the age of the criteria set for the target population, which is 20 - 35 years old. The flexibility in adapting the criteria to respond to the



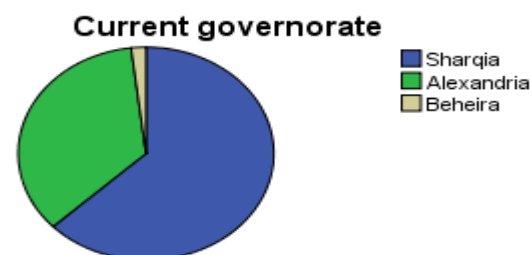
### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

needs of the target population is essential for a project to succeed in serving its purpose, which is prevalent in the case of accepting the age of older beneficiaries who are in dire need to receive the services.



### Governorate

The highest majority of the beneficiaries are currently residing in Sharkia governorate (63%, n =34), followed by Alexandria (35%, n = 19), and only one beneficiary was currently residing in El Beheira (2%). Almost all of them have been living in their current cities for their whole life (96%, n = 52) and only two of them have been living there for a few years (4%). From the 46 who attended the focus groups, 15 attended in Alexandria and 32 attended in Sharkia, where they previously received their services. This is representative of the overall sample of the project to have the majority of beneficiaries from Sharkia, followed by Alexandria. However, Qalubia governorate is not present in the evaluation sample,

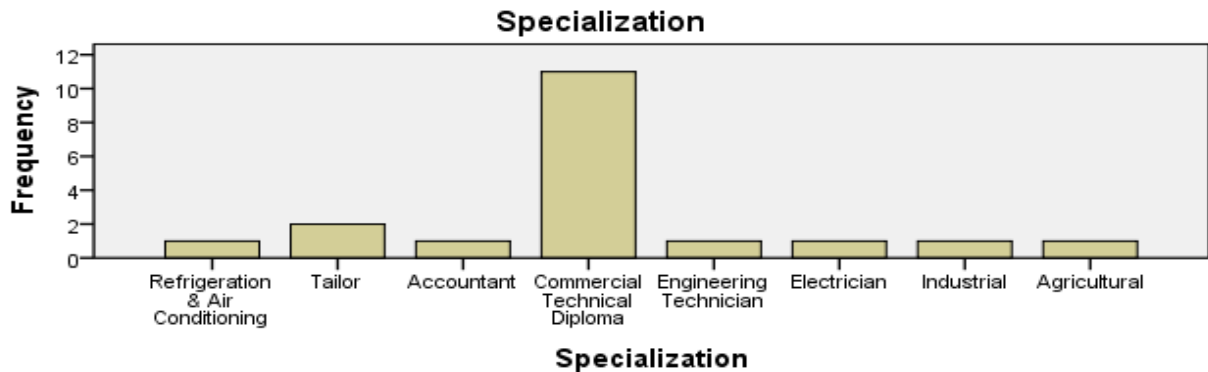


### Highest Education and Specialization

The majority of the beneficiaries who participated in the questionnaire had diplomas (37%, n = 20), followed by beneficiaries who had no degree (24%, n = 13), and then primary degree (20%, n = 11), then technical secondary (9%, n = 5), then preparatory (7%, n = 4), and only one beneficiary had a general secondary degree (2%), as the highest degree earned. Most of the beneficiaries had a specialization in Commercial Technical Diploma (20%, n = 11), and two beneficiaries had specialization in Tailoring, while the rest had different specializations including Refrigeration and air conditioning, Accounting, Engineering Technician, Electrician, Industrial, and Agricultural (2%, n = 1). Most beneficiaries received technical degrees, which assumes some

**An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned**

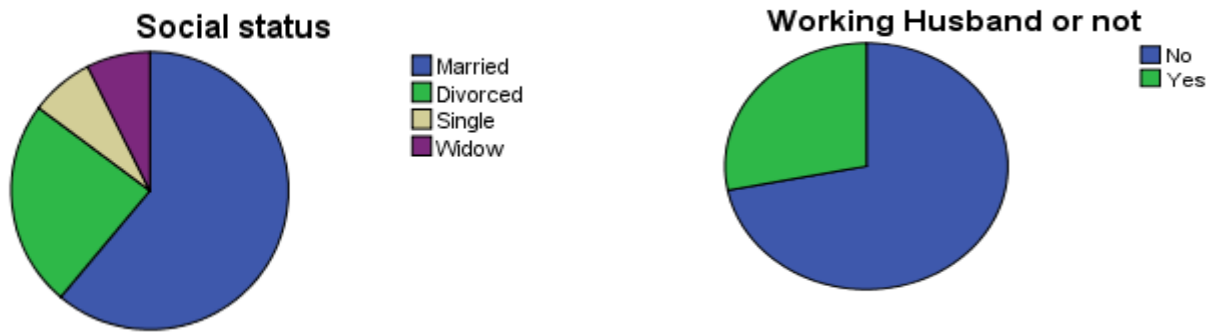
acknowledged skills that can be taken into consideration when assessing the needs and capacity of the participant before placing them in jobs and technical trainings. Also, 24% of no degree and 20% of primary degree contribute to a high percentage of no or limited education or basics. This percentage does not guarantee that they are illiterate because they could have received a literacy certificate through Start Life but the data is aligned with the cumulative report of the project statistics; almost 121 (28%) of the overall target of the project have primary or preparatory degree. Both data from the evaluation sample and the overall sample highlights the necessity to provide the beneficiaries with limited education with literacy classes that are tailored to serve the purpose of the economic services provided and as part of the economic empowerment.



**Household Information**

*Marital Status and Husband Job*

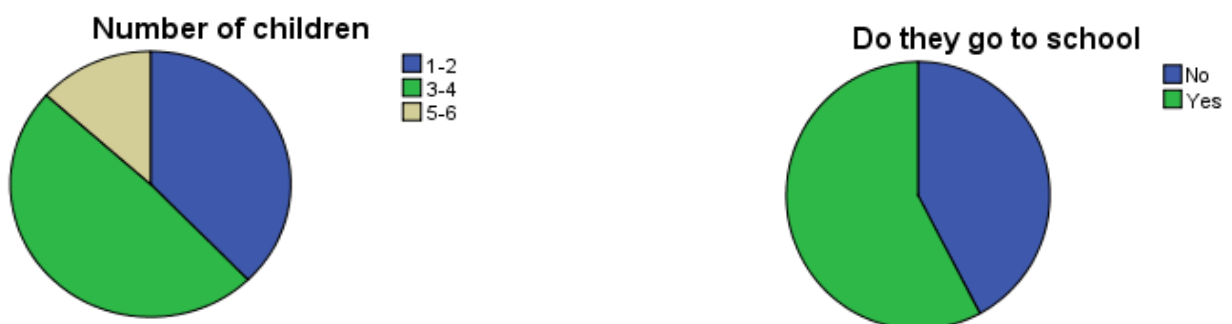
The majority of the beneficiaries who participated in the questionnaire are married (61%, n = 33), followed by divorced (24%, n = 13), and then single and widowed with the same percentage (7%, n = 4). The majority stated that their husbands did not work (43%, n = 23) and only nine beneficiaries mentioned that their husbands work (17%). Four beneficiaries stated that their husbands are workers (7%), and the rest mentioned jobs including Scrap work, Driver, Merchant, and Carpenter (2%, n = 1).



### *Children in the Household*

The majority of the beneficiaries who participated in the questionnaire have children (83%, n = 45) and only six beneficiaries mentioned that they don't have any children (11%, n = 6). Most of the beneficiaries have three to four children (41%, n = 22), followed by one to two children (32%, n = 17), and only six beneficiaries have five to six children (11%).

Twenty one beneficiaries have children aged between eight to eleven (39%) and the same number of beneficiaries have children aged between 12 to 15 (39%). Followed by children between age 16 to 19 (37%, n = 20), then youth who are over the age of 20 (33%, n = 18), and children between the ages of four and seven (28%, n = 7), and finally only seven beneficiaries have children between the ages under three years (13%). The highest majority of the beneficiaries stated that they send their children to school (48%, n = 26) and the rest do not send them to school (35%, n = 19). Beneficiaries participating in focus groups, n=14 have children between the age of 1-2 years, n=12 have children between the age of 3-4 years, and n=4 have 5 children, while n=7 have no children.



This is a high rate of dropping out of school or do not attend school; if we remove the 13% who are under 3 years of age, the percentage will be around 20% not sending their children to school, which reflects their economic and social instability. Also, it is worth to highlight that there are 33% of participants who have children above the age of 19 and can be included in the economic reintegration plan of the released prisoner, in addition to the 43% of married women who mentioned that their husbands do not work. The data show the assets available in the family that can be used to build on to accelerate the economic and social reintegration of the released prisoner.

## History and Story

### *Duration in prison and date of release*

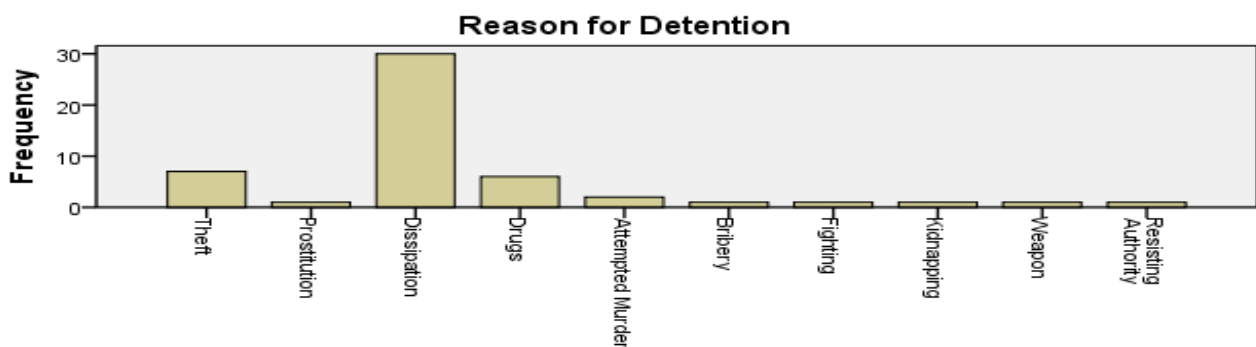
About half of the beneficiaries were detained in prison for less than one year (50%, n = 27), followed by one to two years (28%, n = 15), then three to four years (15%, n = 8), then seven to eight years (4%, n = 2) and finally, only one beneficiary was detained for nine to ten years in prison (2%). This is in line with the criteria of the project target population that outlines that the beneficiary has to be sentenced 6 months to 10 years in prison. Exception was given to only one case due to the extreme need. Almost half of the beneficiaries were released from prison in the year 2017 (52%, n = 28), followed by the year 2018 (37%, n = 20), then the year 2016 (7%, n = 4), and only one beneficiary was released in the year 2015 (2%).

From the beneficiaries participating in the focus groups, n=22 participants spent 1.5 to 5 years in prison, and n=6 spent 6-15 years in prison, and all have been released during the past four years.



When asked about the reason for detention, slightly more than half of the beneficiaries who participated in the questionnaire stated that they were detained in prison for dissipation (56%, n = 30), followed by theft (13%, n = 7), then drugs (11%, n = 6), and two stated that they were detained for an attempted murder (4%). Each of the rest of the beneficiaries stated different reasons for detention like prostitution, bribery, getting into a fight, kidnapping, using weapons, and resisting authority (2%, n = 1).

As for the focus groups participants, the majority of the cases were detained due to debts (or signing guaranteed cheques), n= 14, followed by drug dealing or abuse, n= 10, then theft and



fights and using weapons, n= 4, dissipation and fleeing the army, n=3, respectively. It is worth mentioning that the majority of females were involved in debt cases, and the majority of males were involved in drug dealing and abuse cases.

It is necessary to point out the background of the stories of detention when analyzing the situation and context of the beneficiaries, to be able to understand how to prevent the problem from occurring through raising awareness of people at risk in the community. Almost all stories, that the female participants narrated were related to their husbands, either they sign cheques to guarantee their husbands due to being in debt for supplying products to their businesses, or due to their death or to an accident that happened to them, or due to them being involved in drug dealing and or fleeing the army. The rest were due to having to prepare their daughters or sister for marriage so they got into debt. One woman said, *“after my husband passed away, I remarried and got two other kids. I had a lot of expenses to pay and I had to borrow money and in turn sign a cheque”*, and another said, *“after my husband passed away, I got offered to work in dealing drugs because I didn't have money to spend on my family so I agreed”*. The root cause of the problem is related to financial instability and mostly, this is a result of the husbands. Even when male participants



narrated their own stories, it was related to either drug dealing and abuse or getting involved in fights.

There is also a consequence of being in debt, that was noted by many, which is being in a vicious cycle of being in debt, and signing more and more cheques, and borrowing more and more money, and getting into more legal cases, and getting more family members involved in the chain or cycle. A few women mentioned them signing debts to free their husbands, which caught them in the cycle too, or that their children signed cheques to get them out of jail. It has been reported by many participants that this has become a market and that some individuals build a network and make money out of this activity.

Finally, a few participants mentioned that when a family member is in prison, they face a lot of financial struggles, like having to leave their houses for not being able to pay rent and inability to go visit the person in prison because this in itself is costly. They also mentioned living insecurely because the police can come and break into their houses at anytime if the legal cases are not closed. In addition, some mentioned some social barriers related to having to get a divorce because their husbands are the ones who got them into this situation or because their husbands got married when they were in prison and either him or her in-laws kicked them out of the house with their children. Other social statuses, included 2 cases of a male and a female participants being deprived from their sons because of the stigma the released prisoners have. Thus, it is important to look into the root causes of the problems as well as the consequences that contributed to the current status of the released prisoner, whether social, psychological, or economic.

## Evaluation Outcomes

### Partnership with the Government

**Specific Objective 1** Provide access to pre and post release services for prisoners in PortSaid, Damanhour, Banha and Zagazig prisons to support their reintegration to society

**R 1.1** Signed MoU with Prison administration in PortSaid, Damanhour, Banha and Zagazig prisons to refer prisoners pre-release

**R 1.2** Enhanced knowledge among prison staff and persons in the criminal justice system on the reintegration of offenders to society and best practice to promote their partnership with civil society.

**R 1.3** Increased access to psychosocial and legal aid to pre-release prisoners and their families

### *Signing Protocol with the Ministry of Interior*

Two protocols for cooperation were signed between Life Foundation and the Ministry of Interior, with the Human Rights Sector and Human Rights Department to facilitate the process of transitioning from the prison to the Society, and improve the rehabilitation and reintegration of the prisoners in the 4 prisons. As mentioned in the AI workshop, the project team highlighted that signing the protocol with MoI to be one of the highlights of the project because it facilitated the outreach process. Before signing the protocol, the lawyers hired at the project were not allowed access to prisons and they had to roam around family members visiting to be able to find out who needs help. They also went to police stations reach out to cases. After signing the protocol, in the last year of the project, services with prison administration, specifically, with The After-Care Department and The Human Rights Department. As per the updated logframe, 99% outreach through the planned channels (23.5% from the prison, 11.1% through After Care Department and 65.3% reached the foundation alone, and only 15.4% of prisoners of the project beneficiaries received services pre release because of the delay that has occurred in signing the protocol and the difficulty of outreach and entering the prisons. At the beginning of the project, the target was to reach 75% of the beneficiaries pre-release but this has changed to meet the circumstances of the project.

### *Raising Awareness about Service Provision*

According to the Director of Life Foundation, the signing of the protocol has opened the gate to collaborate and extend the system that has been established by SL post release starting with assessment of the psychological, social, legal and economic needs, to writing the “My Life Plan”, which is a booklet to decide on what the beneficiary needs post released. This will help Start Life team to start working with the beneficiaries right after their release, and this saves time and decreases the risk for recidivism. This coordination will also lead to exchanging data between SL and the ministry, because SL will receive a list of names that need to receive services post release,



with an assessment. This needs to happen after training the social workers and officials on how to use the assessment, and in return, SL will send a report to the After Care Department with the services received for each. It was among the operational manual of the project to reach this level of coordination of data exchange and it was achieved toward the end of the project and this sets the ground for opportunities of collaboration and a more structural work of monitoring the process. During the time of the evaluation, the social workers and officials have not been trained on how to use the system, yet, which was not among the planned activities of the project. It is an unintended outcome that resulted from the collaboration and the regular meetings held with the After Care Department and Human Rights Sector. According to the cumulative report, only 4% (15 cases) were offered legal services from inside the prison, while 96% (406 cases) of the cases were offered the services from outside the prison, post release.

## Access to Psychosocial and Legal Support Services

**Specific Objective 2:** Provide access to psychosocial support; access to justice; legal aid and referral to health and social protection services for post-release prisoners.

**R 2.1** Psychosocial support services provided to post release prisoners.

**R 2.2** Improved availability and access to justice and legal aid to post-release prisoners.

**R 2.3** Established referral system for aftercare services.

## *Accessibility of Services and Referrals*

### Introduction to Start Life Services

The beneficiaries who participated in the questionnaire were asked about when they were introduced to Start Life, almost half of them stated that they were introduced to it three to six months after they were released from prison (48%, n = 26). Some of them mentioned that they were introduced directly after they were released from prison (32%, n = 17), few mentioned that they were introduced before they were released (13%, n = 7), and only three of them stated that



### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

they were introduced to Start Life for more than six months after they were released from prison (6%, n = 3).

The majority of the beneficiaries stated that they were referred to Start Life by someone or an entity (87%, n = 47). They were then asked about the source who referred them to Start Life, the majority of them mentioned that they were referred to Start Life through a Case (32%, n = 17). Some beneficiaries (n = 12) stated that they were referred through a friend, civil associations, or a family member. Five stated that they were referred through a Lawyer and another five were referred through an Aftercare (9%). Finally, few were referred through Social Affairs or Prison (n

**When were you introduced to Start Life?**



= 4). The majority of beneficiaries from the focus groups said they learned about Start Life through a lawyer from the foundation whom they met in prison or while visiting the After-Care Department. Only 1 was referred by a friend she knew from prison, and another learned about SL after their release through family and friends. Thus, the outreach of lawyers was the highest mean of referral and knowing about the project. Data reflect that the channels of outreach match the plan of the project in the operational manual through the official prison departments, police stations, and word of mouth through beneficiaries who inform others in need. However, data does not highlight the role of civil society in referring beneficiaries to Life Foundation to receive services, which was the fourth channel of outreach proposed in the operational manual.

As explained by the project team in the AI workshop conducted with them, the Protocol signed with the After-Care Department and Human Rights Department has facilitated the referral of released prisoners right after their release, because before signing the protocol, the lawyers had to visit the prisons and police stations to reach out for beneficiaries, informally, which might explain the delayed period of receiving services of some, up to 6 months post release. This is a long period, and might increase the risk of recidivism. It is also worth mentioning that the data reflect that the beneficiaries are in dire need of the services offered and that the word of mouth started spreading, not only among the released prisoners after they came out, but also from inside



### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

the prison. As stated by the Director of Life Foundation, there is an informal rule among prisoners that whoever stays inside the prison for 1 year or more, has to help prisoners post his/her release. This is an asset and can be used not only for outreach purposes but also for raising awareness, identifying advocates, and creating a network that helps increase the sense of community of the released prisoners on the long-term.

Towards the end of the project duration, the beneficiaries who participated in the questionnaire who graduated from the program, as per the post assessment tool of the project, are 72%, while only 28% still receive services. The criteria for case closure is to score between 56 and 60 on the post assessment tool, which indicates that the beneficiary is capable of managing his life and does not need services from the project, and is being followed up periodically.

**Still receives services from Life Foundation?**



The majority of the beneficiaries who stopped receiving services from Life Foundation mentioned that the last time they received services were a year ago (33%, n = 18). Few mentioned that the last time they received services were a few months ago (24%, n = 13), and only one mentioned it was from a few weeks ago (2%).

There are a few things to highlight here, one is the fact that providing accessibility does not mean that released prisoners should receive all services, with no specific guidelines, assessment, case management, and defined indicators that identifies their status and level of readiness and continuity of reintegration in the society. The evaluation consultant worked closely with the project team during the midterm evaluation, to set a monitoring, operational, and case management system to structuralize the accessibility of the services offered. According to him, before the system, beneficiaries used to receive unlimited services, which consumes a lot of financial resources without achieving project outcomes. In addition to the above, receiving the services does not ensure reintegration if it is not defined with a structured system.

As for the legal support services, Start Life supports released prisoners with cases of crime, civil, and family cases. As mentioned earlier, before signing the protocol, the lawyers outreach to released prisoners through going to prisons and police stations to offer their legal services, but

after signing the protocol and the word of mouth spread among people in the community, it became easier to access the services.

### Accessibility

As per the cumulative report of the project, there are **838 social services** were received; 419 social reports and assessments (50%), 26 housing services (3%), 130 financial support (16%), 81 social grants (10%), 19 medical support (2%), 93 home visits (11%), 6 social support for families of prisoners (1%), and 52 field visits (6%). In addition, **1846 psychological support services**; 1068 individual therapy (58%), 391 psychological assessment (21%), 367 group and art therapy sessions (20%), and 11 referrals for addiction and HIV treatment (1%). There were **434 economic empowerment services** provided; 288 vocational training (65%), 98 small enterprise (22%), 19 employment services (4%), 32 microgrants (7%), 4 handcrafts training (1%), and 2 driving licence. Finally, the **legal services provided pre-release were 227 services**; 2 filing cases (1%), 55 legal cases (24%), 1 complain, 2 identification documents (1%), 3 delegation (1%), 36 legal reports (16%), 3 awareness about legal issues (1%), and 62 legal papers (28%). **1312 legal services, are provided post-release**; 14 filing cases (1%), 228 legal case (17%), 42 release services, 84 identification documents (6%), 61 delegation to cases (5%), 330 legal reports (20%), 1 legal registration for project, 362 legal awareness (28%), and 221 legal papers (17%).

### Referral from Start Life to other Service-Providers

The beneficiaries from the questionnaire were asked if they were transferred to other specialized services provided by external parties, the results showed that over half of them were not referred (59%, n = 32), and about 19 beneficiaries were referred (35%). As stated by the psychosocial coordinator of SL, that the referral is coordinated (signed agreement) only with 2 institutions of a psychiatric hospital in Sharkia and a private hospital in Cairo for psychological services, and referral takes place in cases with severe mental illness that requires medication or in cases with HIV and other viruses that are a result of previous work in prostitution or just being in prison. In total, during the period of the project, Start Life referred 72 services for 48 cases out of the 421. Among the referrals are 7 are vocational training (10%), 17 healthcare services (24%), 11 rehabilitation for drug addiction (15%), 1 service of HIV case follow up, 14 donations services (19%), 19 partner civil society organizations (26%), 3 services for MoSS (4%). Start Life have created partnerships with 3 civil society foundations such as Resala, Hassala, and ElFarah; a shelter



house before the shelter in Sharkia was renovated, governmental institutions such as the Administration of Manpower and hotline at MoSS, and Administration of Youth and Sports.

## *Psychological Services*

### Service Provision

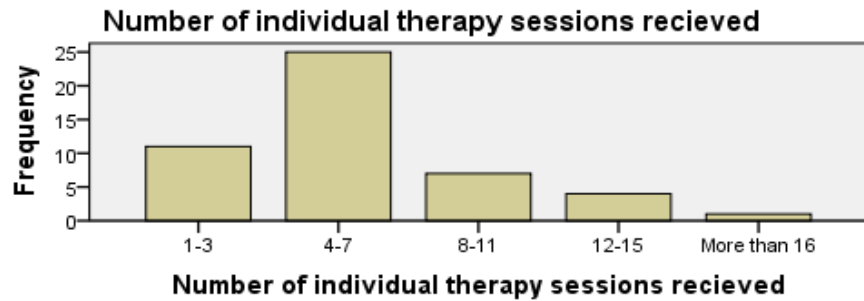
Almost all of the beneficiaries mentioned that they went through a psychological assessment with Start Life (96%, n = 52). Moreover, almost all the beneficiaries have received individual therapy sessions with Start Life (91%, n = 49).

The majority received from 4 to 7 sessions (46%, n = 25), followed by 1 to 3 sessions (20%, n = 11), then 8 to 11 sessions (13, n = 7), then 12 to 15 sessions (7%, n = 4), and finally only one beneficiary have received more than 16 individual therapy sessions. Data reveal that there is a system in place that identifies the duration of therapy, as required. The majority receive 4 to 7 sessions, which is called Brief Therapy, to validate feelings, and work with the beneficiaries on Cognitive Behavioral Skills that helps with adapting. The psychosocial coordinator confirmed that almost all cases receive psychosocial sessions, at least 1 or 2 sessions. She also stated that most cases of women are depression and most cases of men were addiction, and only a few cases of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Borderline, and a few cases who are suicidal. Cases that need medication are referred and severe cases are handled by the specialized psychologist of the foundation. She also referred to the confidentiality code, and that the sessions take place in a closed room for privacy. The report of the assessment of a beneficiary is kept in the folder, but details about the session is kept in the personal notebook of the coordinator. There is no report form that is classified into the issues discussed, plan for the coming session, observations, notes on any high risk behavior, and so on. These forms are necessary for referral, if the case needs that in the future, and it is also important to sustain the plan if the team member quits and someone else substitutes.

**Recieved individual therapy**

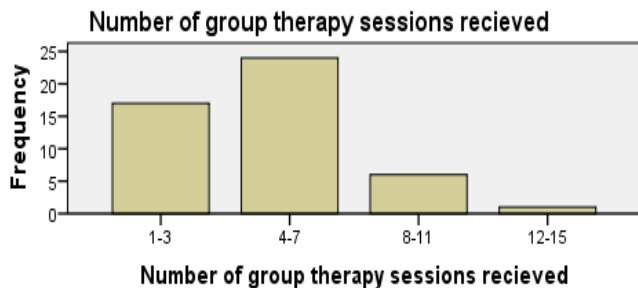


In the first half of the project, psychological support services were offered in a wider form, while the economic component was not introduced yet.



In the second half of the project, the focus with beneficiaries was on Life skills, which is essential to the social integration of the released prisoners; however, it cannot replace the psychological support. is more done now, but this does not replace the psychosocial support. For instance, the life skills training will help a mother deal with the society, make her at ease when she has her own project, and help her deal with her family members, but all that will not happen if the psychological support is not offered as required to fulfill the need of the beneficiary.

When asked about the group therapy sessions, the majority stated that they have received a group therapy session (89%, n = 48). Most beneficiaries received 4 to 7 group therapy sessions (44%, n = 24), followed by one to three sessions (32%, n = 17), then 8 to 11 (11%, n = 6), and only one beneficiary have received from 12 to 15 group therapy sessions (2%).



The stigma is placed on the family as much as it is on the released prisoner. When beneficiaries talked about the challenges and needs they face, 14 men and women mentioned that their family members, specifically their children, got affected psychologically because they are being stigmatized. As stated by one beneficiary, ***“my son went to visit his grandma, and other children saw him in the street and humiliated him because his father and mother were in prison***

***and threatened to report him***". The psychological effect on children ranged from mental illness, to dropping out of school because of the stigma, to having to leave the whole community and find a new neighborhood to live in, to self-shaming and blaming their parents that they got them into these situations, and abandonment of their parents to avoid the pressure on themselves. One of the ladies commented, ***"till now, my children stopped connecting with me, and stopped talking with me"***.

In the focus groups, three beneficiaries mentioned that the rehabilitation services provided them with a very successful reintegration with their community and families. These services had helped them to psychologically face themselves and their families as well as overcoming depression symptoms and other psychological problems. These beneficiaries believed that the most needs which were met by the project were the psychological and re-integration needs. Four beneficiaries added that these psychological services were even more beneficial because they were extended to family members so it gave them the chance to do activities together, which in return strengthened their bond and helped in the reintegration process. Around 10 beneficiaries mentioned the group therapy sessions were the best service they received and even one of them said that it was even better than the individual sessions as they got the chance to face their problems as part of a group and to understand the community, and feel the support being around people who are going through the same situation.

Four beneficiaries talked about the constant support they received from the psychologists they had sessions with. They mentioned that these psychologists actively listened to them and helped them to relieve negative emotions. One beneficiary said ***"Before Ramadan, I called the psychologist and I was depressed because I didn't have food. She came with me to home and saw that I didn't have anything [and got me a stove]"***. This shows that the psychologists provided them with material support in addition to the emotional support, which shows that they cared deeply about them. The team used to offer help on the professional and personal level, which made the beneficiaries feel that someone is caring for them. Some of the social support was provided through gathering donation among them as a team, and others were through official donations through the foundation. As mentioned by one of the psychosocial coordinators, the beneficiaries used to call me anytime of the day and I would go to their home to solve a problem with the family. As much these practices reveal the good intentions and passion of the staff team, it also reveals unprofessionalism for not being able to set boundaries on when and where to step in. This has



#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

consequences on the longer-term, because it puts the service provider at risk for being in an unsafe situation being in the home without taking security measures, also increases their chances of being burned out. As also stated by the coordinator, this has been more structured when the case management system is in place, and the skills of the coordinators improved by the training they received by the foundation's psychologist. Another practice that was mentioned by 2 of the beneficiaries in the focus groups is that they felt validated when they attended therapy session but that the psychologist cried while listening to her story. When this happens in therapy, it leads the beneficiary to feel stuck that even the person who is supposed to help is crying and has nothing to offer.

Two beneficiaries mentioned that the psychologists were easily reachable and they followed up with them on a regular basis. However, one beneficiary argued that the sessions were indeed very helpful to him but there was no follow up after this session. In addition, almost all 10 beneficiaries agreed that female psychologists should be available because many women refuse to speak with male psychologists and they prefer to have the sessions with someone of their same gender. Finally, one beneficiary did not get the concept of the assessments that were done by the psychologists before the sessions, she even said *"I am surprised by the questions that the psychologist asked me. I told him I haven't gone crazy yet"*. This shows that maybe they needed more explanation "psychoeducation on what to expect from the kind of support received", about how the process goes as this might have been the first therapy session they attended in their whole lives. Overall, almost all the beneficiaries in the focus groups were satisfied with the psychological services and the support they received from the psychologists regardless of the few issues that occurred.

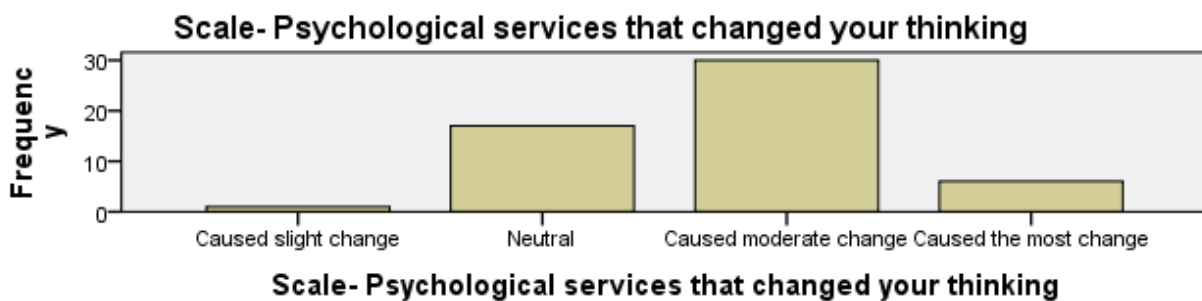
It is also worth mentioning that the women are at higher risk, as they are more marginalized and have other issues that consequent their imprisonment. Pre-release, the children don't find a place to go and many of them end up being in the street or at other family members' house, who might not be welcoming to them and puts them at risk for domestic violence and abuse. In one of the cases, the beneficiary narrated that when she went to prison, her husband got married and kicked the children out of the house, so when she came out, her and her children did not find shelter. Other issues related to post-release, are the inability to find jobs that are flexible to be able to take care of the kids or the absence of childcare services while being at work.

#### **Impact of Psychosocial Services on Beneficiaries and their Families**

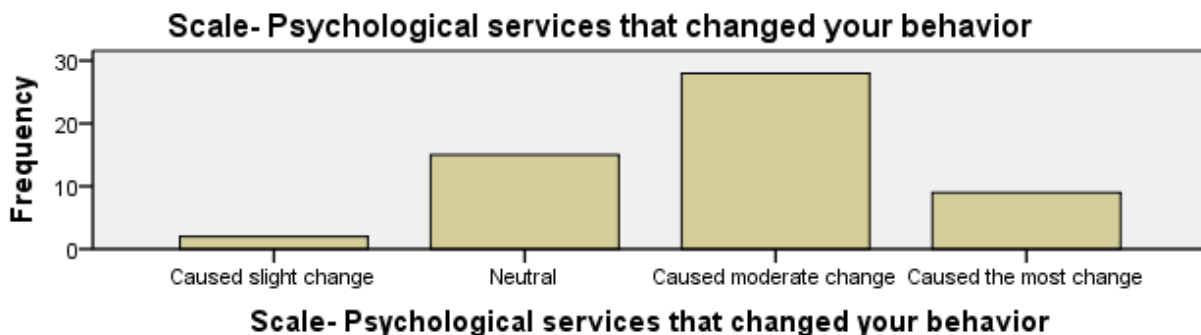


The beneficiaries were asked to rate on a scale the extent to which psychosocial services received by Start Life caused a change in the way they think, and in their behaviors, and in the life of people around them. Half of the beneficiaries believed that most of the services that aimed to change their thinking have actually caused a moderate change (52%, n = 28). Some mentioned that these services were neutral (28%, n = 15), and few mentioned that it caused the most change (17%, n = 9). However, only two beneficiaries stated that these psychosocial services caused a slight change in the way they think (4%).

Regarding the psychosocial services that changed their behaviors, half of the beneficiaries



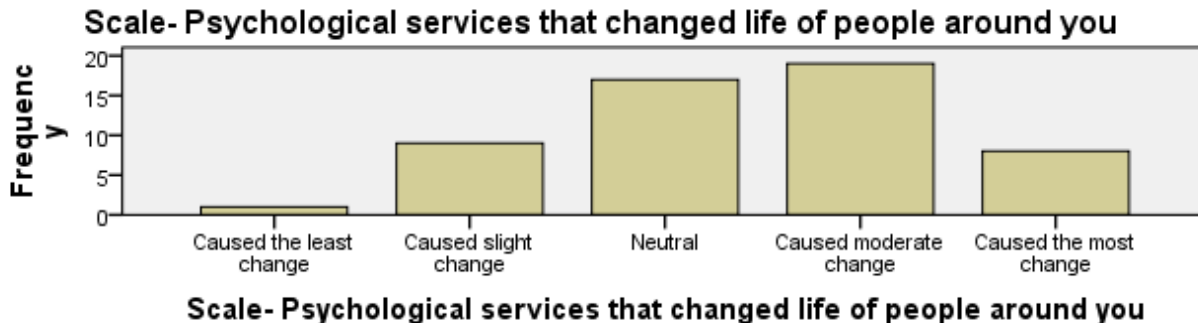
agreed that these services caused a moderate change in their behavior (52%, n = 28). Some mentioned that these services were neutral (28%, n = 17), and few mentioned that it caused the most change (17%, n = 9). Only two beneficiaries mentioned that these psychosocial services have caused a slight change in their behaviors (4%). As one beneficiary mentioned in the focus groups, ***“I stopped becoming stressed and angry about everything. Behaviorally, I became better”.***



Regarding the psychological services that caused a change in the life of people around them, the majority stated that these services caused a moderate change (35%, n = 19), some mentioned that it was neutral (32%, n = 17), few stated that it caused a slight change (17%, n = 9),



eight stated that it caused the most change (15%), while only one beneficiary mentioned that it caused the least change (2%).



Thus, data from the questionnaire assumes that the psychological support received through the program has caused a moderate change in the way they think and behave, and between a moderate and neutral change in the lives of people around them. This highlights the importance of CBT in altering cognition and behavior when used in brief therapy, which is considered effective but could be used more efficiently, if accompanied by family and group therapy.

Data from the focus group discussions with beneficiaries and their family members reveal that the frequency of themes of the effect of the psychological support across all discussions are being able to face the society (14), being able to deal with family members (8), positive behavioral changes (7), meeting people in the same situation (6), and cognitive changes (5). The psychosocial support received has helped beneficiaries and their families to face the society, walk in the streets, handling negative comments, and empowered them to feel part of the community. It also helped them deal with family members and handle their anger, as well as helped them bond together through the trips SL has organized for them to be able to participate in activities together. Eight participants explained that the trips made them feel like they dropped all their sorrow and left them behind for a short time. It release some stress and made them feel appreciated that they were taken to a decent place to stay in during the trip. Behavioral changes mentioned included being able to take action, solve problems, and deal with their stress and anxiety, as well as being determined in what they want to do, while cognitive changes including perception of self and increased self-confidence and self-esteem. the y also mentioned introducing art therapy and that this increased their confidence. In a closing ceremony of the project, Start Life, Life Foundation held a Regional



Conference on the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Prisoners in Egypt, and part of the program, was a play performed by the beneficiaries, and their confidence was revealed on stage.

The operational manual provides a comprehensive overview of the services provided to its beneficiaries. The roadmap drawn by Start Life's case management system is similar to several international models and especially the IASC one. In 2007, The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) reference group on Mental health and Psychosocial Support; consisting of more than 30 organizations including NGOs, UN agencies and other international agencies, developed a multilayered response framework to support and meet the different needs of the different groups[1].



This illustration is based on the intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in the IASC Guidelines (2007).

The first layer represents the basic needs of all groups, establishing the safety and security and ensuring their physical safety. The second layer represents the interventions needed for recipients who do not exhibit chronic mental health problems but are showing symptoms of distress as a result of what they have been through and are able to maintain their mental health and psychosocial well-being if they receive help in accessing key community and family supports. Both layers can be implemented by a trained case manager. The third is the focused but non specialized support that could be provided by psychosocial trained workers who receive supervision. It represents the supports necessary for the smaller number of people who additionally require more focused individual, family or group interventions by trained and supervised workers.

#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

The top layer focuses on the focused and specialized support services needed for the group of service recipients who continue to exhibit symptoms, although they have already received psychosocial support, and face difficulties in basic daily functioning. The service providers need to be trained on how to assess and when to refer cases that need more specialized mental health services. The second and third layer in the above mentioned model are not clearly differentiated in the current case management system.

Psychosocial support is highly dependant on assessing the functionality and identifying the strengths of the service recipient to be able to build on it. It is the non therapeutic support provided with the purpose of supporting the service recipients in coping with and overcoming the consequences of what they have been subjected to and rebuilding social structures. It refers to the impact of the environment on the psychological state of the survivor, including cognitive , emotional, and behavioural functions that may have an effect on the social aspect of the survivor's life and his/her social integration. Psychosocial support can also include a number of activities that are provided by an outsourced specialist, ex: drama therapists, art therapists, mindfulness specialists... etc.

The first step of providing psychosocial support is psychoeducation, which is an evidence based psychological intervention that entails educating survivors and their loved ones about the condition they are suffering from to help them cope with it better[1]. The case manager needs to provide information and educate the recipient about the prevalence of certain psychological distress and experiences other released prisoners experience, and common reactions, consequences and symptoms to help them feel they are not alone. This helps them get a sense of control over the situation and help them cope with those consequences when they happen.

#### *Legal Support*

The legal support presented by the lawyers of SL is the first interaction with the beneficiary or their families who report at the foundation that their family member is in prison or is about to get out of prison. The lawyers stated at the AI workshop held with the team, that there are cases like killing consume a lot of time and it is very difficult for the lawyers to work with. They added that working with “Gharemat or Gharemeen” - people in debt - is sometimes difficult because if the



amounts of debts are small then they sometimes handle it through donations or personal contributions from the team, but if the amounts are large, then it becomes very difficult to resolve. Another way is trying to reach a deal with the person who complained.

The focus group discussions with the beneficiaries and the interview conducted with lawyers revealed that many beneficiaries have up to 20 legal cases, which takes a lot of time. Eleven cases of beneficiaries in the focus groups mentioned that their legal cases are still open, which puts them in constant anxiety because they are afraid that get caught anytime. This puts them at risk because the police can come and take them from their houses, which increases the stigma on themselves and their children. Thus, the legal constraints directly influences the psychological, social, and economic aspects. Only 6 beneficiaries stated that their cases are closed and they are happy about it.

### **Economic Status, Services, and Reintegration**

**Specific Objective 3:** Improve job related skills among post-release prisoners with job placement and job creation programmes (communal micro enterprise projects).

**R 3.1** Enhanced labour related skills among post release prisoners.

**R 3.2** Former prisoners placed in jobs and supported in communal micro-enterprise projects.

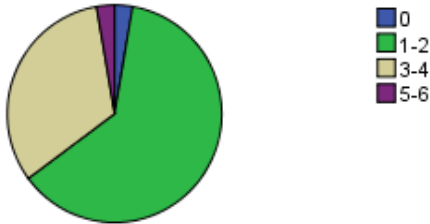
#### ***Economic Status***

##### **Income Generation**

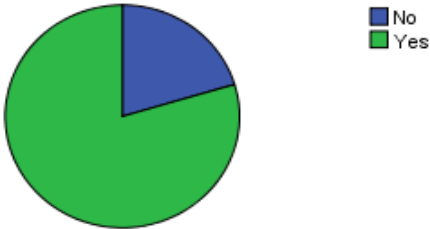
When asked if their children are working, about 22% stated that their children are working (n = 12). Some of the beneficiaries stated that their children are workers (7%, n = 4), two of them stated that their children work in a Cafe (4%) and two others mentioned that their children work as scrappers (4%). Each of the rest of the beneficiaries stated that their children work as a mechanic, in a restaurant, in houses, or in a bakery shop (2%, n = 1).

The beneficiaries were asked about the number of dependent children (age 17 and under) who live in their household, the majority stated that they have from one to two dependent children (43%, n = 23), followed by three to four dependent children (22%, n = 12), then one stated that they have from five to six dependent children (2%), and also one mentioned that they have no dependent children in their household (2%). Moreover, the highest majority mentioned that they were the ones in charge of the household (80%, n = 43).

Number of dependent children



Are you in charge of the household?



Beneficiaries who were not in charge of the household were asked about their relationship with the breadwinner, the majority mentioned the husband or wife (15%, n = 8), followed by the mother (6%, n = 3), then the father (4%, n = 2), then one mentioned the siblings (2%) and only one mentioned that their whole family is in charge of the household (2%). More than half of the beneficiaries stated that they have one or two in their household who work (63%, n = 34), and few mentioned that they have from three to four people in their household who work (17%, n = 9). Even when the majority of the beneficiaries state that more than one family members contribute to the income generation of the household, it is insufficient to ensure economic reintegration.

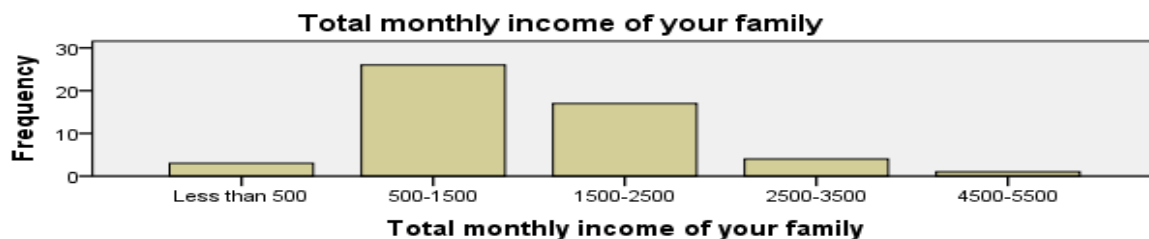
In addition, being in prison, especially if it is the breadwinner, risks the economic stability of the rest of the family and renders them to a lower economic status. In addition to the fact that the grass root reason for detention emerges from poverty. ***“I took my children out of school when my husband went into prison because I couldn't afford it”***. When the breadwinner is imprisoned (usually the male), the spouse/ son/ daughter are pushed to enter the labor market for the first time (with no experience or previous knowledge or skills); ***“When my mother was in prison, I worked and had to spend on the whole family.”*** Due to their lack of experience, this renders them as more vulnerable employees that can be exploited in the informal sector. This also puts them at risk to engage in prostitution or drug abuse, or any other risky behavior that increases the chances of recidivism, which was the case for one of the beneficiary who attended the focus group, and another family member who mentioned, that when she visited her husband in prison, a lady approached her and offered her a job and it turned out it was a trap to get her into sex work.

Moreover, even if the family members have stable jobs, when a family member of theirs is in prison, there is a risk for the other members to lose their jobs because of the stigma associated and the fear of a repeated crime. In one of the families FG’s, one participant shared; ***“when my wife got into prison, she left the kids with me. I lost my job and I had to look after them, and I***



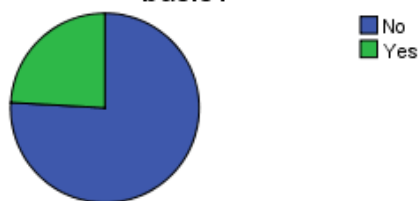
*started working anything that I could. I struggled to find a job*". Another female participant mentioned *"because of my husband's imprisonment, I had a lot of [relational] issues at work"*. Thus, there is a very high correlation between a family member being in prison and the stability of the other family members, even if they already have jobs.

The majority of the beneficiaries who responded to the questionnaire stated that they themselves are the source of income (72%, n = 39).

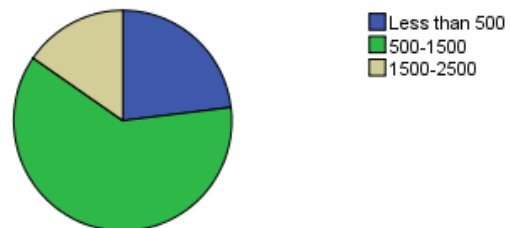


Most of the beneficiaries then mentioned that their son is their source of income (19%, n = 10), followed by the husband (15%, n = 8), then the pension (11%, n = 6), and finally one beneficiary mentioned alimony and another mentioned the mother (2%). Almost half of the participants have an overall monthly income from all income sources is between 500 and 1500 (48%, n = 26), 1500 and 2500 (32%, n = 17), then 2500 and 3500 (7%, n = 4), 3 beneficiaries mentioned that their total source of income is less than 500 (6%) and only 1 beneficiary mentioned that their total source of income is between 4500 and 5500 (2%).

Received any support or grant on a regular basis?



How much is this amount?



Only a few agreed (24%, n = 13) that they have received any wages, incentives, governmental support or grants on regularly basis, while the majority disagreed (76%, n = 41), confirming that they have limited access to financial support. The ones who received grants stated that they were

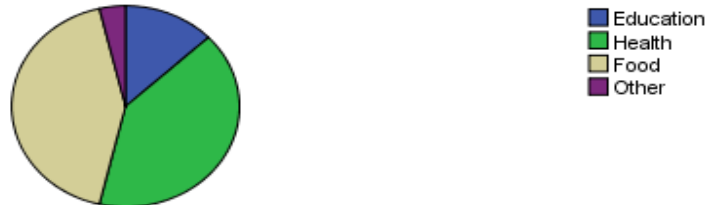


An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned through MoSS (9%, n = 5), 10th of Ramadan (4%, n = 2), an Employer (4%, n = 2), the After Care Department (2%) and pension (2%)., with a range of EGP500 and less to EGP2500.

### Spending and Savings

The majority of participants who responded to the questionnaire spend their income on food (43%, n = 23) and health (41%, n = 22), while only a few chose education (13%, n = 7) and none chose enterprises. Food and health are the basic needs and mostly spending of the beneficiaries are on those 2 necessities. It was also stated by the psychosocial coordinator that

**Most thing you spend your income on**

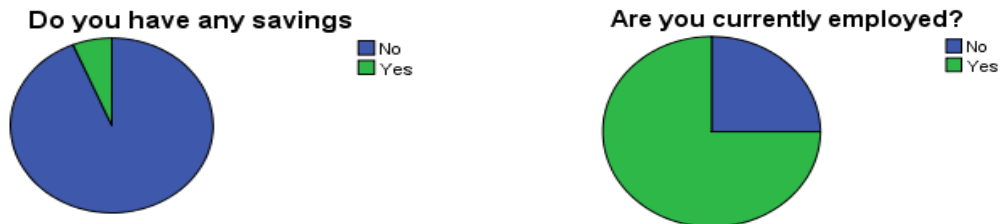


expenses also include educational requirements such as private lessons to their children, and paying rent for housing.

Throughout the focus groups, it has been found that the financial need is one of the main, if not the main, driver for crime and imprisonment. Most of the dire needs relate to spending on households whether on education, medication and treatment, or daily expenses. While this is also relevant to most types of crimes, it is especially true pertaining to the fact that the most common reason for detention amongst FG participants is debt. According to one participant, ***“when my father got sick, I took a loan to pay his treatment expenses. I took the loan from an organization and I couldn’t pay because my son was also sick, so they raised a legal case to the court and gave me 2 years in prison.”***

Data from the questionnaire states that the majority of participants stated that they have no savings (83%, n = 45) while only three beneficiaries said that they do have savings (6%). Three beneficiaries mentioned that they spend their savings on the regular household expenses (6%) and one mentioned that the savings is spent on enterprise assets and capital (2%). The final logframe indicators matrix states that 37.8% of women have their own savings account, as a result of joining the program to manage their project finances, but this is not an indication that they are able to manage their finances. This is just a count on how many of them have accounts.





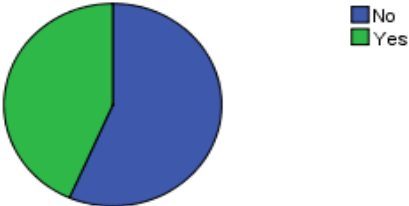
The highest percentage stated that they are currently working (56%, n = 30), while (19%, n = 10) are not working. Their work ranged from being regular workers (22%, n = 12), traders (7%, n = 4), tailors (6%, n = 3), in a clothes shop (4%, n = 2), scrap collector (4%, n = 2) and drivers (4%, n = 2). The rest of beneficiaries worked as a carpenter, painter, in a shop and as a dentist assistant (2%, n = 1).

Beneficiaries for the questionnaire have project related to merchandise, tailoring, mini grocery, garments, cafes, poultry industry, selling fruit and vegetables, food industries, and detergents. The highest majority mentioned that they didn't receive a grant to finance it (69%, n = 37).

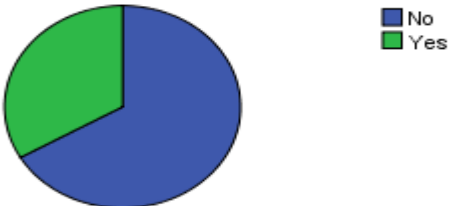
### **Debts and Loans**

The majority of the beneficiaries mentioned that they have borrowed money from their friends (32%, n = 17), and one beneficiary mentioned that they borrowed money from a private bank (2%). They were asked if they currently have any outstanding loans/debt for their projects, the majority disagreed (24%, n = 13) and the rest agreed that they currently have loans/debts (19%, n = 10). The highest percentage of the beneficiaries stated that they are not able to generate money to pay for the loans (24%, n = 13), and the rest mentioned that they are currently able to generate money to pay the loans (19%, n = 10).

**Able to generate money to pay the loans?**



**Have any current debt/loan for the project?**



A common phenomenon observed is the multiplication of debt through vicious cycles of borrowing where initial debts lead to fights, court cases that incur a lot of legal expenses, and to imprisonment which causes the locking away of the breadwinner of the family. These consequences leave the family in more debt. This is especially true in communities where there are professional money lenders/ debt owners who lend money to a lot of individuals in the community and force them to sign receipts of payments that are either empty or amount to a greater sum than what was actually borrowed. In order to give up their cases in court, these money lenders ask for multiples of the amount that was borrowed, and thus, put the borrower in a worse economic condition. They also bring strangers to the court to complain about the borrowers in front of the judge, and/ or raise the case for the same receipt to court with multiple lawyers, and thus increasing the number of cases against the same borrower.

These cycles of debt are also extended to the sons/ daughters of the borrower while the borrower is in jail where the money lender blackmails the younger generation to sign more cheques with the promise of giving up the cases in court. In one example, a lady mentioned that “while I was in prison, the debtor made my daughter sign other 12 payment receipts in order to release me, but he didn’t.” The presence of huge debts, especially owed to people in the same community usually drive people to leave their houses and towns in order to escape the community and the repeated accusations. They also sometimes move houses in order to find a lower end housing because they can’t afford the rent they used to pay.

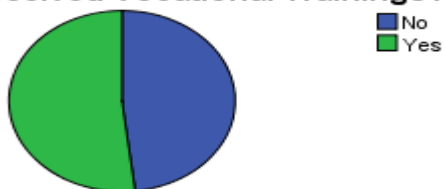
Another common reason for indebtedness is preparing the sons/ daughter for marriage. A lot of families face societal pressures to borrow money and enter into debt in order to fully prepare a house for their sons/ daughters to get married in. This leads to borrowing amounts that are multiples of their income or savings, and thus they are not able to pay back the amounts, and thus face legal charges leading to the imprisonment of the parents/ guardians.

In some cases, males in the family need cash amounts in order to spend on the family or start a small project. In order to borrow money from local lenders, they need a collateral, which ends up being the wife who is forced to sign cheques in order to guarantee her spouse. This practice usually ends up with both partners in jail, multiplying the negative impact facing the family.

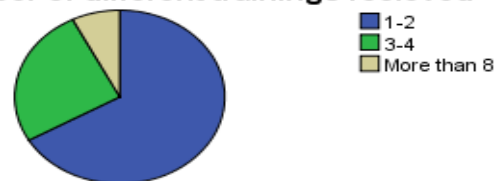
### Economic Support Services

Nearly half of the beneficiaries from the questionnaire have received vocational training (n = 28) by Start Life, and the other half did not (n = 26). Thirty-three percent of the beneficiaries have received 1 or 2 different trainings, 13% received 3 or 4 trainings, and 4% received more than eight trainings (4%).

Received Vocational Trainings?



Number of different trainings received



Since most beneficiaries have never worked before, they had minimal understanding of their own skills, values, or even fields of interest. For this reason, Start Life offered them multiple trainings and workshops in different fields until they were comfortable with one of the options. Most trainings were provided according to their availability and personal preference of individuals, with no thorough evaluation/ assessment of the skills, personality traits, or the values of the beneficiary and where they fit. Data from the questionnaire and focus groups reveal that participants were allowed to attend multiple technical training until they find the field they want to start their project in. This renders the choice of trainings to attend as non-strategic and inefficient in terms of the use of resources since a lot of resources are spent on training beneficiaries in multiple areas before they settle on one skill. An example raised in the focus groups; ***“I tried sewing here but I wasn’t able to work with it eventually. With the grant, I now buy meat, and sell it”***. There is an aspect that was revealed from the interview conducted with the economic coordinator is that the beneficiaries did not have awareness about projects and that it needs time

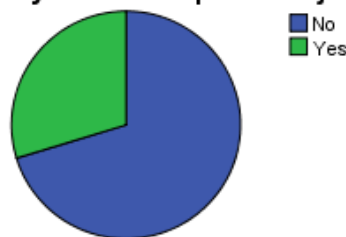


### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

and investment to be able to profit from it so they always come back to SL complaining that they cannot see how the project is going to help them. It was also highlighted through the interview that the beneficiaries will identify that they like sewing because they believe it's the easiest, but then they realize that they are not good at it and that they don't have good skills even if trained on it.

Moreover, the pool of trainings available have mostly been traditional skills that are not market driven or based upon market demand. The trainings and the subsequent choice of projects is mostly done on an ad hoc manner rather than identifying a value chain to be part of, and then equipping the beneficiaries with the needed skills to be part of this chain. Even when there was adaptation training for some beneficiaries - training for 4 months in a workshop to learn the skill - which can be successful because it is sustained and allows them to have a fixed income to pay debts or spend on expenses, the team faced challenges while trying to make deals with the workshops because most of them do not want to hire people released from prison.

**Did you find full/part time job?**



When asked if they found a full or part time job, the majority stated that they did not find a job (48%, n = 26) and some of the beneficiaries mentioned that they found a full or part time job (20%, n = 11). The majority also mentioned that they did not start their own business or enterprise (44%, n = 24), while some mentioned that they started their own business (32%, n = 17). When asked if they have acquired new soft or hard skills, the answers of the beneficiaries who answered this question were almost divided between agreeing and disagreeing, where 37% disagreed that they acquired new skills (n = 20) and 35% agreed (n = 19). The majority mentioned that they have learned the communication skills (9%, n = 5), followed by trade (7%, n = 4), then each of the rest of beneficiaries mentioned different skills like critical thinking, money management, handicrafts, working in detergents, and embroidery (2%, n = 1).

From the overall sample of beneficiaries served by the project, and as per the updated logframe indicators on economic empowerment services, 230 received on job training on 15 hairdresser, 66 cleaning and detergents production, 105 sewing, 25 air-conditioning, 10 lamp

production, 7 leather production, 3 glass drawing; 39 cases employed and 8 cases unemployed. And, 115 received the Get Ahead Training by ILO, 42 of which had income generation projects in selling vegetables and fruits, sewing, and poultry production, and 39 are still operating their projects, and 82% received vocational training.

### *Economic Reintegration*

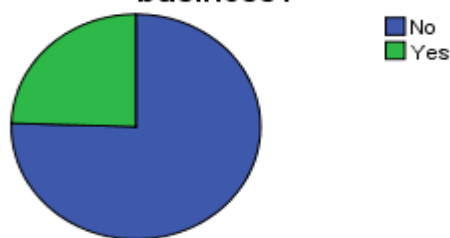
It is no doubt that Start Life has greatly supported the released prisoners and their families. All participants receiving economic support have shown immense gratitude to the support they received from Start Life and how it gave them a base to stand upon and a supporting contact that they can always refer to. According to one beneficiary; ***“because of the project, I am now able to stand on my feet and pay the rent and spend on my kids”***. For some, the projects even allowed the females in the households to take up jobs for the first and be able to financially sustain the household after their role was limited to domestic care work. Upon the imprisonment of many husbands, wives found themselves in need to generate income for the first time while they don’t have enough skills, education, or experience to be employed full time or start a project on their own with no institutional support. Start Life has supported many of these women by the trainings and workshops and by the grant to be used to start their micro project. This model has worked well with many of the beneficiaries who were very open to share their stories; ***“my husband got sick with a liver disease and couldn’t work, and I came here and they gave me trainings and I opened a project of fruits and vegetables and I now spend on my kids. I didn’t need to take loans”***. This client was neither a released prisoner, nor a family member of a prisoner, but she was at high risk of getting into prison.

Yet, most of the impact generated by the project can be classified as survival support instead of poverty alleviation or contribution to social mobility. While the economic support helps a lot of families to survive through the harsh impact of prison, it doesn’t lift those families out of poverty. As eloquently put by one of the participants; ***“we were drowning in water, so the project threw us a piece of wood so we can swim better till we reach shore. It didn’t come to take us in a boat. But we are grateful for it”***. Most participants still suffer from debt after the projects, or even as illustrated below, the projects contributed to incurring more debt in some cases. Because of this debt, few participants still have open legal cases, and more complaints are being raised, leading to their imprisonment for more times.

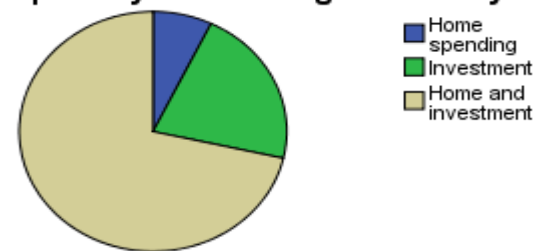
### Micro grants

Beneficiaries who stated that they have received grant through the project were asked about the primary use of this money, and the majority stated that they used the grant money for both household and enterprise expenses/assets (19%, n = 10), enterprise investment (6%, n = 3), and finally only one beneficiary mentioned that they use it for regular household expenses (2%). They majority of them divide the grant to spend half on the household expenses and the other half on the project.

**Received a grant to finance your business?**



**The primary use of the grant money**



Given the size of the grants, the corresponding size of profits is not big enough for most in order to repay the debts and spend on their families; 8 months ago after his release, he said: ***“they helped us to start a project with 5000 EGP. We used it to build a fish farm and we currently gain 300 EGP per month”***. For most people, the income from the micro projects is not enough to pay the debt they have taken. ***“I took sewing trainings and received a grant of 1200 EGP. I used it to buy material. The income I generate is not enough to pay my existing debts”***. The grant helped another beneficiary to pay a debt and drop a legal case.

The size of the grant doesn't only limit the ability to generate enough profit, but it also poses a threat to the business itself since sometimes the small amount of the grant leads to the purchase of low quality equipment that get broken shortly afterwards, risking the whole business. This has occurred with many of the participants, an example is; ***“I took a 3000 EGP grant to get hairdressing equipment. But since the amount was low, the equipment was weak, and it got damaged, so I had to shift and I started working in cleaning homes”***.

Most, if not all, participants agreed that the grant size is very small. While some were able to generate profit from their projects that is enough to cover all their household daily expenses, a

few were able to repay bits of their debts from the project profits, and others were not even able to break even in their projects.

However, there are examples of people who were able to create profitable projects that generate enough income to cover their daily expenses and finance their debts. ***“I started working as a hairdresser from home. I bought equipment with the grant. I can’t do all hairdressing jobs because I don’t have enough equipment. I do small jobs only. I took the grant 1 year ago. The income is enough to pay the rent, and give lessons to my kids. I bought furniture for my house with the debt and I use income from the project to pay the debt”***. Some were even able to expand the project of a kiosk; ***“I took a grant and sold cigarettes and fuel and I expanded and added fruit recently”***. This disparity is evidence that the results of the model are not consistent, and are highly dependable on the individual traits of beneficiaries and their starting points for the projects. Those who already had a space to use for a store, or a skill they can utilize for a project have witnessed much faster rates of growth and profit making, since the small size of the grant is convenient for expansion rather than establishing an economic project from scratch.

Those who don’t already have access to other supporting factors, or are in enough debt that they can’t take further loans to buy the missing elements, face bigger challenges in operating their businesses with only the grant money. In one Focus Group Discussion, the beneficiary had a lot of debt to repay and thus his project stopped; ***“I used the grant money to get machines for my shoes workshop but now it is not running. Because of the debts I had to repay, I don’t have money to buy material for the shoes or packaging”***. This shows that being in debt prior to joining Start Life projects is a strong factor determining the success or failure of the project. In the presence of big external debts, the size of the micro-grant is not enough to ensure the sustainability of the project since all its profits would be directed to financing the debt rather than buying material to be sold/ utilized, leading to the closure of the project as in this example.

In a few other instances, the existence of projects, with the insufficient size of the grant, deem the beneficiaries into a worse economic condition and further debt in order to acquire the material needed to run the project and complement what was bought with the grant. In one of the FGs in Sharkia, four participants took loans from banks and business associations in order to buy material for their projects, leaving them more indebted than they already started.

The grant acts as an accelerator to the growth of existing projects: ***“I used grant to buy goods to sell in the store we have in the family building. I am expanding with the money and now***

selling fine”. Due to the grant’s size, and given the high economic inflation rates that Egypt is currently facing, it is enough to supply the project with only one element; raw material, equipment, or rent.

### **Follow up**

In general, there is no fully-fledged strategy in Start Life for following up with the beneficiaries in order to evaluate the feasibility, progress, or scalability of their projects. Yet, all participants have mentioned how approachable the team is and how they refer back to the organization informally or whenever they needed anything. The employees as well approach beneficiaries in order to check upon their well-being every now and then. In some instances, when the employees knew that the project is not financially sustainable, they took the extra mile and supported the beneficiaries in changing the activity of their business; ***“I started a project but it was not working well so they helped me change it from vegetables to raising poultry. They are now supporting me with it”***. This reveals the flexibility and understanding of the team but does not reflect a structured system to follow up on the sustainability of the project.

Moreover, the usage of the grant money is not being tracked by the organization or restricted to be spent on the project. Some projects were actually closed because beneficiaries had to use the money to cover expenses for emergency circumstances, and some used the money to repay their debts or pay court fines. Examples include; ***“I had to sell my sewing machine when my son was ill to pay for his medical treatment”***; ***“I used grant money to pay the fine for the court, and I used it to close the case”***.

### **Individual Income Generation Projects**

Following the renowned Grameen Bank model, Start Life based their economic support program upon the establishment of individual micro projects from the micro grants disbursed. Furthermore, the Start Life model also overcomes the major obstacles facing the Grameen Bank model by disbursing the funds as grants rather than loans and thus avoiding many risks associated with debt financing, and by complementing the grant with trainings and capacity building, and thus putting the beneficiaries on the beginning of the right track of opening their own micro businesses.

Yet, even with these add-ons, it is questionable whether the micro projects model is the ideal model for this specific target group of released prisoners or their families. Most of the beneficiaries are already starting off their entrepreneurship journey with accumulated debt, which



puts them in a bad credit standing and risks being able to take further debts needed to expand their businesses later on. Moreover, this puts them in a situation where they are seeking fast income generation (instead of gradual scaling up of a micro project) in order to pay back their debts. It has also been noticeable in the interviews/ FG discussions that a common trait of this target group is fear of debts, which would be necessary to expand their businesses with the needed rate in order to suffice all their household needs and finance their existing debts/ pay court fines. A common trait of micro enterprises is being “credit starved”<sup>1</sup> with no enough leverage to seek loans needed for business growth.

Moreover, it is worthy to note that micro grants are considered survival support rather than sustainable poverty alleviation. “Credit can help people in difficult times but sustainable saving from in-work income is more important in long run.”<sup>2</sup> Sustainable support to the families requires having higher real disposable income, which requires higher productivity than what is possible within the scale of a micro project<sup>3</sup>.

There are a lot of risks associated with being a micro enterprise. For example, “micro enterprises always face issue of raw material”<sup>4</sup> where it is very hard for them to have enough cash to buy their needed supplies of raw material/ goods to be utilized/ sold. Moreover, there are legal risks associated with being a micro project since they tend to operate in the informal sector and thus are more vulnerable to external circumstances and to being shut down or forcibly relocated by the government. A few participants mentioned being bullied by the neighbors or being taken off the streets by the police.

Furthermore, it is important to note that micro projects are very hard, if not impossible, to scale and to result in pulling the beneficiary out of poverty. In a study of micro credit borrowers from the Grameen Bank (that has to be paid back with a reduced interest), it was found that “after 8 years of borrowing, 55% of Grameen households still aren’t able to meet their basic nutritional needs”.<sup>5</sup> This is due to the fact that a lot of the beneficiaries are using the money for consumption rather than business investment. Unless a scaling plan is put and supervised that allows for the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/the-big-problem-of-micro-and-small-enterprises-119011400035\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/the-big-problem-of-micro-and-small-enterprises-119011400035_1.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/reference/micro-finance-and-development>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/enterprises/5-major-problems-of-micro-and-small-enterprises/40708>

<sup>5</sup> Gina Neff: Microcredit, microresults The Left Business Observer #74, October 1996. Retrieved from: <http://www.leftbusinessobserver.com/Micro.html>

progress from low level incomes to higher level ones, most of the beneficiaries will remain in high levels of poverty.

UN Women has been applying the model slightly differently where it has worked on grouping women in productive clusters in the geographic locations where they come from, but they still ran their own smaller businesses independently. Each woman with an individual micro project is part of a bigger production cluster where orders are divided upon them, and revenues for each is equivalent to their individual production. The idea of the cluster in this model is to improve marketing, increase production capacity, and supervise product quality while still maintaining their independence. This model requires less supervision on the individual smaller production unit, while more support on the cluster level in terms of linkages to existing bigger markets. In 2015, UN Women established 4 different clusters in 4 governorates namely; handmade carpets cluster in Sharqeya, artichoke cluster in Beheira, dairy cluster in Beni Suif (which has been linked as a supplier of milk to Danone), and papyrus cluster in Menofia governorate.<sup>6</sup>

Also, it has been noticed that the choice of projects by the beneficiaries is not demand-pulled (ie; it is not driven by market demand/ need that they are responding to), rather it mainly depends on their interest or perceived skills. Consequently, most of the projects don't result in high income generation.<sup>7</sup>

One model that has worked well in Egypt during the past few years and is worth looking into is the “One Village One Product” (OVOP) model of cluster production. “Clusters are the concentration of homogeneous enterprises producing similar products or providing identical services along with relevant backward and forward linkage enterprises in a particular geographic location sharing common opportunities and threats.”<sup>8</sup>

In Egypt, although applied slightly differently, this model has been spearheaded by UN Women and Al Nidaa (by Dr. Heba Handoussa). “The economic logic behind this model is based on the idea of product differentiation”<sup>9</sup> between one geographic location and the other. In Qena,

<sup>6</sup> <https://egypt.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/one-village---one-product>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/selfhelp-groups-a-powerfu\\_b\\_833248?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2x1LmNvLnVrLw&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAA-GEqJR19Xy-Wq\\_2cQ-p3V0eck1OB-P5KxVYPIoV8M9jHsYAarcmtj1Pe3VdqP49534Aj3EiuwuGWcsWo1AsyhlF5QQ-evdYUIctWPRbL3m6WqcBoIfo7WAev\\_eTmhUBvdKPkDCipfjHu2hLhu4Fg\\_uEk5mYsCrJ2iMrZTL1T9V8R](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/selfhelp-groups-a-powerfu_b_833248?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2x1LmNvLnVrLw&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAA-GEqJR19Xy-Wq_2cQ-p3V0eck1OB-P5KxVYPIoV8M9jHsYAarcmtj1Pe3VdqP49534Aj3EiuwuGWcsWo1AsyhlF5QQ-evdYUIctWPRbL3m6WqcBoIfo7WAev_eTmhUBvdKPkDCipfjHu2hLhu4Fg_uEk5mYsCrJ2iMrZTL1T9V8R)

<sup>8</sup> <http://article.sciencepublishinggroup.com/html/10.11648.j.ijefm.20150304.15.html>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.encc.org.eg/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Sessio-IVB\\_Taqeem\\_ENID\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.encc.org.eg/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Sessio-IVB_Taqeem_ENID_Eng.pdf)



“from individual workshops in sewing, [larger] factories were created”<sup>10</sup> by Al Nidaa. Skills were introduced and supervised for the first 3 years, while the organization provided continuous support in marketing and product development. Al Nidaa follows an approach of closer supervision and follow up until the production unit is able to be independent. It has been working in 22 OVOP villages and resulting in great results where more than half of the handicrafts are being exported or sold to upper segments of the Egyptian society, and where trained employees have been earning regular income. After being trained in those workshops for 3 years and earning regular income, some individuals preferred to start their own businesses in the same industry<sup>11</sup>, yet will always remain part of the market linkages with the production cluster.

### **Relationship to psychological impact**

As mentioned, a lot of the female beneficiaries have never worked before meeting Start Life and have been restricted to domestic care work. When faced with circumstances like imprisonment, most of these women found themselves obliged to enter the labor market for the first time. At the time, they lacked the needed skills, self-esteem, and knowledge of the market, all of which have been provided support in by Start Life to the extent of some of the female beneficiaries excelling in their work. *“The trainings I took on how to sell and how to speak with people, boosted my self-confidence. The staff encouraged me to sell to strangers and not be afraid. And this encouraged me to go sell in governmental offices. I got used to work and can't stay at home now. I took a certificate from work because of my excellence”.*

From a sociological perspective, pushing released prisoners/ their families to be mainly self-employed reinforces their isolation from society. This is aggravated by the fact that a lot of these projects are run from their households. Despite being convenient and even demanded by the participants in a lot of instances, it might slow down the process of their reintegration in society.

The economic support provided by Start Life intended to address the previously mentioned economic and financial challenges. The economic support program consists of providing various employability and entrepreneurship trainings that include both soft and hard skills, and life skills training. For the entrepreneurship trainings, an ILO entrepreneurship curriculum is being applied with the beneficiaries by trainers from outside the organization. The modules include budgeting,

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/ifpri/heba-handoussa-2016-ifpri-egypt-seminar-series-in-partnership-with-eces-clusterbased-development-in-egypt>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.encc.org.eg/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Sessio-IVB\\_Taqeem\\_ENID\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.encc.org.eg/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Sessio-IVB_Taqeem_ENID_Eng.pdf)

conducting feasibility studies, sales and pricing, project management, calculating income, and running a business on a daily basis.

In case participants are unsure of what technical training/ skill they are interested in, they are allowed and welcomed to try out different training workshops in different skills and handicrafts until they find a skill that they are good at and that suits them best. Most participants were proud to be part of the participatory decision making on which training and which project they would uptake: ***“I took the sewing training, and they gave me a small sewing machine because I wanted a project from home”.***

It is also important to note that all of these trainings currently take place after prisoners are released from prison, despite the efforts done by Start Life to start the training process inside prison. Starting the training process earlier (during prison) would save valuable time that released prisoners have to spend in attending the workshops before having a sustainable income.

After attending the life skills, business skills, and technical skills for an average of 3 months, participants are provided with a micro grant that should be used towards creating their own micro project. The size of the grant depends on the nature of the project, and where the beneficiary stands in terms of project development (in case project/ skill/store had already been with the beneficiary and they just wanted to expand). Grant size ranges from 1200 EGP to 7000 EGP. Different projects supported include; sewing machines, kiosks, expanding existing workshops, buying goods for trade, hair-dresser, chicken farms, and selling vegetables and fruits.

When asked if they have received training on life skills, more than half agreed (63%, n = 34), and the rest disagreed (37%, n = 20). The majority of the beneficiaries mentioned that the most important thing they learned out of the training was problem solving skills (22%, n = 12), followed by work pressure (9%, n = 5) and positive thinking (9%, n = 5), then self control (4%, n = 2) and time management (4%, n = 2), and finally group work (2%, n = 1). Three beneficiaries answered the question related to their feelings after being a part of the program, one mentioned that the program taught him/her how to deal better with others, the second beneficiary stated that he/she has a better control over life, and the third and last one said that the program changed his/her life (2%, n = 1). The majority stated that the program helped in facilitating their re-integration in life (65%, n = 35).



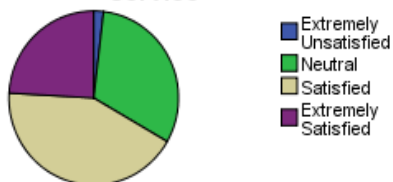
### Satisfaction of Services and Life Satisfaction of Beneficiaries

#### Satisfaction with services

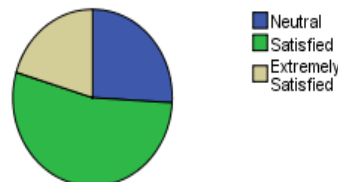
The beneficiaries who participated in the questionnaire ranked the legal, psychosocial and economic services as follows:

- They were asked if they were satisfied with the **legal assistance** services, the majority stated that they were **satisfied** (43%, n = 23), followed by neutral (32%, n = 17), then extremely satisfied (24%, n = 13), and only one beneficiary stated that they were extremely unsatisfied (2%).
- Regarding their satisfaction about the **psychosocial services**, the majority were **satisfied** (54%, n = 29), followed by neutral (26%, n = 14), and finally extremely satisfied (20%, n = 11).
- Regarding their satisfaction with the **economic services**, the results were close between **neutral** (33%, n = 18) and satisfied (32%, n = 17), followed by extremely satisfied (26%, n = 14), and finally a few mentioned that they were unsatisfied (9%, n = 5).

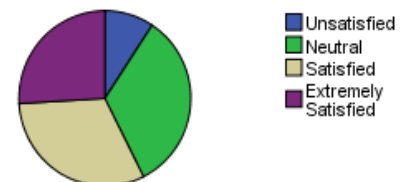
**Scale- satisfied with legal assistance service**



**Scale- satisfied with psychological social services**



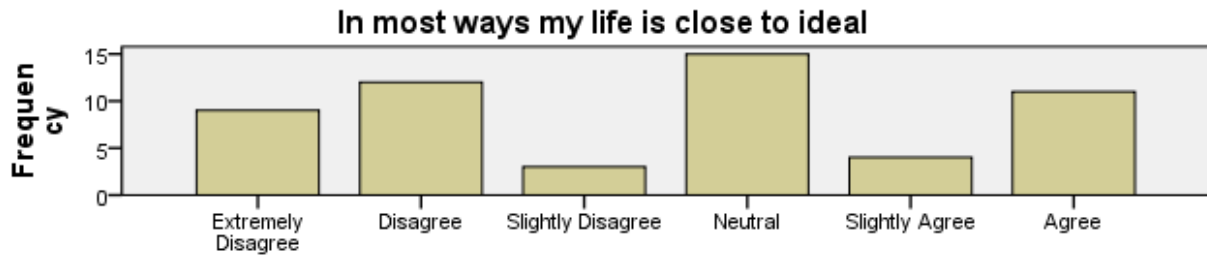
**Scale- satisfied with economical services**



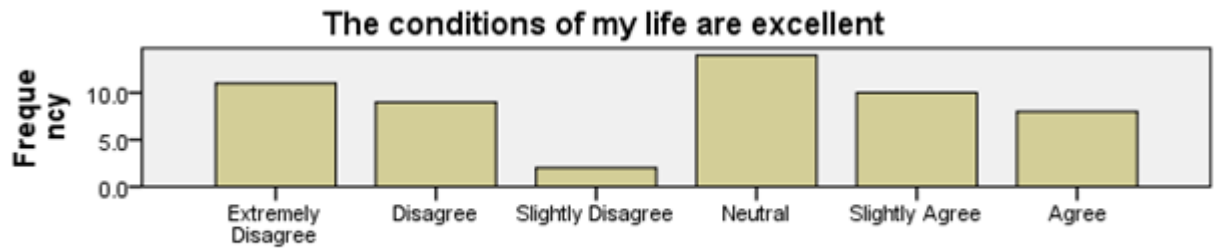
Five statements were shared with the beneficiaries about their satisfaction of their lives after receiving the services provided by Start Life. These statements are part of a scale named “The Satisfaction with Life Scale” (SWL) which is a 5-item instrument that has been used heavily as a measure of life satisfaction component of subjective well-being. The scores ranging between 5 and 9 refers to being extremely dissatisfied with life, between 10 - 14 shows dissatisfaction with life, between 15 - 19 shows refers to slightly below average with life satisfaction, between 20 and 24 refers to an average satisfaction, between 25 - 29 refers to high satisfaction, and finally scores between 30 - 35 refers to a very high satisfaction with life. The total average score for the beneficiaries is 16 which shows that they are slightly below average with life satisfaction.

The first statement said “In most ways my life is close to ideal”. The majority neither agreed or disagreed with this statement (28%, n = 15). The second statement said, “The conditions of my life are excellent”, the majority also neither agreed or disagreed with the statement (26%, n = 14). The third statement said “I am satisfied with my life”, the majority neither agreed or disagreed with this statement (28%, n = 15). The fourth statement said “So far I have gotten the important things I want in life” the majority extremely disagreed (32%, n = 17). The fifth and last statement said “If I could live my life over, i would change almost nothing”. The majority extremely disagreed (43%, n = 23), followed by disagreement (28%, n = 15).

The results shows that although many of them are highly satisfied with the services they had received, but the whole life satisfaction score is slightly below average because they are still in survival mode. This could be due to the economic model presented which is the micro grants which did not help much with their economic status. Also, there is still stigma in the community regarding them, and although they have gained different skills and learnt to adapt in the community, it seems that the community is still not ready for them. Finally, the duration of the project is short which makes it too soon for impact to show.



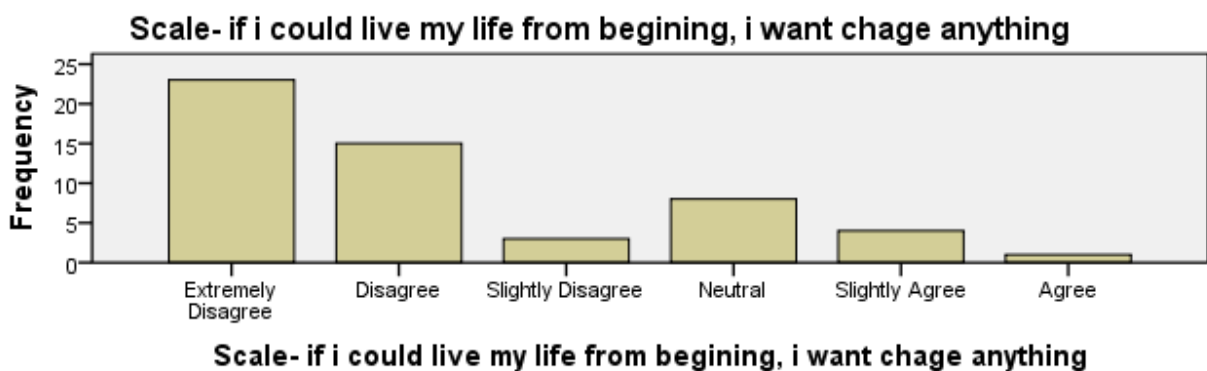
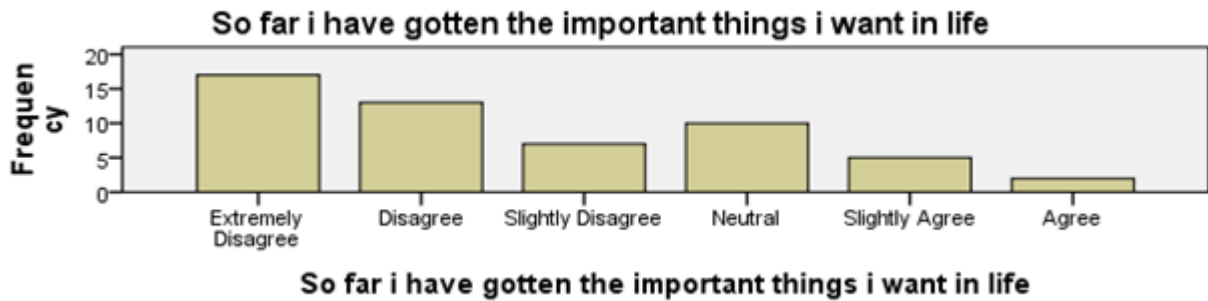
**In most ways my life is close to ideal**



**The conditions of my life are excellent**



**I am satisfied with my life**



### Shelter Housing

**Specific Objective 4:** Establish a shelter in Sharkia for the transitional accommodation of post-release female prisoners and their children as needed

**R 4.1** Appropriate lodging identified and renovated to meet the needs of women

**R 4.2** Sustainable mechanism established for the continuity of the shelter after project termination (A sustainability strategy that the Foundation can follow)

*"As anyone who has attempted to design and develop a major program such as this (on shelters) can attest, implementation is much more than simply identifying a group of stakeholders and selecting the program components to be applied"<sup>12</sup>.*

<sup>12</sup> Guide for Developing Housing for Ex-Offenders, U.S Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Community Capacity Development Office: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/203374.pdf>



#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

In evaluating housing units and shelters for released women prisoners, several components should be taken into consideration. According to the Guide for Developing Housing for Ex-Offenders, U.S Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Community Capacity Development Office, these include identification of other similar programs, and checking how the concerned shelter will complement other available programs. Another component is the necessity to include private sector funding since it is a source that can be negotiated in more ease than with government institutions due to bureaucracy and limited resources, in addition<sup>13</sup> to the fact that private sector companies are able to identify the needs of local communities which in turn can help in identification of training programs needed for employment and income generation<sup>14</sup>.

The development of collaborative relationships is also very important as projects do not need to be replicated, and tasks can be divided among several institutions that can work together and serve a wider pool of released prisoners. And last but not least, a built-in evaluation program should be an element in the program design to address important changes that need to be made to the program, such as admittance regulations, services provided and training programs for social and economic reintegration.

Start Life has successfully partnered with the MoSS to utilize a 2-floor-building by utilizing the organization's status of being one of Public Benefit as recognized by MoSS. Start Life established the first shelter house for released women prisoners in Zagazig, Sharkia, to provide housing for them and their children post release, up to 6 months. An observational visit was conducted to the shelter. Photos in annex 16 show the different areas of the shelter - in the ground floor there is an outdoor area, on the first floor there are 2 bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom, dining area, living room and a fridge, and on the second floor, there is a workshop for sewing with sewing machines for training, and another room with computers. The shelter hosted 44 women since its establishment. Start Life has developed an operational manual for the shelter, which identifies the duration of the women' stay to be from 1 week to 6 months, and they receive their services from Start Life, while staying there. From the 44 cases, 14 cases stayed for 3 months, 15 cases stayed for 4 months, 10 cases stayed for one month, and 5 cases stayed up to 6 months, as per the cumulative report.

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<sup>13</sup> ibis

<sup>14</sup> ibis

Three of the beneficiaries who attended the focus group mentioned that they either were or still are living in the shelter and that it helped them transition. One woman left her children to her in-laws until she was mentally stable enough to take them and eventually started working as a hairdresser and started selling cosmetics products. The other one was abandoned by her children because they are ashamed of her after she came out of the prison, and the third lives there with her children as there is no place for her to go, as her husband got married and kicked her children away. Two of them have been there for more than 6 months because one works there and the other one did not find a place to stay in.

In the AI workshop with the project team, they highlighted the importance of the shelter because when the lawyers used to reach out to women in prisons or police stations, sometimes they did not find a place for the women to stay in upon release, which sometimes takes place late at night, and they used to have them stay with relatives or mothers of team members, until she finds a place to stay in. The shelter is a great asset that provides rescue service that satisfies a basic need post release from prison.

The shelter does not have a sustained model to keep it running. The operational cost there is to be spent on food and salaries of the manager and the cook who is a beneficiary herself. However, the workshop was used only to train the beneficiaries for sewing but it is not utilized. The shelter can also set a model for operating and sustaining a shelter for released women prisoners that helps in their rehabilitation and reintegration through offering vocational training and or creating job opportunities for women living there. The shelter has not reached its full potential yet but Start Life has the skeleton to build on a model, as the space is in very good condition (annex 15 shows the photos from the observational visit to the shelter), and there is an operational manual for the shelter.

## Case Management System

**Specific Objective 5:** Monitoring, evaluation and documentation capacity related to the rehabilitation of post-release prisoners and prevention of re-offending.

**R 5.1** Improved NGO capacity on programme monitoring, evaluation and reporting

**R 5.2** Management Information System established

Start Life have worked on a case management system, including operational manuals, monitoring tools to measure indicators, such as the initial assessment of the beneficiaries, classified into Economic, Social, Psychological and Legal Assessment in terms of needs and progress, and readiness for reintegration. The case management system is divided into the initial assessment, then deciding and writing a plan in “my life plan“ booklet, followed by inserting the data in the archival system, and then deliver the needed services, and reassess to evaluate if the case should stop receiving the service. There is also a referral system in place but it is limited to specific hospitals for specialized services of receiving medication or for special cases of sexually transmitted diseases and viruses. The final stage of the system is the follow up, which is not a very structured process. Follow up is usually done randomly and with no documentation on follow up details or visits. The lack of follow up also was clear when there was difficulty accessing beneficiaries who are living beyond the proximity of the foundation’s headquarters. Follow up is considered a very important part of any case management system to make sure that the cycle is closed and that the released prisoner did not return to prison or does not require assistance.

The monitoring and evaluation system in place depends on quantitative data presented from the archival system, but lacks qualitative data documentation and capacity. A lot of data related to the case management system is presented in the service provision section or objective where the case management start. However, this section is just reflecting on the development of the system. The system focuses on the outputs and targeted numbers but does not monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the project. For example, having an indicator that is related to the number of women who have saving accounts, and defining it as an indicator of them being able to manage their expenses, lacks the effect of this change on their lives. Follow up is very important to include questions that ask specifically about outcomes and relating it to the project activities. From the updated logframe, in annex 2, it is reported that there are 31 follow up reports created, although there are 421 cases opened and require follow up. Moreover, the system does not entail what the follow up suggests, and what is the feedback of the beneficiaries on specific services. The project added a feature of analysis to the system toward the end of the project, which will help create more indicative data in the future, and not just quantities. This is a crucial part in the monitoring and evaluation and generating more comprehensive reports. The monitoring system also focuses on the beneficiaries' performance in project activities such as in trainings, but does not monitor what their satisfaction about the training.

**Specific Objective 6:** Sensitization of local community to reduce stigma associated with imprisonment especially in relation to former female prisoners

Start life has also documented the cases they served and produced a documentary to raise awareness on the status of released prisoners. However, the documentary is not publicized. It is used in festivals so the effect of it on the awareness of the local community is not achieved. The community sensitization to reduce stigma should start from the microsystems, including family and friends, because they are supposed to be the closed circle of the beneficiary and they are expected to be their primary source of support. However, data from the focus groups with the beneficiaries prove the opposite. 18 of the beneficiaries mentioned that their families abandoned them, and that the support they receive from strangers are more than that received by their families.

The second level of intervention is at the organizational level. The nongovernmental organizations that offer other kinds of social and health support services or aids have to be aware of the needs of the released prisoners and their families. Beneficiaries mentioned in the focus groups that some local mosques, organizations and institutions were helpful such as Bank Nasser and Alex Bank, and Takaful wa Karama under the MoSS, to get microloans to open projects, but the majority of beneficiaries claimed that it is not easy to seek help and that they are always not included in the agenda of the Community Service Organizations, and are not considered as their target. As one mentioned, *“whoever leaves prison is as if he is a burden on society. All doors are closed in his face and his psyche is always damaged”*. A question was asked to the beneficiaries about what in the community helped them the most in reintegration upon their release, the highest majority mentioned that the institutions were the most helpful in reintegration (82%, n = 44), followed by the relationships (11%, n = 6), and then the religious institutions (7%, n = 4). No one chose the assets as a method that was helpful in their reintegration with the community after being released from prison.

The project had some protocols with NGOs but that does not guarantee that they get the support needed. The project did not focus on microsystems and macrosystems in terms of raising awareness and reducing the stigma but was more focused on the individual side of it, with some focus on the family intervention. The environment of the released prisoner is not enabling and still not ready to integrate them. Thus, working on multi-levels of the community will support the

#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

services offered by the project and facilitate the reintegration process. Working on the awareness of the private sector and local employers, as well as raising awareness of the civil society, is essential, not only for strengthening the referral system, but also for increasing potential for collaboration in implementing the project activities, such as providing on the job training or, for example, in the future, holding employment fairs for released prisoners. Or, training NGOs who can implement awareness sessions with their beneficiaries on signing cheques and the consequences of it.

Finally, the highlight of this objective was organizing and coordinating a regional conference as a closure event to the project, where different institutions were present and different cases from different countries presented their models and experiences. Drosos Foundation sponsored the conference, and in light of sharing experiences and building on the assets that exist in the ecosystem, Drosos Foundation assigned The Community Hub to prepare a synthesis of the lessons learned from the implementation of 3 projects by CFPA, UNODC and Life Foundation and funded by Drosos Foundation. The synthesis is in annex 16 , and was presented in the conference through a shared panel by CFPA, Life Foundation, UNODC and The Community Hub, and facilitated by Mr. Bassem Adly, Economic Expert, as shown in the photo in annex 17.

## Conclusion

### Relevance

- Relevance and quality of design The project falls within the scope and priorities of the proposed logical framework for the period 2016-2019, and under the strategic framework of Drosos Foundation in Egypt, as part of serving a marginalized group of released prisoners. The project work is important to stress that throughout implementation and even after, project objectives remain fully relevant and aligned with the overall objective of reintegrating released prisoners and has met the needs of the targeted group. The project relevance is also highly dependent on the comprehensive services it provides, which is very responsive to the sensitivity and vulnerability of the released prisoner at the main aspects needed, psychological, legal, social and economic support.
- If analyzed from an ecological perspective, the project has worked at the individual level of service provision to the beneficiary, with some intervention at the microsystem, the

families of beneficiaries by extending services to families of prisoners, and by having the family go on trips or through providing social support such as donation and referrals to receive healthcare services. At this level, the project required further exploration to fit an international guidelines that guides the economic empowerment service to make it more relevant to the needs of the market and link it to supply chain based on demand and market analysis of the local area. The project also worked at the organizational level of strengthening the structure, system, operations, and governance of Life Foundation to maintain relevance and set a benchmark of service provision for released prisoners. Finally, at the macrosystem or societal level, the project has established partnerships with governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Interior to set the ground and open the channels to replication of the program in the future to meet the needs of the general population of prisoners and released prisoners at the country level.

- The project also is one of 3 projects working with the same target population, under Drosos Foundation, which also increases the relevance to other initiatives and magnifies and asserts the importance of working with released prisoners and being able to gather knowledge, lessons and best practices so as to continue/enlarge support in this direction, in particular as regards partnerships at the national level.

## Efficiency

- The project has adequately managed its financial, human, and knowledge resources to operate at full capacity, and has achieved outstanding quantitative outputs. The mandatory progress report required biannually by Drosos Foundation, and that generated through the Management Information System lists activities and outputs but are very short in analysis and lack qualitative insights to the efficiency of the project activities. The evaluation team found no traces of monitoring tools that assess the “process”, how efficient are the activities and does not put the achieved output for each indicator in context. However, the project has either achieved the targeted outputs or has in most indicators over achieved, as shown in the updated and final logframe in annex 2. The project targeted 300 released prisoners at the start of the project, and has increased the target to 350 at the mid of the project, and have reached 421 released prisoners by the end of the project implementation to provide them with pre and post released services. The noticeably underachieving number in output

indicator is in pre-release service in prison were only 15% of the target population received that, but that was linked to a change in strategy through the midterm evaluation, where the project implementers consciously limited the number of pre-release services as a response to existing resources and difficulty of entering the prisons and the delay of signing the protocols with the MoI.

- In terms of timely implementation, the project encountered several delays but that has not influenced its performance. The project stopped operating for 4 months at midterm evaluation to restructure and strategize the work, and that was a turning point in the project implementation to better utilize its resources and operationalize the management of activities. The project has also received an extension of 3 months till October 2019, to wrap the reporting and implement the closure event of the project.
- The financial review has not shown any risk and has reflected an efficient system in use, supported with documentation (see annex 14 for detailed review from the period of June 2018 to July 2019).

## Effectiveness

- Project has achieved its planned objectives in the measure that a tool has been designed and some capacity building has been provided to use this tool for the purpose of operationally defining reintegration of released prisoners in context. The final logframe does not indicate how many cases graduated from the program; however, based on the existing tool, there are cases who graduated from the program, which is defined by scoring high on the assessment tool, which assesses 4 main aspects that are necessary for reintegration and that indicate that the person is ready to be integrated, which are the psychological, legal, social and economic. Data from the final evaluation, challenges the definition of reintegration because it indicates that many of the beneficiaries are at a survival state and at risk for recidivism, specifically who are still struggling with their projects or who are still in debt.
- There is no doubt that the project has provided services and has given the beneficiaries hope for life and has helped in lowering the risk of them returning to the same crime, with very high effectiveness in the legal, social and psychological services, but the satisfaction of the beneficiaries is not high, specifically in the economic empowerment service, and

specifically in the income generating project that were not built on existing assets or market demands. While the project, especially as conceived for a 3-year duration, could not be expected to measurably impact the life of released prisoners in terms of poverty alleviation while still examining the model and process; thus, it is vital to take into consideration the limited duration of the project in achieving full impact.

- The project has contributed initially to accessibility of support services to released prisoners with very effective outreach strategy, an enhanced understanding of integrated and participatory process for operation, and service provisions, and reform process along internationally recognized best practices. Project has disseminated best practices as regards involving the public sector into procedural making towards the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners. The project, however, lacked linkages with the private sector in its first phase, which is very normal as it was more focused on setting a benchmark and working on its institutional capacity as well as designing a structured model for service provision. The link to the private sector can be the main pillar of second phase of the project to ensure sustainability and examine a more concrete and effective way to offer the economic empowerment service and pilot a business model.

## **Sustainability**

- Sustainability must be assessed at various levels, and regarding various elements of the project. Sustainability of the tools and methods: The sustainability of the project was foreseen in its overall objective of rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners and offering pre and post release services to facilitate reintegration into society.
- For this purpose, the project focuses on building initial case management system and setting standards of offering services for the target group through 4 prisons. The first phase of the project developed analytical tools and a database to be used to help the project identify the necessary definitions of reintegration and return to crime. Activities also aimed at building an active public-civil society sector network who have a stake in the field. It also focused on its institutional capacity, while if focused on service provision and testing the model in its second phase.
- In terms of the institutional capacity, there are many factors that ensure sustainability, such as having an administrative and operational manual for Life Foundation and for the Shelter





#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

in Sharkia, which includes an organizational structure, identifying roles and responsibilities of team members, as well as explaining and defining the case management system and its flow and stages. It also outlines the processes and procedures of offering each of the legal, psychological, social and economic services in details, to match the target population to meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

- As tools they will retain sustainability if they are updated adequately and used for their intended beneficiaries. Similarly, it is necessary that monitoring and evaluation system, which is highly related and feeds into the sustainability factor of any developmental project, needs to include qualitative and analytical component to respond to changes and needs in the ecosystem.
- If sustainability relates to the ability of Start Life to continue to offer services to more beneficiaries and follow up with previous ones, then this was beyond the scope of a 3-year project, and extension is needed to be able to build a sustainable model to continue offering the services, with secured operational expenses and income generation workshop that is linked to supply chains and that is linked to the shelter in order to demonstrate successful institutional capacity building.
- The project has also invested a lot in building the capacity of the project staff and strengthening their skills in their specializations and that has contributed to the growth of the staff on the professional and personal levels, since many of them started studying and obtaining professional degrees in their areas of specialization in the project. The team also has a very high level of ownership and dedication to what they do and in offering the service. In addition to that, there is a code of ethical guidelines to ensure confidentiality.
- The project also invested a lot of efforts in sharing knowledge and exchange of experiences at the regional level by conducting visits to Morocco to see their experience and receive training of offering the services in different models. And has also concluded the project with a regional conference that also ensures sustainability and builds on existing efforts and assets.
- Finally, another important factor that highly contributes to the project sustainability is the public-civil sector partnerships, even if the funding is not available, this factor is key to raising funds because at this level of service provision, the government is a key partner. The project has also contributed to the capacity of Start Life whereby the organization was

able to get external funding from other big donors, namely European Union to continue providing services to released prisoners, through Arzak project. .

## Impact

→ The evaluation team can confidently state that the project has achieved its intended outcomes, with higher efficiency on objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, and with limited achievement at objective 6 that is concerned with community awareness. Overall, the project has established a solid model that with some changes and adaptations can be the base of a strong model for offering service to released prisoners. The project duration has limited timeframe to be able to measure impact, but data has revealed short-term outcome delivery at high performance.

## Recommendations

The final assessment of the 3-year project, Start Life, has proved that Life Foundation for Development and Community Integration has set a solid model for service provision to released prisoners in Egypt and with the below recommendations, they will be able to confidently provide evidence on the impact they leave on the community, and be able to examine a full model of case management, service provision, and shelter services. Thus, in order for this to happen, the project still requires support from donor organizations to be able to build on the existing assets and reach a higher level of maturity for replicating the model.

### ★ Pre-release services:

- Continue to collaborate with the MoI to exchange information about release prisoners and the services delivered for each, while examining the process and quality of the initial assessment and planning of services iif done through the social workers in the prisons.
- Work with the prisons proximal to the headquarters of the foundation to be able to access them and follow up with them, and work in parallel with the local community. Expand the work in prisons that other organizations like CFPA and UNODC work with. This will help with measuring the impact and utilization of accessible resources that one or the other offers.

### ★ Shelter and Meeting Basic Needs:

The basic need is to provide accommodation for released prisoners, in a shelter (with priority to women because they are at higher risk but also for children of prisoners, but necessary to men as well). The rescue model in the shelter is required to have a limited time with a plan to live independently to leave room for other released prisoners, and to achieve reintegration. While 44 released women prisoners benefited from the shelter and received some services associated with housing, for periods ranging from 1 day to 6 months (one month for 10 women, 3 months for 14 women, 4 months for 15 women, and 6 months for 5 women), a few recommendations are necessary to maximize effectiveness of this particular service, and to help it gain additional maturity and become a comprehensive model to rely on. These are:

- Set a strategic plan with a business model by utilizing the space on the second floor of the existing shelter in Sharkia, to ensure sustainability and contribute to the economic reintegration of the beneficiaries.
- Partner with the MoSS to utilize other services offered to beneficiaries and replicating the model in several governorates. This requires building the capacity of other local community-based service organizations in other locations to manage and offer the necessary psychosocial support services. For this reason, it is important to work in geographical areas that are linked to other projects working to develop the same area.
- A holistic and cross-cutting approach among different institutions and services needs to be adopted to ensure the sustainability of the shelter model by Start-Life. Despite the agreement that was made with the Women Administration under the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) on preparation of a nation-wide based report on the Care for Prisoners Association and how its different premises can be used as safe shelters for released women and men, in addition to their use as training centers, more partnerships are needed. These include signing a protocol with MoSS that guarantees the eligibility of released women prisoners to the other 8 shelters for women. Moreover, an official protocol needs to be signed with the Ministry of Health (MoH), for inclusion of released women prisoners and shelter inhabitants to receive the necessary medical services under its National HIV Program.
- Funds need to be raised for the current shelter and other shelters in other governorates to be set up (as the concerned shelter is in Sharkia governorate), and this entails a partnership



#### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

with CSR of private sector companies who can provide these funds or activities to raise funds that include the released women prisoners, and have these companies "market" the concept of stigma alleviation of released women prisoners, thus acting as an advocacy tool as well, so more women have access to such shelters and services.

- Another method to gain funds for expenses of running a shelter is to follow the model used by the shelter in Alexandria (under supervision of MoSS), where Alexandria University students live in a floor exclusive to them, and pay rent to the shelter administration.
- A number to contact if in need of a shelter and its services needs to be included in a flyer or booklet that is given to released women prisoners upon release, that they can contact, in order to maintain safety and confidentiality of the shelter.
- A feasibility study needs to be conducted on the area in which the shelter is located, to identify the needs of the community and in subsequence, provide training to released women prisoners on crafts and vocations that are needed by the community, rather than always follow the rigid and standard model of sewing garments and clothes.

#### ★ Post-release Services:

- Service provision must continue to be comprehensive, offering focused and non-specialized services for mild to moderate mental health disorders through individual, family, and group interventions, supported by legal and economic support, until reintegration is achieved.
- Introduce psycho-education for beneficiaries and their families to set expectations on what they can get exposed to and how to deal with it. Continue to include expressive and artistic methods of interventions, with professional expertise like art therapy or psychodrama.
- Offer support groups and look for positive deviance examples who given the same circumstances of the beneficiaries, have thrived to live a better quality of life. Study what these models do and translate it with them into an intervention program, that they themselves can advocate for.



### An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

- Legal support should only be available at the initial phase where finishing the documents and handling the basic needs of issuing IDs, and to beneficiaries who have a limited number of cases that are expected to be closed in a short period of time.
- Full case management and assessment including assessing the financial and debt statuses of the family, instead of solely depending on the type of activity. Pulling oneself out of poverty requires a lot more than just a micro grant. It requires continuous follow up and support, being linked to existing supply chains, having production support, increased productivity, formal registration, and safety nets against external circumstances.
- While the pre and post assessment gives an indication of where the beneficiary is prior to and after receiving the service. it does not cover many aspects that would ensure psychological rehabilitation or actual social integration, it is not a standardized test that would indicate the presence of a psychological problem or indicate that recovery and should not assume that their needs have been met. An assessment should take place during the interview/ filling of intake form with the psychologist. An example of an intake/ assessment form could be found in this resource [http://www.gbvim.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Interagency-GBV-Case-Management-Guidelines\\_Final\\_2017.pdf](http://www.gbvim.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Interagency-GBV-Case-Management-Guidelines_Final_2017.pdf) pages 230-239. The example is concerned with GBV survivors but could be edited to cover released prisoners and be specific to their needs. The tool assess:
  - Life story and story of imprisonment
  - If they are survivors of violence and access to the perpetrator to them (when, where and how frequent do they get subjected to violence)
  - Safety needs and strategies (safe at their own home? Need shelter?)
  - Support systems and social networks (using the ecomap as a tool for assessment)
  - Other available resources and opportunities that might be utilized
  - Health needs and available services (urgent or non urgent health needs)/ drug or substance use or abuse
  - Assess person's feelings, cognitions and behavior
  - Assess functioning:
    - Are they able to maintain their daily activities? Able to leave the house? Sleeping and eating habits? Socialization and maintaining interpersonal relationships?

- Complaining from any psychosomatic symptoms?
  - Assess opportunities for education and livelihoods
  - Identify protective factors and personal strengths
  - Other material needs
- It is recommended to add a section in the operational manual on staff care and wellbeing. Service providers through their work with Start Life listen and deal with stressful and traumatic stories and experiences on a daily basis. This makes them highly vulnerable to psychological burnout and secondary trauma. Putting clear policies to prevent staff burnout, emphasis the organization's role in staff care, including educating the staff and providing resources (ex: therapy) to service providers, in addition to establishing a strong staff supervision system, is essential to ensure that the operational manual is comprehensive.
- It is also recommended to update the referral system and partner organizations list for social support services. Through the interviews, it was clear that several organizations that were providing social and financial support to released prisoners were shut down and alternative forms of support need to be identified.
- It is recommended to use the assessment tool as a reference to ensure that the needs of the service recipient have been met according to the action plan and that there are no new needs emerging. The closure of the file should be determined by both the recipient after the assessment implemented by the case manager.
- While the operational guide and case management system states that follow up is required and reassessment is essential, the case managers said that they lost touch with several of the cases and that follow up is done randomly. Follow up frequency, place and time should be agreed on during case planning. During follow up, the case manager should reassess safety, psychological state and functioning, review case action plan, identify new need (if present) and renew the action plan accordingly<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> USAID, GBV IMS, Primero, IRC, International Medical Corps, UNHCR, . . . UNICEF. (2017). Interagency Gender Based Violence Case Management Guidelines. Retrieved from [http://www.gbvim.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Interagency-GBV-Case-Management-Guidelines\\_Final\\_2017.pdf](http://www.gbvim.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Interagency-GBV-Case-Management-Guidelines_Final_2017.pdf)

- It is recommended to follow the UN Women OVOP model where all micro projects running in the same industry in the same geographic location can be treated as one production cluster, attracting more micro projects into that industry. This would require closer supervision on product development and quality control, and support in marketing. A crucial element as well is market linkages to bigger supply chains where each cluster can be the supplier of a needed good/ material to Egypt's existing huge industries (like in the case of supplying milk from the cluster to Danone to produce milk products and yogurt).
- The organization should also be responsible about regulating the relationships amongst the members of the cluster while establishing a legal framework to sustainably govern the structure and institute clear division of roles. The choice of the industry should be demand-driven; based on the market needs and opportunities for intervention and where they intersect with what's appropriate for the target group. In order to identify the area of work, it is recommended to identify potential supply chains where there is room for smaller producers to be an integral part of as suppliers – inclusive value chains, and to identify bigger players in this supply chain who are willing to source from production clusters. There is a big role for the private sector to play in terms of sourcing from these clusters, and it is our recommendation for Start Life to start seeking private sector partnerships in this regard.
- Members of this production cluster should receive grants in order to develop their own production unit and equip it with the needed material/ equipment, and grants can be given to the cluster as a whole unit in order to manage its expansion. Grants on the cluster level can be given to the whole group while being managed according to the group norms they choose. It is also recommended to replace the cash grants with in-kind support to the beneficiaries where instead of distributing cash grants, the organization can give them high quality equipment/ material needed for the sustainability of their business. This reduces the risk of spending the cash on other needs, or indebting themselves further with the misallocation of the cash. According to one beneficiary; “cash will be spent in other things and will open new doors for debt. A lot of people get cash and spend on their debt or expenses. Goods and equipment, on the other hand, will regenerate themselves”.
- This can be complemented with providing a small monthly stipend for the families for the first few months in order to prevent them from falling into further loops of debt until the

project produces enough profit. The amount of grants (whether as a micro grant to an individual working alone or as part of a cluster) should be bigger than what is already being provided, and should be determined not only according to the type of project, but according to the family status and debt status as well.

- Moreover, from the interviews and FG discussions, it has been clear that family members play a vital role in the success or failure of the projects. Close families are tightly knit, and the project is perceived to be one for the whole family and not just the individual receiving the grant money. For this reason, it is recommended to treat the family as one economic unit where all family members get trained with the organization, multiple roles in the business get assigned to different family members, and with the size of the grant increasing with the number of household members involved in the project.
- Besides promoting self-employment, it is important to strengthen the job placement/employability component where it is better for the target group in terms of preferences, values, and sets of skills. For a lot of beneficiaries, self-employment has a lot of associated risk, requires certain personality traits, and needs a support system that is not available for all. It is important to create more linkages with existing work places that are able to hire released prisoners since the provision of decent jobs will not only accelerate their reintegration in society, but will also prevent re-engagement in crime.
- ★ Community Outreach:
  - Launch awareness campaigns in local communities (youth centers, schools, and local community-based organizations) through meetings or awareness sessions to reduce the stigma around released prisoners and raise awareness about avoiding loans and being in debts and signing cheques.
  - Collaborate with community-service organizations and build their capacity to offer basic services and raise their awareness on the needs of released prisoners.

## Limitations

There are several limitations for the evaluation, one of which is that it was proposed to conduct a workshop with beneficiaries through which they can take photos that represent their current status or something that has changed in their lives as a result of the services introduced through the project, and discuss in a focus group setting what each photo represents to them and





An Assessment and Synthesis of Lessons Learned

how all participants related or not, and exhibit the photos with their narratives in the conference to raise awareness on the changes that happened as a result of SL project, and highlight needs and challenges the post released prisoners face to be able to communicate it to decision makers in an artistic way. However, it was very difficult to reach out to the beneficiaries, other than the ones who attended the focus group discussions and who were also part of the photos that were exhibited in the conference. Conducting this process as part of a regional conference would have left an impact on governance with good media coverage.

The second limitation was also the inaccessibility of some of the key specialists from the MoSS, MoI, and the Psychologist of the Foundation whom had a busy schedule and the evaluation team were unable to meet them and conduct interviews with them to align their vision with Life Foundation and be able to incorporate that in the recommendations.