

“Peace Building in Lebanon” project’s newsletter

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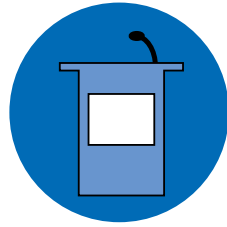
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The Peace Building in Lebanon project aims at analyzing the underlying causes of conflicts in different areas in Lebanon, in order to provide a safe, common space for community groups to discuss their concerns openly, and to develop in partnership with the municipality a strategy to reducing tensions through the development of the Mechanisms for Social Stability to secure the appropriate space for local leaders and local communities and to act as an incubator.

Currently the established mechanisms in Akkar, Menieh-Donnieh, Bekaa, South and Nabtiyeh are tailored to fit the characteristics of each village. In Akkar, three villages have joined efforts in one committee to work on reducing tensions in their area. In Menieh-Donnieh, the four villages have

chosen to work independently on establishing a network of local associations, empowering the youth and promoting regional tourism. In Bekaa, the established mechanism consists of three committees gathering eight villages from the Central and North Bekaa: Mediation and Conflict Resolution Committee, Sports and Youth Committee and Development Committee. In South Lebanon, Old Saida NGOs have established a network of organizations working in the area to coordinate their efforts. Lebbaa and Bablieh are working on Local Village Festivals to bring their residents together. Kfarjarra and Addousieh are working on empowering the youth and keeping them in their villages. While in the Nabatiyeh, five committees representing five villages are working on activating their role through the implementation of social activities.

What's Better Than Music to Meet Over?

"1, 2, 3... 1, 2, 3..." the chief of the marching band kept repeating. At the entrance of Bar Elias public garden, stood 20 scout musicians – drummers and brass section – following the signals of their leading maestro, all at once.

On a mission to reduce local tensions and strengthen the relations among Lebanese and Syrian residents of Bar Elias, the socio-cultural committee supported by the UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project, funded by UK DFID, established the first music institute in town.





This space worked as a common platform for interaction and cultural exchange and hosted 120 Lebanese and Syrian students at first trained by music teachers Ayman and Abdallah Aa'rayji.

“This town holds so much talent. The music institute is giving opportunities to so many young individuals to explore more their culture and themselves. Our enthusiasm is big, we are aiming at organizing new musical workshops soon” said Aa'rayji.

Two months later, on the 2nd of June 2016, around 150 local actors, municipal representatives, mukhtars, parents and supporters celebrated the graduation of 30 students as the first cohort.

“We haven't found a better way to communicate than music,” said Jamal Mousa, Bar Elias socio-cultural committee member and host of the graduation ceremony. Moussa emphasized on the importance of music in communication and praised the efforts of students and teachers throughout the training period to reach graduation day.

Individual performances took up the stage simultaneously. The music was mostly oriental. Students played instruments



such as “oud”, “tabla”, “riq” in addition to guitars, percussions, and trumpets, ending the show with a folkloric Lebanese-Syrian medley sung by all the students together accompanied by their teachers.

“It's my first time on stage, I sang many new tunes. It was a great experience and I will enroll next year for sure said Saeb Al Kattan, 18-year-old Lebanese student from Bar Elias.

From Majdel Anjar, Lebanon to Azerbaijan: Living Together in Inclusive Societies

Ali Al Majzoub, a municipality council member in Majdel Anjar and a member of Majdel Anjar socio-cultural committee (formed with the support of UNDP to sustain social stability in the area), was nominated to participate as a speaker in the Seventh Global Forum of the United Nations Alliances of Civilizations (UNAOC).

This forum took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, on April 25-27, 2016, to discuss the theme of “Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal”.

The event brought together nearly 4,300 participants from all over the world (147 countries) including political leaders, representatives of international and regional organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, youth, arts and the media, as well as donor agencies and foundations.



Majzoub's intervention shed light on the Mechanism for Social Stability process (MSS) which was implemented through the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project. He also tackled the role of the socio-cultural committee which was formed as part of the MSS in the implementation of several local activities which aimed at reducing tensions

in his community. These activities targeted a large group of young people through joint actions between the Lebanese and Syrian communities and emphasized on the partnership between the local authorities and local actors.

The conference was also a networking opportunity for Ali to share the Majdel Anjar committee's experience. He was exposed to models of social inclusion, and introduced to a unique platform where participants shared good practices of inclusion practiced at local and national levels, in UNAOC areas.

“The Forum was an excellent platform for exchanging ideas and sharing experiences, and was a great opportunity to meet several persons from different nationalities and backgrounds. I was also able to introduce attendees to the MSS process which was considered from their side as a unique model in the Arab countries as it deals with the challenges of social cohesion and youth inclusion in the community” said Ali.

Saida Network Joins Efforts of NGOs Working in the Old City

More than 12 local organizations working in Old Saida decided to join efforts and coordinate their projects in order to serve their community more effectively.

The UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project is working in seven localities in South Lebanon and five in Nabatieh on creating local social stability mechanisms. These mechanisms promote social stability through engaging local stakeholders in a participatory process to address challenges facing both Lebanese communities and the Syrian displaced.

Based on conflict analysis and the participatory social stability mechanisms development sessions, Blue Mission

NGO, Hariri Foundation for Human Sustainable Development, OLA Academy “Outreach and Leadership Academy- (OLA)”, Organization of Saida Children's Public Library, Old Saida Firefighting Center volunteers, AL Reaaya Organization, Zakat Fund, Maarouf Saad Social and Cultural organization, Mohamad Zaidan Charity Organization, Saida Association for Environment and Culture, Caritas, Debbaneh Foundation, DPNA/ Development for People and Nature Association, AL Moasat Association/ Social Relief and Welfare Association in Saida, Ahlouna Association, Anjiz Organization, Sea Mosque Charitable Association, Civil Council Against Drug Addiction, Orphanage, Social Movement, Saida's Beach and Zeery Friends Organization, NGO Platform of Saida



and Saida Municipality, identified the need to coordinate and standardize their work in order to avoid duplication and tensions creation.

A coordination unit was established under the supervision of the municipality. They agreed on organizing monthly meetings to coordinate their work, share news and data and set up joint ventures.

According to Oussama Aranout from Hariri Foundation, “the network is a positive initiative that gathers all NGOs in the city. It leads to better serving the old city of Saida”. Sanaa Bizri from the Blue Mission NGO, shares the same comment as Oussama. For her, “this network is an important and very challenging initiative, as it offers better and detailed information on old Saida’s situation, especially with the use of the survey.”

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The unit and the municipality are currently planning to conduct a detailed survey of all the population living in Old Saida with the support of UNDP, funded by Norway, to clearly identify the real needs and challenges.

Deir Ammar Associations’ Network: Bringing Together Rivals And Friends

The heads of the two rival lists in the Deir Ammar municipal elections sat next to each other in an event organized by the newly established Deir Ammar associations’ network. The network bringing together all the associations and the clubs in the village will strive to decrease tensions between the rival families and groups and strengthen peaceful and harmonious relations. The network is product of the 6 months old ongoing Mechanisms for Social Stability process led by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project team and funded by UK DFID. The process aims to establish local mechanisms capable of strengthening social stability in the region.

Deir Ammar, located in Minieh-Donnieh qaza, in North Lebanon has witnessed fierce political rivalries which have turned violent before, during and after local municipal

elections. These clashes have created constant tensions and led to fights and violence. The Deir Ammar associations and clubs which include representatives of all the families in the village, decided to work on a mechanism which brings together all the factions in the village through activities and joint initiatives.

The associations organized a public lecture on 15th of May 2016, around 15 days before the elections. A representative of the Lebanese Association for the Democratic Elections NGO spoke about the basic principles for peaceful and democratic elections as well as about the role of municipalities in local development.



Chebaa and Majdel Anjar Run for Peace



A sunny day in Chebaa and a rainy day in Majdel Anjar gathered Lebanese and Syrians to promote healthy lives and peaceful days.

A “Run for Your Health” marathon organized by the socio-cultural committee in Chebaa took place on April 3, 2016. Participants from the Lebanese army, the internal security forces, Indian and Spanish battalion in the UNIFIL and inhabitants of Chebaa and neighboring villages, ran together in the village to spread action and feelings of joy, happiness.

The Marathon was also considered an ice breaking activity between Lebanese and Syrian youth who ran together along the alleys of the beautiful Chebaa. The aim of the Marathon was to encourage people to re-engage in public affairs and to raise awareness on the importance of rural tourism and supporting youth-led sports activities.

The same ambiance and atmosphere prevailed in the “Run for Peace” Marathon which was organized by the socio-cultural committee in Majdel Anjar on May 28, 2016. Lebanese and Syrian youth, students, local authorities and civil society representatives participated in the Marathon which was an opportunity to spread a message of partnership, co-existence and good spirit between both societies.

Halima El Khatib, from the Majdel Anjar socio-cultural committee that organized this event, shed light on the perseverance of the participants despite the rainy day. “We ran under the rain, we ran for peace. No one surrendered, everybody decided to continue till the end and this is the needed spirit”, she said.

Both marathons were supported by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project funded by UK DFID.



The conflict mapping and analysis component pursues a twin track approach to systematically collect conflict related data and to go more in depth into specific dynamic. Lebanon Support Research Center analyzed the data on conflict incidents occurring in Lebanon over 2015 showing that most armed clashes almost exclusively concentrated around a few hotspots, namely Aarsal & Ras Baalbeck in the Bekaa, Chebaa and Ein El Helwe in the South, and Tripoli in the North. However other types of incidents (raids/arrests by

security forces, demonstrations and collective actions) were much more spread throughout Lebanon. In parallel, two new social stability analysis reports focusing on the different districts of Nabatieh Governorate concur to add that the combined political polarization and economic dropdown caused by the crisis as well as local security policies remain factors of marginalization of refugees in the short term and of potential instability in the medium term.

Converging Interests of Conciliation: The Social Stability Context in the Marjaayoun and Hasbaya Qazas

The report entitled “Converging Interests of Conciliation: The Social Stability Context in the Marjaayoun and Hasbaya Qazas” summarizes the conflict context of the Hasbaya and Marjaayoun Qazas of the Nabatieh Governorate, a religiously and politically diverse area which has for decades been at the forefront of regional dynamics and conflicts. In terms of composition and key actors, the area can roughly be divided into four sub-region. First is the predominantly Sunni Arqoub region where Future Movement and Islamic political parties are the main actors, though with significant support to leftist and nationalist parties. Second are the Druze villages of Hasbaya where Irsan is dominant but where intra-sectarian consensus – within and beyond the Lebanese border – is given priority. Third is Marjaayoun and its surroundings, home of both Christian political parties and nationalist parties. Last are the mostly Shiite southern Marjaayoun villages where the March 8 coalition of Hezbollah and the Amal movement dominates.

A long history of coexistence supported by economic and geostrategic interdependence and historic cross border relationships, as well national level political will and existing

local networks of communications are maintaining the region’s stability and safeguarding it from being drawn into the adjacent battles of the Syrian crisis. Some competition over resources and livelihood opportunities between members of the host community and the Syrian refugees exists.

The unknown fate of the Syrian crisis, the vulnerability of the area to ramifications of developments in Syria, and the increasing dependence on revenue from the war economy and aid might have a dividing impact. To offset these possible dividers the report recommends that humanitarian and stabilization partners and civil society organizations invest in impact driven local development projects, further prioritize border areas in the distribution of both humanitarian and stabilization assistance, and support existing conflict mitigation mechanisms.

Furthermore, a review of the entry and residency renewal regulations on Syrian refugees by the Lebanese Government would not only uphold the human rights of refugees but also contribute to the wider stability of the area.



The Violence Free Schools Initiative in Mount Lebanon

The task forces composed of teachers, students and parents that have been working on non-violence in each of the 15 schools involved in the project, have finalized the Codes of Conduct. The Codes of Conduct are documents that set the peaceful values of the school and the rights and duties of each member of the school community. Each participating school has decided on community activities that it would like to

undertake in order to encourage a culture of non-violence. Five of the schools have executed the activities at the end of this academic year while the others have preferred to undergo them at the beginning of the academic year 2016-2017. In parallel, participating teachers have received a practical training on their role in peace building and on integrating peace building tools in their schools.



This year, the working groups from Mansourieh, Amatour, Jal El Dib, Bourj Hammoud and Jbeil public schools have decided to seize the month of May to execute all of their non-physical activities. As a chance to celebrate the end

of the school year in the most peaceful way possible. The “Violence Free Schools” initiative was implemented by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project in partnership with KDC – Knowledge Development Company and funded by Norway.



Mansourieh Celebrates Nonviolence Through Arts

Mansourieh public school organized its first violence free day on May 13th, 2016. Weeks of preparations and hard work lead the taskforce formed of talented teachers, students and supportive parents, to close their school year with a “Nonviolence Day.”

The day was an exceptional occasion to raise awareness on the impact of violence on children and youth with the presence of around 150 participants. Whether it was through music, painting, acting or dancing, the students made use of the violence-free day to express their thoughts and had the opportunity to use their talent and art for the good of their community and for peace building efforts.

The violence-free day and its preceding preparations were an opportunity to let loose of the school’s creativity and find a common space for communication. “What was remarkable is that our students were so inspired, so willing to help! It was enough to show them how much we love them to get their attention and positive support!” said Mrs. Marie-Noelle Malti, music teacher at Mansourieh public school and member of the taskforce.

The day included group musical performances of Lebanese and classical music speaking of peace and civic values, and dance routines to music dedicated to diversity and respect of the “other”. In addition to a play that highlighted the importance of building better relationships among students, teachers and parents – promoting understanding and non-violence.

“I loved being part of this play, I felt that finally we can speak out and be heard!” said Jenny Fawaz, 8th grade student at Mansourieh public school.

“After this event was launched and during the taskforce trainings, we noticed a big change in our students’ behavior, especially those who had a tough temper or who participated in violent disputes. They are now so much more involved and motivated” expressed Mrs. Georgette Abi Raad, Principal of Mansourieh public school.



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On the same day, **Amatour** public school also celebrated their version of the violence-free day through an open kermes. 290 Lebanese and Syrian students from Amatour (Al Chouf) and other neighboring schools (Mokhtara, Bater, Marraat El- Chouf) took part of the event and participated in the outdoor games and drawing competitions. To spread the nonviolence theme of the day, banners were hanging all around the school walls, Lebanese and Syrian students were painting expressive artworks around the theme of nonviolence and the games were interactive.



Mansourieh was not the only school rich with hidden talents, **Bourj Hammoud** hosted an arts exhibition and talent show on the 26th of May 2016 in the presence of the school students, parents, and teachers.

50 Lebanese and Syrian students participated in the art exhibition that consisted of handcrafts display made from recycled materials and turned into a spectacular artistic crafts. In addition to a musical talent show that was only possible after the trainings focused on strengthening the students’ self-esteem and their public speaking powers.

The activity encouraged students to use their talent to spread joy, love, and peace.



In **Jal El Dib** public school, the violence-free day took a different path. The day was exceptionally athletic and bursting with energy. 312 students took part of this festivity, and 100 middleschool students walked around in attractive T-shirts saying “Together Towards a Violence-Free Environment” promoting the purpose of the event.

While some students participated in the acrobatic show, others held and posted banners that displayed their rights as students, and some quotes from the code of conduct on the walls of the playground. Participants could read on the wall: “I should listen and accept others’ opinions even if I don’t agree with them” and “it’s my right to participate in the educational process and state what I think.”



The day was a success and a way to let out some steam before the end- of- year exams for both teachers and students. “We wish to do this regularly so students can release their stress” said the school principal Mrs. Saydeh Maalouf.

Jbeil second public school, also hosted its violence-free day on May 15th involving 150 Lebanese and Syrian students from grades 4 till 8.

The event included outdoor games, painting competition, crafts for peace competition and a talent show. The diversity in the activities was a key success factor. Students were sharing a fun experience and exchanging peaceful messages and crafting artworks throughout the day.

It was a great opportunity for the students to enjoy an extracurricular activity together with their teachers in a context that promoted respect and nonviolence and initiated healthy relationships inside and outside the school.





Lebanon and Northern Ireland Exchange Peace Building Experiences



The Fighters For Peace (FFP) organization attended a peace building study program that was designed by TIDES Training & Consultancy in Northern Ireland (NI) from the 28th of April until the 3rd of May 2016. The initiative is part of the capacity building support provided by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project funded by Norway.

This program was specifically tailored by TIDES experts in order for FFP members to be able to learn about the Northern Irish peace building experience, with a focus on the role of ex-combatants in that process.

The program included discussions between FFP members and Northern Irish ex-combatants, visits to peace building

organizations run by ex-combatants and visits to sites related to the Northern Irish conflict. Facilitated sessions by experts were also included in order to stimulate debate on the similarities and differences between the Lebanese and Northern Irish contexts.

Ex-combatants from Lebanon and Northern Ireland exchanged perspectives on what they consider their role to be in preserving peace. “If you want to protect your house, talk to a former thief. If you want to protect peace, talk to a former fighter. All of us here are former fighters; this is our added value”, said a Northern Irish ex-combatant. On the Northern Irish experience in peacebuilding work, an FFP member observed that Northern Ireland has worked



on controlling violence not through courts and hearings but through education and awareness, which is what they can use and learn from as an organization.

Ex-combatants felt that their role is to prevent communities from dehumanizing each other because the demonization of the other is what makes violence justifiable. “He was a prisoner and I was the guardian of a prison. What we had in common was our suffering”, said a Northern Irish ex-combatant.

The visits to the sites and museums commemorating the conflict provided concrete examples for FFP members to reflect on. Their observations were related to the benefits of having a collective memory that is alive and documented for sustainable peace. The exposure to these sites has also raised concerns among the group about the social schism and damage to social cohesion that can be created when different parties in a conflict create their own separate museums and collective narrative. In Belfast, the Fighters For Peace stopped at the Peace Wall of Belfast and added their own contribution to Peace in Northern Ireland by writing messages of support to non-violence.

The study program has also created a space for FFP members to meet and interact with ex-combatants working on peace building initiatives to learn from each other, inspire each other and potentially collaborate. Some of the NI ex-combatants that the group has met were still active within their political parties while being strong advocates for non-violence. An FFP member observed: “We had never considered working with ex-fighters who are still involved with their political parties but are willing to be voices for peace. This is a dimension worth exploring”.

While in Belfast, two members of FFP were invited by a church community to talk about their experience and work as an organization. “They called us peacemakers and dedicated their prayers to us”, said an FFP member. “It was truly moving to have people who share the same social problems as us honor us for our efforts in sustaining peace”, he added.

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According to Dr. Drew Mikhael, political development consultant with Durham University, the importance of the program is for the Fighters for Peace to know that they are not alone in their journey. He believes that, as ex-combatants, they are the strongest voice for peace and that they have the power to stop radicalization.

The program has also constituted a platform for the Lebanese ex-fighters to revisit their memories of the war and to discuss their journey as individuals with their Northern Irish counterparts. “The work of these groups is very hard individually and collectively” observed Dr. Julie Norman-Research Fellow at Queens University, Belfast. The ability of the program to create a space of exchange between them is extremely valuable, “I cannot change Northern Ireland”, said a NI ex-combatant. “I cannot expect all the problems to magically stop in Lebanon”, said a Lebanese ex-combatant. As former combatants, they will however use their life story as a testimony for peace.



Students and Media Figures Debate Over the Role of Newscast Introductions



“Let’s hear it from you! Whoever is against news introductions please stand up”, Mariam Al Bassam, Managing Editor of primetime news and political shows at New TV, asked the audience. The hall was immediately blustering with “NOs” as the spectators stood up.

Mariam was one of four key speakers at the open discussion session titled “TV Newscasts Introductions and Establishment of Civil Peace in Lebanon: In Memory and Remembrance” organized by Maharat Foundation in partnership with the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project with the financial support of KfW.

This debate took place on Tuesday April 12th 2016, in Sunflower Theater, Tayyouneh - an area labeled as a “demarcation line” that split neighboring communities during the civil war. The event came out on the eve of the 41st commemoration of the beginning of the civil war, because according to the study done by Maharat on newscast introductions, it was during the civil war that TV broadcasted introductions and editorials first came to life.

Around 400 enthusiastic participants from the civil society, students from Lebanese universities, representatives from NGOs, and media professors took part of the sizzling dialogue. Their eagerness to voice out their opinions about the editorials of the Lebanese primetime news was obvious – especially to the present speakers such as: Dr. Georges Sadaka, dean of Faculty of Media at the Lebanese University; Walid Abboud, Managing Editor of news at MTV Lebanon, and Lara Zaloum, Managing Editor of primetime news at LBCI.

Mariam’s approach to the audience came as a surprise. She was taken away by their strong stand on news introductions which - to her - are works of art. “I think it’s time to rethink and review our role and impact as media institutions and how we can improve them. This session definitely put our work in perspective.”

The audience also got to watch examples of different news introductions, demonstrating how the same news can be interpreted differently on Lebanese TV channels and opening the discussion around the role of the introductions in strengthening civil peace. Maharat took the chance to display indicators from the prepared study for this topic and revealed that only %52 of the news introductions are neutral, while the rest is critical, analytical, or subjective.

According to Rola Mikhael, CEO of Maharat, “the introductions were used during the war to express political perspectives. This is where it started.” Dr. Georges Sadaka added “41 years ago, there was not only a military war, the media-waged war was equally as violent.”

The audience and the speakers debated over topics like “the rise of the introductions in news broadcast”, “the necessity of editorials in news-telling”, “the origin of newscast introductions”, and “the possibility of a better way to restructure primetime news to contribute to civil peace.”



Clearly, the audience was not enthusiastic towards to TV news introductions, the discussion was heated.

Lara Zaloum, explained that the LBCI tried to cut down the use of introductions for a while. Yet to her, “when there was a public matter in need of exposure such as “civil movement vs. garbage crisis” we, at the newsroom, felt the need to bring it back on line, taking into consideration the historic chance of raising awareness on a communal civic concern.”

UNDP country director, Mr. Luca Renda, said “Media and journalism have proven to be of great use within conflict management and peace building. This is why the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project is producing in addition to joint news supplements, a series of media monitoring studies that started in 2015 and are still ongoing with Maharat throughout this year.” Moreover, he stressed on the importance of the starting point of these studies, the Journalists’ Pact for Strengthening Civil Peace that was drafted and signed by 34 media institutions in 2013.

UNDP Supplement Discusses Civil Peace Issues from Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian Perspectives



In the busy street of Ashrafieh in Beirut, right after hearing the news of an explosion targeting Lebanese citizens in Al Qaa, in Bekaa, Amal grabs As-Safir newspaper to read it before heading to work. With this issue of As-Safir, Annahar, L’Orient-Le Jour and The Daily Star newspapers, Amal and other readers, were able to get a free copy of the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” Joint News Supplement, published on the 27th of June 2016.

For Amal, the supplement was a chance to have a new perception on the repercussions of the Syrian crisis in Lebanon. This was also highlighted in UNDP Director’s editorial Mr. Luca Renda, saying that through such mediums, the increasing negative trends of prejudice and discrimination can be alleviated, both publicly and within the media.

The supplement contains articles by writers, journalists, media professionals, researchers and artists from Lebanon, Syria and Palestine; they cover issues related to civil peace in addition to the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon and the relations between Lebanese and Syrians, employing objective approaches that are free of hatred and misconceptions. This 12th issue of the supplement gave participants the opportunity to share their perceptions, fears and aspirations on the role of municipalities in facing the crisis, the legal perspective of the curfews, the Palestinian displacement from Syria and many other personal testimonies.

The supplement can be found on the below link:
www.lb.undp.org/pbsupplement

The UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project works since 2007 on enhancing mutual understanding and promoting social cohesion by addressing root causes of conflict in Lebanon. The project has been also lately working on addressing the impact of the Syrian crisis on social stability in Lebanon.

The project supports different groups from local leaders and local actors, to educators, journalists, youth and civil society activists, in developing medium and long-term strategies for peace building, crisis management and conflict prevention.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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