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# The UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project’s newsletter

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# Newsletter Content



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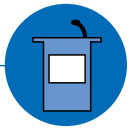
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## Implementation of Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS)

The UNDP, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and under its “Lebanon Host Communities Support Programme - LHSP”, is supporting the host communities to develop Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS) in 38 villages all over Lebanon. The goal of these mechanisms is to provide a safe and common space for the local groups where they can discuss their fears and concerns in public and suggest mechanisms to address them. A participatory conflict analysis exercise was undertaken to engage community leaders (mayors, members of municipal councils and “mukhtars”) and local actors. Based on the results of the analysis, the different local groups in each village are developing MSS that address a specific conflict in their area.

Under the MSS implementation phase, the established committees launched their mechanisms (action plans) through social and environmental activities with the support of Dawaer NGO in **Mount Lebanon**, Permanent Peace Movement NGO in the **Bekaa**, Renee Moawad Foundation in the **North** and the NGO Nahnoo in the **South**.

The committees started developing their long-term action plan that would ensure the sustainability of the established mechanisms.

As part of capacity building, monitoring and evaluation trainings were conducted for the MoSA team to insure the continuity of the process.

## Baaqline through the Lens of its Youth



What happens when people from Baaqline, Mount Lebanon, are invited to tell the stories of their community through pictures?

They showcase its beauty and uniqueness.

On December 15, Baaqline’s tourist sites, landscapes and people were the core of the event. 30 people from Baaqline had the opportunity to tell their village’s story and to see their pictures displayed in an exhibition held in the Baaqline National Library. The exhibition was the outcome of a technical photography training session organized by the Coordination Committee in Baaqline and followed by a one-day photo shooting in the tourist sites and streets of Baaqline under the supervision of a professional photographer. This committee was an outcome of the Mechanisms



for Social Stability process which is supported by UNDP and the Ministry of Social Affairs and funded by UKDFID.

*UNDP Lebanon is committed to supporting the municipalities and the local community members in developing the necessary mechanism promoting Social Stability through civic engagement, community dialogue and conflict prevention awareness.*

“We wanted this exhibition and training to be a common space for the inhabitants of the village to bond and reflect over the positive image of Baaqline”, said a committee member. To another committee member, “There’s an urgent need to bridge the gap between youth and older generations in the village”, adding, “That’s why we worked

on getting the youth involved in the development of their community”.

With the aim of offering safe spaces for the young Lebanese and Syrians living in Baaqline, the Committee also organized movie nights in the village. It was an opportunity for the participants to interact and build friendships.

By documenting stories and pictures of their city, and sharing a common space and events with each other, the youth’s concept of “community” grows deeper and more tangible.

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## A March through History: Bqosta celebrates Independence Day

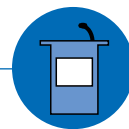


What a better way to inform people about the cultural and historical heritage of a village than with a grand rally paper! On November 25, 2018, and following Lebanon’s Independence Day, inhabitants of Bqosta, South Lebanon, celebrated the occasion with the residents of nearby areas in an engaging activity.

The youth of Bqosta and the neighborhood, coming from local schools, universities, youth clubs, scouts, volunteers, in addition to municipal members, local actors, and NGOs all participated in a quiz race in the streets of the village. The participants played in 28 different teams and competed on who knows more about this town’s history.

UNDP Lebanon, in collaboration with the municipality and Ministry of Social Affairs and with the funds of UKDFID,





supported a group of NGOs, local actors, municipal members and volunteers that formed a steady local working group in Bqosta.

This activity fell under the Mechanisms for Social Stability process that aims to reduce tensions that lead to conflict through collective peacebuilding activities.

The rally was an opportunity to learn about Bqosta together and celebrate the winning teams and the friendships formed through the historical journey.

## Closer Together on Independence Day



Tleil village, in North Lebanon, was preparing for a phenomenal end of year celebration.

The UNDP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the technical support of Renée Moawad Foundation and with the generous funds of UKDFID, reached out to Tleil local actors through the Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS).

Earlier in September 2018, the Tleil MSS committee was formed and became a key actor in the village, bringing its inhabitants closer together and building a stronger sense of belonging among them.

The committee strengthened its relationships with people from all parts of the village's diverse communities. This is why more than 150 people took part in the Independence Day celebration that was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November. The committee members planned the celebration to bring the communities together and to announce their goals and objectives to the public.

The Mayor of Tleil, Charbel Abboud said: "I am proud to see this happening in my village, I didn't believe that the committee will be able to gather people from all parts of Tleil. They have all my support."

Participants planted together more than 100 trees in communal areas around the village and welcomed the new committee's peacebuilding vision.



Committee member Rania Abdo said that it was the first time in more than 30 years that all the citizens of Tleil from different backgrounds participant in one event! “This is worth celebrating,” she added.



That was Tleil’s promising end to 2018. The committee was encouraged by all participants to organize more activities and many people showed interest in joining and taking part in the peacebuilding force of Tleil!

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## Tekrit Sets a New Record



Not so far from Tleil, the committee of Tekrit also organized an Independence Day activity on 9 December 2018.

The MSS committee of Tekrit, however, preferred to do so in a record-setting manner, where they raised, alongside 1500 volunteers, the longest Lebanese flag ever made (1,767m)!

"Today's flag is the longest in Lebanon and may possible be the longest worldwide. It is competing for a Guinness record. The aim was putting Tekrit on the international map, not just on the Lebanese map," said Mayor Abdullah Ghieh.

He added, “The importance of this initiative lies in the fact that the work was done by the youth of the town, in the traditional hand-made way of sewing and drawing.”



The event was also an opportunity to thank and honor 400 retired members of the Lebanese Armed Forces from different backgrounds for their long service and dedication. The Independence Day event was not Tekrit's first. The MSS committee launched its first activity on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October when they organized a marathon and a recreational public event in the village during which they announced their formation to around 1000 participants.

*“The importance of this initiative lies in the fact that the work was done by the youth of the town, in the traditional hand-made way of sewing and drawing”*

Afterwards, on November 18, the committee responded to the needs of the youth and organized a communication and resumé-building workshop. 100 young men and women took part in the workshop and found it helpful to increase their job opportunities and chances within their fields.

Tekrit received a lot of attention among other Akkari villages and in Lebanon in general, which was a positive trigger for the committee to plan more activities that are as inclusive, peacebuilding and fun!

## Mechanisms for Social Stability Launched in the Bekaa

Far from Akkar, villages of the Bekaa also launched their Mechanisms for Social Stability process through several peacebuilding and collective activities.

Funded by UKDFID and with the support of the Ministry of Social Affairs, committees in the Bekaa were able to inform locals about their plans and organize introductory activities.

These included awareness raising on environmental issues, free healthcare days, seminars on political education and active citizenship, in addition to youth-targeting activities such as football trainings and cultural trips.





## Playback in Tripoli: Going Back and Moving Forward

A year ago, UNDP Lebanon supported and brought together 14 Lebanese and Syrian young men and women from different neighborhoods of Tripoli, North Lebanon, by forming the playback theatre troupe, SADA, with the financial support of UKDFID.

The play backers celebrated their first anniversary on October 28, 2018 through a public performance at Beit El Fan, Mina with a large participation from the locals.

Playback theatre is a form of art designed for social change and practiced around the world. The purpose of this artform is to build community and create empathy and understanding.

SADA serves as an open platform where the residents of Tripoli share their stories and memories and contribute to the city's reconciliation and then watch those stories reenacted live in front of their eyes.



A month after its anniversary, SADA went through a 4-day intensive training with Playback Theatre trainer and daughter of its founders, Hannah Fox.

To Hannah, this artform serves as a tool to raise awareness on challenges and difficulties facing communities through a free space: a space that allows marginalized communities to speak, be heard and be validated as human beings.



During November 2018, Hannah trained SADA in Tripoli and focused on the artistry of playback theatre, ensemble work, and building the well-established rituals on the stage. The training also covered hearing the heart of the stories, working on the stories of traumas, self-care after the performance, ways of reflections and group dynamics.

Upon completion of the training, Hannah said: “I’m so impressed by the troupe. They progressed to become deep listeners and really get the essence of people’s stories.”

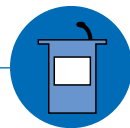
SADA play backers plan on establishing their studio in 2019 in the heart of the city’s demarcation line and, of course, performing more around town.

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*“I’m so impressed by the troupe.  
They progressed to become deep  
listeners and really get the essence  
of people’s stories”*

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## Pioneer Women of Tripoli Take the Lead



Ambitious and motivated women pioneers from Tripoli gathered around one table on November 17, 2018, to discuss the obstacles facing the participation of women in politics and elections in their city.

During the conference that was organized by UNDP Lebanon and titled “Women’s Participation in Political Life and Parliamentary Elections: Challenges and Prospects”, participants came up with recommendations on tools that encourage women’s participation and civic engagement in Tripoli.

UNDP Lebanon is working with members of the local community to encourage civic engagement, community dialogue and conflict prevention awareness.

The committee of Tripolitan women pioneers is one of the Mechanisms of Social Stability (MSS) that were developed within the framework with the financial support of UKDFID.



## #VIOLENCEFREESCHOOLS

### How is Space Crucial when Targeting Violence?

Given the importance of the physical space in schools, and the impact a good or bad environment has on the school community, UNDP Lebanon through its Violence-Free Schools initiative, with the funds of Germany, has supported 15 public schools in Tripoli since 2017.

The support started early on in a non-physical approach through peacebuilding trainings and building capacities of school taskforces made up of teachers, students and parents. The taskforces were later able to design activities that aim to reduce violence in their schools. They also identified and addressed physical needs that were challenging the school environment and increasing violence. Whether it was small bathrooms, leaking roofs or lack of open creative spaces, the taskforces needed to work

on these elements to better impact violence in their schools. The schools differed in their physical needs, but they were all similar when it came to work on the tangible space to enhance the wellbeing of the students.

Some installed multipurpose rooms for recreational and educational activities, others needed to cover the playgrounds to be able to use them during rainy weather, while others needed to rehabilitate their theatres and sports areas in order to encourage creativity, energy release and perform self-expression.

The last few months were long awaited and the changes in the buildings must surely contribute to a safer and less violent school environment.



Before

Al Nour Intermediate Mixed Public School



After



Before

Adnan Zaki Darwich Intermediate Public School for Boys



After



Nabi Kzeiber Intermediate Mixed Public School



Al Beddawi Intermediate Public School for Boys



Abdel Hadi Public School for Boys



## Tripoli Rappers to Outvoice Violence



Mostafa, Nejmeddine and Ibrahim from Suleiman Al-Boustani and Al-Nasr public schools in Tripoli amazed the crowd present at the UN Day event in Beit Beirut, Sodeco on October 24.

They performed two touching rap songs that they wrote together on violence in the school environment and its impact on students.

The rappers were all students at public schools in Tripoli that took part of the #ViolenceFreeSchools (VFS) initiative.

The VFS initiative was launched in Tripoli in 2017 by UNDP Lebanon in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the generous funds of Germany.

The young men were distinguished by their talent and creativity and were invited to participate in the event attended by hundreds. They were all proud to participate and perform in front of a new audience for the first time and deliver a message so important to them; music in the face of violence!





## News supplement discusses perception of the Other and civil peace issues



“What impact do years of layered experience with displacement have? Do the portrayals of refugees lie in the eye of a Lebanese beholder?” These questions were raised in the article of Rouba El Helou, a PhD Candidate at the University of Erfurt and Lecturer at Notre Dame University. Her article was featured in the news supplement published by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project funded by Germany, on December 14, 2018. It was distributed in Arabic with Annahar, in French with L’Orient-Le Jour and in English with The Daily Star newspaper.

The news supplement contained articles by writers, journalists, media professionals, researchers and artists residing in Lebanon, all employing objective approaches that are free of hatred and misconceptions.

The supplement discussed challenging stereotypical narratives and perceptions of the Syrians residing in Lebanon by dissecting the misconceptions from a psychological and historical point of view. It offered portraits of Syrians in

Lebanon and their achievements in Beirut, discussed the issue of adoption and child trafficking and showcased stories of Syrian women who decided to prevent pregnancies.

In the same issue, readers explored initiatives aimed at bringing people together through sports and arts, shedding light on the use of guns in Lebanon and its repercussions on human security, social stability and civil peace, in addition to the issue of sports and its relation with identity and unity in the country.

“Sports cannot be looked at simply as an isolated domain of fun, entertainment and distraction. They also can serve to explore questions of nationalism and nation-state building and are directly implicated in nation-building projects”, said researcher Jamil Moawad, in his article featured in the supplement entitled “Can Sports Help the Lebanese Get Unified?”.



## Open Mic Session for Human Rights in Batroun



UNDP Lebanon, in partnership with Sidewalk Batroun, organized an Open Mic for a session on human rights on November 28<sup>th</sup> in Villa Paradiso in Batroun, with the generous funds of Germany.

The Open Mic session offered participants a platform to raise their voices for causes they hold dear. It was preceded by a discussion session around the articles published in the “Peace Building in Lebanon” news supplement which was issued by UNDP Lebanon in August 2018 and distributed with Annahar, L’Orient-Le Jour and The Daily Star newspapers.

“I wanted to tell the story of Jassem, my neighbor, who, like many other refugees in Lebanon, endured a lot away from his family in Syria”, said Lina Ghaibeh, comic artist and participant in the news supplement.

Other participants in the supplement, covering the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, presented their articles to the audience who shared comments, suggestions and recommendations on topics to be discussed in upcoming issues.

Sidewalk Batroun is a sister initiative of Sidewalk Beirut. It is a collective founded in June 2018 by Eddy Aziz in the city of Batroun. It curates the city's first and only monthly Open Mic. Every month, Sidewalk Batroun hosts a number of participants who share their thoughts and express themselves in any way they wish. It also features local and international talents with the aim to highlight the local talents and introduce them to the international ones.



## Social Media Campaign on Fake News and its Impact on Social Cohesion in Lebanon

In partnership with the UNDP Lebanon and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Huloul is launching, in January 2019, a visual and evidence-based campaign of four parts, focusing on fake news and its impact on social stability in Lebanon. The campaign aims at raising awareness among the Lebanese public on the impact of disinformation and providing them with pragmatic tools and resources to help limit the spread of fake news.

The campaign consists of four socially-engaging flagship videos that will tackle the anatomy of fake news, how it is produced, and how it affects the perception of citizens of “the Other” as well as their opinions on various socio-economic topics.

Over the next 10 months, Huloul will disseminate their research findings in the form of videos, visual content, and

research briefs. In its kickoff campaign, Huloul worked with journalists, academics, civil society actors and experts to provide the Lebanese public with evidence-based research and insights on fake news and its impact on local communities.

The project benefits a number of stakeholders including media outlets but ultimately addresses the needs and speaks to the Lebanese public using digital and social media as a first channel of contact. The campaign will be available on Huloul’s digital platform, Bayanat Box, shared on UNDP Lebanon social media pages and website. The platform <http://fakenews.bayanatbox.com> combines the power of data, design, and journalism to create evidence-based and visual content on the most pressing economic and social challenges in the Arab world.

The UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project works since 2007 on enhancing mutual understanding and 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 to educators, youth, media professionals, journalists and civil society activists in developing both medium and long-term strategies for peace building, crisis management and conflict prevention.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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