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

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# Newsletter Content



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## #MSS

# 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 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 to discuss their fears and concerns in public and to 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.

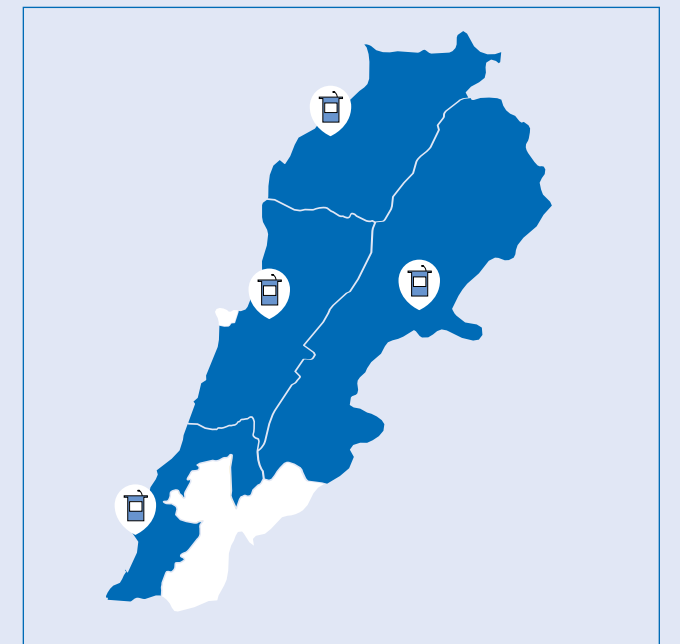
As part of this process, follow-up meetings took place with the local groups of the 38 villages (in **Bekaa, Mount Lebanon, South and North of Lebanon**).

In **South Lebanon**, field visits to eight villages took place to launch the implementation phase of the Mechanisms’ action plans. A workshop on “Local Governance” was conducted for local members to enhance their skills in fostering communal engagement. In parallel, capacity building of the Ministry of Social Affairs’ staff focused on Monitoring & Evaluation approaches and tools.

In **Mount Lebanon**, field visits to eight villages took place to finalize the action plans and the internal structures of the established mechanisms. As part of the Mechanism implementation phase, the NGO “Dawaer” was recruited to support the “Local Working Groups (LWG)” and identified stakeholders to develop their capacities, launch their Mechanisms and design sustainable intervention tools and plans.

In the **Bekaa**, the drafting of the action plans started with 10 villages under the MSS process. The LWGs as well as MoSA staff attended several capacity building sessions and workshops covering different topics such as roles and responsibilities, formalization of a group and detailed action plan writing. After the conflict analysis phase, the focus was on establishing the committees and acknowledging the communal needs.

In the **North**, the drafting of the action plans was conducted with committees. A two-day workshop on “Citizens’ engagement, affiliation and social stability” for local members was organized. Field visits to 8 villages took place in order to launch the implementation phase of the MSS action plans. “Renée Moawad Foundation” was selected to support the LWGs while launching their mechanisms and designing intervention tools and plans.





## Youth: Stars of Social Change



Lebanon's youth lack safe spaces where they can meet, express themselves, and engage in different activities. To this end, local actors in Baysour, Mount Lebanon, organized a 3-day camp for the youth of the village.

25 young men and women from different backgrounds gathered over the weekend of September 14<sup>th</sup>, on a camping site in al-Radar area, to spend what they later described as "the time of our lives!"

The camp was organized by the Coordination Unit of Baysour, a joint committee composed of local actors from the village and local authorities. The committee was able to gather youth for the first time, to spend the weekend, communicate and build strong friendships.

The committee was established as a result of the Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS) process implemented by UNDP Lebanon in collaboration with the Ministry of Social affairs with the generous funds of UK DFID.

UNDP Lebanon is working with municipalities and local community members to encourage civic engagement and community dialogue and to raise awareness on conflict prevention.

"Somewhere along the way we lost ourselves. This camp made us reflect on our true identity and brought us closer together", said one of the participants in the camp as he packed his bags on the last day.



Youth were trained about different topics; identities, respecting the 'Other', discipline and personal expression. They also had the opportunity to unleash their creativity and talents amidst a free open, and welcoming natural space.

After this successful experience, local actors are now determined to achieve their goals and to consolidate social and cultural norms that would positively influence the young generation for a better future.



*"Somewhere along the way we lost ourselves. This camp made us reflect on our true identity and brought us closer together"*



## How Can Sports Events Drive Social Engagement?



Anas and his friends spent their Saturday afternoon playing football on the sandy beach of El Heri in North Lebanon. They played together during a two-day sports event, organized by the “communication committee” in El Heri, resulted from the Mechanisms for Social Stability process supported by UNDP and MoSA and funded by UKDFID.

“I haven’t participated in any similar activity for a long time now. I am happy we are meeting here today” said Anas Saleh, from El Heri village.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2018, locals from all ages played football, beach volley ball, rope knots and backgammon in the breathtaking sandy beach of the village.

“We have organized these activities because we believed that sports can play a role in bringing communities together, having a social and cultural impact. It also promotes social cohesion” said Labib Saleh, member of the El Heri communication committee.

Last year, Labib was one of the participants in the retreats organized by UNDP, all over Lebanon to identify tensions and triggers in the villages based on which participants develop mechanisms to respond to these tensions.

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.

Rabab Saleh, also from the communication committee, believes that these sports activities can build connection between the players and break the ice. It also establishes new channels of communication with the municipality of El Herri. Imane Idris, committee member in the municipality of El Herri, also joined participants on the public beach and was happy to see that people are involved in these recreational and sports activities. To her, such events help shed light about the village and its creek, which can be an important tourist destination.

*“We have organized these activities because we believed that sports can play a role in bringing communities together, having a social and cultural impact. It also promotes social cohesion”*





## Could the Environmental Burnouts in Lebanon Catalyze Social Cohesion?

Chekka residents say yes.

Chekka is a North Lebanon coastal town, long known for its golden sandy beaches as well as the abundance of marine flora<sup>1</sup>, and olive and fig trees.

At the same time, Chekka is home to some of the largest cement and paper factories in the eastern Mediterranean, that are at the origin of massive discharge of toxins all year round<sup>2</sup> and to a polluted environmental reputation.

Local actors are working to change the stereotypes around their town and to push the environmental work to the front-line through the Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS).

UNDP Lebanon is supporting, training and hosting capacity building workshops with local actors from Chekka and 37 other villages around Lebanon to design Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS). The MSS aim at addressing and overcoming local-specific conflicts and challenges, which are environmental in the case of Chekka.

The MSS process in Chekka is led by the UNDP under its “Lebanon Host Communities Support Programme - LHSP” through the “Peace Building in Lebanon” project in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs, with the generous funds of UK DFID.

Environmental stresses can have an impact on all phases of conflict, from increasing the spread of violence to discouraging peace initiatives<sup>3</sup>. This is the reason for which



1. [Projects in Lebanon: International Development Research Centre Archived December 13, 2007, at the Wayback Machine](#)

2. [https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/d/news-bulletin-reports/310013/report-cheikka-residents-warn-against-environmental/en](https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/d/news-bulletin-reports/310013/report-cheikka-residents-warn-against-environmental/)



the local actors in Chekka organized an environmental week with the support of local scouts and youth groups and launched it on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018. The launch was an opportunity to announce the activation and expansion of the municipal environmental committee in presence of representatives from UNDP, MoSA’ s Social Development Centers, municipalities of surrounding villages in addition to the residents.

“Throughout this week, we intend to motivate you to help us revive the agriculture and forestation of our town and bring back the green Chekka we used to know before the environmental changes”, said the mayor of Chekka, Mr. Farjallah Kfoury.

In addition to conducting a beach cleanup by local actors, environmental enthusiasts and clubs, NGOs and residents,

3. [From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/conflict\\_peacebuilding.pdf](#)

the week featured as well a public awareness campaign on recycling and waste sorting at source, reforestation plans for the town, and sustainable fishing methods.

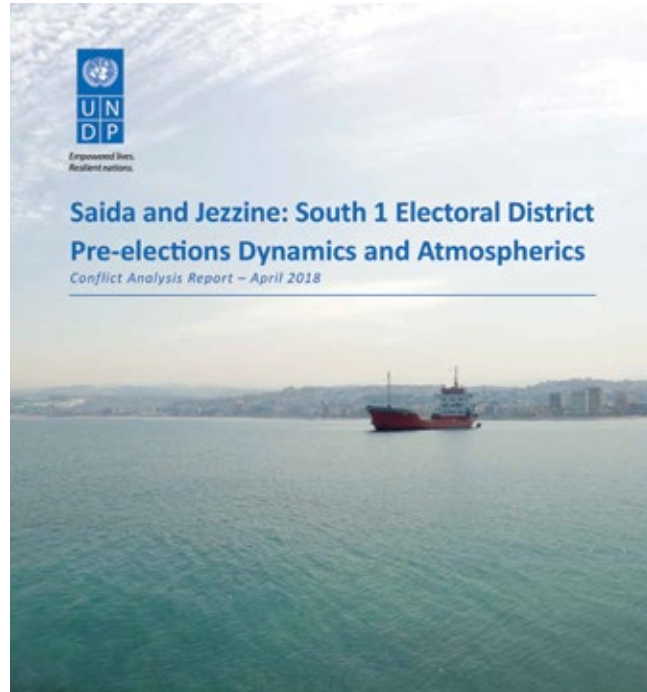
Dr. Adib Kfoury, from the environmental committee at the municipality of Chekka explained, “Chekka is suffering from pollution like many other Lebanese cities. We invite local businesses, authorities and actors to work together to protect the environment in order to enhance the socio-ecological situation.”

He added, “we hope that the collaborative management of our environment will provide social stability and economic growth opportunities which our town can benefit from.”

Now that the local actors from Chekka are equipped to face their challenges together in cooperation with local authorities, what will be their next step?



## Launching the Conflict Analysis Report: “Saida and Jezzine: South 1 Electoral District Pre-elections Dynamics and Atmospherics”



This Conflict Analysis Report is part of a series of research studies commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (UKDFID) that aim to assess the recent developments, atmospherics, and programming opportunities in Saida and Jezzine. A recent study by ARK Group DMCC and UNDP has shown that the parliamentary elections in May 2018 impacted dynamics between people in different cities and towns, both among the Lebanese themselves and between them and Syrians or Palestinians. The study showed that 81.6% of people from the Saida area and 73.5% of people from the Jezzine area have expressed a higher concern than others that the parliamentary elections were highly impacting their internal dynamics and leading to more tensions. Hence, this report published in August 2018, is designed to discuss and analyse the current situation and conflict triggers, and

present any efforts or suggestions that could mitigate rising tensions.

The South 1 electoral district is uniquely divided. It is the only district in Lebanon that joins two separate areas without borders, since the villages of Saida were added to the South 2 electoral district. ‘South 1’ district encompasses Saida City and the Caza of Jezzine, which are different politically, developmentally, demographically, and in terms of electoral agendas and programs. This might help explain the aggressive and populist attitude among certain candidates who, in most cases, diverted from developmental issues to focus on political and familial ones. The highly tensed rhetoric was reflected on the political electoral bases and had manifested itself through quarrels and assaults on individuals, sometimes via billboards and ads, but most commonly on social media.

Saida is also host of the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon: Ein El Helweh. The camp is infamous for being the most tense and unstable in the country, which instilled fear of any instability that could have affected the elections. It is also important to consider the impact of Syrian refugees in both Saida and Jezzine. The case of refugees is one of the topics that political parties used in their campaigns, stressing that it adds to the sectarian feelings and the fear of instability.

This report aims to understand how the various issues affect the noted rise in perceptions of potential instability among the citizens of both Saida and Jezzine, as mentioned in the Ark study.

The research for this report studied the pre-electoral situation in both Saida and Jezzine to assess local dynamics and how the parliamentary elections could affect them. It provides a qualitative analysis based on the information from the Key Informants (KI) interviewed and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).



## News Supplement Discusses Elections and the Repercussions of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon



“The 2018 parliamentary elections were a step forward. The UNDP, with the support of its partners, will assess the lessons learned from these elections to develop the appropriate and most relevant priority areas of intervention towards achieving electoral reforms, democratic stability and participatory governance in Lebanon”, said Philippe Lazarini in his editorial published in the 19<sup>th</sup> issue of the “Peace Building in Lebanon” News Supplement.

The supplement was published by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project funded by Germany, on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018. It was distributed in Arabic with Annahar, in French with L’Orient-Le Jour and in English with The Daily Star newspaper.

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

In this supplement, participants discussed the relation between peace building, democratic governance and elections in addition to the importance of further increasing women’s participation in electoral and democratic processes, the influence of youth and first-time voters on peace-building and the important role of monitoring in elections. Articles also highlighted the obstacles encountered by disabled people during the elections.

“It is high time for us to come together to formulate a comprehensive plan and move the issue of disability into the 21st century in accordance with our own criteria and conditions, imposing solutions that suit us. We are not second-class citizens. We are not dependent on anyone. The State and the private sector can benefit from the skills that many disabled persons have to offer”, said Amal Charif, creative director and participant in the supplement, in her article titled “Disability is Not a Seasonal Issue”.

As for Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development, “The main challenge lies in managing diversity and differences peacefully, no matter how extreme, without affecting stability and civil peace, and in transforming all forms of diversity into incentives to seek solutions that respond to the interests of different groups”. This is what he mentioned in his article titled “Citizenship as a Doorway to Civil Peace, Security and Social Stability”.

In the same issue, readers were inspired by stories of change, perseverance and resilience as the supplement discussed the obstacles facing residents of Aarsal, Bekaa, and the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, racism and inequality.

“When migrants and refugees are integrated into society, when all children have access to education, when health-care is no longer a dream, when documentation is not an obstacle to work and when we can all work in safety and dignity, we collectively build a better society, one that is more peaceful, tolerant and just. Only then can we start to address the underlying causes of inequality”, said Roula Hamati from Insan NGO in her article titled “Out of the Shadows: Migrants and Refugees in Lebanon”.

[www.lb.undp.org/pbsupplement](http://www.lb.undp.org/pbsupplement)





## Open your Mic for Human Rights

Gathered in Aaliya's Books coffee shop, the homely gem of Gemmayze Street in Beirut, activists, poets, writers and musicians were captivated by the performances of participants in the Open Mic session.

This session was organized by the UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project and Sidewalk Beirut on September 27<sup>th</sup>, with the generous funds of Germany.

National and international participants from all walks of life took the mic, read their poems and prose and shared their passion, stories and experiences in a convivial atmosphere. The performances embraced difficult and thought-provoking topics, such as overcoming domestic violence, refugees, death and many other issues.

"All performances revealed the beautiful spirits and souls of their performers. It had a cathartic effect on the audience", commented a participant at the event.

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.

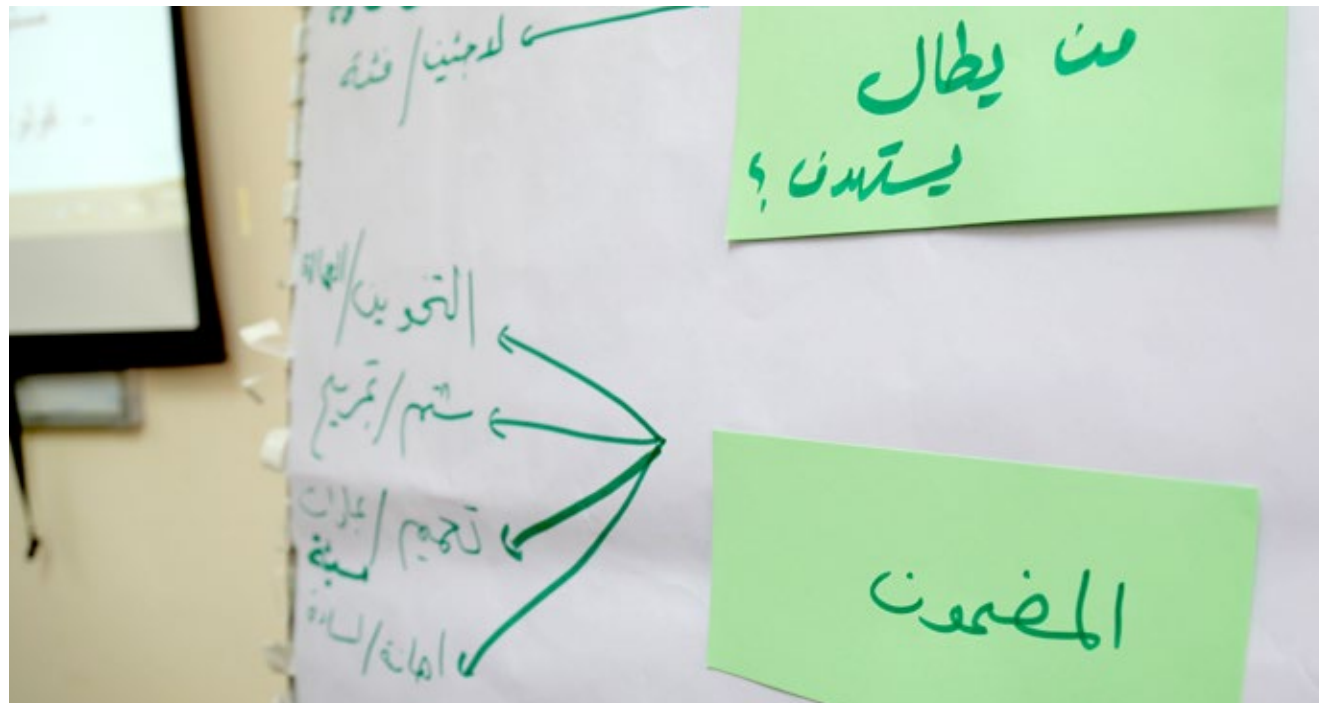
Other participants in the supplement covering the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, presented their articles to the audience who shared comments, suggestions and recommendations on topics to be discussed in upcoming issues.



Comic strip by Lina Ghaibeh, comics and animation artist published in the 19<sup>th</sup> issue of the news supplement



## Strengthening Media Professionalism Through Media Toolbox and Trainings



The media in Lebanon plays a major role in fostering understanding and peace building but at the same time, media can have a major influence in fueling conflict during sensitive periods.

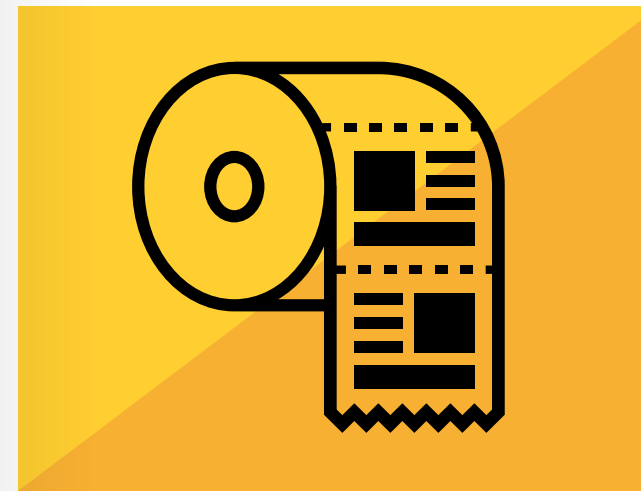
It is with the objective of strengthening media's capacity to contribute to dialogue, conflict sensitive reporting and social cohesion that the UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" produced in 2013, the "Journalists' Pact for Strengthening Civil Peace in Lebanon" in collaboration with the Ministry of Information. The Pact, which was a result of an extensive participatory approach, was endorsed and signed by 29 national media outlets. Between 2015 and 2017, the UNDP in collaboration with Maharat Foundation monitored the implementation of this Pact by publishing media monitoring studies covering all topics and themes raised in the clauses of the Pact.

To follow up on the monitoring of the Pact and make use of the recommendations emanated from the media monitoring studies, the UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project, funded by Germany, partnered with Thomson Reuters Foundation to develop a media toolbox. It is intended to help media practitioners and institutions to implement the Pact and incorporate it at the institution level. Over the course of 2018 and 2019, Thomson Reuters will be training staff working in the monitored media institutions on the toolbox designed.

The Foundation will also offer a set of technical recommendations to the media staff who will be using the toolbox. In addition, it will produce a monitoring and evaluation report detailing the gaps in skills and knowledge of the trained staff.



## Social Media in Favor of Fake News The Battle against Disinformation



In this context, UNDP Lebanon and Huloul will be identifying key social tensions and salient issues which are usually misreported by the media. These issues will be turned into visual, interactive and mobile-ready content to be shared on Huloul and UNDP Lebanon websites and related social media platforms. These visual materials will offer a broader perspective with resources to help viewers and audience spot fake stories and fake visuals.

By achieving this, both UNDP and Huloul hope to contribute to putting a stop to the cycle of "sharing" inaccurate content and to address current misconceptions about the "other" and refute them with evidence.

What is "fake news"? How is this global phenomenon translated in Lebanon? What can be done to stop the spread of fake news?

The UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project, funded by Germany, is partnering with Huloul NGO to offer answers to the questions raised here above.

The project will be working until mid-2019 on countering fake news and fighting disinformation and the impact of "echo chambers" on social stability and cohesion in Lebanon. Huloul is a social enterprise that combines the power of evidence-based research and visual design to deliver knowledge on key social and economic policies 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

The UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project  
Arab Bank Building - 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Riad El Solh Square, Nejmeh, Beirut - Lebanon  
**Telephone:** 01 980 583 or 70 119160



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