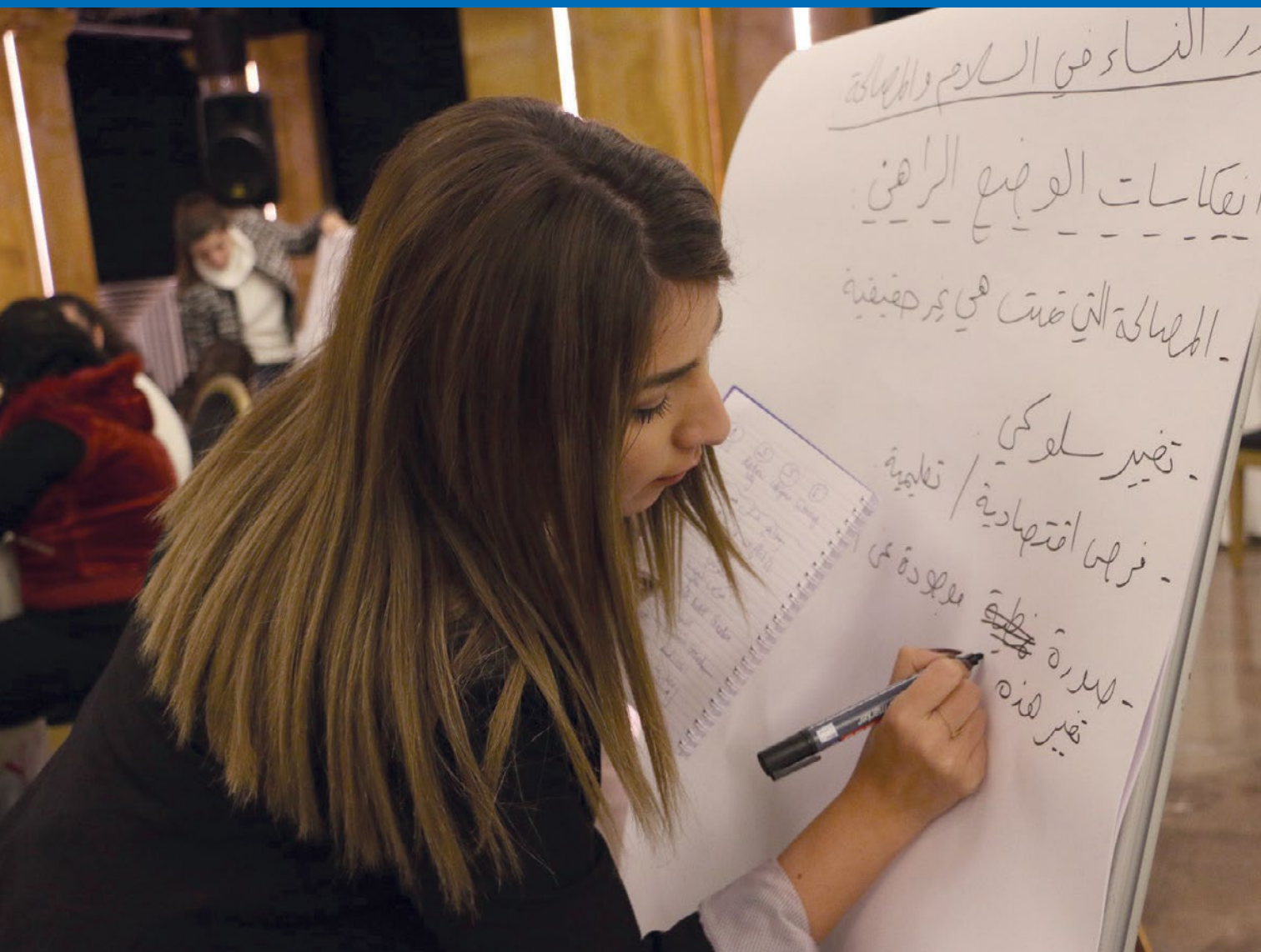




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# “Peace Building in Lebanon” project’s newsletter

ISSUE N°18 - QUARTER 4 - 2017



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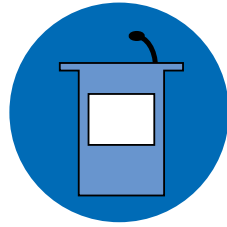


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# Newsletter Content



PEACE BUILDING THROUGH LOCAL COMMUNITIES



PEACE BUILDING THROUGH CONFLICT MAPPING AND ANALYSIS



PEACE BUILDING THROUGH EDUCATION



PEACE BUILDING THROUGH MEDIA

**04** Young Female Entrepreneurs in Tripoli Think Together about a Common Women's Agenda in the City

**10** An Urban Suburb with the Capacities of a Village: The Social Stability Context in the Coastal Chouf Area

**11** Nonviolence in Tripoli Schools: A Vision Towards a Better Generation

**14** "Peace Building in Lebanon" news supplement, a step towards promoting a fact-based discussion

**06** Women as Peacebuilders and Actors of Change at the Local Level

**07** Sada: The Echo of Tripoli's Stories

**08** Football Bridges Divides in El-Sawiri, Bekaa

**09** Folklore Brings Lebanese and Syrian Youth Together in Kamed El Loz



PEACE BUILDING THROUGH CIVIL SOCIETIES

**12** Strengthening the organizational capacities of the Fighters For Peace NGO

**13** "I Will Leave My Gun Behind"



## Implementation of Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS)

The "Peace Building in Lebanon" project aims at analyzing the underlying causes of conflict 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 for reducing tensions through the development of Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS).

The conflict analysis exercise was carried out throughout 38 villages in the South, Bekaa, North and Mount Lebanon while the process of participatory development of local mechanisms will follow.

In **Zgharta**, due to local conditions and the request of the municipality, the mechanism development task moved at a quicker pace. A local plan aimed at reducing tensions between Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees was discussed in a workshop gathering local and international NGOs with the municipality.

As for the **Tripoli** MSS, they concluded two of their three tasks. The joint youth playback troupe was trained and started its performances in the area and the workshop for the local young women leaders was held. Also, the "Harake Barake" movement, bringing together disabled casualties from both sides of **Jabal Mohsen** and **Bab el Tabbaneh** to

work on common needs, was established and developed its plan of action. The plan is being put to work.

The mechanism development phase in **Mount Lebanon** and **Bekaa** started with the validation of the outcomes of the Conflict Analysis (CA) phase. Field visits are currently taking place in the targeted villages. The aim of the visits is to validate what local stakeholders had agreed upon during the CA retreat in order to be able to move to the next phase of the MSS process (the Mechanism Development Phase).

As a result, more than 120 local actors representing 18 villages are currently involved in the discussions of the mechanism development.

The **West Bekaa** villages, **Sawiri, Kefraya, Jeb Jennine and Kamed El Loz**, concluded the Mechanism implementation phase which was conducted through the implementation of social and sports activities.

As for the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) staff capacity building phase II, 110 MoSA officials attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> training workshop which aimed at understanding theories of change, as well as the distinction between peace building and conflict sensitivity.



## Young Female Leaders in Tripoli Think Together about a Common Women's Agenda in the City



"Together we can have a louder voice. Together we can be important female leaders in Tripoli. Together we can discuss women related issues and plan for the future. That's what I have learned from this workshop," proudly said Darine Samarani, a female leader. Darine was one of the 35 young female leaders and activists from Tripoli who attended "The Tripoli Young Female Leaders Conference" on November 24 and 25, 2017 in Tripoli.

This conference was organized by the UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project, implemented within the framework of the Lebanon Host Communities Support Programme (LHSP) as part of the Mechanism for Social Stability (MSS) in Tripoli.

Coming from the private, public and civil society sectors, these women discussed the current status of girls and women in Tripoli, their priorities, the main challenges they are facing and policy recommendations on how to improve their lives.

What is the role of women in social stability, education, the labor market, peacebuilding and reconciliation in Tripoli? How are current programs targeting women entrepreneurs in the city? How are women from Tripoli involved in response to the Syrian crisis and its repercussions on Lebanon?

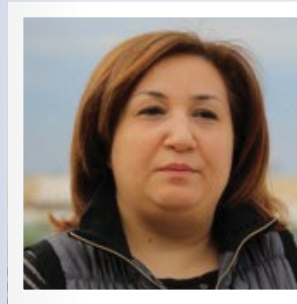
Ambitious and powerful, these women gathered around the same table to answer these questions. Some of them shared their stories of volunteerism during the Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen clashes, others shared their life changing decisions and lessons learned from their political participation in the recent municipal elections.

In addition to voicing their problems, hopes and aspirations, women participants benefited from this conference to network and get to know other female leaders in the city. They all agreed on using this opportunity to sustain future joint initiatives.

*"Together we can have a louder voice. Together we can be important female entrepreneurs in Tripoli. Together we can discuss women related issues and plan for the future. That's what I have learned from this workshop"*



### Ghaida Bakri - Social actor and businesswoman



*" I run a construction business for a living. It's uncommon to see women in Tripoli on construction sites, but it's something I enjoy doing.*

*Other than that, I am part of many local and national organizations. I believe that I contribute to the*

*cultural, social and humanitarian scene in my city.*

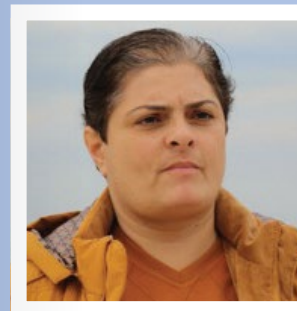
*I try to lead by example and inspire other women like me. I always aim to connect with other leading women in my city. It's the only way possible to join our efforts and have*

*a bigger impact. I'm thankful for being in this workshop for that reason.*

*Gatherings like this one today help us become more flexible and accepting towards people who are different and don't share the same opinions as ours. I believe every woman should make use of her relationships and connections to serve the public interest and not for superficial reasons.*

*The armed conflicts in Tripoli led to gaps between families. The role of women, mothers and sisters was huge in fighting back the negative repercussions of the fights. I believe women have a positive impact on their families and communities and I act upon this.*

### Linda Borghol - Local actor, Ministry of Social Affairs employee and two-time candidate in 'mukhtar' elections



*" I took part in the mukhtar elections twice in Tabbaneh area, my hometown.*

*When I was invited to take part of the Leading Women of Tripoli workshop, I felt appreciated. Finally, someone heard my voice.*

*This workshop was an opportunity for me to share my experience with other women from Tripoli. I got to expose the obstacles I faced going through the elections with other men. Women in Tripoli are overpowered and over-shadowed even though we have a positive role in our community.*

*In 1992, I started field work in Tabbaneh. My community was my first supporter to go through a stiff competition like the mukhtar elections.*

*My supporters, who had great faith in me, gathered my nomination fees. One dollar at a time. They all went with me to the Governor's office to announce my nomination, as if it were a public rally. What more can I ask for?*

*However, the first time, I wasn't lucky, I only got 1,280 votes. This didn't stop me. Years later, I went through it again, independently, without any political support. I got 5,800 votes. Yet, in the face of political nominees, I didn't win.*

*Nevertheless, the reason I wanted to become a mukhtar was to serve my community's needs. I still do that, even without the title.*

*Mukhtars take themselves lightly. They don't really know their tremendous value and massive role in our communities. I think that being a mukhtar is more important than being a politician. I'm positive, one day I will be one.*



## Women as Peacebuilders and Actors of Change at the Local Level

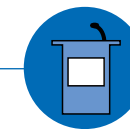


"I am taking part in the conflict analysis workshops because I believe that it is my responsibility to be an actor of change in my community", says Manal from Baysour, Mount Lebanon. And just like Manal, Oumaya wants to be

an actor of change in her community Hasbaya, in South Lebanon. On the other side of the country, in the sunny Bekaa valley, Christiane from Bouday believes in the power of dialogue. "It is very important to talk about the problems of our communities, and analyze them. Once we discuss these issue, we begin the journey of solving them", she says.

These ladies, along with 210 other active female stakeholders representing local authorities and local NGOs, took part in conflict analysis workshops held between 2016 and 2017. These workshops were organized by the UNDP Lebanon Host Communities Support Programme – LHSP through the "Peace Building in Lebanon" project in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs – MOSA.

From North, South, Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa, these workshops aimed at bringing active local stakeholders together to jointly analyze the tensions and challenges facing their villages and communities. There are the first steps towards the development of the Mechanism for Social Stability in Lebanon (MSS). The MSS aims at creating localized inclusive and rights based mechanisms in different localities across Lebanon. They are funded by Germany and UKDFID.



## Sada: The Echo of Tripoli's Stories



"We were born to live. No one can take that right away from us," said Afamia Moujawaz, a Syrian woman living in Qobbeh, Tripoli, after watching a performance by the Sada Playback Theatre troupe on November 12, 2017.

Sada aims to create a safe platform where communities can express their narratives, memories, fears and aspirations. The theatre troupe brings those memories back to life on stage, where the storytellers get to experience them again.

The theatre troupe was formed in August 2017 through auditions, with 14 young Lebanese and Syrians joining it. They have been rehearsing until end of October. Since then, the troupe has performed four times to more than 200 people around the city.

Sada was established as part of Tripoli's Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS) within the framework of the UNDP Lebanese Host Communities Support Programme (LHSP),

in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs – MOSA through the "Peace Building in Lebanon" project.

The UNDP-funded MSS aims at creating local level stability mechanisms in different localities across Lebanon.

According to Iman Ibrahim, a member of the playback troupe, "It's a great feeling when you express and portray what the audience has been through but could not say explicitly. It builds a great bond between us and the spectators."

This experience was life changing for the playback trainees who did not expect it to be that intense and holistic. It gave them the chance to share, connect and reflect on major life incidents. Stories about war, peace, love, loss and hate were shared.

The troupe aims at putting on regular performances in the city with different groups of Tripoli's communities.

*"It's a great feeling when you express and portray what the audience has been through but could not say explicitly. It builds a great bond between us and the spectators"*



## Football Bridges Divides in El-Sawiri, Bekaa



said Mohamad, who came from Majdel Anjar to encourage his colleague playing against the El-Sawiri team. Mohammad Shuman, a committee member, couldn't but agree with that. For him, "football can create a healthy environment in which people can come together and show respect to one another, bridging divides and breaking down prejudice". It was because of this that the committee decided to invite 3 Syrian players to join the team. He explains, "These players now feel empowered and part of a big team."

On this football court, previously established by UNDP and perched on the highest hill of El-Sawiri, few kilometers away from Syria, El-Sawiri team won the game over Majdel Anjar football team. "Although we didn't win, we had fun, and we are looking forward to more games together", said Emad Emam, a football player from Majdel Anjar.



"Football (soccer) washes out hate and prejudice", said Mohammed Janbey, a football player from El-Sawiri, while preparing himself for the game. "When you play, you forget about everything and only focus on the ball", he added.

On Sunday, November 12, 2017, Mohammed and other players participated in a football match during the El-Sawiri Football League, which was organized by the El-Sawiri Youth and Sports Committee.

The Committee, supported by UNDP, established the football team targeting the young generation of El-Sawiri and aiming to bridge the gap between families from El-Sawiri and the Lebanese and the Syrian refugees in the area, in addition to reflecting a good image of El-Sawiri.

Funded by Germany, this activity was implemented within the framework of the Lebanon Host Communities Support Programme (LHSP), through the "Peace Building in Lebanon" project, and in partnership with Association Nabad for Development.

"There's no activity that can bring people together with so much passion and enjoyment as much as football does",



## Folklore Brings Lebanese and Syrian Youth Together in Kamed El Loz



Kamed El Loz in West Bekaa had its own Folklore troupe in 2017.

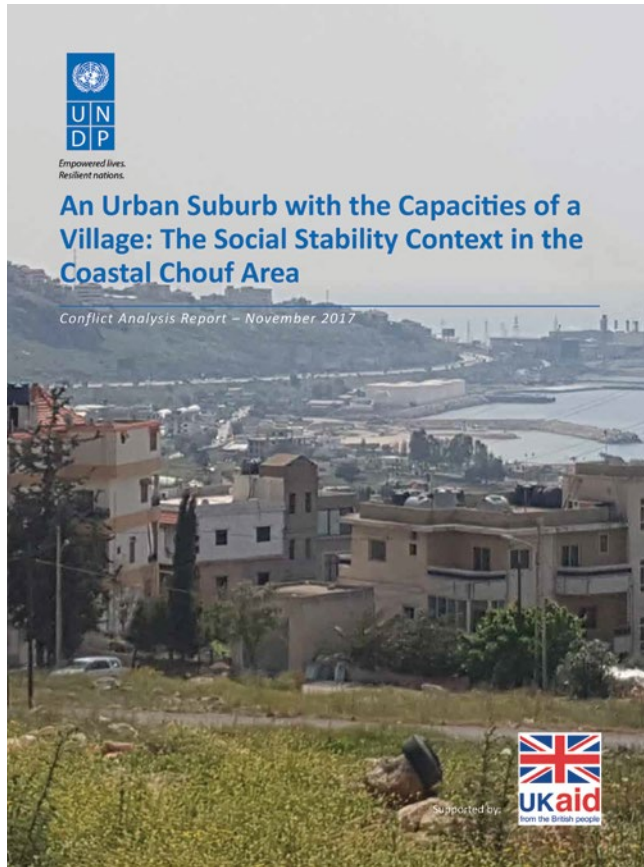
It is formed of 18 Lebanese and Syrian dancers who have practiced folklore dance for four months. On November 21, 2017, together, they presented their first performance before a large audience of students, local actors and habitants of the surrounding villages. Funded by Germany, this activity is a part of the Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS), established by Kamed El Loz for Development Committee, in coordination with the municipality and implemented under the framework of the UNDP Lebanon Host Communities Support Project (LHSP) through the Peace Building in Lebanon project.

For both Syrians and Lebanese participants in this troupe, the rehearsals were an opportunity to bring young talented dancers together in order to know each other and to create channels of friendships and interaction between both communities. During the folklore performance, dancers held each other's hands to spread messages of peace and acceptance of the other. They wanted to prove to everyone that together they can overcome the existing challenges facing the village of Kamed El Loz due to the large influx of Syrian refugees and to other sources of tension.

For Kamed El Loz municipality member, Bassam Taha, this folklore troupe is a tool for empowering group activities, conflict prevention and knowing the "Other". "Folklore is known for strengthening societal relations" he said.



## An Urban Suburb with the Capacities of a Village: The Social Stability Context in the Coastal Chouf Area



nization, in the absence of socio-economic developmental policies and equitable social services, has implications for existing infrastructure and feeds sectarian and political tensions. Major environmental challenges, namely those caused by the Jiyeh power plant, the Siblin cement factory and the Naameh landfill, remain a source of tension with a potential risk of escalation. The Syrian refugee population, which is limited in size, is only one component of a larger incoming population from outside the area, and seems to have developed better relationships with the host community than in other areas in Lebanon.

In terms of conflict dynamics, the report highlights the stabilizing impact of the limited electoral utility of sectarian-based mobilization in the region, convergence of interests of key political actors in the area, the conflict mitigation role of local notables, and similarity in background between incoming Syrian refugees and the local host population. Although the region's geostrategic location and proximity to Beirut facilitates economic opportunities and makes it attractive for housing projects, industrial investment and urbanization remain segregated from the local context. The proposed administrative division of Naameh/Haret Al-Naameh and Damour/Saadiyat into two sectarian segregated communities is another potential divider.

To mitigate the impact of above dividers and contribute positively to conflict issues, the report recommends broad and national level interventions with respect to the environmental and urbanization issues, particularly agreement on sound and sustainable solutions to the environmental crises impacting the area, adequate urban plans, and incentivizing and directing the establishment of eco-industrial parks. Partnership with active Lebanese youth in the area, as well as support of community-led Syrian initiatives to bolster their positive role in the community, is recommended and could serve as a model of grassroots organization for other areas.

"An Urban Suburb with the Capacities of a Village: The Social Stability Context in the Coastal Chouf Area", a new conflict analysis report by the UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project, introduces the conflict context of this largely urbanized area, which relies heavily on government employment, industry and tourism. Its resident population is predominantly Sunni, as a large percentage of the registered Christian population was displaced during the war.

Key issues fueling tension are strongly tied to national and strategic problems. A rapid process of unplanned urba-



The Violence Free Schools Initiative was launched in 15 schools in Tripoli and its neighbouring areas in January 2017. The initiative is being implemented with the support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and with the technical support of the Center for Active Citizenship (CAC) and For Development. After the sensitization sessions on nonviolence that were held with students, parents,

teachers and local stakeholders, the Violence Free Schools (VFS) in Tripoli and its neighbouring areas is currently supporting the schools in designing their own Code of Conduct for nonviolence. A working group composed of students, teachers and parents is regularly meeting in each of the schools in order to discuss and address violence-related issues for a healthier school environment.

## Nonviolence in Tripoli Schools: A Vision Towards a Better Generation



"I'm hopeful that these sessions will constitute the first step towards a better future at our school," said Amal Hussein Ismail, a teacher at al-Jadida Intermediate Public School, during a training conference targeting 45 teachers from 15 public schools on October 27, 2017.

The "Violence Free Schools" (VFS) initiative has completed its sensitization phase in Tripoli. With 15 intermediate public schools on board, students, teachers and parents were trained on the value of nonviolence and peacebuilding in education by the UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon"

project with the technical support of Center for Active Citizenship and for Development and funded by Germany.

Nahida Abdel Rahman al-Helwe, a middle school teacher at the Adnan Zaki Darwish Public School for Boys in Mina, Tripoli said: "During the training session today, I was equipped to become an agent of change in my school. I now value the importance of including the parents, school staff and management in this process."

"Even from the first sessions of training on nonviolence, I was able to get tools that I can apply in my school," she added. "It highlighted the importance of avoiding violence when dealing with children. It got me thinking that I might have been violent even without noticing or intending to. Another issue that I found crucial is the importance of positively dealing with fellow teachers, parents and the principal. And lastly, how to have self-control and efficiently lead conversations and debates."

The sensitization sessions in the 15 selected schools of Tripoli are over, leading the way to a new phase. The VFS initiative is now launching the development phase of the Code of Conduct by the joint committees of parents, teachers and students formed in each school.



As part of a comprehensive initiative taking place in Tripoli, the UNDP's Peace Building in Lebanon project is collaborating with the Fighters For Peace. The Fighters For Peace have been working with local actors in Tripoli and its surroundings. Two retreats gathering FFP members and

former fighters from Tripoli were organized for those who are interested in being involved in violence prevention in their area. FFP has already held more than 10 discussion sessions in Tripoli schools and organized 3 playback theatre sessions around the theme of war.

## Strengthening the organizational capacities of the Fighters For Peace NGO

UNDP has been building since March 2015, the skills of former fighters and members of the Fighters for Peace (FFP) NGO, in communication, fundraising, storytelling and public speaking. Since then, fighters were enabled of coping with their fears, inner thoughts and challenges they are facing in their daily lives and communicating better with their target audiences of students and university students and public at large. This same support continued in 2017,

with a focus on the work of Fighters for Peace NGO in Tripoli, North Lebanon.

During a two-day training in November 2017, funded by UNDP, The NGO' members were coached by Drew Mikhael, and Julie Norman both board members of the NGO, on means to strengthen the organizational capacity of the NGO.

In this context, we have asked Drew Mikhael, Board Member of FFP, the three below questions:

### *How do you think the members can benefit from the training?*

I believe that the training is important because FFP NGO has grown substantially since 2013. The success of its members has shown that they're very much wanted and valued by different civil society organizations. The downside with that success is that they become more in demand and busier, and this training is about trying to organize their structure so they can manage the increase demand.

extremism around the world and are claiming to be experts, whereas this NGO which embraces real experts in dealing with violent extremism and preventing it, is not given the space that it really needs to make a difference.

### *What are the challenges that they are facing nowadays?*

I think that the main challenges dealing with the structure, if they can deal with the structure, they have the skills and capacities to really make a difference here in Lebanon, in the region and also internationally.

### *What are the lessons learnt from the past years since FFP was launched?*

We have recently seen a growth in different civil society organizations that are not equipped to deal with violent



## “I Will Leave My Gun Behind”



“It took you 10 years to realize that you made a mistake after you've been through war. Why do you want to tell us to stop fighting? Why don't you let us go through our own experiences and see for ourselves?” asked one of the young fighters from Tripoli at a training session with older ex-fighters who fought during the Lebanese civil war.

The Fighters for Peace NGO (FFP), with the support of the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project, and funded by UNDP, organized a training retreat gathering the Fighters for Peace with Tripoli's young ex-fighters on October 29, 2017 at Lamunia Hotel in Qalamoun.

Over the course of two days, a fiery dynamic was sparked between the 12 fighters present: older fighters from the civil war versus younger fighters who had took part in the fighting between Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh.

For the first time, Tripoli's ex-fighters from both firing lines sat side by side, told their stories openly and discussed their experiences.

The group got closer through sessions on conflict prevention and transitional justice. The FFP members talked to the participants about conflicts in different countries and how nations healed from them. They also presented case studies from Hiroshima in Japan and peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria.

Additionally, the training included sessions on storytelling, exercises on exposing the turning points in their lives, how they joined armed forces and how they stopped.

The training of the ex-fighters is part of the Tripoli initiative implemented by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project involving municipalities, schools, ex-fighters and the civil society.

Nassim, an FFP member, responding to a young fighter's question regarding his participation in the war, said: “Based on what we've been through, I want to tell you it was not only harmful for us, it burdened our communities. We will not let the generations that come after us go through the same struggles, and we will give everything we have to stand against the risk of relapse into war in this country.”





At the end of the two-day training, FFP members asked: “What will you take from this training? And what will you leave behind?” One young fighter, who was hesitant the first day, said: “I am positive. I will leave my gun behind.”

In addition, FFP organized three playback theater performances on the theme of war and the disappeared. This is one of the ex-fighters’ ways to break the taboo of talking about war or healing from it through storytelling. In addition to that, FFP is organizing discussion sessions inside a number of schools in Tripoli to talk about their own experiences to youth and present their personal transformations from war fighters to fighters for peace.

*“We will not let the generations that come after us go through the same struggles, and we will give everything we have to stand against the risk of relapse into war in this country”*



## “Peace Building in Lebanon” news supplement, a step towards promoting a fact-based discussion



“Oceans separate us now, houses have changed behind the sea, and we carried our home in our hearts and went in all directions. Our home now walks the street with us. When we return will we carry the roads of life with us?”

That’s how Palestinian writer and artist residing in Lebanon, Taghrid Abdel Al, expressed her idea of refuge and displacement. Taghrid drew this text over an illustration which was featured in the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” latest news supplement issue. Funded by Germany, this supplement was published on Monday December 11, 2017, with An-Nahar newspaper in its Arabic version, The Daily Star in English, and with L’Orient-Le Jour newspaper in French. It contained articles by writers, journalists, media professionals,



researchers and artists residing in Lebanon and covering 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.

Taghrid was also able to share her experience as a Palestinian refugee in Lebanon with a number of participants who joined her and other supplement writers to a discussion session. The session took place on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> at Dar El Nimer in Hamra.

Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese participants from national and international NGOs, youth, practitioners and journalists, interacted with the writers, trying to answer some of the questions tackled in this 17<sup>th</sup> issue of the supplement.

Who is the “other” according to the Christian and Islamic religious teachings? What customs and traditions do the displaced Syrians and the host community have in

common? What are the implications of mixed marriage on social cohesion? Who are the “displaced” in Keserwan and to what extent is the community in Keserwan accepting them? How is the political discourse on the displaced persons reflected on the discourse of the society? What terms should one use when talking about displacement or seeking refuge? What do the displaced persons feel when they change their places of residence several times after being displaced from their motherland? How is the Syrian labor force taking part in the production of tobacco in the south? How does discrimination against women in the nationality law affect the Lebanese families and the society as a whole?

The discussion session wasn’t only an opportunity to discuss with the writers the content of their articles, but also to offer recommendations and suggestions to UNDP Lebanon for upcoming issues.

To read the supplement: [www.lb.undp.org/pbsupplement](http://www.lb.undp.org/pbsupplement)





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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