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

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# Newsletter Content



## PEACE BUILDING THROUGH LOCAL LEADERS

- 04 Tomorrow Starts Now!
- 07 Local Leaders from Jbeil Aim Together for a Better City



## PEACE BUILDING THROUGH EDUCATORS

- 08 Spring Arrives Early in Tripoli This Year
- 10 Rap Songs and Music Celebration in Favor of Nonviolence



## PEACE BUILDING THROUGH CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

- 11 "Frontlines Inside Our Minds"



## PEACE BUILDING THROUGH MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

- 13 "Peace Building in Lebanon" News Supplement, a Catalyst for a Peaceful and Hate-free Discussion in Zouk-Mikael, Keserwan
- 15 The Memory of War Through Your Lens



## 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 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 in public and to suggest mechanisms to resolve those fears and concerns. A participatory conflict analysis exercise is being undertaken to engage community leaders (mayors, members of municipal councils, *mukhtars*) and local actors. Based on the results of the analysis, the different local groups in each village would develop a Mechanism for Social Stability (MSS) addressing a specific conflict in their area.

In February 2018, MSS development retreats were organized based on the conflict analysis conducted in 38 villages in the **South, Nabatiyeh, North, Akkar, Bekaa, Baalbeck** and **Mount Lebanon**. Actors representing local stakeholders, the municipal council, NGOs, Clubs and Scouts were gathered to discuss paths and strategies for

achieving positive and constructive change in the systems of conflicts. During the retreats, local groups were able to identify the main leverage points leading to conflicts and tensions and come up with their theory of change, in addition to designing their Mechanism for Social Stability and drafting their action plan.

Once the structures of the established mechanism are finalized, the implementation phase begins.

In the **West Bekaa** villages, UNDP in cooperation with Nabad for Development NGO continued to provide **Sawiri, Kefraya, Jeb Jennine** and **Kamed el Loz** with capacity building sessions on communication, social media and strategic planning.

During the first quarter of 2018, 110 staff of the MoSA-affiliated Social Development Centers (SDCs) took part in coaching sessions and in the discussions of the mechanism developments, field visits and mechanism development retreats.



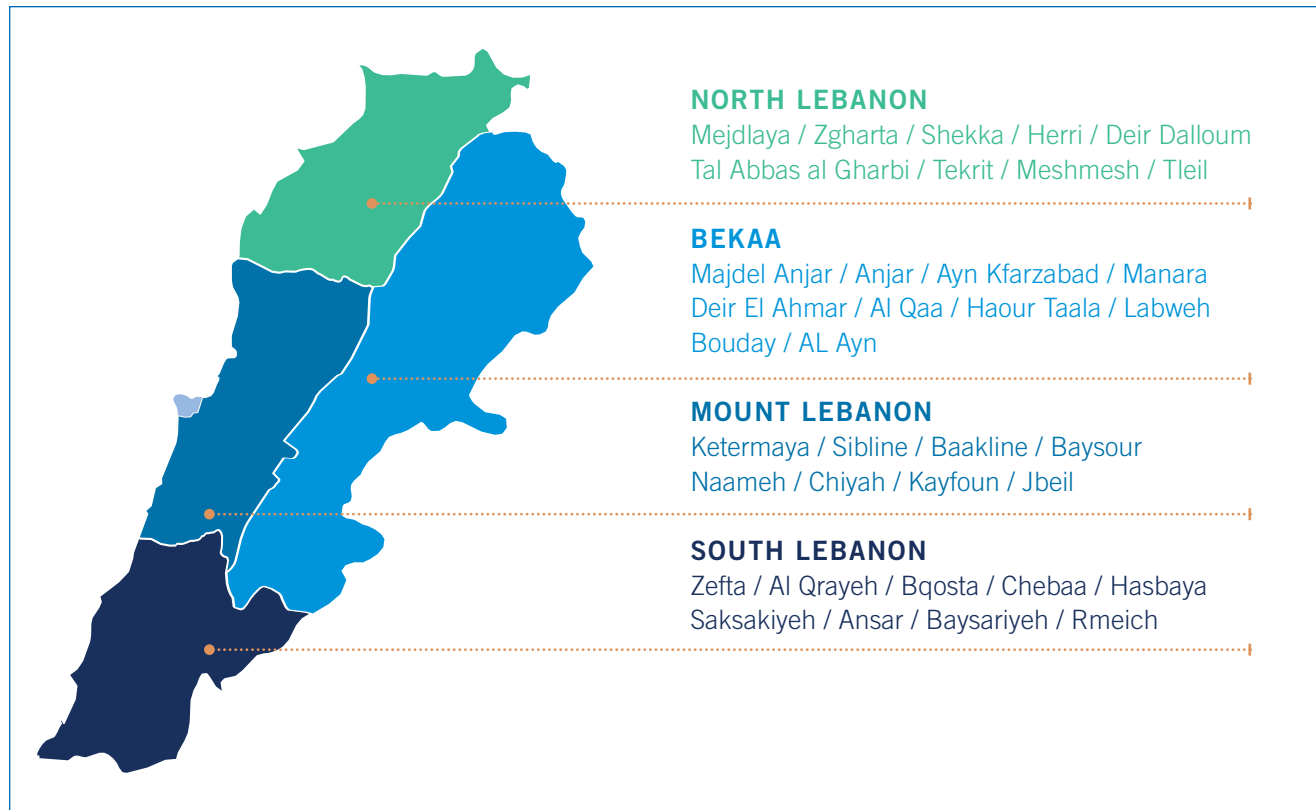
## Tomorrow Starts Now!



Over the course of months January, February and March 2018, local actors from North to South Lebanon started their year with unprecedented resolutions and goals!

The UNDP Lebanon Host Communities Support Programme (LHSP) implemented through the "Peace Building in Lebanon" project and in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), organized training retreats on the Mechanisms of Social Stability (MSS) in 36 villages in Bekaa, North, South, and Mount Lebanon kicking off the process of developmental change.

With the generous funds of KfW and UKDFID, eleven retreats were organized with participants from the following areas:



Participants of the MSS retreats had previously identified tensions and triggers in their villages. However, during the recent round of workshops, they worked on developing mechanisms to respond to and resolve these tensions.

The MSS development retreats encouraged the participants to discuss new paths and strategies to introduce positive and constructive change in the existing systems of conflicts.

Despite the ongoing challenges facing the 36 host communities, local actors joined forces with members of their municipal councils, youth and local NGOs, and initiated discussions about mechanisms for conflict prevention to tackle the key driving factors of tensions.

The challenges differed from one village to another. While some were trying to overcome historical intra-Lebanese conflicts, others were trying to work on environmental challenges, among others... Each village set its own priorities and tried to confront them collectively; for the first time.

In Mount Lebanon, the participation of youth in public service was outstanding and the MSS process highlighted its importance and motivated the participants.



In Heri - Chekka, North Lebanon, local actor Labib Saleh said: "We were not used to this coordination between the residents and the municipal council of Heri. The mechanisms' development retreats broke the ice and mended the separation between both sides. This is key to successful development plans. I'm hopeful because I see that we've finally come together for the good of our village."

And from Hasbaya, South Lebanon, Wissam Mardas said: "The retreat was greatly beneficial in pointing out our needs and finding solutions to answer each of them. It was an opportunity to make use of our differences to come up with creative activities."

"Change starts within ourselves, hence by building the capacities of the local community individuals and being exposed to the theory of change, we will be able to act, achieve and to join our effort and face all the challenges and tensions," said Mohamad al Khatib, a teacher from Majdel Anjar, during the retreat in Bekaa.

No matter the differences in the needs of the villages, almost all 400 participants believe that no change and no peace are possible without addressing conflicts and dealing with tensions.





### Jad Ghosseini - A student from Baakline and a participant in the MSS retreats



“ During Lebanon’s garbage crisis, the youth in Baakline took immediate action. We taught the residents how to recycle and sort waste. That was a first. We turned this crisis into an opportunity that gave more space for youth to take action. This is exactly why we’re taking part in the retreat and what keeps us determined to make use of these mechanisms.

I think it’s very important to be present together today, young people and older generations, civil society and actors from the different political parties. It’s even more important that we’re learning from other villages and experiences.

Mount Lebanon is so diverse and such an open space for all of us to start acting now, hand in hand! ”

### Manal Malaeb - Local actor from Baysour and a participant in the MSS retreats

“ I believe that the first step towards change, is to admit that we have problems. The next one would be finding solutions; and the only way to find them is by communicating.

We’re lucky that our group has high women participation rates. The women of Baysour are innate communicators and action-oriented. Whether we spark change at the level of our families or at a local or national level, we lead and we deliver. Our role has been effective, especially that we never work alone. Our collaboration with the municipal council and local actors and NGOs is what brought results. We are depending on this to use the Mechanisms for Social Stability as sustainable vehicles of change. ”



## Local Leaders from Jbeil Aim Together for a Better City

More than 30 local stakeholders representing local leaders and actors from Jbeil, Mount Lebanon preferred to spend their Saturday discussing with one another means to prevent and manage conflicts in their communities, and come up with human rights and development-based initiatives. They have attended the Mechanism Development retreat in Jbeil, organized by the UNDP Lebanon Host Communities Support Pro-gramme – LHSP through the "Peace

Building in Lebanon" project in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs – MOSA, funded by UK in Lebanon DFID - UK, Department for International Development and German Embassy Beirut.

Stephanie, Barakat and Maroun share their thoughts from this workshop.



“I wanted to take part in this workshop because I believe that there is always a need to discuss human rights and socio-economic issues in the city of Jbeil, and develop action plans to resolve them.”

**Maroun Abboud**  
Mount Lebanon Commissioner, Byblos Scout Organization



“I believe that we need to work on social cohesion and interaction in the city, in addition to Jbeil’s historical identity. This is my mission and that’s why I’m taking part in the city’s mechanism development workshop.”

**Stephanie Bou Chalha**  
Representative of the Jbeil Shadow Municipality



“I would like to voice the problems and issues faced by the Syrian refugees in Jbeil, and highlight the social interaction between the refugee and host communities.”

**Barakat Barakat**  
Syrian Activist







## #VIOLENCFREESCHOOLS #

The Violence-Free Schools Initiative (VFS) was launched in 15 schools in Tripoli and its neighbouring areas this 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 and For Development, with the generous funds of Germany. After the sensitization sessions on violence,

the 15 participating schools have designed their own Codes of Conduct for nonviolence with the active participation of students, teachers and parents. The schools are currently preparing for the community events in which the content of the Code of Conduct will be disseminated to the entire school community.

## Spring Arrives Early in Tripoli This Year



Just a few weeks from the beginning of spring, the students at al-Nour Intermediate Public School were burgeoning with ideas about peace education and non-violence in the school environment.

The UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project has been active in Tripoli, North Lebanon, and its neighboring areas through its Violence-Free Schools (VFS) initiative, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Educa-

tion, and with funds from Germany and technical support from Center for Active Citizenship (CAC) and for Development.

The al-Nour Intermediate Public School is one of 15 schools selected by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project to integrate peace building concepts into the school environment. The project aims at sensitizing the school community (teachers, parents, students and school



“Our students need this initiative,” said teacher and coordinator Huda El Zeini. “I tried to help my students voice out their ideas through interactive short videos. The videos were at once entertaining and educational. Because of their easy content, they made an impact on the students and we can already sense a difference.”

The presentations were followed by short discussions with the class, facilitated by the teachers. The group was keen on advocating for a culture of respect of the “other” inside and outside the school.

After the presentation, 13-year-old Mouhannad shared his thoughts. “You should go see the classes that have seen our presentation. They all changed their behaviors,” he said. “They are all calmer and more respectful towards each other and towards their teachers. When we as students, told our colleagues that violence is bad, they accepted the comment. Because we’re all kids. We understand each other.”

staff) to nonviolence so that they come up with codes of conduct for nonviolence and identify related activities. As a result, on March 1, 2018, the al-Nour School, located at the entrance to el-Mina, or the “City of Waves”, in Tripoli, witnessed a flourishing day, full of excitement and passion. The three students Mouhannad, Taha, and Maram conducted a small peace building tour for 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

With the help of their teachers, Ms. Huda El Zeini and Ms. Amal Hleihel, the group prepared, acted and edited short movies ‘re-enacting’ instances of violence identified at their school and presenting simple ways to avoid them.

“Whether it was pushing each other on the stairs during recess, or using bad word at someone,” said Maram during her presentation, “Anything that bothers other people is violence.”

The group was innovative in its approach. By showing their classmates examples from everyday life at school, they made their presentation more powerful and impactful. Other students were moved. They laughed at what they saw, and they were able to easily reason and connect with it.

Taha, who is also a passionate member of the group, explained: “I am setting an example to my friends. Avoiding violence and being a role model to others helps them do the same.”

“My role is not only academic at this school. I believe that like a mother, I have a role in guiding and educating the students. I care about them being successful individuals when they grow up. This is what keeps me involved in the Violence-Free Schools initiative,” said Amal Fleifel at the end of the day.

The school is expected to host a fair to promote nonviolence on March 28, 2018, thus ending the month as it started it, welcoming a peaceful spring!





## Rap Songs and Music Celebration in Favor of Nonviolence



*“My father yells at my mother. My mother yells at my little brother. My little brother hits the teddy bear” said a student from Suleiman El Boustani school about the cycle of violence.*

The Suleiman El Boustani public school for boys in Tripoli announced its commitment to its Code of Conduct for nonviolence, during an incredible ceremony that included a rap song, sketches, drawings and cooperation games.

This activity is part of the **#ViolenceFreeSchools** initiative that is being implemented in 15 schools in Tripoli and neighboring areas. The VFS activities are done in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education with the funds of Germany and the technical support of For Development and the Center for Active Citizenship.

“My father yells at my mother. My mother yells at my little brother. My little brother hits the teddy bear.”

Al Arz public intermediate public school for boys has also organized a ceremony around non-violence to mobilize the school community. It was the first event that the school ever witnesses and the children were inspired! The play addressed different forms of violence identified in the school community.



## “Frontlines Inside Our Minds”



“I don’t want to become another Em Riad when I go back to Aleppo” said Sarah, a Syrian student from Chouf on stage during a playback theatre performance on January 12, 2018.

The Fighters for Peace (FFP) NGO, funded and supported by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” project, organized a playback theatre<sup>1</sup> performance about stories and memories of war.

FFP is the only organization in Lebanon that unites former fighters in the Lebanese civil war from different political, religious and social backgrounds with the mission of

preventing relapsing into war. The ex-fighters collaborated with the troupe of the Tripoli-based SADA Playback Theater<sup>2</sup> who performed together with Beirut-based Laban playback theatre members.

The session was held at Antwork, Beirut, and hosted around 200 Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian participants from Chouf, Bekaa, North, and South Lebanon. Students, children, parents and older generations were present listening and telling their stories of the civil war, each from his side of the country.

“Em Riad is a woman from Beirut, who fled the war and moved to Chouf,” explained Sarah. “She was shot in her arm and it was paralyzed during the fights. She has

<sup>1</sup> Playback theatre is a form of improvisational theater in which audience or group members tell stories from their lives and watch them enacted immediately by an ensemble of actors, Escola de Cultura de Pau, [http://escolapau.uab.es/img/programas/musica/strategic\\_arts.pdf](http://escolapau.uab.es/img/programas/musica/strategic_arts.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The SADA troupe was formed recently in Tripoli with the support of the UNDP. It aims at sharing the stories of Tripoli residents and their memories, seeking to contribute to the city's reconciliation.





Alzheimer's now. She forgot everything about her past, but she carries her paralyzed arm, and its memory throughout her days. That's the story she tells every day." The student continued, "I don't want to carry the memories of the war with me forever, I want to heal and my home country to heal."

Following Sarah, Wiam from Beirut was encouraged to share her story too. "I grew up during the war. I learned the names of so many Lebanese areas. Not because of geography class, but because of the number of times we moved. We slept in cars, shelters, mosques, schools and churches. My siblings and I even learned to hide knives in our socks to defend ourselves, because armed fighters were waiting around every corner on the streets. These are the only memories I have from my childhood." She added, "I hope my children will never witness that, but I'm not 100 percent sure the Lebanese will not repeat this mistake again."

"The war did end on the frontline. After all these years, without reconciliation efforts, these same frontlines are still inside our minds," from the other side of the hall, said

*"I don't want to carry the memories of the war with me forever, I want to heal and my home country to heal"*

Hussein from Baysarieh, South Lebanon. Hussein was born on April 13, the day the war started.

The audience was moved by the stories told based on memories of the war, whether from Lebanon or Syria. They cried and laughed together.

The group of people who filled the hall as strangers at first, left it as a close-knit group.



## "Peace Building in Lebanon" News Supplement, a Catalyst for a Peaceful and Hate-free Discussion in Zouk-Mikael, Keserwan



In the calm town of Zouk Mikael, Keserwan, right in the middle of the well-known old souk, around 40 persons coming from Beirut, Jbeil, Batroun and Zouk Mikael, were engaged in an open and constructive discussion session. This session was organized by the UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January in La Maison des Jeunes et de la Culture linked to Zouk Mikael municipality, in Keserwan, Lebanon. Participants voiced their opinions regarding the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon and other civil peace related issues in the context of the "Peace Building in Lebanon" news supplement. An atmosphere of positive tension reigned over the session.

The 17<sup>th</sup> issue of the news supplement, which is funded by Germany, was distributed on December 11, 2017 with An-Nahar newspaper in its Arabic version, The Daily Star newspaper in its English version and L'Orient-Le Jour newspaper in its French version. The issue discussed 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 open discussion brought together the supplements' contributors from writers, journalists, media professionals, researchers and artists residing in Lebanon, and welcomed a new audience of Zouk Mikael municipality members





public and private universities students, local actors (both Lebanese and Syrians), teachers and social activists. Contributors in the supplement were given a chance to present their articles and to listen to readers' feedback.

Since 2013, when the first supplement was published, this is the first time that UNDP organizes the discussion session in Zouk Mikael after having organized similar discussions in Beirut and other areas around Lebanon.

"I am so happy that this kind of discussions is taking place in Zouk Mikael, and not only in Beirut, because I believe that we need to talk more about refugees from a human rights perspective and overcome stigmatizing representations of the refugees", said Maha, an International Affairs student residing in Zouk Mikael, after taking part in the session.

The need to highlight realities and illustrate the full picture from both refugees and hosting communities, is what the Zouk Mikael municipality Deputy Mayor, Pierre El Ashkar insisted on in his intervention in the session. "Let's always see both sides of the stories", he said, referring to the challenges facing the municipality in regards to the presence of Syrian refugees in Zouk.

"That's what the supplement is offering", answered university professor, activist and researcher in sociology, Dr. Fahmiya Sharafeddine, who is also a participant in the supplement. For her, the supplement subject of the discussion session is a balanced media that builds bridges and reduces the polarization of societies divided between religious, political and ethnic groups.

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

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



*"I am so happy that this kind of discussions is taking place in Zouk Mikael, and not only in Beirut, because I believe that we need to talk more about refugees from a human rights perspective and overcome stigmatizing representations of the refugees"*



## The Memory of War Through Your Lens A Photo Competition about the Lebanese Civil War



**What object, site, sound or person represents the Lebanese civil war to you? How can you capture the memory of war in a still image?**

The UNDP "Peace Building in Lebanon" project, with funding from Germany, organized in March 2018 a photo competition about the memory of the Lebanese civil war. The project asked participants to contribute to constructing the memory of the war, by sharing a recent photo that in their opinion represents the Lebanese civil war.

The competition which was open to persons of all ages, closed on March 27, 2018 with 24 entries received.

In April 2018, 10 winning photos will be featured in the "Peace Building in Lebanon" News Supplement (in its print and electronic versions) published with An-Nahar, L'Orient Le Jour and The Daily Star newspapers. Selected photos will be shown during an event to be organized by the UNDP to commemorate the Lebanese civil war.



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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