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

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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 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 address those fears and concerns. 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**). Local groups and actors have agreed on the main challenges that they will

be addressing, their final structure and roles and responsibilities. During the meetings, actors finalized their action plans and designed social activities that they will be implementing during the coming months.

In the **Bekaa**, two retreats were organized during the past three months: one gathering 55 participants from the villages of **Haour Taala, Al Ain, Labweh, Manara and Ayn Kfarzabad** and another from the villages of **Haour Taala, Al Ain, Labweh, Manara and Ayn Kfarzabad and Al Qaa** villages. The workshops aimed at equipping the participants with new tools and techniques to design effective peace initiatives in addition to project management, implementation and evaluation techniques.

In South Lebanon, local actors from **Ansar, Bqosta, Chebaa, Hasbaya, Grayeh, Rmeich, Saksakiyeh and Zefta** went through the same process.

Want Positive Change? Try the MSS



During the past three months, UNDP Lebanon conducted training retreats and workshops to develop the Mechanisms for Social Stability (MSS) with local actors from North, South, Bekaa and Mount Lebanon.

Throughout April to June, the UNDP Lebanese Host Communities Support Program (LHSP), through the “Peace Building in Lebanon” project, supported local communities in identifying the main challenges that face social stability and weaken the interaction between the different segments of the society. In partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the funds of UKDFID and Germany, UNDP Lebanon is working with locals to join their efforts and address their identified challenges by developing mechanisms for social stability.



The mechanisms aim at designing social activities to prevent and mitigate tensions, developing work plans, in addition to including the local community in the cycle of change and announcing the mechanisms to the public.

The Mechanisms are being discussed and developed with working groups in 37 villages. Each of the villages is trying to design a peace initiative to overcome its specific challenges and making use of the resources and assets available for it.

Over the weekend of May 12, 2018, 55 local actors representing Haour Taala, Al Ain, Labweh, Manara and Ayn Kfarzabad in Bekaa, gathered in a workshop focused on increasing the capacities of the participants. The workshop motivated them towards public service and collective work through designing mechanisms for social stability.

"I just knew what the real meaning of a local actor is and how to be motivated to move forward and design a sustainable action plan for the enhancement of social

stability in my village", said Ali Al Masri, a local actor from Haour Taala.

Moreover, UNDP Lebanon is partnering with the Ministry of Social Affairs to support the officials of Social Development Centers (SDCs) across Lebanon to take part of the MSS process and to closely work with the local actors to identify the theory of change that would lead to social stability and peace. During April and May 2018, capacity building workshops were designed and implemented to equip the Social Development Centers officials' with technical skills in peacebuilding, conflict management and resolution, in addition to tools in project management and evaluation.

"The partnership between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the UNDP could be the positive catalyser that would enhance social stability within the Lebanese communities and strengthen the interaction between the different segments of our society," said director of Qartaba SDC, Desiree Kahlifeh.

Changemakers Highlight the Beauty of South Lebanon



"Our village is rich with beautiful scenery, hospitality and great architecture. We invite you to come visit this attractive location", said Hanan from Qrayeh, South Lebanon as she finished her presentation.

Hanan is part of a local team working on eco-tourism for social stability in Qrayeh. The team, formed of local actors, municipal members, staff from local Social Development Centers (affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs) and volunteers, joined forces to present their tourism plan for their village in front of other teams from other villages in the South.

Why did the local actors of Qrayeh choose tourism as a peacebuilding engine? "Tourism could drive positive



change and encourage our community to work together for the good of our village", answered Joseph.

Local actors from Zefta and Bqusta were inspired by the presentation. The teams started exploring motivating ideas to promote peacebuilding initiatives and activities in their villages.

The three mentioned working groups met on the 21st of June 2018 in Saida, South Lebanon to develop their "Mechanisms for Social Stability" (MSS), which are tools of positive change that help locals reduce tensions and prevent conflicts.

Nisrine, from Bqusta, spent the day with actors from other areas in the South, and learned so much about their villages. "This inspired us to work and coordinate on organizing better projects and activities in our communities", she said.

This meeting was part of a three-day retreat gathering local actors from the villages of Rmeich, Saksakieh, Ansar, Chebaa, Hasbaya, Qrayeh, Zefta and Bqusta in South Lebanon. They worked on MSS and planned for peacebuilding initiatives to be launched this summer.

What Links Peacebuilding to Job Opportunities?



In order to contribute to social stability in the region and encourage socio-economic initiatives, the UNDP Lebanon in partnership with ILO, UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Affairs and with the funds of Peace Building Support Office (PBSO), has been working since March 2018 on a joint program with municipalities and local actors to integrate job creation as a wheel of positive change on all levels, mainly social stability.

The joint program aims to do so by developing the capacities and skills of Lebanese and Syrian local actors in order to mitigate tensions and deal with socio-economic causes of conflicts.

This program is taking advantage of the existing infrastructures for peace, already established by UNDP Lebanon a few years ago.

Job opportunities may be one of the leading bridges to attaining social stability in Lebanon. The dynamics of conflict in this country depend on multiple factors; one of which is the lack of economic opportunities.

The socio-economic committees, established in Riyaaq, Bar Elias and Al-Qaa villages in the Bekaa, were formed of Lebanese and Syrian local actors in communities suffering from social and economic challenges that impact social stability in their areas.



A New Dawn for Aarsal in the Bekaa Analysing the conflict in its surrounding villages

Tensions between the people of Aarsal and its surrounding villages reached its peak in 2014 amid the increasing presence of extremist groups, namely the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN), in Aarsal and its Jurds (Aarsal's mountainous outskirts). This presence, which was perceived by Aarsal's Shiite and Christian neighbors, as well as by some key officials in the country, to be an occupation of the village, is directly related to the war in Syria. For Sunni militants fighting against the Assad regime and Hezbollah in Syria, the predominantly Sunni Aarsal constituted a safe haven for some of these fighters and a place where their families and support-base resided. However, their relationship with Aarsal worsened drastically in 2014 when both extremist groups reacted to an LAF arrest by "invading" the village and kidnapping both ISF and LAF personnel¹. This has significantly altered the relationship between the Lebanese host community and Syrian refugees, especially those related to the militants. The incident shifted internal dynamics within the Aarsali community and led to higher discontent resulting from the performance of the former municipality which lost the municipal elections of May 2016.

Since 2016, Aarsal's newly elected municipal council made it a priority to restore relationships between the constituents. Some mayors described this phase as "opening a new page". In this research, we call it a "New Dawn" in the relationship, since it was also supported and consolidated through the recent 2017 LAF gains achieved through Operation Dawn of the Jurds. But until the moment when militants were expelled from the Jurds of Aarsal, the price the whole community has paid was very high on multiple

levels including their livelihoods, municipal services provision, stability and security, as well as the overall relationship of Aarsal's citizens with the state.

The strain on services and the deterioration of social stability in Aarsal and its surrounding began even before the cordoning of Aarsal by the LAF that followed the 2014 incidents. A major influx of refugees brought tens of thousands of Syrians to Aarsal and its surrounding in the summer of 2013, as entire villages in Syria – especially Qusair and Yabroud in Qalamoun- fled into the Bekaa, where some resided in Aarsal. According to UNHCR's numbers of registered Syrian refugees, over 50,000 refugees resided in Aarsal and its surrounding villages. This is almost equal to the number of Lebanese living in these villages even though no official census represents accurately the number of residents. But all mayors, key informants, and focus group participants acknowledged that with the existing weak infrastructure facing twice the number of residents, the only way to keep the situation from collapsing would be through continuous international support and larger scale governmental interventions.

This report produced by UNDP with the generous funds of UKDFID seeks to explain current intercommunal relations and grievances in Aarsal. It also aims at presenting the opportunities that both the community and the government have identified to support the area, and proposes a number of key considerations for the scale-up of international engagement to meet needs.

¹ Aarsal Conflict, Lebanon Support Civil Society Knowledge Centre: <http://civilsociety-centre.org/timelines/27778>



#VIOLENCFREESCHOOLS

The Violence-Free Schools initiative was launched in 15 schools in Tripoli and its neighboring areas on January 2017. The initiative is being implemented with the support of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the technical support of the Center for Active Citizenship and For Development and the generous funds of Germany. Following the sensitization sessions on violence, the 15 participating schools designed their own Codes of Conduct for nonviolence with the active participation of students,

teachers and parents. During March and April, the schools organized community events in which the content of the Code of Conduct was disseminated to the entire school community. A final event gathering all the participating schools was held on the 12th of May 2018 in Tripoli. The last phase of the initiative relating to the physical space of the schools is currently being implemented.

Tripoli Celebrates its Violence-Free Schools



UNDP Lebanon organized the closing ceremony of the "Violence-Free Schools" initiative implemented in 15 public schools in Tripoli and its neighboring areas, on Saturday May 12, 2018. The event was held at Al Rabita Al Thakafia theatre, in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UNDP and the German Embassy.

The Violence-Free Schools (VFS) initiative is led by UNDP Lebanon and aims to train teachers, school staff, parents and students on peacebuilding and conflict transformation. The VFS initiative has been ongoing in Tripoli since January 2017 and the working groups in the schools are now equipped with the means to inspire a safe school environment that encourages a space of free expression and respect.

The final ceremony was a burst of talent and joy to all 15 schools of Tripoli and its neighboring areas.

2,173 students, 1,268 parents and 219 teachers and principals have been working together as teams on countering violence in their school environment through peacebuilding approaches.

The students performed sensational theatrical pieces, rap songs and comedy sketches that blew the audience away.

Sarah, one of the students who performed a traditional dance, said as she walked off the stage, "This is my first time on stage, it feels superb! I wish we can always do activities like this! I now love my school."



Parents, teachers, principals and fellow students were all cheering and supporting this inspiring representation of how the school environment can be both violence-free and fun!

“I am so proud of us all. This was an amazing opportunity for the talents we didn’t know we have in our class. The hard work behind this has brought us so close together, we made a good team that will do more next year!”, said teacher Hoda from Al-Jadida school, as her students were getting ready backstage.

After the stage performances were over, the audience visited the exhibition of artwork prepared by the participating schools about positive communication, healthy school environments, respect of differences, empathy and friendship.

Mrs. Celine Moyroud, UNDP Country Director, said that “the schools alone are strong enough to build confidence and a sense of unity in the community, this is why we chose to work in Tripoli”, thanking everyone involved in the VFS initiative.

“Violence is a dangerous phenomenon that affects a large part of our society and turns students and teachers into victims of its different forms”, said Mrs. Nahla Hamati, head of the North educational zone, representing the General Director of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Fadi Yaraq. She pointed out the importance of spreading a culture of tolerance, active listening and communication within the school community.

The UNDP implemented the VFS initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and with the technical support of the Center for Active Citizenship (CAC) and For Development NGOs, and funded by Germany.

This initiative brings directors, teachers, students and parents together to develop a plan that addresses the different forms of violence identified in their school community.

The initiative also includes awareness sessions for students, training workshops for educational staff and renovations of the school’s physical structure.

The working groups inside the schools also develop Codes of Conduct for nonviolence and organize related activities that aim at disseminating the values of the Code of Conduct to the wider school community.



THE 15 PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS IN TRIPOLI ARE:

1. Al Fadila Intermediate Public School for Boys
2. Al Jadida Intermediate Public School for Boys
3. Al Nour Intermediate Mixed Public School
4. Adnan Zaki Darwich Intermediate Public School for Boys
5. Al Nahda Intermediate Public School for Boys
6. Al Arz Intermediate Public School for Boys
7. Ibrahim al Yazagi Intermediate Public School for Boys
8. Nabi Kzeiber Intermediate Mixed Public School
9. Abd el Hadi Dhaiby Intermediate Public School for Boys
10. Al Menieh al-Makaleh Intermediate Mixed Public School
11. Baal Mohsen Intermediate Mixed Public School
12. Suleiman El Boustany Intermediate Public School for Boys
13. Ibn Sina Intermediate Public School for Boys
14. Al Qalamoun Public School for Boys
15. Al Beddawi Intermediate Public School for Boys



15 Schools Promoting Nonviolence in Tripoli this Spring!

The “Violence-Free Schools” initiative of UNDP’s Peace Building in Lebanon project is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the technical support of “For Development” and “Center for Active Citizenship” NGOs and the funds of Germany.

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WORKSHOPS ON VIOLENCE-FREE EDUCATION

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TEACHER SUPPORT WORKSHOPS

providing practical information and techniques for violence management

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DISCUSSIONS AND SOLUTION GENERATION

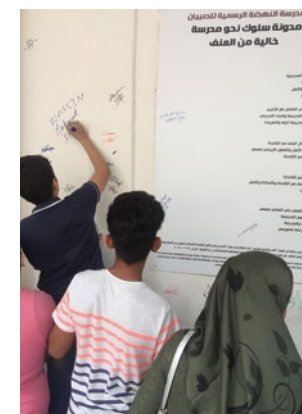
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WORKING GROUP MEETINGS WITHIN SCHOOLS

The 15 schools participating in the VFS initiative in Tripoli have finally celebrated their commitment to nonviolence. Read below to know more:

The **Qalamoun Public School for Boys** has launched its Code of Conduct for Nonviolence on Monday the 23rd of April through music, videos and a moving exhibition!

The **AL Nahda School for Boys** has launched its Code of Conduct for Nonviolence on the 21st of April, 2018 with a moving art exhibition on the theme of nonviolence. Here are some of the art pieces produced by the school’s students!



The students of the **Adnan Zaki Darwish School** were so inspired by the theme of non-violence! Visual arts, a play, a dance and a beautiful rap song were put together especially for the occasion. See what they had to say about violence on April 18.





The **Baal Mohsen School** tried to reduce stressors in its environment through sports, arts and its new school choir. In the ceremony that was held on April 12, everyone seemed to agree that this experience has improved their school environment for the better.



The **Ibn Sina School for Boys** has organized, on April 16, a day full of artistic activities and games to launch its Code of Conduct for Nonviolence. The school has even put together a short musical around the theme!



There was so much talent at the **Abdel Hadi Dheibi School for Boys** on the April 14, 2018! Singing, poetry, acting and traditional poetry rhymes were written around the effects of violence on individuals and on society.



Have a look at the colorful non-violence activity that took place at the **Ibrahim Al Yazagi Public school** in Abi Samra on the April 3, 2018! The school community has decided to celebrate non-violence through arts and sports.



The **Al Nour Intermediate Public School** organized a day full of plays around the themes of cooperation, empathy and non-violence!



Suleiman el Boustani

“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 al Boustani School** about the cycle of violence, during their school celebration of nonviolence. In the below picture, a student marks his hand on the school wall to symbolize his commitment to the Code of Conduct.



The school ceremony of the **Al Arz School for Boys** focused on different forms of violence in the school community. The play was written by the principal of the school and his students and addressed the role of the principal, the students, teachers and parents in addressing a case of violence. Here is a glimpse of their take on the subject!



The **Al Fadila School for Boys** has announced its commitment to its new Code of Conduct for Nonviolence on the 26th of April through entertaining plays and music. The play illustrated different forms of student-to-teacher violence. “Let’s drive the teacher crazy!”, says one of the students and chaos erupts in classroom!



The **Nabi Kzayber Public School** has wowed us with its incredible ceremony announcing its commitment to nonviolence on the 19th of April. The school has focused its work on involving parents in addressing violence related issues and has mobilized all the different talents in its school community to discuss the different forms of violence and the best ways of dealing with them.





The **Beddaoui School for Boys** has celebrated nonviolence through sports, short plays and a beautiful rap performance, held on April 20, 2018! The school play addressed the different rights and duties of the students, teachers and parents and the rap song consolidated the messages by insisting on the personal responsibility of each one of the listeners in reducing violence in our society.



Students in North Lebanon say No to Violence



As one of the participants in the Violence-Free Schools initiative, the Minieh El Makaleh Public School in North Lebanon celebrated the final phase of the initiative in their school with a festive ceremony.

The Minieh El Makaleh 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 staff) to nonviolence so that they come up with codes of conduct for nonviolence and identify related activities.

In line with the project’s engagement of both the school and members from the community, the school’s courtyard was filled with teachers, family members, and the students, who were eagerly waiting to show what they had learned over the past months.

The school’s principal, Ms. Claudia Bitar opened the ceremony by saying that: “The journey of 1000 miles begins today. It is the journey we are taking against violence” After that, numerous performances from the students took place including a poem on nonviolence, a rap in the school on topics including rape, early marriage, the right for nationality, self-esteem and confidence, followed by a play consisting of sketches on bad examples of violence in the school and ending with a traditional Lebanese folklore dance. All performances showed a stunning amount of confidence, determination and joy. The stage was decorated with impressive drawings and the school’s Arts teacher explained that before making them, the children did research on the causes for violence and the reasons for renouncing it. “What they cannot express with words they can express visually”, she said, praising the students for their talent and the school for including art in the project. There was also an impressive testimony by one of the fathers who was active in the task force involved in the design of the code of conduct. The father focused on the

way that the process made him look for alternatives to violence with his children “the fact that we grew up around violence should not make violence acceptable”.

The ceremony ended with the announcement of the content of a code of conduct developed by the school itself, which specifies rights and responsibilities for teachers, students and parents in enabling a violence free environment. The jubilant and enthusiastic atmosphere among all attendees gave an optimistic feeling towards a nonviolent future.

On the 26th of April, the **Al Fadila Public School for Boys** in Tripoli also honored their active participation in UNDP’s Violence-Free Schools (VFS) initiative with a round-up celebration.

The Al Fadila Public School for Boys is one of 15 schools selected by the UNDP “Peace Building in Lebanon” to be part of the Violence-Free Schools initiative.

The celebration in Al Fadila Public School for Boys was well attended by the school’s students, teachers and family members. The school’s scouts, whose faces beamed with joy and excitement, entertained the audience with a splendid musical performance and a play on violence in the school. The principal of the school clarified some of the challenges he had faced with regards to violence in the school, but was thankful for the school’s participation in the VFS initiative and expressed optimism towards a violent-free future. The last act in the ceremony was an exciting gymnastics performance by some of the school’s students who have been awarded numerous prizes and medals for their talents. A final impressive contribution was the grand outline for a painting that will be reproduced on one of the school’s outer walls, reminding the students, teachers, parents, communities and passersby of the school’s dedication to a violent-free environment.



Building Collective Memory of the Past: a Step to Reconciliation

“Don’t shy away from your own history and collective memories; confronting the past is the key to prevent a relapse into violence and war”, said Philippe Lazarini, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator.

Lazarini was inviting the audience attending a panel discussion on “Oral History and Memory of the Lebanese Civil War” in Beit Beirut on 15 May, 2018 to face and understand their past. Same comment was shared by Dr. Michael Reuss, Deputy Head of Mission at the German

Embassy in Lebanon. According to Reuss, “someone who doesn’t know their past will not have a future.”

On the opening night of the “Nazra” photo exhibition on memory and war, a panel discussion session was organized by UNDP Lebanon in partnership with Lebanese Association for History, Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon, Fighters For Peace NGO, and International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), with the generous funds of Germany.



“The problem with oral history is that everyone doubts it because everyone can make it, but it has to be realized that official history is also made and can be manipulated. There is a need to document oral history”, said Dr. Maha Shuayb, Director of the Center for Lebanese Studies at the Lebanese American University.

Commenting on Maha’s words said, Nour El Bejjani, International Center for Transitional Justice representative in Lebanon, highlighted the fact that history books in Lebanon end with the period of the country’s independence. “That’s problematic”, she said. What is problematic for Ziad Saad, President of the Fighters For Peace NGO is that everyone believes they own the truth. “We, as ex-fighters, were brave enough to say that we are working on redeeming our mistakes”, he added.

The session was not only an opportunity for everyone to engage in conversations about the past, remembrance and individual memories, but also a platform for organizations working on history and memory to highlight the importance of oral history documentation and feed in the historiography of the civil war, according to Nayla Hamadeh, education activist and President of the Lebanese Association for History (LAH).

It was in this context that Wadad Halawani, Head of the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disap-



peared in Lebanon, shared her personal experience of how her own personal search for a disappeared family member turned into a shared search for the disappeared and kidnapped of Lebanon.

The need for dialogue between victims, perpetrators and bystanders on one side, and with the government on the other side to activate the truth-seeking process in the case of the disappeared was the highlight of the session.

“I witnessed every single detail of the war, all the different phases and cycles that shaped our behavior and memories”, said a lady at the beginning of the playback theatre performance presented by Wasl Troupe.

Attendees were asked to share their personal story of war and watch them enacted immediately by the ensemble of actors. After hearing stories from the “war generation”, some of the younger people shared stories they had heard from their parents.

The session ended but the truth-seeking process started in the minds of all who attended the discussion session in Beit Beirut that had served as a forward control and sniper base during the war and now turned into a dominant symbol of the Lebanese Civil War.



Nazra on Memory and War, the Lens as a Mean to Remember the Past



“When I first told my family that I want to take this picture, it annoyed both my mom and dad... I gathered members of my family and asked them to stay in the bathroom and I took the picture. After they saw it, my mom had tears in her eyes”, said Maria de Lourdes Haddad, explaining the idea behind the picture she sent in the context of the photo competition organized by UNDP Lebanon. Maria’s photo is a personal representation of her shelter during the civil war where her family used to spend hours in the bathroom waiting for the fights to end. “Even after all these years, this bathroom still evokes different emotions in me. Despite all the stress and fear that we had to go through, our family got closer and stronger”, she said.

Maria and 21 other participants answered the UNDP Lebanon call with the generous funds of Germany, launched in March 2018, asking participants to construct the memory of the Civil War and represent it through their lenses and the recent photographs that remind them of it.

The jury, which is composed of Patrick Baz, an award-winning photojournalist, Nour El Bejjani, ICTJ representative



in Beirut and UNDP team, selected 11 winning photographs that were featured in the “Peace Building in Lebanon” news supplement and published in the 18th issue during April 2018.

All entries received for this competition were exhibited in “Beit Beirut” in Sodeco, between May 15 and 21, 2018. Visitors from Lebanon, Italy, France, England, Serbia and many other countries checked the exhibition that was held in one of the most iconic places of Beirut reminding of the Lebanese Civil War. An Italian tourist and ex-war photographer said that “the photos brought out memories buried deep down”.

Standing in front of her photo in the exhibition, Manal Malaeb, a university teacher from Baysour and a participant in the photo competition explained the idea behind it to the exhibition visitors: “I took this picture in the backyard of my house, where my mother had turned the ammunition box into a flower pot. The box was left by the Arab Deterrent Force that was stationed near our house during the war. It is all about perspective”, she said.

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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