



**USAID** | **LEBANON**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# LEBANON CIVIC SUPPORT INITIATIVE

**ANNUAL REPORT  
JANUARY 2010 – MARCH 2011**

**SWIFT IQC DOT-I-00-00-08-00033, TASK ORDER 2**

15 April 2011

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Chemonics International Inc. The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

# CONTENTS

Acronyms .....	iii
Section I. Program Overview .....	1
Objectives .....	1
Geographic Focus .....	2
Media Coverage .....	3
Section II. Country Situation .....	4
Municipal Elections 2010 .....	4
The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) .....	4
Government Resignation .....	6
Lebanese-Israeli Tensions.....	7
Other Security Incidents .....	9
Anti-Sectarian Movement.....	10
Other Political Updates .....	11
Political Changes in the Arab World .....	12
Section III. Program Impact by Intermediate Result .....	13
Youth Successfully Influence Decision Makers .....	13
Background and Approach .....	13
Impact Examples.....	13
CSOs Form Linkages that Lay the Groundwork for Collective Action .....	16
Background and Approach .....	16
Impact Examples.....	17
Creation of Independent Space for Youth Activism Challenges Political Party Dominance .....	19
Background and Approach .....	19
Impact Examples.....	19
Youth Attitudes and Behavior towards Conflict Change Positively .....	23
Background and Approach .....	23
Impact Examples.....	23
Section IV. Building Capacity to Maximize Impact.....	26
Building Capacity to Advocate .....	26
Media Training and Tools.....	27
Social Media .....	27

# ACRONYMS

CSO	civil society organization
INGO	international nongovernmental organization
IT	information technology
LCI	Lebanon Civic Initiative
LCSI	Lebanon Civic Support Initiative
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MP	Member of Parliament
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency



## SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Please note that this annual report covers the period from January 2010 through March 2011 as a result of overlap between the Lebanon Civic Initiative (LCI) and Lebanon Civic Support Initiative (LCSI) reporting periods. During this period, the LCSI project cleared a total of 63 grants totaling \$5,879,921 and disbursed a total of \$2,743,010.

### Objectives

The Lebanon Civic Support Initiative (LCSI) is a three-year program that promotes youth activism, conflict mitigation, and civil society advocacy. Funded by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), the program provides small, in-kind grants to a wide range of Lebanese organizations working with youth in marginalized and conflict-prone areas. Since January 2010, LCSI has partnered with NGOs, youth groups, and other formal and informal civil society players to carry out activities consistent with the following objectives:

- *Promote leadership, critical thinking, activism, and advocacy.* Youth represent a large and highly vulnerable segment of the Lebanese population and are the group most susceptible to change. LCSI supports activities to encourage youth to become more active and productive members of their communities through skills-based training, community projects, and cultural, sports, and artistic events that provide peaceful outlets for expression and dialogue. Since January 2010, the program awarded 46 grants under this objective totaling \$4,160,771.
- *Mitigate tensions in conflict-prone areas through reconciliation work, collective memory activities, and dialogue on key national and community-level issues.* Under this objective, LCSI supports activities that address specific drivers of conflict and respond to emerging events. Activities include addressing conflict at the local level through community dialogue and exchanges, building conflict-resolution skills among youth and others affected by conflict, and using sports, arts, and cultural activities as instruments for conflict mitigation and peace-building. Since January 2010, the program awarded three grants under this objective totaling \$299,793.
- *Enhance civil society organizations' capacity to advocate for local or national issues.* Since January 2010, the program awarded 14 grants under this objective totaling \$1,419,357.

In 2010, the LCSI team established four program-level intermediate results to serve as a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) structure under which to aggregate impact from various grant activities (see text box). These intermediate results have provided a framework in which to group and analyze program successes and lessons learned and to sum up the results of the LCSI program at a macro level. The main segment of this report

#### Measuring Impact through Intermediate Results

1. Youth Successfully Influence Decision Makers
2. CSO Linkages Lay the Groundwork for Collective Action
3. Creation of Independent Space for Youth Activism Challenges Status Quo
4. Youth Attitudes and Behaviors Towards Conflict Change Positively

is structured around these intermediate results to highlight overall program impact.

## Geographic Focus

LCSI's activities focus primarily on three geographically distinct regions of Lebanon: the North, the Beqaa, and the South. These areas were selected due to the nature of persisting conflicts in them, the large presence of marginalized groups that correspond to the project's target demographic, and U.S. government priorities. Of note, LCSI has been able to work in locations where other USAID and U.S. government programs have not been able to reach through its flexible, locally driven approaches and its ability to work with even nascent organizations through the in-kind grants model. The specific regional contexts in which LCSI works are detailed below:

- *North.* Conflict in northern Lebanon includes ongoing incidents of violence and clashes in and around Tripoli. One continued source of conflict is tension between Sunni and Alawite communities, such as in the Bab el Tabbaneh/Jabal Mohsen district of Tripoli. Other flashpoints are areas with concentrations of Palestinians, including mixed Lebanese-Palestinian gatherings surrounding refugee camps. The increasing presence of Salafi Islamic fundamentalist groups in camps and elsewhere in the North is also a continued security threat. The aftermath of the violence in the Naher el Bared Palestinian camp, when clashes took place in 2007 between the Lebanese Army and the radical Fatah al-Islam group, continues to affect the situation in the region, given the displacement of many Palestinians to surrounding areas. LCSI supports activities to address the drivers of conflict in the North by educating youth on the effects of the Civil War, sectarianism, and the current situation, and by empowering youth to serve as activists and encourage consensus-building around resolving community needs.
- *Beqaa.* The Beqaa, bordering Syria, has traditionally been an important region for agriculture and tourism, but was badly affected by the 2006 war with Israel. Incitement to violence is becoming more prominent, encouraged by Syrian and Iranian influences. There is also ongoing Sunni-Shiite tension between rival groups in the Beqaa, which flared up in May 2008 leading to armed clashes in some parts of the region. LCSI supports activities to provide youth with professional and educational skills training, encourage civic activism, and create opportunities for them to participate in reconciliation activities between rival communities. Given the remote nature of parts of the Beqaa, LCSI also supports the renovation and equipping of youth centers, as locations for independent youth activities are generally very limited.
- *South.* The South was severely affected by the 2006 war with Israel. Despite UNIFIL's continued presence, tensions along the Lebanon-Israel border have continued to escalate, and explosions and other security incidents in the region occur periodically. The Ain el Heloue refugee camp and surrounding areas also suffer from ongoing tensions. To mitigate this situation, LCSI works to improve relations between Lebanese and Palestinian youth through leadership training, conflict mitigation, and community activities. To provide youth with alternatives to participating in violent means of expression, LCSI facilitates

the formation and engagement of youth groups throughout the South that can engage in more constructive activities.

In addition to these priority areas, LCSi is working on nation-wide initiatives that also include activities in Mount Lebanon, as well as targeted national-level events, primarily under the advocacy component, focused on decision-makers and other stakeholders in the capital. LCSi also recently launched a new media portfolio with a nation-wide scope, supported by a dedicated program development specialist, which will focus on enhancing the impact of grantee activities through the use of media, as well as creation of independent media platforms to provide targeted youth with a venue for self-expression and alternative media sources.

## Media Coverage

Below is a summary of media coverage of LCSi activities during the period September 2010 through March 2011. Please note that this table does not include January-August 2010, as media coverage during this period was counted under LCI.

Type of Media	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
Newspaper	2	1	8	6	12	10	13	52
Newspaper supplement	1				2			3
Newsletter								
Web site	1	1	7	25	13	5	29	81
Radio interview	2	1			6			9
TV interview			3		7	2	4	16
TV documentary					3			3
TV news coverage			3	3		3		9
Magazine					1			1
Weekly				1		2		3
Blog				1	1			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>179</b>

## SECTION II. COUNTRY SITUATION

During 2010 and the first months of 2011, Lebanon witnessed a series of political events that were influenced by local, regional and international actors. The political situation in Lebanon remained unstable and at times explosive. Several key events took place in the last 15 months, namely the municipal elections of 2010, a series of security-related incidents both internally and along the Lebanese-Israeli border, various actions related to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) and the resignation of the Lebanese Government and inability to date to form a new one.

### Municipal Elections 2010

In May 2010, municipal and village leader (*mokhtar*) elections took place over a period of four weeks. The elections were held based on the existing electoral law (majoritarian first-past-the-post) as suggested reforms were not adopted in time. Because of strong clan and family ties, these elections focused on familial and political loyalties rather than specific candidate platforms or local development priorities. Of note, these were Lebanon's first local elections since 2004. During the elections, observers reported several violations, mainly vote buying, but stressed that the overall process was calm and well organized. However, the city of Saida in south Lebanon witnessed fierce elections-related battles and 18 people were killed in a total of nine violent incidents. The results varied between regions, but overall elections were dominated either by March 14 or March 8 members and left little room for independent candidates.

### The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL)

“The Truth” was the rallying cry for hundreds of thousands of Lebanese who took to the streets of Beirut in 2005 demanding to know who was behind the assassination of then Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Their movement helped reshape Lebanese politics; however, the quest to uncover and prosecute Hariri's killers is now threatening to tear the country apart. Since July 2010, Lebanon has been heading toward a major political crisis, as the U.N.-backed Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) appears to be planning to indict several Hezbollah members in the murder of Hariri. The alleged involvement of Hezbollah members in the assassination could lead to a perilous situation for the country. Hezbollah has stated that it will not hand over any suspects and it likely would be very problematic for the Lebanese government to make arrests of Hezbollah members. If Hezbollah members are accused, many fear it could lead to violence between the Shiite group and Hariri's mainly Sunni allies. Some Lebanese are now saying that the investigation may not be worth the chaos its findings could create; however, Hariri and his supporters insist that the Tribunal must go forward. The disputes are intensifying a long-running power struggle between Hariri's supporters and Hezbollah that exploded into street violence in Beirut in May 2008. Fear of chaos stemming from indictments is so strong in the region that in July 2010 the leaders of Syria and Saudi Arabia – once bitter rivals – traveled to Lebanon together in an unprecedented show of cooperation to try to calm tempers and maintain peace.

In September 2010, Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah made a statement that he will not respond to requests from the STL's Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare. Nasrallah



said that he does not recognize the legitimacy of the STL, adding that he would cooperate with the Lebanese judiciary instead. Also in September, Hezbollah handed over a packet of evidence allegedly implicating Israel in the Hariri killing, but Bellemare said that the information was “incomplete” and demanded that Hezbollah hand over all information relevant to the investigation.

During the month of November 2010, the United States announced that it will transfer an additional \$10 million to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. This contribution brings total U.S. funding for the Tribunal to \$30 million since its inception. According to the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, the establishment of the Tribunal was a clear signal that Lebanon's sovereignty is non-negotiable. Britain, France, Germany, and Canada have also made significant contributions to funding the Tribunal.

The Hezbollah-led opposition stepped up its rhetoric against the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in December 2010, reiterating that a settlement to the political crisis should precede the indictments. Sheikh Naim Qassem, Deputy Secretary General of Hezbollah, stated his belief that the STL was “dedicated to eliminate Hezbollah.” Also in December, Sunni leaders from across Lebanon's political spectrum urged their supporters to stand firm against Hezbollah, at a time of high tension between the two Muslim communities. A MP loyal to Prime Minister Saad Hariri and a radical Salafist leader jointly accused the Lebanese Army of serving as cover for Hezbollah, urging a gathering of 1,500 to reject an alleged military crackdown on their community. On December 1, the U.S.-based Search for International Terrorist Entities (SITE) Intelligence Group reported that another movement linked to Al Qaida had urged Sunnis in Lebanon to rise up against both the Army and Hezbollah. Despite the fact that Hezbollah has warned that a STL accusation would damage stability in Lebanon, Hariri and his allies have vowed to see the investigation through. The head of the Lebanese Army General Jean Qahwaji also expressed concern over possible unrest once the Tribunal releases its indictments.

In January 2011, the STL Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare announced that he had submitted a confidential indictment into the assassination of Hariri. Following his announcement, crowds affiliated with the Hezbollah-led March 8 coalition gathered in several streets of Beirut (predominantly in Hezbollah- and Amal-controlled neighborhoods) early in the morning, but started dissipating a few hours later. Lebanese troops deployed in the streets to prevent unrest. Following this deployment, schools shut down in several Beirut neighborhoods for fear of violence. The situation was back to normal the following day. The indictment was sealed and its contents will likely not become public for months.

#### **The CBC Report on the Hariri Assassination**

During the month of November 2010, the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. (CBC) produced a report after months of investigation that relied on many interviews. The CBC report uncovered an internal U.N. document indicating that the head of the Lebanese police intelligence bureau, Colonel Wissam al-Hasan, was considered by some U.N. investigators as a “potential suspect,” pointing out that Hasan oversaw security for Hariri at the time of the murder but had taken the day off to take an examination at a university. *The Washington Post* said a confidential internal U.N. memo, dated March 10, 2008, prepared for the commission's top investigator, Garry Loeppky, said Hasan's alibi is “weak and inconsistent” and recommended that he be

“investigated quietly” to determine whether he played a role in Hariri's killing. The CBC report, however, states that the commission's management “ignored the recommendation” to investigate Hasan and that Hasan declined a request to speak with the CBC. It said those suspicions laid out in an extensive internal memo were not pursued for diplomatic reasons.

According to the CBC report, a Lebanese police officer and U.N. investigators uncovered extensive circumstantial evidence implicating Hezbollah in the February 2005 assassination of Hariri. The U.N. International Independent Investigation Commission's findings are based on an elaborate examination of Lebanese phone records that suggest Hezbollah officials communicated with the owners of cell phones allegedly used to coordinate the detonation that killed Hariri and 22 others as they traveled through downtown Beirut in an armed convoy, according to Lebanese and U.N. phone analysis obtained by CBC and shared with *The Washington Post*. The report stated that the revelations are likely to add to speculation that the U.N. prosecutor plans to indict members of Hezbollah.

*The Washington Post* said the CBC report also faults the U.N. for misplacing a vital piece of evidence – a complex analysis of Lebanese phone records that allegedly pinpointed the phones used by Hariri's killers – in the early months of the investigation. It also criticizes the U.N. commission for failing to provide sufficient security for a Lebanese intelligence officer, Colonel Wissam Eid, who was killed after helping the U.N. unravel the crime mystery. The report stated that Eid, a former student of computer engineering, had conducted a review and mapping of the call records of all cell phones that had been used in the vicinity of the Hotel St. George, where Hariri's convoy was bombed. He quickly established a network of “red” phones that had been used by the hit squad. He then established links with other small phone networks he suspected of being involved in planning the operation. He traced all the networks back to a landline at Hezbollah's Great Prophet Hospital in South Beirut and a handful of government-issued cell phones set aside for Hezbollah. “The Eid report was entered into the U.N.'s database by someone who either didn't understand it or didn't care enough to bring it forward. It disappeared,” CBC reported. It would be another year and a half before a team of British investigators, working for the U.N., discovered Eid's paper and contacted him, *The Washington Post* wrote. Eight days later, Eid was killed in a car bomb.

## **Government Resignation**

During the last three months of 2010, Lebanon's divided cabinet barely met and kept adjourning discussions on important issues before they could be resolved. Many key decisions remained unmade, and the government was in practice largely shut down. For example, the head of general security retired in December 2010, and to date a nominee for his replacement has not been announced. Developers have noted that construction projects, which had turned Lebanon into one big construction site following the end of the civil war in 1990, have also slowed recently. Financial institutions such as the ratings agency Standard & Poor's have warned that a slowdown in promised structural reforms could impact the previously high economic growth of the post-war years.

The situation deteriorated even further when the Hariri government collapsed after all of the March 8 coalition ministers as well as State Minister Adnan Sayyed Hussein, who had been named by President Michel Suleiman, announced their resignations on January 12, 2011. The opposition lamented that the Saudi-Syrian initiative “has reached a dead end due to U.S. pressures and the other camp's compliance with these pressures,” referring to the March 14-led government. The ministers announced their resignation on television just as Hariri was meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington to discuss the crisis. Less than two weeks later, the March 8 coalition and its newly acquired allies, including Druze leader Walid Jumblatt (since 2005, a key March 14 coalition member, who later positioned himself between March 14 and March 8 forces) managed to get the highest number of legislators’ votes and thus nominated billionaire businessman Najib Mikati as the next prime minister, replacing Saad Hariri. Following Mikati’s nomination, demonstrators gathered to denounce Mikati’s nomination and voice support for Saad Hariri. Violent protests broke out across Lebanon led by March 14 supporters. The incidents of violence came as part of a "Day of Rage" led by Hariri supporters in Tripoli, the Beqaa, Saida, and some Beirut neighborhoods and included the blocking of roads with burning tires and the destruction of a vehicle belonging to a journalist.

The nomination of Mikati split the country's Sunni Muslim community, who for years had stood seemingly united in a deeply divided country. In the Sunni bastion of Tripoli, a rift has emerged in a community that once rallied behind U.S. - and Saudi-backed Saad Hariri. For many political experts, the collapse of the Hariri government signaled that the Syrian regime is back to controlling Lebanese politics and that Lebanon has returned to the pre-2005 era when Damascus reigned supreme power over Beirut. However, more than two months after his nomination, Mikati has still been unable to form a one-sided government. Despite the fact that the March 14 alliance chose not to join the new government, and will instead serve as the new opposition, Mikati is still facing the difficult task of meeting the demands of the March 8 forces that brought him to power. Mikati is also unable to garner regional and international support to form his government due to lack of agreement between the different regional and international forces (namely Syria, Saudi Arabia and Iran), especially as the region is undergoing major changes and reforms that are influencing key political decisions in Lebanon.

### **Lebanese-Israeli Tensions**

Almost five years after the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, tensions remain high in south Lebanon. Early in 2010, Israel launched a diplomatic campaign aimed at persuading countries providing military assistance to Lebanon that any equipment or technology delivered to the Lebanese Government is likely to fall into Hezbollah’s hands. In August 2010, Lebanese and Israeli troops traded fire along the tense border near the southern village of Adaysseh in the fiercest clashes since July 2006. Two Lebanese Army soldiers, a journalist, and a senior Israeli officer were killed. Each side blamed the other for causing the fight. This border clash had a different dimension than previous incidents, as it took place between the Lebanese and Israeli armies without Hezbollah’s intervention. In light of the incident, some Israeli officials called on Washington to stop sending money to the Lebanese Army. A few days after this request, the U.S. Congress froze \$100 million in aid to the Lebanese Army over concerns that it could be used against Israel. However, the following month, the U.S.

administration asked lawmakers to restore the funding. According to the U.S. administration, continued support to the Lebanese Army is in the interest of U.S. national security and Middle East stability.

In November 2010, the Lebanese newspaper *As Safir* reported that Israel had allegedly penetrated Hezbollah's cell phone network. The article said that the Lebanese Army intelligence bureau, a number of employees at the Ministry of Telecommunications as well as members of Hezbollah's security service have formed a partnership that was able to identify Israel's techniques and advanced software through several tests. These tests have shown Israel's penetration of telephone lines belonging to Hezbollah members. Early in 2011, the Lebanese Foreign Minister announced that it had identified 7,000 Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty in 2010. In mid-December, the Lebanese Army dismantled what it said were Israeli espionage devices placed on two of the country's highest mountaintops. This system enabled Israel to communicate between wireless transmission stations in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. The Israeli Army detonated two spy devices in southern Lebanon after Hezbollah uncovered them near the coastal city of Tyre. Hezbollah hailed the discovery as another achievement of its counter-espionage teams. A few days later, Lebanon filed a complaint with the U.N. Security Council over the discovered Israeli espionage devices. Since then, Lebanese Army intelligence has reportedly dismantled additional espionage devices and arrested three suspected spies. The Army reportedly dismantled the equipment in cooperation with Hezbollah. In March 2011, the Army announced that it had dismantled an Israeli surveillance system hidden in a camouflaged rock in the southern town of Shamaa.

In March 2011, a map of alleged Hezbollah installations was provided to *The Washington Post* by Israeli military officials. The map identifies more than 550 underground bunkers, 300 surveillance sites and 100 other facilities in southern Lebanon. "In releasing the map, the Israeli military appeared to be trying to preempt international criticism of any future offensive against the alleged sites, many of which are located in residential villages alongside hospitals, schools and even civilian homes," *The Post* said. According to Israeli military officials, the majority of arms that Hezbollah has stashed in the South since the 2006 war with Israel were made or supplied by Syria, including short-range Scud missiles as well as 302mm rockets that have the capacity to reach Tel Aviv. The Israeli officials said that most of Hezbollah's weapons are covertly transported by truck from depots near Damascus to storage facilities in southern Lebanon.

Since April 2009, the Lebanese Police Intelligence Bureau has arrested more than 100 people on suspicion of spying for Israel. Arrests include members of the security forces and telecommunications employees, including a retired brigadier general who is a senior member of the Free Patriotic Movement (member of the pro-Syrian forces). Six men have been sentenced to death on spying charges since 2009, including one found guilty of aiding Israel during its devastating 2006 war with Hezbollah. Convicted spies face life in prison or the death penalty if found guilty of contributing to Lebanese loss of life.

## Other Security Incidents

The security situation remained unstable inside Palestinian refugee camps, where there is continuous infighting between Palestinian factions and extremist and Sunni fundamentalist groups with reported ties to Al Qaida. The Lebanese Army has a policy of not entering the Palestinian camps, leaving security in the hands of internal Palestinian forces. A major step towards improving relationships between Lebanese and Palestinian populations took place in August 2010, when the Lebanese Parliament adopted a law granting full employment rights to the roughly 400,000 Palestinian refugees living in the country. The Parliament approved a bill lifting the previous restrictions on employment for Palestinian refugees, who now have the right to work in any field open to foreigners with benefits including social security from their own dedicated fund. However, many fear that this move might open the door for Palestinian naturalization in Lebanon, which could throw off Lebanon's delicate confessional balance.

In August 2010, the most serious internal clashes between Sunnis and Shiites since May 2008 occurred. Three people were killed and several others wounded in fierce armed clashes between members of Hezbollah and supporters of the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (Al-Ahbash) in the Beirut neighborhood of Burj Abi Haidar. Similar to Hezbollah, Al-Ahbash is also pro-Syrian and describes itself as a charitable organization promoting Islamic culture. Following this clash, the Lebanese Army command has begun implementing a security and military plan aimed at remapping its distribution in Beirut. In November 2010, clashes between the Amal Movement and supporters of the Al-Ahbash party broke out in the Barbour area of Beirut. The Army intervened and managed to contain the situation.

In November 2010, four residents of Wadi Khaled in north Lebanon were killed after a clash with guards along the Lebanon-Syria border. To express their anger over the deaths of the young men, angry residents torched offices used previously by the General Security Department. They also hurled stones at the vehicles of the Common Border Force, whose members responded by opening fire on the protesters, wounding six people. On Lebanon's Independence Day, November 22, a Lebanese military intelligence operative was killed in a drive-by shooting near the Syrian border in the Beqaa valley.

On March 23, 2011, seven Estonian tourists cycling in the eastern Beqaa Valley were kidnapped by armed men. They had crossed legally into Lebanon from Syria and were intercepted by three vehicles in the industrial part of the city of Zahle. This kidnapping brought back fears about the resumption of abductions that were common during the 1975-1990 Lebanese Civil War. So far, eleven suspects have been arrested but claim that they are unaware of the whereabouts of the Estonian cyclists. Meanwhile, an obscure group has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of the seven Estonians by sending an email to a local website along with copies of the ID cards of three of those abducted. The group, Haket El Nahda Wal Islah (the Movement for Renewal and Reform) said it would make its demands known at a later time. A few days later, the same group asked for a ransom to set the men free, however, the message did not specify the ransom amount. The message also stated that the tourists were in good condition. The demand was made through an email sent to a local website. As of the date of this report, the cyclists have not been found.

Also in March 2011, a bomb exploded at a church in the eastern town of Zahle, causing severe damage but injuring no one -- an act denounced by politicians and religious leaders as an attack on Lebanon's stability. The blast wrought extensive damage to the church, destroying windows and benches and blowing out a side door. The explosion was powerful enough to damage seven cars parked nearby.

Also in March, a group of angry Lebanese youth threw stones and bottles at a group from the U.S. Embassy visiting the southern port city of Saida. A spokesman for the Embassy confirmed that there had been an incident. Lebanese security forces accompanying the U.S. group intervened, but the youth continued to throw stones, breaking the windows of some of the cars in the convoy. The Army then arrived and arrested three of the attackers. Two days later, the U.S. State Department sent out an updated travel warning for Lebanon urging U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to Lebanon due to safety and security concerns. The State Department also cautioned U.S. citizens about kidnappings. In the same week, other U.S. Embassy officials visiting Saida were attacked by residents accusing them of being "Israeli conspirators." Around 60 supporters of leftist groups gathered outside a government office and pelted the Embassy convoy with stones as it drove by, shouting "Americans, Israeli conspirators, in our government offices." A U.S. Embassy official confirmed that there had been an incident in Saida but did not provide details. No one was injured.

### **Anti-Sectarian Movement**

The beginning of 2011 has been characterized by a popular movement asking for the abolishment of sectarianism. Although there were some previous efforts by civil society calling for an end to the sectarian system, these past efforts had minimal success and did not receive significant attention. In February 2011, the first anti-sectarian march took place, with hundreds of people gathering to demand an end to Lebanon's confessional system, mobilized by a call posted on Facebook. The Facebook group of this movement has since expanded to include more than 15,000 members. Lebanon's system of government is rooted in a power-sharing agreement based along confessional lines that was adopted after the country won its independence from France in 1943. The agreement aims at maintaining a balance between the 18 religious sects and calls for the president to be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister to be a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of parliament a Shiite Muslim. Other government jobs are also allocated according to religious affiliation. The power-sharing arrangement has been blamed for many of the country's problems over the years, including corruption, and above all the devastating Civil War (1975-1990) and its subsequent crises.

One week after the first anti-sectarian march in February 2011, a second march took place, and thousands of protesters in Beirut demanded an end to the country's confessional system. Demands include the strengthening of state institutions and citizenship as well as the transformation of the country into a civil, secular state. Activists are also calling for a modern electoral law, not based on sectarian appointments, an independent judiciary, the implementation of anti-corruption legislation, and the improvement of the socio-economic situation. These demonstrations were inspired in part by the success of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt that took place in early 2011. After less than a month, a third demonstration took

place in Beirut; between 6,000 and 7,000 people took part in this protest. During the month of March 2011, similar demonstrations also took place in the cities of Byblos, Tripoli and Saida. However, the demonstration in Saida witnessed some violence, given tensions between rival factions that flared up due to the presence of some politicians, and several journalists were attacked. The organizers have been blamed by some for not monitoring the events or ensuring unity between the various participating factions.

### **Other Political Updates**

Historical tensions between Hezbollah and the U.S. government continued to rise in June 2010, when a Hezbollah Member of Parliament made a statement that the party was considering suing the U.S. government for intervening in Lebanon. He also stated that the party was “mulling filing a lawsuit against anyone who received money from the U.S. Administration to distort Hezbollah’s image.” He noted that part of the money had been paid through USAID and the Middle East Partnership Initiative. The U.S. Embassy in Lebanon replied by stating that the United States is committed to supporting Lebanon, its government, and its people through various types of support. The Embassy defended its programs by stressing the fact that funds are provided transparently and that Washington is committed to continuing this support.

In September 2010, the new U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, Maura Connelly, presented her diplomatic credentials to President Michel Suleiman. Connelly arrived in Beirut following unanimous confirmation of her appointment by the U.S. Senate.

In October 2010, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad arrived in Beirut for an official visit that lasted two days. During his stay, the Iranian president received a warm welcome, mainly from Hezbollah supporters, in Beirut and in south Lebanon (very close to the border with Israel). His official two-day trip sparked criticism at the time among Lebanon's pro-Western parliamentary majority, who saw it as a move to portray Lebanon as “an Iranian base on the Mediterranean.” The United States and Israel, which have sought to isolate Iran in response to its nuclear program, also expressed concerns. The president's trip came at a sensitive time in politically turbulent Lebanon. The Iranian leader's visit to Lebanon sent a message that Tehran is a key player in the region and cannot be isolated.

A few days after Ahmadinejad’s visit to Lebanon, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman arrived in Lebanon on a sudden visit. Feltman said that he delivered a message from U.S. President Barack Obama that reaffirmed the steadfast support of the United States to the development of a sovereign, independent Lebanon with strong and effective state institutions. U.S. officials in Washington said the visit of Feltman to Lebanon was a response to the visit of the Iranian President. The officials confirmed that Feltman's visit was intended to reiterate Washington's position on the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and its support for the work of the Court.

On February 14, 2011, hundreds of thousands of March 14 supporters gathered at Beirut's Martyrs’ Square to commemorate the sixth anniversary of Rafiq Hariri’s assassination. The rally also aimed at sending a message to the Hezbollah-led alliance about the March 14 coalition’s rejection of the party's weapons. The anniversary came

amidst a drawn out political crisis that saw Hezbollah and its allies bring down Saad Hariri's unity government in January, in an escalation of the long-running feud between the two sides over the U.N.-backed Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

Also in February, Pope Benedict XVI accepted Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir's resignation. The following month, Archbishop of Jbeil Beshara al-Rahi was elected the 77th Patriarch of Antioch for the Maronites. Al-Rahi was elected after winning more than two thirds of the votes of 38 bishops. He is known to be a moderate with good relations with all Lebanese factions.

During February 2011, the U.S. Treasury Department accused the Lebanese-Canadian Bank (LCB) of laundering hundreds of millions of dollars on behalf of a drug lord with alleged ties to Hezbollah. The bank denied the charges. However, the following month, due to a lot of U.S. pressure, LCB merged with another local bank.

### **Political Changes in the Arab World**

Since December 2010, the Arab world has been witnessing drastic political changes that are already affecting Lebanon, illustrated in part by the country's current inability to form a new government. Given the historical interference of regional actors in Lebanon's internal affairs, and ongoing connections to the country through their ties and patronage to Lebanese political parties, very often political decisions in Lebanon are dependent at least in part on external parties. The current unrest in the region is largely seen as delaying the formation of the Lebanese government, as external actors are waiting to see how events unfold in the region before committing to political decisions in Lebanon. The future effects on Lebanon remain unknown and will depend on regional developments and the directions taken by various countries.

To date, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and Syria are the primary countries where changes are taking place. Syria remains the biggest external player in Lebanon's politics, and any substantial change in Syria will surely affect Lebanon significantly. In March 2011, a number of demonstrations against the Syrian regime took place across the country, and crackdowns by security forces left hundreds dead. Although no major changes have taken place to date, the events in Syria are still signs that the regime may no longer be as powerful as it used to be and may need to implement some reforms. It remains unclear how these changes may affect Lebanon.



## SECTION III. PROGRAM IMPACT BY INTERMEDIATE RESULT

### Youth Successfully Influence Decision Makers

#### Background and Approach

Lebanese youth are typically excluded from decision-making processes at both the national and local levels. While the central government is far removed from the daily concerns and challenges facing most youth and their communities, municipal governments tend to suffer from inadequate human and financial resources, organizational mismanagement, and unfamiliarity with participatory processes. Instead of seeking to maintain public support by providing constituent services or accessibility, elected officials in Lebanon tend to rely on a system of patronage and sectarian loyalties to sustain their power. While thus facing limited opportunities to engage with their political leaders, young people also lack the motivation and knowledge to seek to create new ones. Raised in a culture of civic disengagement, with community leaders more frequently motivated by self-interest than the common good, young people tend to be alienated and disinterested. The common belief that they are powerless to influence the government decisions that shape their lives leaves them vulnerable to manipulation by political parties, who hold out the possibility of access to resources or power.

LCSI activities aim to redress this situation by fostering youth activism, advocacy, and citizen-government interactions, primarily by educating young people about citizenship and equipping them with the tools and skills to take collective action and advocate their needs to decision makers. Civic education helps young people understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens and the ways in which they can influence decision makers and empowers them to assume leadership roles in their communities. Activities like local advocacy campaigns, meetings with municipal officials, and elections-related programming help young people understand different ways they can influence their leaders. By fostering a new sense of civic responsibility and a conviction that their voices can make a difference, LCSI activities help youth become active citizens capable of asserting their rights, holding their leaders accountable, and working within the political system to shape their own futures.

#### Impact Examples

With the introduction of the advocacy component under LCSI, OTI supported several campaigns aimed at reforming existing laws or introducing new policies. OTI partner Maharat Foundation succeeded in bringing consensus and attention to media law reforms at a time when the country was divided over the issue of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), leaving little room for other debates. The media-focused NGO developed a new media law proposal to replace the current law, which limits and impedes freedom of expression. The proposed law is the result of months of discussions and meetings between Maharat and major decision makers, journalists, media players and NGOs. The process culminated in the launching of a comprehensive draft law that



Press conference organized by Maharat in Beirut to announce the new draft media law.

introduces major modifications to the existing law, such as eliminating restrictions on the number of licenses for news media and jailing penalties for journalists for defamation. Maharat worked closely with Member of Parliament Ghassan Moukhaiber, setting an example of cooperation between legislators and civil society actors that can be replicated in future advocacy initiatives. Moukhaiber registered the draft law on Parliament's discussion agenda and participated in the conference that the NGO organized to announce its draft law. The proposed law has received unanimous endorsement from both independent and affiliated media stakeholders. It also succeeded in mobilizing journalists across Lebanon, who were greatly involved in the reform process. The Minister of Information, Tarek Mitri, also praised Maharat's efforts and announced the Ministry's plan of building upon these efforts to further develop a new media law. The new media law will be on the agenda of discussion of the Parliament once the government is formed.

Another example of youth influencing decision makers and effecting change is the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU). They successfully advocated for the adoption of decrees related to law 220/2000, which supports basic rights for persons with disabilities. With OTI support, LPHU built three youth taskforces in the regions (Baalbeck, Mashghara and Tyre) and trained them on advocacy and lobbying techniques. Following the trainings, youth started local campaigns under the umbrella



Youth fill out LPHU questionnaire on accessibility.

of LPHU's national initiative. In Baalbeck, youth mapped public buildings in the region and found out that none were accessible to the disabled. They also drew up a petition that was signed by community members. The youth also met with local stakeholders and sought their support. In the southern city of Tyre, youth contacted local non governmental organizations and shared law 220 and its decrees. The taskforces' efforts bore fruits as a binding resolution was recently issued by the Higher Council of Urban Planning stating that all new public buildings must be accessible to the disabled. Moreover, the dean of the faculty of architecture at the Lebanese University has agreed to include accessibility in the curriculum, while APAVE (a consultancy firm in building and civil works) is working on producing a guide for accessibility criteria.

LCSI activities also helped youth across Lebanon model good citizen behavior, which encouraged local decision makers to support their initiatives and in some instances replicate them. In an attempt to develop a model working relationship with municipal councils, youth from Sanabel Al Ataa in northern Beqaa organized cleaning campaigns and garbage bins distribution as part of their community project in two villages of the region: Nabha and Karha. The campaigns were held in direct coordination with the respective municipalities. The mayor of Karha accompanied the youth during their campaign while three municipal members and a *mokhtar* took part in the campaign in Nabha. Further demonstrating the collaboration with local government, the vehicles used in the campaign belonged to the municipality of Nabha. With the little resources they had, youth limited their garbage bins distribution to the village's main street. Local community members praised this modest initiative and urged the municipality to expand the bins distribution to other neighborhoods at

its own expenses. The municipality of Nabha responded to the community's demand and distributed additional bins throughout the entire village.

A similar campaign was held in northern Beqaa, where youth from the Yammuni Cultural Club (YCC) partnered with municipalities to hold activism days in four villages including Yammuni, Taraiya, Saaide and Inata. In Inata and Saaide, the municipality offered the youth its premises to conduct an interactive workshop on conflict resolution and citizenship. Following the trainings, youth groups initiated a garbage bin distribution in their respective villages. The mayors of Inata and Saaide accompanied the youth throughout the campaign, demonstrating that decision makers should not only work for youth but with them. The mayors expressed their support for the youth initiatives and their willingness to assist the youth to achieve higher levels of participation in local governance. The garbage bin distribution was combined with a community clean-up campaign and mural painting, providing the NGO with increased visibility and helping youth reach out to other community members.



Youth install a garbage bin in their village.

On a nation-wide level, the waste management campaign launched by the Beirut-based NGO IndyAct triggered multiple responses from municipalities. The municipality of Tripoli endorsed a five-year zero-waste plan and asked local civil society organizations to take part in the plan's implementation. IndyAct's campaign aimed at advocating for a national zero waste policy and provided a platform for interaction between youth and national and local decision makers through a conference attended by one minister of state, several members of Parliament from the Environmental Committee, municipal representatives, and many NGOs and OTI partners. The public was mobilized to support the campaign through media reports and round table discussions in the toured communities. A total of 26 national, regional, and international media outlets highlighted youth efforts across the country and the Lebanese President praised the youths' efforts in this initiative.

In the North, the local government responded to community initiatives that youth initiated by allocating resources to complete some of these projects. After attending workshops on municipal governance, advocacy, citizenship and conflict resolution, youth from OTI partner Mosawat implemented community projects in five villages in the region. The projects were aimed at beautifying the villages and sensitizing youth and community members to communal work. Upon the completion of the projects, residents had to select the best community project during a mock election. These projects triggered responses from local citizens and decision makers as 800 people voted for the best project and demonstrated interest in youth initiatives. In addition and in response to the youths' initiatives in Beddaoui, the mayor of the village provided funds to the youth group to rehabilitate some walls and streets in the village. The mayor of Minieh was also inspired by the community project in his village and allocated a budget to restore the village's cemetery walls.

In the northern city of Akkar, youth from NOTA International were also offered financial support from municipalities in the region where youth groups are implementing various community projects. In Hissa, one of the targeted villages where NOTA have planned to have a training centre, the municipality offered the organization a floor in what used to be a public school building. NOTA is currently working on rehabilitating the newly acquired premises. The new facility will include a youth center and an administrative office and will be unique in the area. This initiative demonstrates the increased credibility of NOTA as a civil society actor and its success in engaging youth in constructive community work.

OTI partners continued to gain respect and credibility locally as their participation in local decision making was sought by local government. For example, the head of the youth committee of the Beirut municipality asked Beirut-based NGO Nahnou's project manager to become a member of the municipality's environmental committee. Nahnou had previously interacted with the municipality on many occasions while working on an advocacy campaign aimed at opening the Horsh Beirut park to the public – one of the rare public spaces in Lebanon.

## **CSOs Form Linkages that Lay the Groundwork for Collective Action**

### **Background and Approach**

One of the key challenges to promoting reform in Lebanon is the fractious nature of civil society. Although there is a wide range of NGOs varying in size and capacity, Lebanese civil society is itself divided along many lines. Many organizations work only on specific issues or with specific communities; others are charitable institutions affiliated with religious groups or political parties whose services are available only to selected beneficiaries. While there is a limited pool of independent NGOs that have sought to tackle issues cutting across sectarian and political loyalties, they too have been fragmented in terms of their priorities, organization, and effort. Hampered by unhealthy competition, shifting mandates based on donor priorities, and undemocratic governance structures, these organizations have traditionally been unable to come together to build a robust independent civil society or to effect institutional change. The result has been the reduced effectiveness of individual NGOs and limited opportunities to harness their collective power in pursuit of shared goals.

LCSI actively promotes opportunities for collective civil society action by facilitating new linkages and relationships between groups, employing both direct and indirect strategies. Representatives of civil society organizations are regularly brought together for training and events, enhancing their internal capacities while providing them with opportunities to interact, establish relationships, and share ideas. LCSI also works to ease the logistics of collaboration and information sharing by providing direct support from the field team, making it easier and more beneficial for NGOs to cooperate and collaborate. Most directly, a number of key OTI activities include the active involvement of multiple partners, bringing them together to team up on advocacy campaigns and other initiatives. Through these efforts, collaboration is made easier and more familiar. Organizations now have a greater chance to learn from one another, to benefit from one another's experience and ideas, and to harness their collective potential to advocate effectively for change in Lebanon.

## Impact Examples

OTI partners have collaborated to magnify outreach and impact among youth and local communities by coordinating human capital, financial resources, and outreach messages. On Independence Day, November 22, five NGOs supported by OTI coordinated events in several villages across Lebanon. In Baalbeck, youth from the Lebanese Organization for Studies & Training (LOST), the Lebanese Association for Students (LAS) and the Lebanese Youth Network (LYN) organized an independence fair dedicated to the children of Lebanese Army soldiers killed in combat. The fair included several sports activities organized by LYN youth and a musical performance by LAS youth. More than 180 youth took part in the activities and interacted with their peers, who were eager to participate.



Youth from LAS perform as part of Independence Day event in Baalbeck.

North partners NOTA and Mosawat each organized races to commemorate Independence Day, highlighting the benefits and significance of active youth participation in all aspects of society, including sports. Supported by OTI, these two races were held separately, but all of the runners wore the same t-shirts as a symbol of unity. Around 1500 youth runners lined up to participate in the two races to commemorate Independence Day. Among the runners was the winner of the Beirut marathon wheelchair race, two members of parliament and several mayors, who came to encourage the youths' initiative.



Youth winners in Independence Day marathon in north Lebanon.

Another example of civil society working together towards one cause is the campaign led by Beirut-based partner IndyAct, who succeeded in building a national coalition of more than 90 NGOs, including 34 OTI partners, to advocate for zero waste policy and prevent trash incineration. IndyAct organized 12 stops throughout the regions and OTI partners assisted the organization through initiatives in their local communities. IndyAct's campaign included a touring exhibition that was hosted by OTI partners Noqta Fasleh, Youth Network for Civic Activism (YNCA), Association of Working Women (AWW), Lebanese Association for Students (LAS), Ataouna, NOTA, and Chmistar Forum in the regions. Other partners demonstrated support for the cause by organizing activities: Lebanese Association for Local Economic Development (LALED) and We Love Tripoli toured the cities of Tripoli and Mina by bike and encouraged pedestrians to jog and walk along with active youth; the Lebanese Association for Development and Communication (LADC), Toura Youth Club, and YNCA held lectures on environmental challenges and the necessity to reduce waste; and Yammuni Cultural Club and Shajar w Bashar cleaned the public gardens in their respective villages.

On the national day of action for zero waste, organized by Indy Act, more than 100 activities were implemented simultaneously, including activities led by OTI partners Blue Mission, Sama for Development, We Love Tripoli, Women Welfare Association

(WWA), Blue Mission, LAS, LOST, LYN, and YNCA. This coordination piloted a new model of knowledge sharing between an experienced organization and less sophisticated groups from the regions and ensured capacity building for the local groups. The grant provided many local groups, including several OTI partners, with the opportunity to establish more credibility in their villages by raising awareness and advocating for change on a topic of interest to the community.



Youth from Sama demonstrate at Saida dump as part of IndyAct campaign.

This model of collaboration was also used by youth from the well-established NGO the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU). Along with 12 other local NGOs, LCSI partners LAS, Hermel Association for Development (HAD), Vision for Rehabilitation and Care, SADA, AWW, YNCA, Toura Youth Club, Noqta Fasleh, and Sama collaborated with LPHU in its advocacy campaign aimed at ensuring access for the disabled to public spaces, schools and sidewalks in Lebanon. LPHU established regional taskforces to implement activities at the community level. Youth from the taskforces were trained on advocacy and lobbying techniques and helped LPHU fill out surveys and gather community signatures that were presented to the Minister of Interior in preparation for LPHU's legal memorandum. The local groups gave legitimacy to the campaign and activated the issue at the local level. The taskforces' efforts, under the umbrella of LPHU's campaign, bore fruits, as a binding resolution was issued by the Higher Council of Urban Planning stating that all new public buildings must be handicapped accessible.

OTI partners engaged in another level of collaboration to facilitate awareness-raising on local issues through theater shows, musicals and plays to bring youth together around common themes including citizenship, local governance, and youth activism. OTI partners Ribat, Mosawat, We Love Tripoli, and NOTA collaborated with Tripoli-based NGO Cross Arts and enabled 1000 youth from the North to learn about citizenship through theatre and music performances. These same NGOs hosted Cross Arts' play on the theme of Lebanese independence that was written and performed by youth amateur artists. Beqaa partners LOST, LYN, and HAD also collaborated with LAS to host its play in the region and engage 1500 youth in interactive learning about good governance and citizenship through a series of performances.

Collaboration between partners working in the same region extended to include the implementation of joint community projects, as was the case with North partners NOTA and YMCA. Youth from the two organizations implemented a joint community project in Tel Bireh in Akkar and rehabilitated the village's public school. This effort demonstrated youths' capacity to undertake initiatives to enhance the conditions of the local community -- tasks that usually fall under the responsibility of municipalities but are often neglected. Youth decided on this project following a needs assessment they conducted in the village. YMCA also coordinated with NOTA to invite youth from Tel Bireh to participate in the series of trainings on needs assessment, proposal writing, basic feasibility studies, how to budget for small projects and basic advocacy skills.

## **Creation of Independent Space for Youth Activism Challenges Political Party Dominance**

### **Background and Approach**

Civic life in many Lebanese communities is dominated by entrenched political parties, which employ a combination of patronage, targeted public services, social activities, and sectarian appeals to maintain their strongholds over their communities. There is often little opportunity for individuals or groups to influence local decision-making processes or hold their political leaders accountable. With no tradition of independent civic activism, young people tend to lack the capacity, motivation, and inspiration needed to challenge this status quo; few are exposed to any kind of local independent organization that can help them organize and advocate for change. The result is the persistence of entrenched political parties at the local and national levels, to the detriment of accountability, innovation, and reform.

LCSI activities under this intermediate result are designed to challenge this status quo by creating independent space for civic activism, providing young people with new opportunities to develop the knowledge and tools needed to come together independently of traditional political parties. With a specific focus on communities with a history of single-party domination, civic education activities provide young people with the knowledge needed to understand their rights, responsibilities, and options, while additional programs support youths' own initiatives to organize, advocate, and lead. Because local political parties often possess the only physical space available for communal events and socialization, and provide the bulk of local activities and entertainment (including sports and camps), OTI also supports the establishment of independent youth centers and the provision of new activities combining civic education with "hooks" like sports and internet access to generate greater local youth interest. Through these activities, young people are brought together in their own neutral physical space, where they have the ability to learn about civic activism and develop their own initiatives and strategies to shape their communities.

### **Impact Examples**

LCSI helped renovate and equip youth centers to enable its partners to serve as independent service providers and to give youth a physical space to exercise civic activism. In north Lebanon, NOTA provided 350 youth from 20 villages in the Sahel Akkar region, known for historical conflict between communities, with an independent space for recreation and community projects through two centers in Halba and Haissa. Besides participating in trainings in English, IT, and sweets production, youth modeled citizen behavior by rehabilitating a public school, beautifying border checkpoints, planting trees, and taking part in youth activism camps. The center in Haissa became such an active hub for youth gatherings that the Ministry of Social Affairs donated a whole floor of space in their center to the organization to accommodate new youth.

LCSI helped northern partner Akkar Development Association (ADA) equip its center with an IT room, a lecture hall, and a library, empowering them to serve as one of the region's few independent forums for youth activism. The presence of such a space enabled youth to engage in citizen journalism, civic activism, and recreational

activities and stay away from political discourse. Iman Younis, a 19 year old participant explains: “Youth come from Beit Ayyoub, Fnaideq, Rahbeh, Hraj, Meshmesh, and Beit Younis to attend trainings and activities given at ADA’s center. Without this alternative, they would just sit at home and listen to politics.”

In the Beqaa region, known for its radical political party dominance, poor economy, and conservative society, LCSi promoted an alternative for youth to exercise their rights and express themselves. LOST capitalized on its four centers in Baalbeck, Hermel, Al Ain, and Fakiha to expand into 16 youth clubs in schools and four shadow municipal councils in 16 new villages in North Beqaa. “If there were no center in Faikha, I would probably be sitting in an internet café right now and not know much about the duties and responsibilities of the municipality. This organization enabled youth to establish a working relationship with local authorities through pre- and post-election monitoring, community projects, and advocacy campaigns,” says Iman, 19 years old, from Fakiha. OTI also enabled HAD to expand its physical space to allow more than 60 youth from the conservative area of Hermel to engage in civic activism, conflict resolution initiatives, and pioneer community development projects. HAD helped youth open up two public libraries: one in the public school of Hermel and one at HAD’s center. HAD youth equipped the libraries, which attracted community members and other youth and now offer an apolitical forum to engage with other active youth and learn new skills.

The Lebanese Association for Development and Communication (LADC) in south Lebanon empowered 250 youth from eight villages along the Lebanese-Israeli border to channel their energy into a constructive outlet through first aid training. Coupled with workshops on municipal action, life skills, and leadership, youth demonstrated model citizen behavior and offered a service that is usually provided by the dominant political party. As a result of the trainings, 80 percent of the youth participants qualified for Red Cross certification and youth-municipality relationships were strengthened in most of the villages.

Ghada Barakat, a 20 year old participant in LADC’s first aid trainings and civic activism workshops, shared her experience: “I never thought first aid training can be a bridge to enhanced citizen-municipal interaction. It totally transformed me from an unorganized college student to a dedicated and outspoken volunteer in my village.”



Youth participating in LADC first aid training.

LCSi supported forums for youth to engage proactively with their local decision makers on issues of local development and municipal-level reform. Toura Youth Club started as an informal youth group under OTI partner Blue Mission. The club then established themselves as a separate entity and the only independent youth outlet in the village of Toura and the surrounding area. They offered youth training in IT and English literacy and workshops on municipal roles and responsibility and engaged youth in community projects that revived the village’s heritage and sense of environmental responsibility. Unlike the scouts group in the village, which is politicized and selective in recruiting youth, “Toura Youth Club allowed us to express ourselves freely, empowered us to assess community needs, and get engaged with



local decision makers through two roundtables- an initiative that is highly uncommon in a closed village like ours,” explained Jihan Dhaine, a 20 year old participant. Empowered by the trainings on citizenship and municipal action, youth from Toura invited their local representatives to two roundtables in which they discussed the environmental conditions of the village and means of ensuring that local decision makers remain transparent and are held accountable. Youth also discussed establishing a youth shadow municipality to monitor the municipal agenda.

Lebanese Association for Local Economic Development (LALED) youth from Akkar and Tripoli confronted their local authorities with multiple local economic development initiatives that can be adopted at the municipality level. Using needs assessments, questionnaires, and roundtables, youth met with their local decision makers – many for the first time – and agreed on a plan by which youth can have a larger role in planning, implementing, and evaluating local economic development initiatives in their respective villages. As a result of the LALED initiative, youth in Tel Abbas and Tripoli gained permanent seats on various municipal committees including the sports, social, educational and finance committees. The youths’ roundtable in Tripoli also succeeded in re-opening the local Literature Club, which had been closed for years.

In the Beqaa region, youth from the Yammuni Cultural Club (YCC) also questioned their local decision makers in a town hall meeting at the club’s premises. Marking the third time such an initiative takes place in the closed village of Yammuni, youth called for their local decision makers to be transparent about budget spending, agenda items, and action plans. At the end of the meeting, youth asked for regular meetings with their local representatives to look in depth at the municipal agenda and its implementation. Youth also suggested that the municipal council undergo a training session in strategic management in order to enhance the municipality’s performance. The municipality not only agreed to the youths’ demands, but they also committed to holding meetings with them on a regular basis.

With OTI support, youth gained the skills needed to challenge the status quo and demand change from their local decision makers. In north Lebanon, 50 youth from Al Hadatha Association organized meetings with municipal candidates prior to the municipal elections in May 2010 to discuss their platforms. Months later, youth followed up with the elected municipal actors and asked them about the municipal budget and the transparency of municipal programs. In the village of Jdaidet al



Youth in the North speak out at a meeting with municipal candidates.

Kaiteh, youth planned for a youth shadow municipality through competitive elections among the participant members. Although Jdaidet al Kaiteh’s mayor seemed supportive of the initiative at first, he called for the cancellation of the elections in favor of consensus selection of representatives in the youth shadow municipality. However, youth refused his suggestion and demonstrated their commitment to holding fair and democratic elections.

LCSI also helped its partners to develop and maintain 26 newsletters, 10 blogs, 45 websites, and 49 Facebook groups in order to provide youth with a platform to voice their ideas and concerns. OTI partners Akkar Development Association, Chmistar Forum, SADA and others developed newsletters to describe their activities and to reach out to a larger audience. The Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training (LOST) is using their newsletter to incorporate citizen journalism systematically, solicit public opinion on local issues by community members, and to foster accountability on municipal action. Maharat developed the content of its newsletter to promote its advocacy campaign aimed at reforming the existing Lebanese media law and freedom of expression for journalists and CSOs in Lebanon. Maharat's newsletter contained legal analysis and academic research that compared the existing media law with the suggested new law developed by Maharat and its partners.

LCSI also encouraged its partners to use social media tools to provide additional space for youth to express themselves and spread awareness on selected topics. LCSI partner Youth Network for Civic Activism used Facebook to promote the group's activities, engage the community with online discussion forums, and to solicit feedback on important topics. Youth participants launched an online discussion on corruption and Lebanese civil service practices that drew more than 500 comments from interested community members. Demonstrating the potential reach of Facebook, a Palestinian NGO used some of YNCA's training tools and activities after reading about them on the group's Facebook page.

A number of advocacy partners are using social media tools as part of their campaigns. OTI partner Nahnou used Facebook to advocate for opening up the public park in Horsh Beirut and in rallying support for their cause. Nahnou's Facebook page was a platform for individuals to discuss the pros and cons of making the currently closed public park accessible, with some community members asserting that opening up the park might reduce sectarian tensions in the surrounding neighborhoods. The traffic on Nahnou's Facebook page attracted international media coverage, and the *Los Angeles Times* described Nahnou's initiative and its potential impact of mitigating tensions in the capital. Another LCSI advocacy partner, IndyAct, conducted a nationwide advocacy campaign to call for the first solid waste management legislation in Lebanon. IndyAct used social media tools such as Facebook, blogs, website, Twitter, and Google Maps to coordinate with 50 NGOs (including 34 OTI partners) across the country to host a national tour, conduct awareness campaigns on the environmental hazards of solid waste, protest against the garbage incriminators, and build a critical mass of support through discussion forums and roundtables. During its campaign, more than 4,000 people followed IndyAct's activities on Facebook.

LCSI partners also used innovative approaches to spread awareness through theatre, music, and art. Especially in remote areas where sensitive topics are often not discussed and public opinion is strongly shaped by the dominant political parties, OTI partner National Protestant College (NPC) held live theatre performances to spread awareness on social taboos that promote accepting differences in terms of religion, political views, sexual orientation, gender and other aspects. NPC enabled youth to identify and discuss issues they usually ignore due to fears of being socially or politically stigmatized. Cross Arts, an OTI partner in the North, staged awareness-raising performances using theatre and rap songs to promote tolerance among youth in north Lebanon. The performances highlighted municipal actions before and after the

May 2010 elections and the importance of youth participation in decision making at the local and national levels. Beqaa partner Lebanese Association for Students (LAS) also used theatre plays, written and performed by youth, to discuss youth engagement with local decision makers, corrupt civil service practices in Lebanon and municipal roles and responsibilities. “I used to think that theatre is a waste of time, but now I understand that it is a message-spreading forum about elections, municipalities, community integration, and other themes that we often do not discuss in Baalbeck,” said Maha Rifai, an 18 year old participant in LAS’s theatre performances.



Cross Arts performance in the North.

## Youth Attitudes and Behavior towards Conflict Change Positively

### Background and Approach

Many Lebanese live within largely homogenous confessional communities, concentrated in particular regions of the country, particular villages in a region, and even particular neighborhoods in a city. These confessional communities tend to be socially isolated from one another — particularly outside of Beirut — and lack opportunities for cross-confessional interactions, even when they live within relatively close proximity to one another. They are led by rival political and religious figures, and when latent tensions rise or violence breaks out elsewhere in the country, it is these communities that are the quickest to escalate into fresh fighting. While such conflict is sometimes spontaneous, too often it is orchestrated or fanned by these leaders who, in the pursuit of local or national agendas, take advantage of the passions and fears of local youth to set them against one another.

LCSI activities target the attitudes and assumptions of young people in these tense communities to help them understand the roots of conflict, overcome the divisions separating them from their perceived enemies, and equip them with the knowledge and skills to peacefully resolve future disputes. The program focuses primarily on “hot zones,” those areas of the country where conflict is most likely to break out in response to tension or conflict elsewhere in the country. These areas include the mixed Lebanese-Palestinian “gatherings” surrounding refugee camps across the country, where violence has previously broken out. LCSI partners help young people in these communities develop new tools to deal with the disparate pressures they face and the latent tensions wracking their communities. By changing the attitudes of these vulnerable young people and helping them resist manipulation, these activities help reduce the likelihood of both spontaneous and orchestrated violence in the future.

### Impact Examples

LCSI promoted tolerance and empowered youth with conflict resolution skills that made them less vulnerable to being engaged in violence. Through sports, arts, and recreational activities, youth learned to work together and to put aside their differences in favor of cooperation on common objectives. LCSI partner NOTA trained 350 youth from northern Akkar on conflict resolution and communication and

engaged them in community projects with youth from neighboring communities from different religious and political backgrounds. Of note, youth from NOTA discussed and expressed support for legislation proposed by a Member of Parliament who did not share their religious and political backgrounds – a rare occurrence in this region, where political support is generally based primarily on sectarian identity. Youth participating in NOTA activities are putting aside political and sectarian differences and analyzing policies and decision makers on the basis of merit and not sectarian or political identity. Moreover, while youth in the North were burning tires in a “Day of Rage” to protest the nomination of a new Prime Minister that the region did not fully support, youth from NOTA participated in a friendly football tournament with youth from Sahel Akkar and neighboring areas.

The Lebanese Youth Network (LYN) brought together diverse youth from marginalized villages of north Beqaa in a series of sports tournaments. The sporting events took place without any fights or clashes between players – a very rare occurrence in the area of Baalbeck, where matches between rival teams frequently end in violence. “Youth at LYN compete on sports and not on politics or religion,” said LYN’s coordinator. “It is a great way to break the stereotypes and learn about the other through competitive games that only develop the sportsmanship spirit among youth,” he added. Besides sports including football, judo, basketball, and ping pong, LYN offers youth participants conflict resolution and municipal governance workshops to help them stay away from political conflicts and violence. LYN youth also worked together to launch a regional advocacy initiative aimed at lobbying the municipality to fund and reopen the local football stadium in Baalbeck.



Youth from LAS perform their play that highlights local governance issues.

The Lebanese Association for Students (LAS) trained 80 youth on theatre and music skills and provided youth an outlet for recreation and self-expression in an area that is dominated by conservative political parties. LAS attracted youth from the rival areas of Britel, Chmistar, Tarayya, and Hor Taala, which are known for historical conflicts and violence between feudal families, and promoted cooperation,

tolerance and teamwork among the participants in an interactive manner. “Through trainings on theatre and music, the differences between us get washed away, and we surrender to the theme we are performing, be it a song or a sketch on municipalities,” says Ali Ghosen, a 23 year old participant from Chmistar. “We never faced a single problem between participants as this organization did not allow for political discussions, although it encouraged diversity in opinion,” Ali added.

OTI partners have also worked to enhance relations and reduce tensions between Palestinian and Lebanese communities, particularly in mixed areas surrounding refugee camps. Palestinians in refugee camps face economic marginalization and segregation from mainstream Lebanese society. This situation has led to mistrust and intolerance between Palestinians and Lebanese in areas near the camps. Shajar w Bashar, a local OTI partner located in Saida, brought together more than 200 youth from Lebanese and Palestinian communities in five talent clubs: photography, drawing, theater, journalism, and youth activism to address social issues that all youth

face, such as drugs and environmental degradation. In addition to workshops on conflict resolution and communication, Shajar w Bashar established youth committees in the volatile neighborhoods of Mieh w Mieh and Ain el Heloue, known for their history of armed conflict. Faisal Kaawash, a 19 year old Palestinian youth member in Shajar w Bashar, said, “Lebanese citizens and Palestinian youth from Nadi Al Dobbat and Ismaileyya never spared an instance without fights and conflicts. Shajar



Palestinian and Lebanese youth from Shajar w Bashar participate in training in the South.

w Bashar taught us to live together in harmony and to do activities together. Now, you cannot distinguish who comes from which neighborhood. The good relations created at Shajar w Bashar have even reached our families. Shajar w Bashar is our new home that does not distinguish between us based on our identity.”

In north Lebanon surrounding the Naher Al Bared camp, LCSi partner Mosawat engaged 240 youth from six Lebanese and Palestinian villages in trainings on conflict resolution, advocacy, and municipal governance and implementing a series of small-scale community projects in the six villages. After the projects were completed, youth and community members from the six areas were invited to vote for the best community project that best addressed the village’s needed. One participant said: “it is great to compete on development rather than politics.” With these initiatives, LCSi helped mitigate conflicts and fostered cooperation between communities where there had previously been tensions. This experience also encouraged youth to engage with their communities and to find productive solutions to community problems.

## SECTION IV. BUILDING CAPACITY TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

To maximize the impact of grant activities, the LCSi program is investing in building the capacity of its partners through specialized trainings, mentoring and one-on-one coaching in the areas of project design and management, networking, advocacy media outreach, and social media.

### **Building Capacity to Advocate**

In support of the objectives of the advocacy component, the LCSi advocacy team has developed a number of tools and resources to assess partners' capacity to advocate and to help them develop their skills.

*Advocacy Index.* To quantify the capacity of partners before and after the grant process, and to assess learning during implementation, LCSi developed an Advocacy Index that measures five competency areas: NGO linkages and coalition building, engagement with decision makers, outreach, data research/analysis, and policy development. The Advocacy Index is administered to advocacy grantees before and after each grant to measure the skills and experiences gained throughout grant implementation. The Index also serves as a needs assessment tool that trainers can use to tailor their content and methodology, as well as a management tool to plan desired improvement in grantees' capacity to advocate during the life of the grant.

*After Action Review.* To better capture and analyze lessons learned, LCSi developed the After Action Review. An After Action Review is organized upon the completion of every advocacy grant and brings the grantee, advocacy trainers, and the LCSi advocacy team together for a structured discussion and assessment of the grant approach, project implementation, key successes and lessons learned. This process helps OTI identify challenges and respond to them in future planning with potential grantees.

*Advocacy Boot Camp.* To help share lessons learned and best practices across advocacy partners and more broadly, LCSi created a comprehensive assessment forum that brings together multiple OTI advocacy partners to discuss best practices, lessons learned, useful trainings, and other grant-related details. The Boot Camp fosters learning among partners and LCSi staff, and also helps to identify future areas of capacity building through fine-tuning existing trainings or suggesting new ones.

*Advocacy Trainers Network.* LCSi also launched the Advocacy Trainers Network, a forum that engages leading advocacy trainers to share tools and resources and ensure quality control of OTI advocacy trainings through sharing a unified training agenda as well as content. Youth, trainers, and grantees will benefit from the network as it establishes a common understanding of advocacy, unified terminology, and basic tools for achieving change. The network lays the foundation for NGO collaboration and also provides trainers with learning and professional development opportunities through the introduction of tools and knowledge from international practitioners. It is also an entry point to share the lessons learned collected through the Advocacy Index analyses, After Action Reviews and Advocacy Boot Camps, to be integrated into the training curricula and to inform future grant-making and training.

## **Media Training and Tools**

LCSI also provided its partners with media relations trainings to build partners' capacity to interact with the media and get out their message effectively. Under the advocacy component, LCSI developed two such training modules to help NGOs understand the media and how they can make their campaigns more newsworthy. One module is about media outreach and includes introductions to what is newsworthy, how media works, and how NGOs can organize media relations. The other training targets CSO spokespersons and aims at developing on-camera interview skills. This one-day seminar helps partners prepare for an interview, consolidate three strong messages about their campaign/project, and learn to be comfortable in front of the camera. To date, 18 representatives of nine LCSI partners have completed the outreach training and 35 representatives of 20 partners have received the interview techniques training.

LCSI also developed a Media Manual that serves as a reference for various media tools and techniques, including sections on how to create and disseminate a press release, how to organize a media conference, the A-Zs of interviews, and media briefings. The manual also provides grantees with a directory of Lebanese media outlets with youth or civil society programming as well as a list of Lebanese and international observances that can be opportunities for news coverage.

## **Social Media**

Following recent events in Tunisia, Egypt and other areas of the Arab world, where social media platforms facilitated mass mobilization of civil society activists, Lebanese youth have become increasingly interested in using social media tools in their activities and projects. LCSI responded to youth demands to enable them to advocate and reach out to a larger audience by providing technical support through specialized partners Social Media Exchange (SMeX) and Wedia. SMeX is training 20 youth trainers from across Lebanon who will promote the use of new media for social change among other LCSI partners by disseminating the knowledge gained via trainings and one-on-one consultations. Social media tools under SMeX trainings include the active use of Facebook, creating and designing organizational websites and blogs, Twitter, and Google Maps. LCSI partner Wedia is coaching 10 OTI-supported youth NGOs to help them maintain their social media sites and use them more effectively for outreach and programming. Trainings will enable selected partners to gain additional skills in page and group management, online communication skills, e-journalism, Facebook advertising campaigns, basic photography, and basic graphic design. Wedia is helping other partners expand their recruitment base, raise awareness on selected issues, and advocate for local issues through a proactive and more advanced use of various social media tools.