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LEBANON CIVIC SUPPORT INITIATIVE

**ANNUAL REPORT
OCTOBER 2010 – SEPTEMBER 2011**

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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

This annual report covers the period from October 2010 through September 2011. During this period, the Lebanon Civic Support Initiative project cleared a total of 73 grants totaling \$6,943,095 and disbursed a total of \$3,495,624.

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 organizations working with youth in marginalized and conflict-prone areas. Since January 2010, LCSI has partnered with NGOs, youth groups, and other civil society actors 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 October 2010, the program awarded 45 grants under this objective totaling \$4,082,401.
- *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 supported activities that address conflict at the local level through community dialogue and exchange, building conflict-resolution skills among youth and others affected by conflict, and using sports, arts, and cultural activities as instruments for conflict mitigation. Since October 2010, the program awarded six grants under this objective totaling \$667,737. At the August 2011 Rolling Assessment, the LCSI team decided to delete this objective, given the limited number of activities under this objective and primary focus on activism and advocacy moving ahead.
- *Enhance civil society organizations' capacity to advocate for local or national issues.* Since October 2010, the program awarded 22 grants under this objective totaling \$2,192,957.

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

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

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. A continued source of conflict is tension between Sunni and Alawite communities, such as in the Bab el Tabbaneh/Jabal Mohsen district of Tripoli. Tensions were exacerbated in mid-2011 by the conflict in Syria and influx of tens of thousands of Syrian refugees into the North. 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. LCSI supports activities to address the drivers of conflict by educating youth on the effects of the Civil War and sectarianism and 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 prominent, encouraged by Syrian and Iranian influences. There are ongoing Sunni-Shiite tensions between rival groups in the region, which flared up in May 2008 leading to armed clashes in some areas. 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. Recent security events, including incidents of kidnapping of foreigners and ongoing conflict in neighboring Syria, have raised concerns about the security situation in the Beqaa.
- *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 launched a new media portfolio with a nation-wide scope, supported by a dedicated program development specialist, which focuses on enhancing the impact of grantee activities through the use of media and the creation of independent media platforms.

Media Coverage

Below is a summary of media coverage of LCSi activities during the period October 2010 through September 2011, by quarter:

Type of Media	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Newspaper	15	25	30	29	99
Newspaper Supplement	-	2	-	-	2
Website	33	47	32	37	149
Radio Interview	1	6	2	-	9
TV Interview	3	13	5	10	31
TV Documentary	-	3	-	-	3
TV News coverage	6	3	4	2	15
Magazine	-	1	-	-	1
Weekly	1	2	2	-	5
Blog	1	1	-	-	2
Total	60	103	75	78	316

SECTION II. COUNTRY SITUATION

Over the past year, Lebanon witnessed a series of political events that were influenced by local, regional and international actors and political factors. Key events include the ongoing investigation of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) into the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri; the resignation of Saad Hariri's government and creation of a new March 8-led government; a series of security incidents along the Israeli and Syrian borders; and the crisis in neighboring Syria. The political situation in Lebanon remains very uncertain due to deep political divisions related to the Tribunal, and the ongoing turmoil in Syria. The uprising in Syria has added yet another layer of uncertainty to a country already plagued by sectarian tensions, political instability, and sporadic security incidents.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon

One of the most critical political events in Lebanon in the past decade was the assassination of then Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri on February 14, 2005, who was killed in an explosion near the Beirut coast along with 22 others. This assassination reshaped Lebanese politics and had numerous consequences, including the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005 (after nearly three decades of occupation); the division of Lebanon between two major political camps (March 14, opponents of the Syrian regime, and March 8, supporters of the Syrian regime) and the creation of the U.N.-backed Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL). The mandate of the Tribunal is to prosecute those persons responsible for the 2005 attack.

Since summer 2010, Lebanon began heading toward a major political crisis, as news spread that the STL would be indicting several Hezbollah members. Hezbollah had previously stated that it will not under any circumstances hand over party members, which would make it very problematic for the Lebanese government to make these arrests. For over a year, speculation about Hezbollah's potential involvement in the assassination has led to tensions and sometimes violence between the Shiite group and Hariri's mainly Sunni allies. Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has repeatedly stated that he does not recognize the legitimacy of the STL. In December 2010, 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. Despite Hezbollah's warning that an STL accusation would threaten stability in Lebanon, then Prime Minister Saad Hariri and his allies have vowed to see the investigation through.

2011: Timeline of STL-Related Events

Jan 12: Hezbollah forces the collapse of unity government when 11 ministers resign

Jan 24-25: Hezbollah and its allies name Najib Miqati as Prime Minister as hundreds of Hariri supporters protest

Feb 14: Saad Hariri announces he will lead Lebanon's new opposition

May 6: STL files amended indictment based on new evidence

Jun 13: Miqati insists there will be no radical policy shift as he announces formation of new government in which Hezbollah and its allies hold majority

Jun 29: After seven meetings, a committee of the new government agrees on position towards the STL

Jun 30: STL submits sealed indictment and arrest warrants to prosecutor general

Jul 7: New government wins a vote of confidence in parliament

Jul 29: Full names and aliases, biographical information, photographs and charges against the Hezbollah members named in the indictment are released

Aug 3: Lebanese General Prosecutor informs STL that the Internal Security Forces weren't able to find the four suspects named in the indictment

The STL issued its indictment in June 2011 against four Lebanese men, all with ties to Hezbollah: Mustafa Badreddine, Salim Ayyash, Assad Sabra, and Hussein Anaissy. In his first reaction to the STL charges, Nasrallah rejected “each and every void accusation” made by the court. “No Lebanese government will be able to carry out any arrests whether in 30 days, 30 years or even 300 years,” said Nasrallah. The STL submitted warrants for the suspects to the Government shortly after the indictment, and in July Interpol issued an international alert against the four men. In August, General Prosecutor Saeed Mirza informed STL’s Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare that the Internal Security Forces weren’t able to find the four named suspects.

Currently, there is ongoing debate whether Lebanon will contribute to pay its share in the STL. Despite the fact that the president and the prime minister are insisting that the Lebanese Government will pay, Hezbollah and its allies are insisting that Lebanon should not recognize the legitimacy of the Tribunal and thus should not fund it.

Resignation of Hariri Government

In 2010, the Lebanese Government was headed by Saad Hariri, son of slain Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. As the government included members from the two major political camps, March 14 and March 8, it was considered to be a coalition government. However, tensions rose between the two camps in the final months of 2010, primarily due to disagreement over the STL, and the cabinet became deeply divided. Cabinet meetings became rare and discussions that did take place were adjourned prior to resolution. Many key decisions remained unmade, and the government was, in practice, shut down. On January 12, 2011, the Hariri government collapsed after all March 8 coalition ministers, as well as State Minister Adnan Sayyed Hussein, announced their resignation on television. The announcement came just as Hariri was meeting with 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) managed to get the highest number of legislators’ votes and thus nominated billionaire businessman Najib Miqati to replace Saad Hariri as prime minister.

Formation of Miqati Government

Following Miqati’s nomination, demonstrators gathered to denounce his nomination and voice support for Saad Hariri. Violent protests broke out across Lebanon, led by March 14 supporters, as part of a “Day of Rage” in Tripoli, the Beqaa, Saida, and some Beirut neighborhoods. Miqati’s nomination split the country’s Sunni Muslim community, who for years had stood seemingly united in a deeply divided country. For many political experts, the collapse of the Hariri government signaled that the Syrian regime is again controlling Lebanese politics. The March 14 alliance chose not to join the new government, deciding instead to serve as the new opposition.

For more than four months, Miqati was unable to form a government; he faced the challenge of meeting the demands of the March 8 forces that brought him to power. Miqati was also unable to garner regional and international support to form his government, due to the lack of agreement between various regional and international forces, namely Syria, Saudi Arabia and Iran. On June 13, 2011, Najib Miqati

announced the formation of the long-awaited government. Miqati insisted that the new line-up, in which Hezbollah and its allies hold 18 out of 30 seats, will not endanger relations with the international community. He noted that more than one third of the ministers were appointed by himself, President Michel Suleiman and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, giving them veto power. This arrangement ensures that Hezbollah and its allies cannot control the government; however, they control key portfolios, including the justice and telecom ministries. The March 14 coalition has portrayed the new government as a puppet of Syrian President Bashar Assad and Hezbollah. The international community welcomed the formation of the new Lebanese cabinet and reiterated its expectation that Lebanon will continue its commitment to full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (which calls for withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanese territory and disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon) and all other international responsibilities, particularly the STL.

The new government's policy statement emphasizes the importance of respecting international agreements. Finalizing the clause regarding the STL led to a major delay; the final controversial version reads as follows: "The government confirms that it will follow the progress of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which was set up in principle to see justice served in a manner that is neither politicized nor vengeful, and as long as it does not negatively affect Lebanon's stability and civil peace." Nine ministers voiced reservations about the wording, specifically the inclusion of "in principle," which was also criticized by the March 14 coalition. In July, Miqati's government won a vote of confidence in parliament, securing 68 out of a possible 128 votes. This government is the first to be based on a majority, rather than national unity, since the 1990 Taif Agreement.¹

Ongoing Lebanese-Israeli Tensions

Almost five years after the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, tensions remain high in south Lebanon. In November 2010, the Lebanese newspaper *As Safir* reported that Israel had allegedly penetrated Hezbollah's cell phone network. Early in 2011, the Lebanese Foreign Minister announced that it had identified 7,000 Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty in 2010. In mid-December 2010, the Lebanese Army dismantled what it said were Israeli espionage devices in the mountains. The Israeli Army detonated two spy devices in southern Lebanon after Hezbollah uncovered them. Since then, Lebanese Army intelligence has reportedly dismantled additional espionage devices, in cooperation with Hezbollah, and arrested three suspected spies.

May 2011 witnessed violence when Israeli gunfire killed 10 people and wounded 112 in the Lebanese border town of Maroun al-Ras during a protest to mark Nakba Day, the anniversary of Israel's creation in 1948. Dozens of young demonstrators crossed a Lebanese Army cordon to approach the barbed-wire border fence and started to throw rocks at Israeli soldiers on the other side; Israeli troops responded with gunfire.

Another source of tensions with Israel is the delineation of Lebanon's maritime border. Both countries are moving to assert sovereignty over an area potentially rich

¹ Taif Agreement was an agreement reached to provide the basis for the ending of the civil war and the return to political normalcy in Lebanon. The agreement restructured the National Pact political system in Lebanon. It was signed on October 22, 1989 and ratified on November 4, 1989 in Taif, Saudi Arabia.

in natural gas. Tensions rose in July 2011 after Israel's cabinet approved a map of their proposed maritime borders with Lebanon and submitted it to the United Nations, which has been asked to mediate. The map conflicts with one submitted by Lebanon to the U.N. last year, which gives Israel less territory. Lebanon asserts that its map is in line with an armistice accord drawn up in 1949 and not contested by Israel. The map sets out the Exclusive Economic Zone, a sea zone that gives a state the right to explore its maritime resources.

Increased Fears of Kidnapping

In March 2011, seven Estonian cyclists were kidnapped after entering Lebanon on a bicycle tour from Syria. The Estonians appealed for help in three videos posted on the Internet. In July 2011, the seven kidnapped Estonians were freed in Lebanon; mystery shrouded their release. High-ranking sources hinted at Syria's involvement in the release as a goodwill gesture to the European Union, suggesting that Syria intervened after it was embarrassed by attacks by pro-regime supporters on the French and U.S. embassies in Damascus. To date, 14 people have been charged with involvement in the abduction, five of whom are still at large. The Lebanese authorities' role in the release is also unclear. The media has said that top Lebanese officials weren't aware of the operation until the last minute. In August, the chief negotiator charged with ensuring the release of the Estonians revealed that they were accidentally abducted by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command, who had planned to kidnap Americans, French, or English nationals.

A Dutch diplomat was also kidnapped in the Beqaa in June 2011, raising fears of the abduction of foreigners in Lebanon -- a practice prevalent during the civil war. A European diplomatic source said that the Dutch diplomat, who resides in Damascus, was abducted by tribes from the Baalbeck region. He was taken to Syria via an illegal border crossing. Upon arrival, he was handed over to security forces at a checkpoint, who upon learning his identity ordered that he be immediately returned to Lebanon.

Other Security and Political Incidents

A roadside bomb explosion targeting a UNIFIL patrol in the southern city of Saida wounded six Italian peacekeepers and two Lebanese civilians in May 2011. Sources have hinted at Syria's involvement after threats were made by Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem that the European Union would regret its sanctions against President Bashar Assad. On July 26, five French UNIFIL soldiers were wounded, one seriously, in another roadside bomb attack in Saida.

In March 2011, a bomb exploded at a church in the Beqaa 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 and damaged seven cars parked nearby.

Also in March, a group of Lebanese youth threw stones and bottles at a group from the U.S. Embassy visiting Saida. 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, U.S. Embassy officials visiting Saida were attacked by residents accusing them of being “Israeli conspirators.” A U.S. Embassy official confirmed the incident in Saida but did not provide details. No one was injured.

Anti-Sectarian Movement

The beginning of 2011 was characterized by a popular movement calling for the abolishment of sectarianism. Mobilized through Facebook, three marches were organized in Beirut throughout February 2011, ultimately gathering thousands of protesters to demand an end to the country's confessional system. The demonstrations were inspired in part by the success of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011. Demands include strengthening of state institutions and the transformation of the country into a civil, secular state. Activists are also calling for a modern electoral law, an independent judiciary, the implementation of anti-corruption legislation, and the improvement of the socio-economic situation. The Facebook group of this movement expanded to include more than 15,000 members. In March 2011, similar demonstrations took place in Byblos, Tripoli and Saida. Following incidents of violence at the demonstration in Saida, and tensions between rival factions, the movement started to lose momentum and for the time being has been put on hold.

Regional Development and Effects on Lebanon

Since December 2010, the Arab world has been witnessing drastic political changes. Due to the historical interference of regional actors in Lebanon's internal affairs, specifically through their patronage to Lebanese political parties, political decisions in Lebanon are often dependent at least in part on external parties. To date, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and Syria are the primary countries where changes are taking place. Syria remains the most powerful external player in Lebanon's politics, and any substantial change in Syria will affect Lebanon significantly.

In March 2011, a series of demonstrations against the Syrian regime started across Syria; crackdowns by security forces have left thousands dead or missing. Lebanon is facing increasing pressures as a result of the uprising in Syria. An estimated 5,000 Syrian refugees fled Syria through the northern Lebanese border, despite heavy security measures taken by both Lebanese and Syrian authorities. Syrian refugees in Lebanon are suffering from difficult living conditions and are mainly being hosted by Lebanese families in the North. Several demonstrations have taken place in Lebanon both in support of the embattled Syrian President and in support of the Syrian people and their attempted revolution. Beirut and Tripoli have been the scene of several face-offs between rival rallies both for and against Assad, with security forces regularly having to intervene and disperse the demonstrations.

Although most demonstrations have remained peaceful, one pro-Syrian regime demonstration in Tripoli in mid-May resulted in violence. Deadly clashes occurred between gunmen in the rival neighborhoods of Jabal Mohsen (primarily Sunni, anti-Syrian regime) and Bab al-Tabbaneh (primarily Alawite, pro-Syrian). According to security officials, 79 people were injured and seven were killed in the clashes. Troops have since deployed in the two rival neighborhoods and tensions have continued to

run high. In early August, dozens of supporters of Bashar al-Assad attacked a small rally against the Syrian regime in Beirut, landing one protester in the hospital.

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. Many youth feel that they are powerless to influence the government decisions that shape their lives, leaving them alienated and 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 youth about citizenship and equipping them with the tools and skills to take collective action and advocate their needs to decision makers. Activities like small-scale community initiatives, local advocacy campaigns, and meetings with municipal officials help youth understand different ways they can influence their leaders. By fostering a new sense of civic responsibility among youth and a conviction that they can make a difference, LCSI activities help youth become active citizens capable of asserting their rights, holding leaders accountable, and effecting positive change.

Impact Examples

LCSI supported several initiatives aimed at effecting change through reforming existing laws, introducing new policies or influencing local government to support youth efforts. The Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU) successfully advocated for the adoption of decrees related to law 220/2000, which supports basic rights for persons with disabilities. With LCSI support, LPHU built three youth task forces in Baalbeck, Mashghara and Tyr and trained them on advocacy and lobbying techniques. Following the trainings, youth started local campaigns under the umbrella of LPHU's national initiative. In Baalbeck, youth mapped public buildings and found out that none were handicap accessible and wrote a petition that was signed by community members. The youth also met with local stakeholders and sought their support. In the southern city of Tyr, youth shared law 220 and its decrees with local NGOs. The task forces' efforts bore fruits, as a binding resolution was issued in March 2011 by the Higher Council of Urban Planning stating that all new public buildings must be handicap accessible. Also, the dean of the faculty of architecture at the Lebanese University agreed to include accessibility in the curriculum, and civil engineering firm APAVE is producing a guide for accessibility criteria.

LCSI partners also introduced new models of collaboration between youth and local government, which was previously very limited. In the South, the Lebanese Association for Development and Communication (LADC) has made strides in formalizing emergency response preparation at the municipal level. Following the success of their activity, providing first aid training to youth to empower them to be emergency responders, LADC presented their recommendations for an emergency response/disaster preparedness plan that can be tailored to each municipality's needs during a graduation ceremony for youth. Of note, this event was held under the patronage of the Governor of Nabatieh Mahmoud Al-Mawla. This is the first time that an LCSI-funded and fully branded activity had been held with this level of official patronage in the South. At the end of the ceremony, mayors of four local villages

where LADC community projects will be implemented, Kfarshuba, Kfarhamam, Hebbariyeh, and Kawkaba, publicly signed memorandums of understanding with the respective youth groups to incorporate LADC's model in their municipality's contingency plan. To increase the scope and impact of their youth-led community projects, LADC also secured financial contributions from the four municipalities (see textbox). These contributions are significant, as in all four villages this is the first time that municipalities contributed to a youth-led initiative.

Municipal contributions to youth projects	
Kfarshuba: Rehabilitation of a public garden	<i>LCSI contribution: \$2,000</i> <i>Municipality contribution: \$6,000</i>
Kfarhamam: Creation of a public garden	<i>LCSI contribution: \$2,000</i> <i>Municipality contribution: \$8,040</i>
Hebbariyeh: Renovation of the public library	<i>LCSI contribution: \$2,000</i> <i>Municipality contribution: Space for library, books, and basic equipment</i>
Kawkaba: Rehabilitation of a public garden	<i>LCSI contribution: \$2,000</i> <i>Municipality contribution: \$2,000 (construction company will also contribute \$2,600)</i>
Total funds leveraged: \$18,040 (plus space and equipment)	

The Governor of Nabatieh has expressed his support for LADC's initiative and requested a meeting to discuss how to further their efforts.

LCSI partners' advocacy efforts have also led to government endorsement and cooperation. Crowning their eight-month initiative to reopen the Horsh Beirut public park, Nahnoo representatives met with the Head of the Municipality of Beirut. After hearing Nahnoo's arguments, supported by extensive research, the Mayor accepted Nahnoo's suggestion to establish a joint committee with representatives of civil society and the Municipality to work on reopening the park. The Municipality asked Nahnoo to head this joint committee, which include members of Beirut's Municipality, researchers, local NGOs, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and LCSI partner IndyAct. A joint press release was issued after the meeting announcing the agreement and the imminent formation of the committee. Nahnoo is now building a coalition of NGOs that will be in direct contact with the municipality. They are also engaging community members in awareness-raising activities, targeting universities, schools and residents, and conducting research on best practices in park management.

In the southern city of Tyr, the local municipality chose LCSI partner Tyr Youth to lead the committee responsible for environmental initiatives. Empowered by the training sessions they attended in communication skills, needs assessment techniques and proposal writing, Tyr Youth provided the municipality with an environmental action plan for Tyr. The municipality's trust in a newly formed youth group is significant. Demonstrating his support to the youth's efforts, the mayor participated in Tyr Youth cleaning campaign of Tyr beach. The Municipality also picked up the full trash bags the youth filled up from the beach and provided assistance to the youth in the form of transportation of trash bins from the factory to the beach and lunch for the almost 40 youth during their activity. Following the success of the first campaign, Tyr Youth cleaned up the entrance of Tyr in cooperation with Siddiqine youth, the local partner of LCSI grantee Shu'on Janoubiya. Inspired by the efforts of the Tyr Youth group, the Municipality of Tyr and Borj Shmeli cleaned the rest of Tyr's entrance and another area.

Other LCSJ-supported groups led community clean-up campaigns that spurred collaboration from local decision makers and residents. Lebanese Active Youth (LAY) teamed up with the Municipality of Barelias in the Beqaa, two sports clubs and two scouts groups to organize a village clean-up campaign. The municipality gave the youth access to cleaning vehicles and tools and also provided trees, which the youth planted throughout the village. The mayor, seven council members and several *mokhtars* (village leaders) joined more than 100 residents to help the youth clean and plant. “When the people and the municipality saw us cleaning the village, they felt that it is their responsibility as well to keep the streets and the river clean. They got their brooms and went down to help us,” says Ahmad Halablab, LAY’s 24-year-old project coordinator. 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: Yammuni, Taraiya, Saaide and Inata. In Inata and Saaide, the municipality offered the youth its premises to conduct a workshop on conflict resolution and citizenship. Following the trainings, the youth groups initiated a garbage bin distribution in their villages. The mayors of Inata and Saaide joined the youth, demonstrating that decision makers should not only work for youth but with them.



Youth from LAY clean up the village of Barelias in the Beqaa.

In North Lebanon, youth from Islah Youth Committee initiated a cleaning campaign in Wadi Nahle and painted houses adjacent to the major road in the village. Youth also identified road repair as a top local need and approached the municipality with a letter presenting the problem and a proposal to fix the road. Impressed by the youths’ contribution to local development, community members approached the municipality and asked them to continue what the youth had started and to extend the cleaning and painting campaign. The municipality responded by initiating meetings with the youth for tangible action plans and sent local workers to the damaged sites. In addition, based on the youth’s request, the mayor approached the Kuwait Monetary Fund, which agreed to fund a water canalization project in the North, to include Wadi Nahle.

Also in the North, youth from Ataouna worked with youth from the marginalized neighborhood of Hosh l Abeed (slum of slaves) next to El Mina to rehabilitate their community and change the name of the street to its historical name, Freedom Street. The area is made up primarily of descendants of Senegalese immigrants who settled in the area in the early 1900s, and it became known as Hosh l Abeed due to the residents’ race and work as unskilled laborers. Residents from surrounding areas historically avoided interacting with the Hosh neighborhood, causing marginalization and misconceptions about this community. To tackle this issue and help repair relationships with the surrounding area, long characterized by mistrust, Ataouna provided the youth with training on advocacy and helped develop a strategy to approach the municipality with the proposed name change. The mayor supported the idea and announced the name change during Ataouna’s closing ceremony. Ataouna plans to use billboards to promote the name change to the broader Tripoli community.

On a nationwide level, the waste management campaign launched by Beirut-based NGO IndyAct triggered multiple responses from municipalities. The municipality of Tripoli endorsed a five-year zero-waste plan and asked local NGOs to take part in the plan's implementation. IndyAct's campaign, aimed at advocating for a national zero waste policy, 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 LCSI partners. The public was mobilized to support the campaign through a touring exhibition that was hosted by LCSI partners in the regions, 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.



Youth from El Mina and the "Freedom Street" neighborhood rehabilitate the street together.

IndyAct's campaign, aimed at advocating for a national zero waste policy, 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 LCSI partners. The public was mobilized to support the campaign through a touring exhibition that was hosted by LCSI partners in the regions, 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.

The nationwide drug-awareness campaign implemented by three LCSI partners, Yammuni Cultural Club (YCC), Delta and the Youth Network for Civic Activism (YNCA) and supported by Aie Serve, has stirred the Ministry of Social Affairs' interest. In response, the Ministry invited Aie Serve to be one of the partners representing the CSO sector in the development of a five-year national strategy to tackle illicit drug use in Lebanon. Aie Serve was also provided with an office in the Ministry and started working on the strategy. The Ministry also partnered with Delta in a conference entitled "Towards a National Strategy for Drug Prevention," which successfully gathered key stakeholders from the public, private and civil society sectors including ministers, academics, mayors, representatives of NGOs and activists in the field of drug use prevention. At the conference, the Minister of Social Affairs expressed his support for a national campaign that will require joint efforts from government and civil society to address the problem of drug abuse. In spite of being a nascent organization, Delta was able to attract the Minister's attention due to their high level of engagement and successful awareness activities in 20 schools in Choueifat, Aley and Metn. LCSI's support and training to Delta enabled the NGO to position themselves as a key player in drug prevention. The conference also attracted significant media attention, which further promoted Delta's campaign. The conference resulted in a list of recommendations that will be reviewed by a committee that includes three ministries (Interior, Social Affairs, and Education) and three local civil society organizations: Skoun, Um El Nour and Delta.



The Minister of Social Affairs announces National Addiction Day under the umbrella of Aie Serve.

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. Hampered by unhealthy competition, shifting donor priorities, and undemocratic governance structures, NGOs have traditionally been unable to come together to build a robust independent civil society or to effect institutional change. LCSi promotes opportunities for collective civil society action by facilitating new linkages and relationships between groups. Representatives of NGOs are regularly brought together for training and events, providing them with opportunities to interact, establish relationships, and share ideas. Also, a number of OTI activities include the active involvement of multiple partners, bringing them together to work on advocacy and other initiatives; collaboration is made easier and more familiar. Organizations now have a greater chance to share experience and ideas and to harness their collective potential to advocate for change in Lebanon.

Impact Examples

LCSi encouraged civil society actors to work together towards a common cause. The coordination between experienced organizations and nascent groups in the regions ensured capacity building for local groups and helped Beirut-based NGOs establish credibility for their campaigns. LCSi partner IndyAct succeeded in building a national coalition of more than 90 NGOs, including 34 LCSi partners, to advocate for zero waste policy and prevent trash incineration. IndyAct's campaign included a touring exhibition that was hosted by LCSi partners Noqta Fasleh, Youth Network for Civic Activism (YNCA), Association of Working Women (AWW), Lebanese Association for Students (LAS), Ataouna, NOTA, and Chmistar Forum for Culture and Development. Other partners supported 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 join; 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 villages. On IndyAct's national day of action for zero waste, more than 100 activities were implemented simultaneously, including activities led by nine LCSi partners.



Youth from Sama demonstrate at the 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, Association of Working Women (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. LPHU established regional task forces to implement activities at the community level. Youth from the task forces were trained on advocacy and lobbying techniques and helped LPHU fill out surveys and gather community signatures, which were presented to the Minister of Interior. The local groups gave legitimacy to the campaign and activated the issue at the local level. The task forces' efforts, under the umbrella of LPHU's campaign, bore fruit, as a binding resolution was issued by the Higher Council of Urban Planning stating that all new public buildings must be handicap accessible.

Unlike IndyAct and LPHU's campaigns, which started in Beirut and reached the regions, LCSi partner Aie Serve initiated their Youth against Drugs campaign at the grassroots level in the regions. To foster cross-regional NGO linkages, Aie Serve, coordinated capacity building training for three NGOs: Delta, YNCA and Yammuni Cultural Club. These trainings were an opportunity for the groups to exchange ideas and lessons learned and develop local awareness raising campaigns on the health hazards of illicit drugs. Each campaign ran independently and tackled the problem in a unique way, based on the local context. Commemorating the international Day against Illicit Drugs, YNCA organized an interactive play on the topic of drugs at their center in Nabatieh, where political parties have historically refused to admit that drug use is a problem in the area or allow anyone to address it. The legitimacy of the event was due largely to the fact that it was part of Aie Serve's national campaign.



Youth from Mosawat help clean up the coast in Beddaoui.

Demonstrating that vital links have been established between Beirut-based campaign leaders and local groups, LCSi partners in the North Mosawat, Islah Youth Committee, Women Welfare Association (WWA), NOTA International, Al Hadatha Association, Akkar Cultural Forum, Akkarouna and Ribat Association participated in Operation Big Blue, a nationwide campaign organized by Operation Big Blue Association to clean up the Lebanese coast. Youth from Wadi Nahle, one of Tripoli's

most deprived neighborhoods, cleaned the coast in neighboring Beddaoui. These two areas are known for historical rivalries between the communities, due to sectarian and political differences, and collaboration between them is rare. Youth were empowered to participate in the activity, even though municipal participation was limited. "The municipality takes an initiative only when it feels threatened or in competition with NGOs. They sent workers today not because they wanted to help us, but to take credit for our work. We are fine with that; youth are not seeking to take credit for their work. We want to promote a constructive collaboration model between youth and the local government," said Mosawat youth participant Omar Seif, 18.

Knowledge sharing also enabled LCSi partners to replicate successes and achieve impact. Youth from NGO Ajyal Al Ghad in North Lebanon are launching an initiative to open a public library in the politically closed area of Abu Samra. Ajyal Al Ghad youth met with youth from another LCSi partner, Blue Mission, who successfully lobbied their municipality to expand the hours of the local public library in Saida. The youth "exchanged experiences and ideas, which inspired the Ajyal al Ghad youth to

identify creative solutions to establish a library in the community, including potentially housing this library in a local public school,” said Nabil Shinder, trainer of Ajyal Al Ghad. Similarly, youth from Ribat Association in the North visited the Saida-based NGO Shajar w Bashar to discuss experiences, as both groups work to improve Lebanese-Palestinian relations in their communities.

LCSI partners also collaborated to magnify impact by coordinating human capital, financial resources, and outreach messages. Akkarouna worked with LCSI partner Mosawat to organize their village festival in Al-Borj in North Lebanon. The event was very successful and attracted 2000 attendees including community members and residents from Akkar and Tripoli. Of note, the youth organized the entire event, including coordinating the event with the mayor of Borj and municipal council, acquiring the required permits, and even convincing the Union of Joume Municipalities to provide the municipal police to help supervise the event. Mosawat contributed to the fair by organizing puppet shows and also videotaped the event.

On Independence Day, November 22, LCSI partners across the country organized joint events. In Baalbeck, youth from the LOST, LAS and 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. North partners NOTA and Mosawat each organized races to commemorate Independence Day, highlighting the benefits of active youth participation in all aspects of society, including sports. Supported by LCSI, 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

In the Beqaa, more than 1700 youth from Baalbeck and Hermel participated in a race organized by LOST. The race promoted civic concepts and advocated for civil peace, tolerance, and coexistence and against political sectarianism and corruption, as shown on the banners held by the youth. More than 10 *mokhtars* (village leaders) from the region joined the race, as well as runners from the Lebanese Army, Internal Security Forces, and local NGOs including LCSI partners LAS, LYN, Cultural Heritage Organization, Yammuni Cultural Club, Forsa and several sports clubs. Such initiatives are rare in the closed context of Baalbeck where youth are highly politicized and vulnerable to engage in political violence. The youth, who previously attended workshops on citizenship, conflict resolution and municipal roles and responsibilities, challenged the status quo of marginalization and ran for their rights and against violence, corruption and sectarianism. Similarly, the National Foundation for Human Interactions and Values (NFHIV) organized a sports tournament in Akkar in North Lebanon. Five local NGOs took part in this initiative: NOTA International, Al Hadatha Association, Akkarouna, Association for Development in Akkar, and Akkar Cultural Forum. Youth competed in a spirit of sportsmanship and appreciated the opportunity to interact with peers away from the prevalent polarization. The event

was especially significant in light of instability and rising tensions in this area due to recent developments in Syria and the resulting influx of an estimated 5,000 refugees into this area of northern Lebanon.

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 control. There is often little opportunity for individuals or groups to influence local decision-making processes or hold their political leaders accountable. LCSI activities are designed to challenge this status quo by creating independent space for civic activism, providing youth with new opportunities to develop the knowledge and tools needed to come together independently of political parties. Because political parties often possess the only physical space available for communal activities, LCSI also supports the establishment of independent youth centers and the provision of new activities combining civic education with “hooks” like sports and internet access. Through these activities, youth are brought together in a neutral physical space, where they can learn about civic activism and develop initiatives to shape their communities.

Impact Examples

LCSI supported forums for youth to engage local decision makers in discussions on local development and municipal-level reform. Empowered by training in citizenship and municipal roles and responsibilities, youth from Toura Youth Club in the South invited local representatives to two roundtables to discuss the environmental conditions of the village and means of ensuring that local decision makers are held accountable. Youth also discussed establishing a youth shadow municipality to monitor the municipal agenda. Toura Youth Club started as an informal youth group under LCSI partner Blue Mission. They then branched out as a separate entity and are now the only independent youth outlet in Toura. Unlike the scouts group in the village, which is politicized, “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 Jihane Dhaine, a 20-year-old participant.

Youth in many disadvantaged areas of Lebanon also used surveys and needs assessment tools to identify community problems and present solutions to local government representatives. Youth from 13 villages in northern Lebanon met with local decision makers to discuss how they can collaborate on future local economic development (LED) initiatives. Local NGO the Lebanese Association for Local Economic Development (LALED) established a group of youth “municipal monitors” who were trained on local development and surveying. These youth interviewed residents about community needs and met with local leaders to review development progress. Youth then approached decision makers with concrete plans for LED initiatives in their villages. The Tripoli Municipality reopened the local literature club after LALED youth raised the issue of its closure. In Tripoli, El-Mina, Tel Meeyan and Tel Abbas, youth held roundtables with municipal representatives to discuss

collaboration in planning and implementing small scale development projects. For many youth, it was their first time meeting with their local representatives. Youth drew attention to gaps in municipal services and made recommendations to empower youth, including the creation of a youth municipality and a follow-up committee to bridge the gap between youth and local government. The municipal representatives expressed their openness to the youths' suggestions.



Youth from Nadi Al Houdoud present results of their questionnaire to municipal council.

In Majdel Anjar in the Beqaa, youth from Nadi Al Houdoud distributed questionnaires that were completed by more than 200 residents, including the municipal council. The youth analyzed the results and presented findings to the community during two sessions that brought together youth participants and key figures, including municipality council members, candidates from the previous election, *sheikhs*

(religious leaders) and *mokhtars* (village leaders). Youth asked the mayor about the municipality's plans and questioned him on their achievements, pointing out the council's poor performance. "The municipality has neglected its responsibilities and it's our responsibility now to make the change. The NGO provided us with the platform to articulate our ideas. By coming together and discussing common goals, youth have formed a nucleus that can effect change during the coming municipal elections," said youth participant Mohammed Youssef, 25. The council was surprised by the results of the youths' survey, as it revealed that the residents of Majdel Anjar were responsible for the negative reputation of their village as a haven for outlaws, as conveyed in the media. The council members promised to respond to the findings by organizing activities aimed at improving this image.

Also in the Beqaa, youth from the Yammuni Cultural Club (YCC) questioned their local decision makers in a town hall meeting at the club's premises, the third initiative of its kind in the closed village of Yammuni. Youth called for local decision makers to be transparent about 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 regular meetings with them.

After youth participants completed training on municipal governance, provided by LCSi partner LOST, the Chmistar Forum for Culture and Development organized a meeting between the youth and NGO members and the mayor, deputy mayor, and municipal council members. During the meeting, youth asked the municipal representatives a number of direct questions that reflected their new understanding of local governance and citizen rights and responsibilities. Their questions addressed transparency, annual financial reporting, the relationship between the municipality and NGOs, the priorities of the municipality, and its different administrative components. They also questioned the municipal council on the lack of public space and gardens in Chmistar. This event highlighted youths' new sense of empowerment to question local decision-makers and advocate for community needs.

LCSI supported youth-led initiatives that have spread debate and challenged the status quo. In the South, the Lebanese Sports and Cultural Club (LSCC) organized a series of community gatherings in three neighborhoods of Bint Jbeil. These gatherings were a platform for residents and youth to discuss their rights and duties as citizens and to evaluate the municipality's performance. Lively discussions about the lack of services and community problems took place, and a committee of representatives from each neighborhood was formed to address local needs. These events were particularly significant given the closed context of Bint Jbeil. They provided the community, and youth in particular, with a non-partisan and apolitical platform to express concerns.

LCSI partners also used innovative approaches to spread awareness through theatre, music, and art. Cross Arts, a Tripoli-based NGO that works with local rap groups and amateur artists, staged awareness-raising performances using theatre and rap songs to promote the true meaning of independence among youth in North Lebanon. The play, *Istiqlab*, included civic messages and youths' perspectives on the concept of independence. The play was inspired by the Lebanese Independence story and compares what independence means for youth today as opposed to what it meant to the pioneers of Lebanon's independence in 1943. The play was a unique event that brought together youth from different regions of the North, normally separated by divisive sectarian and political issues, around the theme of independence. Cross Arts held a total of 10 performances, several with LCSI partners who hosted the play in the regions. Overall, the play was viewed by 1500 people across the country.

In Nabatieh, the Youth Network for Civic Activism (YNCA) facilitated interactive theater training for youth to provide them with an opportunity to express themselves and tackle local issues. Youth were trained on advocacy and identified local issues through interviews with residents, challenging the closed and conservative nature of the region, which previously prevented youth from engaging in such activities. The issues identified included drug abuse and waste management, two problems in the region that the municipality has long neglected. Zukak, a Beirut-based youth-led theater group, provided YNCA youth with theater training and helped them develop an interactive play that addresses these issues. In spite of the municipality's limitations on civil society organizations' ability to organize public events, YNCA held two showings in their center and an additional performance in one of Nabatieh's busiest public squares. The performances attracted a great number of community members and civil society actors who praised youth's pioneer initiative in the conservative context of Nabatieh, where such events are very rare. The play included messages about individual rights, imposed authorities, freedom of expression, corruption and other issues relevant to the region.



Youth actor interacts with audience at an outdoor performance in Nabatieh.

In the southern city of Saida, Shajar w Bashar engaged Lebanese and Palestinian youth from neighborhoods surrounding the Mieh w Mieh and Ain el Heloue Palestinian camps in talent clubs that provided them with trainings and activities. Through the clubs, including photography, painting, drama and writing, the youth exchanged views and voiced their concerns and fears. Youth illustrated key local issues in photographs and paintings that were shared with community members

through an exhibition. Shajar w Bashar also organized open community days in different neighborhoods and artistic activities “to showcase youths’ talents and enable them to play an effective role in their community,” explains Nadine Moussa, 25. “We lack independent or safe spaces, we have frequent armed conflicts and consequently we lack security. As youth in Shajar w Bashar, we promoted alternatives: we have created art clubs, established a public garden, and used theater as an awareness tool.”

Youth Attitudes and Behavior towards Conflict Change Positively

Background and Approach

Many Lebanese live in largely homogenous confessional communities, concentrated in particular regions, villages, and even neighborhoods. These communities are led by rival political and religious figures; when tensions rise elsewhere in the country, it is these communities that often escalate into violence. LCSi activities target the attitudes of youth in these tense communities to help them understand the roots of conflict, overcome perceived divisions, and equip them with the skills to peacefully resolve disputes. The program focuses on “hot zones” -- areas of the country where conflict is most likely to break out. These areas include the mixed Lebanese-Palestinian “gatherings” surrounding refugee camps across the country. LCSi partners help youth in these communities develop new tools to deal with the pressures they face and the tensions in their communities. By changing the attitudes of these vulnerable youth and helping them resist manipulation, these activities help reduce the likelihood of both spontaneous and orchestrated violence in the future.

Impact Examples

Through arts, theatre, sports, and community activities, LCSi partners helped youth overcome differences and realize the importance of working together on common goals. Lebanese Youth Network (LYN) brought together more than 140 youth from rival tribes in the northern Beqaa in sports tournaments and extracurricular activities. Youth were assigned to mixed sports teams incorporating participants from rival families and confessions in each group. The youth competed in friendly football matches without any clashes, which is rare during sports activities in Beqaa. 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 (see textbox).

“Youth are competing on sports and not on religion and politics. This kind of engagement has washed away the stereotypes youth held against each other at the beginning of the project and enabled them to bridge the divides in a friendly manner,”

--Ali Shamaa, LYN's civic education trainer

LCSi partners worked to reduce tensions and enhance relations between Lebanese and Palestinian communities, specifically in the mixed “gatherings” surrounding refugee camps. Ribat Association trained 110 youth from Beddaoui on civic education, theater, project implementation, and social media. They provided youth with an opportunity to practice their skills through plays, awareness campaigns, and sports. During theatre trainings, youth exchanged roles in order to better understand the other. This approach enabled youth to transform their misperceptions into tolerance and acceptance. To exemplify the change, Ribat youth of mixed nationalities staged

seven plays highlighting Lebanese and Palestinian culture to raise awareness on the significance of coexistence. Samiha Ghemrawy, a 26-year-old Lebanese participant, noted, “I never had Palestinian friends as I was told they are lazy, trouble makers, and terrorists. After going through the theatre trainings and channeling my fears out, I was able to apply the conflict resolution trainings to gradually accept Palestinians, and more so to respect them. Now, my best friend is Palestinian.”

Shajar w Bashar, an LCSI partner in Saida, gathered more than 200 youth in conflict resolution and life skills trainings as well as five talent clubs. Lebanese and Palestinian youth formed committees in the mixed neighborhoods of Mieh w Mieh, Ismailyeh, Nadi Al Dobbat, and Saida which organized multiple community days, a poetry night, and a photo exhibition. They also conducted community projects rehabilitating the public garden in Ismailyeh, painting the exterior of their center, and refurbishing the organization’s library. “Now we do not feel like we are separate communities; we became one big neighborhood living in harmony and peace,” says Mohammad Fakih, a 24-year-old participant.



Theatre helped Shajar w Bashar youth express themselves and bond as a group.

Surrounding the Palestinian camp of Nahr el Bared and Beddaoui in the North, Mosawat engaged more than 240 youth from five Lebanese and Palestinian villages in joint community projects that youth identified after workshops on citizen rights and responsibilities, tolerance, and conflict mitigation. Upon completion of the projects, youth encouraged local citizens to vote for the best initiative. Ali Shaaban, a 16-year-old Palestinian participant with Mosawat said, “We no longer fear to pass by Lebanese neighborhoods. Similarly, our Lebanese peers do not fear being hit by Palestinians if they pass by the camps. Mosawat helped us overcome our differences and work together for the betterment of our community.”



LCSI partners also provided youth with technical and vocational skills to help them find employment and make them less vulnerable to political manipulation. In the Beqaa region, Forsa trained more than 60 conflict-prone youth on construction and renovation skills, in parallel with conflict resolution and citizenship courses. The youth trained are all school dropouts, former prison detainees, or trouble makers who previously had no opportunity to make a living without political recruitment or the use of weapons. Of the 60 trained, 10 have found permanent jobs, and an additional eight are working on a part-time basis. Ali Raad, 16 years old, said, “After being with Forsa, I started realizing how bad my way of life was. Weapons do us harm and increase the hatred between the victim’s family and the victimizers. At Forsa, not only did I learn to use a brush instead of a gun, but most importantly I am now able to communicate without violence, to express myself without fear of being rejected, and to respect others for their differences.”

SECTION IV. BUILDING CAPACITY TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

To maximize the impact of grant activities, LCSi is building the capacity of its partners through targeted training, mentoring and coaching in the areas of project design and management, advocacy, media outreach, networking, and social media.

Building Capacity to Advocate

Advocacy Index

To quantitatively measure the capacity of partners to advocate before and after LCSi support, and to assess learning during a grant cycle, LCSi developed an Advocacy Index that measures five competency areas: NGO linkages and coalition building, engagement with decision makers, outreach, research/data analysis, and policy development. The Index is administered to advocacy grantees before and after each grant following a simple process. LCSi partners score themselves from zero to six on each competency area. LCSi staff then calculate an average score of all competency areas. This process helps measure partners' skills and experiences gained during grant implementation, assess partners' training needs and fine tune support, and plan desired improvement in grantees' capacity to advocate during the life of the grant.

"The Index helped us refine our training needs throughout our advocacy campaign to be better able to reach out to local communities and decision makers, in an attempt to open up the public park in Beirut."

--Mohammad Ayoub, Nahnoo project coordinator

To date, the LCSi team has applied the Advocacy Index with 19 NGOs and youth groups advocating for change in their communities. Of the 19, 10 groups asked for a copy of the Advocacy Index to use as a planning tool for their campaigns (see textbox). Four LCSi partners, Nahnoo, Delta, Shu'on Janoubiya, and Siddiqine Youth Group, completed the pre- and post-grant questionnaire process. On a scale of zero (0) to six (6), the groups' overall average score on all five competency areas increased by 1.3 points, marking a 66% increase in capacity since the beginning of their grants, as shown in the chart below:

Advocacy Index Results	Nahnoo	Delta	Shu'on Janoubiya	Siddiqine Youth Group	Average Score
Pre-Grant	1.3	2.1	3.8	0.7	1.98
Post-Grant	3.4	3.4	4.1	2.2	3.28
Conclusion	on average, 66% increase in capacity to advocate at end of grant				

After Action Review

LCSi has also developed knowledge-sharing tools to help advocacy partners and trainers disseminate lessons learned and best practices. An After Action Review (AAR) is a process organized upon completion of every advocacy grant and brings the grantee, advocacy trainer(s), and the LCSi advocacy team together for a structured discussion and assessment of the grant approach, project implementation, key successes and lessons learned. To date, LCSi has reviewed Nahnoo, IndyAct and Maharat. Maharat's session was focused on the NGO's success in building consensus

on the issue of reforming the existing media law among an array of conflicting political parties in the Lebanese parliament. Nahnoo’s session explored the importance of research methodologies in creating a file and presenting it to decision makers. IndyAct’s review identified the tactics used to build a national coalition on the issue of solid waste management. The AAR identifies challenges and successes that can be applied in future activities; for example the advocacy team used IndyAct’s tactics on coalition building to inform the design of the second phase of Nahnoo’s advocacy campaign aimed at reopening a public park in Beirut.

Advocacy Boot Camp

LCSI initiated the Advocacy Boot Camp (ABC) series, a platform that fosters participatory learning among partners and LCSI staff and helps identify future capacity building needs, fine tune existing training, or suggest new models. During the last ABC conference held in March 2011, LCSI advocacy partners LPHU, Nahnoo, Maharat and IndyAct shared their successes and challenges (see textbox) and discussed lessons learned. LCSI staff stressed the importance of systemizing media outreach tactics for future advocacy initiatives.

Advocacy A to Z: Experiences Shared at ABC	
✓	NGO linkages and coalitions in advocacy initiatives – <i>IndyAct Zero Waste campaign</i>
✓	Balancing national campaigns and local participation – <i>LPHU Access to Services campaign</i>
✓	Challenge of consensus building among different stakeholders – <i>Maharat Media Law Reform campaign</i>
✓	Building a file with targeted messages for different stakeholders – <i>Nahnoo Horsh Beirut campaign</i>

Advocacy Trainers Network

LCSI also launched the Advocacy Trainers Network (ATN), a forum that engages leading advocacy trainers to share best practices and new tools in advocacy training and coaching. Trainers, grantees, and youth benefit from the network as it establishes a common understanding of advocacy, unified terminology, and basic tools for achieving change. The Network promotes linkages among NGOs and provides trainers with learning and professional development opportunities through the introduction of knowledge and resources from international practitioners and experts. To date, LCSI has held two ATN conferences, bringing together advocacy trainers, partners and LCSI staff. The first, in March 2011, focused on standardizing training curricula, ensuring quality control of LCSI advocacy trainings, and establishing the first official network of advocacy trainers. In mid-September 2011, the second conference brought together seven trainers, six partners, and U.S.-based advocacy trainer Nancy Pearson, the Project Manager of the New Tactics in Human Rights initiative led by the Center for Victims of Torture. Ms. Pearson presented the “Five Steps to Tactical Innovation,” with practical sessions on using the tactical map, spectrum of allies and case study tools for advocacy. Three trainers from LOST, Active Initiatives for Development and Empowerment (AIDE), and Partnership Center for Development and Democracy (PCCD) then shared their experiences from training LCSI partners. Of note, following the September conference, the trainers expressed interest in taking over the organization and management of the ATN themselves in order to make it sustainable.

Building Capacity in Media Relations and Outreach

Social Media Training

Following the Arab Spring, where social media platforms facilitated mass mobilization of youth and civil society activists, Lebanese youth became increasingly interested in using social media tools to enhance the impact of their activities. LCSI responded to youth demands to by providing technical assistance through professional partners Social Media Exchange (SMEx) and Wedia.

SMEx trained 40 activists including NGO heads, social media experts, journalists, and lobbyists from across Lebanon through “MAD Skills,” a course geared at maximizing the use of social media for advocacy and social change. Upon completion of the online and offline MAD Skills course, the trainees disseminated their new knowledge to other LCSI partners through one-on-one consultations and mentoring. Social media tools covered through the SMEx trainings include the active use of Facebook, creating and designing organizations’ websites and blogs, Twitter, and Google Maps. In September 2011, SMEx MAD skills program participants used Twitter and other social media tools to cover live updates of TEDx Beirut, a conference bringing together more than 600 participants featuring 21 speakers and performers addressing social, political environmental and cultural issues. The live streaming enabled remote activists to get access to events in the capital. With LCSI support, SMEx also launched its second social media manual that LCSI partners and other NGOs can use to enhance their outreach and impact.

Wedia coached an initial set of 10 LCSI-supported youth groups to launch their organizations online through a professional Facebook page. Wedia’s support included helping organizations set up basic information, custom tabs, photo albums, a calendar of events, and custom Facebook advertising campaigns. To date, 14 LCSI-supported youth groups have benefited from Wedia’s coaching and are using social media more proactively to publicize their activities, recruit new members, and engage community members through ads, substantive discussions, and links to other NGOs’ pages. Wedia’s support enabled partners like Lebanese Youth Network (LYN) to recruit 60 new participants to their sports-oriented project from communities where LYN had no prior experience (see textbox). LYN’s new page also helped them attract support from Action Aid Denmark.

Using Social Media to Maximize Reach

“After Wedia helped us develop our Facebook page, we cut our recruitment time in half, and our effort to attract youth from remote areas to the various [sports] groups by less than one-third. This is one benefit of having someone professional guide you on using a catchy platform like Facebook effectively.”

-- Yasser Zogheib, LYN project coordinator

Media Training

LCSI also provided selected partners with media training to build their capacity to interact with the media and get out their message effectively. LCSI developed multiple tools and trainings to help NGOs maximize the use of the media tools to boost their campaigns’ newsworthiness, as described below.

Media Relations and Outreach. Through LCSi partner IndyAct, LCSi trained advocacy partners on understanding the different types of media, how media works, what is newsworthy, and how NGOs can organize media relations. In the last six months, six partners completed this training.

On-Camera Interviewing. This one day seminar targets CSO spokespersons to help them develop on-camera interview skills. The professional TV host Rania Baroud trains LCSi partners to consolidate three strong messages about their campaigns/projects, to combat camera fear, and to prepare for an interview. In the last year, 22 partners have completed this training.

Media Manual. This manual serves as a reference for various media tools and techniques, including sections on how to develop and disseminate a press release, how to organize a media conference, the A-Z of interviews, and media briefings. The manual also lists a directory of Lebanese media outlets with relevant youth or civil society programming in addition to a list of Lebanese and international observances that can serve as opportunities for news coverage. To date, LCSi has distributed more than 70 copies of the manual to its partners.

One-Minute Videos and Issue-Based Photography. These trainings help partners use video and photography to share advocacy messages either through a one-minute video or a series of photos explaining the issue and presenting a policy alternative.

Information Sharing Across Programs

LCSi has also worked to share information, resources and tools across programs and countries to promote the exchange of best practices and lessons learned. The LCSi advocacy team leader was invited to present the Advocacy Index as an innovative monitoring and evaluation tool at a conference organized by the USAID-funded Civil Society Project (CSP) in Jordan. The tool was shared with a dozen Jordanian civil society organizations and can now be adapted to the Jordanian context to help CSP and their local partners develop targeted advocacy capacity building support and measure progress. The LCSi team has also shared various grantee tools and products with the newly launched OTI Libya program, including various social media manuals, civic education curricula, and other training materials.

V. MEASURING PROGRAM IMPACT

LCSI continuously seeks to measure the impact of its activities and effectiveness of its investments. To that end, the LCSI team has created new tools to assess the success of its activities, collect and aggregate impact, capture and circulate lessons learned, and document resources leveraged. To date, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools include evaluations and assessments at the grant level as well as across grants, components and regions.

Measuring Impact across Grant Activities

In June 2011, LCSI launched three comprehensive M&E initiatives to measure impact across grant activities based on the following three themes: social media use by LCSI partners; the impact of civic education trainings on youth behaviors and attitudes; and the impact of establishing physical centers for NGO activities.

Social Media Survey

The Social Media Survey (SMS) aims to find patterns in social media use among current and former LCSI partners in the areas of fundraising, mobilization, outreach, and creating an online identity. The study is composed of three phases. Phase one involved an online review of 31 active partners' Facebook portfolios using various metrics. Phase two was conducting semi-structured focus groups with 13 selected LCSI partners to discuss their level of knowledge and proficiency in social media. The third phase is the launching of a nation-wide social media survey that will target more than 70 LCSI partners to gather information on how they use social media tools, their level of knowledge, and the impact of LCSI capacity building support. The results and analysis of this survey will help LCSI and social media trainers better address organizations' training needs. More effective use of social media tools will increase LCSI partners' ability to reach out to new target audiences, donors, and a wider array of youth. For example, IndyAct, one of LCSI's advocacy partners, reached out to 39 CSOs in its nation-wide campaign addressing solid waste management through Facebook alone. Partner Nahnoo's Facebook page and website led to international media coverage in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* on their campaign to open the Horsh Beirut public park.

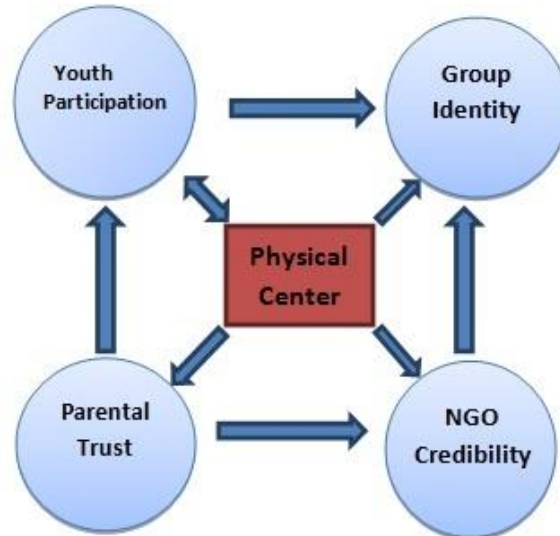
Civic Education Impact Assessment

The second study aims to measure the impact of LCSI's investment in civic education, looking specifically at changes in attitudes and behaviors among targeted youth regarding their role in their local community, distribution of public opinion, perception of leaders and "others", and participation in public life more broadly. This study includes three overlapping phases, two of which have been completed. For phase one, the LCSI team discussed the socio-political situations under which youth attitudes and behaviors are influenced. This discussion was translated into a chart summarizing the dimensions of change in youths' knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors during and after every LCSI-funded grant. In phase two, LCSI developed a questionnaire that was used to interview 21 project trainers and coordinators from 13 organizations across Lebanon in order to validate the dimensions tabulated in the chart. Phase three, which is currently underway, will test program assumptions

through pre- and post-tests with at least eight organizations and a survey of youth participants in ongoing grant activities. An evaluation of changes resulting from civic education trainings requires comparing baseline and post-intervention results of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. LCSi has designed the pre- and post-tests and translated them into Arabic and will pilot them in October 2011.

Physical Space Analysis

LCSi's third broad M&E initiative analyzes the importance of physical spaces or centers in terms of building NGOs' credibility in the community, encouraging and sustaining youth participation, and forming a group identity. To date, LCSi has developed a questionnaire to interview project directors and coordinators, trainers, and community members about how a physical center contributes to an NGO's credibility and its impact on the local community. Simultaneously, LCSi interviewed more than 70 youth from different organizations to better understand the correlation between a physical center and the formation of a group identity that is apolitical and independent of political parties. The quantitative aspect of this project will be captured in the pre- and post-tests to be administered under the civic education study, as described above.



Other M&E Tools for Grant-Level Evaluation

LCSi also conducts assessments and evaluations of current and repeat grantees in order to measure impact, quantify results, and translate anecdotes into aggregated data across regions and components. To that end, LCSi created a series of tools that partners as well as LCSi staff use to measure and share success and to better inform project design and implementation.

Case Studies. LCSi has produced three in-depth case studies. Ataouna's case study sheds light on the youth shadow municipality in north Lebanon and how youth succeeded in holding their local decision makers accountable despite their diverse political affiliations. The second case study on the Lebanese Association for Development and Communications highlighted the use of first aid training as a tool for civic activism. The third case study examined the spin-off of a nascent youth group, Toura Youth Group, from a more established NGO that LCSi previously supported, and how the group challenged mainstream politics through civic activism.

Mini-Evaluations. LCSi conducts mini evaluations of repeat grantees (especially those receiving a third or fourth grant), which examine how a certain approach or hook worked and the challenges and solutions encountered during project implementation. Mini-evaluations offer recommendations and general conclusions

that can be used at the grant level and for future programming if a similar hook or approach is to be replicated elsewhere.

Donor Funding Tracker. To track how LCSi support to partners enables them to receive additional funding, this tracker monitors leveraged financial or in-kind support from other local, national, or international donors. To date, 43 LCSi partners have received additional funding from international and national donors following or during their grants from LCSi. For example, following their successful community project installing garbage bins in the village, the Yammuni Cultural Club received an additional \$68,000 to support their community development initiatives: the Ministry of Social Affairs contributed \$58,000, UNDP contributed \$4,000, and Italian NGO Ricerca e Cooperazione contributed \$5,000. In addition, the local community contributed \$9,100 to support the Club's efforts. LCSi partner Shajar w Bashar received an additional \$7,000 in funding from the Danish Refugee Council and \$2,000 from the Palestinian Children Relief Fund following their LCSi-funded activity.

Video Success Stories. LCSi developed video success stories to visually demonstrate the success of a partner or an approach. To date, LCSi has completed four video success stories on the following grant activities: Blue Mission's advocacy campaign to open the public library in Saida; LOST youths' advocacy effort to fix the roads in Baalbeck; Hadatha's efforts to promote youth activism in the North; and Shajar w Bashar's activities to bring together Lebanese and Palestinian Youth in the South. LCSi and their partners have used these videos in training modules as case studies for other LCSi partners.