



USAID | **LEBANON**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

LEBANON CIVIC SUPPORT INITIATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT
OCTOBER 2011 – SEPTEMBER 2012

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

15 October 2012

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
Program Overview	1
Objectives	1
Summary of Media Coverage	1
Country Situation	2
Effects of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon	2
Increased Kidnapping Incidents.....	2
Rise of Salafism and Continued Unrest in Tripoli.....	3
Additional Security Incidents	4
Weakened Lebanese Government.....	4
By-Elections.....	4
An Uncertain Future	5
Program Highlights And Achievements	5
Youth Successfully Influence Decision Makers	5
CSO Linkages Lay the Groundwork for Collective Action.....	6
Independent Space for Youth Activism Challenges Political Party Dominance.....	6
Youth Attitudes and Behavior towards Conflict Change Positively	7
Civil Society Responds to Political Events through Peace-Themed Activities.....	8
NGOs Take Initiative to Support Communities in Need	9
Sharing Knowledge and Measuring Program Impact.....	9
Building Capacity through Knowledge Exchange.....	9
Measuring Partners’ Capacity to Advocate	10
Program Level Impact Evaluation	10
Program Operations	10

ACRONYMS

CSO	civil society organization
IT	information technology
LCI	Lebanon Civic Initiative
LCSI	Lebanon Civic Support Initiative
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PDS	project development specialist
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This annual report covers the period from October 2011 through September 2012. During this period, the Lebanon Civic Support Initiative (LCSI) cleared a total of 61 grants totaling \$6,781,488 and disbursed a total of \$7,581,340.

Objectives

Funded by USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), LCSI provides small, in-kind grants to organizations working with youth in marginalized and conflict-prone areas. Over the last year, LCSI partnered with NGOs, youth groups, and other civil society actors to implement activities in support of the following objectives:

- *Promote leadership, critical thinking, activism, and advocacy.* LCSI activities encouraged youth to become more active and productive community members through skills-based training, community projects, and cultural, sports, and artistic events that provide peaceful outlets for expression and dialogue. Since October 2011, the program awarded 41 grants under this objective totaling \$5,196,225.
- *Enhance civil society organizations’ capacity to advocate for local or national issues.* LCSI empowered local organizations to actively promote change in their communities and on the national level on key issues. Since October 2011, the program awarded 20 grants under this objective totaling \$1,585,264.

At the August 2011 Rolling Assessment, the LCSI team eliminated the previous conflict mitigation objective, given the limited number of activities under this objective.

LCSI uses intermediate results as a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) structure in which to aggregate impact and analyze program successes and lessons learned. The main segment of this report is structured around these intermediate results (see textbox).

LCSI 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

Summary of Media Coverage

Below is a summary of media coverage of LCSI activities from October 2011 to September 2012:

Type of Media	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012	Total
Newspaper	45	33	39	60	177
Website	59	74	66	96	295
Radio interview	1	12	1	6	20
Television interview	11	6	6	14	37
Television news coverage			5	7	12
Weekly/Magazine			8	2	10
Total	116	125	125	185	551

COUNTRY SITUATION

Over the past year, the political situation in Lebanon became progressively more unstable as the crisis in neighboring Syria continued. Syria has been a key player in Lebanon's internal affairs since the 1970s, and the increase in tension and violence there has managed to intensify instability in Lebanon. Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees continued to flow into Lebanon over the past few months, mainly to the North and Beqaa regions, which increased sectarian tensions and security incidents throughout the country. Additionally, Lebanese politicians continued to take stands either against or in support of the Syrian regime, and the increasingly strong political rhetoric further heightened political and sectarian divisions within the country. These incidents reminded people of the darkest hours of the 1975-1990 civil war and raised fears of a broader conflict.

Effects of the Syrian Crisis on Lebanon

The ongoing Syrian crisis has been the leading factor on the Lebanese political scene over the past year. Since the start of the uprising in Syria in March 2011, the Lebanese Government has struggled to remain neutral in an attempt to preserve stability in Lebanon. For months, Lebanon managed to remain relatively calm despite the escalation of violence in Syria and increasing number of refugees crossing the country's border. At the end of September 2012, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon at around 85,000, of whom about 60,000 are registered. Tens of thousands of additional refugees have sought help from other NGOs and donors, and the overall demand is exceeding their capacities. According to the UNHCR, several thousand Syrian children have enrolled in Lebanese schools, underscoring fears that the end of the crisis remains far off. According to a report published in September 2012 by Doctors Without Borders, many Syrian refugees are living in very poor conditions and suffering from psychological trauma. Additionally, they are fearful for their safety and unable to afford medical care.

There have been a number of incursions by the Syrian Army into Lebanon and many cross-border exchanges of fire between the two armies. In July 2012, Syrian security forces infiltrated the northern region of Wadi Khaled and detained two Lebanese General Security officials for an hour. During the reporting period, a large number of people were killed and injured due to shelling along the Syrian-Lebanese border and into the North and the Beqaa valley of Lebanon. President Michel Suleiman condemned the various Syrian infiltrations into Lebanon, and sent Lebanese Army reinforcements to the borders.

According to many media sources, Hezbollah, a close ally of the Syrian regime, has been increasing its support to the Syrian government, sending military advisers and fighters to aid the regime of President Bashar Assad. During the last week of September, a Hezbollah commander and several fighters were killed in Syria while fighting alongside the regime. Soon after, the Free Syrian Army warned Hezbollah of a "severe and earthshaking retaliation." The U.S. Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions against Hezbollah's leadership in Lebanon, following its active support to the regime.

Increased Kidnapping Incidents

Since the start of the Syrian uprising, a number of kidnappings have taken place, primarily along the Syrian border in the North and Beqaa regions. According to local newspaper *An*

Nahar, 27 kidnappings occurred in Lebanon in the last year. The most significant took place on May 22, when 11 Lebanese Shiite men were abducted in Aleppo, Syria on their way back from a pilgrimage to religious sites in Iran. In response, relatives and supporters of the kidnapped men blocked roads in the southern suburbs of Beirut and the main airport road on several occasions. On August 7, the 11 men appeared on national television, seemingly in good health, and criticized the Lebanese government for not doing enough to set them free. Two of the men have been released and arrived back in Lebanon, but the other nine remain detained.

On August 15, one of the largest tribal families in Lebanon, Al-Meqdad, announced that its “military wing” had captured more than 20 Free Syrian Army members in Lebanon, as well as a Turkish national, in retaliation for the kidnapping of one of its members in Syria. The family’s statement held Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey responsible for the kidnapping. Consequently, the Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon urged all Saudi citizens in Lebanon to leave the country immediately; soon after, the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar followed suit. On September 18, the State Commissioner to the Military Court charged six people from the Al-Meqdad family with belonging to an armed group and kidnapping.

During this period, several people were also kidnapped for financial reasons and held for ransom. The Lebanese Army had some success in persecuting those responsible, and they arrested a six-member gang that was kidnapping Syrian opposition members in northern Lebanon. Also, a military tribunal charged eight people, including a Syrian Army officer, with kidnapping Syrian opposition members in Tripoli.

Rise of Salafism and Continued Unrest in Tripoli

With the deterioration of the security situation in Lebanon and Syria, many Sunni extremist groups have become increasingly active. Salafism appears to be on the rise in the wake of the Arab Spring, given the significant role that some Islamist groups played in calling for regime change in various Arab countries. In Lebanon, Salafist groups have gained supporters through their vocal opposition to the Syrian regime, as few others have taken a clear stand. In August, Salafist Sheikh Ahmed al-Assir launched a sit-in protesting Hezbollah’s arms, blocking a main road in Saida for more than a month. After frustration from local residents and political leaders, and negotiation with the Interior Ministry, the sit-in ended after 35 days.

The crisis in Syria, and resultant deepening of Lebanese political divisions, has had especially violent implications in Tripoli. Between May 12 and 16, 10 people were killed and at least 70 injured in a gunfight in Tripoli between the mainly Sunni residents of Qobbeh and Bab al-Tabbaneh, who support the Syrian opposition, and the Alawites of Jabal Mohsen who support the regime. The fighting came against the backdrop of the arrest of Salafist activist Shadi Al Mawlawi for allegedly contacting a terrorist organization. His arrest drew the condemnation of local Islamists, who blocked the northern and southern roads into Tripoli. On May 22, a judge released him on bail after more than a week in custody. In early June, 15 people were killed and more than 50 were injured in renewed clashes in Tripoli. The city continued to witness periodic violence, which resulted in tens of deaths and hundreds of casualties.

On September 14, extremist youth attempted to storm the Tripoli Serail in protest against the film “The Innocence of Muslims.” One person was killed and 25 were wounded during clashes between protesters and security forces. The protesters also set fire to a local Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and Hardee’s restaurant. Later that week, unknown assailants opened

fire on a KFC in the southern city of Nabatieh. A Military Tribunal charged 45 people in the Tripoli KFC attack.

Additional Security Incidents

In April, unknown assailants opened fire on the residence of Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea. In May, Lebanese soldiers manning a checkpoint in Akkar shot and killed Sunni Sheikh Ahmed Abdul Wahed when his convoy failed to stop. In response, many Akkar residents and Sunnis across the country burned tires and blocked roads. Opposition members and anti-Syrian political parties criticized the attack, deeming it suspicious and aimed at creating tensions in Lebanon. The same night, two people were killed and 18 injured in clashes in Beirut between Future Movement supporters and members of the Arab Movement party led by Shaker Berjaoui, an ally of the Syrian regime.

The Internal Security Forces Intelligence Branch arrested former minister Michel Samaha after he confessed to smuggling explosives in his car from Syria to Lebanon. He admitted to plotting bombings to create sectarian tensions in Lebanon, under direct orders from President Assad. Samaha is known for his pro-Syrian regime views and was among several officials sanctioned in 2007 by the United States for “contributing to political and economic instability in Lebanon.” A Lebanese court charged Samaha and Syrian security chief Ali Mamlouk with forming a group to commit crimes and plotting to assassinate political and religious figures.

In addition to Syria-related events, Hezbollah led a campaign to crack down on the sale of alcohol in the South. Tyre is one of the few towns in the region where alcohol is available, given the city’s significant tourism industry and status as a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) base; however, a series of attacks has caused several venues to ban alcohol. In April, seven people were injured in an explosion at a restaurant, and two other explosions targeted shops that sell alcohol. On New Year’s Eve, a bomb exploded at another restaurant and a nearby liquor store.

Weakened Lebanese Government

The government faced continued disputes among political factions, namely between Prime Minister Najib Miqati and head of the Change and Reform bloc Michel Aoun. In April, the government survived a vote of no confidence in Parliament, after a walkout by the majority of March 14 MPs (the political bloc led by former Prime Minister Saad Hariri).

In August, the Cabinet approved a new draft electoral law based on proportional representation, which calls for dividing Lebanon into 13 electoral districts for the 2013 parliamentary elections. Druze leader and MP Walid Jumblatt and March 14 forces voiced objection to the adoption of proportional representation. The draft law has not yet been approved by Parliament, where it will likely face strong opposition.

A Healthy Victory for Civil Society

A smoking ban came into effect in Lebanon on September 3, prohibiting smoking in closed public places. The ban came as a result of years of lobbying by civil society organizations for the passing and enforcement of Law 174, which prohibits smoking. On September 4, the first fine was issued to a restaurant in Tyre for violating the law.

By-Elections

On May 6, municipal by-elections took place to select 37 municipal councils in towns where councils had been newly created, or to fill vacant positions. The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections, which monitored elections, reported three security incidents, an electoral bribery incident, and illegal advertising at several polling locations. The Interior Minister described the elections as a “victory for democracy.” On July 15, Lebanese Forces candidate Fadi Karam won by-elections in Koura, defeating Syrian Social National Party’s Walid al-Azar, filling the Greek Orthodox MP seat left vacant by the death of MP Farid Habib.

An Uncertain Future

As the end of 2012 approaches, it remains uncertain how power and politics will evolve in Syria and, as a direct consequence, in Lebanon. Lebanese political forces are using the Syrian crisis to try to reshape the internal balance of power to their advantage. It is becoming increasingly clear that Lebanese politicians can no longer dissociate themselves from what is going on in Syria, and that Syria will continue to exert influence in Lebanon. The question now is, not if but rather how quickly, and for how long Lebanon will be destabilized by what looks to be a long-term conflict in neighboring Syria.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Youth Successfully Influence Decision Makers

Lebanese youth are typically excluded from decision-making at both the national and local levels. LCSi’s support to youth across Lebanon has built their capacity to advocate for critical issues and achieve positive change in their communities. It has also empowered youth to create platforms to engage with local decision makers. *Nahnou* (LCSI092) joined Beirut residents and activists and the Mayor of Beirut in a public debate to discuss the challenges of opening the Horsh Beirut park to the public. Through this debate and a series of lobbying activities, the NGO succeeded in getting a pledge from the Mayor of Beirut to open the park by the end of the year 2012.

In the South, nascent organization *Tyr Youth* (LCSI080) tackled the issue of mismanagement of butchers’ waste. The youth completed a survey with local butchers to understand the roots of the problem and potential solutions. In response to the youths’ initiative, the municipality offered to co-fund the project, which included awareness-raising sessions for butchers on hygiene and proper meat disposal. Tyr Youth also secured funding from the UNIFIL for a special truck for meat waste, the first time UNIFIL has provided direct support to an NGO.



Youth from Tyr Youth complete a questionnaire with local butchers.

LCSI’s support to newly established groups through advocacy training and coaching enabled youth to undertake research, collect data and prepare policy alternatives. *Khota Al Shabab* (LCSI086) presented solutions for traffic congestion in the city of Aley. The youth presented their plan to the mayor, members of Parliament (MPs) and residents during a town hall meeting. This positive approach and emphasis on solutions pressured the mayor to take action. Youth from the *Lebanese Center for Civic Education (LCCE)* (LCSI091) presented a

plan to make the local public school more accessible. The school's entrance is obstructed by unregulated construction and traffic due to the lack of parking lots. "The fact that the Mayor finally agreed to receive us is a triumph in itself," said 19-year old participant Sara Ammar. Following their meeting, the municipality established a committee including youth, council members, parents and LCCE representatives to follow-up on the issue.

CSO Linkages Lay the Groundwork for Collective Action

One of the key challenges to promoting reform in Lebanon is the fractious nature of civil society. Hampered by unhealthy competition, shifting donor priorities, and undemocratic governance structures, NGOs have traditionally been unable to come together to effect lasting change. LCSi is promoting collective civil society action by facilitating linkages between groups. Many LCSi partners have worked together to promote solutions to critical issues. *IndyAct's* (LCSi100) team of Eco Warriors organized their second National Day of Action for Zero Waste, which included more than 125 initiatives implemented across Lebanon by numerous organizations. These initiatives represented a collective demand from civil society to the government to find a solution for the waste problem in Lebanon. The private sector also participated, and several restaurants launched recycling plans on that day.

The *Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI)* (LCSi111), together with *IndyAct* and Tyr Youth's lobbying efforts, succeeded in pushing for enforcement of Law 174 (passed in September 2011 and implemented starting September 2012), which bans smoking in public spaces. Several members of parliament, restaurant owners and civil society activists supported the campaign, promoting collaboration between the private sector, NGOs and the government. Also, activists working on environment and public space issues joined Nahnou's campaign to reopen Horsh Beirut park in a joint event aimed at pressuring the Beirut Municipality to open the closed park. Challenging the lack of public parks and green space, Nahnou and 17 participating NGOs created 13 makeshift green spots across Beirut.



Activists turned sidewalks into makeshift parks to highlight the lack of public space.

NGOs working on similar issues have also grasped the importance of sharing experiences. Many LCSi partners are inviting each other to informative sessions to share lessons learned from their campaign experiences. Examples of such meetings include Nahnou and *Common Effort's* (LCSi074) discussion on public space, and the exchange between *Khota Al Shabab* (LCSi086) and the *Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training (LOST)* (LCSi097), who are both working on traffic safety. In addition to sharing experiences, LCSi partners are sharing expertise. The *Youth Economic Forum (YEF)* (LCSi054) helped LCSi partners *SADA Organization* (LCSi079) and *Khota Al Shabab* developed policy papers, making use of YEF's policy development skills developed under their LCSi grant.

Independent Space for Youth Activism Challenges Political Party Dominance

In many Lebanese communities political parties control most of the space, including public services and social activities, and thus youth lack independent platforms to express themselves. LCSi activities are designed to challenge this status quo by creating space for

civic activism and providing youth with opportunities to come together independently of political parties. In the southern city of Aitaroun, *Youth of Tomorrow* (LCSI067) conducted a sports day that included a marathon and various competitions. The event attracted around 150 community members. Such activities were a new experience for the youth in Aitaroun. Following the event, the municipal council realized the importance of such initiatives and shared their decision with the NGO to allow similar apolitical activities in the future, which were previously very rare. In the conservative city of Nabatieh, the *Youth Network for Civic Activism* (YNCA) (LCSI140) used theater as a tool to help the local community voice their opinions. YNCA conducted several public theater performances in five villages using an interactive approach to help residents identify and communicate community concerns.

LCSI partners have also created new media platforms to enable independent expression. Responding to the lack of unbiased media outlets in Lebanon, LCSI supported the establishment of *Baladiyat News* (Municipal News) (LCSI095), a website and magazine that monitors and informs citizens about local issues. The website gained the trust of citizens, who are reporting municipal issues to the site. Municipalities have also contacted the magazine to share information, and many citizens have used the site and the magazine to spread petitions. A debate generated from an article about poor housing conditions in the marginalized area of Borj Hammoud compelled the municipality to sponsor alternative housing for six families living in a collapsing building. The *Baladiyat News* print magazine continues to be circulated to municipalities, MPs and NGOs in Lebanon, even after the completion of LCSI funding. The website has had more than 203,000 viewers (www.baladiyatnews.com).

LCSI also supported the *Youth Television Network* (YTN) (LCSI154) in launching a new web-based television channel, ALT Television (www.altelevision.com), an alternative television outlet that addresses critical issues independently. The crew has developed an innovative program grid that uses a crowd-sourced approach, where the ALTV team collects questions from viewers via street interviews. Viewers can also send in questions via video. As part of its weekly show “Post Officer,” ALTV hosted the Minister of Youth and Sports and the Minister of Culture, raising the profile of the channel. To further boost viewership and website visits, ALTV made a special program featuring active bloggers and managers of popular Facebook pages, who in turn tweet and post updates promoting the channel.

Another LCSI partner *It-vism* (LCSI135) launched a knowledge-based web portal, www.civicboard.org, where NGOs, funding agencies and activists can meet and share information. The portal combines wiki-elements, a crowd-sourced data bank for NGOs and activists in Lebanon and the Arab world, and a refined search engine to identify training modules, trainers, and donors. The portal allows CSOs to create profiles, share their activities and projects, meet donors and access informative resources. The Facebook page of the portal received more than 6500 fans (“Likes”), mostly from Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia, Yemen, and Libya. Also, more than 25 LCSI partners have already signed up to the portal.

Youth Attitudes and Behavior towards Conflict Change Positively

LCSI activities help youth who live in conflict-prone areas in Lebanon develop new tools to peacefully address and mitigate tensions in their communities. These areas include the mixed Lebanese-Palestinian “gatherings” surrounding refugee camps across the country and multi-

confessional communities led by rival political or religious figures. LCSi activities help reduce the likelihood of these youth being dragged into violence in the future.

Around 30 youth from *CitiAct* (LCSi077) from diverse sects biked through the streets of Dahieh and surrounding neighborhoods in the Beirut suburbs, carrying banners with messages promoting peace and tolerance. The group used the event not only to combat sectarian divisions, but also to promote youth activism in an area where generally only political and religious causes are promoted. Residents, who usually associate demonstrations with political parties or religious groups, appreciated this symbolic initiative. *CitiAct* had previously engaged these youth in citizenship, leadership and communications training that enabled them to plan this activity.



CitiAct youth in a community biking event, whose t-shirts read, “They disunited us...We met...Follow us.”

On the occasion of the feast of Eid Al Fitr, youth from *Jousour* (LCSi130) distributed gifts to children of Syrian refugees staying in the Beqaa village of Aarsal. The youth are from both Aarsal (mostly Sunni) and neighboring villages (a mix of Sunni and Shia communities). This initiative is significant due to the sensitivities of many members of the Shia community towards hosting Syrian refugees. The youth previously participated in conflict resolution and citizenship training, which encouraged them to be more open to the other, as illustrated by their participation in this activity working with Syrian refugee children.

In the North, youth from the *Association for Development in Akkar (ADA)* (LCSi039) celebrated Neighbor’s Day in several villages in Jurd El Qaiteh, characterized by their religious diversity. The event included activities, performances by the youth and discussions about local issues. Several municipal officials attended the event. Joe Tannous, a 17-year-old participant from Qorayyat, said, “Our families should understand that we are aware youth who will not be affected by the tensions created by religious and political problems.”

Civil Society Responds to Political Events through Peace-Themed Activities

Increased tensions, a series of security incidents and severe electricity shortages triggered a wave of rage in many regions, manifested by tire burning and road blockages. Refusing to be dragged into conflict, youth across Lebanon organized peace-themed activities as alternative forms of expression and symbolic gestures in support of peace. In Nabatieh, youth from YNCA painted tires using the colors of different political parties to highlight “the necessity of these colors and shades meeting and coexisting for the interest of the nation,” said participant Hamsa Abu Zeid, 19, in an interview with local newspaper *The Daily Star*. Youth displayed their artwork in center of the city. Similar activities were organized by *Blue Mission Organization* (LCSi121) in the village of Maarakeh in the South, the *Lebanese Association for Development and Communication (LADC)* (LCSi122) in Hibbarieh in the South and by the *Lebanese Association for Students (LAS)* (LCSi131) in Baalbeck. Through their activity, YNCA caught the eye of the international media, and the group was featured on CNN’s website (<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/06/29/world/meast/lebanon-tires-ynca/index.html>).

In Beirut, *CitiAct* youth performed a flash mob to address electricity shortages and demonstrate peaceful ways of protesting. The flash mob took place on the airport highway, which was frequently blocked off by protesters burning tires. The youth filmed the event and

shared it via YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCxuMiJc4o4&feature=g-upl>). Finally, the LCSI team created a Facebook page promoting alternative uses of tires as a symbolic action for peace (<https://www.facebook.com/Doulebanon>). Partners and NGOs posted pictures of their peace-themed activities, enabling other activists to participate and replicate them in their regions. To date, the page has received a total of 2,257 “Likes.”

NGOs Take Initiative to Support Communities in Need

The number of displaced Syrian families staying in shelters or with host families continues to increase, specifically in the Beqaa and the North. A number of NGOs have responded to the emerging needs of both refugees and hosts, helping to mitigate the effects of the significant influx of refugees on these communities. With more than 250 displaced Syrian families staying in the Berkayel area in North Lebanon, residents and activists in the region approached LCSI partner *Al Hadatha Association* (LCSI124) to help the displaced by providing them with hygiene kits and educational activities for children. In collaboration with *Akkarouna* (LCSI144), Hadatha distributed items not being supplied by other donors.

As Syrian refugees continue to arrive in the village of Aarsal in the Beqaa, LCSI partner Jousour engaged more than 200 youth, both Syrian and Lebanese, in recreational activities. This timely initiative provided psychosocial support to affected youth. Through their activities and physical presence, Jousour was able to establish itself as a credible actor in Aarsal, becoming the primary partner for international organizations working on relief efforts in the village. The municipality consistently refers international organizations to the NGO, including the Danish Refugee Council, which conducted movie discussions at Jousour’s center, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is currently using Jousour’s center to register Syrian refugees.

Believing that interaction between the Syrian and Lebanese communities will prevent potential conflicts, many NGOs have included Syrian youth in their trainings. LCSI partner *Youth Vision* (LCSI137) has recently enrolled a number of Syrian youth in their vocational program, which provides hairdressing training to at-risk youth in Tripoli. One of the new Syrian trainees was extremely depressed and suffering from psychological problems prior to her work with Youth Vision; later, she expressed her gratitude to the NGO for helping to bring back her confidence and increase her productivity.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND MEASURING PROGRAM IMPACT

Building Capacity through Knowledge Exchange

OTI Middle East Regional Meeting. In February 2012, OTI program staff from Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen came together to share experiences and lessons learned in a two-day session in Tunis. This forum provided an opportunity for staff to share programmatic approaches, discuss challenges, and learn from each other’s successes.

Staff exchanges. In January 2012, the LCSI project development specialist (PDS) for the North region traveled to Libya to complete a short-term assignment to support the OTI Libya project, including providing training to staff, identifying and meeting with potential partners, and sharing relevant tools and resources with the team there. In March, the M&E specialist traveled to Amman to conduct a workshop for staff and grantees of the USAID-funded

Jordan Civil Society Program (CSP) on the LCSII Advocacy Index. To date, a total of 26 CSP grantees have applied the index in Jordan. Finally, LCSII's media PDS and an advocacy development specialist, traveled to Tunisia in July to provide technical assistance to the OTI Tunisia program in media, advocacy and strategy development.

Sharing experiences at SHARE Belgrade. In April 2012, six OTI partners participated in SHARE Belgrade, an annual event that gathers activists, bloggers, programmers and artists from Serbia and around the world in three days of lectures and workshops. Participants included LOST, Nahnou, IT-vism, *March* (LCSII134), *Social Media Exchange (SMEx)* (LCSII106) and *Zico House* (LCSII126). Lea Baroudi from *March* and Esraa Haidar Zayour, a SMEx graduate, also participated as speakers at the event. Following the success of this exchange, LCSII is working to organize a SHARE Beirut event in October 2012, in collaboration with the *SHARE Foundation* (LCSII155).

Measuring Partners' Capacity to Advocate

Advocacy Index. LCSII's Advocacy Index is a quantitative tool used to measure advocacy partners' capacity to advocate before and after every grant in five competency areas: NGO linkages and coalition building; outreach; engagement with decision makers; data research and analysis; and policy development. To date, 31 partners have been assessed with the index, 14 of which completed both baseline and post-grant indexes. On average, partners' capacity has increased by 78% or 1.25 index points on a scale of 0 to 6.

After Action Reviews. LCSII fostered knowledge exchange among its staff and partners to circulate lessons learned and to integrate best practices into upcoming activities. In the past year, LCSII assessed 15 partners' performance via the After Action Review, an evaluation platform organized upon completion of each advocacy grant to discuss best practices and lessons learned (see textbox).

Enhancing technical skills. In addition to technical assistance from advocacy coaches, LCSII advocacy grantees also participated in a series of trainings on complementary topics including one-minute movie making; media relations; how to give media interviews; and public speaking.

After Action Review Themes
• <i>Nahnou</i> : The integration of media outreach plans in advocacy
• <i>YEF</i> : Lessons learned working in universities and the parliament
• <i>Green Globe</i> : Communicating messages through large scale events
• <i>LCCE</i> : Engaging school students in advocacy campaigns
• <i>Siddiqine Youth Group</i> : Organizing advocacy campaigns in conservative areas

Program Level Impact Evaluation

LCSII is working on two comprehensive M&E studies that assess impact across grants in three areas: the use of social media by LCSII partners, the impact of civic education training on shaping youth behavior and attitudes, and the importance of physical space to the creation of an NGO and youth identity. Initial drafts of both studies should be finalized in November.

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

In January, outgoing LCSII Deputy Chief of Party Ruba Freij was replaced by Operations Manager Bernadette Naoum, the former Chemonics home office manager.