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LEBANON CIVIC SUPPORT INITIATIVE

**ANNUAL REPORT
OCTOBER 2012 – SEPTEMBER 2013**

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ACRONYMS

CSO	civil society organization
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
IT	information technology
LCSI	Lebanon Civic Support Initiative
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
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 2012 through September 2013. During this period, the Lebanon Civic Support Initiative (LCSI) project cleared a total of 43 grants totaling \$4,430,919 and disbursed a total of \$2,475,229.

Objectives

USAID/OTI's Lebanon program was launched in September 2007 to promote youth activism, conflict mitigation, and civil society advocacy. In 2012 as the program prepared for closeout, months of escalating violence in neighboring Syria threatened to destabilize the country. In 2013, LCSI was extended to January 2015 to promote social cohesion and mitigate tensions in areas affected by the Syrian crisis. The reconfigured project objectives are listed below:

1. *Reduce resource and economic strain in affected communities.* The program awarded 28 grants under this objective totaling \$3,036,218.
2. *Facilitate community engagement through cooperation and inclusive participation.* The program awarded 11 grants under this objective totaling \$1,063,269.
3. *Alternate messaging and strategic communications.* The program awarded four grants under this objective totaling \$331,434.

In September 2013, the team converted the third objective into a cross-cutting theme.

Geographic Focus

Geographic areas of focus include Tripoli and Akkar in the North and key host communities in the Beqaa region, with targeted interventions in Beirut and the South. LCSI targets the most vulnerable areas that pose a viable threat to development and political stability:

- *North.* A continued source of conflict is tension between Sunni and Alawite communities in the Bab el Tebbaneh/Jabal Mohsen district of Tripoli. Tensions were exacerbated by the Syrian conflict and influx of tens of thousands of Syrian refugees. Shelling along border areas by the Syrian Army has led to internal displacement. The increasing presence and strength of Salafist Islamic fundamentalists is also a threat.
- *Beqaa.* The Beqaa, bordering Syria, is hosting an estimated 33 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Most are living in homogenous sectarian communities, with Alawite refugees residing in Shia areas, controlled by Hezbollah. There are growing tensions, as evidenced by clashes in Baalbeck in September 2013.
- *South.* Although the South is hosting the smallest percentage of Syrian refugees, numbers are increasing as refugees try to move out of other saturated regions, and the refugees moving south are increasingly not Shi'a. Hezbollah has tight control over the south but steadily, tensions are on the rise. Saida also witnessed significant violence between a Salafist sheikh and his supporters and the Lebanese army in June 2013.
- *Beirut.* The capital has seen an increase in violence including sectarian clashes, abductions, rocket attacks, and two bombings in the southern suburbs over the summer. Tensions remain high in communities along Sunni-Shi'a fault lines and the potential for the rapid escalation of violence also remains high in these areas.

COUNTRY SITUATION

As the war in neighboring Syria continues into its third year, Lebanon has become progressively unstable. Syria has been a key player in Lebanon's internal affairs for decades and occupied the country from 1976 to 2005. Lebanon is a small country with a weak central government, and it has been paralyzed by sectarian divisions and violence spilling over from the Syrian conflict. Currently, Lebanon is sharply split between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime: Hezbollah (pro-regime) and radical Sunni groups (pro-opposition) have each sent fighters to support opposing sides in Syria. In the last year, Lebanon has witnessed episodes of sectarian violence that reflect the dynamics of the Syrian conflict, as well as regular cross-border shelling and several bombings. These incidents brought back memories of the civil war (1975-1990) and raised fears of Lebanon falling into a longer-term conflict.

Massive Influx of Syrian Refugees

At the end of September 2013, more than 750,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon have registered or are pending with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The total number of refugees in the country is estimated to be more than one million. Unlike other countries in the region hosting Syrian refugees, in Lebanon there are no formal camps and refugees are living in host communities. Many are staying with families; others are living in unfinished buildings, store rooms, and other shelters. Many informal tented settlements have also sprung up in the past year. The majority of refugees are living in the North and Beqaa regions, often in already marginalized areas where living conditions and services are poor for both residents and refugees. To date, only 27 percent of the \$1.7 billion U.N. funding appeal to cope with the refugee crisis in Lebanon has materialized. There is a shortage in food assistance, hygiene and baby kits, and other non-food items. With winter approaching, the UNHCR and other humanitarian actors are struggling to provide adequate shelter.

The lack of access to education for Syrian refugees is also a major issue. Lebanese public schools are unable to accommodate the thousands of additional newcomers; schools are overcrowded and the system is at risk of being overwhelmed. Lebanese public schools are already suffering from low budgets and poor infrastructure. The other major challenge for refugees is language, as many components of the Lebanese curriculum are taught in English or French, while the Syrian curriculum is entirely in Arabic. According to the UNHCR, there are an estimated 270,000 school-aged Syrian children in Lebanon; UNICEF aims to enroll 60,000 of them in the public system this year. About 33,000 Syrian refugees attended public school last year, and a small number enrolled in private schools.

As the influx of refugees continues into Lebanese communities, there is growing strain on local services. Municipalities are struggling to meet the growing demand, and the burden on water, electricity, and waste management resources is causing significant tensions, in addition to economic and environmental issues. As many host communities have been supporting Syrian refugees for two plus years, there is also frustration that UNHCR and other aid is only going to Syrians. There is the perception that Syrians are able to work for lower wages, as some of their basic needs are being met by donor support, and that they are competing with Lebanese for jobs. This competition is also aggravating social tensions.

Border Incidents and Kidnappings

Cross-border shelling and incursions by the Syrian army have been intermittent, resulting in several casualties, extensive material damage, and growing fears and frustration in border communities in the North and Beqaa. The Lebanese military is unable to secure the area. A number of residents of border villages have been internally displaced, and those who remain feel increasingly vulnerable and forgotten by the Lebanese government. There has been an increase in arms in these communities, as residents feel they must protect themselves. Also, with the rise of insecurity across the country, Lebanon has witnessed a series of kidnappings. The majority of these abductions are financially motivated, although others are politically motivated or related to family disputes. Some of the abductions have also been instigated by sectarian tensions.

Bomb Attacks

A series of bombings took place over the last year, targeting both security figures and civilians. On October 19, 2012, Brigadier General Wissam al-Hassan, intelligence chief of the Internal Security Forces (ISF), was killed by a car bomb in the Beirut district of Achrafieh. The bombing killed two other people and injured 100. Hassan was close to former Prime Minister Saad Hariri and hostile to the regime in Syria, and many believed he would take over as head of the ISF at the end of the year. This was the first car bombing in Beirut since January 2008 and was reminiscent of the series of political assassinations in the capital from 2004 to 2005.

The summer of 2013 witnessed deadly bombings in the southern suburbs of Beirut, a stronghold of Hezbollah. On July 9, a booby-trapped car exploded in Bir al-Abed, wounding 53 people and damaging several nearby buildings. Syrian rebel groups had previously threatened to strike Hezbollah assets inside Lebanon in response to Hezbollah's military engagement in Syria alongside the regime. In May, two rockets also hit the southern suburbs, wounding four people. On August 15, another car bomb killed 27 people and wounded several hundred in Rweiss in the southern suburbs – the deadliest attack in this area. Following this incident, many began to question Hezbollah's internal security capacity, which is likely weakened given the group's deployment in Syria.

On August 23, 2013, two car bombs exploded in the northern city of Tripoli. The two bombs killed an estimated 47 people and wounded hundreds. The coordinated blasts – the biggest and deadliest in Tripoli since the end of Lebanon's civil war in 1990 – struck in areas surrounding two Sunni mosques as worshipers were finishing Friday prayers. Several suspects have been arrested in connection to the bombing, but no legal action has been taken to date. There is growing fear that this incident will spark sectarian strife in Lebanon.

Increase in Sectarian Tensions and Extremism

Since the May 2008 conflict that pitted Hezbollah fighters and their allies against Sunni militants, sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Shiites in Lebanon have progressively grown stronger. Tensions have become considerably worse since Hezbollah's open declaration of participation in the Syrian conflict. The Syrian opposition now considers itself at war with Hezbollah and has threatened possible attacks on Hezbollah assets inside Lebanon. In recent months, the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites has erupted in mixed areas across Lebanon. Tripoli, the second largest city in the country, has become a reflection of the ethnic and religious divisions in the Syrian conflict and continues to witness regular

clashes. The situation is exacerbated by the rise of extremist Islamist groups, who are filling what many see as a void in Sunni leadership. The Lebanese army has been largely unable to prevent or stop fighting in the city, due to the widespread availability of ammunition and arms and the army's own policy of containment and limited engagement.

Following the collapse of many oppressive military regimes across the Arab world, there has been a rise in the visibility of extremist Salafist groups across the region. In Lebanon, a number of extremist figures have rushed to fill the Sunni political vacuum and have gained followers due to their vocal support for the Syrian opposition. One of the most outspoken and virulent of them is Sheikh Ahmad al Assir from Saida. After several provocations, major clashes took place between his followers and the Lebanese Armed Forces on June 23. The fighting there was among the most violent in Lebanon since the outbreak of war in Syria and deepened sectarian tensions, with several soldiers killed and many wounded. There were accounts that Hezbollah fighters supported the Lebanese army during the clashes. This increased widespread Sunni resentment against the army, which they accuse of being biased towards Hezbollah and only cracking down on Sunni armed groups.

Handover of Hezbollah Security Checkpoints to Lebanese Army

At the end of September 2013, the Lebanese army and ISF deployed in Hezbollah's stronghold of the southern suburbs of Beirut for the first time in many years. Hezbollah historically has managed security of this area independently. The army took over numerous checkpoints that had been set up by Hezbollah following the bombings in late summer. This handover was welcomed by all Lebanese political factions. Also in September, clashes broke out between Hezbollah members and Sunni gunmen in the Beqaa city of Baalbeck after an argument at a Hezbollah-run checkpoint, leaving four people dead, including two Hezbollah members. Shortly after this incident, the Lebanese army also took over the Hezbollah checkpoints in the city and adopted intensified security measures to restore security and stability in Baalbek. Several fugitives were later arrested by the army.

Absence of Government and Delay of Parliamentary Elections

On March 22, 2013, Prime Minister Najib Miqati resigned and called for formation of a unity government. Miqati's decision came after Hezbollah and its March 8 allies blocked attempts to create a body to supervise planned parliamentary elections. The March 8 alliance also rejected Miqati's proposal to extend the term of Major General Ashraf Rifi, Director General of the ISF. In early April, MP Tamman Salam was nominated as prime minister of a new government. Salam was seen as a neutral candidate to oversee the transitional period before parliamentary elections, initially scheduled for June 2013. However, seven months later, Salam has still been unable to form a government, as Lebanese political factions have not been able to agree on the division of ministerial portfolios. On May 31, parliament voted to extend its mandate for 17 months (until November 2014) after rival political parties failed to reach agreement on a new electoral law, and because of the security situation resulting from the war in Syria. It was the first time parliament has extended its session since the civil war. Due to its status as a caretaker government, the current body is not making major policy decisions regarding the security situation or the Syrian refugee crisis. Some perceive this deadlock as intentional: it is a way for Lebanese political factions to avoid making controversial and potentially politically damaging decisions regarding the situation.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The section below details key program impact over the past year, and is organized according to the project's two main sub-objectives.

Reduce Resource and Economic Strain in Affected Communities

The high influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon and concentration in underprivileged areas of the North and the Beqaa has led to serious socio-economic problems and tensions with host communities. OTI supported efforts to reduce resource and economic strain and resulting tensions in affected communities. Under this sub-objective, OTI funded activities in the sectors of education, health, WASH, core relief items, shelter, psychological support, livelihoods and economic growth, and registration.

Program Impact at a Glance

- 26,433 people benefitting from OTI-supported service provision
- \$460,335 invested in local communities
- 626 shelter units rehabilitated
- 327 people placed in jobs or employed
- 120 small businesses supported
- 103 community development initiatives
- 54 initiatives that engage municipalities

Municipal Service Delivery

As the influx of Syrian refugees continues, local municipalities are struggling to meet the growing demand for services. Tensions are increasing as Lebanese are affected by increased costs and reduced access to utilities and services. OTI partners are working with local municipalities to address water shortages and health and hygiene threats. Akkarouna (RLCSI002) and the Lebanese Association for Development and Communications – LADC (RLCSI005) installed washing machines to provide laundry services to 2,000 Syrian families in Akkar and the South. This initiative promoted more efficient water management and prevented the spread of diseases. The Lebanese Refugee Council – LRC (RLCSI028) procured water tanks, pipes, and other equipment to enhance municipal services in Akkar. LRC installed 15 mobile bathroom units in Minnieh and Bhanine, benefitting 4,110 Syrian refugees, and equipped three wells, providing 7,000 Lebanese residents with increased access to water. This support improved the local sanitation system and had a multiplier effect of mitigating health and hygiene concerns. This initiative also injected 85,000 USD into the local economy and supported ten local businesses.

Relief and Medical Support to Host Communities and Refugees

To address increasing shelter needs in Akkar, OTI partner Akkarouna (RLSCI002; RLSCI004) coordinated with local municipalities and rehabilitated 605 shelter units accommodating more than 9,000 Syrian refugees in the North. These activities employed 113 local workers and injected \$395,680 into the local economy. In Tripoli, OTI partner Hamid Construction (RLCSI009) rehabilitated 21 shelter units accommodating more than 105 Syrian refugees. These initiatives directly benefited host communities, and made it easier for families to continue hosting Syrian refugees by providing a safer and more private space for them, thereby reducing tensions. Akkarouna also responded to host community needs and distributed critical non-food items including blankets, rugs, mattresses, and water tanks to around 1,300 Lebanese and Syrian families across the Akkar region.



Akkarouna youth distribute winterization items.

OTI partners are also working to mitigate the strain on the health sector in Lebanon. The Lebanese Association for Development and Communication – LADC (RLSCI005) created and trained emergency response teams of Lebanese and Syrian youth in several villages in the North and Beqaa to provide emergency first aid in coordination with municipalities. OTI also supported the provision of medical equipment to clinics in the North and Beqaa, where tensions over access to health services are increasing between Lebanese and Syrians. With OTI support, LADC (RLCSI021), Order of Malta (RLCSI027), Vision Association for Development, Rehabilitation & Care (RLCSI035), and the Greek Catholic Diocese Dispensary in Al-Qaa (RLCSI034) equipped local clinics and are now offering medical services to the community at a 70 to 80 percent lower cost than private clinics. OTI also launched a pilot initiative to provide psychosocial support to Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees in North Lebanon. Being (RLCSI001) provided trauma therapy and psychological support to around 8,000 people at their newly established center in Tripoli. They collaborated with a Syrian youth group who led community outreach efforts. This support included individual and group therapy, as well as psychosocial activities for children.

Access to Education

An estimated 35 percent of Syrian refugees are school-aged children. The Lebanese education system is struggling to accommodate additional students, and local schools are increasingly overwhelmed. To ease this strain, the Lebanese Association for Advanced Sciences – LAAS (LSCI153), Sonaa Al Hayat (LCSI159), Ajyal Al Ghad (RLCSI017), and SADA (RLCSI018) led pilot summer school programs in Akkar and the Beqaa. In total, more than 60 Lebanese and Syrian teachers were trained and around 3,100 Lebanese and Syrian students participated. In Tripoli, youth volunteers from four NGOs in the Coalition of Campaigns against Violence in Tripoli (RLCSI030) organized remedial classes for students of poor socio-economic backgrounds who failed the first round of official exams. A similar accelerated educational program was implemented by OTI partner Arcenciel in the Beqaa. By providing the participating Syrian students with documentation of their education completion, these initiatives reduced strain on Lebanese schools. They also helped reduce the number of dropouts and kept youth off the streets and away from resorting to violence or joining radical groups. These programs also introduced youth to their role in community development and civic activities, which helped reduce tensions between the host community and refugees.

Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods

As competition for scarce jobs increases, and tourism and other sectors are negatively affected by the security situation, OTI partners are working to reduce economic strain and enhance income opportunities. Development Engineering Consultancy – DEC (RLCSI045) and the Lebanese Association for Urban Agriculture (RLCSI032) installed 50 standard tunnel greenhouses for 50 Lebanese farmers in the North and Beqaa, benefiting around 300 people including farmers, laborers, and their families. Participating Lebanese farmers will expand production by 25 percent and generate more income at a lower cost. They will also be able to employ additional Syrian workers to assist with production. In Tripoli, recurrent clashes significantly affected the city’s economy, and many local shops and



OTI installed greenhouses for farmers in the North and Beqaa.

cafés lost business due to the instability. OTI partner Youth for Growth and Development – YGD (RLCSI008) led an activity in Ramadan that revived the old souks in Bab El Ramel, bringing cultural performances and other events to this area. During this period, 10 cafes increased their daily net profit from 133 USD to 667 USD.

Facilitate Community Engagement through Cooperation and Inclusive Participation

The spillover of the Syrian crisis into Lebanon has raised sectarian tensions and fostered violence and instability across the country. Citizens feel frustrated and helpless to improve the situation. OTI supported platforms for people to come together to challenge the rhetoric of sectarianism and violence, to reclaim public space, and to identify solutions to shared problems. Under this sub-objective, OTI partners mobilized more than 15,700 people through 103 community development initiatives and 23 peace campaigns.

Emergency Response

Over the last year, OTI partners demonstrated their ability to mobilize volunteers and take action in response to and even during security incidents. After the twin car bombs in downtown Tripoli on August 23, eight OTI partners came together to provide emergency support. The Coalition of Campaigns against Violence in Tripoli (RLCSI030) led efforts to rehabilitate damaged shops and also filled gaps in the local government’s capacity to respond. Coalition volunteers assessed the damage to cars and houses around the bomb sites, collected owners’ contact information, and guided them through the registration process. The High Relief Commission relied on the Coalition’s data to address needs and compensate for losses. Just one day after the bombing, more than 1,200 citizens of all ages responded to the Coalition’s call for action at both bomb sites. Volunteers from



Volunteers clean up the streets in Tripoli following August 23 bombing.

“In the absence of the government, the only group who compensated [for our losses] is this enthusiastic group of youth who are coming from different areas of the city. My shop was fixed in only three days.”

-- Ahmad Sabbagh, 34 years old, owner of electronics shop

OTI partners Utopia (RLCSI026), Al-Hadatha (RLCSI013), Association for Development in Akkar (RLCSI016), Youth for Growth and Development (RLCSI012), Ajyal Al Ghad (RLCSI017), Shabab al-Balad (LEB085), Akarouna (RLCSI020), and Ribat (LCSI145) also participated. In coordination with the municipalities of Tripoli and Mina and civil defense, volunteers swept up broken glass, removed burnt cars and trees, and started repair of the surrounding buildings. In only two days, the streets surrounding the sites were reopened to traffic. In one month, the Coalition

rehabilitated 154 shops damaged by the bombs, reducing owners’ losses and helping the city return to normal social and economic life. The Coalition worked with the local Tripoli Tradesmen Association and OTI partner Hamid Construction (RLCSI009), a contractor providing vocational training to at-risk youth, to rehabilitate the shops. They hired 20 previously trained youth and 40 local workers to repair damaged shops. Materials and equipment were procured locally, benefitting the local economy.

Tripoli has witnessed recurrent violence between the rival neighborhoods of Bab al-Tebbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, and between Islamist groups and the Lebanese army. The Coalition of Campaigns against Violence in Tripoli was able to create a network of NGOs and volunteers both inside and outside the conflict areas. During clashes between Tebbaneh and Jabal Mohsen at the end of May 2013, more than 500 families fled their homes and sought shelter in public schools in Baddawi. For the first time, through the Coalition, local civil society groups were able to network with people living inside the conflict zones. They distributed aid kits that included hygiene and food items to more than 150 displaced families.

Reclaiming Public Space

OTI partners are also working to reclaim public space that has been damaged in violence or taken over by extremist groups. Youth from OTI partner Hamid Construction, who are from diverse sectarian backgrounds and live in conflict-prone neighborhoods in Tripoli, repaired 21 shops in the old Tripoli market that were damaged during sectarian violence. Some of



Youth volunteers from Utopia erase the scars of violence in Tripoli.

these stores were burned down intentionally based on the owner's sect. This rehabilitation removed some of the visible scars of the conflict and encouraged residents to resume social and economic life. Another OTI partner, Utopia (RLCSI006), worked to promote peace through street rehabilitation activities in Daher el Mogher and Zehriyeh, poor neighborhoods adjacent to Bab Al-Tebbaneh. After each round of clashes, Utopia volunteers identified damaged streets and repaired them. They covered over bullet holes on building facades, painted walls, and fixed drainage pipes and street lamps. Finally, to reclaim a city

landmark from armed groups who use this space for demonstrations, burning tires, and clashes, the Coalition organized a community meal in Nour Square in Tripoli. Just before the event, a group of militants threatened participants and demanded that the organizers cancel the event. However, the Lebanese army restored security and more than 500 people attended, conveying the message to politicians and militants that they reject violence in their city.

Promoting Collaboration between Conflict-Prone Groups

OTI partner Al-Hadatha Association (RLCSI013) successfully created a platform for cooperation between Lebanese host families and Syrian refugees. They established mixed community committees made up of local residents and refugees in 13 villages. These groups are working to identify ways to minimize the burden on host residents and municipalities, promoting mutual trust between Syrians and Lebanese residents. After completing workshops on needs assessments and proposal writing, the committees worked with local municipalities to identify needs and potential solutions in education, safety, social protection, health, and refugee registration and orientation. Their proposed project ideas will be shared with the international donor community at a conference in Beirut at the end of October 2013. In some villages, the committees have already started addressing the issue of waste disposal, organizing a schedule for different volunteer groups to take turns collecting garbage from the streets.

"Communication between us is now much better; we often sit and discuss common issues that the Syrian and Lebanese communities are facing in the village."

-- Lebanese participant in Naseej project, Berkayel, Akkar

Other OTI partners are using sports and cultural events to bring together youth and others from rival communities. More than 700 participants from all over the North ran for peace during the Tripoli Peace Marathon under the umbrella of the Coalition of Campaigns against Violence in Tripoli (RLCSI014). In Arsal, in the northern Beqaa, 70 youth participated in a bike race organized by Jousour (RLCSI011). This event was one of the rare civic activities in a community where Islamist extremist groups are on the rise, and where there have been several attacks on the Lebanese army. It gave the community a chance to come together in a peaceful way and show the other side of the village there to the rest of Lebanon. OTI partners Utopia (RLCSI006) and American Near East Refugee Aid – ANERA (RLCSI019) organized football trainings and tournaments in Bab al-Tebbaneh and the Palestinian refugee camps in Baddawi and Bared. These activities brought together teams from different backgrounds, including Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian-Palestinian youth. The youth acquired new skills and were taught how to interact and compete against each other without resorting to violence, as evidenced by their peaceful and productive interaction.

MEASURING PROGRAM IMPACT AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

M&E Tools

Focus groups. The LCSI team is using focus groups to collect impact information from grantee participants and other beneficiaries. The M&E specialist is leading this process in collaboration with a local focus group expert. For each grant activity, the key groups to be interviewed are determined based on the context and specific components of each activity. To date, focus groups have been completed for six grants.

Knowledge Sharing

Civic Activism Toolkit. The LCSI team finalized development of this resource to capture, analyze and disseminate best practices and lessons learned. The Toolkit includes 39 how-to sheets on organizing high-impact projects and initiatives, working with decision makers, recruiting peers, mobilizing the community, developing public policy alternatives, building successful advocacy campaigns, and communicating effectively on mainstream and social media. It is based on the experiences of civil society organizations in Lebanon and uses case studies, examples, and photographs collected through OTI-funded activities implemented from 2007-2013. More than 400 copies of the Toolkit were distributed at an event in August 2013, attended by the USAID/Lebanon Mission Director. The Toolkit is also available online at www.civicboard.org, and to date 138 English copies and 106 Arabic copies have been downloaded. The LCSI monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialist also shared the Toolkit at a Youth Conference for Cities in Transition in Kosovo. The attendees were excited to learn about the Toolkit, and after the event one participant from Kosovo noted, “I downloaded the Civic Activism Toolkit...and I've got the idea to do a community mapping project here in Mitrovica, updating the OpenStreetMap database and thus creating a joint effort of North and South people to create a city map together.”

OTI Advocacy Webinar. The LCSI Chief of Party, former Advocacy Component Team Leader, and OTI grantee Youth Economic Forum (RLCSI022) took part in an online webinar to discuss the online advocacy training developed by OTI/Washington, based on the *Civic Activism Toolkit* and other LCSI advocacy tools. This online event brought together USAID and OTI staff and implementers from around the world and peaked at around 70 participants.

Coordination with other donors. OTI is participating in regular UNHCR sector working groups on various sectors, including education. The LCSi team is also working closely with USAID/Lebanon to coordinate programming, including sharing assessments and other data, such as the recent education assessment funded by OTI.

Media Coverage

Below is a summary of media coverage of LCSi activities from October 2012 to September 2013:

Media Type	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Newspaper	22	8	13	8	51
Website	38	2	30	24	94
TV interview	8	-	-	2	10
TV news	3	5	3	2	13
Total	71	15	46	36	168

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Personnel Updates

Following the reconfiguration of the program in January 2013, the team welcomed a new Country Representative and Senior Transition Advisor. LCSi also hired an additional Project Development Specialist to focus primarily on the Beqaa, an M&E Specialist, a Communications Specialist, and a Finance Specialist.

Strategic Review Session

The team participated in an annual Strategic Review Session (SRS) in Amman, Jordan in June 2013, which was also attended by representatives from OTI/Washington. At this session, the team reviewed the political and security situation, regional strategies, and opportunities for programming. This event also provided an opportunity for the team to meet the new OTI Country Representative.