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LEBANON CIVIC SUPPORT INITIATIVE

FINAL REPORT

March 15, 2015

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Cover: Youth work with Bassme w Zeituneh to rehabilitate and reclaim public space in their neighborhood

All photographs courtesy of the Lebanon Civic Support Initiative and USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives

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ACRONYMS

ATN	Advocacy Trainers Network
AWW	Association of Working Women
CSO	civil society organization
DEC	Development Engineering Consultancy
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
KDS	Key Development Services
LADC	Lebanese Association for Development and Communications
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LAS	Lebanese Association for Students
LAUA	Lebanese Association for Urban Agriculture
LCI	Lebanon Civic Initiative
LCSI	Lebanon Civic Support Initiative
LPHU	Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union
LRC	Lebanese Relief Council
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
RLCSI	reconfigured Lebanon Civic Support Initiative
UNHCR	U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YEF	Youth Economic Forum
YNCA	Youth Network for Civic Activism

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) supports U.S. foreign policy by seizing emerging windows of opportunity in the political landscape to promote stability, peace, and democracy by catalyzing local initiatives through adaptive and agile programming. In Lebanon, the deeply polarized political environment reflects a long history of sectarian-driven conflict, with roots in the country's 1975-1990 civil war. A chain of more recent events, including the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 and the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, deepened political tensions. In 2007, OTI launched the Lebanon Civic Initiative (LCI) to mitigate tensions, and continued activities under the Lebanon Civic Support Initiative (LCSI), launched in January 2010. During its five years of implementation, LCSI provided 319 grants to civil society organizations (CSOs), youth groups, local and regional governments, and other local partners under two distinct sets of objectives.

Implemented from 2007 to 2010, LCI's objectives were to provide youth with alternatives to political extremism and mitigate tensions in conflict-prone areas. In a 2009 USAID country assessment, it was determined that OTI could help expand democratic space in Lebanon by expanding assistance to reform-minded civic actors to enhance their capacity to advocate for change. The new program, LCSI, which began in 2010, continued work under LCI's two objectives and added a new objective: enhancing CSOs' capacity to advocate for local or national issues. LCSI worked to empower youth as active and independent citizens by promoting civic activism, targeting sources of tension in hot zones along sectarian fault lines, and enhancing CSOs' capacity to advocate. LCSI activities encouraged youth to become more active and productive community members and empowered local organizations to promote positive change in their communities.

In January 2013, LCSI reconfigured its program to address the increasing community-level volatility resulting from the ongoing war in neighboring Syria. The focus of the reconfigured LCSI program (known as "RLCSI") was to increase social cohesion in vulnerable communities by mitigating tensions in the areas most affected by the Syrian crisis. By alleviating the pressures resulting from economic and resource strains and increasing cohesion among communities, RLCSI enabled vulnerable Lebanese host communities to prioritize community needs and grievances, determine and pursue common goals, and manage common resources. Together, these outcomes contributed to the goal of increased resiliency and community stability throughout Lebanon.

During both programmatic phases, the program implemented clusters of small grants, focusing on the local community and promoting Lebanese ownership of decisions and results. In LCSI and RLCSI programming, activity processes led by youth and other residents, such as community needs assessments, were often as important as outputs in contributing to the program's strategic goal of mitigating tensions to maintain stability. The program used several approaches — cultural and recreational activities, public forums and town hall meetings, supplemental education, small-scale infrastructure rehabilitation and other community improvement initiatives, enhanced service provision, and training activities — to mitigate conflict, strengthen linkages between vulnerable communities, encourage youth activism, and increase community cohesion. These activities empowered youth as agents of change, improved

civil society advocacy capacity, supported community-based mediation and conflict resolution, generated short-term employment, and reduced economic strains. For its entire duration, the program operated quickly and responsively, remaining flexible to adapt to new challenges and opportunities, and addressed a variety of strategic themes, geographic areas, and technical sectors to support program objectives.

This report provides a representative sample of activities implemented during both programmatic phases to mitigate community tensions, promote active citizenship, improve the advocacy environment, keep youth positively engaged with their communities, and reduce the economic and social strains experienced in local communities in Lebanon as a result of the war in Syria.

SECTION 1

Country Context and Transition Support

OTI supports U.S. foreign policy by seizing emerging windows of opportunity in the political landscape to promote stability, peace, and democracy by catalyzing local initiatives through adaptive and agile programming. OTI's model allowed LCSI to respond to the constantly changing political and security environment in Lebanon over the course of the program. Between 2010 and 2015, Lebanon faced an increasing number of challenges. Its deeply polarized political environment reflects a long history of sectarian-driven conflict, with roots in the country's 1975-1990 civil war. A chain of more recent events, including the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 and the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, deepened political tensions.

From 2010 to 2012, the country saw periods of calm, but these continued to be broken by political assassinations and bombings, and the weak — and often leaderless — central government was rarely able to take action to address these issues. Beginning in 2011 with the initial influx of Syrian refugees and progressively intense shelling along the Syrian border, Lebanon has become progressively and dangerously unstable. Adding to the sectarian tensions that existed long before the war, Lebanon is now split sharply between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime: Hezbollah (pro-regime) and radical Sunni groups (pro-opposition) have sent fighters to support the opposing sides in Syria. In the last two years, Lebanon has witnessed episodes of internal sectarian violence that reflect the dynamics of the Syrian conflict, as well as regular cross-border shelling and several targeted suicide bombings. These incidents recall the civil war from 1975 to 1990 and raise fears of Lebanon falling back into a longer-term conflict. The Syrian conflict has added yet another layer of uncertainty to a country already plagued by sectarian tensions, political instability, and sporadic violence.

1.1 LCSI (2010-2013)

1.1.1 Gridlock and Citizen Disengagement

Lebanon has historically faced ongoing challenges related to the sectarian divisions across political parties, which often translates to gridlock within ministries and contributes to frequent vacuums in leadership positions throughout the government. The municipal and village leader (*mohktar*) elections were the first elections to be held in Lebanon after LCSI started. These elections focused on familial and political loyalties rather than specific candidate platforms or local development priorities. The results varied between regions, but overall elections were dominated either by March 14 (led by the Future Movement) or March 8 (led by Hezbollah) members, which left little room for independent candidates or voices.

In early 2011, the government of Saad Hariri (leader of the March 14 coalition) collapsed after all the members of the March 8 coalition announced their resignations. In April 2013, Member of Parliament Tamman Salam was nominated as the prime minister of a new government. It took nearly 11 months for Salam to form a government, and despite many challenges, the Salam government still operates today even though its original constitutional term has expired.

This governmental gridlock highlighted the pressing need for a strong Lebanese civil society that could identify community needs and advocate for the government to address them, particularly at

the local level. Lebanese youth are typically excluded from decision-making processes at both the national and local levels, particularly because the minimum voting age is 21. While the central government is far removed from the daily concerns and challenges facing most youth and their communities, municipal governments tend to suffer from inadequate human and financial resources, organizational mismanagement, and unfamiliarity with participatory processes. Instead of seeking to maintain public support by providing constituent services or accessibility, elected officials in Lebanon tend to rely on a system of patronage and sectarian loyalties to sustain their power. Apart from limited opportunities to engage their political leaders and advocate for improved services, young people are also hampered by a lack of motivation and knowledge to do so. Given the lack of a responsive government and entrenched patronage system, many young people feel apathetic and powerless to effect change. Youth's sense of marginalization from the decision-making process leaves them vulnerable to manipulation by political parties and extremist groups, which attract youth through the promise of economic incentives, power, and a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves.

LCSI activities aimed to redress this situation by fostering youth activism, advocacy, and citizen-government interactions, primarily by educating young people in areas most prone to conflict about citizenship and equipping them with the tools and skills to take collective action, engage decision makers, and build connections across sectarian lines. The program sought to maximize its impact as a vehicle for conflict mitigation by specifically targeting hot zones, and engaging youth from rival sectarian and political communities. Civic education fosters a national identity by helping young people understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens and the ways in which they can influence decision makers, as well as empowers them to assume leadership roles in their communities. This sense of national identity also foster connections to citizens and groups outside of one's immediate sectarian, political, and geographic background. Activities like community needs assessments, small-scale development projects, local awareness campaigns, forums with local officials, and election-related programming empowered young people as change agents and provided tools to help them influence decision-makers. In addition, educational and recreational activities, such as theatre, sports, arts, and vocational training, provided youth with alternatives to participating in sectarian and extremist political groups. By fostering a new sense of civic responsibility and a conviction that their voices can make a difference, LCSI activities helped youth from across sectarian divides work together to become active citizens capable of asserting their rights, holding their leaders accountable, and working within the political system to shape their own futures, rather than resorting to violence.

One of the key challenges to promoting reform in Lebanon is the fractious nature of civil society. Although there is a wide range of CSOs varying in size and capacity, Lebanese civil society is divided along many lines. Many organizations work solely on specific issues or with specific communities; others are charitable institutions affiliated with religious groups or political parties whose services are available only to select beneficiaries. Although there is a limited pool of independent CSOs that have sought to tackle issues cutting across sectarian and political loyalties, many have also been fragmented in terms of their priorities, organization, and effort. Hampered by unhealthy competition for funding, shifting mandates based on donor priorities, and undemocratic governance structures, many of these organizations have not collaborated to effect institutional change. The result has been the reduced effectiveness of individual CSOs and limited opportunities to harness their collective power to advocate for shared goals.

1.1.2 LCSl Objectives

From January 2010 to December 2012, LCSl focused on promoting youth activism, mitigating tensions in conflict-prone areas, and building CSOs' capacity to advocate. The program partnered with CSOs, youth groups, and other civil society actors to implement activities in support of the following objectives:

- *Promote leadership, critical thinking, activism, and advocacy.* LCSl supported activities to encourage youth to become more active and productive members of their communities through skills-based training; community projects; and cultural, sporting, and artistic events that provided peaceful outlets for expression and dialogue.
- *Mitigate tensions in conflict-prone areas through reconciliation work, collective memory activities, and dialogue on key national- and community-level issues.* LCSl supported activities that addressed 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. At the August 2011 strategy review meeting, the LCSl team decided to delete this objective, given the limited number of activities under this objective, and to primarily focus on activism and advocacy moving forward.
- *Enhance CSOs' capacity to advocate for local or national issues.* LCSl built the capacity of local organizations to promote change within their communities and on a national level.

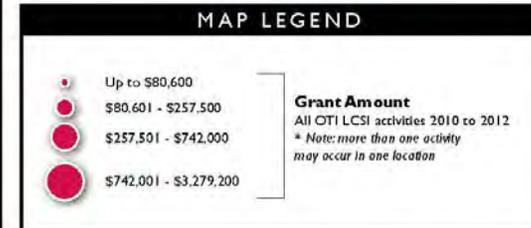
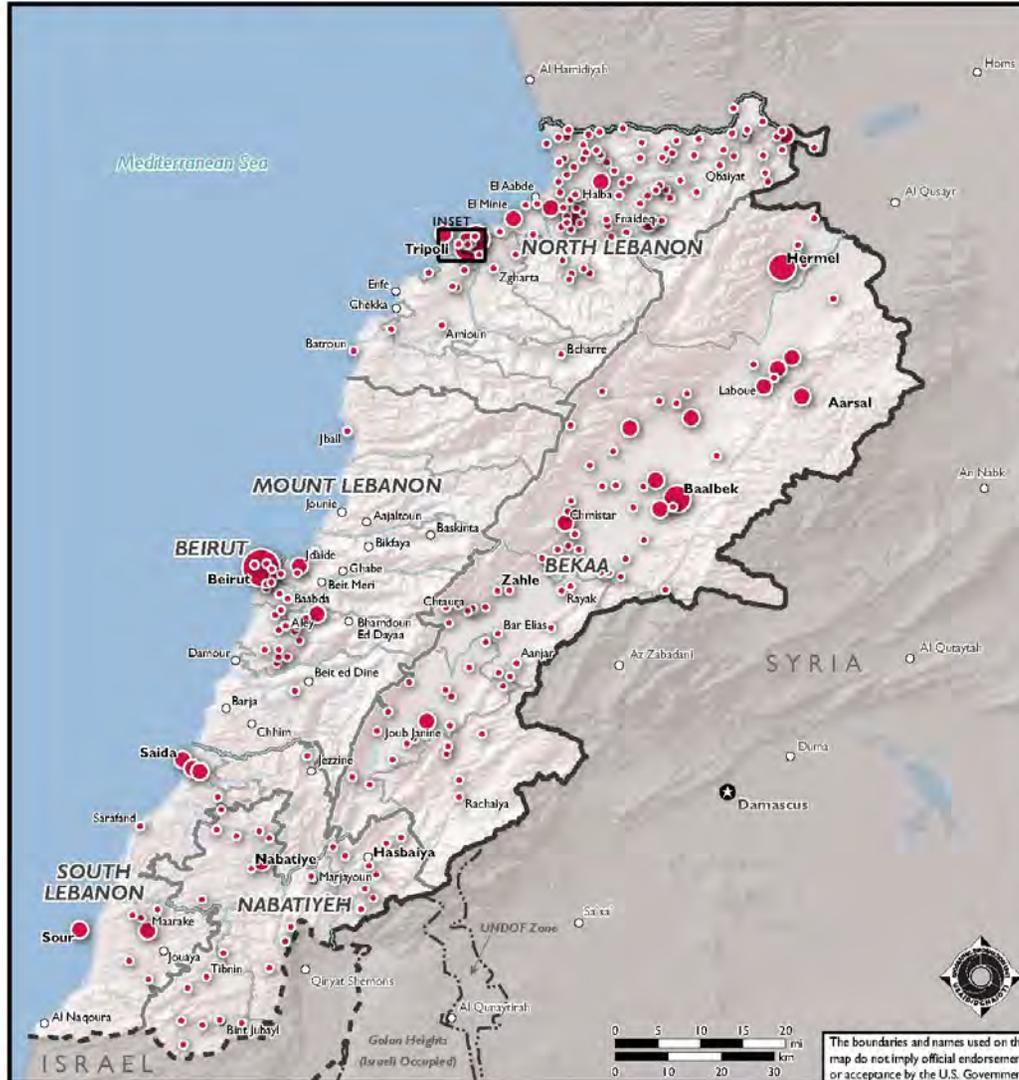
1.1.3 Geographic Focus

LCSl focused primarily on the North, Beqaa, and South regions. For activities related to youth and conflict mitigation, the program selected specific "hot zone" communities within these regions where violence had recently erupted and where there were large populations of marginalized groups matching the program's target demographic, and based on U.S. government priorities. See Exhibit 1 on the following page for a map of LCSl activities.

Exhibit 1. LCSi Activities Map



OTI LEBANON CIVIC SUPPORT INITIATIVE (LCSI)
OTI ACTIVITIES FROM 2010 to 2012



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Promote leadership, critical thinking, activism and advocacy, and enhance civil society organizations' capacity to advocate for local or national issues.

ACTIVITY TOTALS

Total: 160 activities for \$15.2M

Map Created: 02.25.2014
Data Sources: USAID/OTI, UNHCR, DoS GGI

1.2 RLCSI (2013-2015)

As OTI prepared for LCSi's closeout, months of steadily escalating violence in Syria undermined stability in Lebanon by exacerbating sectarian tension, burdening vulnerable communities with tens of thousands of needy and highly politicized displaced Syrians, and radicalizing segments of Lebanon's Sunni community. Government and civic institutions were strained by the multiplying challenges, while moderate influences were losing ground, particularly in the north. LCSi's grantees made program staff aware of the impact of these issues on the communities where the program was operating, highlighting the ongoing need for OTI programming.

1.2.1 Massive Influx of Syrian Refugees

By the start of 2015, approximately 1,146,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon had registered with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The total number of refugees is estimated to be nearly 2 million, which is equivalent to roughly half of the Lebanese population. Unlike other countries hosting Syrian refugees, Lebanon has no formal camps, and thus refugees live in Lebanese communities. Many refugees stay with families; others live in unfinished buildings, storerooms, and other shelters. More than 1,000 informal tented settlements have sprung up in the past three years. The majority of refugees reside in the North and Beqaa regions, often in already-marginalized areas with poor living conditions and services.

From the very beginning, the influx of Syrians into Lebanese communities has caused a strain on local services. Municipalities struggle to meet the growing demand, and the burden on water, electricity, and waste management resources has caused significant tensions, in addition to economic and environmental issues. A perception exists that UNHCR and other international donor aid only goes to Syrians, and that because their basic needs are being met by donor support, Syrians are able to work for lower wages and take jobs away from Lebanese. This perceived competition in addition to the overall economic strain felt by many host communities has increasingly aggravated social tensions.

Lack of access to education for Syrian refugees also became a major issue as the number of Syrian youth swelled. Lebanese public schools, already suffering from low budgets and poor infrastructure, could not accommodate the thousands of additional students. The UNHCR estimates that 300,000 school-aged Syrian children now reside in Lebanon; however, in 2014, only 89,300 were enrolled in public schools. The number of school-aged Syrian children not in school poses major social problems, including the short-term problem posed by many at-risk youth existing outside of the structured school system with nothing to do, and the long-term issue of creating a lost generation of Syrian youth.

1.2.2 Increase in Sectarian Tensions and Extremism

Since the May 2008 conflict between Hezbollah fighters and Sunni militants, sectarian tensions between Sunnis and Shiites in Lebanon have increased. Recently, the biggest danger from outside Lebanon has stemmed from violent groups, such as the Jabat Al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These groups have become very influential in Iraq and Syria and currently represent one of the largest threats for Lebanon. In addition to frequently clashing

with Hezbollah along the Lebanese-Syrian border, the extremist groups have also attacked the Lebanese army several times. In early August 2014, the army engaged in a one-week battle against the Jabat Al-Nusra and ISIL in the village of Aarsal, located along the Lebanese-Syrian border in the Beqaa Valley. The fighting caused numerous casualties, and was the most serious border incident since the beginning of the conflict in Syria.

For the past four years, the key potential flashpoint for escalation in sectarian violence inside Lebanon has been the ongoing fighting between warring factions in Tripoli. The Syrian war has intensified old feuds between Tripoli's two main communities — Sunnis and Alawites — which have a history of conflict dating back to the Lebanese civil war. There have been 22 battles in Tripoli during the last four years, which have killed more than 300 people and injured thousands more. There are no signs that full reconciliation between the communities will happen soon.

Hezbollah's open declaration of participation in the Syrian conflict on the side of the regime further exacerbated these tensions. The Syrian opposition now considers itself at war with Hezbollah and has threatened further attacks on Hezbollah assets and areas of influence inside Lebanon. The situation is aggravated by the increasing influence of violent extremist groups that some see as filling a void in political leadership. The recent crackdown on radical armed groups by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) risks deepening resentment within the Sunni community due to the perception that LAF unfairly targets Sunni groups while ignoring other armed militias. The influx of Syrian refugees, many of whom were Sunni and supporters of the Syrian opposition, further complicates the delicate sectarian demographic balance inside Lebanon.

1.2.3 Increase in Security Incidents

Kidnapping incidents. Since 2011, most kidnappings in Lebanon have taken place in the northern Beqaa region and along the Syrian border. During the prolonged and deadly battle in Aarsal in August 2014, ISIL and Jabat Al-Nusra gunmen took approximately 30 Lebanese soldiers and policemen hostage. The militants beheaded three of the prisoners, released seven, and called on the Lebanese government to release Islamist inmates from the country's largest prison in Roumieh in exchange for the remaining captive security personnel. This remains one of the largest unresolved communal grievances in Lebanon and has been the source of many protests and road blockages. Other kidnappings have mostly been financially motivated, with some politically motivated or related to family disputes.

Cross-border shelling and bombarding. Since the war began, Lebanese border villages in the North and Beqaa regions have been regularly assaulted — at times deliberately — by warplanes, shells, helicopter gunships, rockets, and small arms fire from across the border. The attacks have caused material damage and some casualties, and sparked an exodus of residents to safer places away from the contested border areas.

Increased threat of bombings. A series of bombings between 2012 and 2015 targeted security figures and civilians. One of the most serious attacks occurred in August 2013, when car bombs exploded simultaneously outside of two Sunni mosques in Tripoli. The coordinated blasts struck areas surrounding the mosques as worshipers were finishing Friday prayers, killing an estimated 47 people and wounding hundreds. All of the bomb attacks — including separate incidents that claimed the lives of the intelligence chief of the Internal Security Forces and former Finance

Minister Mohammed Chatah — signaled a new and dangerous era for Lebanon, with the potential to become a proxy frontline to the conflict raging next door in Syria.

Security plan. Sectarian clashes and bombings reduced after April 2014, when LAF implemented security plans in Tripoli and the Beqaa. However, while the deployment of troops and routine security sweeps have improved overall security in the last year, the root causes of the violence in Tripoli and the Beqaa have not been resolved, and could resurface given the right conditions.

The dramatic increase in violence and potential for mass casualties and/or internally displaced people resulting from escalated fighting in Lebanon — specifically in Tripoli and the border areas in the North and Beqaa regions — led to a greater need for organizations and municipalities to respond effectively to emergencies when they occur, as well as to renovate, repair, and reclaim public spaces damaged during clashes to reduce the risk of a prolonged conflict environment. Addressing the gap between need and capacity was, and continues to be, a monumental task, but by late 2012 LCSi had worked with a number of local CSOs that were already serving as first responders by default because they were the only groups willing and able to fill the void. In many cases, their ability to respond was in large part due to the CSO capacity-building work the program had conducted with select grantees under previous LCSi grants.

1.2.4 RLCSI Objectives

In response to the influx of Syrian refugees, combined with the rising sectarian tension, violent extremism, and security incidents, LCSi reconfigured its programming in January 2013 to focus on supporting Lebanese communities hosting Syrian refugees. The reconfigured programming also helped form part of the U.S. government's response to calls from the Lebanese government for assistance in dealing with the spillover effects of the Syrian war.

The Lebanese government formally requested assistance from the United Nations to help with the Syrian refugee crisis in December 2012. However, the majority of international assistance focused solely on supporting refugees, not host communities. The reconfigured LCSi (RLCSI) therefore focused on helping Lebanese communities cope with the presence of Syrian refugees, whose presence had begun exacerbating sectarian tensions and increasing resource strains on local communities and municipal governments.

The overarching program objective became to mitigate tensions in areas affected by the Syrian crisis by supporting activities that addressed the following sub-objectives:

- *Reduce resource and economic strains in affected communities.* RLCSI supported activities that improved local service delivery (e.g., education, water provision, shelter rehabilitation, health services, and emergency response) and enhanced the income-generating capacity of Lebanese host communities.
- *Facilitate community engagement through cooperation and inclusive participation.* RLCSI supported efforts to create platforms for constructive collaboration and to reclaim public spaces affected by conflict, including rehabilitation and peace-building activities.

1.2.5 Geographic Focus

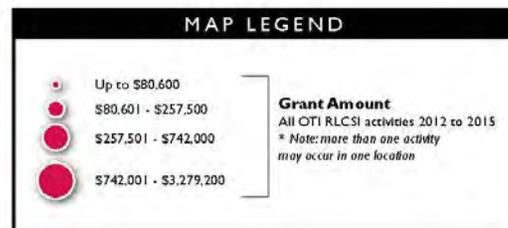
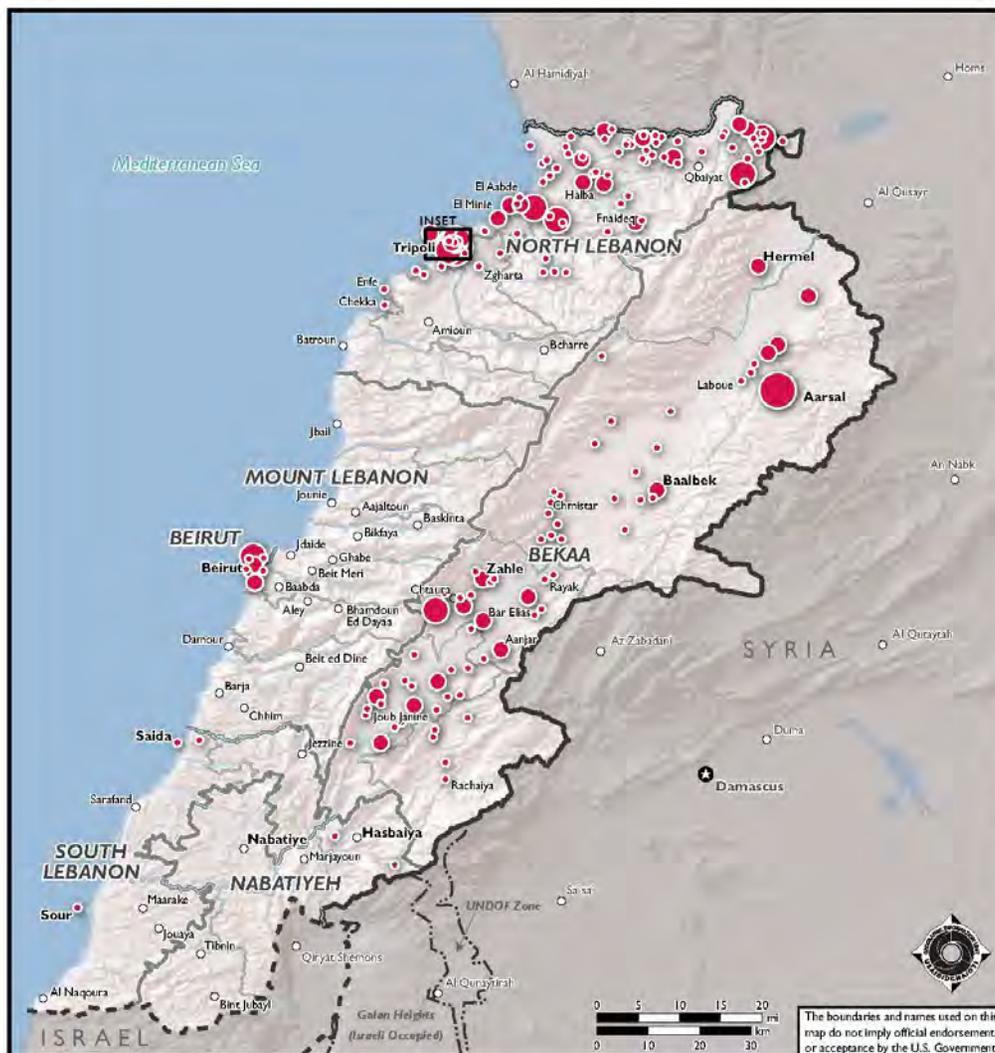
RLCSI focused on the areas most affected by the Syrian conflict: Tripoli, Akkar, and Minieh Donnieh in the North region, and key host communities in the Beqaa region, with limited programming in southern Beirut. RLCSI prioritized the most vulnerable, tense, and refugee-dense areas that posed the most significant threats to the stability of population centers and economic corridors.

It is important to note that RLCSI, during both implementation phases, was able to work in locations where other USAID and U.S. government programs had not been able to reach. This was due to the program's flexible, locally driven approaches and its ability to work with nascent organizations through in-kind grants. During RLCSI, certain communities blocked many of the relief efforts of the United Nations and other international aid organizations because their aid was perceived as being only for Syrian refugees. RLCSI gained access to these communities because its programming was seen as supporting the Lebanese communities. Please see Exhibit 2 on the following page for a map of RLCSI activities.

Exhibit 2. RLCSI Activities Map



OTI RECONFIGURED LEBANON CIVIC SUPPORT INITIATIVE (RLCSI) OTI ACTIVITIES FROM 2012 to 2015



PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Reduce resource and economic strain in host affected communities affected by the Syrian refugee crisis; and facilitate community engagement through cooperation and inclusive participation.

ACTIVITY TOTALS

Total: 159 activities for \$15.3M

Map Created: 02.25.2014
Data Sources: USAID/OTI, UNHCR, DoS/GCI

SECTION 2

Program Highlights and Achievements

The program highlights in this section include the objectives of the program’s original (LCSI) and reconfigured (RLCSI) scopes of work. These objectives were to:

- Promote leadership, critical thinking, activism, and advocacy (LCSI)
- Mitigate tensions in conflict-prone areas (LCSI; 2010-2011)
- Enhance CSOs’ capacity to advocate for local or national issues (LCSI)
- Reduce resource and economic strains in affected communities (RLCSI)
- Facilitate community engagement through cooperation and inclusive participation (RLCSI)

2.1 LCSI (2010-2013)

To achieve program objectives, LCSI provided grants to a range of Lebanese CSOs, youth groups, and other civil society actors, as well as local governments. The grants were intended to provide rapid support that capitalized on windows of opportunity for established CSOs, nascent organizations with limited institutional capability, and government counterparts with a mandate to provide services but no resources to do so. LCSI focused on working with local CSOs to identify and implement local solutions to local problems. The program staff developed activity ideas with grantees based on their communities’ needs, regardless of programming sector (i.e. activities ranged from public health, environment, and traffic congestion to water scarcity).

LCSI actively promoted opportunities for collective action by facilitating new linkages and relationships among groups, employing direct and indirect strategies. CSO representatives were regularly brought together for training and events, enhancing their advocacy capacities while providing them with opportunities to interact, establish relationships, and share ideas. LCSI also worked to ease the logistics of collaboration and information sharing by organizing events and conferences, making it easier for CSOs to cooperate and collaborate. A number of OTI activities included the active involvement of multiple partners, bringing CSOs together to team up on advocacy campaigns and other initiatives. By the end of the program, organizations had a greater ability to benefit from one another’s experience and ideas and to harness their collective potential to advocate effectively for change in Lebanon.

2.1.1 Promote Leadership, Critical Thinking, Activism, and Advocacy

Youth represent a large and highly vulnerable segment of the Lebanese population and are most susceptible to outside influence, regardless of whether it is positive or negative. They are often both the perpetrators and the first victims of violence. To encourage youth to become more active and productive members of their communities and provide them with alternatives to joining sectarian political groups or engaging in violence, LCSI supported skills-based training; community projects; and cultural, sports, and artistic events that provided peaceful outlets for expression and dialogue. These activities also provided opportunities for youth to interact and build relationships with youth from other sectarian groups, thereby mitigating tensions in mixed communities and in areas along sectarian fault lines. Program partners used “hooks” — including sports, theater, dance, and language and computer skills training — to attract youth to civic

organizations. These fun activities were complemented with more theoretical training events on topics like civic activism, conflict resolution, and municipal governance to help youth understand the myriad of ways they can influence their leaders. By fostering a new sense of civic responsibility and a conviction that they can make a difference, LCSi activities helped youth become active citizens capable of asserting their rights, holding leaders accountable, and effecting positive change.



A youth participant of a CrossArts hip-hop event helps spread positive social messages.

Cross Arts, a Tripoli-based CSO, used “hooks” effectively to engage youth in art as a tool to encourage peace messaging. Through eight LCSi-funded activities, Cross Arts engaged at-risk youth in artistic endeavors, such as rap, breakdancing, and graffiti, while using these activities to distribute messages of tolerance and peace. Participating youth came from all of Tripoli’s neighborhoods, from all religious and cultural backgrounds, and many had dropped out of school. Cross Arts provided a safe, creative space for youth to express themselves, and curated music, theater, graffiti, and flash mob events to address the violence that had overtaken Tripoli and the growing support for militants among youth who lack avenues for positive engagement.

In 2011, youth from LCSi partner Blue Mission successfully advocated to expand access to Saida’s public library and revitalize its services. With LCSi support, the Saida youth group developed a proposal to expand the operating hours of the library to increase access for youth and other community members. The youth brought their proposal to the mayor, who expressed his support for their ideas and solutions, and guided them through the procedure to enact this change. The youth signed a five-year contract with the municipality, under which they volunteered their own time to help staff the library and classify and catalog books.

After nearly a year of work, the library reopened to the public with 4,000 newly classified books, a children’s activity room, a state-of-the art computer room, and a newly flexible schedule. The youth group developed a volunteer schedule and organized the opening ceremony, which was attended by the mayor and local members of Parliament.

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

Approximately 30 youth from CitiAct from diverse sects biked through the streets of Dahieh and surrounding neighborhoods in the Beirut suburbs wearing t-shirts reading, “They disunited us...We met...Follow us.” 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.

In addition to engaging youth from violence-prone areas to address the needs of their community, these activities demonstrated that youth are capable of assuming a positive role in their community and effecting change. These activities also provided constructive alternatives for youth who might otherwise be susceptible to extremist influence. LCSI activities under this objective trained 14,806 Lebanese youth in civic participation, which led to 816 meetings between youth and municipal leaders.

2.1.2 Enhance CSOs’ Capacity to Advocate for Local or National Issues

A key challenge to promoting reform in Lebanon was the fractious nature of civil society. Although there was a wide range of CSOs of varying size and capacity, Lebanese civil society was divided along many lines. CSOs were unable to build a robust, independent civil society or effect institutional change.

LCSI sought to create long-term and mutually beneficial relationships with grantees. This necessitated a coaching model that involved regular mentoring, tutoring, training, and assessment. Skills training initially involved frequent face-to-face meetings with program staff or short-term capacity building experts, with consistent follow-up to help the organizations implement activities based on the training they had received.

LCSI also promoted opportunities for collective civil society action by facilitating new linkages and relationships between groups. LCSI regularly brought together representatives of CSOs for training and events, providing them with opportunities to interact, establish relationships, and share ideas, and many LCSI activities included the involvement of multiple partners. Bringing civil society actors together to work on advocacy and other initiatives gradually made collaboration easier and more familiar. LCSI fostered new, productive relationships among CSOs, allowing these Lebanese organizations a greater chance to share experience and ideas, and to harness their collective potential to advocate for change.

The modality of LCSI’s work helped build the credibility of grantees, and they were eventually seen as civil society leaders in Lebanon that could thrive long after the program ended. To maximize the impact of grant activities, as well as to ensure CSOs could maintain effective operations after the program ended, LCSI focused on building the capacity of its partners through targeted training; mentoring; and coaching in advocacy, project design and management, media outreach, networking, and social media. In addition, three important resources developed by the program — the Advocacy Index, Advocacy Trainers Network (ATN), and Civic Activism Toolkit — allowed it to build the capacity and credibility of nascent and established Lebanese CSOs, and to spread civic activism throughout Lebanon. Descriptions of these resources are described below under “Tools and Resources.”

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

This model of collaboration was also used by youth from the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU), a well-established CSO. Along with 12 other local CSOs, LCSi partners LAS, Hermel Association for Development, Vision for Rehabilitation and Care, SADA, AWW, YNCA, Toura Youth Club, Noqta Fasleh, and Sama collaborated with LPHU in its advocacy campaign aimed at ensuring access for the disabled to public spaces, schools, and sidewalks. 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.

As LCSi prepared for a January 2013 closeout, the team identified a variety of strategies to prepare former partners for success after OTI programming ceased. The team selected a small group of "legacy partners," those identified as the most promising and most likely to continue their work in the future, regardless of donor funding. These organizations participated in an organizational assessment process to identify key gaps and capacity needs. Along with grants to these organizations to fund youth engagement, advocacy, or conflict mitigation activities, LCSi integrated targeted training events and other capacity support to help better position these organizations for future success.

Under RLCSi, the program worked with its legacy partner organizations to kick-start new activities and mentor new partners in support of a reconfiguration that executed 159 grants. RLCSi relied on these local organizations — many of which had established themselves as viable civil society actors due to LCSi capacity building and mentoring — to provide ever-changing, on-the-ground information from the regions and recommendations for activities that would be most effective to address new dynamics.

2.2 RLCSI (2013-2015)

The influx of Syrian refugees into underprivileged areas of the North and the Beqaa regions led to serious socioeconomic problems and tensions with host communities.

RLCSI's quick-impact activities brought together local stakeholders to address community-specific tensions and provided tangible outcomes. Using its in-kind mechanism, RLCSI procured goods and services directly from local communities to increase income generation for local vendors, craftsmen, and laborers. RLCSI's impact can be measured by the resonance of its programming in host communities and in its close collaboration with municipal and community leaders, who actively engaged with RLCSI in targeted programming.

RLCSI built on existing partnerships with local CSOs developed under LCSi to quickly begin implementing activities under its new objectives, in many cases working in locations where no other international organizations were able to work.

Through these strong partnerships, RLCSI rehabilitated thousands of shelter units for refugees and houses for Lebanese host families; increased access to water or other municipal services for more than 200,000 people; reached more than 20,000 children and at-risk youth through supplemental education activities; and implemented more than 350 community cohesion activities and social improvement projects.

2.2.1 Reduce Resource and Economic Strains in Affected Communities

With the estimated 2 million refugees flooding into Lebanon since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, coming in waves as large as 30,000 in one night, local municipalities have struggled to meet the growing strain on water, electricity, and waste management resources in addition to strained health care and education systems. The correlating economic and environmental issues associated with the refugees' presence created a growing discontent and increasing social tension. To reduce resource and economic strains and resulting tensions, RLCSI funded activities in the water, shelter rehabilitation, medical support, education, emergency response, and economic growth sectors.

2.2.1.1 Improve Local Service Delivery

Water, sanitation, and hygiene. The rapid population growth due to the arrival of refugees in Lebanon exacerbated water scarcity, imposing additional pressure on host communities. The increase in water consumption coupled with drought worsened this strain. From baseline data gathered through surveys conducted by Key Development Services (KDS) s.a.l. and reports from local organizations and municipalities, RLCSI identified water as the resource strain that led to the greatest and most consistent tension in host communities. To address this problem, RLCSI supported 17 water-related initiatives totaling approximately \$1.6 million in the North and Beqaa regions. Some activities included training components through which farmers, residents, and local authorities were introduced to water-saving measures and advocacy workshops to adopt more sustainable irrigation systems. Lebanese farmers were the main beneficiaries in the Beqaa, as many of the rehabilitated wells provided them with desperately needed irrigation water. This reduced tensions between farmers and Syrian refugees over water resources and also helped

restore the farmers' source of livelihood, which had been threatened by drought. As the mayor of Ghazze, home to about 6,000 Lebanese and 11,000 Syrian refugees, said, "People who didn't have water, now have water, residents were angry and concerned about the increase in numbers of refugees, if it wasn't for the water and garbage intervention that OTI supported there would have been blood."

RLCSI partners also worked with local municipalities to address health and hygiene threats, which grew exponentially after the arrival of Syrian refugees. CSO partners Akkarouna and LADC installed washing machines to provide laundry services to 2,000 Syrian families in Akkar and the North. This initiative promoted more efficient water management and prevented the spread of diseases. The Lebanese Relief Council procured water tanks, pipes, and other equipment to enhance municipal services in Akkar. The organization also installed 15 mobile bathroom units in Minnieh and Bhanine, benefitting approximately 4,500 Syrian refugees, and equipped three wells, providing 2,100 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 injected \$55,000 into the local economy by using local businesses, helping to alleviate some of the economic and resource strains experienced by Lebanese host communities.

In September 2014, RLCSI assisted the Municipality of Qabb Elias in the Beqaa to equip a well with a solar-powered water pump that provides 110m³ of water per hour with minimal operating costs. For the previous four years, many residents relied on water trucking, but the pump and solar grid was completed within 40 days of the grant being signed, and residents started receiving water from the well. The well now benefits 42,000 people, including 12,000 Syrians, and will provide water security for the village for many years to come.



A project-funded solar-powered water pump has provided 30,000 Lebanese and Syrian residents of Qabb Elias with increased water security.

RLCSI equipped nine wells with water pumps in the Beqaa region, including the solar-powered wells in Qabb Elias and one smaller well in Ras Baalbeck. RLCSI also supported municipalities to engage farmers and residents in training on water use to promote water conservation to further alleviate the strain on this essential resource.

In total, RLCSI initiatives increased access to water for 242,040 Lebanese and Syrian people.

Shelter. In 2013, to reduce the burden on Lebanese host communities, mitigate tensions, and address refugees' shelter needs, RLCSI funded Akkarouna to rehabilitate Lebanese hosts' homes in the North region to accommodate Syrian families; in return, many Lebanese homeowners committed to provide shelter for refugees for free for up to a year, and keep rent low in subsequent years. Through cooperation with the local municipalities, Akkarouna rehabilitated 86 homes that housed 405 Lebanese and Syrian families. The small-scale rehabilitation efforts injected \$138,000 into the local economy, employed 58 local workers and reached 10 local

businesses over six months. In addition, all of the municipalities with which Akkarouna coordinated were newly formed and struggled to address the challenges of hosting refugees. This collaboration with Akkarouna helped municipal councils feel more confident to address local needs, restored residents' confidence in local government, and created a platform for future community-municipality engagement.

During this same period, RLCSI also collaborated with ShelterBox, an international organization, to help distribute 700 shelter kits to refugee families across Lebanon. Each kit included a tent for eight people, blankets, and waterproof groundsheets. ShelterBox utilized the expertise of seven different LCSI partners in the Beqaa and North to identify and access target communities and distribute the kits. LCSI contributed to the transportation costs, which enabled the distribution of more than \$500,000 worth of shelter supplies to 5,600 Syrian refugees.

All told, RLCSI's partners rehabilitated 711 Lebanese residences and 2,149 refugee shelter units, alleviating shelter concerns for 12,841 people.

Health services. In April 2013, RLCSI supported a group of psychologists in Tripoli to begin providing support to refugees and Lebanese citizens to help treat the effects of conflict trauma. The psychologists established the Being Center to facilitate access to psychological support for those in need. According to the Being Center, nearly all of its Syrian patients suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and many young patients exhibited common trauma symptoms like stuttering, nightmares, and anxiety, which hindered them from participating at school or in their daily lives. After just a few months, the Being Center had helped more than 450 individuals to overcome the most traumatic aspects of their experiences and live a more normal life, and improved the ability of its young patients to socialize with their peers.

Many international organizations — including the UNHCR, United Nations Children's Fund, Handicap International, and Médecins Sans Frontières — now refer patients to the Being Center. These organizations also sought out training on the outreach model that the Being Center pioneered to more effectively reach Syrian refugees.

In December 2013, RLCSI provided much-needed new equipment to the Order of Malta's medical center in Kefraya, which benefited Lebanese residents from at least six villages of the western Beqaa region. RLCSI support helped the center to expand its obstetrics/gynecology, dentistry, dermatology, and cardiology services. Residents can now access medical services for a 70 to 80 percent lower cost than at the private clinics where they needed to attend when the center became overburdened with Syrian refugees. The center also held information sessions and created brochures to inform village residents on how to ensure a healthier environment for all communities. This initiative was vital to reducing the strain on the health sector and helped diminish the growing health threats in the Beqaa region.

RLCSI's health service activities provided 20,180 people with improved access to medical care.

Education. In April 2014, RLCSI received \$5 million for activities aimed at increasing access to education for both Lebanese and Syrian children. These funds allowed LCSI to implement 27 education-related activities in host communities (see box on next page), which made it

possible for students, who would have otherwise not had the chance, to recuperate a lost year of school and increase their ability to enroll in the next academic year.

For example, the Saint Georges Intermediary School, located in the central Beqaa, provided education for Syrian and poor Lebanese students either for free or at a reduced cost during the 2012-2013 academic year. However, the school could not afford to do so for the 2013-2014 school year. With RLCSI support, Saint Georges paid the school fees for the 29 Syrian and 11 Lebanese students whose families could not afford the fees and were at risk of missing the academic year. Program funds also allowed the school to provide free books to 190 students. This support enabled families to save an average of \$300, which prevented many families from going into debt and helped others afford additional fuel for heat in the winter.

These activities helped reduce dropouts, kept youth off the streets and away from violent groups, and introduced youth to a new role in community development and civic activities, which helped reduce tensions between host communities and refugees.

RLCSI made a concerted effort to coordinate with other USAID and United Nations Development Programme efforts supporting education in Lebanon to ensure that efforts were not duplicated and OTI's assistance was applied as strategically as possible. This meant that the resources committed by RLCSI were either targeting schools that would otherwise miss out on desperately needed support, or providing additional support to the schools most affected by the crisis and in need of additional support to remain open to Lebanese and Syrian students.

Overall, RLCSI-funded activities equipped or rehabilitated 115 schools throughout Lebanon, and provided 31,160 people with increased access to education.

Emergency response. Tripoli endured recurrent episodes of violence between the rival neighborhoods of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, and between Islamist groups and LAF. After many of the battles, RLCSI partner the Coalition of Campaigns Against Violence in Tripoli called on its network of CSOs and volunteers, both within and outside the conflict areas, to confront the situation and help those affected by providing emergency relief supplies to hundreds of families, and in some instances helping to rehabilitate community areas.

LCSI 2014 Education Activities

- Summer remedial classes in Arabic for Syrian refugees and national exam preparation for Lebanese students in Grades 6 and 12 benefitted 4,505 students in the Beqaa; 4,200 in the North; and 3,020 in Beirut and the southern suburbs.
- Academic programming in Wadi Khaled, Akkar, and Tripoli provided 2,740 Syrian refugees with formal education opportunities. More than 2,000 of these students were certified by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education and continued their education the next year.
- Equipment provision to 71 public schools in the North and the Beqaa enabled the schools to increase enrollment, benefiting 14,200 students.
- More than 100 after-school activities, such as sports, arts, theater, music, and community projects, promoted the integration of Lebanese and Syrian youth and fostered social cohesion.
- Rehabilitation for nine schools in the Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tabbaneh neighborhoods of Tripoli damaged by the frequent clashes allowed 2,000 students to return to school and helped prevent them from being recruits for violent groups in the city.
- Provision of filters that supplied clean, safe water to 30 schools across the country.

After simultaneous car bombs were detonated in front of two Sunni mosques in August 2013, killing 47 people and wounding hundreds, the Coalition filled gaps in the local government's ability to respond and led efforts to rehabilitate damaged shops. Coalition volunteers assessed the damage to cars and houses, 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.



Volunteers clean up the streets in Tripoli following bombings on August 23, 2013.

Just one day after the bombing, more than 1,200 citizens — including volunteers from LCSi and RLCSI partners Utopia, Al Hadatha Association, Association for Development in Akkar, Youth for Growth and Development, Shabab al-Balad, Akkarouna, and Ribat — responded to the Coalition's call for action at both bomb sites. In coordination with the municipalities of Tripoli and Mina, volunteers swept up broken glass, removed burnt cars and trees, and started repairing the surrounding buildings. In only two days, the streets surrounding the sites were reopened to traffic. The Coalition worked with the Tripoli Tradesmen Association and RLCSI partner Hamid Construction, a contractor providing vocational training to at-risk youth, to rehabilitate the damaged shops. They hired 20 previously trained youth and 40 local workers to repair the shops. 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. As one shop owner explained, "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."

In November 2014, LADC gathered representatives of the first responder teams it had previously formed in 12 villages of the Beqaa to draw an emergency map that would enable them to respond to emergencies more effectively. The attendees divided the villages into clusters and appointed a responsible person for every cluster to coordinate and better monitor responses. In addition to emergency unit locations, the map includes contact details and a list of the stock of emergency supplies (such as blankets, mattresses, body bags, flashlights, uniforms, and lamps) available in each location. LADC also trained 80 volunteers in primary care, first aid, and emergency response. Through this project, LADC succeeded in bringing volunteers from many areas of the Beqaa together to develop a strategy and materials for emergency intervention, which their municipalities had neither the capacity nor resources to provide.

RLCSI and its partner organizations established 17 emergency response teams in Lebanon, and provided emergency response training to 460 Lebanese and Syrian people.

2.2.1.2 Enhance Income-Generating Capacity

As competition for scarce jobs increased and tourism and other sectors were negatively affected by the security situation, RLCSI partners began working to reduce economic strain and tension.

In the North, in the Middle Dreib and Wadi Khaled villages in Akkar, cross-border shelling had forced farmers and their families to abandon their homes and farm land. In 2013, with support

from RLCSI, CSO Development Engineering Consultancy (DEC) installed 65 tunnel-like greenhouses in these regions, providing farmers with a sustainable, profitable, and safe agriculture activity to recover their lost livelihoods. DEC and the Lebanese Association for Urban Agriculture (LAUA) also introduced agricultural training on best practices in greenhouse cultivation for participating farmers to improve their skills and income potential. The greenhouses yielded immediate results: Most farmers doubled their monthly income during the first harvest.



An Akkar farmer surveys a newly installed greenhouse provided by DEC.

In the Beqaa, RLCSI supported LAUA to install 20 greenhouses in the area of Baalbeck. Subsequently, three of the beneficiary farmers invested their own money to install additional greenhouses to increase their production. This inspired other farmers to apply for small loans to build greenhouses, grow vegetables instead of labor-intensive and less-profitable tobacco, and increase their income.

In 2014, RLCSI supported local CSO Bassme w Zeituneh to conduct a vocational training program in sewing for Syrian women in the Beirut camp of Shatila. Most of the women who attended were widows with children. The program trained the women on sewing production and gave them an avenue to sell their products. Through Bassme w Zeituneh's wide network of Syrian expatriates, women's handmade products were sold in exhibitions in Lebanon, Dubai, Qatar, Denmark, Netherlands, and Jordan. In addition, five local fashion designers approached Bassme w Zeituneh and sought embroidery work for their designs. Female trainees began being paid for the sale of their products, which greatly assisted them to support their families.

At the end of that first activity, Bassme w Zeituneh launched a crowd-funding campaign for the women's workshop and vocational training center. The funds raised helped the CSO implement a branding and marketing strategy that allowed the workshop to become self-sustaining. With additional support from LCSI, Bassme w Zeituneh expanded the workshop and training program to the North and Beqaa regions. In 2014, Bassme w Zeituneh won a €10,000 Women Sowers of Development award from Caritas International and the Fidel Gotz Foundation.

RLCSI activities provided more than 6,000 Lebanese and 1,300 Syrian people — including more than 1,700 women — with the ability to earn more money and provide for their families.

2.2.2 Facilitate Community Engagement through Cooperation and Inclusive Participation

RLCSI supported platforms for people to come together to challenge the rhetoric of sectarianism and violence, reclaim public space, and identify solutions to shared problems. Program partners mobilized more than 40,000 people across 135 cooperative platforms and 122 peace campaigns.

Platforms for constructive collaboration. LCSI created the Naseej project in April 2013 with the Al Hadatha Association, a CSO based in Akkar that LCSI had previously worked with on several occasions. Naseej, which means “fabric” in Arabic, was originally a pilot project to test the idea of a platform for Akkar residents — Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees — to engage the local government to collectively identify community needs and possible resources to address these

needs, in the hopes of reducing tensions and strains on host communities. Al Hadatha worked with residents to establish community committees (called Naseej committees) in 13 refugee-dense villages of Akkar. Each Naseej committee included Syrian refugees, Lebanese residents, and municipal representatives. LCSi and Al Hadatha trained the committees to conduct needs assessments, identify common issues, write proposals, and coordinate and share information with municipalities and international donors. Following the training, the committees conducted rapid needs assessments based on the consensus of all members and the municipality. The committees prioritized needs in four areas: safety and security, health, registration, and education.

The Naseej model of collaboration and inclusion of both Lebanese and Syrians alongside the municipality was a new concept to Akkar and northern Lebanon. Previously, most assistance provided by international CSOs had been directed to communities in Akkar based on decisions made in Beirut or abroad. This created tension and resentment among the local population in Akkar, whereas providing an opportunity to collectively prioritize and address local needs was key to helping participants overcome an initial reluctance to interact with one another.

In October 2013, Al Hadatha organized a conference in Beirut that brought together the 13 Naseej committees with representatives from the international community. The event provided a forum for the pilot committees to share their proposal ideas with potential donors, and many Naseej committees capitalized on the relationships they established with donor organizations independently of LCSi (see box).

As a result of the success of the 13 pilot committees, 27 new Naseej committees were formed in 2014, and the second annual conference had 450 attendees, including representatives of international CSOs and donor agencies, local CSOs, and local government representatives. This large turnout demonstrated the increased interest in the Naseej model as a platform to promote social cohesion between Lebanese host communities and Syrian refugees. Attendees received a booklet with priority projects identified by the 40 Naseej committees. The booklet facilitated collaboration between international CSOs and the Naseej committees to better channel funds into locally customized projects and targeted interventions.

OTI also offered follow-on support for some of the recommended projects. In

October 2014, RLCSI provided the municipality of Machha with needed materials to expand its existing sewage network to new residential neighborhoods. The project was identified as a community priority by the local Naseej committee in collaboration with the municipality. LCSi

Naseej Committees' Continued Success

- The committee in the village of Bireh received support from War Child to enroll 200 children in a local school.
- The committee in the village of Tal Abbas received support from Arcenciel to introduce English classes for Lebanese and Syrian students and provide psychosocial support for Syrian refugees.
- The committee in the village of Bebnine received support from Save the Children to conduct vocational training in weaving for a group of Syrian women to improve their income-generating capacity.
- The committee in the village of Tal Abbas provided shelter and non-food items to 15 Syrian refugee families with support from ShelterBox, Save the Children, and the Coalition of Charity Organizations.
- The committee in the village of Berqayel conducted a mapping of Syrian families living in garages and warehouses and distributed stoves and 100 liters of fuel with support from the Coalition of Charity Organizations. The mapping included information about the families' needs and health conditions.
- The Berqayel committee also collaborated with the Al Hadatha nonprofit private school to enroll 235 school-aged Syrian children.

supplied pipes, sand, gravel, and cement, and the municipality provided the labor, which established approximately 4,300 additional meters to the sewage system for neighborhoods hosting nearly 4,000 residents. Promoting transparency and good governance practices, the municipality made the request for quotations public so that all village contractors had an equal opportunity to bid on the project. This initiative helped alleviate the flooding of collective septic tanks; reduced the spread of bad odors, insects, and diseases; and prevented the contamination of underground water and wells. The project benefitted 300 Lebanese households, 150 Syrian families, and 50 businesses that are now connected to the newly rehabilitated sewage network.

The concept of Naseej committees gained traction within the participating communities and with other international donors. In addition to the individual Naseej committees' continued success (see box, previous page), the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNDP have launched initiatives in the North and Beqaa modelled after the Naseej approach.

Public spaces reclaimed. In the wake of recurrent violence in Tripoli, which damaged buildings and paralyzed the city's economy, RLCSI sought to capitalize on the opening created by the April 2014 security plan. In addition to other ongoing activities in Tripoli, RLCSI expanded its approach by working with the Municipality of Tripoli to create an urban plan. The process of developing the urban plan was overseen by RLCSI grantee Beyond Reform and Development. Together with all stakeholders — from civil society to local government — Beyond Reform and Development facilitated sessions with local leaders to establish priority areas in need of improvement and then set about developing an urban plan for renewal of the Bab al-Tabbaneh, Jabal Mohsen, and Qobbe neighborhoods. The urban plan is currently being reviewed by a number of potential donors for funding and implementation.

In August 2014, following five days of clashes between militants and the Lebanese army in Arsal, RLCSI focused on post-conflict activities to restore normal life and promote messages of peace and tolerance. RLCSI capitalized on its local grantee network to conduct activities in Arsal despite the volatile security situation and a road blockade that would usually limit international organizations' mobility. RLCSI partner the Coalition for Stability and Peace in Arsal conducted clean-up campaigns and rehabilitation efforts to ensure four local schools were ready for students in time for the new academic year. The Coalition also used media platforms to convey messages of peace and tolerance and counter the traditional negative image of Arsal as a hub for militants.

At the same time, RLCSI partner Jousour organized six days of outdoor recreational activities for children to help bring back hope and positive energy to Arsal. RLCSI also supported Jousour to establish a mini football field, which it now uses to implement activities that bring together youth and provide them with a much-needed alternative to the growing volatility and violence in the village. In total, RLCSI funded the repair of public spaces through 209 community rehabilitation activities and 166 community initiatives, which benefitted roughly 240,000 people.



Youth in Arsal play a friendly football match during the inaugural ceremony of the field.

SECTION 3

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

After five years of implementation, two distinct programming configurations, and 319 grants executed through dozens of grantees, LCSi gained valuable lessons. These lessons learned and best practices can serve as a guide for current and upcoming OTI, USAID, and other donor programs in Lebanon and around the world.

3.1 Lessons Learned

Cultivate local networks. LCSi benefited from the regional knowledge and situational awareness of local organizations. LCSi sought out established and nascent local organizations with which to work, recognizing that local organizations better understood the regional and societal dynamics. Unlike most OTI programs, LCSi focused on developing and building the capacity of local organizations in its initial phase. Because of that, after the program reconfiguration, LCSi had a number of reliable partners around the country to call upon to begin work immediately.

This approach also paid security dividends. In addition to leading to better-attuned and more locally appropriate programming, this approach allowed for the successful implementation of projects in villages in the North, South, and Beqaa that other U.S. government and international programs could not access. LCSi staff were welcomed and even protected by the communities in which they worked, which led to the absence of security concerns, even in volatile regions.

Maintain ongoing relationships with local organizations. LCSi was particularly successful in building strong partnerships with CSOs and working closely with them to implement successful grant activities. Although LCSi provided grantees with direct capacity building support, one of the hallmarks of OTI support to CSOs in Lebanon was ongoing mentoring to grantees throughout the activity cycle. This approach enhanced the capacity of nascent organizations around the country, allowing them to ensure greater impact of their activities, and established OTI as a respected, go-to partner for civil society in Lebanon, which gave the program access to some of Lebanon's most conflict-prone areas. LCSi grantees have repeatedly praised this model of partnership and recognized OTI's support in empowering them to be more effective.

Procure locally. As with all OTI programs, LCSi procured local materials, services, and labor whenever possible. This approach helped workers and vendors in the villages in which program activities operated, adding a secondary benefit to the communities in addition to the activities' intended effects. By procuring from multiple vendors within the communities in which it was operating, LCSi avoided supply shortages and delivery delays and provided large quantities of materials and assistance to communities during emergencies. In total, RLCSI-funded activities injected nearly \$5 million into local economies and supported over 800 Lebanese businesses.

Use "hooks" for youth involvement. Whether it was linking sought-after vocational training with municipal governance awareness or using graffiti to engender a better sense of community cohesion, the use of creativity to engage youth to become active and productive members of their community was important to the success of LCSi. Rather than framing activities as "conflict resolution" or focusing explicitly on difficult issues like political and sectarian violence, LCSi

first built trust with youth by showing them how to foster peace in their communities through action and shared experiences. “Hooks” like sports and art activities or volunteer community improvement campaigns gained the attention and attendance of youth; and with that attention, implementing partners could then build young people’s sense of self respect, civic responsibility, and community involvement — and steer them away from violence.

Ensure clear communications and grantee buy-in during a strategic pivot. The transition from LCSII, which focused primarily on civic activism and youth participation, to RLCSII, which focused more on social tension and economic and resource strain, represented a dramatic change in programming. The shift came about partially as a result of LCSII’s grantees alerting program staff to the growing impact of the refugee crisis. The trust and communication channels LCSII had established with those grantees supported the program’s understanding of local needs, and allowed the program to pivot in response to the urgent change in priorities. At the same time, communicating the change in objectives to grantees was critical to developing new activities that addressed those new priorities — particularly with grantees that already had experience with LCSII under the earlier configuration.

Build and maintain working relationships across the donor community. When foreign aid programming in Lebanon moved toward crisis response and refugee aid, developing and maintaining relationships with other responding agencies — including the United Nations, bilateral donors, and other U.S. government entities — was crucial. By maintaining active lines of communication with these agencies, LCSII filled programming gaps and took advantage of official approvals obtained by other agencies to work in similar areas. These relationships also allowed OTI to influence the way refugee and host-community assistance was delivered in Lebanon and to become a leader despite having a comparatively small budget. By collaborating with other donors, LCSII was able to draw attention to its pilot projects and activities generated by the Naseej committees, encouraging others to build on these successes.

3.2 Tools and Resources

Civic Activism Toolkit. LCSII produced the Civic Activism Toolkit to provide all interested activists and organizations with practical tips for implementing local development and advocacy initiatives. The toolkit includes 39 how-to sheets on organizing high-impact projects and initiatives, working with decision-makers, recruiting peers, mobilizing communities, developing public-policy alternatives, building successful advocacy campaigns, and communicating effectively through mainstream and social media. The Civic Activism Toolkit was based on the experiences and insight of Lebanese civil society actors and contains case studies, examples, and photographs collected from LCSII activities. A team of Lebanese and international civil society experts analyzed the toolkit’s examples to determine the key lessons learned, which were then crafted into a series of tips and tools that can be applied by CSOs in Lebanon — and around the world — to effect change in their communities. The toolkit is available in English and Arabic. LCSII distributed the toolkit at events and conferences, and made it available online at www.civicboard.org. In 2013, with funding from USAID’s Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning, OTI developed a webinar called “The Art of Advocacy,” co-facilitated by LCSII staff and partners, and an online Advocacy Resource Center, based in part on the toolkit. The toolkit, webinar, and self-paced training, as well as other relevant materials, are available at the USAID Advocacy Resource Center: <http://kdid.org/kdid-advocacy-group/9839/resource>.

Advocacy Index. Based on the USAID publication Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators, LCSi created the Advocacy Index as a quantitative tool to measure advocacy partners' capacity before and after every grant in five competency areas: CSO linkages and coalition building, outreach, engagement with decision-makers, data research and analysis, and policy development. Partners scored themselves on a six-point scale in each competency area. LCSi staff then calculated an average score of all competency areas. This process helped 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 measurements at the end of each activity provided vital data on the effectiveness of program interventions and remaining capacity needs. The utility and value of the Advocacy Index has been recognized by other USAID projects and missions, which now use the index for their own programmatic purposes.

Advocacy Trainers Network. Recognizing a gap in the number of trainers in regional areas of Lebanon, and to empower regional advocacy training, LCSi launched the Advocacy Trainers Network (ATN), a platform that engaged leading trainers to share best practices and new tools in advocacy training and coaching. The network established a common understanding of advocacy, unified terminology, and provided basic tools for achieving change. The ATN promoted linkages among CSOs and provided trainers with learning and professional development opportunities by introducing knowledge and resources from international practitioners and experts. LCSi held two ATN conferences during the first phase of program implementation, bringing together advocacy trainers, partners, and LCSi staff. The first, in March 2011, focused on standardizing training curricula, ensuring quality control of LCSi advocacy training activities, and establishing the first official network of advocacy trainers. In September 2011, the second conference brought together seven trainers, six partners, and a U.S.-based advocacy training expert. Following the September conference, the trainers expressed interest in taking over the organization and management of the ATN to make it sustainable.

After Action Reviews. During LCSi's first phase, the program team used After Action Reviews, organized upon completion of each advocacy grant, as evaluation platforms to discuss best practices and lessons. The reviews brought the grantee, advocacy trainers, and LCSi advocacy team together for a structured discussion and assessment of the grant approach, project implementation, key successes, and lessons that could be applied to future advocacy activities.

Advocacy Boot Camp. Also during its initial implementation phase, LCSi initiated the Advocacy Boot Camp series, a platform to foster participatory learning among partners and LCSi staff. During the one-day boot camps, LCSi advocacy partners shared their successes and challenges, and the program advocacy team identified the partners' capacity-building needs, modified their training approaches, and suggested new models for activity implementation.

Social Tension and Resource Strain (STaRS) survey. LCSi provided KDS with a grant to do a monthly survey in villages within RLCSi's geographic focus areas. Each month, interviews were split between villages that both had and had not received support from LCSi grants. The survey reached out to randomly selected individuals to gauge their perceptions of Lebanese-Syrian and intra-Lebanese tensions, as well as the particular resources that were under the most strain and therefore most likely to lead to further conflict. The data provided a useful management and

decision-making tool that helped triangulate the assumptions made by the program in deciding where to invest resources, and allowed the program to see how perceptions and priorities changed over time as a result of political and environmental developments.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

LCSI continually sought to measure the impact of its activities and effectiveness of its investments. Program staff collected qualitative and quantitative data at the individual grant, intermediate result, and programmatic levels, all of which fed into strategic decision-making that occurred approximately every three to six months. Collective data management systems proved challenging considering the large number of grants the program executed across an array of technical areas and varied geographic settings.

To provide a framework to report on and aggregate impact, LCSI developed four activity clusters: youth successfully influence decision-makers; CSO linkages lay the groundwork for collective action; creation of independent space for youth activism challenges status quo; and youth attitudes and behaviors toward conflict change positively. The use of these clusters to group related activities helped to improve M&E efforts at the grant and program levels by facilitating data flow from the grant activity to the programmatic level.

Under RLCSI, the team developed four new clusters: improved local service delivery, enhanced income-generating capacity, creating platforms for constructive collaboration, and reclaiming public space. The first two clusters fed into the economic strain objective and the last two into the community engagement objective.

Throughout the life of every LCSI grant activity, using diverse measurement and knowledge-sharing tools (discussed below), M&E specialists and program development specialists provided guidance on allocating resources to capture and share implementation results and lessons. Apart from program development specialists, LCSI assigned its field officers to work with their respective grantees to ensure that data was reported in a timely, consistent, and accurate fashion. LCSI created M&E plans for all partners at the beginning of each grant, developing tailored indicators and outputs to evaluate the effectiveness of each partner, approach, and activity. LCSI used focus groups to collect impact information from grantee participants and beneficiaries. The M&E specialists led this process in collaboration with local focus group experts. For each grant activity, the groups interviewed were determined based on the activity's context and components. The information gathered proved valuable for programming new activities, fostered knowledge exchange among staff and partners, and enabled the program to integrate best practices into upcoming activities, replicating across regions when possible.

With the allocation of Economic Growth funding, RLCSI used KDS analyses to examine activities completed at the cluster level for enhanced income-generating capacity to develop a better understanding of the effect program interventions had on direct and indirect beneficiaries. The analysis results provided RLCSI with much-needed data on the challenges and successes of grant activities. The data was valuable for programming new RLCSI activities and served as baseline data for future USAID and other donor-funded programs working in similar areas.

SECTION 4

Conclusion

Both LCSi and RLCSi supported local organizations in promoting far-reaching community cohesion and stability. LCSi helped numerous CSOs achieve their missions of advocating for positive change and strengthening moderate voices in Lebanon, and the program touched a generation of youth, encouraging them to see beyond sectarian divides and promote peace in a divided society. Building on the success of those activities, RLCSi worked with communities most affected by the war in neighboring Syria to address exacerbated sectarian tensions within and among Lebanese communities and to mitigate resource strains.

The approaches LCSi piloted and adapted have been replicated by OTI and other USAID programs around the world, and tools like the Advocacy Index continue to benefit other civil society development efforts. This index provides OTI with useful information about the capacity of current and future partners in Lebanon, and is easy to translate into other countries and contexts, as demonstrated by USAID's Jordan Civil Society Program and others. Broader lessons learned from youth programming and civil society capacity building have been valuable for many types of projects, both within and outside of Lebanon, and remain accessible through the online Civic Activism Toolkit and Art of Advocacy training. Similarly, LCSi has shared strategies for youth engagement and promoting community cohesion with other OTI programs in the Middle East and elsewhere.

RLCSi allowed OTI to pivot programming to address a growing threat that the Syrian crisis could further destabilize Lebanon and potentially lead to a new civil war. RLCSi built on the strong partnerships with local organizations and communities developed through LCSi to gain access to difficult-to-reach populations. The trust and credibility built through LCSi allowed RLCSi to work with communities on sensitive issues surrounding refugees and social tensions.

In addition, RLCSi prioritized selecting activities that would have a catalytic effect. The success of OTI interventions in various sectors, including education, rehabilitation, and assistance to refugees, has encouraged international CSOs to replicate similar activities. Drawing lessons from OTI projects, several organizations approached OTI grantees to expand the activities initiated under RLCSi or to design similar activities. Examples include:

- OTI supported Utopia to engage youth in sports, art, environmental, and community awareness activities, including rehabilitation of neighborhoods damaged by conflict in Tripoli. After seeing the results of Utopia's work, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Save the Children requested that Utopia replicate its OTI-supported projects and expand their work into other neighborhoods. Through DRC's support, Utopia rehabilitated two additional neighborhoods in Bab Al Tabbaneh and Zahrieh. In addition to its success in street rehabilitation, Utopia raised its own funds and distributed aid to displaced families in Bab Al Tabbaneh during the October 2014 clashes. It was chosen by the International Orthodox Christian Charity to distribute 1,000 aid boxes, and DRC partnered with it to train CSOs on aid distribution in the Beqaa and South, and to help monitor the process.

- The International Rescue Committee requested 3,000 copies of the refugee guide (for new entrants) created by grantee Al Hadatha Association under an OTI-funded grant. The committee distributed the guides under its protection program and conducted awareness sessions for newly arrived refugees on how to register.
- OTI provided support to CSO Bassme w Zeituneh to provide 300 Syrian students with an accelerated learning program in the neighborhood of Shatila in Beirut. It also helped the organization equip a private education center. Based on the success of these activities and the availability of the physical space, UNICEF and the Canadian Embassy are providing additional funding for accelerated learning programs in the Bassme w Zeituneh center.
- OTI supported Arcenciel to establish a waste processing unit in the central Beqaa region to address tensions stemming from increased waste around informal tented settlements. The unit includes several high-tech machines that can produce raw materials for plastic factories. Based on the success of this initiative, Aide Francaise de Development is replicating Arcenciel's model and establishing a similar unit in Akkar.

OTI will continue to build on RLCSI's efforts to strengthen community ties and mitigate the effects of spillover from the Syrian crisis through its new program, the Lebanon Community Resilience Initiative. Launched in September 2014, this program aims to strengthen resilience in Lebanese communities by mitigating rising sectarian tension and tension between host communities and refugees, as well as countering the influence of violent extremist groups.