



BUILDING LOCAL P/CVE CAPACITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST THROUGH COMMUNITY PREVENTION NETWORKS

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT: LEBANON AND JORDAN

Report submission date: December 30, 2020

Performance period: July – September 2020

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS: LEBANON

- Launched call for proposals aimed at scaling up the project to new municipalities across a number of Lebanese governorates, including Mount Lebanon, North, Akkar, Beqaa, Baalbeck-Hermel and South. Selected 5 new municipalities through a competitive proposal process.
- Delivered proposal writing workshop delivered LPNs of Saida, Majdal Anjar and Tripoli.
- Tested the “PVE Teachers’ toolkit” in Saida.
- Responded to the Beirut port explosion by mobilizing youth from the partner Local Prevention Networks (LPNs) to engage in community humanitarian activities in partnership with Young Cities teams
- Conducted mediation training for municipal police, municipal members and civil defence in Majdal Anjar
- Organized capacity development sessions with Jabal Mohsen vulnerable youth and parents to promote community engagement and non-violence.

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS: JORDAN

- Conducted and continued monthly dialogue sessions “Dewaneyat” to ensure continuous communication and exchange on violent extremism across Jordan.
- Delivered dialogue skills training in Karak to build the capacity of the network’s friends on acceptance and conflict transformation.
- Liaised with the new focal point of the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA).
- Launched recruitment of a new project manager.

COMPLETED ACTIVITIES: LEBANON

Outcome A: Increased ability of the community Prevention Networks (PNs) in select municipalities to meaningfully engage with local, national and international policymakers and peers to support the implementation of the national P/CVE strategies.

The situation in Lebanon continues to deteriorate as the national government fails to address the acute economic and political crisis afflicting the country. The country has grappled with a range of economic, social and political crises since the October 2019 protests that led three governments faltering. The environment has become a catalyse for hate, polarization, and in some cases, extremism.

Anger towards the national government escalated in dramatic fashion following a massive blast at the port of Beirut on August 4, 2020. The explosion killed more than 200 people, wounded around 7,000, and left 300,000 families homeless. The explosion renewed calls for accountability and good governance, as protestors once again took to the streets. The pressure on the government led to its resignation. The appointment of a new prime minister, and his subsequent inability to form a government, led to another government resignation, plunging the country once again into political turmoil.



The port explosion came simultaneously as a national spike in COVID-19 cases.

Amidst a rapidly evolving and deteriorating environment, the Strong Cities Network (SCN) team adapted to the challenges to deliver community-based activities and capacity building programs to prevent extremism, build community cohesion, and enhance and build on the knowledge and know-how of key stakeholders a part of the Local Prevention Networks (LPNs).

Local- Local Coordination

The LPNs played a key role in delivering rapid response to the port of Beirut explosion. LPN focal points from Majdal Anjar, Tripoli and Saida mobilized youth to deliver emergency assistance, clean debris and distribute food to some of the worst-hit neighbourhoods and most vulnerable people affected by the blast. Together with the youth, the SCN supported the preparation and delivery of 7,000 meals and helped restore 24 destroyed homes.

National-Local Coordination

While the rapid response to the emergency in the wake of the Beirut explosion highlight the coordination capacity of the LPNs to respond to crisis, the SCN team similarly focused on growing the model to new cities in partnership with national stakeholders. In partnership with the Lebanese National Prevention of Violent Extremism Coordination Unit, the SCN launched a call for proposals in early June, to enhance municipal-led PVE initiatives and engage new municipalities in the formation of LPNs.

The call for proposals garnered interest from 25 municipalities. Mayors, municipal stakeholders and civil society organization (CSO) representatives, and the Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Beirut attended. Municipalities submitted community-focused PVE project proposals responding to issues such as polarization and hate speech as well as socio-economic vulnerabilities. Some of the projects focused on improving vocational opportunities for youth through skills development as well as enhancing the critical thinking skills of youth through media literacy training and capacity building. Other community-based projects were focused on providing youth with an active role in their community through human rights, conflict resolution and advocacy education and involving them in artistic, sports and dialogue activities.

Religious leaders and teachers were also an integral part of the proposals submitted to enhance religious tolerance and the role of interactive educational methodologies in prevention of violent extremism respectively. It is worth noting that the teachers' toolkit and the religious agenda previously developed by SCN will be utilized by municipalities working with the aforementioned stakeholders.

The call for proposals launched across a number of municipalities, and resulted in the expansion of SCN programming to 5 new municipalities, including, Akkar Al Atika and Berqayel in the Akkar governorate, Bedawi in the North, Kfarshuba in the South and Irsal in Baalbeck-Hermal governorate. SCN will work with the selected municipalities to finalize project logframes, budgets, and awards. Supporting this effort, the National PVE Unit, will train selected municipalities on the national PVE strategy. The SCN team is also partnering with the National PVE Unit and the British Council in Lebanon to provide a series of in-depth virtual training and coaching sessions to enhance the capacities of LPNs and CSOs to monitor extremist groups online.

National-International Coordination

Supporting rehabilitation and reintegration at the local and national level, the SCN team was in the midst of organizing a regional virtual meeting with policymakers in Lebanon, Jordan and the Netherlands to learn about the Dutch Safety Houses model. Another virtual meeting will be conducted later on with the local prevention networks to focus on the institutionalisation of P/CVE programming at the local levels.



Outcome B: Enhanced quality of P/CVE activities by LPNs targeting vulnerable youth, teachers, youth workers and religious leaders in select municipalities in Jordan and Lebanon.

Recurring waves of political, social and economic crisis in Lebanon required LPNs to be responsive to the vulnerabilities of their communities. To that effect, coordination meetings with focal points and LPN members were being conducted regularly; physically when lockdown measures were lifted, and virtually when gathering restrictions were in place.

Majdal Anjar

In Majdal Anjar, the LPN organized a seminar on Islamophobia and the discourse of extremism, gathering a large number of academics, religious leaders and civil society activists in the Bekaa region. Additionally, and in partnership with the Centre for Mediation at St. Joseph University, a two-day mediation training workshop was conducted for 20 municipal police, municipal officials and civil defense employees to enhance their abilities to manage conflict. The training was provided tools for conflict mitigation at the inter- and intra-village levels.

To combat the stigmatization and stereotypes around Majdal Anjar, the LPN launched a short film competition whereby multimedia students would film the role of the municipality, LPNs, religious leaders, teachers and others in promoting tolerance and acceptance. As a result, one youth was selected by the LPN to produce a short movie that will be launched during 2021.

In the upcoming reporting period, the LPN will support parenting sessions in an effort to provide parents with the needed knowledge and tools to understand their children's needs, identify signs of their children's engagement with extremist groups and thus, prevent them from potentially engaging in violence and extremism.

Saida

In Saida, the LPN worked on testing the PVE teacher's toolkit developed in 2019 to ensure its adaptability and application within the current context. The testing was organized over a period of two days with 40 Lebanese school teachers, UNRWA teachers and scouts' leaders participating. This group was selected from a pool of 75 participants who had already received PVE training during a previous project phase in 2018. Following the testing, the teachers and the Saida LPN will produce a final edition intended for publication and adoption in schools. In partnership with the National PVE Unit, the toolkit will also be presented to the Ministry of Education to discuss its use in all schools across Lebanon.

During the upcoming reporting period, the Saida LPN will work on establishing a Psychosocial Support Unit (PSU) within the municipality. The initiative hopes to borrow part of the Dutch Safety Houses model in the development of the PSU. The initiative is the first of its kind and will be a pilot whereby the unit will include LPN members, teachers and youth trained on psychological first aid, active listening, counselling and referral mechanisms. A strategy will be developed for the LPN to conduct outreach, psychosocial support and referral. Saida has similarly secured a physical location for the LPN to act as a coordinating unit for this psychosocial support effort.

Tripoli

Upon launching the call for proposals on the July 7, 2020, a meeting was organized under the patronage of the mayor of Tripoli, inviting mayors in the Northern governorates to apply for the call for proposals launched by SCN. The meeting was conducted on the July 15, 2020 whereby mayors, municipal members and CSO representatives from the governorates of Tripoli and Akkar attended. The meeting highlighted the role of established LPNs playing a coordination function with other cities, and assisting in developing PVE initiatives in new locales.

The LPN similarly played a key role in organizing a series of capacity development sessions with 30 vulnerable youth and 25 parents in Jabal Mohsen area. To tailor the training to their needs, an assessment was conducted prior to the training sessions whereby youth were asked about their needs and interests. In partnership with two LPN member CSOs, Himaya, a child protection organization, and Janah Al Rahma, a humanitarian aid organization, the LPNs led 20 workshop sessions addressing the needs and concerns of youth. The sessions were focused on civic rights and responsibility, and similarly touched on different forms of violence including physical, psychological, verbal and sexual violence and neglect. Youth



were also provided with guidance on decision making, self-appreciation and positive thinking techniques, especially when exposed to psychosocial pressure or dealing with stress.

Two sessions concentrated on parents worried about the challenges of raising their children in the current climate. Trainers offered professional assistance to help them understand the needs of youth. The sessions provided youth with a safe space and allowed them to discuss controversial topics without fear of repercussion. Some participants who were reluctant to express themselves at the beginning of the sessions were able to open up gradually about domestic violence, in addition to other forms of aggression they encountered in their lives.

The Tripoli LPN were also trained on social media tools and skills. This was a follow up to a previous social media training meant to enhance the visibility of the network. Participants worked on developing strategies to promote the services provided by the LPN.

COMPLETED ACTIVITIES: JORDAN

Outcome A: Increased ability of the community Prevention Networks (PNs) in select municipalities to meaningfully engage with local, national and international policymakers and peers to support the implementation of the national P/CVE strategies.

In late August, as Jordan was hit by a fierce second wave of COVID-19, strict and stringent restriction measures were put into place. These public health restrictions significantly limited the physical movement of individuals, banned social gatherings and closed venues such as conference halls and local work spaces. This constituted a significant challenge to achieving the outcomes of the project during this period.

The COVID-19 related developments must not be looked at in a silo. Rather, it was an added layer of challenges to the country's difficult socioeconomic standing *prior* to the pandemic. Crucially, the security, political and socioeconomic fallouts of the crisis dovetail with the drivers of violent extremism that are typically cited and found in the literature, including increased unemployment; higher rates of poverty; marginalisation; a widening social injustice gap; and increased securitisation.

This not only meant there is arguably more fertile ground for radicalisation and violent extremism in Jordan today (as a direct result of said fallouts), but also that the role of the LPNs is both more relevant and difficult in the current circumstances. While the country witnessed new patterns of hate and extremist behaviour, whether in speech or action, as observed in recent horrendous in Zarqa, Irbid, Amman and other places, LPNs were trained, active, aware, and engaged with their local communities. The role of the LPNs, however, has become more difficult in the sense that the government does not seem to have a comprehensive/effective recovery plan to mitigate the aforementioned fallouts, and it even seems to be more dependent today on state-centric security approaches. As a result, a near halt of PVE activities were observed in regards to the national P/CVE strategy.

Furthermore, as priorities shifted to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications, there was less space for the LPNs to engage in ongoing official P/CVE activities. Likewise, the network's own lack of ability to physically meet or hold activities on the ground meant that there were less activities of said nature. Instead, the LPNs sought to mainstream a discussion of P/CVE in the online activities it organised, such as the "Dewaneyat" dialogue series.

The dialogue sessions brought together LPN members with policy makers, academics, religious leaders, youth workers and active civil society members to discuss the role of different stakeholders in PVE. During this reporting period, the following sessions were held:

- The Role of Moderate Religious Discourse in Combating Extremist Ideology, June 10, 2020, with 25-35 participants.
- The Impact of Violence on Social Cohesion and Peace, June 24, 2020, with 25-35 participants.
- The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Combating Extremist Ideology, July 15, 2020, with 25-35 participants.



- The Role of the Family and the Media in Combating Extremist Ideology, July 22, 2020, with 25-35 participants.

As for national engagement, meetings were held with the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA) to update them on project activities and ensure they are in line with their objectives and plans. It is worth mentioning that during this period, the project manager in WANA resigned and a new project manager was appointed together with a project coordinator and a field officer. The team held several meetings with the LPNs and national representatives to maintain the momentum of the project.

Outcome B: Enhanced quality of P/CVE activities by PNs targeting vulnerable youth, teachers, youth workers and religious leaders in select municipalities in Jordan and Lebanon.

During this reporting period, a new more efficient LPN structure was developed. This included creating a ‘core group’ of LPN members as well as a wider group who were referred to as the ‘friends of the network’ to support and engage in its activities more broadly.

In Karak, the SCN team delivered a dialogue skills training to a diverse group of vulnerable youth, LPN members, and other local stakeholders. The 3-day training marked the SCN’s first capacity building program in Karak, and was specifically designed to enlance the capacity of local stakeholders working alongside and within the LPN framework. Initially, a needs assessment was conducted with high school students to understand their capacity development needs. Thus, the training was meant to be delivered to students participating in the needs assessment.

Yet, because of events related to Teachers’ Union strike and their clash with the national government and Ministry of Education – the Education Directorate in Karak was reluctant in granting the LPNs the needed clearance and permission to directly engage high-school students. Consequently, to ensure its outreach to vulnerable youth, the LPN partnered with “All Jordan Youth Commission” in Karak, as well as the King Abdullah II Fund for Development. The “All Jordan Youth Commission” is known for both its grassroots outreach and its safe spaces (specially for young women). The trainings were led by LPN members who were previously trained on the topic.



Outcome A: Increased ability of the community Prevention Networks (PNs) in select municipalities to meaningfully engage with local, national and international policymakers and peers to support the implementation of the national P/CVE strategies.

<p>Output A.1: Increased access of select national and municipal P/CVE stakeholders to best practices and knowledge about the Dutch experience in setting up national and local infrastructures for the implementation of the P/CVE strategy</p>	<p>Activity A.1.1: Conduct 1 national policy roundtable</p> <p>Activity A.1.2: Conduct 2 workshops for Dutch, Lebanese and Jordanian mayors</p>	<p>A 2nd virtual roundtable is planned for the Q4 of 2020.</p> <p>This will be conducted during the Q1 of 2021.</p>
<p>Output A.2: Engagement of Jordanian national policymakers and mayors with their international peers in global policy dialogue about P/CVE strengthened.</p>	<p>Activity A.2.1: Facilitate the participation of 3 national policy makers in GCTF national – local cooperation initiative</p> <p>Activity 2.2: Facilitate the participation of 3 Mayors and practitioners in international forums, including GCTF national – Local Cooperation Initiative, SCN Global Summit and/or UNGA events</p>	<p>To be conducted during the Q4 of 2020 and over the course of 2021.</p>

Outcome B: Enhanced quality of P/CVE activities by PNs targeting vulnerable youth, teachers, youth workers and religious leaders in select municipalities in Lebanon and Jordan.

<p>Output B.1: Capacity-building provided to select PNs in Lebanon and Jordan on Training of the Trainer model (ToT) and on effective P/CVE approaches inspired by the Dutch model.</p>	<p>Activity B.1.1: Conduct 2-way practitioner exchange visits between Dutch, Lebanese and Jordanian PNs</p> <p>Activity B.1.2: Conduct 6 practitioner training workshops</p> <p>Activity B.1.3: Conduct 4 ToT workshops with PN focal points</p> <p>Activity B.1.4: Conduct 60 coordination meetings for PNs in Lebanon and Jordan</p>	<p>This activity is to be conducted during the Q4 of 2020.</p> <p>This activity will be conducted at several intervals of the project, commencing in Q4 of 2020.</p> <p>This activity is planned to be conducted during the Q1 and Q3 of 2021.</p> <p>In an extremely challenging context, the LPNs and focal points demonstrated outstanding commitment and aptitude to observe, plan and respond to the emerging needs of their communities. All three LPNs undertook capacity development trainings as part of their long-term action plans for sustainability of efforts and fulfilling their role in serving as the key local platforms to coordinate and create local PVE action plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Saida LPN succeeded in organizing 2 testing sessions with public school teachers, UNRWA school teachers and scout leaders on the PVE toolkit. Recommendations provided will be added to the final iteration of the toolkit. - Tripoli LPN members and SCN team received training on social media strategy. Furthermore, the LPN organized trainings in Jabal Mohsen area with children and parents to raise awareness on child abuse and provides context-sensitive response to their needs. In line with the LPN's comprehensive approach, a needs assessment was conducted prior to the training. Accordingly, 20 sessions were delivered providing youth leadership and life skills intended to enhance their resilience and engagement in their communities. Trainers also led 2 sessions with parents on non-violent communication.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Majdal Anjar LPN succeeded in organizing a seminar on Islamophobia and the discourse of extremism. A 2-day mediation training for 20 municipal police, municipal officials and civil defense was delivered during the project reporting period. - In Jordan, 7 dialogue sessions, dubbed “Dewaneyat” brought together LPN members with policy makers, academics, religious leaders, youth workers and active civil society members to discuss the role of various stakeholders in PVE. - In Karak, a 3-day training was conducted on dialogue skills for vulnerable youth.
	Activity B.1.5: Support at least 4 PN-led training workshops to potential focal points	This activity is expected to take place in the Q1 of 2021.
	Activity B.1.6: Support at least 4 PN-led training to potential PN Members	This activity is expected to take place during Q1 of 2021.

Output B.2: Financial and technical Support provided to PN members from selected municipalities in Jordan to design and implement P/CVE activities.	Activity B.2.1. Provision of small community activity grants to facilitate the scaling of local initiatives outlined as priorities within the Jordanian National CVE Action Plan	The call for proposals was successfully launched across 6 municipalities. 5 municipalities were selected for partnership with the SCN, in addition to the three already existing ones and will start implementing the activities during Q4 of 2020.
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CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

Lebanon

The situation in Lebanon continues to deteriorate. Citizens are demonstrating inordinate resilience, but increasing rates of poverty and the spiking numbers of Covid-19 cases are worrying. The banking restrictions imposed by the central bank are also causing financial obstacles at the national and local levels. Despite these severe challenges, the SCN team, LPN members and partners are responding to the issues confronting local communities. LPNs have shown increased focus on providing social, economic and psychological support to youth, while engaging them in activities aimed to enhance their sense of civic responsibility.

Jordan

In Jordan, several challenges and obstacles were faced. Institutionally, the focal point of the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA) during July/August, has not been very cooperative. A new focal point was assigned during the reporting period, who was very supportive to the project. Yet, the focal point is expected to leave his position by the end of the year. As such, there are no guarantees that a replacement will be as cooperative and understanding of the project's objectives. There will be similar challenge in familiarizing the replacement with the project scope and objectives.

Additionally, Jordan is set to have municipal elections in 2021, and therefore existing municipal councils will be dissolved in the first quarter of 2021. This means that the focal points might change as new councils and mayors are in place. As for the LPNs themselves, the challenge remains maintaining the commitment and active engagement of their members. In a pre-emptive move, new members were added to the LPNs in order to re-energize the work of the LPNs. Restrictions on movement and social gatherings are also expected to remain in place due to the epidemiological situation in the country. Combined, such challenges and obstacles are expected to limit the ability of the networks to expand to new municipalities over the next year (2021). Still, the LPNs have proven resilient and flexible to change since the start of the COVID-19 crisis.



LESSONS LEARNED

Lebanon:

- Instability across Lebanon did not stop the SCN team from maintaining a rather normal schedule, allowing them to resume planning for activities and coordination meetings with all LPNs.
- Challenges in conducting digital coordination meetings with focal points and LPN members was difficult due to weak digital infrastructure across Lebanon.
- Frequent face-to-face communication and engagement with the focal points and members of the prevention networks proved to be pivotal in ensuring the momentum of the networks was sustained.
- Continuous assessment and follow up of youth needs in changing contexts is critical to future engagement.
- The ever-increasing challenges caused by the social, political, economic and health crises afflicting the country has given more incentive and inspired the SCN team and LPNs to look for creative models to deal with the current environmental challenges.

Jordan:

- While the physical restrictions on movement and gatherings did provide a potential opportunity to engage with and reach out to new groups, it is clear that face-to-face meetings are still critical to maintaining the momentum of work.
- Learning and exchange of knowledge between LPN members is key. The members have diverse skills and experiences, and it is something that must be tapped into. It also helped bind LPN members more closely, as was observed in Karak during workshops conducted during the period. In short, more in-house exchange and interaction is a great lesson to be learned.
- There is greater responsiveness/attendance during online activities when 1) organised later in the evening, 2) announced well in advance, 3) engage LPN members as facilitators, guest speakers, and trainers.
- Dividing the LPN members into a “core” small group of committed individuals as well as a broader “friends of the network” group was a useful strategy. It bodes well for the sustainability of the network.
- Close monitoring and responsiveness of the general situation in the country is a key to ensure the dynamism of the work of the network.

NEXT QUARTER

Lebanon:

- Selected municipalities following the call for proposals will present their projects and action plans.
- Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) will be signed between selected municipalities and ISD.
- Implementation of the subgrant projects will commence.
- PVE training provided by the SCN and the National PVE Unit for the selected municipality members and partner CSOs members.
- Coordination meetings and planning with focal points and LPNs.
- Continuous monitoring of the situation from SCN team and LPN members will ensure, as much as possible, tailored responses to the communities’ needs.
- Launching the counselling and referral unit in Saida municipality.
- Piloting community-based rehabilitation and reintegration mechanisms with the LPNs in partnership with the National PVE Unit in Lebanon and in-country partners like Search for Common Ground.
- Joining efforts with Tri-pulley, a socio-economic impact initiative, by matching unemployed skilled individuals with vulnerable families. This initiative will also work on reengaging former prisoners in society after intensive follow up and psycho-social support sessions.
- Second policy roundtable to introduce the Dutch Safety Houses model of rehabilitation and reintegration which will congregate Lebanese, Jordanian and Dutch policymakers.
- Parenting sessions to be delivered in Majdal Anjar.
- Publishing the youth perceptions assessment results and analysis.



Jordan:

- Ensure a smooth handover for the project and establish good relations and communication with the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA).
- Initiate a conversation with the LPNs and national stakeholders on the Dutch Safety Houses model.
- Continue with the monthly Dewaneyat initiative and produce monthly policy-briefs.
- Technical and financial support provided to the LPNs to design and carry out P/CVE activities.
- Meet with members of the Kabset Zer anti-bullying campaign to revamp the initiative.
- Meet with and support members of the legal aid network in Zarqa, and explore ways to replicate the initiative in other governorates.
- Conduct capacity workshops for the core group of the LPNs, as well as the focal points, in all three governorates, with the objective of familiarizing them with the concept of human security, and with P/CVE concepts and approaches.

OVERALL PROJECT PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

Progress lagging behind - Achievement of target at risk / not possible	<input type="checkbox"/> Red
Some progress made - corrections required to achieve target	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow
Progress achieved as planned – target likely to be achieved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Green