

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE EVALUATION -DIAKONIA LEBANON- 2012-2014

Diakonia Lebanon Programme is evaluated through collected and written 'stories' that reflect the outcome or impact of the partners' projects in support to Diakonia Lebanon Programme

*Prepared by:
Nadine Haddad,
Esther El Haddad,
Soraya Dali-Balta*

Contents

OVERVIEW	2
METHODOLOGY	2
EVALUATIVE CONCLUSIONS.....	4
SO WHAT HAS CHANGED? STORIES TO LEARN FROM AND OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SEIZED	6
RECOMMENDATIONS	18
LIMITATIONS	19
ON DIAKONIA’S PROGRAMS IN LEBANON	20
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22

OVERVIEW

The goal of this evaluation is to draw the most significant changes realized by the projects implemented by Diakonia's partner organizations in Lebanon during the past three years. This will create space to assess the performance of Diakonia Lebanon office programme in the context of a strategy that supports and empowers civil society through a participatory decision making process.

Most Significant Change evaluation (MSC) is a participatory, dialogical, story-based approach of monitoring and evaluation; meant to augment other evaluation analysis. It is a tool to help collect, discuss and select stories about significant changes that people / organisations experience as a result of Diakonia Lebanon's projects.

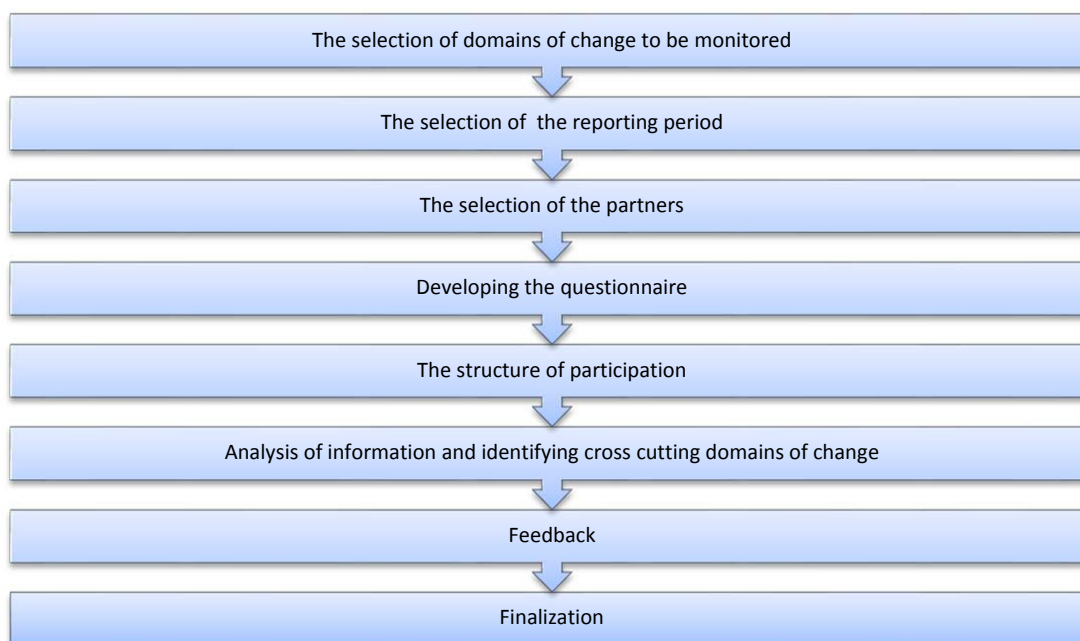
This is a unique method for collecting data regarding project impact in situations where data is not easily quantified. This methodology can also provide evaluative feedback to improve programming as well as communications pieces for sharing with the public and stakeholders.

Both project participants and stakeholders were involved in discussing the stories and then selecting the aspects of change that they consider most significant, through story telling.

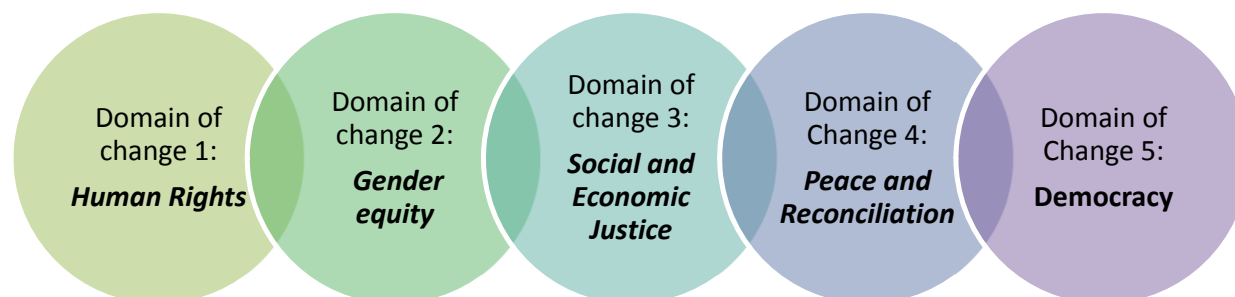
Stories are a valuable part of MSC for several reasons: they encourage non-evaluation experts to participate, they are likely to be remembered - and can help keep dialogue based on concrete outcomes rather than abstract indicators. Storytelling is an ancient cross-cultural sense-making process, familiar to all peoples. The stories make MSC more humane, and people seem to relate to the information more when it is told in the form of a story.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used followed the steps depicted from the seven key steps of MSC (Davies, 1996), yet adapting them to the context and needs of this specific exercise:



Firstly, the evaluation team has met with the Diakonia Lebanon managing team to review the proposed MSC process and identify the domains of change they think need to be evaluated, based on Diakonia strategy. The following themes of change have been retained:



Stories of significant change were then collected from those most directly involved, such as. Partner NGOs' managements, field staff and right holders. The stories were collected with the help of a simple question: 'During your partnership with Diakonia, in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place in the program?' It is initially up to respondents to allocate their stories to a theme category. In addition to this, respondents were encouraged to report why they consider a particular change to be the most significant one.

At the end of this interview exercise, the story collectors documented the following information:

- Information about the story teller/organization, and how the events in the story occurred.
- A detailed description of the story itself – what actually happened?
- The significance to the story teller of the events described in the story.

The interview usually revealed several stories. The interviewer would identify the most expressive one and confirm it with the partner being interviewed. Figure 1 illustrates the flow of stories and feedback. Each level of the hierarchy reviews a series of stories sent to them by the level below and selects the single most significant account of change within each of the domains. The collected stories were then analysed and filtered up from each partner.

A final document was then produced with each of the stories selected at the uppermost organizational level over that period. Later the team gathered to reflect on the cross sectoral changes that the Diakonia programmes and approaches has enabled. All stories and findings constitute the element of this Most Significant Change evaluation document.

The layout of this report was then designed, in the form of a folding newspaper to be used as marketing and information tool.

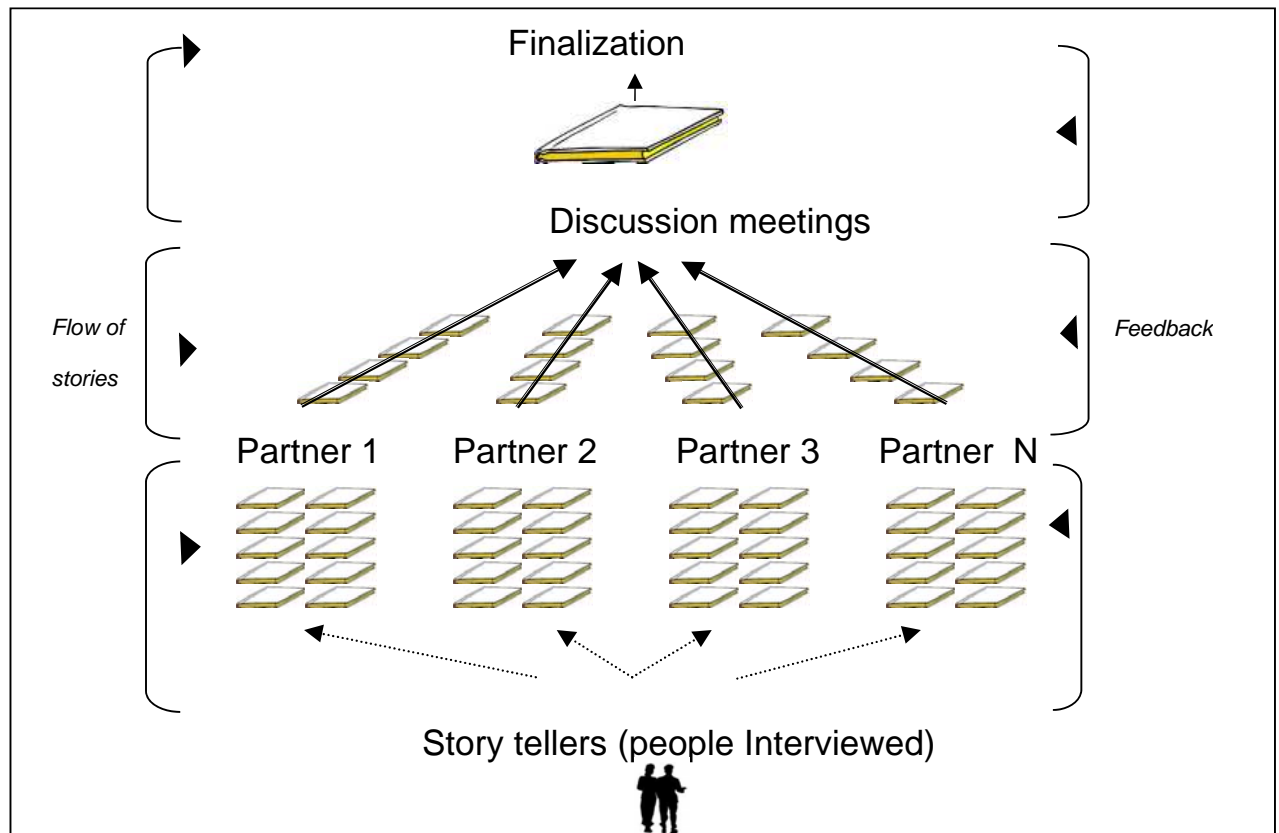


Figure 1. Flow of Stories and Feedback in MSC.

EVALUATIVE CONCLUSIONS

Diakonia's network is a melting pot of partners with different backgrounds, varied approaches, and different areas of intervention. Yet; Unanimously Diakonia's partners have independently agreed that they have witnessed change as a result of their partnership with Diakonia on three cross cutting levels:

- 1- **Individual change** related to increased knowledge and awareness. This has been mainly focused on areas related to effective project management, finance and communication. All interviewed partners have declared to being highly satisfied with the quality of the capacity building opportunities. They feel that on the personal level they are more confident about their capacities and that they have utilized their gained knowledge in the services of their organization. Moreover, the exposure that Diakonia has provided them with through both the national forums as well as the regional ones
- 2- **Organizational change** related to the effectiveness and efficiency of the partners organizations. Once again, all partners have shared the satisfaction from Diakonia's success

which has uplifted them to the level of well-established experienced local and even international NGOs, both in Lebanon and the Region. They have appreciated Diakonia's tailor made approach to offer trainings that respond to their needs which has maximized the benefit and increased the trust in the partnership with Diakonia.

Additionally, it is worth highlighting that the capacity building strategy was holistic as it has focused on the key functional capacities of a good NGO such as finance, project management and Communications. Furthermore, media and advocacy training empowered various network members and harmonised their collective objectives and actions; we saw how adopting evidence-based research helped campaign targets to become more realistic.

Moreover, most interviewed partners have embraced the strategic change that they have adopted since partnering with Diakonia which has elevated them from a service delivery oriented organization and placed them on the country's development agenda. In addition they feel proud with their right based approach shift in line with Diakonia's vision to development, which they also consider as a step further to professionalism.

- 3- **Peer support through networking.** Partners value Diakonia's knowledge exchange platforms such as partners' meeting and intra-regional network initiatives. The local partners' meeting is seen as an opportunity to be up to date with the local agenda. It also provides them with a space to exchange lessons learned and tools for self-improvement. It has to be said that most Diakonia's partners are grass root organisations which offer the opportunity of being community rooted and therefore reflect the true needs of the societies.

Both young and old partners represent the same characteristics in terms of capacity building needs, even if some are more advanced than the others on specific topics. They all share the interest of partnering with regional Diakonia partners. Some of the challenges faced are that building networks is time consuming and requires technical and managerial input from Diakonia. In light of limited available human resources this risk being done sometimes at the expense of other processes. Another challenge is that the action/influence level is often disrupted by the political instability and quite often national security is prioritised by government over social and economic priorities.

SO WHAT HAS CHANGED? STORIES TO LEARN FROM AND OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SEIZED

Domain of Change 1: Human Rights –

From small gatherings to global meetings!

Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU) believes that they have a crucial role to play in eradicating marginalization and gender discrimination from the lives of people with physical disabilities. They defend their rights and promote the spread of culture of inclusion and their right of participation. They have come a long way, from a small group, using small steps, transferring each other's knowledge, speaking loud, striking in the rain, standing for their right to work like any other citizen and their right to have access to everything, despite their disabilities.

LPHU have been on the rise since 1981, they have been carrying the voices of people with disabilities inside Lebanon helping and promoting their participation in the decision making process: "Dialogue has changed from charity to rights and from exclusion to inclusion".¹

The thrust behind law 220

The main concern was accessibility. Disability was not only a wall blocking people's education and career but was actually a concrete barrier, made of stone and bricks. Those change-makers went as a delegation to the Sports City, 80 people. They organized a sit-in and stopped construction works saying that they were not moving until the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works arrives and promises them change. After a series of communication, Law 220 was finally issued in May 2000; it ensures basic rights for the disabled in education, rehabilitation and employment. Among other things, Law 220 requires that three percent of staff jobs be allocated to disabled workers in a private sector business with 60 or more employees.

However, this was just the first step up the ladder: LPHU thought that the hard part was over, but they realized they still had a long way to go. In order to help in the implementation of the law, they had several case studies and had to work on three different levels: The public, the mediators and other companies. The law was not being practiced by many companies, not necessarily because employers were ignoring it, but rather before there was not much awareness. They set up an observatory, which is supported by Diakonia, to study how the law is to be applied and what are the tools needed in order to expand. ***"In everything we do, every step shows that we are going the right way, in the same objective we had 30 years ago. We are so confident." (Hassan was among the first who started LPHU, since 1981)***

LPHU's mission to reach further and promote social inclusion of people with disabilities did not only stop at the Lebanese border. ***"It is important for us that new generations, do not face the same degrading treatment we faced in our generation [Hassan and Sylvana], so to be honest I feel very powerful"***. With six branches in Lebanon, thanks to Diakonia's support, LPHU was able to attend the Ashoka Globalizer meeting held in Vienna in February 2013 and received the "Best practices for inclusion" award and since then have been mentors and asked for advice on how to reach the rest of the Arab countries. Hence, LPHU had now reached global exposure and has since been working thoroughly on the inclusion of people with disabilities in 13 countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

¹ From the LPHU website, http://www.lphu.com/AN/index.asp?Id_Page=19

LPHU's rise continues: in July 2013, they have attended DESA Forum: Dialogue on the post-2015 Development Framework and Disability" at United Nations Headquarters in New York, also with the support of Diakonia. LPHU presented their valuable input in the conference on the monitoring activities in the Arab world in order to contribute to the Forum's objective towards a post-2015 UN development framework through exchange of experiences and ideas for disability-inclusive development: policy development, implementation and monitoring and evaluation for the continuing work of the international community toward society and development for all. As the Millennium Development Goals did not include people with disabilities, Sylvana Lakkis challenged that change and expressed: ***"We need to be very focused on the benefits of the social economic inclusive policy. We need to learn how to listen better to what solutions people with disabilities can bring to the table. We need to institutionalize a conversation between the private and public sectors to really come out with policies that will encourage everyone to do better regarding achieving social economic goals."*** Here we have LPHU not only changing laws, changing minds, but also providing input on the next indicators of the Millennium Development Goals. How is that for an exponential change?

Diakonia has been giving support to LPHU for the past three years; and not only financial but also technical support ***"It is not easy to find a partner which has the same objective we do, we share the same vision – we are working together"***, says Sylvana Lakkis. She believes that the most significant achievements LPHU has had the last three years include: the observatory, the participation of the Arab region and global networking through the main ongoing agenda of the development goals 2015. She highlights Diakonia's flexibility, understanding and constant support along the road they are taking –Capacity Building trainings have been organized after prioritizing and identifying needs by LPHU. They have had financial trainings, monitoring and evaluation trainings, and other technical support. ***"Of course, I would like to add that now we have become professionals. We started as people who have a will but did not know how to turn it into action. And look where we are today – people ask us to give trainings on several levels and even Government Ministries are asking us for input and advice"***.

Domain of Change 2: Gender

Knowing your rights is your protection shield²

Promoting Human Rights Policy and Practice in Lebanese Women's Prisons project aimed at promoting respect for human rights in women's prisons in Lebanon by enabling prison authorities to uphold the human rights of prisoners and detainees, supporting them to claim their rights and report abuses and transforming civil society into an effective advocate for reform in women's prisons through legislative, policy and practical change. Diakonia implemented this project in collaboration with Dar Al Amal organization that works towards supporting young girls and women victims of violence, exploitation, prostitution and/or in conflict with the law, and to accompany them for their social rehabilitation and reintegration.

The following story about Maryam shows how legal awareness and assistance to inmates can build their self-efficacy and support them in their claim for their rights and reporting abuses. Maryam, 45 year old, has been detained in Baabda prison for the last eight years.

Maryam participated in all the trainings and awareness sessions provided by Dar Al Amal. Part of it was the legal sessions conducted twice a month. Maryam wishes she knew her rights before entering jail. Knowing that she could have filed a complaint against her allegedly aggressor husband could have saved her from quite a lot of shackles in her life. She talked to his parents about her case and to many other people. To her poor luck, nobody told her about her right to report him. They all convinced her to continue struggling in silence. It is now that she started to realize that she is entitled to a lot of rights. **"I know now my rights, as a woman and as a human being, and most of all I know how to defend them"**. Now she knows that she is entitled to have a lawyer accompanying her during the hearing sessions, to remain silent if she wants, not to sign on things she haven't said, to ask for a hearing session and more importantly to talk about things that bother her. It is a simple thing that she became aware of, unfortunately she didn't know that when she needed it.

In the prison Maryam started to feel stronger, and she knows everything as she says. More than anything, she feels now that she can put her leg on the ground and demand what legally is her right. It is in the prison that she realized that she is free. The knowledge she gained built her esteem **"now I teach my family and relatives if anything happened to them. I am confident that they don't know or they would have guided me when I needed the advice"**. Now she knows all the legal aspects and characteristics of the penal code, felonies, offense, and crime. She knows exactly her legal case and situation after the awareness sessions, and is confident of the procedure to follow.

Maryam is fully aware of herself and her presence and doesn't take any medication. **"I still feel happiness and attach to the idea of a better future when I see that there are people that committed from Dar el Amal giving from all their hearts. I become very optimistic when I see this goodness still exists"**.

She likes to learn as much as possible and isn't shy to ask about things she doesn't know because she is confident it would help her later with her family. She looks towards a brighter future, and about

² This story is prepared by Hicham Jadaoun

the day that she will be free again. **“I think a lot of outside and I don’t want to lose the beautiful things inside of me, what you build piece by piece remains strong”.**

The legal sessions benefited all the detainees and it showed where the law can and cannot protect them. Even those coming in with cases of prostitution and robberies asked about legal issues and the councillor was so responsive and helpful. Maryam strongly believes that this needs to continue as there will always be people like her in need for awareness and support. There is also the need to support some of the detainees who are not capable of appointing a lawyer with additional legal services.

Domain of Change 3: Social and Economic Justice

“Knowledge is power”- LOWER

The Lebanese Observatory for the Rights of Workers and Employees (LOWER) is an independent civil democratic association, committed to workers and employees issues. They aim to advocate and raise awareness on labour law rights, locally and internationally. LOWER has created a network of CSOs and built their capacities to monitor, report and follow-up violations of socio-economic rights of workers and employees, as stated in the International Labor Convention and the Lebanese labor laws. The network, composed of 15 NGOs, 19 unions and syndicates and 26 activists, lobbied the unions and syndicates to play their role in protecting workers rights.

Ahmad Dirani speaks with pride of their achievement in the 70s, before the Lebanese war... before syndicates and labour parties were politicized... at time when solidarity prevailed and when history was in the make during the golden era of the Ghandour factory manifestation.

LOWER founding members and old civil activists gathered again in 2009 to launch an NGO to contribute to community development. They had their permit in 2011. Started their partnership with Diakonia in 2012 following a meeting in Egypt where Diakonia’s vision and mission had attracted LOWER team and they were looking forward to benefit from their support to launch a watchdog for labour rights. With over 100,000 employees not members of any syndicate, this was crucial and was used as an advocacy tool to put pressure on the public opinion. **“We always look for partnership; we tend to involve everyone in our actions. We believe that we should hold hand to achieve justice. This is true activism and this is the best way to mobilize public opinion.**

“Knowledge is power, says Dirani, but only those who know their rights can fight for them even if they do not always win, but at least they have more chances of getting there”.

In 2012 with Diakonia, the capacity building of volunteers as reporters was boosted to monitor and detect law violations – the observatory acted as a watchdog and was filled a big need. A hotline was established and **“people were thirsty for information, we were getting 400 calls from people”.** **“people even confused us for the ministry of labour!”.** LOWER’s influence and motivation kept rising higher after they launched an audio-visual campaigns, featuring on major televisions,. **“Diakonia showed us the importance of social media, thought us how to use it. We now have dedicated people for that. Diakonia supported us with the development of a communication plan that put in place. This was very important amid the growing numbers of people reached. – ...We are not the only ones, but we are online and more accessible”**

The added value of Diakonia is their flexibility their vision to development. **“They listened and discussed the development of our ideas into sustainable actions that can induce large-scale change.”**

Diakonia **“showed us supported us also with capacity building on management issues. This was crucial for us especially the finance training, we went from being a group of activists to a reputable and professional movement. This felt great. We are now organized. Everything is documented so it is much easy for us to report... we can even plan better. The capacity building sessions showed us how to plan ahead, how to forecast how to be more result oriented... how to be efficient actually”.**

This helped LOWER have enhanced management of projects in order to have a balance between different projects and activities and in turn develop reports for increased transparency and accountability.

The upcoming project will aim more at fresh graduates who are vulnerable and who are more likely to be abused in their first job. The change induced would be to target fresh graduates so that they are well-equipped with knowledge and they know well their rights when they accept their first jobs.

“We had the expertise in the field of advocacy and labour law, we’ve always fought for rights but partnering with Diakonia took us to an upper level – a more professional one, a level where we compete with well-established NGOs. Diakonia provided us with know-how skills and tools to avoid working on ad hoc basis but rather plan for long-term goals”

Samir Youssef Tawk: the activist within

After the salary increase law was established in 2012, Spinneys did not comply. Samir Tawk was raised to be an agent of change since he was a child – and was always in trouble for this his whole life. As an outraged Spinneys employee by this situation, he wanted to take his concern into action and got in touch with LOWER for guidance on this battle – he knew that it would not be easy, but he was not scared to get into trouble. They were by his side and fought all the way to provide him with the tools and knowledge to launch a syndicate for Spinneys employees. **“I was threatened in all sorts of ways, I even lost my job when I had a family to feed, but I was not scared. To be honest I would have back up if it wasn’t for LOWER’s support. They stood by me when I mostly needed them. Deep down I knew I was doing the right thing. I had to fight to people to get their right. It was just unfair. It revived in me the fighter that I was back in school when I used to stand by those who suffered from unfairness. I will never forget how LOWER managed to mobilize people from different sectors and backgrounds”**. For the first time since the end of the civil war, politics was set aside. Politicians, NGO activists, even civilians gathered to fight for justice. They have created a bigger pressure group and to better lobby for social justice through the implementation of the law.

Unfortunately, Samir lost the battle with Spinneys as he was released from his job. But he did not lose the war: He was able to pioneer, induce change and set an example for people that they should fight for their right. His colleagues received most of their rights as per the law thanks to him, his determination and LOWER’s guidance.

Domain of Change 4: Peace and Reconciliation

Building bridges ... welcoming first time visitors

Diakonia partnered with Naba'a in 2011 and both organizations launched together the Conflict Resolution Project; a youth-focused program that aims at building bridges between the different and the self-segregated communities in Lebanon. The project joined together 60 young Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian volunteers and involved them in trainings on dialogue, conflict resolution and other related topics to create more harmony between them.

Peace and Reconciliation is one theme Diakonia focuses on in its vision and strategy of work. And in this field, it partnered with Naba'a, a Sidon-based non-governmental organization that aspires to increase the involvement of youth and children in their societies. Naba'a works in different Lebanese regions, targeting in its programs; Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian youths. Its activities vary including advocacy, trainings, providing education and psycho-social support, and anti-drug assistance, amongst others.

The partnership with Diakonia came in 2011, and since then, Naba'a has been benefitting from capacity building in Finance, Social Media, Project plan and design, and in conflict resolution. But the essence of the Naba'a-Diakonia corporation is a collaboration in the Conflict Resolution Project that main objective is to promote tolerance and acceptance between youths in the country, whether Lebanese, Palestinians or Syrians. The Project came at a time of heightened tension between the different communities currently residing in Lebanon, particularly with the rise in the number of Syrian and Palestinian refugees in the country as a result of the region's turmoil.

The program started with a group of 60 youths who attended trainings on 17 different topics among which; group dynamics, conflict resolution, planning, dialogue, and the importance of group work. Of the 60 trained, 30 young men and women were selected, attended Training of Trainers seminars, and started their own Peace and Reconciliation activities in several towns and cities in Lebanon. The activities, sought to create a rapprochement among Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrians, included; launching a magazine fully mapped and written by the youngsters, producing a calendar with inspirational quotes, holding a marathon in Tyre, and preparing an Iftar for Palestinian families in the holy month of Ramadan. The Naba'a team played only the role of supervision in guiding and assisting the 30 youth in their projects, and give them the freedom to come up with ideas and to execute them.

The success of the Conflict Resolution Project was felt on many different levels. The Naba'a staff lauded the capacity building trainings they have receiving from Diakonia since the launch of the Project, noting that it remarkably improved their execution of different tasks. And the youths involved in the program developed a sense of belonging to the NGO and a passion for volunteerism and community work, as they started to visit the headquarters more frequently and ask about launched activities to take part in them. Meanwhile on the ground, the project helped in breaking the ice between the Lebanese, the Palestinian, and the Syrian communities.

"For the first time, Lebanese youths entered refugee camps and established relations with Palestinians," the Naba'a team said.

Naba'a cites communities trust in Naba'a, its vision and its history, the experienced team of trainers, providing space for youth to express themselves and debate topics of mutual interests, and the mutual agreement with Diakonia on the necessity of this program amid the current circumstances and heightened tension between the different communities in Lebanon, as main factors that contributed to the project's success.

Naba'a is pleased with its partnership with Diakonia, noting the latter's flexibility and its keenness on being present throughout the program's implementation to follow up on its progress. But the Sidon NGO's team points out that a larger donation or a longer partnership with Diakonia would allow measuring its success more accurately.

What is also noteworthy in the Diakonia-Naba'a partnership was that it is mutually beneficial, as the Sidon-based NGO's impressive skills and experience in promoting accountability prompted Diakonia to ask for its support in this field. Naba'a ended up training 10 of Diakonia's partners in Egypt on accountability, and even helped in the translation of many documents produced by the Swedish NGO. ". This was such a self-rewarding experience. It allowed us to feel more professional" declared Naba'a's interviewed members.

Domain of Change 5: Democracy -

Story 4: Revitalizing advocacy for electoral and political Reforms

In its efforts to promote and disseminate democratic values and processes in Lebanon, Diakonia partnered with the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections in 2010, a local NGO that has cemented itself as leader in this domain in the country. The two NGOs worked together in several projects aimed at the same common objective, and their most significant collaboration was launching interactive events that engaged local communities in various types of activities that encourage citizens to reach their own understanding and conclusions on the importance of electoral and political reform in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) was established in 1996 at times when the first parliamentary elections after the Civil War in Lebanon whereby LADE sought to protect the anticipated polls from corruption, bribery and abuse of power. But monitoring the elections and conserving transparency was not the only objective in mind for LADE's founders, who considered it a pathway for reforming the political system and the democratic process in the country. In addition to monitoring the elections, supervising the implementation of laws and assessing the political process, LADE also holds several types of activities on a local level to promote several democratic and political concepts among the people.

Following their partnership in 2010, together, LADE and Diakonia invested in the promotion of the importance and the culture of electoral reform among the Lebanese. Diakonia provided the necessary funding for the project, in addition to technical assistance and capacity building trainings for LADE staff in various areas such as Finance, Administration and Social Media. And in the pursuit of this objective, LADE recruited and trained volunteers on electoral reform who in their turn held local activities in different regions all over the country for this purpose. While local meetings introducing several electoral concepts such as the voting age, the quota for women's seats and proportional representation also took place in various Lebanese cities and towns.

But the most significant activity launched by LADE was manifested in local events that were taken out of the traditional lecturing and debating context, to become interactive sessions involving cooking, games, theatre plays, music and acting through which messages on democratic processes and notions were conveyed and concluded.

These interactive activities brought LADE closer to the people in all Lebanese regions and to youths in particular; whom the NGO targets in hopes they would become advocates of its principles and values in their own communities. And although measuring the success of LADE's activities; i.e. knowing whether they have convinced people of the importance of electoral and political reform or not, is hard to achieve, the NGO notes the engagement of participants during the sessions and the wider understanding of several concepts among the Lebanese as proves that the team and the volunteers are actually making a difference on ground.

LADE believes the interactivity and the comforting atmosphere of these sessions; where all participants feel confident and at ease to express their opinions, are what contributed to the success of these activities, in addition to taking place on a local instead of a nation-wide level.

Diakonia's financial and technical support is essential in the execution of LADE's project on promoting a culture of electoral reform, as the lack of funding could have put the realization of the program in jeopardy. And the flexibility and the absence of conditions in the Diakonia-LADE partnership further supports its implementation based on the vision and objective of the local organization. The cooperation between both NGOs also goes beyond the electoral reform project, whereby Diakonia and LADE collaborated in other significant activities such as student elections at different university campuses in the country, where Diakonia provides funding and the technical assistance to volunteers on ground.

Domain of Change 2: Human rights

Media, as human rights advocate!

Domain of change: Human rights

Programme: "Promoting Human Rights Policy and Practice in Lebanese Women's Prisons" 2012-2014

Name of the Right Holder/Stakeholder: Maharat News

Name of partner: The Lebanese Democratic Women's Gathering (RDFL)

Name of author and email address: Hicham Jadaoun, jadaoun.hicham@gmail.com

Promoting Human Rights Policy and Practice in Lebanese Women's Prisons project aimed at promoting respect for human rights in women's prisons in Lebanon by enabling prison authorities to uphold the human rights of prisoners and detainees, supporting them to claim their rights and report abuses and transforming civil society into an effective advocate for reform in women's prisons through legislative, policy and practical change.

This project was implemented in collaboration with The Lebanese Democratic Women's Gathering (RDFL), a secular non-governmental women organization which works with the democratic forces and represents a part of the advocacy secular democratic women's movement, on the basis of international pacts and treaties, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, in order to promote women's status and participation and empower them, aiming at achieving full equality between both sexes.

This story shows that good collaboration with civil society and media as independent stakeholders can advocate for the women prisons problem informing the public opinion, being a human rights problem.

In the following writing we highlight the story of Maharat News, a project at Maharat Foundation a Lebanese organization promoting freedom of speech.

The Foundation aims at achieving a freer journalism and to defend and promote free expression in order to build a much more democratic society. This collaboration on the project intended to foster an increased awareness and mobilization among civil society stakeholders, specifically media organizations regarding gender equity and human rights considerations in prison management. Through its "Maharat News" the organization provides a platform for new journalists to experience field work with a rights-based approach. It was created to fill a major gap of journalism curriculums which don not offer such experience for aspiring journalists.

This lack of human rights notions in media faculties where the focus lays on theoretical knowledge instead of field implementation was tackled by the project in the media and journalists seminars conducted. Maharat structured its capacity building program to provide as well different aspects of public policy making in the country. Since 2013 and with the partnership of media and journalism faculties at the Lebanese university, new opportunities were created for youth to make their voices heard through an open platform to raise their issues outside of the political alignment.

The collaboration with RDFL and Diakonia came in the wider effort to improve the situation of Lebanese prisons. The subject was characterized by a big shortage of information available for

interested people to cover it. This is where Diakonia partners inside the prisons (Dar Al Amal in this case) facilitated meetings and contacts with current and previous detainees. It provided an overview of the situation and available governmental policies and laws that govern their situation in addition to identifying influential stakeholders and partners.

As the project manager Layal Bahnam puts it **“Diakonia helped us in providing all the required information through preparatory meetings and pictures from inside the prisons, whereas Dar Al Amal gave us a background overview on the project and their experience in this field in general”**. This empowered the different journalists with quite a lot of media substance on the subject helping in **“forming a more realistic picture of the situation”**. The Foundation got to know more about the detainees’ suffering from a humanitarian perspective. As Layla highlighted **“when we got to know them we discovered humanitarian cases that revealed how much our law are brutal and unfair and how they are wrongfully perceived by the society”**. Layal is convinced that the current attention isn’t directed towards public policies and people’s concerns, which makes it more difficult to expect the community to care about women who are perceived differently and a very “unjust” manner.

The partnership with the media is quite important for it helps raising the voice to those responsible. In order to reach these changes policy makers need to be pressured in order to adopt better policies on the legislative and implementation levels. There is an important role that the media can play in advocating for new policies and laws that can bring significant change on the Lebanese community. As a journalist, one has to care about the subject itself in order to be an agent of change. This can happen when building sustainable and strong partnerships with the civil society and when equipped with the proper information and knowledge. This can contribute in bridging the gap with policy makers and push for new initiatives and laws. Through Mahart’s platform more sensitive human rights issues can be covered with a practical and evidence based approach, shedding the light over violations and initiatives for change

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Interviewed partners have valued Diakonia for listening to their needs and tailor the capacity building opportunities accordingly. They have also highlighted that this approach is rather unique among their donors and it gives them great satisfaction, therefore it is encouraged to continue with this approach.
- Partners have felt that their partnership with Diakonia allowed their NGOs to be upscaled into a more professional state and compete with long well established Lebanese NGOs. It is important to continue valuing this relationship through the same approach for support.
- Being grassrootsed, the selected partner NGOs have a great added value for Diakonia to consider. Not only they are community based they often have a niche sector for human rights issues that needs to be addressed under Diakonia's strategy. It is however important to keep in mind that these partners require close mentorship on managerial capacity development due to their often poor knowledge about the non-profit sector. With the right support Diakonia can share the positive impact resulting from their work.
- Partners' meetings that Diakonia regularly hold, and where participants share personal experience and aspiration to working with Diakonia have proven to be of great added value for the interviewed people and should be replicated.

On future similar exercises...

- It is encouraged to invite partners to identify throughout the year "change makers", from their partners and beneficiaries, and document their added value for further evaluation exercises.
- Ask partners and right holders to document their own stories. It is recommended to train partners on story writing based on set Diakonia criteria in order to provide enough material for story selection for future MSC exercises.
- It is advisable for fieldworkers to document unsolicited stories they have heard in the course of their work. The fieldworkers should come to learn about change stories in the normal course of their work because they have daily and close contact with their beneficiaries. If they cannot find such SC stories this itself may signal something about the quality of their work. Here MSC is incidentally monitoring the staff as well as the lives of the Diakonia's right holders.
- And it is important for stories of change to be collected and interpreted at regular intervals of time.
- When possible, women's stories can be compared with men's stories to break down power dynamics.
- Projects that are currently supported under Diakonia programmes and that have not been included in this evaluation are to be included in future exercises.
- Allow MSC stories to contribute to evaluation by providing information about the impacts and outcomes of a project that can be used to assess how well the project as a whole is working.
- MSC is not meant to be used as a stand-alone methodology; However, MSC combines well with other evaluation methods such as short surveys and focus group discussions. Other forms of evaluations should be undertaken in order to assess impact based on the pre-set indicators and targets. Yet this document should serve as a qualitative source of information for further correlation and analysis.

- MSC is a participatory, dialogical, story-based approach to monitoring and evaluation and is meant to augment other evaluation analysis. It is a tool to help collect, discuss and select stories about significant changes that people experience as a result of Diakonia projects, and it is by far important to replicate it.

LIMITATIONS

- It was hard to grasp language of “significant change” – the team had to explain that we are looking for the perceived impact of the project on the community/individual/beneficiaries etc. Sometimes misunderstood us to be asking about a significant change that occurred in the project itself.
- Although Diakonia has chosen to focus on five thematic areas in its strategy; it was hard to attribute the stories to one specific domain of change as it contained elements that are interdependent and overlapping. Stories have then been distributed as to the most relevant domain, and in a way to cover all five of them.
- Although several projects currently implemented by Diakonia show sign of significant change, its actual measurement and attribution of Diakonia support is still early as the partnership with Diakonia is younger than a year. Therefore they had to be eliminated from this evaluation process in order not to avoid “claiming others’ impact”.
- Some stories would have been more complete if they had been combined into one – nature of the technique.

ON DIAKONIA'S PROGRAMS IN LEBANON

Diakonia has been present in Lebanon since 2007 when we took the first steps of setting up a country office. The office is run by a Country Representative, supported by a Project Assistant. A part time financial consultant supports the partners in their internal governance, financial reporting and audits. Accounting and financial services have been procured from an international NGO, while awaiting cabinet approval of our registration. In August 2011 the cabinet finally approved Diakonia's registration and financial and accounting capacity will be gradually added to the team.

Diakonia Lebanon supports programmes that advocate for tolerance, democracy, peace and human rights among the Lebanese and Palestinian communities by empowering marginalised groups to take proactive steps against exploitation and towards inclusion in society. An important programme managed by the Lebanon office provides support to a regional network for strengthening civil society in social and economic policy formulation and dialogue.

During the previous strategic period significant progress was made, including the creation of a rights-based rehabilitation module in women's prisons that is used as an advocacy tool for gendering the penal laws; increased engagement of civil society actors in social and economic decision-making processes at national and international levels; improved access of marginalised groups to social and economic structures; and an enhanced awareness of gender equality. Additionally, partners' capacity was developed in different domains specifically in maintaining social sustainability and institution building.

Diakonia's main stakeholders in Lebanon are the rights holders, partners, existing networks and coalitions of CSOs, duty bearers, and existing and potential donors. Diakonia's partners include specialised national organisations in the subject matter to be addressed (women, people with disabilities, human rights, environment), existing networks on electoral and constitutional reform and gender equality, and CSOs with a strong grassroots presence with the most vulnerable groups, including female prisoners, rural women, youth, and refugees.

In addition to its work with partners and duty bearers, Diakonia in Lebanon work together with the regional office in building relationships with potential donors, and in forging strong alliances and coordination with INGOs who share the same values and priorities.

A specific focus on women's empowerment, political participation and rights and the power relations between women and men will be made in all priorities below.

Priority 1: Strengthen formal democratisation processes and participatory political reforms

This involves providing leadership training and support for political participation (including election monitoring) to women, youth and people with disabilities; support civic education and advocacy on constitutional reform, electoral reform and citizenship; support transfer of expertise on electoral reform from Lebanon to the Arab countries in transition; advocate for legislation to regulate inclusive participation in reform processes.

Priority 2: Increase respect for Human Rights of marginalised groups within different levels of society

This involves building capacity in CSOs for monitoring in accordance with the UPR, and raising cases of violations, with particular focus on prisoners, women, Palestinian refugees, working children and

persons with disabilities; support the expansion of community based rehabilitation modules within the Palestinian camps; provide support to social media users.

Priority 3: Prevent and combat violence against women in its various forms and practices

This involves raising awareness of men's roles in the processes to change gender power relations; promote knowledge of female prisoners' rights; support evidence-based research on violence against women; advocate for reforms on family law, civil status law and penal codes.

Priority 4: Place the right to natural resources/water on the national development agendas within the framework of climate justice for the poor, resource allocation and conflict

This involves supporting the establishment of a Climate Justice Coalition for Lebanon and its participation in international conventions; promote knowledge and build skills of CSOs on climate change priorities related to access to natural resources for marginalised groups through the dissemination of existing research and sponsorship of new research; support civil society advocacy especially those related to access to water and agriculture; foster exchange within the region as well as other countries where Diakonia has significant input and successes, for example Latin America.

Priority 5: Strengthen socio-economic rights of vulnerable groups and engage in socio-economic policy making and reforms at local and national levels

This involves undertaking advocacy for the right to employment of marginalised groups; support monitoring of the Social Strategy process and its final adoption by the government; raise awareness on the topic of "better aid" and "open forum" processes for advancing aid/development effectiveness; support action for Corporate Social Responsibility and promote the role of private actors in development.

Priority 6: Promote non-violence, tolerance and diversity to prevent intercommunity divisions and promote conflict resolution

This involves supporting interventions leading to a culture of peace on a national level, including the Lebanese and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, focusing on children and young men and women to have a lasting impact, young leaders in political parties and the Media; mainstream conflict prevention into existing programmes; disseminate information and build CSO capacity around Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, as well as on IHL.

Priority 7: Provide humanitarian assistance in close collaboration with selected partners in response to emergencies, natural disasters and escalating conflicts, particularly focusing on refugees and the Israeli occupation

This involves building capacity on emergency preparedness in accordance with internationally accepted Humanitarian Principles and standards.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bateson, G. (1979), *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. E.P. Dutton. New York.
- Bennett, C. (1976), Up The Hierarchy. *Journal of Extension*, March/April, USA. See also http://www.lhccrems.nsw.gov.au/pdf_xls_zip/pdf_env_report/Attach5-BENNETTS.pdf (site visited: 26 September 2004).
- Campbell, D.T. (1969), Variation, Selection And Retention In Socio-Cultural Evolution. *General Systems*, Vol 14, p 69–85.
- CCDB (2000), *Roles and Functions of the CCDB PME System*. Internal CCDB Memo.
- Dart, J.J. [1999a], 'The Tale Behind The Performance Story Approach', *Evaluation News and Comment*, 8, No.1, pp 12–13. Link available at: <http://www.clearhorizon.com.au> (site posted April 2005).
- Dart, J.J. (1999b), 'A Story Approach For Monitoring Change In An Agricultural Extension Project', *Proceedings of the Association for Qualitative Research (AQR), International Conference, Melbourne*, AQR, www.latrobe.edu.au/www/aqr/offer/papers/JDart.htm link at: <http://www.clearhorizon.com.au> (site posted April 2005).
- Dart, J. J. (2000a), 'Stories for Change: A new model of evaluation for agricultural extension projects in Australia', PhD, Institute of Land and Food Resources, University of Melbourne, Melbourne. PDF available at: <http://www.clearhorizon.com.au> (site posted April 2005).
- Dart, J. J. (2000b), 'Stories for Change: A systematic approach to participatory monitoring', *Proceedings of Action Research & Process Management (ALARPM) and Participatory Action-Research (PAR) World Congress, Ballarat, Australia*, [www.ballarat.edu.au/alarpm/docs/Dart, J - Paper.doc](http://www.ballarat.edu.au/alarpm/docs/Dart_J_Paper.doc) (site visited: 26 September 2004).
- Dart, J.J. (2000c), Target 10 Evaluation stories, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victorian State Government, Melbourne. PDF available at: <http://www.clearhorizon.com.au> (site posted April 2005).
- Dart, J. J. & Davies, R.J. (2003), A dialogical story-based evaluation tool: the most significant change technique, *American Journal of Evaluation* 24, 137–155.
- Dart, J. J., Drysdale, G., Cole, D. and Saddington, M. (2000), 'The Most Significant Change Approach For Monitoring an Australian Extension Project', in *PLA Notes*, Vol. 38, International Institute for Environment and Development, London, 47–53. PDF available at: <http://www.clearhorizon.com.au> (site posted April 2005).
- Davies, R.J. (1996), 'An Evolutionary Approach To Facilitating Organisational Learning: An Experiment By The Christian Commission For Development In Bangladesh.' <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/ccdb.htm> (site visited: 26 September 2004).
- Davies, R.J. (1998a), 'An Evolutionary Approach To Organisational Learning: An Experiment By An NGO In Bangladesh', In Mosse, D., Farrington, J., and Rew, A., (1998), *Development as Process: Concepts and Methods for Working with Complexity*. Routledge/ODI. London.