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LEBANON REFORESTATION INITIATIVE

SOCIAL STABILITY ASSESSMENT REPORT



2018

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The Lebanon Reforestation Initiative (LRI), funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the US Forest Service (USFS), completed in June 2015 the first four-year project with a total funding of \$12.6 million. In July 2015, LRI started a second phase of USAID funding with a total budget of \$7 million. This three-year follow-on project was developed to sustain and maximize the impact of community-led reforestation in Lebanon. The new phase was based on the theory that community-led landscape restoration activities can be used as a positive vehicle to build social stability and promote sectarian harmony in host communities.

The main aim is to amplify the program's socio-economic co-benefits, focusing on diverse sectarian communities, especially those host communities hit hardest by the Syrian refugee crisis. Such co-benefits include: social outcomes such as stronger inter- and intra-community relations, stronger local institutions and civic groups engaged in service provision, increased involvement of women in local decision-making, increased youth civic engagement; and economic benefits of seasonal job creation and strengthening communities to face adverse situations such as wildfires, quarries and climate change.

LRI phase II project puts an increased emphasis on Monitoring and Evaluation and impact measurement of implemented activities on social stability of targeted communities. In this context, the MEL plan is proposing to adopt a qualitative indicator measuring social stability and that will cover three main social categories to give an overview of the situation in each targeted community. The indicator will allow to monitor the evolution of social stability for the specific issues targeted by LRI activities. In this purpose, a study was conducted during the first year and last year of the project to assess the baseline situation and evaluate the change achieved at the end of the project. This report describes the methodology and the main findings of the study.

2. Background and Rationale

2.1. Lebanese communities

The Lebanese state in the current period has been arbitrarily controlled by contradictory and conflicting communities and other socio-political dynamics. Therefore, religious groups in Lebanon constitute the major political forces of the political system ([Abdel-Kader, 2010](#)) consequently affecting intercommunity-relations, participatory conflict management mechanisms and perception of commonalities between different community groups, some of the aspects considered as indicators of social stability ([UNDP, 2015](#)).

LRI project conducted a community profile rapid assessment in 2016 that showed the different sectarian backgrounds in the target communities where LRI is implementing activities to improve social stability within and between Lebanese communities in two Social and Environmental Corridors (SEC): the North SEC (including villages from the Zgharta, Bcharre, Baalbeck, Jbeil and Batroun districts), and the Rachaiya SEC (including villages from Rachaiya district and one village from Zahle district).

Table 1. Religious background of target communities

| | Villages in the North SEC | Religious background |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Chatine | Christian Maronite, Orthodox |
| 2 | Ehmej | Christian Maronite |
| 3 | Jaj | Christian Maronite |
| 4 | Bcharre | Christian Maronite |
| 5 | Tannourine | Christian Maronite, Orthodox |
| 6 | Hasroun | Christian Maronite |
| 7 | Akoura | Christian Maronite |
| 8 | Deir El Ahmar | Christian Maronite |
| 9 | Maqne | Muslim Shia |
| 10 | Ainata | Christian Maronite |
| 11 | Yammouneh | Muslim Shia |
| 12 | Ehden | Christian Maronite |
| | Villages in the Rachaiya SEC | Religious background |
| 1 | Ain Arab | Muslim Sunni/ Christian Orthodox |
| 2 | Kherbet Rouha | Muslim Sunni |
| 3 | Rafid | Muslim Sunni |
| 4 | Anjar | Christian Armenian Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical |
| 5 | Majdel Balhis | Muslim Sunni/ Christian Orthodox |
| 6 | Mhaidthe | Druze/ Christian Orthodox, Catholic and Maronite |
| 7 | Kfardenis | Muslim Sunni |
| 8 | Bakka | Muslim Sunni |
| 9 | Kawkaba Abou Arab | Druze |
| 10 | Bireh | Muslim Sunni |
| 11 | Dahr El Ahmar | Druze/ Christian Orthodox |
| 12 | Mdoukha | Muslim Sunni |
| 13 | Rachaiya | Druze/ Christian Orthodox, Catholic and Catholic Syriac/ Muslim Sunni |

2.2. Syrian refugees' communities

Studies showed that the Syrian conflict had significant demographic and socio-economic impact on the Lebanese host communities. The rapid increase in numbers of refugees in the Lebanese communities had profound consequences on the dynamics of local communities especially for the management of resources and tensions. However, dynamics differ between different regions of Lebanon depending on the existing political, security and cultural contexts. The attitude of Lebanese population is essential in managing potential threats on social stability in Lebanon at the individual, community and village level (LRCP, 2015-2016). LRI project recognized that continued engagement in a common cause such as reforestation and the environment in general including capacity building of local stakeholders is a way to help strengthen social stability in its target communities. The project targeted particularly youth groups from the Syrian and Lebanese communities.

Table 2. Registered Refugees in LRI target communities (UNHCR, 2016; UNHCR, 2018)

| Community | Number of registered Syrian refugees - 2016 | Number of registered Syrian refugees - 2018 | Change |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|-------------|
| Villages in the North SEC | | | |
| Deir El Ahmar | 2807 | 3374 | +567 |
| Bcharre | 1812 | 1155 | -657 |
| Tannourine | 1400 | 920 | -480 |
| Ehden | 1352 | 798 | -554 |
| Yammouneh | 372 | 524 | +152 |
| Hasroun | 207 | 216 | +9 |
| Maqne | 127 | 189 | +62 |
| Ainata | 126 | 38 | -88 |
| Ehmej | 54 | 73 | +19 |
| Chatine | 36 | 50 | +14 |
| Akoura | 35 | 60 | +25 |
| Jaj | 0 | 5 | +5 |
| Total | 8367 | 7402 | -965 |
| Villages in the Rachaiya SEC | | | |
| Dahr El Ahmar | 2115 | 1844 | -271 |
| Kherbet Rouha | 1478 | 1328 | -150 |
| Rafid | 1373 | 1210 | -163 |
| Anjar | 1372 | 2128 | +756 |
| Rachaiya | 1109 | 682 | -427 |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mdoukha | 839 | 719 | -120 |
| Bireh | 659 | 539 | -120 |
| Kawkaba Abou Arab | 554 | 405 | -149 |
| Kfardenis | 278 | 277 | -1 |
| Bakka | 108 | 117 | +9 |
| Majdel Balhis | 98 | 120 | +22 |
| Mhaidthe | 70 | 121 | +51 |
| Ain Arab | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 10053 | 9490 | -563 |

3. Methodology of Social Stability Assessment

Scope of Work

LRI project Goal is “To build social stability and promote sectarian harmony in host communities, through sustainable participatory reforestation, capacity building, and protection from environmental threats”. As part of their MEL plan LRI is using the indicator of “Percent improvement in Social stability in target USG-assisted communities” to measure the level of achievement of the Goal at the end of the project.

In this context, a baseline assessment of social stability in the target communities has been prepared during the first quarter of FY17 (starting November 2016) based on a customized tool used by several National stakeholders working on social stability (**Appendix I for customized tool**)¹. The same assessment was conducted again at the end of the project activities starting March 2018 to measure the final status of social stability and show the level of improvement achieved.

In brief, the tool allows to assess three social categories that are considered linked to improved social stability within and between different communities.

The social categories are:

- The quality and frequency of inter-community contact or social interaction;
- The existence of participatory mechanisms;
- The presence of connectors or commonalities between groups.

¹ Customized from the Rapid Tension Assessment Tool developed by Lebanon Crisis Response Plan – Social Stability Working Group. The objective of the tool is to provide a ready and useful resource to partners and to improve comparability of data and findings between partners – however partners should feel free to adjust the tool to the specificities of their programmes or their M&E needs. For example, a partner could choose to use only four or five of the seven categories listed. Questions can also be adjusted/replaced/removed in order to remain sensitive to the local context.

Training on data collection tools for SSA

The first step in the assessment was to organize a 5-day coaching on preparation and use of data collection tools for SSA. The coaching was given by an external consultant to the M&E specialist, LRI field officer, LRI intern and two part-time field officers.

The coaching included desk work (15 November 2016 and 28 November 2016 with the team, and one day home-based) such as the review of the customized tool, the project Goal, target participants in the assessment, the development of questions for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and training on the use of the developed questions (**Appendix II, III, & IV for questions**). Also, the coaching included 2 days of field coaching where the team tested the KII questions (29 November 2016) and the FGD questions in Rachaiya region (30 November 2016) with the supervision of the consultant (**Appendix V for trainer report**).

Target communities

In Rachaiya SEC, 13 communities were assessed, selected as being the direct beneficiaries from the project activities and being villages located on the Social and Environmental Corridor (SEC) (Anjar, Rafid, Mdoukha, Kfardenis, Ain Arab, Kherbet Rouha, Rachaiya, Bakka, Bireh, Kawkaba Abou Arab, Majdel Balhis, Dahr El Ahmar and Mhaidthe). With the same approach, 12 communities were assessed in the North SEC (Yammouneh, Maqne, Tannourine, Chatine, Jaj, Ehmej, Akoura, Bcharre, Ehden, Hasroun, Deir El Ahmar and Ainata).

The additional target groups assessed were Lebanese and Syrian youth groups from the Rachaiya region. In this area, the refugee communities are mostly found in larger groups where all the household members have moved together, and youth groups can be found more than in North region. A number of 15 Lebanese and Syrian youth groups benefited from conflict mediation training and key persons were selected to conduct the baseline and final focus group discussion in relation to social stability.

Methodology

The full method used for the assessment is detailed in the Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) of the indicator “Percent improvement in Social stability in target USG-assisted communities” being measured through this study (**Appendix VI for PIRS**).

In brief, three Key Informants were selected from each community for interviews including men and women from different age groups. In total, 78 interviews were conducted for the baseline assessment and 75 interviews were conducted for the final assessment.

For triangulation of results generated from the KII, two FGDs were conducted in each SEC, one for the baseline and one for the final assessment. In addition, social stability was assessed using only FGD for Lebanese and Syrian youth groups (**Appendix VII for sign-up sheets of FGDs**).

The interview questions were divided into two parts, the first section asking about the social stability status within the same community and the second part asking about the social stability status between neighboring communities within the same SEC. The FGD questions addressed social stability between different groups without tackling social stability issues within the same community.

Each question was given a score based on the answer provided by the respondent. The scale used was from 5 to 1, the higher score the better social stability. Scores were later converted to percentage to calculate the percentage improvement for each of the studied aspects (5=100%, 4=80%, 3=60%, 2=40%, 1=20%).

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the KII and FGD results was divided by the three social categories assessed because the answers showed high variation of the impact on different aspects of social stability. Combination of scores between the three categories was not recommended; however, for reporting purposes, the weighted average score for all categories is also presented in the results. The analysis is conducted on the inter-community level, as LRI is mainly working on improving social stability between neighboring communities rather than within each community, only results on the corridor level are considered for the reporting against the Goal indicator (**Appendix VII for KII for scoring and detailed calculations**).

4.1. Rachaiya SEC results

Quantitative Analysis

| KII results | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------|--|--------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Social Stability Indicator</i> | <i>(1) Inter-community contact</i> | | <i>(2) Participatory management mechanisms</i> | | <i>(3) Connectors between groups</i> | |
| <i>% of Total Stakeholders</i> | <i>Baseline</i> | <i>Final</i> | <i>Baseline</i> | <i>Final</i> | <i>Baseline</i> | <i>Final</i> |
| Score of 5 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 15.38 | 58.97 | 12.82 | 10.26 |
| Score of 4.5 | 0.00 | 2.70 | 0.00 | 7.69 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 4 | 15.38 | 2.70 | 25.64 | 20.51 | 46.15 | 64.10 |
| Score of 3.5 | 10.26 | 21.62 | 2.56 | 5.13 | 0.00 | 12.82 |
| Score of 3 | 12.82 | 13.51 | 2.56 | 2.56 | 23.08 | 10.26 |
| Score of 2.5 | 35.90 | 48.65 | 0.00 | 5.13 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 2 | 7.69 | 8.11 | 15.38 | 0.00 | 2.56 | 0.00 |
| Score of 1.5 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 1 | 17.95 | 2.70 | 38.46 | 0.00 | 15.38 | 2.56 |
| Weighted average per category (%) | 51.79 | 55.94 | 53.07 | 90 | 67.69 | 77.17 |
| Average for all categories (%) | Baseline: 57.52 | | | Final: 74.38 | | |

| FGD results | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | <i>(1) Inter-community contact</i> | <i>(2) Participatory management mechanisms</i> | <i>(3) Connectors between groups</i> |
| Baseline | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| Final | 3.5 | 4 | 4 |

The assessment in Rachaiya SEC showed that strong connectors and commonalities are the main aspect of social stability between neighboring communities in this region. After LRI activities, a 9.48% improvement resulted in this category. During the FGD, participants agreed that the same connectors existed between the different social groups however, the project activities contributed in highlighting them.

Regarding the social interaction before LRI activities, most agreed that it does exist however it includes only part or few of the community members and during special occasions with a low frequency of few times per year. After LRI activities, results show an increase in social interaction by 4.15% in comparison to the beginning of the project. A larger portion of the community was engaged through the joint activities resulting in higher frequency of inter-community contact. There was also consensus on this result during the conducted FGD.

In relation to the participatory management mechanism, the baseline results were divided into a major part (38.46%) indicating a lack of such effective participatory entities, and another part considering that informal mechanisms such as leaders in the community and notable people are present and have a very effective role in conflict mediation (25.64%). In the FGD, participants emphasized the formal position of the union of municipalities and appraised their effective role in solving common issues which was only indicated by 15% of the interviewed key informants. In the final assessment, an improvement of 36.93% was shown related to the creation of the corridor planning committee but mainly its relationship with the local environmental committees and municipalities in each town without ignoring the important role of the two union of municipalities present in this region (Kalaat al Istiklal and Jabal El Sheikh). The link that was created by the project between the community members and the local authorities proved to have an important effect on the participatory mechanism aspect of social stability in the Rachaiya region. The results show a division of opinions in the baseline whereas there is a major group having a consensus on the participatory mechanisms at the end of project.

Qualitative interpretation and analysis

| Category | Summary of answers |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>(1) Inter-community contact</i> | <p>Social interaction between communities was present in most cases however limited to few occasions per year and with the participation of few members in the communities. Examples of such interactions include marriages or condolences or private invitations, in addition to festivals organized by municipalities or sport and educational events conducted by clubs, annual religious gatherings or individual social visits.</p> <p>Social and environmental activities supported by LRI project contributed to an increased interaction between the neighboring communities on a seasonal basis (monthly during the summer, less during the winter). Examples of interaction mentioned by respondents are planting activities and related training, cleaning</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>campaign, participation in public markets and festivals, helping each other in protecting the forests, fire fighting training, hiking events, mutual social and cultural visits, learning visits to nature reserves, awareness campaigns, experience sharing meetings and sport events. Such events supported by LRI, led to the creation of new friendships between people from different backgrounds, and continued interaction regardless of LRI involvement.</p> |
| <p><i>(2) Participatory management mechanisms</i></p> | <p>At the beginning of the project, most of the respondents did not identify any effective participatory mechanism between the communities of the SEC, whereas others focused on the effective role of community leaders. The fact that more than a half of participants in the FGD were from municipal councils, highlighted the role of the two unions of the municipalities (Jabal El Cheikh and Independence) as very effective and participatory. Few also mentioned a role for the presence NGOs and Mokhtars in the area that are also participating in improved communication about issues between neighboring communities.</p> <p>Towards the end of LRI project, respondents acknowledged the presence of the established Corridor Planning Committee (CPC) as a participatory mechanism between different villages as well as between the civil society and the municipal authorities. The municipalities were still considered the main mechanism responsible of managing common environmental issues, however the CPC was able to convey the communities' concerns to the main decision-making authorities in the villages through the locally established or activated environmental committees and activists. The CPC was considered to become more effective if it is supported to become more of an official entity that could present itself in formal meetings and become more reliable in proposing projects or solutions to common environmental issues in the region.</p> |
| <p><i>(3) Connectors between groups</i></p> | <p>The main sited connectors and commonalities between communities were geographical identity, religious sects, culture and traditions, sports activities, family relatives and marriages, and the similar economic situation and community issues.</p> <p>Most of the respondents indicated that the connectors are strong between communities, although others considered them not strong enough and few did not acknowledge any commonalities with their neighboring villages.</p> <p>At the end of the project, new strong connectors were identified by respondents including an increased environmental awareness and stewardship toward the reforested lands, the willingness to work for the conservation of the exiting forests, positive future vision of the corridor, and the acknowledgement of women's role in forestry.</p> |

4.2. North SEC results

Baseline Quantitative Analysis

| KII results | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------|--|---------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Social Stability Indicator</i> | <i>(1) Inter-community contact</i> | | <i>(2) Participatory management mechanisms</i> | | <i>(3) Connectors between groups</i> | |
| <i>% of Total Stakeholders</i> | <i>Baseline</i> | <i>Final</i> | <i>Baseline</i> | <i>Final</i> | <i>Baseline</i> | <i>Final</i> |
| Score of 5 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 20.51 | 6.06 | 7.69 | 29.41 |
| Score of 4.5 | 2.56 | 0.00 | 2.56 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 4 | 2.56 | 5.71 | 23.08 | 48.48 | 56.41 | 41.18 |
| Score of 3.5 | 2.56 | 14.29 | 0.00 | 6.06 | 2.56 | 2.94 |
| Score of 3 | 10.26 | 17.14 | 12.82 | 0.00 | 25.64 | 8.82 |
| Score of 2.5 | 46.15 | 51.43 | 0.00 | 6.06 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 2 | 15.38 | 0.00 | 5.13 | 6.06 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 1.5 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 6.06 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 1 | 20.51 | 11.43 | 35.90 | 21.21 | 7.69 | 17.65 |
| Weighted average per category (%) | 45.64 | 52.86 | 58.21 | 60.61 | 71.54 | 73.24 |
| Average for all categories (%) | Baseline: 58.46 | | | Final: 62.23 | | |

| FGD results | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | <i>(1) Inter-community contact</i> | <i>(2) Participatory management mechanisms</i> | <i>(3) Connectors between groups</i> |
| Baseline | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Final | 2.5 | 4 | 5 |

The compilation of the scores show that on one hand connectors between groups are the main aspects that exist between target communities that support social stability in the North SEC. A slight improvement of 1.7% resulted at the end of the project by highlighting the common environmental problems and interests on the corridor level and which need to be jointly addressed.

On the other hand, it is agreed that inter-community contact need improvement as most of the interaction is either non-existing or happens only in specific occasions with a low frequency (less than once a month, few times per year). By the end of the project, the highest improvement of 7.22% was shown in the social interaction aspect of social stability in this region.

In relation to participatory management mechanisms, people were divided into about 36% not showing any knowledge of effective entities and into 23% indicating the municipal councils as sufficient and adequate conflict solving entities, and into 26% that acknowledge informal

individuals or groups as efficient entities for conflict mediation. By the end of the project, 48.48% of respondents acknowledge the presence of the CPC as an effective participatory mechanism, however, 21.21% did not consider the CPC as having yet the capacity to fulfill its role as a mechanism that could jointly manage the corridor. Nevertheless, this aspect improved by 2.4 %.

Triangulation through the FGD at the baseline, shows a consensus on having no social interactions between communities or any participatory mechanism for communication about management of environmental issues, but indicating the existence of strong commonalities and connectors between them. Similarly, the final FGD, shows the slight improvement on the level of connectors and an increase in social interaction levels. The FGD, however, showed a significant improvement in the participatory mechanisms' aspect, the participants being members of the CPC.

Qualitative interpretation and analysis

The narrative answers of the key informants showed the below:

| Category | Summary of answers |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>(1) Inter-community contact</i> | <p>Varied between communities; meaning that higher geographical proximity, resulted in higher social interaction in some cases whereas farther communities had no interaction at all. In most cases, interaction frequency was occasional (less than once month) and limited to big events (social festivals, religious gatherings and political occasions) or on an individual level (personal acquaintances, wedding invitations or condolences). LRI project activities engaged a larger portion of the communities on the corridor on a monthly basis on average (more in summer, less in winter). This allowed social interactions to be improved significantly as per the respondents, and included mutual visits between different communities, joint awareness events for different age groups, continuous cooperation between community members involved in the project, experience-sharing about common issues and interests (technical and cultural) through periodical meetings, invitation and participation of villages to each other's events such as festivals, capacity building activities (e.g. ecotourism, firefighting, conflict resolution), planting activities, continuous communication through social media and mobile applications, participation in group discussions around the corridor, sport activities, and hiking activities.</p> <p>The various activities created friendships and mutual visits breaking cultural barriers between people from different religious and political backgrounds regardless of LRI involvement although it is mainly on an individual level.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>(2) Participatory management mechanisms</i></p> | <p>This category was debatable for most communities. In the baseline, part of the participants agreed that there is no conflict management mechanism between neighboring communities, whereas the other part indicated the communication between municipal councils as an effective mechanism for the management of common environmental issues. Many noted that in case conflict is not solved communities would go to the law court. Several communities acknowledged that key people in the community such as leaders from the big families, political leaders or religious men are the initial non-formal mechanism to be used. Recommendations for improvement included the communication with relevant organizations depending on the type of conflict (given that we stressed on environmental ones rather than political or religious).</p> <p>By the end of the project, most of the respondents considered the CPC as an effective participatory mechanism mainly for discussing common issues and a good platform for experience sharing. However, its role could be improved and clarified by giving more commitment to the corridor rather than on each individual village and working on becoming a formal entity that could represent the corridor in a more reliable way and be able to get funding to implement their strategic plan. Part of the respondents, did not consider the CPC as an effective participatory mechanism and kept acknowledging key persons or entities in the communities as the main responsible of common environmental issues (i.e. managers of nature reserves, activists in the community, environmental organizations).</p> |
| <p><i>(3) Connectors between groups</i></p> | <p>The highest consensus was on the commonalities between the communities within one SEC. Most of the participants indicated that there are strong connectors between them especially in relation to the blood relatives (marriages between communities), cultural customs and traditions of the mountains, their shared forests, the Lebanese identity, common resources such as water, and the financial situation. It should however also be noted, that less connectors are found when communities are more geographically apart or have different religious backgrounds.</p> <p>By the end of the project, new connectors have been created or highlighted and mentioned by the respondents especially between communities that are geographically apart and the ones from different religious backgrounds. Examples of connectors are the common cultural and natural heritage that link different areas (Roman trail, the Lebanon Mountain Trail), the passion to planting and increasing the green cover, the similar potential for ecotourism, common yearly activities (marathon between Ainata and Yammouneh), and the increased environmental awareness).</p> |

4.3. Syrian-Lebanese youth groups results

Quantitative Analysis

| Social Stability Indicator | (1) Inter-community contact | | (2) Participatory management mechanisms | | (3) Connectors between groups | |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------|---|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| | Baseline | Final | Baseline | Final | Baseline | Final |
| % of Total Stakeholders | | | | | | |
| Score of 5 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 50.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 4.5 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 4 | 50.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 100.00 | 50.00 | 100.00 |
| Score of 3.5 | 50.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 3 | 0.00 | 100.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 2.5 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 2 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 50.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 1.5 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Score of 1 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 50.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Weighted average per category (%) | 75 | 60 | 30 | 80 | 90 | 80 |
| Average for all categories (%) | Baseline: 65 | | | Final: 73.33 | | |

The main improvement analysis of the FGD results between Lebanese and Syrian youth showed the highest improvement of 50% in the participatory conflict management mechanism. This is due to the establishment of the “Arz w Yasmine” group joining Lebanese and Syrian youth from Rachaiya region. The group is considered as effective in gathering youth from both communities to interact under a common vision regardless of existing conflicts.

The social interaction seemed to be slightly less than before, but this is because the participants in the FGD were focusing on the members of the “Arz w Yasmine” that are coming from different villages in Rachaiya SEC and do not necessarily live as neighbors. Although they might not interact daily or weekly, they are meeting on a regular/monthly basis and they stay connected through social media (whatsapp/Facebook). Also, the group include part and not most of the communities obviously, mainly the age groups between 15 and 29 years old.

On the level of connectors, the participants also focused on the new connectors created and identified them as strong in comparison to the existing commonalities that were considered very strong (religion, language, traditions, etc...) resulting in a slightly lower score. The group acknowledged that the new joint action plan needs follow up and more efforts and support to be implemented and consequently to become a very strong connector between the Syrian and Lebanese youths in the region.

Qualitative interpretation and analysis

The narrative answers of the FGD participants showed the below:

| Category | Summary of answers |
|--|--|
| <i>(1) Inter-community contact</i> | <p>Based on the baseline study, social interaction proved to be existent between Lebanese and Syrian youth residing in Rachaiya SEC. Individuals from both communities usually interact on average on a weekly basis and in some cases daily whenever the place of residence is common or very much depending on proximity to each other. In other cases, there is no interaction at all between the two groups or interaction is usually limited.</p> <p>The type of activities include sport activities (football), social occasions (marriages, funerals), visits between neighbors, sharing of food recipes, friendships at university, and some have marriage relationships.</p> <p>It was also noted that this interaction varies between men and women. Usually women tend to interact better due to competition over job opportunities among men. Also, Syrian women born in Lebanon and men who have been living in Lebanon for a long period consider the interaction with the Lebanese communities as normal.</p> <p>At the end of the project, additional social interaction between youth included conflict resolution trainings and group discussions to develop action plan of joint activities (named “The way of the pines”), joint planting activities, environmental awareness events (fire prevention - Sanjoub Play-, distribution of garbage bags at the public Market in Dahr El Ahmar, International Women’s Day), and hiking events. These activities gathered a larger part of the youth of both communities on a monthly basis creating new friendships that continued interacting and bringing more volunteers to join the activities without LRI involvement.</p> |
| <i>(2) Participatory management mechanisms</i> | <p>The main conflicts or differences identified at the start of the project between Lebanese and Syrian youth include political conflicts, racism towards the Syrian refugees, social problems such as Lebanese men marrying Syrian women creating competition with Lebanese women, disputes between the youths leading to bigger issues between the older members of the communities, conflicts over house rental pricing and financial exploitation, competition over job opportunities, different traditions and culture, different levels of education, refugee status of long-term Syrian residents, illegal residence and cases of criminal acts.</p> <p>Participatory conflict management mechanisms include informal representatives of the two communities intervening to solve the problem or else there is direct intervention of the judiciary bodies and</p> |

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| | <p>the state. The meetings between the two groups are neither on a regular basis nor are considered as efficient in resolving the issues. Suggested solutions included joint trainings and meetings, dialogue sessions, and common activities, communication with the municipality, and creation of common interests.</p> <p>At the end of the project, the youth acknowledged the establishment of “Arz w Yasmine” group consisting of 44 youth from both Lebanese and Syrian communities that have a common action plan “the way of the pines” with common goals to increase environmental awareness and implement cleaning activities in the villages in the Rachaiya SEC, organizing and participating in fire prevention events and increasing the green areas. The youth considered this mechanism as effective in decreasing conflicts between youth and allowing them in gathering around a common cause. The group has been engaging in other social activities (“Dafa” campaign to help the unfortunate, recycling of plastic bottle caps to provide wheelchairs, and picnic between Lebanese and Syrian youth in the region, and other volunteering work)</p> |
| <p>(3) <i>Connectors between groups</i></p> | <p>During the baseline assessment, the participants identified several strong connectors between the two communities including the attendance of the same schools, living in the same neighborhoods, visiting the same places (gardens, restaurants, markets), gathering around the same entertainment activities (football, card games, computer places, coffee shops, festivals, among others).</p> <p>Commonalities included also family relations, the language, the religious background, some culinary customs, and similar economic problems. At the end of the project, “Arz w Yasmine” group has now created even stronger connectors between the two communities by having common vision and goals through their joint action plan, the willingness to volunteer, the lack of racism within the group, the stronger friendships and new acquaintances.</p> |

4.4. Challenges and data limitations

The main challenge in this study was the selection of key informants to be interviewed for the baseline assessment. The people were selected with the help of LRI field officers in each region based on criteria that make them key persons in their communities. Key Informants are generally characterized as individuals with good knowledge and influence (i.e. their opinion matters to others) in their communities, such as local leaders, municipal officials, mukhtars, active people representing different sectors such as educational (social worker, teachers, schools’ directors), economic, and active youths from the refugee community. LRI aimed at gathering different perspectives and therefore interview different types of key informants, from the different communities, economic and social background. Despite the above approach, some interviewed

people in the baseline turned out not to be key informants in their community and were not able to provide answers on the interview questions especially during the final assessment. When the answer provided was “Don’t know”, it was considered as “no score” in the analysis.

Another challenge was the selection of the target communities. As stated before, the communities were selected based on the ones that are potential direct beneficiaries of the project. However, Lehfed community considered in the baseline was not involved later in the project activities. The CPC members failed to follow up on the meetings and trainings and the municipality did not show commitment to reforestation. Thus, it was not relevant to consider it in the final assessment.

On another note, the combination of the scores for different aspects of social stability was considered as a data limitation concealing actual performance on each aspect. However, this report shows the results separately for better interpretation of each category.

Finally, it is important to mention that the change in the municipal councils during the project implementation in 2016 affected the level of commitment in case of the election of new members. As a mitigation LRI continued to collaborate with newly elected members to introduce the project and follow up on the work implemented before.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the results obtained from the assessment and the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the foundation of having better social stability is to work on several aspects together, because each community would interact differently on each of the levels depending on the community’s social, political, environmental and economic backgrounds and the specific dynamics existing in the region. Specific activities should be designed based on their needs and interests and tweaked to ensure efficient participation of target stakeholders.

On the level of social interaction, LRI project was able to engage various categories in the target communities within the SECs of the North and Rachaiya (age groups, gender, religious and political backgrounds) in joint activities. LRI project contributed to longer term relationships on the personal level as well as the community level.

On the level of participatory mechanisms, LRI project was able to improve communication between local authorities (municipalities) and the civil society (individuals and CBOs) on one hand by creating committees on the village level and on the corridor level. The committees proved to be good platforms for sharing of experience, information and proposing local projects and solutions related to the management of natural resources. On the other hand, LRI was able to improve communication between Lebanese and Syrian youth in the Rachaiya region by training

youth groups on conflict mediation and helping in the establishment of a joint group with common development objectives through their action plan.

The main recommendation is to support corridor planning committees in defining their role depending on the needs per corridor in addition to strengthening their reliability and status as effective management mechanism between communities in the same SEC. Regarding the youth group, the recommendation is to support them by linking their initiatives to the CPC strategic plan and working together with the CPC to ensure needed funding for the implementation of small scale events. Although the youth members are willing to volunteer for the organization of activities under their action plan, the financial and social situation of the Syrian does not always allow them for equal participation whenever small contributions are required.

On the level of connectors and commonalities, LRI project contributed to the creation of a common vision towards the shared natural resources in each of the corridor. The target communities acknowledge the increased awareness and stewardship towards their environment and the commitment to the conservation of the planted areas. The main recommendation is keeping the communities informed and engaged in public awareness events to emphasize this connector and increase the number of people that share this common goal.

In summary, LRI project was able to improve social stability by focusing on three aspects within its scope of work. It should be noted that several external factors affect social stability in the target regions such as political issues, and historical conflicts between different categories in the community. Although such factors do affect LRI work; the project did not tackle these issues but rather tried to get around them and gather diverse communities over a less controversial subject such as reforestation and the environment in general.

6. References

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