

Lebanon Youth - National Volunteer Service Program Strengthening and Sustainability (P158815)

Capacity Development of Implementing Agencies of the NVSP



**Lessons learned the April 2016 Workshop “Becoming Sustainable”
and next steps**

From interviews conducted in Lebanon

October 2-8, 2016

Organized by
The World Bank and the
National Volunteer Service Program of the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Lebanon

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1. Background and summary

The National Volunteer Service Program (NVSP) focuses on involving Lebanese youth in volunteering activities, under the stewardship of the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), and in partnership with local NGOs, universities, and soon the corporate sector. The NVSP is currently supported through a US\$2 million World Bank State and Peace-Building grant (P126734 - Lebanon National Volunteer Service Program) managed by the Social Protection & Labor (SP&L) Global Practice. The NVSP project has three main components: (i) institution building and capacity development for volunteer civic engagement; (ii) Small Grants Program (SGP) for eligible NGOs, universities, and schools as well as youth summer camps and weekend volunteering programs for expanding volunteer opportunities and building employability skills; and (iii) monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of civic engagement.

1.1. NGO capacity building

In 2015, the NVSP received additional support “Lebanon Youth - National Volunteer Service Program Strengthening and Sustainability” (P158815) - to strengthen the capacity of NVSP implementing agencies, especially the CSOs which received funding to implement volunteering projects under the first Call for Proposals (CfP) of the NVSP Small Grants Program (SGP). A technical assistance program was designed to help these organizations improve their service delivery and put in place processes that could support their sustainability. A specific curriculum was designed in partnership with the NVSP, MoSA, and the Confederation of Danish Industries, an implementing partner for the project.

In April 13-15 2016, 73 representatives from 26 implementing agencies attended a capacity building workshop. The workshop focused on lessons learned and best practices in project development, management and implementation, and included sessions on financial management/procurement, monitoring and evaluation techniques and communications action planning, all of which cited as the primary capacity gaps for NGOs in Lebanon.

Program of event of April 2016 Capacity Development of Implementing Agencies of the NVSP:

Day 1: April 13	Day 2: April 14	Day 3: April 15
Developing and Managing Sustainable Organizations	Positioning programs for long term support and impact	Results-based management and business planning
Introduction: How to grow and develop your organization How to become sustainable?	Defining your positions (STEP 2 + 3) Influencing the environment where the organization operates (STEP 4)	What is results-based management? Developing a business plan
Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Introduction to 5-STEP model Building your organizational capacity over time (STEP 1) Case Study: “Challenges in sustaining an activity over the long run”	Strategic Communication: Defining your outreach strategy (STEP 5) Case Study: Social media communication: Does it work? Is it useful? Developing and delivering a message	Developing a business plan Presentation of the business plans Ceremony of awarding training certificates to participants of the full 3-day workshop
Dinner	Dinner	

1.2. Workshop early findings

Immediately following the workshop, the DI team assessed the key takeaways and lessons learned from the workshop, its content and the event itself. The DI team noted that:

- Although most of the participating CSOs might be quite advanced as organizations, many seem to have services which were not aligned with their value proposition. Many tend to have too many customers/target groups and too many activities and as a consequence, loose focus. Throughout the BMC exercise, many realized that they might be targeting too many stakeholders and should prioritize amongst them. Therefore, the DI team suggested that CSOs prioritize their core activities as well as revise and sharpen their value proposition.
- Many of the participating organizations have not defined the marketplace they operate in and do not know who their “competitors” are or who they potentially could make an alliance with to achieve higher impact. Some alliances/groups of NGOs have been formed in Lebanon, and there is a great window of opportunity to create more such groups working on thematic and crosscutting issues as many of the CSOs work on similar issues, face similar scrutiny by public institutions, and request similar policy changes.
- In many instances, representatives of the same CSO did not speak with one voice on core issues. This calls for attention and improvement of internal coordination and communication.

Participating organizations do not always use fundraising strategically as they generally prefer short term funding solutions which hampers the long term sustainability of activities.

All the material and post-workshop evaluation associated with the workshop can be found here:



**Youth Tools -
Capacity building w**

1.3. Objectives of follow-up

The NVSP and World Bank team felt it was important to follow up from the early assessment, and go back, six month later, to interview a sample of workshop participants, so as to evaluate the appropriateness of the content used during the workshop, the style of delivery of the training event, and the categories of activities and learnings that were delivered to the attendees. Therefore, during the week of October 2-8, 2016 the team followed-up with six (6) implementing agencies which participated to the workshop and conducted semi-structured interviews with former participants.

This note assesses:

- The relevance of the methodology used during the workshop with implementing agencies.
- Whether and how the lessons from the workshop were applied.
- The remaining level of technical assistance needed to improve all participating NGOs’ capacity and ensure the sustainability of the NGOs component of the program.

1.4. Summary of follow-up findings

Early results indicate that implementation capacity has indeed improved as shown by the level of implementation of the program management techniques learned during the workshop and the increase in program activities within the following six months. To promote sustainable outcomes this notes recommends follow-up training sessions and the provision of a mentoring mechanism and of coaching sessions for CSOs.

2. Findings

2.1. Sample and methodology

Out of the 26 CSOs which were present at the April Workshop, the team met with six CSOs including five NGOs and one large Foundation. Since some CSOs were represented by two individuals, 11 people were met altogether from:

- Appel (from Jbeil)
- Beity Association (from Kfardebian Village)
- Childhood Protection and Care Association (CPCA) (from Baabda)
- Women Charity League (WCL) (from Halba Akkar)
- Farah Sama (from Falougha).
- Hariri Foundation (from Beirut)

Standard interview questions were used, which all invited open answers. The same interview protocol was used for each interview, with the following standard list of questions:

- In retrospect, what were the main lessons learned from the Workshop?
- Which other content and knowledge areas would you have liked to see covered?
- Have you used/ Are you still using / Will you use the following model or material in any way?
 - o Business Model Canvas
 - o Service Relevance Matrix
 - o The 5 Step-Model
 - o The "*Becoming Sustainable*" Guidebook
- How has your organization been following-up with the business plan you designed on Day 3? How far have you gone with implementing this business plan?
- How far have you prioritized your activities and your stakeholders?
- How has the training impacted the redefinition or scope of your value proposition?
- What about your "market place" and alliances with other NGOs? How far have you gone in reaching out to others? In creating partnerships and alliances?
- Are you considering revising your financing activities to make them even more sustainable? Going from fundraising activities to a structured and systematic plan?
- How have you improved your internal communication?

Each interview lasted for one hour, and notes were taken to capture the answers.

Interviewees were particularly appreciative of the opportunity to share their experience since the workshop and noted that this type of qualitative follow-up is rare and welcome.

2.2. Perceptions of the quality of the event

The overall perception of the workshop's methodology, outcomes and outputs is generally positive. According to all participants, the training added value to their organization, even to those who had previous management training (CPCA, Beity, Hariri Foundation) or program experience with large international donors (Hariri Foundation, WCL, CPCA).

The comments from the interviews fall into three main categories:

- **Inspirational and motivational effects:** Participants felt empowered and widely acknowledged the direct effect of the workshop on their new strategy design. All insisted on the importance of having met and exchanged with other CSOs. Many are now looking into building new partnerships, or strengthening their existing partnerships with other organizations (Beity, WCL, Hariri Foundation and Farah Sama).
- **Adoption of proposed tools:** Both the *Business Model Canvas* presented during the workshop and the take-home *Guidebook "Becoming Sustainable"* are now used post-training as tools of reference. On a need-basis, the *"Stakeholder mapping template"* and the *"service relevance matrix"* are helpful to CSOs (Beity, CPCA) as they refine their strategy.

"The Guidebook is very useful, very well structured and clearly written. In fact it is on my desk right now."

Danielle Daccache, CPCA.
- **Operational lessons:** The main operational takeaway is the need to "think as a business" to become sustainable, particularly in:
 - o identifying and prioritizing the organization's revenue streams,
 - o properly delivering a project to donors in organizing, preparing, and budgeting a project proposal (Appel, Beity, Hariri Foundation and Farah Sama),
 - o enhancing and retooling the organization's outreach and communication strategy (Appel, Beity, CPCA, WCL and Farah Sama). Indeed steps 4 and 5 - stakeholder mapping and communication strategy & outreach strategy- of the Five-step Strategy presented during the Workshop resonated particularly with the participants who learned how to: differentiate among stakeholders, organize the organization's network and contacts (Appel, Beity), identify and address potential donors, and "articulate their success".

"The workshop has enticed us how to think as a business, not as an association, and to think about sustainability."

Jumana Billeh, Beity Association.

2.3. Workshop's outcomes: CSOs activities since the Workshop

CSOs have applied, fully or in part, the suggested methodology on their whole organizational structure (Beity) and on individual projects (WLC, Hariri Foundation), or are in the process of designing their strategy and project proposals for the new calendar year starting January 1st 2017 (Appel, Beity, CPCA, Farah Sama).

They are enhancing their long-term strategy, processes and individual projects along the recommendations of the training content, using the Business Model Canvas they developed for their individual organization on day 3 of the training as well as the principles of the Guidebook. As CSOs are actively applying lessons learned in various project management areas, activities in one area can reinforce outcomes in another area:

- Long-term strategy, prioritization of objectives and alignment of tools and activities to these objectives: Since the workshop many CSOs have been redesigning their long term strategy as they learned how to articulate their value proposition more clearly, identify and differentiate among their various stakeholders (Appel, Beity, CPCA, Farah Sama). While one CSO has barely started Appel) and one CSO is kept busy by its new projects (Farah Sama), another CSO (Beity) has already simplified and restructured its organization's objectives and activities around three pillars, and presented this strategy to its General Assembly and Board members; each pillar represents an objective of social change (good governance, sustainable development, and social development), and activities and budget are re-aligned towards these pillars to create leaner and more transparent processes. One CSO (CPCA) intends to present its long-term strategy to its Board soon.

"We filled the BMC on day 3 and then immediately worked and talked with each project coordinator to make sure all the tools are aligned to the project's value proposition."

Nahla El-Zibawi, Hariri Foundation.

- Capacity building: CSOs have trained their volunteers (WCL) and project coordinators (Hariri Foundation) on the BMC to increase their capacity in new project proposal design and project management, especially in budgeting activities. Another CSO (Beity) made training its staff on the BMC one of its mid-term steps towards achieving its overall strategy; one CSO (CPCA) plans to present the Guidebook and the BMC to its Board members, yet reports having doubt that all would be open to new methods.

- Revision of existing projects to foster project efficiency and transparency: Immediately following the training, two CSOs (WCL and Hariri Foundation) applied the BMC to their current projects. Building on their capacity development efforts, they coordinated internally (Hariri Foundation) to identify and analyze their current funding's distribution and improve project budgeting and reporting based on lessons learned. One CSO (Appel) reports that they have understood the importance of project evaluation but need more training. Two other CSOs (CPCA, Farah Sama) assert that their existing M&E mechanisms are sufficient.

- Development of new project proposals: In order to increase their funding opportunities and ultimately the number of people who benefit from their programs, be those volunteers (Beity, WCL) or training recipients (Hariri Foundation), many CSOs are working on new project proposals. One CSO (WCL) reports preparing as many as six project proposals a month instead of two prior to the training; it also started recruiting and training more volunteers to prepare for the expansion of existing project and the inception of new projects, and has created and implemented over the summer a series of 10 training events to prepare volunteers.

"It helped us rethink our marketing as we learned how to articulate and show our success."

Jumana Billeh and Josephine Zgheib, Beity Association

- Revenue streams and long-term sustainability of activities: Since the workshop, CSOs have focused on assessing their current fundraising strategies and identifying new revenues streams, while identifying and starting to reach out to donors (Beity, CPCA, WCL, Farah Sama). One CSO indicated, however, that it still lacks the tools and self-confidence to reach out to donors and would need additional support to do so (Farah Sama). One CSO described how the experience of reaching out to new donors and testing new fund-raising activities through public events had been successful at the local level (WCL).

"It helped us define our long term vision; and re-organized our projects towards our mission statement."

Jeanette Al Ramy, Farah Sama.

- Outreach and communication strategy: The workshop encouraged CSOs to improve their current outreach strategy (Beity, CPCA), or creating new strategies (Farah Sama). CSOs are focusing their new outreach and communication around the

main stakeholder groups they identified post training (Beity, WCL). Many CSOs are in the process of articulating their success, creating new marketing tools for both donors and volunteers (Beity, CPCA, WCL) and developing their online presence (Beity, CPCA, Farah Sama).

- **Building partnerships and alliances:** CSOs have understood the importance of partnerships and are revisiting and expanding their system of alliances and partnerships, thus increasing their capacity, funding opportunities and reinforcing their presence in local communities (Hariri Foundation, WCL, Farah Sama). Two of these CSOs (Hariri Foundation, WCL) created contact lists following the workshop, and maintain contact with other workshop participants. Furthermore, these two CSOs have been very active in strengthening their existing partnerships. WCL also developed an entirely new partnership with the Lebanese Patriotic Association leading to the organization of a joint event in Tripoli in September 2016. Finally one CSO (Farah Sama) is designing its first-ever partnership strategy.

“One major lesson of the workshop is that your organization should have at least two partnerships, not just one; that is why we are now partnering with more organizations.”

Sally Sayed, Women Charity League

2.4. Remaining Technical Assistance Needs and Recommendations

2.4.1. Improving the workshop

The participants identified four main areas of improvement to increase the value of the workshop:

- All organizations called for more time during the event to network and exchange with other organizations, as well as for more practice exercises.
- All note the need for culturally sensitive examples relevant to the Lebanese or larger MENA context.
- An Arabic translation of the Guidebook “Becoming Sustainable” could be useful to disseminate knowledge and share with and train local staff as well as local authorities and partners.
- CSOs would appreciate a donors’ list and more donors’ presentations of their youth and volunteerism programs as well as more tools and detailed processes on how to communicate with donors.

2.4.2. Post-training Technical Assistance needs as identified by CSOs

Perceived technical assistance needs vary among CSOs depending on their starting capacity levels and their experience with systematized project management techniques prior to the training. One CSO noted that it was difficult to put the new techniques learned into practice. This being said, all identified the following needs for technical assistance areas to professionalize their activities:

- **Mentorship:** CSOs agreed that they would benefit from a structured mentoring or coaching system with continuing training sessions “because it is motivating” and to support the sustainability of the programs. One CSO mentioned the need for a consultant to guide them through the first steps of the implementation process and to write “professional” project and funding proposals.
- **Capacity Building:** CSOs expressed their need for more training in various areas:
 - o M&E,
 - o budgeting,

- creating and maintaining sustainable partnerships,
 - training on how to scale up models and programs,
 - volunteers' selection and recruitment and volunteers' management, and
 - opportunity to present a redesigned project plan to a donor panel in 12-month time.
- Tools and information: CSOs asked for support and tools needed to grow their networks of exchanges and alliances, and guidance to understand and help navigate the market and the information from relevant government ministries.

3. Recommendations and future steps

3.1. Training improvements

If the Capacity Building training event is to be replicated, it is recommended to integrate the following changes:

- Contextualization of the training: Include culturally sensitive examples relevant to the Lebanese context in the presentations and training material.
- Translation of the Guidebook: The provision of an Arabic translation of the Guidebook “*Becoming Sustainable*” is essential to CSOs who want to train local staff as well as to share the material with local partners while they expand their alliances.
- Networking activities: More time for networking activities among participating CSOs should be embedded into the schedule.
- Practice time: Participating CSOs should get more individual or small-group practice time after each section to learn how to apply the tools presented.
- Donors' list and donors' presentations: A donors' list could be added to the material provided, as well as opportunities for donors to present their youth and volunteerism programs.
- Communication with donors: The section on communication and outreach could be expanded to encompass more tools and detailed processes on how to communicate with donors.

3.2. Follow-up with CSOs

The following modifications are recommended in order to further support and build the capacity of the NVSP implementing agencies:

- Mentoring and coaching: Within the six months following the training, offer mentoring or coaching sessions to support each CSO on specific implementation issues they have identified. This implementation post-training support system should be as timely as possible to reinforce the motivation effect and prevent the loss of knowledge acquired during the training.
- Transparency and accountability: During the workshop CSOs were given techniques and tools to enhance their accounting processes and management in order to improve the governance of service delivery. Smaller or rural CSOs have not been able to make fundamental changes in their M&E or financial reporting systems. Further budgeting, reporting and M&E training is needed, especially among CSOs with weaker capacity, to ensure transparency and better governance of service delivery.

- Training: Additional training is recommended in the following areas:
 - organizational management with follow-up training on project management and the BMC model;
 - volunteer selection and recruitment training;
 - volunteer management training to update knowledge;
 - creating and maintaining sustainable partnerships; scaling a model and programs.

- Certification mechanism: The certification process could be enhanced by certifying NVSP implementing agencies on post-training implementation, with the possibility for renewal of certification upon completion of follow-up training after 12-24 months.