

CASE STUDY: LEBANON

AIN EL REMMANEH URBAN PILOT PROJECT

Urbanisation is a global megatrend that is changing the aid and development landscape. The world's population is already over half 'urban', with more than one billion people living in slums.

World Vision (WV) has established a Centre of Expertise for Urban Programming that is leading urban pilot projects in six countries. The pilots are testing innovative, locally driven urban poverty solutions such as securing urban land rights, influencing municipal policy implementation, and creating livelihood opportunities.

The Lebanon Urban Pilot Project provides opportunities for children and youth to proactively engage in building positive relationships and a healthy and resilient community.



Project name: Ain el Remmaneh Area Development Programme – Peacebuilding Project

First Phase Start Date:
October 2009

First Phase End Date:
September 2013

Direct project participants: Approx. 850 children and youth

Central Beirut total population: 361,366 (2007 est.)

Proportion of national urban population in slums: 53.1% (2005 est.)

Annual national slum population growth rate: 3% (2001 est.)

Projected national urban population by 2030: 4,439,900

PROJECT CONTEXT

The social and political history of Lebanon has been largely characterised by successive outbursts of civil strife, cross-border tensions and political instability. In the midst of this a report published by the UNDP in 2008 showed that 28% of Lebanese people live below the poverty line.

Ain el Remmaneh (AER) is located in the south-east of Beirut, which was an active green line – a line of demarcation separating Muslim factions from the Christian Lebanese Front during the civil war (1975–1990). Although the war has ended, the symbolic division is still present between different communities in AER which remain largely divided along lines of religious and political affiliations.

From the start, the ADP aimed not simply to enhance child well-being through the improvement of services in education, health, or economic development – but to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation among Christians and Muslims split by decades of war.

During the war of 2006, AER specifically witnessed the displacement of community members and was host to internally displaced people (IDPs). The recent Syrian crisis has brought another layer of complexity and crisis to an already vulnerable city, through the influx of tens of thousands of refugees, putting further pressure on services, and creating new ethnic tensions.



PROJECT GOAL	AER community proactively engaged in building positive relationships and a healthy and resilient community for peace.
PROJECT OUTCOMES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Youth and children in AER project demonstrate peaceful behaviour. Local organisations of the AER project form a mutually beneficial network of relationships for a peaceful and resilient environment.

PROJECT APPROACH

Post-2006 war, unintentional mobilisation of youth around relief and recovery efforts was a result of their voluntary engagement in World Vision's efforts to assist the IDPs and war-



affected communities. Building momentum around this initial mobilisation, a peacebuilding project was designed as a response to the youths' interest in supporting the children and other youth of AER. This was achieved through peace and civic education as well as building on local capacities for emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation.

The project adopted an approach based on:

1. Engaging with local stakeholders, coming from divided communities around one specific issue,
2. Active participation of youth and children in addressing issues affecting their lives, and
3. Building capacities of local communities around peace building and emergency preparedness.

The project promotes genuine participation of different segments of the communities by providing opportunities to children and youth to plan, implement and evaluate their own initiatives. The project also supported the formation of a network of relationships between local organisations for promoting a peaceful and resilient environment in AER.

The programme is now entering a new phase where individual projects are being clustered with new projects to form a city-wide approach known as the 'Beirut City Model'.



KEY OUTCOMES

- Overall the project's effort to promote Muslim-Christian reconciliation makes it unique – peace and reconciliation remain a prerequisite for progress in any development work in Lebanon.
- A youth group has been established, and youth group members were provided capacity-building to enhance their personal and professional development – 'From vulnerable youth, we made leaders'. Indeed, several former youth volunteers formed their own local NGO dedicated to helping other youth, and it is now a partner organisation to WV.
- AER and Palestinian refugee camp youth have gathered through a number of activities and joint trips (planning activities, peace camp, video making) with the theme of conflict transformation. These activities promote understanding, tolerance and acceptance between youth from diverse ethnic, political and religious groups – despite the mistrust of some parents. Students have little chance to leave their communities, and WV trips and activities allow children of one faith to visit and meet with people of other faiths.

- All youth group activities were executed in coordination with local authorities and civil society organisations that formerly never worked together.
- A Disaster Mitigation and Peace Initiative committee was formed joining together local municipalities, social development centres and different civil society organisations involved in disaster risk reduction. It conducted a Community Owned Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment, based on which a community-based disaster preparedness plan was developed.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Any project working in a highly charged atmosphere like Beirut will create heavy expectations. Many youth view NGOs not simply as service providers, but as microcosms of a post-sectarian Lebanon, examples of organisations where people of different faiths can work together – the very antitheses of the political parties that have hitherto dominated Lebanese society.
- In a diverse context, challenging preconceptions of youth about 'the other', through effective debate and providing the environment for such dialogue, contributes to effective results.
- Parent Associations were seen as a particularly effective way of bringing together previously mistrustful parents from different faiths, and could serve as models of interfaith cooperation.
- Transitioning from a local community based project to a city-wide programme has challenges – many areas of Beirut still define themselves by religion and this attests to the importance of locale. WV must also work with municipalities whose portfolios are local, with residents who maintain local ties and local trust. Thus, a Beirut city-wide approach needs a broad vision to foster cross-municipal interactions, but also a close appreciation for local concerns and differences.

For more information, please contact:

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