
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR LEBANESE WOMEN
and
UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

PROJECT LBN2G102

Women Empowerment:
Peaceful Action for Security and Stability
(WE PASS)

PHASE III

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Supported through the Lebanon Recovery Fund

August 2010

Project summary

Reporting UN Organization	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Country	Lebanon
Implementing Partner	National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW)
UNFPA Project Number	LBN2G102
LRF Project Number	LRF- 12
Project Title	Women Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Security and Stability (WE PASS)
Project Start Date	March 2008
Project Time frame	38 months
Reporting Period	March 2008-May 2010
Budget	US\$ 994,858

I. PURPOSE

As part of the post war recovery initiatives, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) pursued the partnership with the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) to implement Project LBN2G102 (referred to as “*Women Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Security and Stability*” - WE PASS) through Lebanon Recovery Fund (Project’s Phase III). The idea started initially as a pilot project that aims to promote the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, relative to its context in Lebanon and targeting selected communities that suffered from the war of July 2006. It was launched in cooperation with municipal councils and Social Development Centers (SDC) of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) in selected communities. One of the main results of this project – under phases I and II stretching between October 2006 to June 2007 and July 2007 to February 2008 respectively - was the establishment of WEPASS Women Committees (WWC) that act as beneficiaries of various capacity building programs on the one hand and key actors in support of community development on the other. Project LBN2G102 was implemented in accordance with the LRF terms of reference by complementing United Nations programmes on community development and women empowerment initiatives. The project adopted a transparent execution modality particularly regarding fund administration and project implementation in line with the Government reform agenda. The activities are executed by pertinent national partners with the aim of transferring ownership to beneficiaries and thus ensuring sustainability. The project also abides by transparency and accountability principles and is implemented with efficient utilization of donor funds. Narrative and financial reports are conducted on regular basis, and the project has been audited under the LRF phase (as well as the previous 2 phases) by an external auditor in 2008 and 2009 in accordance with UNFPA’s regulations.

The focus of project LBN2G102 is to accomplish the following objectives:

- Support institutional building of women machinery entities for advocacy and policy dialogue for mainstreaming gender in peace and security related programmes, initiatives, strategies, policies, etc
- Promote advancement of women and youth in citizenship, democracy, decision making, leadership, literacy programmes, reduced vulnerability to violence
- Promote and support protection of and respect of women and girls human rights
- Promote and support protection of women and girls from gender based violence as well as other forms of violence in various initiatives and interventions
- Promote and support the full participation of women and youth in the peace process and conflict prevention at community and national levels
- Promote and fully support the empowerment of women in economic development
- Promote and support creation and operationalization of solidarity and coalition networks within and between the targeted villages as well as with national entities Explain how the project relates to the LRF Terms of Reference, including issues being addressed through the project.

The following outputs of project LBN2G102 have been identified as follows:

1. Technical and Institutional Capacities of Women Machineries, Municipal Councils, and Organizations for advocacy, policy development and networking towards women's advancement strengthened;
2. Outreach, Awareness Raising, community mobilization on UNSCR 1325 as well as Comprehensive service package (health, GBV, literacy, and life skills) provided in targeted areas;
3. Capacities for Women Economic Empowerment promoted and strengthened;
4. A youth networking mechanism and strategic approach for empowering young people in public participation, peace and conflict prevention, reduction in high risk behaviors including HIV/AIDS prevention for young people established and linked to women committees and Y-PEER network;
5. National women strategic priorities and framework revised, elaborated, and concurred in a participatory approach to be mainstreamed in national sectoral strategies and action plans

Two main partners are joining effort to implement Project LBN2G102: UNFPA and NCLW. Both partners supervise the overall management of the project through participating in the project Steering Committee (SC) established under phase I (consisting of selected NCLW members, UNFPA, and the project management). The SC continues its functions by guiding the project implementation and approving various matters i.e. recruitment of staff, revision and implementation of work plan, management of funds, and oversee of an optimal degree of coordination and collaboration between and with contracted partners. NCLW supervises all the day to day management and provides guidance to the implementation of the activities. NCLW has proven a strong capacity to implement the project in its different dimensions and despite the many challenges faced through the political and security situations in the country. In addition to technical assistance provided by UNFPA Country office, an internal audit of the project is regularly conducted.

II. RESOURCES

II.1. Financial Resources:

Provide information on other funding resources available to the project, if applicable

The project was funded by the Government of Lebanon through the Lebanon Recovery Fund (LRF) established on the occasion of the Stockholm Conference. The National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) provided an-kind of contribution of office space, communication, and office supplies, in addition to technical assistance through its members in the project steering committee, the project National Director, and the treasurer.

Funding has been committed to complete all project activities and cover expenditures from March 2008 until May 2010 for the total amount of **US\$ 994,858**.

These resources cover activities implemented in the defined targeted areas under this project. The key activities consisted mainly of: establishing women committees; capacity development for women on various topics such as RH, GBV, first aid, self defense, conflict resolution, self empowerment, electoral process, starting own business, etc; awareness raising events on various topics (i.e. human rights, GBV, RH, peace building, etc); capacity building of health and social care providers; establishment of support groups for GBV survivals; conducting English and Computer courses; conducting literacy program; supporting NCLW’s national campaign on women and municipal elections; engaging communities in interactive activities for increasing awareness on gender equality (i.e. forum theater, soccer game, drawing contest, etc); launching micro credit projects; revising and updating the National Women Strategy; institutional development of NCLW staff; engaging youth in support of community development; needs assessment and participatory project evaluation; staff salaries; and travel.

The budget expenditures per LRF category for the entire project duration are summarized as follows:

Categories	2008	2009	2010 ¹	Total in US Dollars
Personnel	66,293.12	127,473.00	49,474.00	243,240.12
Training	20,500.00	45,662.48	75,621.98	141,784.46
Sub-Contract	28,000.00	154,131.00	152,435.60	334,566.60
Material	260.00	22,183.50	12,312.83	34,756.33
Audit	--	2,000.00	4,600.00	6,600.00
Procurement/Equipment	--	7,249.00	4,667.00	11,916.00
Other²	18,086.16	65,226.41	73,695.74	157,008.31
UNFPA Indirect Cost (7%)	9,319.75	29,674.78	25,991.65	64,986.18
Grand Total	142,459.03	453,600.17	398,798.80	994,858.00

Provide details on any budget revisions approved by the appropriate decision-making body, if applicable

Throughout the project period (i.e. March 2008 to May 2010), budget revisions were discussed with the SC and accordingly undertaken based on emerging needs and priorities, recommendations by the project steering committee, and assessment of the feasibility of the activities. The budget revisions were carried out jointly with the UNFPA office at no extra cost and ensured the overall expected outputs and deliverables are neither affected not altered.

¹ The figures for 2010 are approximation based on project reports. The exact expenditures will be generated and submitted once a final reconciliation is completed

² Others refer to miscellaneous, meetings, and fellowships

Provide information on good practices and constraints in the mechanics of the financial process, times to get transfers, identification of potential bottlenecks, need for better coordination, etc

All financial matters and transactions were implemented in accordance with UNFPA's financial and accounting procedures as stipulated in the signed Letter of Understanding between UNFPA and the implementing partner being the National Commission for Lebanese Women. UNFPA office in Lebanon followed up closely and regularly on the financial mechanisms adopted by the project in terms of budget allocation per activities, requesting advances on a quarterly basis, settling and closure of advances, as well as submission of supporting documents. An external auditor was also assigned to audit the project in 2009 and 2010 covering the period March 2008 to May 2010 which marks the completion date of the project.

Some bottlenecks were encountered with the implementing partner including delays in submission of documents. It is recommended that NCLW reviews its internal control framework, updates its operations policies, and continues to develop staff capacities in accounting, management and operations.

II.2. Human Resources:

- National Staff:

Programme:

1. Zeina Mezher, Project Manager
2. Elissar Doueihy, Training & Community Mobilization Coordinator
3. Hicham Jadoun, Training & Community Mobilization Coordinator
4. Nizar Amin, Training & Community Mobilization Coordinator
5. Diana Nasrallah, Media & Communication Coordinator
6. Nadim Abou Alwan, Activity Coordinator

Operations:

7. Madona Diab, Administrative Assistant
8. Georges Aboud Haidar, Accountant (Part time)
9. Issam Hassrouti, Driver
10. Fadi Sayegh, Driver
11. Alaa Sayegh, Driver

- International Staff:

N/A

III. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Summarize the implementation mechanisms primarily utilized and how they are adapted to achieve maximum impact given the operating context

Since it was launched, project LBN2G102 built upon national strategies and successful initiatives relevant to its thematic areas. The project planning is linked to endorsed local, national and international priorities on the advancement of women rights and gender equity. The main inspirations were the International Conference on Population and Development - Programme of Action (ICPD - PoA), the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the National Reproductive Health Programme, the National Population Policy, the Social Action Plan presented to the Paris conference, the draft National Youth Policy, the national Gender Based Violence (GBV) action plan, and the CEDAW report and the corresponding commission observations. In addition, the National Woman Strategy (NWS), revised as a major activity of the project and under further development with its action plan constitutes a major undertaking at the national level.

Project LBN2G102 addressed Reproductive Health (RH) issues and areas that are aligned with the National Reproductive Health Programme (NRHP) which promote women's ability to control their own fertility, choices, number of children, etc. RH awareness sessions have been considered a priority by the beneficiaries of the project, especially in rural areas where political parties and NGOs are not active in implementing any development issues. Invitations to RH awareness issues required the least mobilization for women to become interested in attending. The approach used by the experts and resource persons focused on empowerment, i.e. providing women with a choice based on the knowledge offered. In some areas RH services accompanied certain awareness campaigns, and it was a joint activity with nearby health care centers.

More so, the project continued to promote the objectives set in the National Women Strategy (NWS) in Lebanon, and which discusses frames of actions in the following aspects: legal, political, economic, social, educational, health, environmental, media, and conflict areas. The previous phase of project LBN2G102 initiated the revision and updating the NWS to ensure the mainstreaming of emerging issues including participation of women in peace building and conflict prevention. The process follows a participatory approach that involves national NGOs, policy makers, and women at community level in selected WEPASS villages. This task was completed under the current Phase III supported by LRF. The updating and revision of the NWS will be used as a tool to advocate for relevant legislatures amendments.

Project LBN2G102 also ensured that the various activities and interventions respond to and contribute to realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) - namely goal 3. Specifically, the project contributed towards supporting the development work of women's organizations, practice of democracy, and raising the level of coordination, including increasing political awareness in the regions outside Beirut. It also supported the promotion and protection of women's human rights and gender equality as a central goal of all aspects of the transition/recovery process and hence raising the legislature's awareness of that important goal.

A very essential dimension of the project is related to Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention and protection and hence activities and interventions were guided by the Gender Based Violence national (GBV) action plan. The project has coordinated closely with initiatives taken by partners on the theme, and focusing at this stage at working further with the communities where silence has been broken and a need for support group has been in demand. Community sensitization on GBV continues to be an ongoing effort, and it is often integrated in other themes like RH or gender discrimination and rights.

The methodologies used to implement the project activities are based initially on community mobilization, targeting community leaders, active local institutions, and women being the main direct beneficiaries. The WWC played a major role in deciding on the agenda and approach to be adopted in conducting activities, which the project team coordinates with experts and/or NGOs. In addition, the WWC proactively contributed into organizing the activities at community level and were in charge of community mobilization.

Advocacy and policy dialogue was considered a main strategy followed during the implementation to meet the objective of strengthening the capacity of the WWC representing the women of local communities so that they can gain policy influence. This tool has proved efficient since many WWCs were active in lobbying the local decision makers to include women in the electoral lists, whereby some of them run and 7 won during municipal elections in May 2010.

A challenge remains unsolved, that of gender discrimination being a complex matter related to religion and social culture, affected by poverty and conflicts, and that requires time and continuous efforts in order for change to be manifested. By building local capacities, project LBN2G102 started a progressive process to deal with this challenge. Indeed, by encouraging networking with other stakeholders and exposing the WWC to partners with different specialties, the sustainability process was initiated. NCLW being the national entity that works on women issues will continue to build on the successes and lessons learned from this project to further advance women rights. Also UNFPA's future projects dealing with women and security will benefit from the results and achievements of this project to implement successful activities to reach its goals.

Provide details on the procurement procedures utilized and explain variances in standard procedures

Procurement followed NCLW regulation which is in compliance with UNFPA's standards. Any equipment amounting to more than US\$500 required a minimum of 3 comparable offers and justification of selection, which takes the best price as a priority to favor the selection. The equipment purchased have been distributed to beneficiaries as follow:

- ✓ 3 fully equipped Sound systems presented to the three newly established NGOs who will use them to generate income by renting them out locally, and to start a cinema club where gender equity and human rights movies and documentaries will be displayed and discussed.
- ✓ Cameras and DVD players distributed to participants who won in a drawing contest on Gender Equity.

Other office equipment have been purchased to NCLW as follow:

- ✓ Lap top (2)
- ✓ Printer/Photocopier/Scanner

Provide details on the monitoring system(s) that are being used and how you identify and incorporate lessons learned into the ongoing project

In order to support monitoring of project implementation, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to identify gaps and guidelines in implementing activities, and to monitor progress towards the goals. These include: a) guidance and advice by the Steering Committee (SC) to assess results and challenges, b) the staff meetings/minutes to assess results, challenges, opportunities, best practices and lessons learned, and suggest alternatives approaches to problematic issues, c) the WWC per each targeted village, d) the meetings with community leaders, e) the progress reports, f) the field visits, g) the evaluation meetings with partners (consultants and NGOs) to measure achievements relative to indicators and objectives and assess challenges and opportunities, h) the pre and post evaluations during training and awareness raising sessions, and i) the final project evaluation workshop.

Report on any assessments, evaluations or studies undertaken

1. Conduct gender assessment in 10 new villages

It was a common trend in all villages that empowerment could not be perceived outside the materialistic scope, and yet this shifted when young women participated proactively in gender assessment event. Indeed, 10 general meetings had been organized, and women from different age groups and educational backgrounds met to discuss their aspirations and priorities. Those were mainly linked to the social development component in the community such as need for health care center, sports facility, computer center, water, large scale income generating projects, etc. But the needs expressed by younger women were related to self empowerment mainly in the area of gender equity and rights, self confidence, participation in development, to name but a few. Many women perceived themselves as actors of change and saw in the project an opportunity to empower them to play that role properly.

In the old villages established under phases I and II, the position and status of WWC created through the project had been assessed. Out of the ten villages, four aimed to become sustainable entities whereby one of them already registered as NGO (Ras Baalback). The project will continue to support those committees mainly to empower them attract funding and plan projects that address their needs.

2. Development of the National Woman Strategy

A main output of project LBN2G102 is the revision and updating of a national woman strategy in a participatory approach involving all relevant stakeholders working on gender and development as well as input from the grassroots represented by the women beneficiaries of the project. The NWS will set a framework of priorities on gender issues for all actors such as government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations. NCLW and UNFPA

will continue joining efforts in follow up for a) the revision and updating of the strategy, b) the development of an advocacy kit for promoting the women strategy priorities, and c) the elaboration of a medium term action plan.

3. **Development of Good Practices on participation of women in municipal elections**

Another significant output is a “good practice” diary on participation of women in municipal elections which covered the journey of women who wanted to run - or actually ran - for local election and assessed the local circumstances that supported or challenged their chances of winning.

4. **Evaluation of Phases I & II**

While the project represents a continuation of phases I (through Norwegian funds) and II (through Italian funds), there was a necessity to evaluate progress made to date and lessons learned. Although this is a system followed on the level of each activity and upon revision of each of the 3 phases’ work plans, results achieved through a general assembly (GA) of all WWC helped a great deal in providing an authentic outlook at needs and priorities as identified by these committees themselves. The GA aimed at assessing and evaluating work achieved to date according to each village and per activity. It also aimed at sharing the experiences and expertise among the WWCs, discussing priorities of objectives envisioned for Phase III, and finding means to further strengthening the solidarity chain and ties among women of different communities. Finally it was an activity to strengthen the solidarity chain built among the WWCs. The GA was attended by representatives of the 10 communities initiated to date; it was based on a participatory approach which allowed the main beneficiaries of the project to highlight remarks experienced by themselves, in addition to observations shared by their local communities. The main conclusions and recommendations resulting from the GA allowed adjusting and fine-tuning the planning of Phase III activities such as: request for continuity of themes with more in-depth or widening outreach, continuity with SDC/MOSA, focus on electoral campaigns for women in municipal elections and introducing the role of municipality in local development. The WWC focused on the importance of participatory approach in planning and hoped to gain skills to strengthen coordination with other local stakeholders, including municipality. The main conclusions and remarks are categorized as follows:

- ✓ *A Forum Theatre on GBV* was a great method to mobilize people and to increase their willingness to publicly discuss GBV issues. The participatory and creative approach of the activity intrigued the participants and motivated some of the community leaders to request for widening the exposure on the topic (Previous Mayor of Doueir, Religious Leader),
- ✓ *Literacy Program*: In Yarin where most women and children are engaged in tobacco cultivation, there was a strong demand for literacy program. This was imitated by introducing a TOT in order to build local capacities to carry on the work in Phase III. The possibility of reading and writing for those women increased the credibility of the WWC and reflected a great sense on empowerment among women,
- ✓ *WEPASS Day*, which was a special day dedicated in the community for the project. During this day, a rally paper addressing gender related issues mobilized the youth of the local community through the WWC. This activity broke some of the stereotype about women NGOs/CBOS, and encouraged the local citizens to further support the WWC.

During the LRF phase, WEPASS day was used to promote participation of women in decision making through municipal elections,

- ✓ *Inti..Hiyi Toolkit*: A tool of four short stories addressing the main themes of the project, namely Participation, GBV, Rights, and Economic Empowerment, was also used as a training document that built the capacities of women from the WWC to discuss the issues among groups. This tool also brought together young people from different villages, which is an objective of the project to increase ties among various groups of the Lebanese society. In phase III, this tool was also used, followed later by a new one promoting RH issues.

5. **Final Project Evaluation**

Project LBN2G102 concluded its activities by organizing the Final Project Evaluation meeting during a workshop attended by 75 women beneficiaries. The workshop was an occasion to share good practices and lessons learned concluded from the three phases of the project. These remarks will be a guiding framework in implementing and replicating similar projects in the future. The following are the main points resulting from the final evaluation meeting and are based on the beneficiaries feedback:

A- Challenges:

- ✓ The title of the project mentioning “women empowerment” required more mobilization effort for both men and women to participate in activities, especially at the beginning;
- ✓ Engaging men in activities;
- ✓ Partnership with municipality sometimes alienates a whole part of society due to local conflicts;
- ✓ Long distances among villages, and from villages to central areas where collective events used to be organized;
- ✓ Sensitivity on GBV discussion;
- ✓ Economic challenges and lack of financial resources among WWC members, and lack of financial support from municipalities affected mobilization and local communication;
- ✓ Jealousy among women from emerging leaders in the committees which required continuous effort from project staff to enhance cooperation and team work;
- ✓ Challenge of consistent coordination among members of WWC while preparing for any activity;
- ✓ Gaining support of religious leaders; and
- ✓ Fear from security of certain regions (south Lebanon) which affected participation of some WWC and youth in events organized in the villages of the south

B- Successes:

- ✓ Interaction among women from different backgrounds and on national level;
- ✓ Exposure of grass-root groups to national NGOs, experts, and relation with NCLW;
- ✓ Local needs assessment;
- ✓ Support of some municipalities;
- ✓ High participation in activities by community members;
- ✓ High interest of women to be part of the WWC;
- ✓ Transparency from the part of the implementing organization/project staff;

- ✓ Flexibility in planning taking into consideration local priorities, seasonal commitments especially relevant to agriculture or schooling, respecting commitment of working women while planning timeline of activities;
- ✓ Presence of women in some municipalities;
- ✓ Gaining credibility from women in their villages through the successful and creative community events organized by the project;
- ✓ Sensitizing health care providers on gender issues especially GBV;
- ✓ Literacy program;
- ✓ Ability of some WWC to sustain their group by becoming NGOs or cooperatives;
- ✓ Enthusiasm and commitment of women to take part in the local/municipal elections;
- ✓ High interest of women to attend Reproductive Health awareness sessions due to lack of knowledge and services in the rural areas;
- ✓ Start up of new businesses by women;
- ✓ Support of project for new businesses created by women through considering them suppliers whenever applicable;
- ✓ Working according to priority and time line defined by the local women committee;
- ✓ Participatory planning;
- ✓ Credibility of experts and partners who implemented activities;
- ✓ Realism in planning based on needs and existing capacities.

C- Lessons Learned:

- ✓ Building relations with all active stakeholders in the community as opposed to focusing on the municipality only;
- ✓ Creativity in organizing events that attract both men and women to change perception on gender roles;
- ✓ Ensure protection of women in conservative communities (through local support of religious and community leaders);
- ✓ Using the peer to peer approach when working with men on women rights;
- ✓ Organizing activities for youth and children in order to mobilize women to build trust towards the women committee;
- ✓ Focus on economic empowerment;
- ✓ Thorough preparation of events and timely community mobilization leads to success of events;
- ✓ Availability of financial and human resources enhance the chances of success;
- ✓ Proper time planning relative to the target group;
- ✓ Importance of diversity of products by women benefiting from economic empowerment services to increase sales and customer chains;
- ✓ Increased participation of women in marketing events enhances their know-how and skills.

D- Recommendations:

- ✓ Addressing women with disability as a target group;
- ✓ Continuing the work on community sensitization on GBV, and empowerment of GBV survivals;
- ✓ Planning side activities for children to facilitate participation of mothers in events;
- ✓ Enhance creative approaches to reach awareness especially forum theatre and other art activities;

- ✓ Addressing community leaders personally enhances their support and participation in events;
- ✓ Organizing joint training workshops empowers women and decreases stereotyping and discrimination;
- ✓ Defining criteria for participants in activities even if this will limit the number of beneficiaries, but it will increase the benefit due to more harmony among the attendants;
- ✓ Adding days to training programs to increase spaces for break and recreational activities since women are not used to long intensive workshops;
- ✓ Need for more quality, packaging, and labeling of know-how for marketable products produced and sold by women; and
- ✓ Time will help women gain trust in micro credit.

E- Impact of project:

- ✓ Prior to the project start up and implementation, women had no sense of self significance, their families came first at the expense of their personal well being. Thanks to the project this has introduced more balances;
- ✓ The project assisted women in adopting modern approach to upbringing and education of children;
- ✓ Women gained knowledge on household budget management, which made them gain power at home;
- ✓ Increased interest and knowledge in public and political participation;
- ✓ Spreading the culture of group work versus individualism;
- ✓ Creation of job opportunities through the “Literacy program”;
- ✓ New income generating projects by women; and
- ✓ Networking with national NGOs and experts which helped sustainability of efforts.

F- Quotations by beneficiaries:

- ✓ “The WEPASS project resembles the sun that gave us light. It helped me to know myself, accept others, and exposed me to new traditions and values”. *Violette*.
- ✓ “I was hoping that the project continues, but every good thing has an end. And it is up to us to try and continue on our own”. *Nassab*
- ✓ “I used to think that I am empowered, but the project further built my personality and made me have higher aims. Today I feel confident to work on women rights and development outside the borders of my villages, because I have the confidence and the know-how”. *Wissam*
- ✓ “I gained maturity, courage, and knowledge. I now can implement projects and find donors. I still feel though that we need more support for there is much to learn still”. *Samar*
- ✓ “We were in dark prison and you opened the windows to sunlight. The literacy program changed my life forever”. *Moufida*

- ✓ I used to be afraid to face the closest people to me like my husband. Now I learned how to communicate with him and with my children. The project enhanced harmony in my life”. *Nahed*
- ✓ “I used to care a lot and base my opinions to match those of my mother and brothers, today I think about the destiny of all women in my village before I make a judgment”. *Hiam*
- ✓ “We were sitting in our homes doing casual work. The project came like sunlight to our life and brought to us new experiences and horizons. Even if the project stops, we should keep moving, like a seed that was planted, now it is up to us to give it enough water to grow”. *Hanan*
- ✓ “I am a housewife. The project was a boost to my dreams. I learned to be persistent and free in voicing my opinion, and the importance of educating myself. I took a loan to start an agricultural tent, then I took two other loans and expanded my small business. Now I have five tents and I am financially supporting my husband and children.” *Afaf*

IV. RESULTS

Provide a summary of Programme progress in relation to planned outcomes and outputs; explain any variance in achieved versus planned outputs during the reporting period

1. Identification of New Communities

The planned outcomes and outputs for the LRF phase (III) were based on the recommendations and lessons learned from previous phases (I and II), thus selection of new villages followed the selection criteria agreed upon by the project Steering Committee and which are the following: a) having a “woman as member of municipal council” in rural or urban communities classified “under poverty line”, and b) the interest of municipality and consent to support was an additional determining criteria. Experience showed that the interest of municipality in the project’s dimensions and its willingness to provide support is a key for success. The matching of selection criteria lead to a wide and diversified geographic coverage, the project is now in the South, Bekaa Valley, North, Beirut suburbs. After the community mobilization process started, three communities were eliminated due to strong local conflicts that hindered any possible work on the short run. These were Harbata and Bazoun, as well as Kuwaikhat due to lack of cooperation by the respective municipalities. The project therefore was implemented in the following villages: Kantara, Sebel, Ardeh, Bourjein, Beit Lahya, Bakkifa, Akabi, Ain Hersha, Tannoura, Kfeir, Ras Baalback, Deir Mimass, Nabatiyeh, Doueir, Bint Jebil, Aytaroun, Yarine (Marhwahin and Dhayra), Ghaziyeh, Ghobeiry.

2. **Community Mobilization Process**

It started by approaching the municipalities about the project followed by a field visit. During the first field visit, the willingness of municipality to join this project was assessed, and key players were identified. Upon building trust with the mayor/mukhtar and female member(s) of municipality, they often shared the local problems which might hinder smooth launching of the project activities and restrict participation to the supporters of municipality. A green line was given in order for project staff to conduct further field visits for promoting the project among key local stakeholders, mainly religious leaders, local NGOs, youth clubs, and schools. The community mobilization was an ongoing activity especially that with the development of the status of WWC in the villages, expectations increased and conflict started to arise, which required constant effort from project staff to either get involved or tailor training to build local capacities in facing the situations.

3. **Create and Build Capacities of WEPASS Women Committees in all Villages**

The idea of building capacities of WEPASS Women Committees (WWC) is based on the idea that encouraging cooperation among grassroots within a certain community will accelerate the process of change, and provide power to vulnerable individuals. The WWC being the direct beneficiary of the project required much attention and focus. The training plan for the WWC was based on previous evaluation and lessons learned; focus was put on communication skills, building self esteem, gender as an identity and cause, planning, mobilization skills, setting objectives, monitoring and evaluation including identification of indicators, organization of community events, etc. The training plan varied from one committee to another, and training tools were tailored specifically for each committee due to the difference of their requirements and ability to interact. For instance in Beyt Lahiya cluster, women lack all the basic listening and dialogue skills which impede their participation in other activities. As such, due to the large number of participants in this cluster, the groups were divided and separate training workshops have been organized until an acceptable level of communication was established. In Sebel, Ardeh, and Kantara, more training aiming at building self esteem of women were required. Further training events were conducted on differences and plurality so women become more sensitized on the concept of accepting others differences on the one hand, and empowered to conflict resolution approaches on the other when facing conflicts due to diversity especially in villages where there is lack of tolerance and sectarian sensitivities.

4. **Training of WWC towards Sustainable Entities**

Among the WWC, some had expressed their need for further capacity building to become autonomous entities, mainly NGOs. The interested WWC are those of Ras Baalback (which already became an NGO), Bint Jbeil, Kfeir, and Deir Mimass. As such, WWC of Kfeir, Sibil, and Ras Baalback completed the training to develop their strategy and finalized internal procedures thus obtaining official permit to operate as NGOs. These WWC also participated in training on fundraising and proposal writing as well as networking and were coached until the end of May 2010 for increased capacities towards sustainability.

5. Capacity Development of NCLW Staff

Based on a capacity needs assessment that was conducted for NCLW staff members, a series of capacity development workshops on different subjects were organized. The importance of the training is that it offered a motivation to the staff members to become more involved and active in accomplishing their tasks, and re-shaped some of the habits that were impeding their success. An indirect result of the training was that it created more synergy and team work among the staff members. The following subjects were addressed and covered in the capacity development workshops: **a) Basic Administrative Know-How** including archiving and filing (hard copies and on computer); effective telephone; sorting and updating timely information (experts lists, media, NGOs, reports, minutes of meetings etc.); **b) Writing Skills** including Writing business correspondence; Taking minutes of meetings; Layout and presentation of correspondence; How to address others in a written format (official, non official); Writing news for press; Website update; **c) Organization of Events** including preparation of checklists prior event; Division of tasks; Ushering people; Setting an accountability mechanism (in order to avoid overlap or lack of responsibilities); **d) Advanced Computer Courses** (based on staff needs) and including intensive e-sessions given to increase the staff capacity to use computer programs (Microsoft office access and internet surfing). This same training was also provided to NCLW high executive officers to further advance their computer know-how and evaluation with staff was conducted and shared with supervisors.

6. Campaign on Enhancing Women Participation in Local Elections

Project LBN2G102 coordinated with other NCLW supported projects on enhancing women's candidacy and active role in the municipal elections. This was launched once the municipal elections were set to occur during the month of May 2010. Yet it will occur without any law amendments (e.g. women quota) that increases the chance of women to run and win. Nevertheless the project organized a series of workshops and coaching sessions, and joined a national media campaign to support the participation of women in municipal elections. It is worth noting that this work has been conducted in cooperation with Beyond Reform and Development (BRD).

This initiative recognized the municipal elections as an opportunity to increase women's political participation and their engagement in local governance. The opportunity was used to empower around 70 women on electoral campaigning, developing local communities, and voter mobilization. The activities consisted of a comprehensive approach in four integrated phases that culminated in a guide capturing "Best Practices" applicable to women seeking to enter political life and participate in elections in general, and local elections in particular.

Women received two 2-days customized training workshops and one 2-days coaching sessions on interpersonal skills, developing platforms, managing campaign teams, political strategizing, campaign slogans, voter outreach, and media relations. In addition, these training events provided the women with the opportunity for interface with prominent national experts in media, government, civil society and private sector representatives.

As a result, 27 women run for elections in the 20 villages covered by the project, whereby 12 members of the project WWC won, and one becoming vice mayor.

7. Launching New Women NGOs Established by WWC

The “Solidarity Women” NGO of Ras Baalback was established by the WWC and announced to the community during a public event. The members presented the journey that led them to become a sustainable group through the various activities of the project. The launching was organized during a festival that takes place each year in Ras Baalback and a play on gender issues using material produced by the project concluded the day.

On the other hand, the Kfeir WWC was officially launched as an association with the name “Women Empowerment Support Organization” (WESA). A community event celebrated the announcement of WESA and as a result of excellent mobilization plan by the Kfeir WCC, the event was attended by local NGOs, political and decision-makers as well as parliamentarians from the region, religious leaders, and with the participation of other WWC who came from far away distances to show support. The WCC of the newly established NGO of Kfeir explained the reason and justifications that pushed them to become a sustainable entity through the various activities of the project. The event was a successful means to introduce WESA as an association that targets women empowerment with no political or religious affiliation. This is the first time in the history of Kfeir community, that women of different age group, of different religious and political background create their own association with empowerment goals. The members of WESA also used this community event for fundraising and were able to secure a land to build their center, and financial contributions to start the construction. The Inti...Hiyi play which is inspired by WEPASS booklets that promote women’s rights, was played as a closing to the ceremony and focused on mobilizing the Kfeir citizens to vote for women during the coming municipal elections.

The preparation for the announcement of WESA event showed the positive impact that the various WEPASS trainings had on women. Although they were stressed by the event, they were very organized, resourceful and practical. Women also showed that they are confident and can function under stress; this is due to “the experience and the skills gained through the project in implementing activities and as a result of self empowerment trainings” as they expressed it.

8. Promoting Healthier Mothers and Teenagers

A main need for women, specifically mothers, is on how to deal with their children during the teenage period. The problems are affecting women's well being and their ability to participate in public life, and self development. Thus a sensitization workshop was organized in 6 villages and targeting mothers of children under 12 years old. The targeted youth also took part in various project activities such as linkage to youth to youth peer education network (i.e. Y-PEER) supported by UNFPA.

A specialist led the sensitization meeting which aimed at supporting women to deal with violent and aggressive children, a problem of great significance in Ras Baalback. The meeting was designed to be an interactive learning tool where the women build the trust to share in a confidential climate their families relations and experiences. By the end of this activity, the women learned to assess their own behavior and communications skills, then define personal work plans to make necessary changes.

9. Gender Mainstreaming at Community Level

A coordination meeting has been organized in Aytaroun inviting all stakeholders working in the village (municipality, CBOs, national and international NGOs, UN supported projects active in community). The meeting resulted in initiating a network towards gender mainstreaming in local development. The problem that was faced lied in the fact that most of the participants in the meeting didn't have sustainable projects and might not continue to operate in the coming year. Yet it was a first step to sensitize different stakeholders on the importance of incorporating gender concepts and principles in their projects.

10. Celebrating WEPASS Day

This event was organized to celebrate women empowerment as a theme. The focus was on women's participation in local decision making. The WWC hosted the event in their respective villages inviting other WWC and young people to participate as well. The specific objectives of this activity are the following:

- ✓ To actively engage WWC in social activism;
- ✓ To give WWC and youth the basic know-how on designing and implementing an electoral campaign;
- ✓ To raise local public awareness and to engage in a participatory discussion on women's rights;
- ✓ To introduce the concept of local governance and the active role of women in the local development process to the youth; and
- ✓ To enhance solidarity among Lebanese women and youth from various backgrounds.

11. Literacy Program

Three groups have been identified to profit from the "literacy program" in the village of Yarine. Teachers were trained by the project's previous phase (II). To meet this need, the Ecumenical Popular Education Program (EPEP) was selected to implement this component and worked in close coordination with the project team and Yarine WWC. The "literacy program" was executed in Yarine and two neighboring villages, opening a learning opportunity for illiterate women and a job opportunity for educated ones trained in previous phase of the project to supervise and coordinate the lessons. A community event was organized in Yarine to celebrate the graduation of the 45 literacy participants who completed the first phase of literacy program. The event was made official through the participation of UNFPA, NCLW, and the Ambassador of Norway, as well as representatives from the Peace Keeping Forces (UNIFIL) and local community leaders.

12. Awareness on GBV

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a local NGO (i.e. the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women – LECORVAW) was engaged to implement a forum theatre on the topic. This was held in collaboration with "Khayal For Art" a theatre group that base the work on interaction and participation with the audience. The activity was held in Sibil and Ardeh, and attended by a large group from the local community. It was very important that young men and religious leaders participated in the discussion, which opened the door for further work on the subject. The forum theatre on GBV was also implemented in the village of Kantara sensitizing and mobilizing men, women, and youth to publicly discuss that issue. The attendance of key leaders in the

community, such as the head of the municipal council and the mayor, and their active participation in the discussions was very noticeable and influential. This activity was the first in the village to address men and women jointly. It presented an important visibility for the committee and boosted their credibility in the community. In addition, the forum theater was organized in two villages of the Beyt Lahiya cluster. It was a very good opportunity to break the silence on GBV and engage men in the discussion. It also had a positive impact on the visibility of the project in these communities.

In Ghaziyeh, the WWC organized a “soccer game” among men under the slogan “No for Violence Against Women”. The game was preceded by a presentation from a local NGO “KAFA – Enough Violence and Exploitation” on the Family Violence Law Campaign, and which the latter NGO in cooperation with other civil society organizations are promoting.

The WWC also took part in the campaign organized by “KAFA – Enough Violence and Exploitation” and filled around 400 petitions. They also attended the same NGO organized by KAFA in UNESCO to support the cause.

13. Support Groups for Women

Support groups for women were organized in Yarine and Beit Lahya cluster contributing to:

- ✓ Reducing the stress and anxiety resulting from a high-stress environment through creating a safe adequate environment suitable for women and adolescents to express freely and openly;
- ✓ Assisting group members to continue to adapt with the changes resulting from the post-July 2006 war environment which had various and long lasting negative effects on their personal and professional lives;
- ✓ Allowing participants to meet others who share a common experience and exchange mutual emotional support;
- ✓ Facilitating the exchange of practical experience and information on how to deal with children within current situation of high stress; and
- ✓ Increasing knowledge about GBV, early marriage, etc.

14. English Language Courses

Two WWC requested empowerment in languages, mainly English to enhance job opportunities and assist the women in developing their relation with their children. In Bint Jbeil, a local teacher conducted the course with the support of the Social Development Center (Ministry of Social Affairs) of Bint Jbeil. While in Sibil, three English language courses were conducted with the collaboration of the British Council. The women NGO “HAYYA” of Sibil identified this activity as an important mobilization strategy focusing on unmet needs of the women in the village and the surrounding villages.

This was the first time that the British Council conducts any sort of training outside its centers, and it was viewed as a promising precedent. The British Council provided an in kind contribution of training 10 teachers from the area on English language so they can assist the others in the future. A donation of books and stories were also presented to the public library of Sibil.

15. Computer Courses

As a mean to empower women, computer literacy was conducted in most the villages supported by the project. This was an opportunity for women to understand the computer language, get familiar with its usage, and start working on basic programs (word, internet surfing).

16. Awareness on Health/Reproductive Health

During the needs assessment exercise carried out by women in the new villages (under Phase III - LRF), Reproductive Health (RH) was reflected as a high important subject. The RH was a topic of importance for the youth in all villages targeted by the project under the 3 phases, and this was reflected in the common activities. Awareness sessions were organized on the following topics:

- ✓ Awareness sessions on Breast Cancer (followed by mammography in some villages), Menopause, Life Style Modification, Sexual education for young women, Back Pain (followed by exercises);
- ✓ Training on Emergency/First aid skills

Throughout the RH activities, the importance of awareness and prevention was stressed upon and women were empowered to play a greater role regarding the promotion of a healthier lifestyle, and passing information gained to their peers.

17. Training Health Care Providers in RH and GBV

This component was addressed in depth by reaching out to local service providers and building their capacities in quality Reproductive Health (RH). Specifically, health care workers from different NGOs, public and private hospitals, as well as the Social Development Centers (SDCs) of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) participated in a three days training on RH services and Gender Based Violence (GBV). The training aimed at enhancing the quality of RH services of local providers thus strengthening the trust of health care providers with their communities. In order to cover all aspects of service provision and ensure a smooth implementation of experience gained, every organization was represented with a managerial and health worker.

18. Solidarity Events with Focus on Gender Awareness

Different activities were organized and targeting women, men and youth to enhance solidarity among the different WWC, interaction among villages, and sensitization on gender issues to all participants. Such events can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ *Photo voice activity*, where adolescents from all the communities participated to the activity. Photo voice aims at sensitizing teenagers on gender equality and discrimination through photos. The participants learned basics of photo shooting and expression through photography, and basic notions on gender equality. This was followed by expressing their own understanding of gender equality through taking photos in their own community. They also got exposed to the ethics of photography. It was a very interactive activity that resulted into a major photo exhibition during the celebration of international women day and mother's day;

- ✓ *Celebration of women's and mother's day.* The event was an opportunity for 500 women and youth from the project's communities to meet among themselves contributing to the solidarity network established by the project, and with national stakeholders working on women issues, as well as officials representing the governmental institutions and the international community including the UN agencies. The event used tools produced in previous phases of the project, such as a documentary where two beneficiaries talk in their own language about the benefit of the project and its impact on them, as well as a play based on Inti...Hiyi stories on women empowerment. The event was also an opportunity to exhibit the photos taken by the youth in the photo voice activity. The participation of the first lady in the event gave further credibility to the WWC who are looking into establishing a more solid network with NCLW;
- ✓ *Community mobilization Iftars* were organized in the village of Kantara gathering all the WWC along with their spouses and families and with the participation of key leaders in the community. This event was intended to mobilize the community around the committee and to gather the support of men for future efforts and activities especially that the Kantara WWC is heading towards sustainability. Also the coordinators, the trainers and the beneficiaries from the literacy program of Yarine gathered over an Iftar. The event had a very positive impact on women because it strengthened their ties and it was an opportunity for women tobacco growers to rest and feel the solidarity among themselves;
- ✓ *Gender equality in colors.* A drawing contest was organized where young boys and girls from 8 villages (Kfeir, Yarin, Gaziye, Ayn hercha, Tannoura, Bakkifa, Akabe and Bint Jbeil) participated to an activity as they gained skills on drawing techniques in order to enter a drawing contest on gender equality. Two villages had been asked to join in other villages. At the launching of the contest a participatory workshop about the basics of drawing and art was conducted. After a brief description of the history of art, the contest was placed in context of gender equality which generated a discussion on the topic. The participants then had a week to complete their drawings at home, and then submit them to a committee from NCLW and UNFPA to select winners. Winners received their prizes during the closing of the project at the evaluation workshop, and where WWC from all villages were present. As a result 90 drawings expressing views of young boys and girls on gender equality were produced.

19. Capacity Building on Family and Personal Budget

Women met over three sessions to be trained on concepts and new methods for family budgeting. Participants were provided with innovative techniques and approaches that they could incorporate in their daily household budgeting. This activity was organized in Deir Mimas, Kfeir, and Ardeh.

20. Launching Micro Credit at Community Level

The micro credit component was launched during the previous phase creating a supportive environment to launch economic empowerment for women. The process was initiated through a) a rapid economic development assessment in the initial 10 villages, b) a feasibility study for operationalizing the micro-credit projects, c) a series of consultation with a local

NGO for providing technical know-how regarding the micro-credit projects, and d) development of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism and tools. Based on evaluation of previous launching of micro credit in the six villages, a slight shift in the approach had to be introduced. Inbeed, as beneficiaries have constantly confused “credit” with “grant” and thus affecting the credibility of the project and focus of the beneficiaries, it was found necessary instead to hold a general meeting. The aim of this general meeting was to introduce micro credit component, and to plan focused groups which resulted in the identification of vocational training needs and potential beneficiaries of micro credit. The result of the meetings led to assessment of training needs among the women, and organization of a vocational training on entrepreneurship.

21. Market Studies

Market studies were carried out in selected villages in the south and the north (Nabatieh, Aytaroun, Sibil and Kantara) in order to help finding out the occupation and marketable products that match the need in those areas. Specific objectives of the studies were the following:

- ✓ Identifying channels for local promotion of the products produced by the women;
- ✓ Finding out a mature product ready to be widespread in the market;
- ✓ Analyzing a market plan by the marketer containing all the details, information needed and recommendations for each area;
- ✓ Assisting women with networking and creating deals; and
- ✓ Training on products displaying and pricing.

22. Individual Consultations

The Individual Consultations (IC) is an individual business management training, where consultant and beneficiary study all aspects of application and conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to determine the potentials and risks prior to getting the credit. It is important to mention that some of the potential beneficiaries of micro credit decided to hold their application or postponed it based on the IC conducted by consultants from “Al-Majmoua” (the local NGO entrusted with executing the micro-credit component). For instance in Doueir, a woman who presented a feasible application to gain access to credit for opening a women internet shop, put hold on the project due to the location of the shop which happens to be in a neighborhood crowded with men. Bint Jbeil and Aytaroun participated in two group consultations to develop two existing businesses (food cooperative and handicraft cooperative). Kfeir WESA (recently established women NGO) discussed the possibility of starting their own food cooperative. Ghaziyeh beneficiaries discussed marketing issues and prepared brochures to promote their businesses. Furthermore, two IC were carried out in Ras Baalback, one in Doueir, and another IC in Ghaziyeh to advise women on their respective feasibility studies and on further requirements and potential to venture into micro credit. A group consultation also supported the women of Nabatiyeh and Bint Jbeil regarding the production process, labeling and quality control.

23. Vocational Training

Based on market survey and interest of women in targeted areas, vocational training workshops were organized on Chocolate Making and Ornaments, Souvenir Design, Cloth Design (haute couture), Jewelry Accessories, Candles and Flowers Arrangements, Glass Drawing, Soap Production, as well as Quality Control and Food Safety.

24. Business Development Services Training

Prior to providing access to fund, group of women who showed interest in starting their own businesses or in developing their existing economic activities participated in trainings on business concepts such as: Innovative Business Ideas, Basic Accounting and Book-keeping, Financial Management, Business Management, Marketing Skills, Quality Chain, Entrepreneurship, etc. Other training workshops were organized on life skills that helped the beneficiaries conduct their businesses. These workshops covered areas such as: Negotiation Skills, Time Management, Self Confidence, and Decision Making.

25. Provision of Micro-Credit

The micro-credit is a financial innovation, a program for those who are granted small funds to start up business or to develop an existing one. This activity was initiated under Phase II and continued under Phase III (LRF) and will go on for three additional years following the completion of the project (in May 2010) to be supervised by NCLW.

Loans are two types, “individual” and “group” loan. In the individual loan, collateral requirements play a part in achieving the high re-payment rates especially in form-D (home and work assets as collateral) but it makes a good option for clients and that is not provided in bank services. To get a group loan, women should join the financial group and the group guarantees the loan. Group lending refers to the practice of working with clients in small groups; it has the potential to provide affordable credits, reduce transaction costs and lower the risk of default.

Individual micro-credits were approved for the following projects: Shoe Shop, Dress Making business, Hairdresser and beauty Salon business, Agricultural business, Curtains shop, Grocery store, Accessories & Toys, Jewelry accessories, Handy craft business, Cloth shop, Driving School business, Chocolate design business, Lingerie shop.

Group loans were approved for the following:

- ✓ In Bint Jbeil: one group composed of women owning a grocery shop, a cloth shop and a small food processing business. Another group composed of women owning a cloth shop, shoes shop and make up business, food process business, dressmaking business;
- ✓ In Nabatieyh: one group composed of women who participated in the Jewelry Accessories design;
- ✓ In Aytaroun: six groups obtained micro credits. It is worth noting that the group loan is not necessarily for women having common objectives, but rather for them to support one another as debtors. These were for agricultural businesses, one hair dresser and a computer shop, handy craft businesses, and food process businesses;
- ✓ In Doueir: one group composed of 3 women whereby two of them own food process businesses and the third one is a tailor. Another group is composed of 3 women who have agricultural businesses, one hairdresser and a woman who has a small food processing business. A group three consists of 3 members of the handicraft cooperative. And a fourth Group consisting of 3 women who have agricultural businesses.

26. Distribution of Equipment and Tools

Equipment and tools in the form of grants were distributed to women entrepreneurs of different categories as beneficiaries who undertook the vocational trainings and willing to start their own enterprise. This was considered a way to encourage them expanding their business at a lower initial cost. In addition, equipment were distributed to women micro-credit beneficiaries, who need a small grant to boost their economic activity, and to increase their income generation and therefore improve the livelihoods condition of their family.

27. Access to Market-Marketing Forum at Souk el Tayeb

A fair took place in Beirut – Saifi where women had the opportunity to share this day with the regular suppliers of Souk Al Tayeb market place and to introduce their products and their business to the usual clients who visit the Souk every Saturday of the year. This was an opportunity for the WEPASS women beneficiaries to experience networking and marketing outside their limited geographic borders.

28. Study Tours

Following the vocational training and business development services, field trips were organized to Syria having a main supplier chain for different products and raw material needed. The objective was to build the practical experience of women in business whereby a field trip to Souk Bazouriyeh in Syria was organized. A total of 21 women were exposed to negotiation deals, costing and pricing of goods with merchants. The trip built the self confidence of the women and initiated a network for marketing and outsourcing.

Another study tour was organized as an entrepreneurial trip to Amman where a Forum was held in Jordan in coordination with a leading Jordanian microfinance institution “Tamweel.com”. The WEPASS project women exchanged experience with Jordanian women who are also micro-entrepreneurs and have different occupations. The Jordan trip included 2 days of advanced training session on marketing, debt management and awareness. The Lebanese participants also joined the exhibition in “Souk Al Ayadi” and benefited of introducing their products and selling some of them in the Jordanian market.

On the other hand one of the beneficiaries of micro credit was invited by Al-Majmoua to Strasbourg to participate in a Fair for SMEs. These field trips had a major impact in encouraging the women and motivate them to initiate or expand their own businesses.

29. Evaluation of Economic Empowerment Component

In order to evaluate the impact of the economic empowerment components (Training, micro credit, market opportunities), an evaluation workshop was organized with the participation of women beneficiary from various villages. The evaluation results were documented as follow:

- ✓ *BMT and Vocational Training.* This evaluation was conducted by filling a questionnaire reflecting the level of success, challenges, and recommendations on future trainings;

- ✓ *Marketing Access.* This aspect was achieved through a brainstorming evaluation with the market expert to help the exchange of the diverse experience among the women. It focused on lessons learned and challenges;
- ✓ *Micro Credit.* This evaluation was facilitated by the area supervisor of “Al-Majmoua” who led a qualitative discussion to obtain in depth-information about the fears of committing to debts and perception of the micro-credits by the target group. It was reflected in the discussion that the majority considers micro-credit as an opportunity to start up or enlarge a business, and a help in the absence of better options;

The economic empowerment component will be continued after the completion of all activities and closure of the project with the direct supervision of NCLW through its Economic Committee. Regular meetings will discuss progress and challenges, and field visits will be organized by NCLW to monitor the implementation for the coming three years.

30. Revision and Update of National Women Strategy

The “National Woman Strategy” (NWS) has started during the second phase of the project and was completed under the LRF phase (Phase III). A final report has been completed with direct contribution by NCLW. The development of the NWS was carried out in a participatory approach taking into consideration grassroots needs prior to engaging NGOs, governmental bodies, and UN agencies working on women issues. The NWS will constitute the core of cooperation between UNFPA and NCLW in the future in order to validate the strategy, advocate it at policy level, and develop an action plan using a participatory approach and involving all relevant stakeholders.

31. Documentation of Good Practices

The documentation of successful stories and good practices pertaining to the project activities was reviewed, compiled, and documented in a draft report which will be finalized and produced in a user friendly format and material for possible replication in the future.

32. Project Evaluation

The project was evaluated with representatives from the different WWC reflecting on achievements of the four years (i.e. 2006-2010). The project’s successes, challenges and lessons learned were identified through interactive activities and group work. Among the main successes were the establishment of the WWC, that are fundamental structures for sustainability irrespective if the project comes to end noting the sense of commitment expressed by the WWC to activate their role in the future. The self empowerment was the

most common success expressed by the majority of women who felt this project provided them with enough self confidence and skills to advance in life and be proud of being women. Among the challenges that were shared were the difficulty to engage men in activities related to women rights.

As for the recommendations, they will be listed in details in the last section of the report, yet one key recommendation to be highlighted is the demand to start and/or continue literacy programs for women. An issue ignored by most development actors in the rural areas.

33. Y-PEER Network

The Y-PEER network is a youth to youth network that uses peer education as an approach for transmitting information and messages on healthy behaviors namely related to HIV/AIDS prevention. Upon assessing the tools used by the Y-PEER network in Lebanon, a need for a cultural and social sensitive approach seemed necessary to be adopted at this stage with the aim of integrating this approach in the WEPASS project targeted villages. Thus training of young people on the Peer to Peer approach from selected villages was conducted while giving due attention to the specificity of the communities. In addition, related brochures and newsletters on Y-PEER issues was re-produced and disseminated.

Report on the key outputs achieved in the reporting period including # and nature of the activities (inputs), % of completion and beneficiaries

Under the reporting period of the LRF/project phase III extending from March 2008 till May 2010, the following indicators provide an overall picture of the achievements made against each of the 5 outputs:

- ✓ Project launched in ten new villages (in addition to the 10 villages under Phases I and II)
- ✓ 10 new WWC established
- ✓ 3 WWC becoming official NGOs
- ✓ 3 newly established NGOs developed their strategic plan
- ✓ 2 WWC becoming cooperative
- ✓ 70 women acquired skills and knowledge on municipality elections
- ✓ 27 women run for the municipality elections
- ✓ 12 women won the municipality elections in their villages
- ✓ 1 woman became vice president of municipal council
- ✓ Estimated 600 people including parliamentarians and religious leaders attended the announcement of newly established NGO in Kfeir: “WESA”
- ✓ 45 women graduated from “level I” literacy program
- ✓ 250 persons attended the literacy graduation event organized by the Yarin WCC
- ✓ 15% of municipal councils and community leaders in project targeted communities sensitized on UNSC 1325 with focus on GBV
- ✓ 40% of SDC trained on comprehensive gender service package
- ✓ 380 persons sensitized on GBV
- ✓ 35 women attended GBV support groups
- ✓ 70 men and women with increased knowledge about CEDAW
- ✓ Estimated 500 women and youth from all the villages participated in the event celebrating women’s day contributing to the strengthening of the solidarity chain created through the project
- ✓ Estimated 300 women and men honoring elderly women
- ✓ 160 women and men, young girls and boys of targeted communities gained skills on drawing techniques and were sensitized on gender equality through participation in a drawing contest
- ✓ 310 boys and girls were sensitized on women’s participation in decision making
- ✓ 135 women from local communities contributed to the revision of the National Woman Strategy

- ✓ 350 women gained knowledge on life skills including communication skills, fundraising, proposal writing, networking, organization and planning of community events, community mobilization, dialogue, fighting discrimination, enhancing self esteem
- ✓ 60 women sensitized on environmental issues
- ✓ 70 persons gained knowledge in English language
- ✓ 125 women gained knowledge in computer skills
- ✓ 50 women gained knowledge in mechanical car skills
- ✓ 715 women gained knowledge in RH issues
- ✓ 100 women benefited from mammography screening services
- ✓ 30 health care providers gained knowledge and skills on reproductive health and gender based violence services
- ✓ 170 persons gained knowledge on first aid skills
- ✓ 50 women gained knowledge on mental health and its impact on women
- ✓ 102 women gained knowledge on parenting skills
- ✓ Micro credit services launched in 10 new villages
- ✓ BDS package delivered in all the villages
- ✓ 600 direct beneficiaries form non financial services within the economic empowerment component in 20 villages
- ✓ 135 individual benefited from micro credit loans
- ✓ 102 women benefited from grants in form of equipment or tools for their small business
- ✓ 21 women participated in a field trip to Syria
- ✓ 38 women participated in a marketing day (Souk el Tayeb)
- ✓ 24 women participated in entrepreneurial trip to Amman
- ✓ 1 woman participated in an SME fair in Strasbourg
- ✓ 99 women improved their business performance and increased income through an income generating activity
- ✓ 25 women started-up new business
- ✓ 65 women acquired knowledge and skills on advanced vocational training
- ✓ 11 staff/members at NCLW trained on institutional capacities
- ✓ National Woman strategy finalized for validation
- ✓ 75 women participated in the final evaluation of the project

Explain, if relevant, delays in programme implementation, the nature of the constraints, actions taken to mitigate future delays and lessons learned in the process

At the national level, constraints were resulting from the highly unfavorable security situation in the country. The armed conflict of May 2008 not only impeded all activities, but it also paralyzed the ability of staff and women committees to re-launch the enthusiasm and positive attitude based on set agenda. Immediately after resuming the project following the conflicts, it was not easy to talk about specific issues i.e. reproductive health or gender discrimination, to motivate people to take part in the micro credit, or to participate in a plenary session; people's priorities shifted, first to ensure their own safety and security, then to absorb the shock and the conflict after math. This matter was further aggravated by the sporadic armed conflicts and incidents in North Lebanon that prevented community mobilization events to take place.

Limitations on the project's execution of activities have also been influenced by the transitional government, especially that NCLW was in a transitional phase awaiting the appointment of a new board after the election of the new president of the republic in May 2008.

In 2010, the municipality elections were a big challenge to the implementation of multiple activities; in many of the communities people were focused on the elections, and it became clear that implementing activities is not their priority. It required more extensive mobilization to organize community activities, and to get the attention of the women committees. In addition to that, the elections were held during the whole month of May (marking the closing month of the project) which reduced the amount of days to finalize planned activities, and put a strain on the project staff and the WWC. On the other hand, conflicts at the local level between opposing candidates to the municipality elections were a challenge to the implementation of some of the activities. Sometimes the supporters of a candidate would threaten to sabotage an event because an opponent candidate is participating to the activity, which also required more attention and sensitivity from the project staff and the WWC.

At the **local level** of implementation, there were also many constrains summarized as follows:

- ✓ Limited time that can be provided by the WWC due to their other commitments is a constrain to implement many scheduled activities especially those involving whole day of training;
- ✓ Communities are mostly small villages with strong family ties, sometimes social occasions and functions such as weddings and funerals, can postpone activities and affect further obligation in other villages;
- ✓ The considerable needs of poor and deprived communities, which affect the priorities perceived by the beneficiaries versus priorities identified by the project;
- ✓ The high level of “non-financial” services create a feeling of dissatisfaction among people, and often lead to lack of support from municipalities;
- ✓ The challenging behavior of municipalities who have a major role as a partner in this project, but who rarely understand the concept of women empowerment as it is perceived by women of the local communities;
- ✓ The lack of local awareness on the importance of capacity building, and the adoption of a participatory approach to create a feeling of un-patience within some committees, and sometimes affect the judgment of others on the advantage of such projects;
- ✓ The participatory approach, despite its long term result, which requires involvement of WWC in assessing needs and planning of activities, is taking time to come up with a plan that respects the project design while addressing the priorities set by women;
- ✓ The high expectations had a negative impact on the micro credit whereby on one hand there is the high interest rate of micro credit, and expectations of most community that credits are in form of grants affected the enthusiasm of women to engage in loans; this challenge has diminished with the increased self trust gained by the women and the exposure to marketing opportunities and other women entrepreneurs; there was a need for intensive mobilization to absorb the deception generated because it was a “credit” and not a “grant”, although grants were never promised nor promoted;
- ✓ The project has been cautious in prioritizing the training needs, to support the WWC towards sustainability especially given the lack of experience of the women committees in social and development work and the challenge of team and participatory work;

- ✓ In communities where there is a high need for similar initiatives, it has been difficult to limit the number of participants to most activities, which affect the effectiveness of such activities especially training;
- ✓ Tobacco growing season and olive cultivations delay certain activities and slow the process during the agriculture season;
- ✓ The limited ability to write and read of most of WWC members of Beit Lahiya cluster imposed an additional challenge during the activities, especially that this was not a declared issue from the beginning;
- ✓ The delay of the government in announcing the date and law of municipal elections affected the implementation of most activities aiming to empower women and increase participation during the upcoming municipal elections.

Lessons learned were abundant, and they were deduced upon evaluation of activities, and more elaborated during the final evaluation of the project. The lessons learned are summarized according to different levels as follow:

- ✓ On the level of adopted approach:
 - Significance of following indirect approaches in introducing awareness, especially when the community has more urgent priorities. For instance in Yarine, through the TOT on literacy, women became more committed to awareness rather than just interested to increase their technical knowledge;
 - Continue to use interactive methods in sensitizing the community and transmitting our messages, and continue to adopt participatory approaches with the WWC in planning, implementing, and evaluating all the activities, which boost their sense of ownership and motivate them;
 - Linkage and coordination with other NGOs and government or UN supported projects to provide tangible services together with the activities of the project;
 - Increase mixed activities among villages as this will maximize profit and reduce time for team to be able to provide quality consultation. It will also serve the purpose of building solidarity among women from different backgrounds;
 - Organize big events in communities increase the credibility of the WWC and their motivation;
 - Using creative methods to increase awareness like theatre, contests, rally papers etc... Those were considered as highest success in the communities, and provided credibility and popularity for the women committees.
- ✓ On the level of selection of topics and/or target groups:
 - Literacy whether alphabetical or computer or foreign languages is very important to build women's self confidence and connection to the future. It is easier to mobilize women to learn about gender issues through such indirect approaches;
 - The importance of targeting youth and involving them in the project is an essential aspect for women empowerment. By involving this generation the issue of gender equality would gain more allies and potential for sustainable interest;

- The small, collective, and rural environments in which these beneficiaries live give way to much paranoia, real and perceived, about the anonymity and confidentiality of the issues discussed within the support group sessions (i.e. Gender Based Violence). Although it is unrealistic to eliminate such an obstacle completely, these issues require more attention and continual revisiting;
 - Targeting health care providers in rural areas is essential. By developing knowledge and skills on reproductive health and gender based violence services, health care providers who participated in the training are now capable of attracting more beneficiaries with their holistic and gender appropriate services. The training had also great influence on the level of health providers' attitudes. They are now more likely to accept beneficiaries with sexually transmitted infections, and know how to approach women subject to domestic violence;
 - Women with disabilities were not targeted in this project, and no activities were planned in that respect. It is important to do so in the future especially in the geographic regions of conflict where there is a high rate of women affected.
- ✓ On the level of community mobilization and engaging men:
- Men would have a better attitude towards the project activities when they are involved and not only as participants. In some villages their positive attitude could motivate the women and encourage them to be more active;
 - Recommendation to adopt the peer to peer approach and to start by empowering few men and assist them to influence others.
- ✓ On the level of establishing and sustaining women committees:
- Concrete steps such as building an NGO increases women commitment and involvement to activities. They feel that they will be able to really practice what they have learned and they are enthusiastic because they are building their own sustainable entity;
 - Define criteria while establishing the WWC. The project used an open approach to mobilize the largest number of beneficiaries, and due to lack of understanding of local conflicts at the early stages of the project. Yet having an open committee affected the level of commitment sometimes, and often created discrepancies in the level of knowledge among the old timers and the new comers.
- ✓ On the level of networking:
- The project can be a very useful link with other NGOs and stakeholders especially villages in remote areas. For example Beit Lahiya cluster lacks Red Cross centers and first aid volunteers. The implementation of first aid sessions through the project introduced the Red Cross who will continue working in these communities based on their needs by training people to be first aid volunteers and trainers, so they might eventually establish Red Cross centers in these areas;
 - Exposing women in rural communities to accomplished and empowered women peers is very beneficial. It creates motivation and encouragement looking at something like role models. And the opportunity to discuss issues with these empowered women validates the idea that women face same challenges everywhere. The participation of NCLW's members to activities in the field also enhances the relation between the commission and the grassroots;

- Building local alliances at the launching of the project outside the influence of the municipality in order to create a wider room for participation. Many people did not join nor participate in events organized by the WWC due to differences with the municipality.

- ✓ On the level of economic empowerment:
 - Increase the opportunities for access to markets (forums) since this needs practice in sales, and in quality control and products development and display;
 - Importance of starting with small loans (micro credit), and increase amount based on success and after establishing the confidence of the creditor in her ability to pay the loan.

- ✓ On the level of enhancing women’s participation to decision making:
 - It is important to sensitize women on the importance of supporting each other by specific activities and by tackling the subject during trainings such as the municipality training;
 - The relevant trainings empowering women on municipality elections should have taken place earlier during the year. It would have been better for women if they had more time to work on their campaigns;
 - Women from WEPASS villages decided to take a proactive role and to participate in the process of municipal elections. Indeed, despite the fact that the quota was not applied, they participated either by running for the elections, supporting the campaign of another woman, or participating in the training on “empowering women candidates”. A total of 27 women candidates from 8 villages decided to take this challenge and 12 out of them were victorious. Yet more lessons learned were drawn from this activity than any other because it was given a special focus. These lessons learned are listed below:
 - *To address methodological challenges:* On-site mentoring and candidate coaching is important to better enable candidates to campaign within their village environments.
 - *To communicate successes:* Media as a partner during women’s campaigns can be used to inspire women in creating their own electoral lists and in challenging the gender status-quo in local councils. External communication can leverage women’s ability to attract voters and show their competitive advantage over other candidates. More often than not, women who are socially active at a local level lack the skills to strategically communicate their messages through the media.
 - *To build women’s capacities:* A women’s quota alone is not enough to allow women to become partners in political decision-making. Women lack equal educational opportunities, and often chances for personal advancement are still reserved for men in many villages. Women require further an integrated approach to personal, political, and organizational development to increase their chances of being recognized and negotiating presence on electoral lists. At a local level, women also are in dire need to advance their communication skills and strengthen their relations with national media outlets.

- *To support women's issues:* Relationships between partner organizations are central to the success of any women empowerment program. Avoiding the duplication of efforts and ensuring open channels of communication can lead to a more accurate diagnosis of women's needs and a more effective way of transferring knowledge and skills. The myriad governmental and non-governmental programs working on women's issues require more collaboration in order to leverage their impact and increase their ability to reach out to villages all across the country.

List the key partnerships and collaborations, and explain how such relationships impact on the achievement of results.

This project is nationally implemented by the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in coordination with women NGOs, especially umbrella organizations, and with technical and advisory support from UNFPA Country Office. As for the partnership with NGOs, the project under this LRF/Phase III coordinated with specialized NGOs, such as **KAFA** "Enough Violence and Exploitation" and **Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women** in reference to GBV related initiatives; **Ecumenical Popular Education Program** in reference to literacy; **Sustainable Democracy Center** in reference to participation and gender discrimination; **Beyond Reform and Development** who worked on enhancing women participation in municipal elections; **For Development** who conducted training for NCLW staff, **British Council** who conducted English language courses; and **Al-Majmoua** implementing the economic empowerment component. More NGOs were continuously engaged in areas related to youth, reproductive health, and human rights. Promoting coordinated efforts with various entities including NGOs, municipalities, community committees, schools, health care centers, social development centers, youth networks, and other UNFPA supported projects etc... is one major objective that was achieved by the project.

On the other hand the project cooperated with various national experts and research/academic institutes for specific tasks such as conducting research and studies, contributing to capacity development to name but a few.

Finally the support of the various municipalities of the old and new villages is a challenge and an opportunity that the project takes into account while designing the activities as well as conducting any mobilization plan. This kind of support and partnership was – and still is - very handful and necessary, and it became more vital as WWC developed. Efforts will be made to sustain this partnership by the implementing partners.

V. FUTURE WORKPLAN (if applicable)

N/A

VI. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (optional)

VII. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BRD	.....	Beyond Reform and Development
BDS	.....	Business Development Service
CEDAW	.....	Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
EPEP	.....	Ecumenical Popular Education Program
GA	.....	General Assembly
GBV	.....	Gender Based Violence
IC	.....	Individual Consultations
ICPD	.....	International Conference on Population and Development
LECORVAW	.....	National Council to Resist Violence against Women
LRF	.....	Lebanon Recovery Fund
M&E	.....	Monitoring & Evaluation
MDG	.....	Millennium Development Goals
MOSA	.....	Ministry of Social Affairs
NWS	.....	National Woman Strategy
NCLW	.....	National Commission for Lebanese Women
NGO	.....	Non Governmental Organization
NRHP	.....	National Reproductive Health Programme
PoA	.....	Programme of Action
RH	.....	Reproductive Health
SDC	.....	Social Development Centers
SDC	.....	Sustainable Democracy Center
SME	.....	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN	.....	United Nations
UNFPA	.....	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFIL	.....	United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon
UNSCR	.....	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WEPASS	.....	Women Empowerment: Peaceful Action for Security & Stability
WESA	.....	Women Empowerment Support Organization
WWC	.....	WEPASS Women Committee
Y-PEER	.....	Youth to Youth Peer Network